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*Mr. GURDON'S*  
**S E R M O N S**

A T

*Mr. BOYLE'S*

L E C T U R E

In the Years 1721 and 1722.



*The Pretended Difficulties in Na-  
tural or Reveal'd Religion  
no Excuse for Infidelity.*

---

S I X T E E N

S E R M O N S

Preach'd in the CHURCH of

*St. Mary-le-Bow, London;*

In the Years 1721 and 1722 :

A T T H E

LECTURE Founded by the Honourable

ROBERT BOYLE, *Esq;*

---

By *Brampton Gurdon*, A. M.

Chaplain to the Right Honourable

THOMAS Earl of *Macclesfield*,  
Lord High Chancellour of GREAT BRITAIN.

---

L O N D O N :

Printed for ROBERT KNAPLOCK, at the Bishop's-  
Head, in St. Paul's Churchyard. 1723.



T O T H E

Right H O N O U R A B L E

R I C H A R D,

Earl of *Burlington* ;

The Right Reverend Fathers in G O D,

CHARLES *Lord Bishop of Winchester,*

EDMUND *Lord Bishop of Lincoln,*

SAMUEL *Lord Bishop of Carlile,*

A N D

WHITE *Lord Bishop of Peterborough,*

T R U S T E E S

Appointed by the most Reverend Father  
in G O D, T H O M A S late Lord Arch-  
bishop of *Canterbury*, the last Surviving  
Trustee named by the Honourable

R O B E R T B O Y L E, *Esq;*

These S E R M O N S are most  
humbly Dedicated.

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T H E  
C O N T E N T S.

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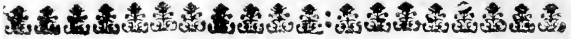
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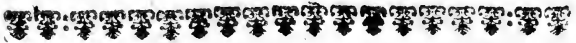
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## ERRATA.

PAGE 94. line 15 insert *not.* p. 183. l. 15. dele  
*and.* p. 262. l. 19. *of* for *by.* p. 461. l. 9. dele  
*same.*



SERM.



# SERMON I.

I TIMOTHY IV. 8.

— *Godliness is profitable unto all Things, having the Promise of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come.*



THE Subject which I propose to discourse upon is of the last Importance and Concern for all of us to be satisfy'd in; for 'tis no less

than this,

1. WHETHER Men at first either grew out of the Earth spontaneously as Trees; or that there has been

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always

*always* a Succession of Men and Women upon Earth, propagated after the same manner, as they are at present; or whether a Wife and Intelligent BEING sent us into this World.

2. WHETHER we are to go, as the *Materialist* contends for, to the Place *quo non nati jacent*; or whether, as the religious Man believes, there is to be another State of Being for us after this short Thread of Life is wound off.

IF any Prejudices were allowable, they would certainly be in this Controversy between Us and the *Atheists*, where all the Advantages to Mankind are on the Side of Religion; and nothing but Darknes and Despair in the *Atheist's* Scheme of Things. The Profitableness of Godliness, or of living under a Sense of religious Principles, and the Unprofitableness of Infidelity, may be made very plain to us, tho' we should suppose that we may be mistaken in believing them true. And for these Reasons:

I. BECAUSE

# SERMON I.

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1. BECAUSE nothing but such a Belief can carry a Man thro' the Difficulties and Miseries that human Life is subject to.

2. BECAUSE the Belief of religious Principles restrains a Man from no Enjoyments but such as would be hurtful to him and make him uneasy.

3. BECAUSE living under a Sense of Religious Principles will make a Man's Mind easy with regard to any Apprehensions of a Future State.

1. THAT nothing but the Belief of Religious Principles, *viz.* of GOD and a Providence can carry a Man through the Difficulties and Miseries that Human Life is subject to. If a Man makes the least Reflection upon the State and Condition of his Life, he will presently see that he has not sufficient Power of himself to procure his own Happiness. That there are many Things which are able to hurt him, and he neither knows how to secure himself against them, or to acquit himself of them, when they have attacked him. There are many Evils he must own

himself obnoxious to, because he sees others oppress'd by them. If there was no GOD or Providence to have Recourse to in this disagreeable Prospect of Things those whom we all of us allow to be Animals inferior to ourselves would have greatly the Advantage of him, for as they have no Foresight of Future Evils, so they could have no Forethought about them, nor torment themselves with any Fears of what may be hereafter; whilst our continual Anxiety and Solitude about Future Evils would make the Life of Man appear to be a Scene of Things perfectly dismal and without any kind of Hope, if *without a God in the World.*

THE Author of the Characteristicks has fairly own'd that there cannot be a Compleat Virtue without Piety or the Belief of a GOD and Providence, that those Virtues which should support us in Adversity, such as Fortitude, Patience and Contentment under our Condition, would probably lose their Effects upon us, if we had nothing to trust to but Chance or a blind Necessity;

cessity ; that they would be converted into a natural Kind of Spleen and Abhorrence of every Thing in the World, and imbitter our Tempers to that Degree as to ruin the very Principle of all Virtue, so as instead of Fortitude and Patience, the *Arbeits* Scheme in his Opinion would produce Impatience and Rage, “ Nothing, “ *says he,* \* indeed can be more melancholy than the Thought of living “ in a distracted Universe from whence “ many Ills may be suspected, and “ where there is nothing that can raise “ any Passion besides that of Contempt, “ Hatred or Dislike. Such an Opinion “ as this may by Degrees imbitter the “ Temper and help to impair and ruin “ the very Principles of Virtue, ” Speaking of the Belief of a God and Future State, he says †, “ by Virtue “ of this Belief Man may retain his “ Virtue and Integrity even under the “ hardest Thoughts of Human Na-  
 B 3 “ true ”,

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\* Enquiry concerning Virtue, p. 70. † *Ibid.*  
 Vol. 2. p. 71.

" ture ", but in the other Scheme,  
 " upon disastrous Occasions and under  
 " the Circumstances of a hard and cala-  
 " mitous Fortune 'tis scarce possible  
 " to prevent a natural Kind of Ab-  
 " horrence and Spleen \*. And in ano-  
 " ther Place, " That 'tis not possible  
 " to retain the same Firmness or Con-  
 " stancy of Mind, which Religion  
 " would naturally give a Man † ".  
 Thus we see, if this Author's Obser-  
 vations (who has no small Credit with  
 our Free-thinkers) have any Weight  
 in them, what must be the Behaviour  
 of a Man in Adversity, and what must  
 be commonly expected from one that  
 acts upon the Atheistick Scheme: In-  
 stead of Constancy and Firmness of  
 Mind under Afflictions, we must ex-  
 pect to find the *Atheist* raging and cur-  
 sing his Stars, acting more like a Mad-  
 man than a wise and sober Person,  
 we must expect that he should lose  
 his Temper, grow soure and melan-  
 choly, and consequently uneasie to him-  
 self,

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 \* Page 73.

† Page 76.



self, and every one that has any Thing to do with him. And is not this a Charming Prospect of Things, and enough to induce a Man to part with his Religious Principles, that instead of behaving under Afflictions with Decency and Dignity, if we will turn *Atheists* we may hope to lose our Tempers, grow impatient, contract a Sort of Dislike and Abhorrence of every Body and every Thing: But if we desire to keep our Tempers in all States of Life, and to do nothing that we shall have Reason to be ashamed of, we must live and act with a View to the Principles of Religion; it being impossible with any other Principles to keep up a good Composure of the Affections, or any Uniformity in our Minds as the above mention'd Author observes.

EPICURUS himself could not forbear saying, that he thought it better to believe the Fable of the Heathen Gods than to submit to that blind Necessity which our Modern *Atheists* seem to be so fond of (in his Letter to *Ma-*

*necessus* given us by *Diogenes Laertius* in his Life) because, he says, there is Hopes that the Gods may be prevailed upon by Worship and Prayer, but the other, *viz.* Necessity is deaf and inexorable to all Applications \*. And tho' he did not much mend the Matter by his introducing the Clinamen or Oblique Motion of his Atoms, in order to secure the Liberty of our Minds, yet the Force of Truth extorted this Confession from him, that the Fatality which *Leucippus* and *Democritus* had introduced, and which is still maintained by our *Atheists* did reduce Mankind to a most hopeless and miserable Condition; that it would be even better to embrace Superstition for such was the Heathen Mythology, than to be tied down to the Laws of an unrelenting Necessity.

THE

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\* Κρεττόν ἢ τὸ θεῶν μύθεον, κατὰ κληθεῖν, ἢ ἢ ὀφυσίαν (meaning the *δοκίαι*) ἐμαρμένω δακίσει, ὁ μὲν δὲ ἐλπίδα ἀφαιρήσει ὑποχρεῖται θεῶν δὲ τὰ τινῶν, ἢ ὃ ἀφαιρήσει ἔχει τὴν ἀναγκήν.

THE *Atheist* when he is called upon to give an Account of the general Consent of Mankind in the Belief of a G O D and Providence is forced to assign such Reasons for it as plainly shew him very sensible of the Profitableness of Godliness or Religious Principles, as first \*, When he accounts for the Introduction of Religion, by Mens Fears and Solitude about Future Events; he must own it to be his Opinion that it would be for the Benefit of Mankind that some Being should exist who could order and dispose of all Events, to whom Men might address themselves for Relief, and in whom they might take Refuge, as being able to protect them against every Accident. Whereas the Fear and Concern about Future Events which themselves suppose to be natural to us, would encrease upon us, grow worse and worse, if we were once persuaded that Future Events were under no Direction but subject to the Caprices of Fortune or what would be as bad for us, the unalterable

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\* Primus in orbe Deos, fecit timor.

alterable Laws of a blind and unthinking Necessity, because in such a Case there is nothing to apply to, nothing to trust in: For as these Atheistical Deities bring about every Thing without knowing all the while what they are doing, it can be to no Purpose to make any Application to them or hope for any Relief from them. In order to amend this ill State of Things the *Atheist* tells us Mankind found out this Expedient of making themselves believe that there must be some other Agent besides this material World, which they were sure could not help them; and tho' they could not see him doing any Thing that yet he did all, directed the Motions of the Heavens, manag'd all Events here upon Earth, and was able and ready to relieve his Creatures when they called upon him for Help. What Proof we have for a God shall be afterwards shewn, by which it will appear to stand upon the best of Evidence, and therefore that Fear was not the onely Cause of introducing Religion among Men. It is

is enough for my present Purpose that we have the *Atheist* acknowledging the Advantages of Religious Principles for supporting Men against the Fears of Future Evils, and consequently the Being of a GOD and Providence is what of all Things ought to be desired and wish'd for by us all.

ANOTHER Account they are wont to give of the General Consent of Mankind in the Belief of a GOD is that Legislators and Politicians persuaded Men there was a GOD as such a Persuasion was thought to be the best Means of keeping Societies in order and in Obedience to the Laws. This too is a plain Acknowledgment from them of the Profitableness of Religious Principles, since the wisest Men such as the Founders of States were, saw no Way of securing the Peace of Societies but by making the Principles of Religion a Part of the Civil Constitution; and Mr. *Hobbs* tells us how those Religious Principles preserved the Peace of Societies in as much as the People when they were under  
any

any Misfortunes or Calamities, and were therefore most inclined to Mutiny, would not blame their Governors † but rather attribute their Misfortunes to their Want of Respect to GOD, to their Omission of some Religious Institution or some Mistake in performing it. I think a higher Commendation of Religious Principles cannot possibly be given than the making them necessary to the Peace of Societies. And the *Hobbist* above all others must acknowledge the Necessity of embodying for our mutual Security, because according to his Scheme, every Man is an Enemy to every other Man in a State of Nature. Every Man has a Natural Right to whatever he can get by any Methods whatsoever; there being according to him no such Thing  
as

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† Per has similesq; Institutiones ad finem suum, nempe Pacem Civitatis, hoc saltem obtinuerunt, ut populus Calamitates suas Errori alicui vel neglectui in agendis sacris — attribuens minus cogitaret Rectores suos incitare, *Leviathan*, p. 60.

as Right and Wrong, Just and Unjust, before Men enter into Society, nor consequently any Thing but their own Interest to hinder them from being a Plague and Vexation to each other. Having now seen some of the Advantages of Religious Principles for our Support in the uneasy Parts of Life, it may be fit to see what those Advantages are which the *Atheist* proposes by his Scheme as an Equivalent for what by his own Confession he must deprive himself and others of by his Disbelief of a GOD and Providence, and by endeavouring to draw others into the same Degree of Infidelity. *Plutarch* tells us his Design is to free himself from Fear, that he might stand in Awe of no Body, and be at full Liberty to do what he pleas'd †. This leads to the Second Advantage of Godliness, *viz.*

THAT the true and Genuine Notion of a GOD has nothing frightful in

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† Τελθ το μὴ φοβέσθαι θεῶν, ἢ ἀβυσσῶν.

in it, that it restrains a Man in no Enjoyments but what would be hurtful to him and make him uneasy, and therefore that a Man can be no Loser by being a Believer, if it should prove at last that there is to be no after State. That *Plutarch's* Observation was a just one, or that the *Atheists* Unwillingness to admit a GOD arises from a frightful Notion that he entertains of him, is evident from the *Epicureans* continually representing Religion as a grievous and heavy Burden. Thus *Velleius in Tully de Natura Deorum*, lib. 1. pag. 48. says, That those who had introduced a Governor of the World, had made Mankind perfect Slaves \*. So *Lucretius* in the Beginning of his first Book, represents Mankind as sinking under the heavy Load of Religion, groveling upon the Ground, not able to look up or lift up its Head for fear of the terrible Aspect of a God appearing from

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\* Itaque imposuistis in Cervicibus nostris sempiternum dominum, quem dies & noctes timere-  
mus.



from above, and that this was the miserable Case of Man till *Epicurus* appeared \*. And the same Writer speaks of *Epicurus's* curing Men of the Fear of a G O D as the most signal Piece of Service that was ever done for Mankind †. But there is nothing can be more false than this Representation of G O D and Religion. 'Tis true indeed our Holy Writings speak of Religion under the Phrase of the Fear of G O D. But then this is not the Fear of an Arbitrary Being who has no regard to the Good and Welfare of others. 'Tis not the Fear of an Omnipotent Tyrant, that acts by Humour and Passion, but the Fear of a wise and good B E I N G, that always governs himself by the unalterable Rules of good Sense, such a Fear as should restrain Men from playing the Fool and hurting themselves, from violating the Laws of Reason, and confounding the

Moral

\* Primum Graius homo mortales tendere contra est Oculos ausus.

† Nos exæquat Victoria Cælo.

Moral Differences of Things. And such a Fear no considerate Man ought to be concern'd at, for a Fear of this Kind is greatly for the Advantage of Mankind, as it tends to the keeping the World in Peace and good Order, and hindring them from injuring one another; 'tis the Fear of a just B E I N G who threatens Punishment for doing such Things as would turn to our real Detriment; 'tis the Fear of a kind Father, who knowing better than ourselves what is good for us and what would be mischievous to us, leads us to our Happiness and keeps us from hurting ourselves by the Fear of offending him. This is the true and genuine Fear of a G O D; what Advantage then would it be to any Person if he were deliver'd from such a Fear. Every Man that thinks at all would rejoice that there should be such an Object of his Fear as might keep his Passions and Appetites from doing him Harm, he would see that such a Fear was so far from being Slavery, that 'tis consistent with the truest

truest Liberty, and the best Preservative of it, and that without it, it would scarce be possible to secure the Freedom of our Thoughts and Actions. Whenever this Fear is attended with Jealousies and Suspicions of the Deity, as an imperious and arbitrary BEING, that rather delights Himself in the Miseries than the Happiness of his Creatures, it then ceases to be a religious, and commences a vicious Fear, or what we are wont to call Superstition.

'Tis against this last Sort of Fear, that the Arguments of *Lucretius*, and of all Sorts of *Atheists* are directed. For they, laying it down as a certain Truth, That there is no such Thing in Nature as Moral Differences, no Right or Wrong, Just or Unjust, separate from Pleasure and Pain, Convenience and Inconvenience, it would then indeed follow, That if there was a God, He could have no Moral Qualities, nor be oblig'd to act in Virtue of them. If there was a Being distinct from the World, and endu'd with a

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Power

Power of doing every Thing ; yet there could not be a just Being, if there be no such Thing as Justice (abstracted from the Laws of Civil Government.) If there existed an infinite Intelligence, yet such Intelligent Being could make no Distinction between Right and Wrong, if there really be no such Thing as Right and Wrong in the Nature of Things ; and then what should we be the better for such a Being ? Or rather, should we not probably fare better, if we were without such a Governor as acts by mere Will and Pleasure ? That these Notions are justly charg'd upon the ancient and modern *Atheists*, may appear by a Quotation from each of them : *Cotta in Tully de Natura Deorum*, pag. 98. *Davies's* Edit. tells us, one Opinion of the *Epicureans* was, That there was no such Thing as Benevolence or an Obligation to do Acts of Kindness ; but that whatever appears of this Kind, arises merely from Weakness \* ; and therefore, if there

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\* *Cum in inbecillitate gratificationem & benevolentiam possit.*

was any such Thing as a GOD, there could be no such Thing as Love or Benevolence in him; because as He would be all-powerful, He could want no one's Assistance, stand in Need of no Body, and therefore care for no Body. And thus again, Mr. *Hobbs* in his *Leviathan*, and his Book *De Cive*, p. 260, 262. founds all the Right that GOD has of Governing us, upon his Almighty Power; and all the Obligation that we have to obey him, upon this, That we cannot help it, his Power being irresistible \*.

Thus we see the *Atheists* Dressing up GOD in a frightful Shape, that they might have the better Colour for Denying his Existence. But I have already shewn, that this is a false Representation of Him; that when He is represented as He ought to be, and such as He really is; that He is the most amiable BEING in the World; such a

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BEING

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\* Deo omnipotenti jus dominandi ab ipsa potentia derivatur: manifestum est Obligationem ad præstandam ipsi Obedientiam incumbere hominibus propter imbecillitatem.

## S E R M O N I.

BEING as every considerate Man would heartily wish for, and would even part with all the World, rather than give up the Belief of Him; as the Want of such a BEING would rob him of a most comfortable Prospect in a Time of Difficulty and Distress, and in a Time of Prosperity take off that Restraint from his Appetites and Passions, which is absolutely necessary to keep them from hurting him.

HITHERTO I have shewn the Profitableness of Religious Principles, and (*consequently*) the Disadvantages of those of the *Atheists* on the Supposition, that they could fully persuade themselves of the Truth of their Scheme: But, if after all the Pains they take to disown a GOD, they cannot set their Minds easy from the Fears of Him, then the Profitableness of living under a Sense of Religious Principles, and the Disadvantages of *Atheism*, will receive a new Degree of Evidence: Which was the third Advantage of Religious Principles that I propos'd to discourse upon, *viz.* That the Belief of them will set the  
 Religious

Religious Man's Mind at Ease with Regard to any Apprehensions of an after State.

THE Histories of all Times, and all Countries inform us, That there constantly has been a Belief of some future State, in which Men were to be accountable for their Behaviour in this. I am not now to consider, Whether this Apprehension in Mankind be agreeable to the Truth of Things, or any good Proof of them: I am at this Time only to consider, What Effects such an Apprehension may have upon Mens Minds. And I think it must be granted me, That whilst Men have such Apprehensions, they cannot be indifferent or unconcerned what is to become of them in this after State, no more than a Man can be indifferent with Regard to his Happiness or Misery in this present one. And therefore, unless the *Atheist* can give us a sure and certain Method by which we may get entirely rid of such Fears, he must acknowledge his Scheme to be neither calculated for the Good of himself nor any Body else.

For I have already shewn the Advantages of a true and genuine Fear of God, for the better Conduct of our Lives; and if the *Atheist* is willing to give up those Advantages, so as he might free himself from the Fears of an after Reckoning, we might expect that he was sure of gaining this Point: But the Histories of all Ages shew us, that the Convictions of Mens Consciences are not to be silenced by such weak and trifling Reasonings as the *Atheists* Scheme is built upon: The Apprehensions of a future State have taken too deep Root in Mens Minds to be overturn'd by any Speculations of Men; and I will venture to say, That the *Atheist* himself, with all the Confidence he pretends to have in the Truth of his Scheme, cannot insure himself for Life against the Fears of a future State, and for this plain Reason, That he cannot prove it to be impossible, that such a Being as GOD (in the Religious Notion of the Word) should exist: For if he cannot have an absolute Certainty of that, neither can



he have any of the other. The Case being this, there can be no Difficulty in shewing, That the Principles of Religion are better calculated for the Ease of Mens Minds, with Regard to a future State, than those of the *Atheist*. For the Man that lives under Religious Principles, has a comfortable Prospect: If his Apprehensions be just, he knows that he is made for ever, that his Happiness will be beyond the utmost of his Conceptions, and the Continuance of it to all Eternity. And if his Thoughts of the Matter should prove nothing but a Mistake; yet his Belief has made him pass off Life with more Satisfaction than *Atheism* can afford a Man, and it can be at last no worse with him than the other.

L E T us now take a View of the Unbeliever, with Regard to the Apprehensions of a future State: As I have already observ'd, That he cannot demonstrate the Impossibility of a Life after the Conclusion of this present one, the Supposition of its being *barely* possibly to be true, must give him now and then an uneasy Thought, for Fear

that Possibility should arise; and whenever such a troublesome Thought disturbs him, I know of no other Way he can take to make himself easy, but by persuading himself, either 1st, That no Man is under any Obligation of Reverencing or Honouring GOD, tho' there should be One; or else, if he dares not trust to that, That *he* is under no Obligation, because not believing there is a GOD, he cannot pay any Reverence to Him. As to the first of these Excuses, I believe the *Atheist* will find it hard enough to make himself believe, that no Man is under an Obligation of honouring Him, if there really be One; for if there be such a BEING, the Relation that we stand in to Him, and the Obligations we have received from Him, will make it fit for us to express our Thankfulness and Acknowledgments to Him.

I AM sensible Unbelievers do not allow what we call moral Differences; but then this is upon Supposition that their Material Scheme is the true one, and that there is no GOD, or no Supreme

preme BEING endued with Moral Perfections. But if there should be such a BEING, the *Atheist* may be, for any thing he knows, answerable to this BEING for denying his Existence, and in Consequence of that, for paying no Reverence nor Acknowledgments to Him for the Favours received from Him. For if there are any moral Differences in the Nature of Things, and they are judg'd of by the Supreme Understanding such as by other understanding Beings, making only an Abatement for the Difference between a finite and infinite Understanding; that is, Suppose we know what Justice is in GOD, we must believe that it is unjust to deny Reverence to the Supreme BEING, as well as it would be Injustice to refuse our Acknowledgments to any Friend or Benefactor for any Kindnesses we had received from him. And it can't be thought but that the Supreme (as well as other Beings) must make a Difference between those that honour Him, and those that deny his Being and Authority over them. For if GOD has  
constituted

constituted any moral Differences in Things, He has thereby sufficiently declared that it is his Intention to act suitably to those Differences. The Thing is so evident, that the Learned and Unlearned have agreed in honouring the the DEITY. *Tully* has long ago told it as a certain and undoubted Truth, That if there is a Supreme and Eternal B E I N G, He is to be had in the greatest Reverence and Admiration by Mankind \*. And even *Epicurus* † himself wrote a Book of Piety towards the Gods. If he wrote this Book for no other Reason than to screen himself from the Publick Odium, yet it shews thus much, That it was the general Belief of People at that Time, that the DEITY ought to be honoured. And that this Belief was well-grounded, will afterwards appear, when I come to prove a real Difference in the Nature of Things between Virtue and Vice. *Vide* Serm. XI.

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\* *Tully de Natura Deorum. Lib. 1.*

† *De Divinatione. Lib. 2.*

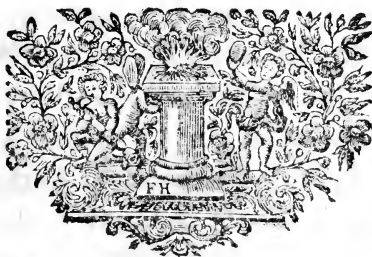
# SERMON I.

27.

I CANNOT forbear making one Remark from what has been said are any is this: That <sup>there</sup> ~~there~~ are any Persons <sup>who</sup> ~~who~~ pervert an Understanding, as cannot persuade themselves of a GOD and Providence, that they should not give themselves much Trouble in drawing Men off from such a Belief; because, by their own Confession, Mankind was brought into this Belief for their own Good, that they might relieve themselves from the Uneasinesses which human Nature is subject to. If they make any Pretensions to Goodnature, or have any Love for their Species, they should be contented to believe themselves in the right, without using any Endeavors to draw other Persons into a Scheme which is so dismal and without all Comfort, as theirs is; they can lie under no Obligations of Conscience, because they make shew of Denying all moral Differences; and therefore if they were not a Set of sour and ill-natured People, they would be contented to be miserable by themselves, and leave the rest of Mankind in the quiet Possession

fession of so agreeable a Delusion as  
 that of a GOD and future State. I  
 for themselves, <sup>one</sup> Thing they can urge  
 right Notion of Religion would <sup>be</sup> <sup>really</sup>  
 ly beneficial to Mankind, yet Supersti-  
 tion is more destructive of the publick  
 as well as private Quiet of every Man  
 than *Atheism* itself: And for the Truth  
 of this, they refer you to *Plutarch* in his  
 Treatise, *εὐειδαιμονίας*, and to the vi-  
 sible Effects of it, wherever it has pre-  
 vailed. They add further, That the  
 Histories of every Age have convinced  
 them, that Mankind is a Creature that  
 is more apt to be influenced by a su-  
 perstitious, than by a religious Fear.  
 And therefore, the Odds in human Na-  
 ture being on the Side of Superstition  
 that 'tis not safe trusting it with any  
 Religion. The Answer to this is very  
 easy, That if the Fears of Superstition,  
 are the only Reason of his rejecting re-  
 ligious Principles, then instead of setting  
 himself against all Religion, let him en-  
 deavour to set the World right in their  
 Notions of Religion, and we will hear-  
 tily

tily joyn with him in so laudable an Undertaking. And, as I hope the Danger of Mens falling into Superstition may be much lessen'd by our joynt Endeavours; so I am sure, the above-mentioned Advantages of true Religion will sufficiently justify us in the Attempt.









## SERMON II.

I THESSALONIANS V. 21.

*Prove all Things : hold fast  
that which is good.*



THE Reasonableness of Observing this Rule of our Apostle, is grounded upon this undoubted Matter of Fact, That there has been always a Mixture of Truth and Falseness in the World: That there have always been Persons who have endeavour'd to propagate false, as well as true Doctrines, and therefore no Safety in holding fast any Opinions, before we have carefully prov'd and examin'd them.

IF our Apostle might have a particular View to the trying of Revelations or divine Inspirations; yet this Advice of his will equally extend to every Subject that is proposed to our Consideration; and if we are guided by it, we shall never give our Assent to any Proposition, till we have fully and fairly examin'd it; For if, as in the present Case, which the Apostle seems particularly to refer to, we suppose a Man led into Error by some mere Pretender to Inspiration, if it would not, I say, be a good Excuse before GOD, that he believed such a Person inspired, and practis'd amiss in the Virtue of such a Belief, because he ought to have examin'd his Credentials, and proved his Spirit, whether it was of GOD, or not; neither would it be a good Justification of a Man, if he should plead, That he acted suitably to his own Opinions; unless 'twas also true, that he had carefully examined them before he espoused them; because every Man will be as much concerned to avoid Mistakes concerning the Truths of Natural, as well as those

those of Revealed Religion. And he that assents to either upon any other Motive than that of Evidence, altho' he should embrace the Truth, as this is purely accidental, may be answerable to GOD for not making a due Use of his Faculties: for *St. Paul's Rule* is, *To prove all Things: and then to hold fast that which is good.*

WE who are guided by *St. Paul* and the rest of the inspired Teachers, do require, and press upon all Persons a thorough Examination of the Arguments on which Religion is built: We desire nothing more than a fair Trial, and are willing to abide by the Success of it. And therefore the Author of the Discourse of *Free-Thinking*, is a Slanderer of his Brethren, when he would insinuate, as if the Religious Man was averse to a free and impartial Examination of Religious Truths. We desire Men would examine with the utmost Strictness; we only desire them to lay aside all Partiality, and every Prejudice; we are only against Licentiousness in Thinking, as we are

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persuaded

persuaded, That a Man may as well abuse his Freedom in Thinking, as he may his Liberty in Acting; as I shall have Occasion to shew in Considering another Evasion the *Atheist* has to avoid the Apprehensions of a future State, *viz.* That a Man cannot deserve Blame or Punishment, so long as he acts consistently with his own Opinion, or that himself cannot deserve Blame or Punishment for not Honouring GOD, because he does not believe there is one.

FOR if this Excuse be a good one, one of these two Things must be true, either *1<sup>st</sup>*, That a Man cannot deserve Blame for acting according to his Opinions, how groundless soever they be. Or, *2<sup>dly</sup>*, Because he had made a due Examination and Trial of this Question, and could find no Evidence for a GOD.

As to the first of these: Let us see what Grounds the *Atheist* can have to hope for Impunity, merely because he acts according to his Opinion, when he refuses Respect to a Supreme BEING.

I MUST confess, I cannot see much in the Argument used by some great Men against incurring this Blame and Punishment, *viz.* they advise the *Atheist*, That he should strive to have Faith and believe to the utmost; because, if after all there be nothing in the Matter, there will be no Harm in being thus deceived; but if there be any thing, it will be fatal for him not to have believed to the full: And my Reason is this: Because the Person we advise to believe, is supposed at best to be doubtful, whether there is a GOD and Providence; And how then can the Man believe them, who at the same time is not persuaded of their Truth; but rather believes there is no such Thing? For if a Man should affect to believe, what he does not believe, there is little Reason for thinking that such a Procedure would be agreeable to GOD; because this would be acting against the Light of his own Mind, which no one that believes a GOD, will suppose to be a probable Way of recommending any one to his Favour.

I SHOULD rather advise the *Atheist* to examine carefully, What were the real Motives that prevailed upon him to quit the Religion he had been educated in, and to take up with Infidelity? Whether a sincere Love of the Truth, or rather some secret Passion had influenced him? If he would deal fairly with himself in this Self-examination, I am persuaded he would find, that the Alteration of his Opinion is not so much owing to any rational Conviction of his Mind, as to some vicious Inclinations, which had made Arguments appear weighty to him, which would pass with other People for mean and trifling; as I shall afterwards shew when I come to consider the Arguments by which he pretends to support his Material Scheme.

IN the mean time I am to shew, That there are many Motives besides rational Evidence, which have determin'd Men to the Opinions that they espouse, and consequently, that this Evasion of the *Atheist*, *viz.* That a Man cannot deserve Blame or Punishment for

for acting agreeably to his Opinions, cannot be relied upon by any prudent or considerate Man. And then the *Atheist* can never secure himself against the Apprehensions of future Punishment upon this Foot of Reasoning.

WHEN I am shewing, that a Man may be answerable for his Opinions, and for what he does in Virtue of them; I would not be thought to assert, That 'tis in any Man's Power to believe what he has a mind to believe; for his Belief and his Opinion must depend upon the Evidence, such as it appears to the Man; and yet thus much is certain, That a Man may deserve Blame for his Opinions, if he has not duly qualified himself for Evidence when 'tis offered to him. As,

*1<sup>st</sup>*, IF when he is enquiring after Truth, he suffers himself to be byass'd by any predominant Passion or Appetite; for these are known to make Men deaf to the plainest Evidence of Reason. Or,

*2<sup>dly</sup>*, IF thro' Laziness he declines a full or thorough Examination of any

Question in which he is much concerned. That these may be, and often are, the true Causes of many Persons Infidelity, will appear probable, by considering some of the Motives which too often govern Men, with Regard to the Persuasions or Opinions that are held by them: The Prejudices which I shall at present consider, as having a great Influence upon us, and which may lead Men into an Inclination for the Principles of Infidelity, are these:

1. A N Affectation of Singularity; which is wont to take much with such Persons as desire to be distinguished by being thought to see farther than their Neighbours.

2. A N Aversion to the Errors that have crept into true Religion, has insensibly led many Persons into a total Disbelief of all Religion.

3. A D E S I R E of being independent, and uncontrollable by any one: When this meets with Persons of an imperious Temper, 'tis a strong Temptation to Infidelity.

WHENEVER



WHENEVER any of these prevail, they must be allowed to be false Grounds of Persuasion, and for which a Man will be justly accountable, if there be a Supreme BEING to whom an Account is to be given for the Use, or Abuse of our understanding Faculties.

1<sup>st</sup>. AN Affectation of Singularity is wont to have a powerful Influence upon a Man's Opinions, especially when it meets with a proud Temper.

A MAN must have pass'd his Life without much Reflection upon human Nature, that has not observed, That Men are more commonly influenced, as to the Opinions they hold, by some predominant Passion, than by any Conviction from the Principles of Reason. The striking out into a different Way of Thinking from the rest of Mankind, flatters the Vanity of a proud Man with this pleasing Imagination, That he shall be thought to see farther than any Body else. For he that contradicts any received Notions, expects the World should believe, that he does so, because he reasons with greater Freedom and Im-

partiality than other People; and the more generally received the Opinions are which he opposes, the greater Credit he hopes to gain by it; and therefore, Religion having been the general Persuasion of Mankind, is for that Reason the fittest Mark for the proud Man to point his Arguments against: for the Fewer he has on his Side, the more he hopes to shine, as he knows a Man is apt to be lost in a Croud, and that if he would be taken Notice of, he must stand single, or have but Few in his Company.

THE Author of the Discourse about *Free-thinking*, has acknowledged this secret Temptation to Infidelity, when he would put it off as the common Opinion of Mankind, that the *Atheist* has more Sense than other People. For, says he, *if any good Christian happens to Reason better than ordinary, they (meaning the Christians) charge him with Atheism.* He takes this sly Way of commending the *Atheists* for good Reasoners, in suggesting that those very Persons who believed a God and future State,

State, could not forbear owning *Atheism* to be the Effect of good Reasoning, and the *Atheists* better Reasoners than other People. How weak and groundless forever this Notion may be of Mens being better Reasoners in proportion as they believed less of a GOD and Providence; yet thus much may be observed from it to my present Purpose, That some Persons may have been, and still are tempted to appear on the Side of Infidelity, from the vain Hopes of being thought more discerning and sagacious than the rest of the World.

M O N S I E U R *Bayle*, whose Writings will free him from any Suspicion of being overpartial in the Cause of Religion, does honestly acknowledge, That the Infidelity of many People is owing more to some Degree of Vanity, and a Desire of distinguishing themselves, than to any Force of Evidence: and nothing can be truer than what he has said upon this Occasion in his *Historical Dictionary*, “ It is plain enough, *says he*, “ that those who make a Shew in  
“ Company of opposing the most  
“ common

## S E R M O N II.

“ common Truths of Religion, speak  
 “ what they do not really think ; their  
 “ Vanity has a greater Share in their  
 “ Debates than any Conviction of their  
 “ own Minds ; they please themselves  
 “ with the Thoughts that the Boldness  
 “ and Singularity of the Opinions which  
 “ they defend, will gain them the Reputa-  
 “ tion of great Genius’s, and of Men  
 “ of a superior Way of Thinking to  
 “ the rest of Mortals. Thus they are  
 “ tempted against their Consciences to  
 “ set forth the Difficulties which the  
 “ Doctrines of Providence and those of  
 “ the Gospel are subject to ; so that by  
 “ Degrees they get a Habit of speaking  
 “ impiously : And if their Vanity be  
 “ attended with the Love of Sensua-  
 “ lity, they go on faster in their Im-  
 “ piety ”. Thus far Mr. *Bayle* speaks  
 in relation to an ingenious *French* Li-  
 bertine, and to all of that Sort in  
 the Title *Des Barreaux*. The *Atheist*  
 has perhaps heard too, That the *E-  
 picurean Atheist* was wont to impute  
 the Belief of a GOD to Mens Ignorance  
 of the Powers of Matter in  
 Motion ;

Motion; and therefore hopes by the Denial of Him, to acquire a great Reputation for Knowledge.

A N O T H E R common Fountain from whence Infidelity is wont to arise, is, An Aversion to Superstition. Some Men do no sooner discover the Errors that are crept into true Religion, than they conceive such an Aversion to these Errors, as that they begin to suspect all the rest to be a Mistake, and from being Enemies to Superstition, become Enemies to all Religion in general. This I take to be the most usual Way by which Men arrive at a State of Infidelity; but this is an unjustifiable Proceeding in any one that pretends to be a Lover of Truth; because it supposes that where there are Errors, there can be no Truth. There are Errors in all Communities of Men professing Religion, therefore there can be no Truth at all in Religion itself; Men have made great Mistakes in the Pictures they have drawn for the DEITY, therefore there can be no DEITY at all; because they are sure there cannot be a GOD with  
human

human Weaknesses, therefore there cannot be one with divine Perfections; They might with as much Justice argue, That because there is a Wrong, there can be no such Thing as a Right.

BUT they are not only unjustifiable, when they have no better Reason for leaving us, but also (which I believe will concern the *Atheist* more, because it reflects upon his Understanding) they shew great Weakness when they are byas'd to Infidelity by their Aversion to Superstition, as this shews a great Defect in Point of Judgment. For when Men flee from one Extream to the other, when they take Refuge in *Atheism* out of an Hatred to Superstition, the Reason must be because they know not how to distinguish what is true from what is false. They find they have not Skill enough to take off the Disguise from Religion, to separate the Appearance from the Reality; and therefore finding they must take all or none; the Hatred they have conceived against the Errors they have already detected,

ted, prompts them to quit Religion entirely, as the only Way for such poor Reasoners to be secure against Errors in Religious Matters. This is the true Reason and Foundation of that Observation so often made, That where there is most Superstition, as in *Italy*, *Atheists* are most frequent; because the Generality of People are apt to conceive so strong a Prejudice against any Cause, how just soever, when they discover any Fraud used in the Support of it, that they immediately conclude the whole to be a Cheat. Their Aversion for the Fraud, makes them overlook all the Arguments that can be given them for the Support of the Truth; as if it was an Impossibility in the Nature of the Thing, for evil Men to defend the Truth by a Falshood. But this has so often happened in the World, that no Man can be accounted a fair Examiner that rejects Religion merely upon this Account.

3dly, A DESIRE of being uncontroul'd and unaccountable as to their Thoughts and Behaviour, tempts some Persons to  
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the Denial of GOD's Existence. Men of haughty and imperious Tempers would be Monarchs to themselves, they care not to believe themselves obliged to any Body, and therefore are fond of the Material Scheme, as it sets them at full Liberty from all Obligations; for no one can think himself obliged to any Being merely for doing for him what it can't help doing. Atoms by luckily jumbling together for my Good, or the necessary and unalterable Laws of Matter in Motion producing all that we see, tho' I received never so much Benefit from them, could lay me under no Obligation of Gratitude to them; I should still be under the fullest Liberty of Thinking and Acting as I liked best; (if any such thing as Liberty were consistent with either of those Schemes) But if a Man should acknowledge an Intelligent BEING for his Creator and the Author of all the Comforts he meets with in Life, he cannot forbear thinking sometimes that some such Submission may be due to  
Him



Him, as may restrain his Fulness of Freedom in Thinking and Acting.

AND this St. *Evremont*, who was never thought to be troubled with Believing too much in Religious Matters, acknowledges might be a Temptation to Persons of an imperious Temper; if he was truly the Author of a Treatise ascribed to him \*, where it is said, “ That there are others who in an  
 “ extravagant Presumption of their own  
 “ Abilities, scorn to depend on their  
 “ MAKER; vainly imagining, that the  
 “ Obedience that is paid to this Infi-  
 “ nite MAJESTY, must necessarily take  
 “ away the Freedom of their Thoughts  
 “ or Opinions. ” We have already seen by the Confession of *Lucretius* †, that the Desire of being in a State of Independence; and of having none to controul them, was a great Inducement to many Persons to enter themselves in the School of *Epicurus*; and we cannot doubt but the same Cause is  
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\* Vid. Curious Miscellanies † Sermon I.

still working the same Effect in the Children of Disobedience: Especially as to those who are Libertines in Action as well as Thought, who desire to gratify every irregular Appetite, and to extinguish the Clamours of their Consciences, 'tis their Interest to throw off the Belief of a G O D and turn *Atheists*: as long as they have any Reason left, they must for Peace and Quietness Sake endeavour to perswade themselves, that there is no Superior Understanding to take notice of and animadvert upon them for acting against the Sense of their own Minds. *Atheism* is the only Refuge they have to take to; for so long as Men will act against their own Understandings, they must wish that there were no Understanding Being to observe what they are doing: but these are the Fools, which the *Psalmist* tells us have *said in their Hearts, that there is no God.*

THE Use that I would make of this, should be to advise the *Atheist*, That since there are confessedly vicious Motives that have led Men into their Opinions, that

that he would examine, whether none of those I have already mentioned had determin'd him to exchange the Religion he was brought up in for *Atheism*. For if he has left it without sufficient Reason, his pleading that he acts according to his Opinion, will not excuse him from Blame and Punishment.

I AM easy to believe, that the *Infidel* will disregard the Advice I have given him of examining what were the Motives that principally occasioned his Infidelity, and may think, that his Mistake, if it should prove such, can do him no Harm. I shall therefore chuse to put him in mind of what Monsieur *Bayle* says of such as have been drawn into Infidelity thro' any vicious Motives, particularly those he instances of Pride or Sensuality in his *Historical Dictionary*, Title *Des Barreaux*: " That evil  
 " Custom, says he, which some Persons  
 " had taken up in Conversation of opposing the great Truths of Religion, occasion'd either by Vanity, or a Desire  
 " of being thought more knowing than  
 E " others,

“ thers, or to justify themselves in their  
 “ Sensuality, may for some time silence  
 “ the inward Convictions of their Minds,  
 “ and make them to have entirely for-  
 “ got what they had learnt in their  
 “ Youth concerning a GOD, a Hea-  
 “ ven and a Hell: but they cannot  
 “ wholly extinguish the Belief of them,  
 “ it being only like a Fire concealed  
 “ under the Ashes, which will quickly  
 “ shew its Activity, especially when  
 “ there is any Prospect of Danger;  
 “ then, *says he*, we find them Trem-  
 “ bling, and more in Fear than any  
 “ body else; they become then even  
 “ superstitious:” And he gives this  
 Reason for it; “ That the Remembrance  
 “ of their having shewn more Con-  
 “ tempt for Holy Things than others,  
 “ increases their Uneasiness.” If this  
 Observation of Monsieur *Bayle’s* be just  
 and agreeable to Truth, the Advice I  
 have given the *Atheist* of examining the  
 Motives that induced him to renounce  
 Religion, may not be altogether amiss.  
 Because whatever he may think while  
 he is in Health, and out of Danger, he  
 cannot

cannot secure himself against the Apprehensions of Punishment, if he has wantonly taken up the Cause of Infidelity.

BUT some one may say, That this Way of arguing against *Atheists*, is entering into the Hearts of Men, and charging them with what may be as easily denied as affirmed; that it is an unfair Procedure with them, because 'tis taking for granted, that a Man must be influenced by some Prejudices whenever he embraces *Atheism*; that this might be with equal Justice retorted upon the Believer, that he too is prejudiced, and willing against Evidence to believe a G O D, because he wishes there was one, and thinks it would be better for him that there should be one; and therefore that the Argument drawn from Prejudices should be omitted by both Sides.

THE Answer is, That I ought to shew, if I could, that other Motives besides Evidence, might influence Men in their Opinions; that such Motives were vicious and punishable if there should be

a GOD: And this, in order to engage the *Atheist* to examine carefully upon what Motives he took up his Opinions: If the Religious Man is under a strong Prejudice to believe a GOD, and he should be mistaken, his Mistake cannot be dangerous or hurtful to him. I ought also not to have omitted these Prejudices as probable Motives to Infidelity, because many of those who seem to disown all Religion, have been (as we have already seen from the Confession of unsuspected Writers) influenced by some or other of them.

IF there are any others who have from any thing like a serious Consideration wrought themselves into a Belief, That this Frame of Things might have either casually fallen into the Order we find it in, or necessarily have existed such as it is from all Eternity, they are not concerned with what has been said under the Head of Prejudices, and shall be distinctly considered by themselves, when I come to consider another Evasion of the *Atheists*, viz. That after the best Enquiry, he  
could

could find no Evidence for a G O D, and therefore could deserve neither Blame nor Punishment for being consistent with himself, in not paying any Respect to One whom he did not acknowledge for G O D.

HAVING considered certain Prejudices which might be supposed to have determined many of those who have espoused the Cause of *Atheism*, it cannot be amiss to put them in mind, That their Ancestors in Infidelity supported their Principles by Reasons which our Modern *Atheists* must acknowledge to be false, and therefore were certainly to blame in concluding against a G O D upon such Reasonings, as a further and more careful Examination into Nature would have discovered to be false. This should discourage the modern *Atheist* from being over-confident in his Scheme, lest further Discoveries in Knowledge should make his Cause less defensible, and himself culpable for determining hastily against a G O D, before a full and thorough Examination of the several Particulars on which he is went to

E 3 ground

ground his Infidelity. Which brings me to consider another Defect in trying any Question, *viz.*

*viz.* THAT we deserve Blame, if thro' Laziness we decline a thorough Examination before we take up our Opinions.

It cannot be doubted that there are in the world Half-Thinkers as well as Free-Thinkers; such as lead themselves into Mistakes, either because they want Abilities or Inclination to make a close Inquiry into Things. The great Lord Bacon places *Atheism* to the account of Short-Thinking, to a smattering in Philosophy. I know our modern Unbelievers would think themselves greatly injured if we charged them with any Want of Ability, and so would their Predecessors; for we find *Lucretius* perpetually Talking with such an Air of Assurance, as if he had actually wrested the Thunderbolt out of *Jupiter's* Hands; and yet he appears to have been a careless Examiner into Nature, when he accounted for the Production of Animals from insensible Matter



ter, by Worms arising from corrupted Carcasses ; which was the only Account he could give of Animal Productions, *viz.* of Life and Sensation \*; And yet our present *Atheists* must acknowledge, That he pronounced in this Case as a poor Philosopher, and before he had made a fair Examination: For I think Equivocal Generations are now generally given up. This therefore must pass with our Unbelievers for a Proof, That their Ancestors were in this Respect Short-Thinkers, and took up their Opinions upon insufficient Motives.

THERE is another Instance may be given, in which the *Atheists* have taken up their Opinions before their having made a due Examination; which is this: That nothing could act upon Matter but by Contact; from thence they inferred, there could be no real

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Being

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\* Quippe videre licet vivos existere vermes, stercore de retro putrorem cum sibi nata est, &c.

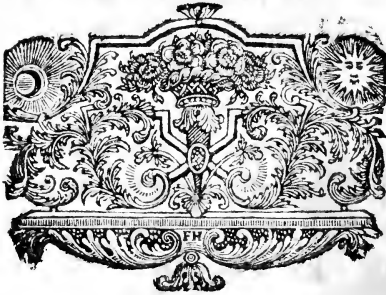
Being but Matter, or, which would be the same thing, that if there was any thing immaterial in Nature, it could have nothing to do with the Material World; because Matter could be acted upon in no other Way but by Contact, and then nothing but Matter could act upon Matter; and consequently, an Immaterial Being, which could not act in the Way of Contact, could have no Efficiency or Action upon Matter: But a farther Examination into the Laws by which Nature is govern'd, has convinced the World, that Bodies themselves can act upon one another at the greatest Distance from each other, and in another Way than that of *Contact*; and then it must be allowed, that the Argument built upon it was form'd before a due Examination had been made into the Nature of Things.

A VERY Learned Man and a great Thinker in our Time, who had asserted, " That we might as well conceive that GOD might have added a Thinking Quality to Matter, as  
 ' make

“ make a material Substance capable of  
“ Acting or being acted upon by an  
“ Immaterial one; because there could  
“ be no relation of Contact between  
“ such heterogeneous Substances;” was  
afterwards convinced, that there was  
another Way than that of Contact by  
which Bodies might be acted upon;  
as may be seen in his *Posthumous Let-  
ters*.

THE Use that I would make of  
this, is, That in a Matter of so great  
Concern as that of a GOD and Pro-  
vidence, the Unbeliever would suffer  
himself to be persuaded to re-examine  
his Conclusions, and see whether he  
has not been deceived in any of his  
Premises. he sees his Predecessors in  
Infidelity by a closer Inspection into  
Nature, stripp'd of some Part of that  
Armour in which they trusted *most* :  
And how can he be sure, that far-  
ther Enquiries into Nature may not  
still weaken his Cause? And if thro'  
Laziness he should decline such En-  
quiries, and his Opinions should at  
last prove false, his Neglect will be  
Criminal,

Criminal, and himself answerable for not taking due Information, before he took his Opinions *for Better, for Worse.*





## SERMON III.

I THESSALONIANS V. 21.

*Prove all Things : hold fast  
that which is good.*



HAVE already in discour-  
sing upon these Words  
shewn how we must pre-  
pare ourselves for a fair  
Examination of any Que-  
stion ; that we must, previously to  
our Inquiries, divest ourselves of every  
Prejudice and Passion, suffer no Inclina-  
tions, nor any Desires, but those of  
finding the Truth, to influence our  
Judgments : That we must be con-  
tented

mented in Questions of great Moment, to undergo the Fatigue of a full and careful Examination, and not thro' Laziness decline a thorough Search into the Arguments on both Sides, or draw our Conclusions before we have well considered our Premises.

I HAVE shewn that the Want of observing these Rules, doth often lead Men into Errors; and that the greatest and worst of all Errors, *viz.* Infidelity, would decrease in its Numbers, and lose a great Part of its Profelytes, whenever the World shall resolve to take up their Opinions from no other Principle but a sincere Love of the Truth. That the *Atheist* ought to lay his Hand upon his Heart, and declare if he can, That nothing but a Love for the Truth *had* determin'd him to exchange Religion for *Atheism*; and that it concerns him to be sincere in such a Declaration; because every other Reason for making the Exchange, would render him a Criminal for the Abuse of those Faculties of his Mind which

which would have directed him better.

I AM now to consider the other Excuse the *Atheist* is wont to make, That he has made the best Enquiry he can, without being able to discover any Evidence for a GOD.

BUT before I consider what those have to say for themselves, who pretend to have taken up *Atheism* after a serious Consideration of Things, I must insist upon this, as a Preliminary to the Debate, That the *Atheist* ought not to bring against us any such Objections, whose whole Strength arises merely from our Incapacity of conceiving the Nature and Operations of GOD; and for this plain Reason, Because 'tis agreed betwixt us, that we are finite or limited Beings; and must therefore have limited Understandings: But that the necessarily existing BEING, whoever He is, must be an Infinite and Eternal One, filling all Time and all Place. For there is no denying that Something must have been from Eternity; because if it were not so, Something

thing must have arisen absolutely from Nothing, or existed without having any Cause or Reason of its Existence : Which is plainly impossible. And yet 'tis certain, we can form no Notion of an eternal Duration already past ; an Argument therefore drawn from our Inability to conceive the Nature of a BEING that has actually existed from Eternity, or to comprehend its Manner of Operation, ought to have no Weight with *us*, nor be urg'd by the *Atheist*, because his Material God would be equally affected by it. If then he would justify himself, the only rational Inducements that can possibly be assign'd for exchanging Religion for *Atheism*, must be one or other of these :

EITHER for the avoiding some particular Difficulties, which he thinks may be proved to amount to Impossibilities in our Notion of a GOD, and which too his Material Scheme is not attended with :

OR else, because in general there are far less Difficulties to be gotten over  
in



in accounting for Appearances by the material Scheme, than there would be, should we once admit a GOD and Providence. These are the only justifiable Inducements that can be assigned for quitting Religion and embracing *Atheism*. And if the first of these should appear to be such as cannot be defended, and the other to be false in Fact; then it must be granted, that the *Atheist* has not taken up his Material Hypothesis after a fair Examination; and will be therefore highly culpable for not acting with that Ingenuity which becomes a Lover of Truth.

As to the first of these Inducements, I will shew, That it can never justify him in rejecting Religion.

1<sup>st</sup>, BECAUSE he can never prove that the particular Difficulties he complains of, do amount to an Impossibility or a Contradiction.

2<sup>dly</sup>, BECAUSE his Material Scheme which he takes up with for avoiding those Difficulties, is attended with infinitely greater ones than those which he finds

finds fault with in our Notion of a GOD.

AND then, as to the other Inducement, *viz.* That in general, there are fewer Difficulties in accounting for Things by a Material Principle; I will shew, that some of the most considerable *Phænomena* in Nature, cannot be accounted for by such a Principle only.

THE first Inducement for embracing *Atheism*, is not defensible, because the *Atheist* can never prove, That the particular Difficulties he complains of in our Notion of a GOD, do amount to an Impossibility or a Contradiction. The chief Difficulties which the *Atheist* is wont to charge upon our Idea of a GOD, are these:

1<sup>st</sup>, THAT we ascribe Immateriality to Him.

2<sup>dly</sup>, THAT we allow Him a Power of making Something out of Nothing: Both which are thought by him to be impossible, whenever they are supposed to be the Nature or the Operations of any Thing whatsoever. And

3<sup>dly</sup>, BECAUSE we make Goodness a Part of his Character; which they think

think to be sufficiently contradicted by the many Natural and Moral Evils that appear in his Workmanship.

1<sup>st</sup>, I AM to consider the Difficulties which are raised against a GOD from his Immateriality. If the *Atheist* would prove an immaterial or incorporeal Substance to be impossible or a Contradiction; in order to prove it such, he must undertake the Proof of this Proposition, "Whatever is immaterial, is Nothing." And therefore an immaterial Substance, a mere *Non Entity*. And he must prove this, one of these two Ways; either, That what we have no Idea of, can have no Existence in the Nature of Things; that we have no Idea of an immaterial Substance, therefore there can be no such Thing. Or else he must affirm, That the only substantial Thing in the World is Matter or Body; and therefore an incorporeal Substance would be the same thing as an incorporeal Body: Which must be a Contradiction in Terms.

THE Answer we give to the first of these Objections, is, That we cannot  
 if allow

allow them to speak Truth, if they affirm, That we have no Conception of an immaterial Substance. *2dly*, That if it were a Truth, it could not be a good Proof of the Impossibility of its Existence.

As to the first of these Objections, we are persuaded, That we as certainly know some of the Properties of immaterial, as we do those of material Substance; that Perception, Understanding, and a Power of beginning Motion, are as certainly the Properties of an immaterial Substance, as Solidity, and a Capacity of receiving and communicating Motion are Properties of Matter or Body. I know the *Atheist* would make all these Properties of immaterial Substance, to be only Qualities resulting from Matter. But as I shall afterwards have Occasion to shew, That this Supposition of the *Atheist* is Groundless and Unphilosophical, I will for the present take it for granted, what shall afterwards be proved, *viz.* That these are Properties of immaterial Substance; and as a Consequence of that, that we  
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are able to form some Notion of an Immaterial Substance \*. And as for the Substance itself of an Immaterial Being, it would be in vain and to no Purpose to argue, that we knew nothing of it, or could form no Idea about it; because the same Objection would equally affect Material or Corporeal Substance, of which we know as little as we do of the other.

B U T supposing it never so certain, That we could form no Idea of an Immaterial Being; this would not prove the Impossibility of its Existence; unless it was as certain, That the Faculties of a limited Nature, such as ours confessedly is, could reach to the utmost Extent of every Truth, and no Possibility of Being could escape the Searches of our Understanding. Whereas all the Knowledge we can pretend to have of the Existence of Things *without us*, must be derived to us thro' some or other of the Senses; for these

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are

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\* Vide Serm. VI, VII, VIII, IX.

are the only Carriers of all the Intelligence that the Mind receives concerning External Existences. And then which Way will the *Atheist* take to convince any Body, that our Five Senses are all the possible Ways of receiving Information concerning the Nature and Operations of External Objects. If we should consult our Reason in this Matter, that would probably tell us, That this particular Number of Informers was rather calculated for our present State (in which we find ourselves beset on all Sides with Corporeal Objects, some of which are good for us, and others would hurt us) than to give us an exact Insight into the Nature of Things. And that probably there may be many more Channells of Knowledge than those we are furnished with, and such as would have given us farther Views into Things than we are capable of in our present Condition. And therefore we should with just the same Reason and Justice pronounce against the Possibility of any Thing which is not the Object of one of our Five Senses,



the World which cannot be accounted for by the mere Mechanical Laws of Matter in Motion. For then he will have the same Motive for taking in some Being that is not a Material one, as he has for that of an Actual Eternity. For he takes Refuge in this, that he may avoid the Absurdity of Acknowledging, that any Thing can come into Being absolutely from Nothing, or without any Cause of its Being; and if he cannot make it very probable, that certain Powers I lately mentioned, may arise purely from Matter; he must then either acknowledge those Powers to have existed without any Cause or Reason of their Existence, or else with us he must admit Immaterial Substance.

THE other Argument against Immaterial Substance, *viz.* That there is nothing substantial in the World but Matter; is a shameful begging of the Question in Dispute, and taking for granted, what they know we constantly deny. For how would the *Atheist* prove this? Why thus *Spinoza* does



does it, he gives us a Definition of Substance, that " 'Tis Something Independent of every other Thing, and existing by a Necessity of Nature." From thence he inferrs, That since there can be but One Self-existent or Independent B E I N G, and Extension or Matter is confessed to be a substantial Being, therefore there can be no other Substance in the World besides Matter; and consequently, no such Thing as Immaterial Substance. But all this Proof amounts to no more than if he had only told us, there is Nothing but Matter, therefore no Immaterial Being. For he knows very well that we denied Matter to be the Self-existent Being; and therefore that if his Definition of Substance was a good one, that we should deny it belonged to Matter, or in this Sense of the Word, that Matter itself could be a Substantial Being, or indeed any Thing except the One Self-existent B E I N G: And then how will his Definition prove to us the impossibility of Immaterial Substance? Thus far then we can

go in Defence of a G O D, That his Immateriality cannot be proved to be impossible, or to imply a Contradiction.

2dly, A N O T H E R Difficulty the *Atheist* is wont to raise against our Notion of a G O D, is, The Power that we ascribe to Him of making Something from Nothing. Here the *Atheist* is wont to triumph, as if we had found out a Power that could not possibly have any other Existence than in our own Imaginations : Here they persuade themselves, that they are supported by Authority as well as Reason. The *Atheist* does seldom take Refuge in Authority, but in this particular Case he condescends to part with his beloved Singularity, and is contented for once to be found in a Croud, and to take Shelter in Numbers. But he might as well have kept out of them for any Advantage they will be to his Cause. For he supposes the Meaning of this *Axiom*, *Nothing can be made out of Nothing*, to be designed by all those who made use of it, not only against the Production

Production and Annihilation of any Species of Things; but also that there can be no other Productions but what are from pre-existent Matter; that every Thing must have a Material as well as an Efficient Cause of its Being. But here his Numbers forsake him, and he is reduced to those of his own Sect. For altho' it was generally believed before the Appearance of Christianity, That Matter was eternal and unmade, yet we are sure that all those, at least, who acknowledged our Souls to be incorporeal, did not derive them from pre-existent Matter: For thus *Plato* says \*,  
“ That if the Soul be ancients than  
“ the Body, then must the Things of  
“ the Soul also be ancients than those  
“ of the Body; and therefore Cogita-  
“ tion, and the several Species of it  
“ must be in the Order of Nature, not  
“ only before local Motion, but also  
“ before the Longitude, Latitude and  
“ Profundity of Bodies. ” From whence  
’tis

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\* *Plato de Legib. Lib. X. pag. 896.*

'tis evident, *Plato* could not possibly suppose the first Production of Souls to be derived from pre-existent Matter: Which is directly contrary to the Account which the *Atheist* gives of Things: For he must say, That the Things of the Soul, *viz.* Thought, &c. are posterior in the Order of Nature to the Formation of Things, being an Effect of Matter properly moved. And therefore supposing the Antients to have been unanimous in Denying the Production of any Substances *εἰς τὴν οὐσίαν*; yet since they did not derive all Beings from Matter, they will do the *Atheist's* Cause little Service; for if the *Atheist* will not allow their Authority, when they suppose that there must be some active Substance not derivable from Matter; neither are we obliged to allow it, when they suppose the Essences of all Things to be eternal.

BUT the *Atheist* may say, that their Agreement in denying a Power of producing Substances, will be of great Service to him, because a just Pursuit of that Principle must necessarily end in  
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the Denial of a G O D, as the advancing of two Independent Principles, is a setting up two Gods, which is the the same Thing with pulling down one.

A N D therefore if they had seen the Impossibility of two Self-existent Principles, they must have joyn'd with the *Atheist*, in deriving all Things from that which every Body's Senses assure them to be a substantial Being, *viz.* Body or Matter.

To this we answer, That all the Sects of Philosophy, excepting that of *Epicurus*, speak so fully their Sense as to the Necessity of some active Being distinct in its Original from Matter, in order to account for the Appearances of Things, that we may with much better Reason conclude, that if they had seen the Consequence of their Doctrine, they would rather have allowed of a *Creative*, than have given up to the *Atheist* an *Active* Power distinct from Matter.

As the *Stoick* is generally supposed to be the greatest *Materialist* of all the Sects, next to that of *Epicurus*, he will be

be the fittest Person to be interrogated upon this Occasion ; and I think it cannot be difficult to shew, that if the *Stoick* argued consistently, he must have been more easily persuaded to admit a Power of Creating Matter, than to part with his Active Power or Principle ; for so long as he supposed Matter or his *Materia prima* (which, according to him, was the Principle of all material Existences) to be a lazy and inactive Being, it would be impossible for him to give any Account of this Frame of Things, without an active Power to work upon the *Inertia* of Matter, or rouse it out of its Stupidity \*.

AND therefore 'tis reasonable to believe, that had he been reduced to this *Dilemma*, of either admitting a Power of Creation, or rejecting an  
Active

\* Dicunt, ut scis, Stoici nostri duo esse in rerum Naturâ, ex quibus omnia fiant, Causam & materiam : Materia jacet iners, res ad omnia parata, cessatura, si nemo moveat. Causa autem, id est, Ratio, materiam format, & quocunque vult versat, ex illâ varia opera producit. *Seneca* Epist. 65.

Active Principle, that he would have chosen the former, rather than have owned himself to be of a Sect of Philosophy that could give no Account concerning the Formation of Things. For it cannot be said, that the *Stoical* Active Principle might be a very volatile Matter, and what he called Matter, the grosser Part of it, to distinguish it from the former; because there is no other Difference between the finest and the grossest Matter, if Matter, as Matter, be inactive, than that the finest requires a less Force to put it into Motion: and then this Active Principle, instead of giving Motion to every Thing, must be moved itself by Something; and therefore could not be a Principle of Action, or account for the Formation of Things.

BUT however that be, if we consider the Reasons by which he and the rest of the Philosophers were determined in rejecting the Creative Power, they will appear to be so weak and inconclusive, that their Authority in this particular Point ought to have little Weight

Weight with us; they either argued from Natural Generations, or Artificial Productions. Because we do not now see Nature producing any Substances, but only different Modes of Being, therefore the Author of Nature never could: Because all Works of Art are only the Management of pre-existent Matter, and fitting it for particular Uses, therefore G O D, as well as every other Artist, must have a Subject prepared to his Hands to work upon. But this Way of Reasoning will never prove what ought to be proved, *viz.* That it is impossible in the Nature of the Thing, that there should be any such Power. For this Power of making Something out of Nothing, or of creating a Substance, is no more than the bringing Something into Being, which before had no manner of Existence; but this is not to affirm, That a Thing may be, and not be at the same Time; which is a Contradiction, and therefore the Object of no Power whatsoever; but only that Something, which once had no Being at all, may  
be



be brought into Being. If we, who work only upon pre-existent Matter, cannot conceive how this should be done; this can be no good Argument against the Possibility of its being done by an Infinite Power; for there will always be something in such an Object as the Infinite BEING, that will more than fill our finite Capacities.

AND *Spinoza* himself confesses as much, when he tells us, \* “ That he  
 “ cannot understand the Manner how  
 “ many Things are brought about by  
 “ his Self-existent BEING, such as the  
 “ Cohæſion of the Parts of Matter,  
 “ and the Connexion which particu-  
 “ lar Beings have with each other.

And

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\* Seriem rerum singularium mutabilium impossibile foret humanæ imbecillitati assequi, cum propter earum omnem numerum superantem multitudinem, tum propter infinitas circumstantias, in unâ & eâdem re, quarum unaquæque potest esse causa ut res existat aut non existat. *Tract. de Emend. Intellect.* p. 388.

Cognoscere quomodo partes nature revera cohereant, & quomodo unaquæque pars cum suo toto conveniat, id me ignorare dixi in antecedenti meâ Epistolâ, quia ad hoc cognoscendum requiretur totam naturam omnesque ejus partes cognoscere. p. 439.

“ And yet he is fully persuaded, that  
 “ there is a Chain and Connexion of  
 “ particular Beings; that there is such  
 “ a Thing as the Cohæſion of the  
 “ Parts of the Body, and an Union of  
 “ all the Parts with the whole.” And  
 therefore, in Purſuance of the ſame  
 Way of Reasoning, Altho’ we cannot  
 tell how GOD could make all Things  
 out of Nothing, our Ignorance will  
 never prove the Thing to be impos-  
 ſible, no more than *Spinoſa’s* Ignorance  
 of the Cauſe of Cohæſion in the Parts  
 of Matter, will prove that there can  
 be no ſuch Thing.

THE Neceſſity of admitting a Crea-  
 tive Power, will appear ſtill ſtronger,  
 when we come to ſhew the Abſurdities  
 which the *Materialiſt* for Want of ſuch  
 a Power is reduced to. But

3<sup>dly</sup>, ANOTHER Impoſſibility the  
*Atheiſt* is wont to charge upon our  
 Notion of a GOD, is on account of  
 our aſcribing Goodneſs to Him, which  
 they ſay, is plainly contradicted by the  
 many Marks and Tokens of Natural  
 and Moral Evil which appear in that  
 Part

Part of his Workmanship which we are best acquainted with. Before the *Atheist* can prove that these could not possibly proceed from a Good BEING, it will be incumbent on him to shew, That 'tis inconsistent with the Nature of Goodness to make Beings with different Degrees of Perfection. If he cannot do that, then certainly every Degree of Imperfection makes an Abatement of the Happiness of the Creature; and such an Abatement constitutes what we call Natural or Physical Evil. Thus for Instance, 'Tis an Imperfection in us Men that we want a perfect Knowledge of our own Frame and Constitution; such a Knowledge, I mean, as would enable us to find out (antecedently to the tedious Way of Trial and Experience) what would be good for us, and what would be prejudicial or hurtful to us. To supply the Want of this Knowledge, GOD has affix'd the Idea of Pain to our Natures, which is designed to give us Warning of any Thing that might hurt us. Pain is

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acknowledged to be a real Evil, and yet if we were not admonished by it to avoid such Things as would be hurtful to us, what thro' Inadvertence and Ignorance of our own Frame, we should never know when it was out of Order, nor endeavour to set it aright, till it was too late. If therefore it be not repugnant to the Idea of Goodness to create a Being, with such a limited Knowledge; neither could it be inconsistent with the same Goodness to make him capable of receiving painful Ideas, when such a Constitution was fitted for the Use and Benefit of such a Creature.

AND thus for Moral Evil, the *Atheist* can never shew its Existence to be a Contradiction to the Idea of Goodness, till he can fully satisfy us, that there can be no such thing as a Creature endued with a Power over its own Actions; because if that is possible, which the *Atheist* cannot disprove, such a Creature may most certainly make an ill Use of that Power, and involve itself in Moral Evil.

BUT

BUT I shall decline saying any more upon this Head of Natural and Moral Evil, because this Subject has been already Handled by the Learned Person who lately Preached these Lectures; to whom the Reader is referred for farther Satisfaction.







# SERMON IV.

I THESSALONIANS V. 21.

*Prove all Things : hold fast  
that which is good.*



HAVING in the preceding Discourse shewn that the *Atheist* cannot prove a Contradiction upon our Notion of a GOD; and yet sure if there was a *real* Contradiction in it, he might help others to a Sight of it as well as himself; I proceed to consider the Difficulties attending this Scheme, by which he will appear to be a very partial Enquirer after Truth, as he

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might

might have seen much greater Difficulties in his Material Scheme, than those which he makes Objections against the Religious one; that under the Colour of avoiding the three Difficulties of an Immaterial, Omnipotent, and Good G O D, he is fore'd to take Refuge in such Explications of Things as are evidently false and impossible; and is therefore inexcusable in making those Difficulties a Pretence for rejecting Religion.

SPINOSA is the only Person among the modern *Atheists*, that has pretended to give us a regular Scheme of *Atheism*; and therefore I cannot act unfairly in making him the Representative of their Party, and in proving the Weakness and Absurdities of the *Atheistick* Scheme, by shewing the Faults of his: tho' I shall not so entirely confine myself to the Examination of his Scheme, as not to shew occasionally, that every other Scheme that leaves out the Religious Notion of a G O D, will be liable to great Absurdities. And if we examine the Hypothesis which

*Spinoza*



*Spinoza* has substituted as a Remedy to the above-mentioned Difficulties, I am fully persuaded his Remedy will appear to all indifferent Persons to be much worse than the Disease he complains of.

HE supposes with us, “ That Some-  
 “ thing must have existed from all  
 “ Eternity, without having any other  
 “ Cause of its Existence than the abso-  
 “ lute Necessity of its own Nature :”  
 Thus far we are agreed. He further  
 supposes, “ That there is Nothing in  
 “ Nature, that is, no Substance or *real*  
 “ Being, besides this One Necessarily  
 “ Existent Being; and since the Ex-  
 “ istence of Material Substance is most  
 “ evident, that this must be the One  
 “ Self-existent BEING, and all the va-  
 “ riety of Beings in the World, no-  
 “ thing but different Modifications of  
 “ this One Material Substance. He sup-  
 “ poses this Substance to be Infinite  
 “ or Immenſe, and to have an infinite  
 “ Number of Attributes, two of which  
 “ he supposes to be Thought and Ex-  
 “ tension; he then affirms in Conſe-  
 G 4 “ quence

“ quence of this, That all Bodies  
 “ are Modifications of this One Sub-  
 “ stance, considered as *extended*; as all  
 “ Souls or Thinking Beings are the  
 “ Modifications of this One Substance  
 “ considered under the Notion of  
 “ *Thought*. So that GOD, the Necessari-  
 “ ly Existent BEING, and endued with  
 “ infinite Perfections, is the Cause of  
 “ all Things that exist, tho’ at the same  
 “ time He himself differs not really  
 “ from those Things that exist; they  
 “ being all of them Consubstantial with  
 “ him, and not so much as personally  
 “ differing from Him. He is at the  
 “ same time Agent and Patient, Cause  
 “ and Effect, and every Thing He pro-  
 “ duces, is only practising upon *Him-*  
 “ *self*; and generating a new Appear-  
 “ ance of *Himself*. ”

THIS is the extraordinary Scheme  
 that *Spinoza* has thought fit to erect, in  
 order to get himself clear of the Three  
 above-mentioned Difficulties. From this  
 Account of his System ’tis evident, that  
 tho’ *Spinoza* and we do differ as to  
 the Subject of the Self-existent Nature;  
 yet,

yet, as to certain Characters or Properties of it, we are both agreed; such as,

*1<sup>st</sup>*, THE Unity or Simplicity of the Self-existent BEING. And *2<sup>dly</sup>*, Its Immutability. For whatever Diversity, whatever Changes there may seem to be in the Nature of Things, yet all this does seem to pass with him for nothing; so long as 'tis but one and the same Numerical BEING appearing in different Dresses: As a Man suffers no real Change by assuming different Characters, or by personating any State or Condition of Life different from his own: Which he thinks sufficient to secure both the Unity and Immutability of his Self-existent BEING. Thus far then being agreed, we are to enquire, How far he has mended the Religious Scheme by rejecting Immaterial Substance; and whether his Material Scheme can possibly answer the above-mentioned Characters.

THE insuperable Difficulties which thinking Men found in reconciling these Attributes with material Extension, inclin'd

clin'd them to admit, altho' their Senses could give them no Information concerning the Existence of any such B E I N G, that there might be in Nature some more perfect Manner of Existence than the Material one; and this they called Immaterial Substance. *Spinoza* himself was well aware of the Difficulties that would disturb his Material Scheme, and therefore found it necessary to give us a new Notion of Matter, and different from what the World had hitherto suspected of it. Matter had always been thought capable of Division into numberless Parts; each of which Parts might exist separately from the whole; and consequently, if Matter was the Self-existent Being, according to the common Notion the World had of it, there must have been as many Self-existent Beings as there are Parts into which Matter is divisible. But *Spinoza* was sensible that the B E I N G which was Necessarily Existent, could be but *One*; he therefore lays it down as the Foundation of his Undertaking, " That  
 " there is no more than One Material  
 " Substance

“ Substance in the World; that what  
“ every Body before him had call'd di-  
“ stinct Substances, were to be no long-  
“ er such. ” And tho' the several Parts  
of Matter are every Day seen to be  
separated from each other without lo-  
sing their Existence, as when the Parts  
of Wood are divided from each other  
into Smoke and Ashes; and tho' the  
separate Existence of Individuals, and of  
the several Concretions of Matter look  
never so much like distinct Substances;  
yet they shall all pass with *Spinoza* for  
nothing more than different Modes of  
one and the same Being.

BUT if we know any thing at all,  
we know this to be false and impossi-  
ble: if we have any distinct Ideas, and  
if such distinct Ideas will at all prove a  
real Distinction or Difference in Things  
existing without us, we are as certain  
as we can be of any Thing, that there  
must be more than one Material Sub-  
stance; as many as there are or can be  
of separate, material Existences, and  
those as many as the Divisions which  
Matter is capable of receiving. And  
therefore

therefore *Spinoza* by substituting Matter in the Room of Immaterial Substance, has avoided a Difficulty, and taken up with an Impossibility. For let there be never so much Difficulty in conceiving Immaterial Substance, yet when we find ourselves reduced to this *Dilemma*, of either admitting it for true, or else acknowledging Matter to be a Simple Being, the Choice which Side to take, cannot be long in making: For all that any one can say against Immaterial Substance, is only this; That his Senses give him no Account of any such Existences; but as for Matter or the Material World, he sees nothing plainer than that this is a Compound Being, each of whose Parts may exist separately; and therefore can never be made consistent with that Unity and Simplicity which are necessary Consequences of that *Oneness* of Substance which *Spinoza* ascribes to the Necessarily Existing BEING. The only Subterfuge *Spinoza* has, and a mere Subterfuge it is, is this; That he takes it for granted, there is no such Thing as a *Vacuum*; and

and therefore that there can be no real Separation of one Part of Matter from another.

I N the first place, This is taking for granted, and Building his whole Scheme upon what Sir *Isaac Newton*, a much better Philosopher than himself, has since his Time given the World strong Reasons for believing to be false, *viz.* *That there are no Spaces void of Matter.* But supposing there is no such Thing as a *Vacuum*; yet those who maintain'd the Infinity of Matter, or that all Space was filled with Matter, did acknowledge, that the Parts of Matter were really divisible and separable from each other; and consequently did not think void Spaces necessary in making a Separation of one particular Part of Matter from another, however necessary they might be to make a total Separation from all Matter in general: For who will not say, that two Persons are as really separated from one another, tho' the Space or Distance that separates them should be filled with other Persons, as if it were taken up by any Thing

Thing else? and therefore one Part of Matter may be really divided from another, altho' the Space between those two Parts of Matter should be filled up by other Matter.

INDEED, *Spinoza* himself seems to mistrust the Strength of this Argument, and therefore thinks it best to provide himself a Retreat in case he were beaten out of it, by saying, That he does not know whether he attributes any thing to GOD, that is unworthy of him, if he should grant that He was divisible \*. And all the Reason he gives why Divisibility should be an Imperfection in GOD, is, "Because if He is divisible, He is divided by *Himself*, and not by any External Cause." But this Answer leaves the Difficulty in all its Strength: For let the Divisibility be caused by what it will, still the Difficulty remains, how a partable and separable

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\* Se nescire cur divinâ Naturâ indigna esset, si dicatur Divisibilis. in the latter End of the Scholion on Prop. 15. Part 1.



separable Nature, can be a Simple or Uncompounded BEING. Till the *Materialist* can satisfy us in that Point, we must beg Leave to affirm, That he is no fair Examiner; that he could not be determined by the greater Evidence, when he left Religion to free himself from the Belief of Immaterial Substance, because at the same time he saw himself under a Necessity of swallowing an Article of Belief of much harder Digestion; I mean, that Divisibility is irreconcilable with Unity.

2dly, ANOTHER remarkable Difficulty the *Atheist* brings upon himself, is, To make a sufficient Provision for the Immutability of his Self-existent BEING, while he makes Matter to be the Subject of it. We are fully persuaded that we know the Difference between a Being that always continues the same, and a Being that is perpetually changing the Manner of its Existence; that a Being who is what it is by a Necessity of Nature, cannot be subject to Change or Corruption: we are also well assured that Material Beings are so far from  
being

being without Variation or *Shadow of Turning*, that they are subject to all manner of Alterations, that they are successively putting on new Modes of Being, acquiring some Forms that they had not before, and losing others that they had.

How much soever our modern *Atheist* may think fit to laugh at the *Epicureans*, yet I think, in this Respect, they have taken better Care of their Gods than he has done. The *Epicureans* saw that their Material Gods could never be permanent Beings, if they were in the Way of their Atoms; that their Frame would be in continual Danger of being disordered, if not destroyed by their continual IncurSIONS: and therefore they wisely removed them out of their numberless Worlds, where the Atoms were continually jostling each other, and placed them in Security in their Intramundan Spaces: But our modern *Atheist* has taken no such Care of his God, for he has left him in all the Hurry and Confusion of Things, continually altering and changing his State and Condition,

Condition, sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse; he is the Subject of all the Generations, and all the Corruptions that are seen in the World. For, as what others would call particular Beings or Substances, are with *Spinoza* only Modes of the same One Substance GOD; so it must be GOD that is the Subject of all the Changes; and yet *Cotta* in *Tully de Natura Deorum*, speaks of it as an undoubted *Axiom* in *Philosophy*, *Si ortus est Deorum, interitus sit necesse est.* p. 56.

MUTABILITY has so plain a Mark of Imperfection upon it, and is so inconsistent with necessary Existence, that it gives *Spinoza* no small Trouble to clear his Necessary Being from any such Imputation; and the only Way he could think of, was this: That tho' the Manner of Being was always changing, yet the Substance or Subject of those Changes always continued the same. But this Plea will never excuse his Self-existent Being from Variableness and Change, whenever we appeal to any of the Ancients who have made use of

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these

these Words: For they all maintained, as much as *Spinoza*, the Immutability of the Substance of Body; they supposed that the Substance of Matter was never created or annihilated, but always continued the same; and yet believed it a BEING that was ἀλλοίωσις & τροπὴς, because of its so often altering the Manner of its Existence.

THE *Proteus* of the Ancients, tho' the Emblem of the greatest Inconstancy, would be as immutable a God, with all the different Forms he threw himself into, as *Spinoza's* Self-existent Being. For 'twas always the self-same Being, tho' sometimes in one Shape, sometimes in another. And therefore to deny the Mutability of any Being merely because the Substance remains the same, is to give a new Signification to the Word, and different from what was ever given before. For in every Mutable Being 'twas always understood, that the Substance remained what it was, only the Mode of its Existence was altered; otherwise there would be no Difference between the  
Change

Change and the Annihilation of a Being ; and yet the Poets as well as Philosophers, the fabulous *Metamorphoses* of *Ovid*, as well as the real Changes and Corruptions, as explained by the Philosophers, have always supposed a Difference between these two Ideas. And therefore *Spinosa's* Argument will only prove the Immortality, not the Immutability of his Self-existent Being.

'TIS plain from *Plutarch*, That he thought a Being might be immortal, and yet an imperfect and mutable Being : For thus he expresses himself in his Treatise against the *Stoicks*, where he is ridiculing the Stoical Notion of *Jupiter*, into whom the *Stoicks* supposed all other Beings, Gods as well as Men, to be transformed at the Conflagration ;  
 “ *Chrysippus*, says he, and *Cleanthes*,  
 “ when they had filled the whole  
 “ World with what they called Gods,  
 “ they took no Care of securing any  
 “ of them from Corruption but *Jupiter*  
 “ only, in whom all the rest of the  
 “ Gods were lost. And then he makes this Remark, “ That his destroying of  
 H 2 “ them,

“ them was no better a Proof of his  
 “ own Immutability than it was of  
 “ theirs. For, says he, it is no more  
 “ an Argument of Weakness and Mu-  
 “ tability in the Gods, that they are  
 “ changed and *corrupted* into *Jupiter*,  
 “ than it is in *Jupiter* into whom they  
 “ are changed \*.”

BESIDES, this Argument of the  
*Spinolists* cannot be a good one, be-  
 cause it would prove too much: for  
 it would prove not only that the  
 Self-existent BEING was not a Mutable  
 BEING, but also that there could be no  
 such Thing as a Mutable Being in the  
 World. For if the Self-existent BEING  
 could be an Immutable one amidst all  
 the

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\* Plutarch. Περὶ τῆς κοινῶν ἐπινοῶν ὁμοίας τοῦ  
 Στωϊκῆς. — Sect. 1000.

Χρυσίπαϑ ἢ Κλεάνθης ἐμπετηκότες — τῷ λόγῳ  
 θεῶν τὸν ἕρανδον — εἰδέναι τῆς τοσούτου ἀφθαρτον εἶδὲ  
 αἰδίου ἀπολελοίπασι, πλὴν μόνου τῷ Διὶ εἰς ὃν πάν-  
 τας καταναλίσκασι τοῦ ἄλλου, ὥστε καὶ τέτω τὸ φθερᾶν  
 προσεῖναι τῷ φθερᾶς μὴ ἐπικέσεσθαι. ἀσθενεῖ γὰρ ἵνῃ  
 καὶ τὸ μεταβάλλον εἰς ἕτερον φθερᾶται, καὶ τὸ τοῖς ἄλλοις  
 εἰς ἑαυτὸ — φθερᾶσθαι τρερόμενον σώζεται.

the Changes He went thro', only because his Substance was not destroyed but remained the same; then what should hinder Man from being an Immutable Being, altho' he should change his Opinions, Inclinations and Purposes every Day, or, if you will, every Hour of the Day? for amidst all these Changes, he is still the same Person or personal Being. And therefore by the Reasoning of the *Spino- lists*, he too would be a most steady Being, tho' his Thoughts and Purposes were unsteady enough.

THESE Difficulties, or rather Impossibilities, must affect every Scheme that the *Atheist* can raise upon the Foot of a Material God. And now I will leave it with every Thoughtful Person, whether the *Atheist* could be moved by any rational Conviction, when he took Refuge in the Material Hypothesis, to avoid the Difficulty of conceiving an Immaterial Existence; and whether he has not acted the same foolish Part, which

*Cotta* charged upon *Epicurus* in another Case \*. But,

2dly, I AM now to consider how he has mended the Matter by rejecting a Power of making Something from Nothing. As he allows no such Power, he is under a Necessity of deriving all the Powers of Nature from the Substance of Matter, as from an *Emanative* Cause, producing them by acting upon itself; and thus Thought, Sense, and Life, as well as Material Extension, must all be drawn out of the Bowels of this simple Substance of Matter.

As there are evidently Thinking, as well as Unthinking Beings in the World; the Difficulty is, how to derive both of them from one single Principle. *Spinoza* and we are agreed, That there is but One Principle of all Things: we account for it, by supposing an Omnipotent, Substantial Intelligence to have given Being to Matter, not as an Emanative

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\* Graviorem plagam recipiebat, ut leviozem repelleret, p. 58. de Nat. Deorum. *Darby's Edit.*



native Cause, by producing it out of its own Substance; for we do not see how material Extension should flow from the Substance of a Thoughtful Being, any more than how Thought should arise from Matter; but that GOD gave a Being to Matter from *Nothing*, or when it had no manner of Existence previously to the Exercise of this Power of his.

THE *Atheist*, that he may avoid ascribing this Power of producing Substances, or of making Something from Nothing, which he thinks to be the Object of no Power whatever, is forced to have recourse to Material Substance as the only Source from whence must arise both Thought and Extension, all the Variety of Corporeal Beings, all their Powers and Qualities, and also all the Powers of Mind, such as those of Perception and Intelligence. A hard Task this is for him to perform; and yet hard as it is, he must go thro' with it, if he will not with us admit a Power of Creation.

WE agree to what the Author of the *Characteristicks* has said concerning the Production of either of these Substances, (to wit, Extended and Thinking) out of the other, when he says \*,  
 “ That the poor Dregs of sorry Mat-  
 “ ter, can no more be made out of  
 “ the simple, pure Substance of imma-  
 “ terial Thought, than the high Spi-  
 “ rits of Thought or Reason can be  
 “ extracted from the gross Substance  
 “ of heavy Matter.” We joyn, I say,  
 with him in this Reasoning, and do  
 therefore assert the Necessity of having  
 Recourse to a Creative Power; for since  
 neither Material Substance can flow  
 from Immaterial, nor Immaterial Think-  
 ing Substance from Material in the Way  
 of *Emanation*; there must either be two  
 Independent Principles from whence we  
 may draw out these two different Kinds  
 of Being; or else one of them must  
 necessarily be produced from Nothing.  
 If the *Atheist* will affirm, That Thought  
 and

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\* Vol. II. p. 266, 297

and Extension may arise from the same Substance; the Absurdities he will be reduced to, are these; he must say, That *Sense* and *Insensibility* are the Attributes of the same Simple Substance of GOD; and yet he nor no Man alive can tell how such incompatible Attributes could be identified, so as to constitute one Simple Substance; that is, how the same simple Substance could be both sensible and insensible, thoughtful and thoughtless.

To avoid this Absurdity, he must then say, That there is no real Difference between Thought and Extension; he must fall in with that absurd Notion of Mr. *Hobbs*, "That all Matter  
" is furnished with actual Sensation and  
" Thought; altho' only Matter Orga-  
" nized and in Life, can make Evidence  
" of its Perceptions." And *Spinoza* seems to be under a Necessity of acknowledging this; because he makes Thought and Extension to be Two Attributes of his One Substance, and says, "That  
" there is no real Difference between  
" the Attributes and the Substance."

For

For if there be no real Difference between the Attributes and the Substance, there can be none between the Attributes themselves, to wit, between Thought and Extension, according to that known Rule, That those Things which agree in a third, must agree among themselves.

THUS we see *Spinosa* in avoiding the Difficulty of conceiving Something made out of Nothing, reduced to the Necessity of making no real Difference between Thought and material Extension, tho' every Body else sees a manifest Difference between them. Whatever Difficulty then there may be in conceiving it possible that Something should be made from Nothing; yet I hope there is a great deal of Difference between our *not conceiving* the Possibility of a Thing, and the *conceiving it impossible* to be: That Thought and Extension should be really the same Thing, we see, if we see any thing, to be impossible; because our Ideas of 'em are evidently the Ideas of different Things\*,  
and

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\* Vide Serm. VIII.

and we must despair of ever knowing that one Thing is not another, if such Marks of Distinction in our Ideas will not prove a Difference in the Things themselves.

2<sup>dly</sup>, T H E R E is another Absurdity which *Spinoza* is led into by rejecting the Creative Power, which is this: He must make his Self-existent Being the Subject of all the contradictory Inclinations and Passions which are met with in Mankind; for if there be no Creative Power, there will be no other Way in accounting for the Existence of Things, but by deriving them from the Substance of the Self-existent BEING: But all such Derivations can be nothing but so many different Modes, as himself confesses, of the Divine Substance; and consequently, the Souls of Men, all their Thoughts and Passions, will be only different Modes of the Divine BEING. And therefore it will be G O D, and not the Man (for he is only a Mode of the Divine BEING) that thinks, affirms or denies, loves or hates, so often as Man seems to do  
either

either. For it is an undisputed *Axiom* in *Philosophy*, That whenever we affirm of any Thing, That it is an Agent or a Patient, we mean, that the Substance, and not the Accidents, does or suffers this or that; as when we say, Iron is hard, or Wax soft; we mean not to say, that the Accident of Hardness is hard, or of Softness is soft, for this would be ridiculous; but that the Substance or Essence which constitutes these Bodies is hard or soft: so when we say that a Man thinks of any Thing, affirms or denies, loves or hates any Thing; we do not mean, that the Thoughts themselves (which are only Accidents or Modes of the Soul) but the Man himself or his Soul thinks, affirms or denies, loves or hates. From thence it must follow, that the Souls of Men, being according to *Spinoza's* Scheme, Modifications of the Divine Substance, we must not (if we would speak properly) say; that the Man affirms or denies, loves or hates; but that GOD loves or hates, affirms or denies, as often as Men do so: And as one Man at  
the

the same Time, and in the same Respects, affirms what another denies, and loves what another hates. According to this Account of Things, G O D must at the same Time, and in the same Respect affirm, and not affirm or deny, love, and not love or hate, which are palpable Contradictions; and if we know any thing at all, cannot possibly belong to any Being. Yet these, or as great Absurdities will stick fast to all the Deniers of Creative Power.

F O R they must either affirm, with *Spinoza*, That all the several Beings in the World are only Modes of the Necessarily-existent B E I N G , which must end in the Absurdity I have now mentioned, of making all the contradictory Volitions and Passions of Men to be the Affections of one and the same Being: Or if they affirm these Modes of *Spinoza* to be real and substantial Beings; they must admit what is equally absurd, an infinite Number of Necessarily-existent Beings, as many as there are real Beings in the World: Or else they must with us, allow, how difficult soever it  
may

may be to conceive, that there must be somewhere or other a Power of making Substances or real Beings, which is the same thing with what we call the Creative Power. For nothing can be plainer, than that all particular Beings (supposing them to be real or substantial Beings) must exist by a Necessity of Nature, if there be no such Thing in the World as a Power of making real Existences.

SPINOSA was well aware of this Consequence, and therefore as he was neither willing to admit a Power of Creation, nor a Plurality of Necessarily-existent Beings, he could see no other Way of extricating himself out of this Difficulty, but by advancing this new Notion, “ That what the World had  
 “ before him called real Beings, was no-  
 “ thing more than different Modes of  
 “ Being.” And tho’ Mr. Bayle seems to think the *Chinese* Notion, which makes all particular Souls to be so many Self-existent Beings, or *Democritus* and *Epicurus*’s infinite Number of Self-existent Atoms, to be a more ra-  
 tional



tional Account of Things, than that which makes all particular Beings to be only Modes of Being; yet thus far I think sufficiently clear, That the *Atheist* acts a most foolish Part when he takes Refuge in either of these, to excuse himself from admitting a Power of Creation.

F O R as to a Plurality of Self-existent Beings, nothing can be more absurd than to make all the Diversity of Beings, with different Degrees of Power, to be all Necessarily-existent. The Reason which induced the *Chinese* to suppose a great Number of Self-existent Souls with *different* Powers, was, That they might the better account for their animating *different and unequal* Portions of Matter; and the Reason why the *Epicureans* supposed their Self-existent Atoms to be of different Figures, was, That they might give a more probable Account of the *different* Combinations of Material Beings. But if this Inequality of Souls, and the Different Figures of Atoms, was really necessary in accounting for the Diversity of Beings in the World, it will be necessary

fary to look farther, and enquire for the Cause of this Difference in the *Chinese* and *Epicurean* Principles: For if the Inequality in the several Portions of Matter, was a good Reason for supposing an Inequality in the Self-existent Principles, what Reason can they give why we should not as well look out for the Cause of the Inequality of their Principles, as well as they provide a Cause of the different and unequal Combinations of Bodies? They could, I say, have no more Reason for supposing the Difference of their Principles to have arisen from the Necessity of their Natures, than that the different Combinations of Matter, should have arisen from such a Necessity; which latter they do not suppose. And therefore, if they would argue consistently with themselves, they must acknowledge some external Cause of the Difference that is supposed to be in their Principles; and this Cause must be some One *Simple* BEING, not many Beings; because all Diversity of Being does plainly suppose a Reason of  
its

its being what it is, extrinſical to the Nature of the Being, to wit, that it muſt have ſome external Cauſe, that makes it to be what it is, or different from any Thing elſe.

AND thus I have ſhewn that the *Atheiſt* does not act like a fair Examiner, when he rejects a G O D with a Power of Creation; becauſe he either takes up with a Number of Self-exiſtent Beings of unequal Forces, or elſe, with *Spinoſa*, he makes the Self-exiſtent B E I N G to be every Thing, in the ſtrict-eſt and propereſt Senſe of the Words; which are ſuch Abſurdities, that we may without Breach of Charity, deny ſuch Perſons to be impartial Searchers after Truth.







# SERMON V.

I THESSALONIANS V. 21.

*Prove all Things : hold fast  
that which is good.*



HAVE already shewn that the *Atheist* cannot be a fair Examiner, when he quits Religion for the avoiding some Difficulties in the Religious Scheme ; because he must swallow much greater, if he will account for the Appearances of Things, and abide by his Material one. As to two of the Difficulties which he is wont to complain of, *viz.* The Immateriality

teriality of GOD, and his Power of Creation, or of making Something from Nothing, we have already seen, that if he will not admit these, he must admit some Things that are much harder of Belief, and that therefore he cannot be justified by any fair and candid Reasoner in rejecting Religion, for the Sake of these Difficulties.

I AM now to consider one other Difficulty, which he makes in Excuse for not believing a GOD, which is, That it would oblige him to believe that Evil may be reconciled with the supposal of a Good BEING; and am to shew, That all the Ways he can possibly take to account for the real State of Good and Evil upon the Foot of *Atheism*, are impossible to be true; and therefore that he is an unfair Examiner in rejecting Religion for the Sake of this Difficulty. I will begin with that Account *Spinoza* is able to give of this *Phenomenon*, consistently with his System of the World, which is built upon a single Principle, from whence he is to draw both Good and Evil.

IF there was in the World nothing but Natural and Moral Good, or nothing but Natural and Moral Evil, there would be no Difficulty in deriving either of them from one single Principle; but as there is an evident Mixture of both in the World, *Spinoza* judg'd it to be impossible that such a Mixture should arise from a good Principles, and therefore erects a new System with a Material God at the Head of it, that should be neither Good nor Evil, but in its own Nature indifferent to both: Such a Being then acting necessarily according to its Nature, which Nature is supposed to be perfectly indifferent as to Good and Evil, and acting by an infinite Force or Power, must produce all the Possibilities of Being. For *Spinoza* says \*, *Ex Necessitate Divinae Naturae infinita infinitis modis, hoc est, omnia quae sub intellectum infinitum cadere possunt, sequi debent.* And therefore, since Errors and Crimes, Grief and Pain, are as real Modifications of Being, as Truth and

I 3                      Virtue,

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\* Prop. XVI.

Virtue, Pleasure and Happiness ; consequently one as well as the other must have a Place in the Universe. For this Principle being in its own Nature indifferent to either what we call Good or Evil, and producing all that is possible to be produced, it must of course produce Evil as well as Good.

WE will now see whether 'twas worth *Spinoza's* while to quit Religion in order to get rid of that difficult Question, If a Good GOD, *πρόθεν τὰ κακά.* I would grant *Spinoza*, that his Infinite BEING should produce all the Possibilities of Being ; but then I can never grant, that Contradictions are Possibilities of Being. And yet surely it looks as much like a Contradiction as can be, to draw out of the same Simple, Uncompounded Substance both Wisdom and Folly, Virtue and Vice, Happiness and Misery ; and yet if this Account could be true, these must all flow from the Essence of the Self-existent BEING.

HOMER has shewn much better Sense, when he accounted for the Goods  
and



and Evils of this Life by placing two Tuns near the Throne of *Jupiter*, one filled with good Things, the other with Evils, and that Goods and Evils came from Heaven, as *Jupiter* poured out of either of them; if he poured out of both at the same Time, then there was upon Earth an Appearance of both Good and Evil, or a Mixture of both. He saw that if he had made both Happiness and Misery to be drawn out of the same Vessel, that it would have had too much of the Air of Incredible, even for a Poem; that it would have been as bad as if he should have pretended to fetch both *salt Water and fresh* from the same Spring or Fountain, which was in St. James's Time a proverbial Saying by which they used to express an Impossibility. Had *Spinosa* lived in those Days, and broached this Doctrine, his God might have been in Danger of becoming a proverbial Expression for any Thing that was thought impossible. For to suppose a Simple Being to be neither Good nor Bad, but a Mixture of both, is supposing what is al-

together unintelligible. The *Spinofist* must allow a *real* Difference between Physical Good and Physical Evil, Pleasure and Pain, Happiness and Misery: And yet if his Account of Things were true, these must be so like one another, and so much of the same Nature, as to come indifferently from the same Un-compounded Substance.

BUT this is not all, here is not only a Difficulty of giving Birth to both Good and Evil from such a single Principle, but also when that is done, of freeing such a Principle from the Contradiction of being at the same Time happy and miserable, in Joy and in Grief, as often as Men or any other Beings are in these Circumstances, which is always the Case of some or other of them. *Tully* \* ridicules a Notion of *Pythagoras*, which made the Souls of Men to be Parts of the Divine BEING; because GOD must in such Case be often miserable; but this was not to be reconcil'd with his supposed Happiness.

Happinefs. *Nam Pythagoras qui censuit Deum animum esse per Naturam rerum omnem intentum & commeantem, ex quo nostri animi carperentur, non vidit distractione humanorum animorum discerpi & dilacerari Deum: & cum miseri essent animi, quod plerisque contingeret, tum Dei partem esse miseram.* We see that it was then thought a good Argument against *Pythagoras's* Opinion, That if it were true, the DEITY must be miserable, which could not be, because GOD was a Happy BEING, and they little thought that 'twas possible to be both happy and miserable at the same Time; and therefore *Pythagoras's* Notion was justly rejected, and so must *Spinoza's* too for the same Reason; for if *Pythagoras* made the Souls of Men to be Parts of the Divine BEING, *Spinoza* makes them to be Modes of the same BEING, or the same Nature of GOD, differing only in the Manner of its Existence; and therefore the Divine BEING must be at least equally affected in the one as in the other Case.

THE Religious Man stands clear of any such Absurdities; as he supposes these particular Existences which are the Subjects of Evil, to be made not out of the Divine Substance, but from *No-thing*, and to be created with different Degrees of Perfection, and consequently, that the Evils they are obnoxious to, whether Physical or Moral, do not proceed from Him, but are, as I before observed, merely the Effects of their imperfect Natures. And we do not think that the *Atheist* can prove it inconsistent with Goodness to make limited or imperfect Natures. Thus far we are sure we can talk Sense. Whereas *Spinoza* having no Creatures nor limited Natures to take Refuge in, must necessarily suppose all the Evils and Imperfections of the World to be the Attributes of his Infinite BEING: And therefore cannot avoid the Absurdities I have now charged upon him.

THERE is also one other Absurdity chargeable upon *Spinoza's* System, *viz.* That all the foolish and wicked Thoughts of Men, as well as those that  
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are good and rational, must be the Thoughts of his Self-existent BEING; but so long as we see a real Difference between good Sense and Foolishness, Virtue and Vice, we can never see how such incompatible Properties can flow from the same Principle. For this would be to make a most Simple Being to be not only a Compound Being, which is Contradiction enough; but also compounded of such inconsistent Ingredients as could never be united together in the same Being, but would battle each other till one of them had subdued and destroyed the other.

BUT then, it may be said, Why may not this be true, as well as what the Christian Religion supposes to be true, *viz* That the same Person may be the Subject of both human and divine Attributes? For human Wisdom, or the Wisdom which human Nature, for Instance, is capable of, when compared with divine Wisdom, is no better than Folly: And if this be true, then the Subject of both Natures must be at the same Time divinely and humanly wise,  
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that is, wise, and not wise; but this can no more be conceived than the other; and if these Things can be supposed by the Religious Man to exist in GOD, why not by the *Spinosist* in *his* Self-existent Being. Some Christians to avoid this Difficulty of uniting GOD and Man in the Person of our SAVIOUR, either supposed one of the Natures to be swallowed up, lost or confounded in the other, *viz.* the Man in GOD; or else, that after the Union there still continued two distinct Subjects of the two different Natures; but there is no Need of either of these Solutions to clear the Union of GOD with Man from the Objections I have raised against *Spinosas's* Self-existent Being. For when GOD took upon him human Nature, that human Nature was perfectly submitted to the Divine, and constantly followed its Guidance, and the Actions of the Person were always the last Determinations, not of the Passions and Appetites of the Man, but of the Divine *Logos*. No contrary Volitions, no Conflict between GOD and Man, but the Word directed,  
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and the Man followed. And tho' our SAVIOUR, as a Man, is said to have encreased in Wisdom as well as Stature; yet it is enough for my present Purpose, that there was no Clashing between the Wisdom of the Divine and Human Nature: If the Wisdom of the latter was less extensive, yet it was without any Mixture of Folly: Whereas I objected against *Spinoza's* System, because it introduced a Nature which was a perfect Scene of Contention and Inconsistency, as it was evident from the many *rational* and *foolish* Thoughts of Men; which if we know what Contradictions are, must be such, whenever they are both made to be at the same Time the Thoughts of one and the same Being. And yet (as I have already shewn) his Self-existent Being, so long as he supposes him the only Substance or real BEING in the World, and all other Beings only the same Being in different Shapes and Dresses, according to the Diversity and Variety that we see in Nature, must be chargeable

able with all the foolish as well as rational Thoughts of Men \*.

HAVING now shewn that *Spinoza's* Hypothesis is so far from giving a better Account of that Mixture of Good and Evil which appears in the World, than the Religious Scheme, that it will by no means introduce any such Mixture into the World; and therefore that every *Spinosist* is Culpable when he rejects Religion for the Difficulty of reconciling Good and Evil with a Good GOD:

I COME now to shew, That no other Atheistick Scheme ought to be taken up by any fair and impartial Examiner; because every other Atheistick Scheme, different from that of *Spinoza*, will suppose more than One Necessarily-existent Principle; but a Plurality of Self-existent Beings cannot possibly be true. And therefore how well soever a Plurality of Principles would account for this particular Difficulty, yet  
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\* Vide Serm IV,



it ought not to be admitted for a Solution of it; because every good System ought to be built upon clear and evident Principles of Reason, as well as to be qualified for solving Appearances of Things: But every Scheme that supposes a Plurality of Independent, Necessarily-existent Beings, is so far from being supported by clear, evident Principles of Reason, that 'tis directly repugnant to the clearest Ideas we have of the Order of Things. All the real Perfections that Men have ever had any Notion of, they have been wont to give to the Self-existent BEING; they were sure that Something must be boundless in its Existence, both with regard to Time and Place; and as the Existence of that Something was excluded from no Place nor Time, that its Operation could not be hindered any *where* nor any *when*. As these Powers and Privileges, I say, were always thought to have a real Existence in Nature, they were as constantly ascribed to the Self-existent BEING; for the Excellency of such a Nature must be, according

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ing to our Conceptions, if any Thing be so, entitled to all possible Perfections; but then it must be very hard to conceive two such Beings with all these Powers and Privileges; as for Instance, We shall be hard put to it to find Room for more than One of such a Kind of Beings, as would by Itself fill up and exist in every Part of the infinite Space, as it must of Necessity, since 'tis supposed to be Infinite or Immense.

'TILL the *Atheist* can tell us how to provide a Reception for a second Infinite, when all is already taken up by the other; we must beg Leave to affirm, that he has a much greater Difficulty upon his Hands, than the Religious Man has, when he is called upon to account for Good and Evil upon the Foot of a Good GOD. For as the *Atheist's* Self-existent Beings, are supposed to be Material, they cannot be both in the same Place; and therefore a Second cannot be at all, because the First is supposed to be Infinite, and to have already filled all the infinite Space.

BUT

BUT farther, The Idea of Power sticks close to our Idea of the Self-existent BEING, and yet our Ideas will not allow of halving or dividing the Power between Two; because this would be to admit Two Powers that could controul one another, and disturb each other in their Operations; which furnishes out a very faint Idea of Power, too much limited and restrained to be given to a Necessarily-existent and Infinite BEING. For in this Case, neither of the Self-existent Beings would be able to produce any one Thing without the Interposition of the other. And therefore every Being in the World would be the Effect of their opposing one another, and so receive not its Nature from either, but from both.

As the Appearances of Things are no where pure or unmix'd Good, nor pure or unmixt Evil, some Persons have discovered a great Fondness for Two Contrary and Independent Principles, hoping that such a System would perfectly well account for the Mixture of Good and Evil, as whatever should be

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produced from the Struggle and Conflict of two contrary Powers, must of Course partake of the Nature of both. But however fond they may be of this Way of solving the Difficulty, they may do well to consider, whether the ascribing to the Necessarily-existent BEING such a limited Power as evidently contradicts our clearest Ideas, be not a better Proof of the Falshood of this *Hypothesis*, than any Arguments they can bring against the Being of a GOD from their *Phaenomenon* of Good and Evil. the first we are sure cannot be the Truth, for Reasons I have already given; the last may possibly be true, altho' we cannot clear up every Difficulty that may offer itself to us, when we are endeavouring to reconcile Good and Evil with a Good GOD. But,

2dly, I WILL now shew, that supposing the Possibility of the Existence of Two or more Contrary, Independent Principles, that yet they would not, any more than *Spinoza's* System, account for the Appearances of Good and Evil in the World.

I HAVE, as I before observed, avoided entering into a particular Detail of the Difficulties that are met with in reconciling Evil with a Good BEING, because the Learned Dr. *John Clark* has lately *ex professo* examined them; however, I hope, even in this Way of Handling the Matter, to shew, That the *Atheist* is an Unreasonable Person, if he has left Religion for the Sake of this Difficulty. As I have already shewn, That the Scheme of many Self-existent Principles, the Refuge of some *Atheists* from this particular Difficulty, is inconsistent with our plainest Ideas: If I can also shew, That should we give him any of his Schemes on the Foot of Plurality, yet he would not be able to account for the Difficulties; we shall leave him without any Shew of an Excuse, if he pretends to have left us, that he might stand clear of Difficulties.

SUPPOSING then for once, the Possibility of the Existence of Two or more Independent Principles of contrary Natures; these Principles must either have an equal or unequal Force. If they were

unequal Powers, then the superior Power acting necessarily and to the utmost Stretch of its Power, must, in an eternal Duration, have destroyed all the Effects of the weaker Power; And then if the superior Force were Good, there could be *now* no such Thing as Evil; or if Evil, no such Thing as Good; neither of which will answer to the true Appearance of Things. The *Atheist* cannot defend himself by the Ancients, who supposed unequal, contrary Powers to have always had an Existence, without destroying one another: For altho' the ancient *Theology* of the *Pagans*, as we find by the Poets and other *Mythologists*, consisted of many contrary Principles endued with unequal Powers; tho' the good Beings, such as *Jupiter*, &c. were supposed by them to be superior in Power to their *Vejoves*: yet they might easily believe the eternal Co-existence of such unequal Powers, or that the lesser were not destroyed by the Greater; because they supposed *Jupiter* and the rest of the Good Principles to be *Free Agents* that acted

acted with Views and for Ends, and might therefore believe that the Good, tho' a superior Principle, had permitted the Action of the inferior Evil Being, in a Way of Punishment to such as had broken the Laws of those Beings, who were the Principles of Goodness. But as to the Atheistick Principles which act necessarily, or because they can't help it; and consequently, act to the utmost of their Power, the eternal Subsistence of unequal contrary Forces must be impossible, for the Reason already given; and therefore they cannot account for the State of Good and Evil in the World. But,

2dly, IF we take two contrary Principles of *equal* Force to account for Good and Evil, then as they act necessarily, and therefore to the utmost of their Powers, their continual Opposition to each other must either produce nothing but Confusion; that is, the evil Principle must destroy as fast as the Good Principle produces any Thing, because the Evil Principle is supposed to have as much Power, and to be

under as great a Necessity of using that Power as the Good One: Or else an equal Mixture of Good and Evil must run thro' all Things, as the necessary Result of the Equality of their mutual Opposition. For there is no third Way of conceiving the Effect of the Agency of two necessary, equal, and contrary Powers. But if neither of these be agreeable to the truth of Things, then the *Atheist* is not to be justified in rejecting Religion for the Difficulty of solving the Appearances of Good and Evil, because every pretended Solution upon the Foot of *Atheism*, will then appear to be false.

1<sup>st</sup>, THE Appearance of Good and Evil cannot be accounted for by Two contrary, equal Principles; because if they acted Necessarily, the Effect of their mutual Action would be nothing but Disorder and Confusion, as Two equal, contrary Powers must of Necessity destroy the Operations of each other. Monsieur *Bayle*, as fond as he shews himself upon all Occasions of the *Hypothesis* which pretends to account for Good and Evil by Two contrary Principles;



Principles; was yet sensible, that Two such contrary Natures, unless they acted with something like Freedom, could never account for Good and Evil; and therefore when he is making an Apology for *Zoroaster*, he represents him as justifying his Two Principles in this Manner: “ That it was with his Two Principles for some Time, as it was with  
 “ Mr. *Hobbs*’s Men in a State of Na-  
 “ ture, and before the Establishment  
 “ of Societies; that every Man was an  
 “ Enemy to every other Man, and did  
 “ each other all the Mischief they  
 “ could; and thus, says he, it was with  
 “ the Two Principles at first, till they,  
 “ as well as Mr. *Hobbs*’s Men, weary  
 “ of such a confused State of Things,  
 “ in which one Principle was conti-  
 “ nually overturning what the other  
 “ was building up, came at last to an  
 “ Accommodation, and joyned amica-  
 “ bly together for the future, in the  
 “ several Productions of Nature \*.”

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\* *Histor. Dist. in voce Zoroaster.*

Mr. *Bayle* enters into so many Particulars in his Vindication of this Doctrine of *Zoroaster*, that we may believe he look'd upon it as the most rational Solution of the present Difficulty. But from hence we may observe, That Two contrary Principles, so long as they acted Necessarily and to the utmost of their Power, could produce nothing but a State of the utmost Confusion and Disorder; because this is supposed and allowed to have been the State of Things previously to the Agreement of the Two Principles: and then without such Agreement, every Thing must have been still in Confusion, and different from what we see at present; and therefore were it possible that this Account of Things could be the Truth, yet it would do the *Atheist* no Service, unless he would allow the Existence of Beings that act upon Choice, which he always steadily denies, and while he does so, can have no Right to any Advantage from this *Hypothesis*.

IF it be said, That such an Accommodation is consistent with Necessity, and that a good Principle is necessarily determined

determined to such an Accommodation, as a Mixture of Good and Evil is better than no Good at all; the Answer is, That such a Determination must be the Effect of Choice and of a Freedom of acting, and not of any absolute Necessity of the Nature of the Being; because the Operations of a Being that acts from a Necessity of Nature, will always be as invariable as its Nature; and therefore if they both acted from a Necessity of their Natures, the Effect of their acting must be always the same, and no Room for Variation, which this Accommodation supposes. 'Tis true, the *Atheist* allows *Men* the same Power of transacting with each other for their mutual Benefit, and yet denies them a Liberty of Action: but I am persuaded they would not persist in denying such mutual Agreements between Men, to be an Argument of Choice and Freedom, if they could see any Possibility of reconciling Liberty with their Material Scheme. For they cannot but see a Difference between Moral and Physical Motives, between  
being

being moved to act by a Reason, and being forced into Action by an external Impulse ; and that this Difference exists in the Nature of Things, and therefore they would never have made them to be the same, if they could have fetched them both from Matter, and yet supposed any Difference between them. But,

To proceed, If the *Atheist* finding he can make no Advantage of this imaginary Accommodation between the Two Principles for a Solution of the present Difficulty, should rather take up with another, which the same Mr. *Bayle* proposes in the Title *Paulicians*, viz.

“ That the Good Principle opposes with  
 “ all its Might and without ceasing the  
 “ Sin and Misery of the Creature ;  
 “ but that the Evil Principle acting on  
 “ its Side with all its Strength in Op-  
 “ position to it, there results from this  
 “ continual Shock of the Two Prin-  
 “ ciples, that Mixture of Good and Evil  
 “ which we see every where, as the  
 “ Action and Reaction of two contrary  
 “ Qualities produces a third Quality par-  
 “ taking

“ taking of the Nature of both :” If, I say, he has any Hopes from this Way of solving the Difficulty, we will shew, that this cannot be the true one, Because supposing such a Conflict between Two contrary Principles, if they did not, as I have already observed, turn all into Confusion, then the Consequence would be, that there must be an equal Mixture of Good and Evil running thro’ all Things ; whereas if this were the Case, there must be an invariable and uniform Appearance of Good and Evil ; the Mixture of Good and Evil must be the same in every Part of Space, as well as every Part of Time, because it proceeds from Two contrary Causes acting necessarily and to the utmost of their Powers ; and therefore no Reason can be given why their Action and Reaction, or the Result of them, should not be the same in every Part of the infinite Space, their Powers being supposed to be equal. But if the same Quantity of Good and Evil had been blended together from Eternity, and uniformly diffused thro’ the Infinite Extension,

Extension, there could have been no such Thing as human Conduct or Wisdom, no Possibility of chusing the less Evils or Inconveniencies to avoid greater ones; because the Inconveniencies must be equal which Way soever we act, if the Evil be equal or as much in every Part of Infinite Space as the Good is.

AWAY then with all the Maxims of Wisdom which Men have hitherto pretended to distinguish themselves by, if the same Degree of Evil must be expected, act as wisely as we will. But if the real State of Things proves, that there is more evil in one Way of acting than in another, this shews that the Mixture of Good and Evil did not proceed from Two contrary Principles acting necessarily; but from One Free and Intelligent BEING, that has judiciously annex'd different Degrees of Evil or Inconvenience to different Ways of acting, in order to make a Trial of our good Sense in chusing the least Inconveniencies. In this Way of accounting for Good and Evil, we can suppose them  
mixed

mixed together, and yet leave Room for the Exercise of good Sense: Because a BEING that acts not from any Necessity of Nature, but with every Degree of Freedom which is consistent with acting wisely, may so order the Constitution of Things, as to leave it in the Power of some Beings, if not entirely to separate the Evil from the Good, yet, at least, when there are different Degrees of Evil, to take the lesser: Whereas if Good and Evil proceeded from two different and contrary Causes acting necessarily with all their Force, it could never be in the Power of any particular Beings, such as Men, to alter so far the Original Constitution of Things as to take Good without taking an equal Portion of Evil; because it cannot be supposed, that what has been joyned together by two infinite Powers, can possibly be separated by Man. But since all the World allows a Difference between wise and foolish Conduct, the Appearance of Good and Evil such as it really is, cannot possibly be reconciled

reconciled by an *Hypothesis* of Two contrary Principles acting necessarily.

AGAIN, as Wisdom and Folly are not reconcileable with Two contrary Principles acting necessarily; so neither will the unequal Allotment of Good and Evil to some Sorts of Men, receive a Solution from Two contrary Principles; for Beings that act necessarily, it must be granted, cannot be Respecters of Persons, but must disperse their Favours or Resentments promiscuously to all that come in the Way of them, and not single out particular Persons for that Purpose. This is so plain a Deduction from the *Atheistick* Scheme, that *Lucretius* could not deny it; and therefore when he comes to that Part of Nature which relates to the Dispensation of Good and Evil, he plainly gives up the Cause of *Atheism*, in acknowledging that this was not to be accounted for by any Laws of mere Matter and Motion; for speaking of the Misfortunes of great Men, of which the Histories of all Times had furnished great Numbers of Instances, he drops his Atoms,  
and



and has Recourse to I know not what hidden Power that took a Delight in making a Jest of all human Grandeur. *Usque adeo res humanas vis abdita quadam Obterit, & pulchros fasces savaeque secures, proculcare & ludibrio sibi habere videtur \**.

We may by the Way observe, That *Lucretius* does here the same Thing for which he and other *Atheists* have thought fit to laugh at the Religious Man ; because his Material Causes were found by him not sufficient to answer this *Phenomenon* of Nature, he is contented to take Refuge in an unknown Cause, a Θεός ἄνομολογός, and yet when we have recourse to a God, they will allow it no better a Name in us than a Cloak for our Ignorance. But if the *Atheist* would declare as fairly with regard to several other *Phenomena* as *Lucretius* has done in this particular one, he would find as much Want of a GOD for extricating him out of other Difficulties, as *Lucretius* did in this concerning good and Evil.

IF

IF the Religious Man meets with some Difficulties in reconciling the Misfortunes of great and good Men with a Good BEING, yet nothing has been thought clearer than that Something besides the necessary Laws of Matter and Motion must have had a Hand in human Affairs. There was always so much seeming Caprice, such Inconstancy, and Changes so sudden, and so unaccountable in the History of great Men, particularly of such as had been great and good Men, that it has been always thought necessary to have Recourse to some Agent that governs all Events with perfect Freedom, and not to Matter in Motion, whose Laws were too steady and too regular to account for them. For 'twas easily seen that the Workings of Necessary Agents must be as unchangeable as their Natures. And therefore a more regular Course of human Affairs than the present, must have arisen from the Action of a Being or Beings that brought Things about from a Necessity of Nature.

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THUS we see the *Atheist* is never the nearer towards giving himself Satisfaction concerning Good and Evil, when he exchanges *Religion* for *Atheism*: but if he deals fairly with himself, he will only find this Difference, That whereas he stumbled at some Appearances of Evil which he could not reconcile with Goodness or the Existence of a Good Principle, he must now see every Solution he can give of this *Phenomenon* upon the Foot of *Atheism*, plainly impossible to be the Truth.







# SERMON VI.

ACTS XVII. 28.

*For in Him we live, and  
move, and have our Be-  
ing.*



THESE Words are Part of a Speech *St. Paul* made upon *Mars-Hill* at *Athens*, in Justification of himself against the Charge of endeavouring to introduce a new Religion into that City; he tells them, That he had Preached no strange Gods, but the very same GOD whom they themselves worshipped, under the Title of

the UNKNOWN GOD, tho' they were entirely ignorant of his Nature, as was plain by their erecting Temples to Him for his Habitation and Residence. Whereas himself had erected this stately Frame of the Universe, and therefore could never be in Want of a Room or Place to dwell in; neither could He want the Assistance of Men for making Him Altars and Images, for that He had given Life and Breath to those very Men by whose Skill and Workmanship they pretended to honour Him. We find by the 18th Verse, that the *Epicureans* made a Part of our Apostle's Congregation, for they went along with him from the Market-place, where they had been Disputing, to the *Areopagus*. These Men had wilfully mistaken the Nature of GOD, and impiously stripp'd the DEITY of all the Privileges that had been universally allowed to belong to it; for the God of *Epicurus* had no Hand in the making the World, he neither moved the Matter of the World, nor directed its Motions, he was neither concerned in the

Inanimate

Inanimate nor Animate Part of it, and must be therefore shut out of all. For as to the Motion of Matter, from whence all its Variety arises, that was supposed by them to have been Eternal; and as for Life, that was nothing more than the particular Organisation or Structure of the Parts, such as is seen in Animals; which Organisation too was entirely owing to Chance or Fortune, without the least Interposition of their Gods. And as to the Nature of their Gods, we find by *Democritus* (from whom *Epicurus* took a great Part of his *Philosophy*) that they were beholden to Matter for their Existence; for he supposes them to be nothing but the Images of Objects, which according to his Way of Thinking, were continually flying off from all Corporeal Objects; as appears by *Tully* \*. Had this been the real Truth of the Case, a Worship,

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\* *Democritus* qui tum imagines earumque Circuitus in Deorum Numero refert. *Cicer. de Natura Deorum* lib. 1. p. 28.

such as that at *Athens* by Images, had been worthy enough of such imaginary Beings, or rather more than they deserved: But *St. Paul* tells them, That this was to mistake entirely the Nature of GOD; for that He was the sole Cause of all Things, and the sole Giver of all our Powers of Action; for that 'twas in Him we all of us both lived, and moved, and had our Beings.

HAVING already considered some of the most material Objections which the *Infidel* is wont to urge against the Being of a GOD, and shewn that they cannot be a good Reason for denying Him, because the Appearance of Things will necessarily require the Existence of such Powers and Properties as we ascribe to Him, and which the *Atheist* pretends to find Fault with; I am now to represent some of the Arguments on which the Religious Man grounds his Belief of a GOD, drawn from the most considerable *Phænomena* in Nature, such as Motion, Thought, and the Order of Things, which *Plato* calls the *τὸ εἶναι καλῶς*.



I will begin with that of Motion, and shew, That there is no possible Way of accounting for its Existence, unless we will admit a G O D, or which is the same Thing to the *Atheist*, a Being distinct from Matter, and yet acting upon it.

T H E R E are but three possible Ways of accounting for Motion, either by supposing that there has been an infinite Succession of Impulses communicated from one Body to another from Eternity, without any active Principle either *in* Matter or *without* it; or that there is an Active Principle in Matter, that it is Self-active, and Motion essential to it, or else that there is some Being distinct from Matter, that is the Cause of its Motion. I will shew, that neither of the two first Ways of accounting for Motion, can possibly be the Truth; and therefore that the Cause of Motion, must be some Being distinct from Matter, the same B E I N G, which our Apostle made the Subject of his Discourse to the *Athenians*, the G O D that made Heaven and Earth; the

sole Giver of Life and Animal Motion, for that 'tis in Him we live, and have a Power of moving ourselves. And,

1<sup>st</sup>, AN infinite Succession of Impulses without an Active or Moving Principle, will never give Birth to Motion, because this would be to bring an Effect upon the Stage without the Help of a Cause. And yet absurd as this is, *Spinoza* was able to give no better an Account of Motion, or at least thought this to be better than to suppose with some, That Motion was a necessary Attribute of Matter. And tho' all the World agrees, That in a finite Time 'tis absurd to suppose an Effect without a Cause, which must be the Case, if Motion was not an essential Attribute of Matter; yet *Spinoza* would never undertake to shew how an infinite Time would make any Sense of it; and therefore always avoided giving a direct Answer, when he was press'd by his Friends to explain how Matter could ever come into Motion, if Motion was neither essential to Matter, nor proceeded from any external Cause. This last  
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he could never own without giving up the Cause of *Atheism*, and therefore would never speak plainly to this Point, as appears by the Sixty-third and following Epistles in his Posthumous Works. This Behaviour of *Spinoza's*, makes it reasonable to believe, that he himself would have given up his Account of Motion, if he could have saved his Scheme and his Reputation. And as *Toland* too has thought fit to reject it as indefensible, I shall take no farther Notice of it, but proceed to the other *Atheistick* Account of Motion, which *Toland* thinks will be sufficient, without troubling the Supreme BEING, *viz.* That Motion is essential to all Matter, and Action as much an Attribute of Matter, as Extension or Solidity; and consequently, every Atom of Matter is necessarily Self-moving, or active from the Necessity of its own Nature.

THE World has had so strong an Opinion of the natural Inactivity of Matter, that *Spinoza* had not Courage enough to oppose it; but *Toland* find-  
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ing *Atheism* was not tenable, if Matter was really Inactive, was resolved to try whether he could not defend its Activity, as the only Refuge left for the sinking Cause of *Atheism*. The Arguments he makes use of to prove the Activity of Matter, are these:

1<sup>st</sup>, “ BECAUSE, he says, Motion, “ as well as Extension and Solidity, is “ included in our Idea of Matter; that “ whenever we separate Motion from “ Matter in our Idea of it, ’tis only a “ partial Consideration of it, or an abstracted Notion of the Mind; and “ therefore no more a Proof that Matter can exist without Motion, than “ that Mathematical Lines, Surfaces “ and Points, have any Existence in “ Nature, because they are in the “ Heads of *Mathematicians*.”

2<sup>dly</sup>, ANOTHER Reason he urges for the Activity of Matter, is, “ Because in Fact all Matter is in Motion.”

A THIRD Reason is this: “ That “ tho’ there should be some Objecti- “ ons against it, that much greater “ ones

“ ones would lie against an External  
“ Mover of Matter.”

IN answer to these Arguments of  
his I will shew,

*1st*, THAT our Idea of Matter, when  
we leave Motion out of it, is no ab-  
stracted Notion of the Mind, but a  
compleat and adequate Idea of it.

*2dly*, THAT tho' all Parts of Mat-  
ter were in Motion, it would not fol-  
low that Motion was an essential At-  
tribute of Matter.

*3dly*, THAT the Activity of Mat-  
ter is inconsistent with some Appear-  
ances in Nature.

*4thly*, THAT the Objections against  
GOD'S being the Author of Motion,  
are not such as should discourage any  
rational or unbyass'd Person from ac-  
knowledging, That 'tis in GOD we  
live, and have our Animal Being.

*1st*, I AM to shew, That our Idea  
of Matter without Motion, is not a  
partial Consideration of Matter, but a  
compleat Idea of it.

THE Reason which has always deter-  
mined the World to look out for a Cause  
of

of Motion extrinſical to Matter, was this: Tho' they could eaſily conceive it capable of being moved and divided; yet the conceiving it to be undivided, undiverſified, and unmoved, was a more ſimple Notion of Matter, than the conceiving it divided and moved. This being firſt in Order of Nature, and an adequate Conception of it too, they thought it neceſſary to enquire and give themſelves an Account how it came out of this State, and by what Cauſes Motion, from whence this Diverſity in Matter aroſe, could come into the World? *Descartes*, altho' he allowed the Infinity of Matter as well as *Toland*, was yet ſenſible that even this would not alter the Nature of Matter, nor the Idea that every Body had of its Inactivity, and therefore could ſee no other Way of altering its primitive Idea, and reconciling it with the Motion of Matter, but by introducing another Infinite Being, *viz.* a GOD that had ſufficient Power to rouse Matter out of that ſleepy, inactive State in which its Original Idea had

had

had represented it. And *Toland* would have found himself under the same Necessity of admitting a GOD for the Mover of Matter, if he had not endeavoured to impose upon his Reader by confounding Divisibility and Mobility, with actual Division and an active or moving Power, as we shall see presently. For he acknowledges, that the true Conception of Matter is this: That it is every-where the same, and only diversified by Motion; so as by his own Confession, the conceiving Matter in Motion, is a departing from that Unity of Substance, that Sameness of Nature in which our Ideas represent it to us. For all Diversifications of Matter must of Necessity be so many Removes from the natural Unity and Identity of Matter, according to his Conception of it.

ARISTOTLE, who was confessedly the best Reasoner among the Ancients, and not thought to be at all prejudiced in Favour of Religion, is yet very clear in this Point: in his first Book of the *Metaphysics*, cap. 3. he condemned  
those

those who stop'd short at the material Cause of Generations and Corruptions, without looking after the Efficient Cause. " For, says he, altho' all Corruptions and Generations, are variously produced from Beings more or less compounded, yet 'tis necessary to enquire, How this happens, and what is the Cause? For the Subject of all these Changes cannot possibly change itself, *viz.* The Wood and the Brass cannot be the Causes that one of them is turned into a Bed, the other into a Statue; but Something else must be the Cause of these Changes. But to enquire after this, is to enquire after a Principle of Motion, or some Being that has a Power of beginning Motion, and communicating it to Matter \*."

For he could see nothing in the Idea of Matter, that would qualify it for acting upon itself. Mr. Bayle in *voce Leucippus*, confesses, " That our Idea of  
 " Matter

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\* Vid. Aristot. *Metaphysic.* Lib. 1. cap. 3.



“ Matter is compleat when it repre-  
 “ sents nothing to us but Extension  
 “ and Solidity, and that Motion is not  
 “ included in it, but is a perfect exo-  
 “ tick, a foreign Idea, that has no  
 “ more relation to Matter, than  
 “ Thought or Understanding.” The  
 Evidence against the Activity of Mat-  
 ter from its Idea, is so clear and  
 strong, that one would hardly have ex-  
 pected that this Idea should have been  
 press’d into a contrary Service, and  
 made to speak in behalf of the Acti-  
 vity of Matter. And yet Mr. *Toland*  
 has attempted to prove Matter an  
 active Being from its Idea.

As 1<sup>st</sup>, “ FROM the Divisibility of  
 “ Matter, which always makes a Part  
 “ of our Idea of Matter. And,  
 2<sup>dly</sup>, “ BECAUSE our Idea of Mat-  
 “ ter always contains some Quality or  
 “ other, which necessarily supposes Mo-  
 “ tion.”

1<sup>st</sup>, FROM the Divisibility of Matter,  
 his Argument from hence is founded  
 upon this; because, as he supposes, we  
 cannot conceive Divisibility without  
 Motion;

Motion; therefore we cannot conceive Matter which is always conceived as divisible, without conceiving Motion as inseparable from Matter. But this is plainly to make Mobility or the Capacity of receiving Motion, and Motion itself, or the *Vis motrix*, to be one and the same Ideas. For altho', *indeed*, we cannot conceive Matter to be actually divided, without adding Motion to our Idea of Matter; yet nothing more than a Capacity of receiving Motion is necessary to the making up our Idea of Divisibility: But this last has a plain and evident Distinction in our Conceptions of Things from the former. For we can conceive a Thing to be divisible, tho' it never should be actually divided; and when we conceive Matter as divisible, we at the same Time as well suppose it capable of continuing in an undivided State, as of changing it into a divided one. And therefore Motion is not necessarily included in our Idea of Divisibility. And consequently to say, That Divisibility makes a Part of our Idea of Matter, would be no  
Proof

Proof that Motion too must belong to our Idea of it.

BUT *Toland* goes further, and would prove, That Motion must necessarily be included in the Divisibility of Matter; because whatever is divisible, must have within itself a Power of dividing itself; for thus he speaks in his *Letter* concerning Motion \*; “ If, “ says he, there was no *Internal Energy*, Matter would be incapable of “ Alteration or Division.” But this can never be proved by him, unless he takes it for granted, that there is nothing in Nature besides Matter; which would be to beg the Question in Dispute between us and the *Atheist*. For 'tis plain if any Thing besides Matter had an Existence, he might have conceived Matter to be divisible without thinking of the internal Energy of Matter, because Matter would be as truly divisible, altho' we suppos'd it divided by something else, as if we suppos'd it divided by itself, and the Idea of

M                      Divisibility

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\* Page 194.

Divisibility would be exactly the same in either Case. As to what he says, "That Motion is contained in our Idea of Matter: Because

*2dly*, "WE can never form an Idea of Matter devoid of all Qualities; and all Qualities are an Effect of Motion; consequently Motion is not to be separated from our Idea of Matter:" If by Idea, he means an Image or what may be an Object of our Senses, 'tis agreed, that in this Sense we can form no Idea of Matter divested of all Qualities; but this is to say nothing more than this, That we can't form an Image of a Thing which has no Image, or is no Object of our Senses; but still the Idea of solid Extension remains a distinct Idea from that of Motion, and therefore from all the Qualities that are a Consequence of Motion; which shews that there is nothing in the Nature of the Thing that should have hinder'd Matter from existing without Motion. And *Toland* himself acknowledges, "That Motion is not included in the Idea  
" of

“ of Extension, nor any ways deducible from it \*.” And therefore if we can have any Idea of Solidity, a solid extended Substance may be conceived to exist without Motion, or without any Qualities that shall affect our Senses. Whereas there is no conceiving Matter to exist without Solidity and Extension, which shews *them* to be essential to Matter, and at the same time shews Motion to be not essential. And therefore he has plainly beg’d the Question in Dispute, in adding to the Idea of Matter a new Attribute, without any Proof that ’tis one.

HE was sensible that the universal Belief of a *Chaos*, was an ugly Argument against him, and therefore takes some Pains in ridiculing the several Methods the Ancients took of bringing Matter out of that Confusion, in which all Things were supposed to be while the *Chaos* lasted. But how ridiculous

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\* See his Letter concerning Motion.

culous foever *their* Schemes might be, yet this is evident, that they could and did conceive Matter to have an Existence altho' unmoved, and of course without any of those Qualities that result from the Movement of Matter. *Ovid* in describing the Chaotick State, tells us, " That there was no Kind  
 " of Diversity, but the same Face of  
 " Things thro' the infinite Extension.\* " That the whole was *rudis indigestaque moles, nec quicquam nisi pondus iners*. By which the Poet intended to express the lazy and stupid State in which Matter lay during the *Chaos*, and till the Chaotick Matter began to be stirr'd. *Mr. Bayle* was as much out of Humour with the Account that *Ovid* had given of the ancient Opinion concerning a *Chaos*, as *Toland*, and therefore unreasonably falls out with the Description he has given us of it. That he  
 may

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\* Ante mare & terras, & quod tegit omnia Cœ-  
 lum,  
 Unus erat toto Naturæ vultus in orbe,  
 Quem dixere Chaos. *Ovid. Metamorph. L. 1.*

may make his Account inconsistent with itself, *Ovid* is brought in representing all the Variety in Nature as if it had an actual Existence, before there was any such Thing as Motion; when he says, speaking of the Chaotick State, *Frigida pugnabant calidis, humentia siccis, mollia cum duris, &c.* and yet he had just before told us, that the Whole was an homogeneous Substance, *Unus erat Naturæ vultus*; whereas what *Ovid* says is very consistent. He supposes the *Chaos* to be an homogeneous Substance, which, upon its being moved, was diversified into Bodies of very different Natures, and not that any such Diversity had any other than a possible Existence, till it was moved. And if *Mr. Bayle* had not been prejudiced against a *Chaos*, it ought to have pass'd with him for a fine Piece of Imagery, when the Poet represents the Change that was made by Motion, that Earth, Air, Fire and Water, which had been hitherto blended together, were then separated from each other. For the best Philosophers are agreed, That all

Matter is really the same, and that all the Diversity that appears in it, is owing to Motion. And therefore a Poet might well represent the simple and uniform Face of Matter, as containing within itself all these Diversities, even before it was moved, because it was capable of receiving them; without supposing them to have had an actual Existence till the *Chaos* was put into Motion: which is enough to clear the Poet from the Inconsistency which Mr. *Boyle* would charge upon him, and at the same time to satisfy us, that the Ancients had a Conception of Matter as an uniform Being before it was moved. And consequently, that *Toland's* Conceiving Faculty was very defective, if he could not conceive Matter without Motion. But,

2dly, I AM to shew the Weakness of another Argument he brings for the Activity of Matter, *viz.* "That in Fact all Matter is in Motion." And supposing it true, it would not follow that Motion was an essential Attribute of Matter. For if Motion



tion is not, as we have already shewn, included in our Idea of Matter, but we can as well conceive it at Rest as in Motion, altho' there should be no Bodies perfectly at Rest, it would not yet follow that Motion is essential to Matter; but on the contrary, for this very Reason, (*viz.* That Motion is not contained in the Idea of Matter) we ought to look somewhere else than in Matter for a Cause of its Motion; and as 'tis proved to be foreign to our Idea, to look abroad for a Powerful Cause, such as GOD, that had impress'd Motion upon Matter. But *Toland* lays Stress upon this Argument, and says \*, " Seeing every Part of Matter is always in Motion, you should conclude that Motion is essential to the Whole, for the same Reason that you think Extension to be so; because every Part is extended." But the Case here is very different between Motion and Extension, because Extension is confessedly included in our Idea of Matter, where-

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as Motion is not so. Besides, if *Toland* reasons justly, the Universality of Motion can be no Proof of its being essential to Matter, because he allows the Centripetal Force to be universal, and belonging to all Bodies; for he describes it thus: “ ’Tis that by which  
 “ all the Bodies of the Earth are drawn  
 “ or tend towards its Centre, as all  
 “ others to the proper Centres of their  
 “ Motions. \* ” And yet he does not allow that particular Determination, which we call Gravity, to be essential to Matter; and therefore Motion may belong to every Part of Matter, and not be essential to it; it may be universal, and yet proceed from an external Cause that has moved the Whole. But,

3<sup>dly</sup>, THAT Motion cannot be essential to Matter, may be made plain from these Three Reasons.

1<sup>st</sup>, BECAUSE there could be no such Things in the World as Bodies or any Concretions of Matter; which would render the Face of Things quite different

different from what it appears at present.

2<sup>dly</sup>, B E C A U S E there would be no Variation as to the Quantity of Motion, if all Matter was Self-active; and yet we think it very evident that the Quantity of Motion does and must continually vary.

3<sup>dly</sup>, A T H I R D Reason that demonstrates the Inactivity of Matter, is, That Bodies of equal Bulk or whose Surfaces are equal, do yet weigh unequally.

1<sup>st</sup>, B E C A U S E there could be no such Things in the World as Concretions of Matter, if Matter was self-active. The present Face of Matter appears to us to be divided into *Æther*, and an infinite Number of large Combinations of Matter floating in that *Æther*; whereas if Matter had been self-active, it could never have concreted into such Globes as those of the fix'd Stars, Planets and Comets; but must have every-where appeared in the highest State of Fluidity, as fine as the present *Æther* in which they swim. For  
if

if Motion were essential to Matter, it must belong to every the smallest Part of Matter, and consequently must be equally spread thro' the whole Mass of Matter, and then no possible Reason to be given why some Parts of Matter should be more divided than others, since every Atom of Matter must equally partake of the dividing Principle. This shews that there can be no Reason given upon this *Hypothesis*, why the dividing Effect of Motion should ever cease till Matter was ground so small as to be incapable of any further Division; the Consequence of which would be a World not at all like what we live in; and therefore ours can never be accounted for by any such Scheme as *Toland's*; but the Assistance of a GOD will be necessary for moving the Matter of the Universe, if we pretend to account for the Diversity that is seen in the different Portions of Matter. But,

2<sup>dly</sup>, A SECOND Reason why Matter cannot be self-active, is this; Because there could be no Variation as

to the Quantity of Motion, no increasing nor lessening the Quantity of it; for if Motion be essential to every Particle of Matter, no one Particle of Matter can any otherwise lose its Motion, but by losing its Being in the Universe; and yet we think it very evident, that the Quantity of Motion does, and must continually diminish. 'Tis certain the greatest Philosopher that ever this Globe produced, is fully persuaded that Motion must vary, that 'tis Generable and Corruptible: "But, he says, what by the Tenacity of fluid Bodies, the Wearing of their Parts, and the necessary impairing of the elastick Force in solid Bodies, the Quantity of Motion must diminish rather than encrease, unless the Loss of Motion be repaired by an Active BEING that can supply those Losses \*." And 'tis certain, that he is supported in his Persuasion by a plain Matter of Fact, as in the Case of two hard Bodies of equal

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\* Newton's Opticks.

equal Force, that are not elastical; when such Bodies meet together, they lose all the Motion they were before possessed of. And if this be true, the next Enquiry to be made, is, What becomes of this Motion or active, impulsive Force? If it cannot be dispersed among the Parts of such Bodies, 'tis plain, that then all the Motion is entirely sunk and lost. That it cannot be so dispersed, is as plain; because the Parts of such Bodies are incapable of any tremulous Motion for Want of Elasticity; and if it should be denied that the Parts of those Bodies would lose the Motion of their Wholes, there is this plain Argument against it, That it would then follow, that Bodies perfectly hard and elastical would reflect with a double Force, *viz.* the Force arising from the Elasticity, and moreover all, or at least, part of the original, direct Force; which, as the very Learned Dr. *Samuel Clark* has observed in his Letters to *Leibnitz*, is contrary to Experience.

I CANNOT but observe by way of Inference from the loss of Inanimate Motion, that as the Original Laws of Motion could never have taken Place, or had any Being in the World, unless there did Exist something Superior to Matter that had Impressed those Laws of Motion upon it; so those Laws could never have continued, unless there were an Active Being in Nature, that was always ready to Exert upon Matter a certain Force or Activity, in proportion as the Motion was diminished; which proves the Existence of a BEING, that not only gave Motion to Matter, but also of a BEING that still continues constantly to repair the weakning by Time of the first Impression of Motion. And this shews the Necessity of admitting a Governour of the World, who by his Providence may Interpose in the preservation of it, as well as of an Original Author of Motion, and of this World, which is an Effect of a wonderful Direction of that Motion. From whence it follows, That the Notion of some Persons who believe

lieve that G O D had Impressed a certain Quantity of Motion upon Matter at the Creation, and then left it to shift for itself, believing this to be a sufficient Account of the Appearances of Things, cannot possibly be true; because we have already shewn, that the Quantity of Motion must necessarily diminish, unless there was some Active B E I N G that could *constantly* keep it up in the same State and Condition. And if the Inanimate Part of the World could not have been preserved in Motion without the continued Action of some B E I N G putting forth its Force according to those Original Laws of Motion, much less could the Bodies of Plants and Animals, which are vastly the most considerable Parts of our Earth be formed and preserved by Matter directed at first according to any whatever Laws of Motion. From hence too it appears, that G O D does not act as an *Anima Mundi*, not as a Part, but as a Governor of the World; because such a Being would be nothing but Fate and Nature, which  
can



can never be reconciled with the apparent Diminution of the Quantity of Motion in the Universe; as Fate or Nature must always act to the utmost of their Powers; and therefore if the Effect of their Activity could be at any Time abated, it could never be restored or repaired again. Consequently we have gained a BEING that not only made the World, and established at the Beginning the Laws by which it should for the future be governed; but also a BEING that still watches over his Workmanship, repairs any Failures in it, and continues it in its State as long as He thinks fit: Which is the Religious Man's Notion of a GOD, a BEING that is not far from any of us; *For 'tis in Him we live, move, and have our Beings.*







# SERMON VII.

ACTS XVII. 28.

*For in Him we live, and  
move, and have our Be-  
ing.*



HAVING already shewn,  
That if we will not admit a  
GOD for a mover of Mat-  
ter, there will be only  
these two possible Ways of accounting  
for its being in the World, either in  
supposing an Infinite Series of Impulses  
or Communications of Motion from one  
Part of Matter to another, without a-  
ny Original Cause of those Impulses,  
N which

which is supposing an Effect without supposing any Cause of that Effect: Or,

*2dly*, T H A T Motion is an essential Attribute of Matter, and therefore all Matter an active Being.

I N answer to the suppos'd Activity of Matter, I propos'd to shew,

*1st*, T H A T our Idea of Matter, is a compleat and adequate Conception of it when we leave Motion out of it.

*2dly*, T H A T it would not follow, that Matter was an active Being, were it, never so true, that every Particle of Matter was in Motion. And

*3dly*, T H A T the Activity of Matter is inconsistent with some Appearances in Nature: As,

*1st*, W I T H the great Diversity that appears in the Face of Nature, that some Parts of Matter are condens'd into solid Bodies, and others in a high Degree of Rarefaction; whereas if Matter was self-active, the Whole must necessarily be reduced into the smallest Particles into which Matter is capable of being divided. A second Reason I gave, why Motion could not be an essential

essential Attribute of Matter was, because there could then be no Variation as to the Quantity of Motion in the Universe, and yet 'twas evident that the Quantity of it must gradually diminish, unless its Losses were constantly repaired by some active Being. Thus far I proceeded in the last Discourse.

A 3d Reason by which I proposed to shew the Inactivity of Matter was from hence, That Bodies of equal Bulk or whose Surfaces are equal, do yet weigh unequally; for if there is no accounting for this *Phenomenon*, without supposing the heavier Body to contain more Matter than the lighter one of the same Bulk, then 'tis plain, that Matter must be an inactive Being, since the encreasing the Quantity of Matter in any Body, tho' there be no encrease of its Surface, by which its Motion might be retarded, shall encrease the Difficulty of putting it into Motion: This very Argument will hang as a Millstone upon the Neck of the *Atheist*, as it makes it impossible to reconcile this

*Phænomenon* of Nature with the Mechanical Laws of Motion, which is all that the *Infidel* has to depend upon for the Support of his *Hypothesis*. For 'tis certain that all Mechanical Causes do act in proportion to the Surfaces of the Particles that they act upon; whereas 'tis as certain, that Gravity, whatever be the Cause of it, acts proportionally to the Quantity of solid Matter, without any regard to the Superficies of the Bodies; so as Bodies which are the same in Bulk, shall be very different in their Weight. *Lucretius* saw plainly that there was no accounting for the different Gravity of Bodies of equal Bulk, without having recourse to a *Vacuum*, and supposing a greater Quantity of Matter in the heavier Body. He indeed, very weakly supposes Gravity to be an inherent Quality in Matter, and that all Bodies had a natural Tendency downwards, tho' we are sure there could be no such thing as downward or upward in an infinite Space. But however, he saw evidently that the general Activity of Matter, which he

believed

believed as well as *Toland*, would not account for this *Phænomenon*, without admitting another Principle of Action, *viz.* Gravity; he believed his Atoms had been in Motion from Eternity, but did not think *that* Motion sufficient to account for the different Gravitation of Bodies towards a Centre \*.”

LET us now see how *Toland* would derive this peculiar Affection of Matter, *viz.* of moving towards a Centre, from the general Action of Matter; or how he would account for the *unequal* Resistance of Bodies of *equal* Bulk. It will quickly appear that he is so far from being able to derive Gravity from the

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general

\* Denique cur alias aliis præstare videmus

Pondere res rebus, nihilo majore figurâ.

Nam si tantundem est in Lanæ glomere quantum

Corporis in Plumbo est, tantundem pendere

[par est,

Corporis Officium est quoniam premere omnia

[deorsum :

Ergo quod magnum est æque, leviusque videtur,

Nimirum Plus esse sibi declarat Inanis :

At contra gravius plus in se Corporis esse.

Vide Lucretium. Lib I.

general Action of Matter, that this very Gravity proves to a Demonstration the Inactivity of Matter. 'Tis plain, as I have already observed, that all Mechanical Causes act by Contact, and upon the Surface of Bodies; and 'tis as plain, that Gravity acts quite otherwise, and affects the solid Contents of Bodies, by penetrating the very Substances of them, and therefore can never be produced by the general Action of Matter, because that is suppos'd to act superficially, as all Mechanical Causes are wont to do. But supposing it possible to derive Gravity from the general Action of Matter, which *Toland* aims at, it would do him no Service, because he cannot avoid making an increase of Gravity, and consequently of Resistance to Motion, to depend upon an increase of Matter: For he supposes the Centripetal Force to be, not indeed as *Lucretius*, a Quality inherent in Matter, but one of the Modes of *Action* in general, or a particular Determination of the general Activity of Matter. Let it be so; since 'tis evident



evident, that the Quantity of Motion in the Body must be the Sum of the Motive Forces of all the Particles of Matter that are in that Body; if this Centripetal Force be only a particular Determination of the general Action of Matter, there would be no giving a Reason why the Quantity of that Force, or of that particular Determination too, should not be computed after the same manner; and be the Sum of all the self-moving Atoms in any Body; the Consequence of which would be, That whenever we observed two Bodies of equal Bulk and Gravitating unequally, or tending towards a Centre with unequal Force, if we would account for such a *Phenomenon* consistently with *Tolana's* Account of Gravity, we must say, that one of the Bodies had a greater Number of the Self-moving Atoms than the other, which necessarily supposes in the lighter Body a Space void of Matter, which levels one of the strongest Retrenchments of the *Infidel*, viz. The Infinity of Matter, and at the same time its Activity: Be-

cause Experience tells us, That the more weighty any Body is, tho' nothing be added to its Bulk, the more it resists to Motion ; whereas if Matter was an active Being, an increase of its Quantity could never increase its Resistance, unless its Surface, by which alone Bodies could be retarded, was increased too. All that *Toland* has to say for himself, is, " That this Difference of Resistance in Bodies of equal Bulk, may possibly arise from the different internal Contexture of those Bodies " ; and all the Reason for such a Suspicion is drawn from the great Resistance that some Fluids are observed to make above others, altho' of near the same specifick Gravity, and consequently near the same Quantity of Matter ; which can be resolved into nothing, but a Difference in the internal Contexture of such Fluids : But this Plea can have Force only in such Bodies as are not equally fluid. For whatever be the Figure of the Internal Parts of Fluids, if they are equally devoid of Tenacity, their Force of Resistance to  
any

any particular Determination as well as the absolute Force of Motion, can be only the Sum of the Forces of the Self-moving Particles in those Bodies. And therefore if a Cubical Inch of Water, and the same Quantity of Quick-silver, which are fluid Bodies, and free from Tenacity, did really contain the same Number of Self-moving Particles, whatever were the Figure of those Particles, they would *equally* resist to any Change that should be made of the Determination of their Motion. But as Experience shews this to be false; consequently, that fluid which makes the greatest Resistance to Motion, must have the greatest Quantity of Matter; and then the different internal Contexture of Bodies will not account for their different Weights, nor clear Matter from the Imputation of being inactive. But,

*4thly*, I AM NOW to shew, That the Objections against GOD's being the Author of Motion, are not such as should discourage any rational and unbiass'd Person from acknowledging, that 'tis in GOD we live and have our animal Being.

Being. The Difficulties that are raised against G O D's being the Author of Motion, are these :

1<sup>st</sup>, " T H A T we cannot conceive  
 " how an Immaterial B E I N G, such  
 " as G O D is supposed to be, could act  
 " upon Matter, consequently, how He  
 " should move it.

2<sup>dly</sup>, " T H A T if it were possible  
 " for Him to be the Author of Moti-  
 " on, there would be, as *Toland* thinks,  
 " this evil Consequence attending such  
 " a Supposition, that G O D must be the  
 " sole Cause of all the Evil and Wick-  
 " edness that is committed by Men;  
 " 'twill then be G O D that actually  
 " *moves the Tongue, of a lying Witness,*  
 " *the Hand and 'Dagger of a Murderer.*"

T H E first Objection is grounded upon this, " That nothing but Matter  
 " can move Matter. This is proved  
 " thus; " That the Mobility of Matter,  
 " or its Capacity of receiving Motion,  
 " is wholly founded upon its Impene-  
 " trability or Resistance; by the Means  
 " of which 'tis qualified for hindring  
 " any thing from coming into its Place

" till

“ till 'tis removed out of it; and con-  
“ sequently, the Active Principle must  
“ be a Material or Solid Being, be-  
“ cause Matter could make no Resist-  
“ ance to the Action of a Being that  
“ was not Material, and therefore could  
“ not be moved by it, as there can  
“ be no Action without a Reaction  
“ or Resistance on the Part of Mat-  
“ ter. ” In answer to this it may be  
said, that tho' this Argument should  
hold good in all the Mechanical Com-  
munications of Motion from one Par-  
cel of Matter to another, yet it would  
prove nothing to the Purpose in the  
Present Case, unless it was big with  
another Proof, *viz.* That all Causes  
must be Mechanical Ones. Supposing  
the Existence of such a Thing as Mo-  
tion, which our *Atheists* will not ven-  
ture to deny, we have made it evident  
that an Infinite Series of Impulses  
without any Original Cause of those  
Impulses is a plain Impossibility and  
direct Nonsense, and also that the  
Self-Activity of Matter is not only  
repugnant to the Conceptions we  
have

have of it, but is inconsistent with some Appearances in Nature: And therefore tho' we could not give a satisfactory Answer to those Objections against an Immaterial Agents being the Author of Motion, it would by no Means follow that he was not. When *Zeno* was raising Difficulties against the Possibility of Motion, a Man in Company with him rose up and walk'd; this has been always look'd upon as a sufficient Answer, tho' no particular Solution was given of the Objections. If there are but Three possible Ways of accounting for Motion, and Two of them be evidently false, we shall have as good Evidence for the Third's being the true Account of Motion, as the Man that walk'd had for the Existence of Motion. And therefore how difficult soever it may be to conceive the Action of an Immaterial Being upon a Material One, yet as there is no other possible Way left, every unbiass'd Person must and ought to have Recourſe to a GOD, for a Solution of this *Phænomenon*.

BUT

BUT farther we have seen already that there is a Principle of Action in Virtue of which Bodies act upon one another in a different Manner from what they would do by the Mechanical Laws of Motion, *viz.* Gravitation. Whatever be the Cause of this Action, the Fact is evident, that it penetrates the solid Substances of Bodies, and therefore its Action cannot be founded upon the Impenetrability of Matter, or the Resistance it makes to it; it going beyond the Surface of Bodies. Whereas the Argument against an Immaterial Being's acting upon Matter is founded upon this Supposition, that there can be no Action upon Bodies but by Contact or Striking upon the Surfaces, and the consequent Resistance that Body makes to such a Shock or Impulse; which being evidently false, the Argument drawn from it can be of no Moment.

BUT this is not all; when we come to consider the Matter closely, I am persuaded we shall find as much Difficulty

difficulty in conceiving how Matter acts upon Matter, as in conceiving how an Immaterial Substance should act upon a Material One: For I will venture to refer it to any unprejudic'd Person, whether he cannot as easily conceive that an Immaterial Being may act upon Matter without Corporeal Contact, as that an Impulse upon a Part of the Body should move the whole Body; for nothing can account for this, but the Adhesion of the Parts of Body to each other, which is as much beyond our Conception of the divisible Nature of Matter, as the Action of Immaterial upon Material; and the Difficulty of conceiving it would encrease upon our Hands, if we should suppose with *Toland* that every Particle of Matter was Self-active; because then, as we before observed, all Matter must necessarily be in the highest State of Fluidity, and consequently the Particles of Matter could have little or no Union with one another.



2dly, THE other Objection against GOD's being the Author of Motion, is this; " That then He must be the  
" sole Cause of all the immoral Actions  
" that Men are suppos'd to be guilty  
" of; As when a Man bears false Wit-  
" nefs, it is not the Man that bears false  
" Witness, but GOD that gives Moti-  
" on to his Tongue; when he commits  
" Murder, it is GOD that does it, be-  
" cause 'tis GOD that moves his Hand  
" and the Dagger by which he com-  
" mits this Act." Whatever Strength  
there is in this Objection, it must entire-  
ly rely upon the Truth of this Suppo-  
sition, That if GOD were the Origi-  
nal Author of Motion, nothing else, no  
other Being whatsoever could have this  
Power of moving Matter: And the Rea-  
son of this must be, either because this  
is a Power which is in the Nature of  
the Thing incommunicable, as much so  
as necessary Existence and Independance,  
or at least, that 'tis such a Power as  
Man is incapable of receiving: If nei-  
ther of these be true, this Objection  
must amount to nothing.

As to the first Reason; If we contended for a Power of acting as we pleas'd, where and as long as we pleas'd, and this independently of GOD, we might be thought to plead for a Power which could not be disposed of, because there cannot be two or more Independent Beings, no more than there can be two or more Gods: But if when we contend for a Power of Self-motion in Man, we only mean a finite or limited Power, confined to a small Portion of Matter, and wholly depending upon the first M O V E R for its Continuance, no Reason can be given why such a Power as this may not be communicated. And therefore Mr. Bayle need not have put on such an Air of Concern, as he affects to do \* at the *Hypothesis* of free Agents; as if the admitting such particular Self-movers must necessarily exclude an Universal Mover. He brings an Instance from the *Chinese*, among which

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\* In voce Spinoza.

which People the Belief it seems of many Self-movers had this Effect; the first Universal M O V E R being wholly left out of their System of Religion: But then it must be observed, That the Belief of Free Beings had not this Effect, till they had so far sunk the Notion of a G O D, as to make Him only an *Anima Mundi*, that was acted upon by Matter, as our Souls are acted upon by our Bodies; and had raised the particular Souls, that animated the several Parts of the World, to such an Height, as to be almost entirely independent upon Him; which is the *Chinese Philosophy*, as Mr. *Loubiere* assures us. But so long as 'tis acknowledged, that the Self-moving Power is derived from G O D, and depends upon Him for its Continuance; so long as 'tis confessed, that in Him we *live, and move*, so long there can be no Fear of shutting out a G O D, from our taking in free Agents. And I am persuaded Mr. *Bayle* \* would have seen no Danger to Religion from free Agency, if this had not threatned his darling

O

Notion

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\* *Bayle's Dictionary*, Voce *Spinoza*.

Notion of a Principle of Evil; for he could easily see that all his Arguments drawn from the Moral Evil that appears in the World, must lose much of their Force, if once Free Agents were allowed of; because then G O D might be the Original Cause of Motion, and yet not the Cause of Moral Evil, of the wicked Acts committed by Men, or of the blasphemous Words they sometimes utter. But,

2dly, As to the other Reason, That granting some Degree of this Power might be communicated, that yet Man would be a Subject incapable of receiving any such Power; 'tis confessed, that G O D cannot give any Powers or Qualities to a Being that are inconsistent with that Nature which He has already given it, and that such a Being would be incapable of receiving them; that *Axiom in Philosophy* being very true, *Quicquid recipitur, ad modum Recipientis recipitur*; therefore that G O D could not give to Matter a Power of moving itself, because Matter is naturally and essentially Inactive; and consequently the

com-

communicating such a Power to it, would be destroying its Nature, and making it cease to be what it is. And if Man was altogether a Material Being, the Argument might be a just one; but as we have already shewn, That the Author of Motion cannot be a Material Being, the *Atheist* will never be able to prove, that there cannot exist other Beings besides him that are not Material, and which may therefore be capable, tho' Matter be not, of receiving from GOD a Power of moving themselves, or of beginning Motion.

THE *Atheist* will perhaps say, That if the Immateriality of an Infinite BEING be conceivable, yet not the Immateriality of a Finite or Limited one; because 'tis not easy to see what an Immaterial BEING should be limited or confined by, nor what should give it any particular Locality, or separate one Immaterial BEING from another; that if we suppose them to be distinguished from one another by the different Systems of Matter that they animate; we shall be forced to suppose something ve-

ry unintelligible, because Matter is perfectly heterogeneous to Immaterial Being: And whatever is such, can have no kind of Relation to it, and therefore not that of terminating its Essence, and by necessary Consequence we must be mistaken in accounting for human Actions by an Immaterial Principle, and then 'tis already granted, that God must be the sole Cause of all a Man's Actions, and therefore of his wicked ones too.

To avoid the Force of this Argument, some have fallen into a Notion of an *Anima Mundi* that informed the Bodies of all Animals, and consequently, that all that which we call particular Souls, was really one and the same Soul; that the Difference in different Individuals, was not a real, but only a seeming Difference; that it was every where the same numerical Soul that animated the several particular Systems of Matter, all the different Bodies of Individuals. But this was getting clear of one Difficulty at the expence of a much greater one. For if we have any clear

clear Ideas, they are certainly those which concern Identity. And yet nothing can be more evident than this, That whatever it is that thinks in several Individuals, it cannot be one and the same in all of them, because that which thinks in each Individual, thinks only for itself, and knows nothing of what passes in another, and therefore cannot be the same in both of them, no more than in two Atoms of Matter, one of them can be the same with the other. For Consciousness will be as necessary to the Identity of a Thinking Being, as the same Particles of Matter can be to constitute the same Material Being.

BUT in answer to the Difficulties of supposing Souls to be immaterial, and yet separate or distinct Portions of Immateriality, it would be sufficient to say, that Immaterial Beings may be separated from each other, tho' we could not conceive what it was that should bound or separate them; because the narrow Faculties of our Minds cannot be supposed to take in all possible

Modes of Being. This I say would be a sufficient Answer to this Difficulty; for a Difficulty that owes all its Strength to our Weakness, can never be a good Argument. If it could be one, then the Difficulty of conceiving the Action of Immaterial upon Material, would sufficiently prove that there neither was nor could be any such Thing, and yet we have already shewn it must be true with regard to One Immaterial BEING, *vis.* GOD, and no one will pretend to say, that there is any more Difficulty in conceiving the Limitation of Immaterial Beings, than there is in conceiving this very Action of Immaterial upon Material. The limited Nature therefore of an human Soul ought no more to be urged as a Proof of its being Material, than its acting upon an human Body be brought as an Argument to prove it a Body too. Since then the Soul may be immaterial, consequently GOD may have communicated to it a Power of Self-motion; and then Man and not GOD, will be the immediate Cause of all the evil Actions that are



committed by him, and none of those ill Consequences will attend the Supposition of GOD's being the Original Author of Motion, which *Toland* seemed to be afraid of. And then too he might have exchanged his singular Opinion concerning the essential Activity of Matter, for the Religious one which makes GOD the Cause of its Motion.

I HAVE insisted the longer upon this Point of Motion, because if I have well proved, That there is no introducing Motion into the World without admitting a Being distinct from Matter, the *Atheist* must then be contented to give over all Speculations concerning the Nature of the Universe, and of the Causes of that Variety we see in it; for no body will mind such an *Empirick* in *Philosophy*, as pretends to furnish us with a World, when he knows not where to look for a Being that would be able to move the Materials out of which he is to raise the Fabrick of it. For this is plainly to introduce an Effect without being able to assign a Cause of that Effect.

FROM the Possibility of GOD's communicating to some Beings, as Men, a Power of beginning Motion, I cannot but observe the Hazard which the *Atheist* runs, if he should be mistaken in his Clock-work Scheme, and he and the rest of his Fellow-Creatures should prove to be something more than mere Mechanism; because if he had a Power of directing any of his Actions with Freedom, he might be accountable for his Behaviour in such Actions, if there was any Being that could and would take account of them. This Proposition carries with it so much Evidence, that I believe the *Atheist* will not venture to dispute it.

I HAVE already shewn, That there must be a Principle of Motion distinct from Matter; that some Appearances in Nature prove to a Demonstration, that this Principle of Motion does not act as an *Anima Mundi*, but with the utmost Freedom; and therefore may take Account of the *Atheist's* Behaviour, if by Freedom of acting he is qualified to give such Account. It will  
there-

therefore very much concern him to be well assured, notwithstanding we have shewn, That there are, and must be Causes that act not by any Laws of Mechanism, that yet Man does; and yet if there are other than Mechanical Causes upon our Earth, the *Atheist* cannot deny that Man may put in as fair as any Thing whatever for being one of them; and therefore he may do well to consider which way he can possibly satisfy himself that he is not one of them. Especially too when every Man thinks he feels within himself in many of his Actions a Power of beginning Motion at Pleasure, and independently of any external Mover. But,

2dly, IF the Difficulties attending the Religious Scheme of God's being the Author of Motion, be such as may reasonably be accounted for; the *Sceptick* too may do well to consider, whether his mere doubting what is true or false on account of those Difficulties, will be a sufficient Justification of him for not embracing Religion. Whether he ought not rather to enter into a  
care-

careful Review of those Objections, for Fear his Inclination to doubt of every Thing might have tempted him to take for Difficulties those which are not really such. The Lazy Part of Mankind, who have some Wit and less Learning, despairing to gain any Credit by forming Schemes that would give some tolerable Account of Things, have in all Ages chose the much easier Task of puzzling, than of clearing up any Thing. They do not pretend to tell you, as the *Atheist* does, how the Matter of the Universe may be stirred without the Assistance of a GOD; but only, “ That there are so many Difficulties in accounting for Motion either with or without a GOD, that they cannot see which Side of the Question preponderates; and therefore hope they may be justified in Doubting where the Truth lies.” Tho’ I should think that rejecting Religion when a Man pretends not to see any thing else to be true, should be more Criminal, than rejecting Religion because a Man sees, or thinks he sees some

some other Thing to be the Truth, and consequently, the *Sceptick* will not run less Hazard than the *Atheist*, if his doubting concerning Religion, as well as the other's positive Denial of it, should at last prove to be ill-grounded. Perhaps the Security which both of them might promise themselves, supposing them to be mistaken in denying or doubting the Existence of a First MOVER distinct from Matter, would be this: That altho' there should exist such an Original Cause of Motion, yet it might not be an Intelligent Being, and therefore they should be safe, as it could take no Cognizance of what they were doing here. But I believe it would be hard enough for any Man to conceive Freedom without Intelligence. 'Tis possible indeed to conceive an Intelligent Being without Freedom of Action; but there is no conceiving how a Being should act freely without knowing what it does, and why it does any Thing; but the Intelligence of the Supreme BEING will be made evident, when we come to shew, that Matter cannot be the Subject of Intelligence.





# SERMON VIII.

ACTS XVII. 28.

*For in Him we live, and  
move, and have our Be-  
ing.*



HAVING already shewn,  
That there is no intro-  
ducing Motion into the  
World without the Help  
of a Being distinct from  
Matter, it would be plain  
enough that without such a BEING, no  
such Thing as Thought or Intelligence  
could ever have had an Existence in the  
World. For if Motion be necessary for  
the making Matter an Intelligent Being,  
as

as it must be if *Spinoza's* or *Hobbs's* Notion of Perception, which places it in the Action and Re-action of Bodies upon one another, were the Truth, then Intelligence could not be an essential Attribute of Matter, unless Motion was so too; and therefore must have some external Cause of its Being: This, I say, would be sufficient to shew, That *Spinoza's* Notion concerning the Existence of Intelligence, is altogether unphilosophical; because in such Case, Cogitation would be made to arise from nothing, unless he could believe this great Absurdity, *viz.* That Thought and Extension were the same Thing, or that Extension whether in Motion or at Rest was endued with actual Perception: Altho' if we can judge at all of the Nature of Intelligence from our own Perceptions, we must observe the Action of external Objects to be necessary to our having any actual Perception of what passes without us. *Toland* was so sensible of the Force of this Reasoning, that in his Discourse concerning Motion, he gives up *Spinoza*

as



as a Person, that upon this Account is not to be defended. “ The *Spinozists*, says he, “ have afforded Matter of Triumph to the *Spiritualists*, (for such he calls the Believers of a GOD) “ by acknowledging the Inactivity of Matter; for in this they were so unphilosophical as to assign an Effect without any Cause of it; as in the Case of Cogitation, when they made it to belong to all Matter, and yet allowed Matter to be naturally without Motion or inactive \*.” And yet as unphilosophical as it is to make Thought arise from still or inactive Matter, it will presently appear that those have not much the Advantage, who are forced to pump Sense and Intelligence out of senseless and unintelligent, tho’ active Matter. Yet *Toland* must do this, or else with us confess, That there is some Eternal, Intelligent BEING that is the Cause of all the Intelligence which is seen in Mankind.

FOR

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† See his Letter concerning Motion.

FOR there are but three possible Ways of accounting for the Existence of Thought or Intelligence :

1<sup>st</sup>, EITHER by supposing it an essential Attribute of Matter, as much so as Extension or Solidity ; which is the Way *Spinesa* and Mr. *Hobbs* have taken. Or,

2<sup>dly</sup>, IN supposing that 'tis not essential to Matter, but is an Effect of the Motion of Objects on some particular Arrangement of the Parts of Matter ; such as is seen in the Bodies of Animals. Or,

3<sup>dly</sup>, THAT there is in all Intelligent Beings a Principle distinct from Matter, and of a different Nature, from whence Thought or Intelligence does arise ; which is the Opinion of the Religious Man. Mr. *Lock*, indeed, supposes a fourth Way of accounting for Intelligence : “ That tho’ Matter was  
 “ a thoughtless and senseless Being, and  
 “ no Disposition of the Parts of it, how  
 “ curiously soever they might be put  
 “ together, would ever naturally rise  
 “ up into Thought and Understanding,  
 “ and

“ and tho’ there was no Principle of  
“ Thought in Man distinct from Mat-  
“ ter; that yet G O D by his infinite  
“ Power might superadd a Thinking  
“ Quality to Body or Matter.” But  
were this possible, it would do the  
*Atheist* no Service, because it supposes  
the Being of a G O D as necessary to the  
producing such an Effect upon Matter  
as that of Intelligence; or if it could at  
all favour him, it must then fall in  
with the second Way of accounting for  
Thought, *viz.* That such a Quality as  
Thought might *possibly* arise from Mat-  
ter disposed in such a Manner as are  
the Bodies of Animals, there being no-  
thing in the Nature of Matter that  
should make it incapable of receiving  
Intelligence, and consequently, if the  
Bodies of Animals could be formed  
without the Help of a G O D, there  
would be no Want of Him in account-  
ing for that Thought and Intelligence  
which belongs to those Bodies. But this,  
so far as the *Atheist* is concerned in it, is  
exactly the same with the second Way of  
accounting for Intelligence; and there-

fore I shall pass it over without any farther Remark.

AND proceed to a Consideration of the two Atheistick Accounts of Intelligence, and in Opposition to them; I will shew, That Intelligence cannot be an essential Attribute of Matter, nor an Effect of any peculiar Structure of the Parts of a senseless Being, such as Matter is supposed to be by the second Scheme.

1<sup>st</sup>, THAT Intelligence cannot be essential to Matter.

THAT which gave *Spinoza* the Hardiness of advancing the Essentiality of Thought to Matter was, That he thought he could not be disproved in his Assertion, because we did not sufficiently know the Nature of Intelligence to determine concerning the Subject of Thought; or to say what Sort of Being it must be that is capable of having such a Quality; and therefore Matter might be the Subject of it, for any thing we could say to the contrary. But the Answer to this is plain; Tho' I do not know all I could wish concerning Thought and the Subject of it;

it; yet I may know that Thought is not Extension; which is enough for our present Purpose: Because I shall shew, That it must be Extension, if it be an essential Attribute of Matter. I may be certain, I say, that Thought cannot be Extension; because to affirm this, would be just as if we should affirm, that any Consequence of Extension, such as a Triangular or Square Figure, and the Perception that the Mind has of such a Figure, were the same Thing; but the Ideas of the Trine Dimension and Thought, are so evidently different, that the Things represented by those Ideas cannot possibly be the same, unless all our Perceptions are mere Deceptions; and then 'tis to no Purpose to argue at all. But 'tis the *Sceptick*, not the *Atheist* that pretends to defend himself in this Way, whereas the latter always brings Reasons, such as they are, in Support of a contrary Scheme to the Religious one. It must then be granted me, that Thought and Extension cannot be the same Thing, and therefore we are only to shew,

That *Spinoza's* Notion of Thought's being essential to Matter, does by necessary Consequence make Thought and Extension the same Thing.

THAT there can be no real Difference between them, may be made evident by this one Consideration, That supposing them really different, one of them must arise from Nothing; for both Thought and Extension cannot be necessarily existent, if there be a real Difference between them, any more than there can be two Necessarily-existent Beings, which *Spinoza*, as well as we, denies: And yet by this Scheme of Things, Thought cannot be a Mode of Extension, or derivable from it, but must be equally Self-existent with Extension. *Spinoza* indeed pretends to assert, That the same Numerical Substance may have an infinite Number of essential Attributes, and of these he names particularly Thought and Extension, as different Attributes of the same Substance. But if the Difference he means, be a real, and not a notional, or at least a modal Difference, the

the Substances or Subjects of those different Attributes must be different too, otherwise he destroys the Foundation of all our Reasoning, which is laid in this *Axiom*, That those Things which agree with a third, must agree among themselves: And therefore if Thought and Extension were so united together as to constitute the same Essence or Being, and not different Beings, they must be the same in Reality, and not different from one another, any more than the same Substance can differ from itself. For, if every Part of Matter be endued with Perception, and every Part of it extended, unless Extension and Thought be of the same Nature, or one of them a Mode of the other, it will be impossible to conceive how they should constitute the same Substance or Being; there being no Room left for a real Difference, when the Whole and every Particle of Matter is supposed to be both extended and intelligent.

THAT which led *Spinoza* into this Mistake was, his confounding notional

Attributes with real ones; as appears from what he says in one of his Epistles in these Words: *Quod autem addis, nos ex definitione cujusque rei considerata unicam tantum proprietatem deducere valere, locum habet in rebus simplicissimis vel entibus rationis, at non in realibus. Nam ex hoc solo quod Deum definio esse ens ad cujus Essentiam pertinet Existentia, plures ejus proprietates concludo, nempe quod necessario existit, quod sit Unicus, Immutabilis, Infinitus, &c. Et ad hunc modum plura alia Exempla afferre possem qua impræsentiarum omitto \**. But there is nothing plainer than that those Attributes of GOD he has instanced in, and which he calls Properties, do no otherwise differ from each other, than as any other abstracted Notions of Mind do differ from one another. For the Oneness of GOD, his Immutability and Infinity, are Properties necessarily flowing from a Necessarily-existent Nature, and cannot possibly be separated from such a Nature

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\* Vide Spinozæ Epistol. 78. p. 598, 599.



ture without destroying it. Which shews them to be only partial Considerations, and not really different Attributes of the Divine Nature. Thus for Instance, the Existence of the Divine Nature may be considered without regard to Time or Place; but this is plainly a partial Consideration, because infinite Time and infinite Place, are the necessary Consequences of such an Existence, and therefore cannot be really separated from it. Thus then it appears by these Instances which *Spinoza* has brought for the Support of his Opinion, that he did not distinguish between real and notional Attributes. And therefore that he has not proved it possible for Thought and Extension to be Attributes of the same Substance, supposing them really different.

BUT as our present Unbelievers seem more inclined to depend upon the second Account of Intelligence, I shall proceed to consider how the *Atheist* defends it, and what Arguments may be brought for the Support of it. All the Arguments that can be brought to

defend such a Supposition as that which makes Thought to be Figure and Motion; or to arise from them, will be reduced to these: Either,

1<sup>st</sup>, THAT we are ignorant of the Nature of Thought *in what it consists*; and therefore it may be for all we know only Matter curiously put together, as in the Bodies of Animals, and we know not all the Effects that may arise from Matter in Motion, and therefore Thought may be one of them; that the Difference between Thought and Figure can be no good Argument against it, because we find certain Qualities, such as Colours, Sounds and Tastes, to be produced by the different Motions and Figures of Bodies, and therefore why not the Thoughts of the Mind, which are no more unlike to Figure and Motion than these are. Or,

2<sup>dly</sup>, IT may be said that there is as much Difficulty in conceiving that Corporeal Motions should excite different Ideas by acting upon an Immaterial Substance, *viz.* that certain Motions in Objects should be the Reason

of there being constantly certain Sensations in an Immaterial BEING, as that Thought should arise from some particular Situation of the Parts of Matter; and therefore where the Difficulties are equal, a Man may be at Liberty to take which Side of the Question he pleases.

IN answer to the first Argument; That we are ignorant of the Nature of Thought, and know not all the Effects that may arise from Matter in Motion; We say, That we may know enough of the Nature of Thought, and the Nature of Body (without knowing every Thing belonging to either) which may satisfy us, That Thought cannot possibly arise from Matter or Body, manage it as cunningly as you will. What *Tully* has said in his *Tusculan Questions* in Answer to a like Objection, will be a just Answer to this, *An si omnia ad Intelligendum non habeo que habere vellem, ne iis quidem que habeo mihi uti licebit?* Because we are ignorant of some Things which would much enlighten the Subject, it does not therefore sure follow

follow that we may not make use of what we do understand concerning it. If we do not know what Thought or Perception is, nor know all the Effects that may possibly arise from all the possible Ways of putting Matter together; yet we may know so much of the Nature of Thought and Figure, as to see that Thought is not mere Figure, nor a mere Passion or Reception of the Motion of Bodies. And then who shall hinder us from declaring what we do know of it, for this Reason only, Because we do not know every Thing belonging to it. I say, We may know that Thought is not Figure, altho' we know not every Thing belonging to Thought and Figure.

I/, BECAUSE in our Conceptions of Things, according to which we cannot help Judging, we find a real Difference between Thought and Figure, or between local Motion and the Perception of that Motion; and yet unless Thought be Figure and Motion, it will be impossible for any Man alive to  
conceive

conceive that Thought should arise from either or both of them. If Extension or Matter was a Thinking Being, we might then indeed conceive that from a more or less curious Arrangement of the Parts of Body, might arise more or less perfect Ways of Thinking, stronger or fainter Degrees of Perception and Sensation. But these Men grant Matter as Matter, to be as stupid and senseless as we could wish for. They acknowledge, that there is no more Excellency in the Atoms that compose the Eyes, Ears and Nose of a Man, than there is in any other Atoms that enter into the Composition of Bodies that are the farthest removed from any Thing like Life or Perception, and yet would vainly pretend from a good Management of those Atoms to derive Thought and Sensation. But let them prepare Matter as they will, so long as they confess it to be without Thought, they must have good Luck if they make any Body believe, that a single Thought can ever be drawn out of her. Mr.

*Bayle*

*Bayle* confesses, “ That all those who  
“ deny the Distinction between Soul  
“ and Body, talk childishly, unless they  
“ suppose the whole World to be ani-  
“ mated or endued with Understand-  
“ ing.” And therefore in his Opinion,  
there is no conceiving the Existence of  
Thinking Beings, supposing the Soul to  
be material, unless we believe all Mat-  
ter to be furnished with Thinking. And  
both *Spinoza* and *Hobbs*, who could nei-  
ther of them endure the Belief of Im-  
material Beings, were plainly forced to  
take Shelter in such a monstrous Doctrine  
as the essential Intelligence of Matter, be-  
cause they saw there was no conceiving  
how the bare Movement of the Parts  
of Matter should ever produce Thought,  
if there was originally no such Thing  
as Thought in Matter. For he that  
says he can suppose the meer Disposi-  
tion of the Organs of an human Bo-  
dy shall make a Substance to become  
thoughtful that had never Thought  
before, says what is impossible for him  
or any Man alive to conceive. For  
then he must make the Disposition of  
the

the Organs of an human Body to be Thought, altho' every Body else sees it can amount to nothing more than local Motion differently modified according to the Structure of those Organs, as the Movements in a Clock or Watch are regulated by the Disposition of its Wheels. But no Body has ever ventured to affirm, That he could clearly conceive local Motion alone to be sufficient to make a Substance devoid of all Thought and every Sentiment, to pass into actual Thought, or that any Substance could possibly pass from a Privation of all Thought to actual Thought, merely by being moved. Because this would be to say, That a Change of the Situation of the Parts of Matter, was a Sense of Pleasure and Pain, an Idea of Moral Virtue, of Truth or Falshood, an Affirming or Denying a Proposition, tho' at the same time we are sure we know fully the Nature and Essence of Change of Situation, without conceiving any thing of Sense or Perception as belonging to it. And therefore if an evident Difference

in

in our Ideas will prove any Difference in the Things themselves of which they are the Ideas, Thought cannot be Motion or Figure, nor Motion or Figure be Thought.

ARISTOTLE, after he had as he thought sufficiently provided by the Help of his Four Elements for all the Variety that appears in the Corporeal World, when he came to Thought, he presently saw that his Elements would never help him out, because mix them together in any Proportions he would, he saw no Likelihood of getting a single Thought out of them. And therefore, as *Tully* tells us, he saw himself under a Necessity of supplying the Defect of his Four Elements by adding a fifth to them, out of which he might extract all the Faculties of the Soul. *Aristoteles cum quatuor illa nota genera principiorum esset complexus è quibus omnia orirentur, Quintam quandam Naturam censet esse, è qua sit mens. Cogitare enim & providere & discere, & docere, & invenire aliquid, & tam multa alia meminisse, amare, odisse; cupere, timere; angi, letari. Hec & similia*



*similia eorum in horum quatuor generum nullo inesse putat. Tuscul. Quæst.* And therefore the *Aristotelians* as they believed Beasts to be Thinking Animals, would not trust to the mere Organization of their Bodies for an Account of their Thinking; but contrived for them a substantial Form entirely distinct from the Arrangement of the Parts of their Bodies, which should be the Cause of their Thinking; for this substantial Form, according to them, was neither Matter nor Body, nor composed of Matter. The *Cartesians* who on the contrary supposed Beasts to be barely Material Beings, would not allow them to be Thinking Beings, or to have any real Sense of Joy or Grief, Pleasure or Pain: So impossible did it appear to both those Sects of *Philosophy* to resolve Thought into mere Organization, or to make it a Mode of Extension. We may by the Way observe, that our modern *Atheist* does actually affirm Cogitation, Understanding and Volition, to be nothing but local Motion or Mechanism in the inward Parts of the Brain and  
Heart;

Heart; whereas the *Epicureans* went no farther than asserting them to be caused by Motion; but still thought Motion and Cogitation to be different Things.

THE singular Notion which *Des Cartes* advanced concerning Brutes, That all their Actions, tho' some of them look'd like an Effect of Thinking, were yet nothing but the Movements of a Machine; and the Success this Opinion met with in the World, did probably give our present *Atheist* the Hardiness of affirming, That all Kind of Thought was nothing but Motion in a proper Structure of the Parts of Body. And it must be confessed, That if his Notions concerning the Actions of Brutes were true, there would be a plausible Reason for resolving all the Faculties of an human Mind into mere Mechanism; for altho' he did not allow Brutes to be Thinking Beings, yet so long as their Actions have an Appearance of good Sense, if such Appearances may be resolved into the Powers of Mechanism, there would be no great Difficulty

culty in Accounting for the Operations of human Thought by the Help of a more curious and elaborate Organization; such as that of an human Brain. For if such Appearances of Thought, as those in Brutes, might be nothing but Motion, why might not Reflection, and such other Acts of the Mind by which we are wont to distinguish ourselves from Brutes, be performed by Motion too? But I am persuaded the more we consider this Matter, the more it will appear impossible that Thought should be Motion, or even that it should be drawn out of any Construction of Matter by the Help of any Degree of Motion whatsoever, unless a Way could be found out for furnishing Matter with the Gift of Thinking. For so long as Matter or Extension has not that Gift, the *Atheist* will be forced to father upon it a Brat that has not any the least Resemblance to its Parent, to assign an Effect to a Cause that has no Kind of Relation to it. We see an evident Dependence that the Divisibility of Matter has

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upon

upon solid Extension, we see in this Extension a Reason *a priori* of all that Variety of Figures that Matter is capable of receiving, and of all the Mechanical Qualities which depend upon its Figure. But the *Atheist* no more than we can see any Kind of Connexion, or any Dependence of Thought upon Figure or upon Extension in any Shape whatever. And therefore here is a *Phænomenon* in Nature for the Existence of which, upon the Foot of *Atheism*, no Reason can be given.

I CAN see no Way the *Atheist* has left for retaining his Opinion of Thought depending upon the Organization of the Parts of Body, if he must acknowledge, that there is no Kind of Resemblance between Thought and Figure; unless he should say, That in this he supposes nothing more inconceivable than what the Religious Man supposes, when he ascribes to GOD Effects that have no Kind of Similitude to Him: And such confessedly are all Material Effects, that 'tis as hard to conceive that Matter should be derived from Thought, as that

that

that Thought should be wrought out of Matter. But the Answer to this will be easy; for the Religious Man does not suppose Material Effects to have flowed from GOD as from an emanative Cause, but to have been brought by Him into Being from Nothing; and therefore is not obliged to look out for any Resemblance between the Cause and the Effect; whereas the *Atheist*, rejecting all creative Power, must look out for such a Cause of the Existence of Beings as may have some Kind of Resemblance with the Effects depending upon it. Otherwise he must introduce Beings into the World without a sufficient Reason for their Existence.

HE will perhaps say, That Colours, Sounds and Tastes, are produced by Matter and Motion, and yet that there is as little Resemblance between these Qualities and the Figure of Bodies, as there is between Thought and Figure. And this would be a just Objection, if Matter and Motion did really produce Colours and Sounds; but these are in

the Bodies themselves nothing more than different Degrees of Motion arising from the different Contexture of those Bodies. Whatever goes beyond this, has no real Existence in the Bodies, but is only a Cloathing which the Mind puts upon these Motions, which Motions are nothing more than an occasional Cause of the Mind's receiving such or such Ideas.

HAVING now shewn from the Ideas we have of Matter and Thought, that there is no Possibility of drawing Thought out of Matter. I will now proceed to shew, That the Unity and Simplicity of Thought, and the Continuance of one and the same Thinking Being for many Years together, which we must all of us confess to be true, can never be reconciled either with the Compound Nature of Matter, or with the continual Changes to which all Material Compositions are subject: I say therefore,

*2dly*, THAT Unity of Thought, by which we find all our Sensations united in one Thinking Being, could never arise

rise from any Compound Substance, such as Matter, and every Construction of Matter is known to be; and therefore tho' we did not know all that we could wish for concerning the Nature and Subject of Cogitation; yet so long as we may know that a single Principle, such as that of Thought is, cannot be an Effect or Result from the Action of any Compound Being, we may venture with all our Ignorance of the Nature of the Soul to affirm, That human Thought was not caused either by Extension or by the Figure of an human Body.

'Tis evident that Man is one, not many Thinking Beings; that amidst all his various Sensations and Perceptions, there is some one single Principle that is the Subject of all of them; 'tis plain too, that there is something in Man, which thinks and contrives for the Benefit of his whole System; from whence nothing can be more evident than that there must be a Principle of Individuation, whatever it be, that joyns certain Parts of the human Fa-  
Q 3 brick

brick together, and which thinks and acts conforantly for the Use and Purpose of those Parts: That there must be something in our Composition like to what I have already described, cannot be deny'd by any Body. The only Enquiry that wants to be made, is, Whether Matter in any Shape is capable of acting as a Principle of Individuation? And we are sure that 'tis utterly incapable for any such Employment; because which ever Atheistick Scheme we take, the Principle of Conscioufness would be a Compound Being. For, to begin with *Spinoza's* Scheme, which makes every Particle of Matter to be Cogitative, 'tis plain there must be as many Thinking Beings in Man as there are Particles in an human Body, unless the *Spinosist* would attempt to shew us a Way by which an infinite Number of conscious Parts of Matter may be melted down into one conscious Part. For notwithstanding the Union of Parts in a Compound, the Parts still remain as different from each other as ever, and therefore there must be good Reason  
for



for believing that the Thoughts of those Parts of Matter could be no more united than the Parts themselves. And as to the Government of the human Fabrick, it would be necessary for the *Spiz. sifu* to shew how all the Atoms of an human Body were persuaded to chuse one Atom, and invest it with a Power of Acting for the whole, and what it is that hinders them from recalling their Grant, and acting separately? Till these Questions are answered, *Spinoza* will appear to have built a single Thinking Principle upon a very precarious Foundation. As he has never thought fit to give us any Satisfaction in these Inquiries, his Scheme must deservedly pass for a groundless and silly Account of Things in this Particular.

THE other Scheme, which would derive Thought from some particular Organization of the Parts of Matter, is liable to the same Inconvenience. For every Organization of Matter, being a Composition of Matter, will for that Reason be unable to

furnish us with a single Conscious Being. Tully supposes them to be mere Blockheads that have advanced a Compounded Being into a Principle of human Thought. *In animi Cognitione dubitare non possumus, nisi plane in Physicis plumbei sumus, quin nihil sit animis admixtum, nihil concretum, nihil copulatum, nihil duplex. Tuscul. Quest.* And the Reason is plain; because if the Principle of Thinking was a Being compounded of Parts, all those Parts, as I have already observed, being the Subject of Thinking, would constitute as many Conscious Beings as there are Parts that constitute the Thinking Principle. For the Union of Parts in a Compound, is not an Union close enough to produce Unity of Thought; this will necessarily require the strictest of all Unions, *viz.* that by which Beings are united into a Sameness or Identity. Any Unity less than this, would never make a Man feel as he does, that all his Perceptions have a Relation to one and the same Thinking Being.

THAT

THAT such an Union as that of Identity, is necessary to account for Unity of Thought, is evident from this Consideration, That without such an Unity in the Principle of Thinking, we could never, for Instance, see the whole of any Object whatsoever ; because if the Soul was a Being compounded of many Parts, every Part would only receive a Part of the Image of an Object, and no Part would receive the Whole, and consequently a Man could have no Image of the Whole of an Object, unless the Parts of the Soul could communicate to each other their Part of the Image. But there is no Ground for such a Supposition ; because 'tis certain, that when any solid Body is put into Motion, every Part of the Body retains a certain Degree of Motion in Proportion to its Bulk, without communicating *that* Degree of Motion to any of the other Parts of the same Body. The *Atheist*, who owns the Relation between Thought and Motion, cannot except against this Argument, nor shew any Reason why one Part of  
Matter

Matter should communicate to another Part its Share of Thought, when there are no such Communications of Motion from the Parts of Body to each other. But supposing it possible that the whole Image of an Object might be impress'd upon every one of those Parts that are the Subject of Thinking, there would be this Inconvenience attending such a Supposition; that we must admit an Absurdity, and something harder to conceive than the Doctrine of the Schoolmen, which the *Atheist* is wont to laugh at, *viz.* That the Soul or perceptive Faculty would be then *tota in toto, & tota in singulis partibus*. For in this Case there would be a double Image of every Object; for every Atom that constitutes the Subject of Thinking, would have the whole Image of the Object, and all the Atoms taken together, would have the same whole Image too; which is plainly superfluous or needless, as well as 'tis inconceivable. If the *Atheist* looks upon this as Nonsense in a Schoolman, when 'tis applied to an

Immaterial

Immaterial Soul, he ought to give a Reason why it should not pass for such in him, when he applies it to a Material one. He ought to shew, That a Representation of Objects twice over, is impertinent in the one Case, but not so in the other; that the one is conceivable in a divisible Subject, but not so in an indivisible one, which an immaterial Soul is supposed to be. When he has done this, we will acknowledge that a Compound Being, such as Matter is, may be, for all that we have said to the contrary, the true Principle of Thought.

BEFORE I leave the *Atheist*, I cannot but observe his unfair Dealing, when he pretends the Difficulty of conceiving some Powers ascribed to GOD, as a Reason for his rejecting Religion, and yet at the same time submitting quietly to the Drudgery of believing some of the most incredible Things in the World. This Particular of Intelligence will furnish me with a plain Instance of it, if we do but take Notice of his Method of extracting it  
out

## SERMON VIII.

out of Matter. He desires only Motion and a little Curiosity in the Composition of Matter, and then he has gotten Intelligence, tho' he knows Motion, before it came into such a Composition as that of an human Body, had no Sense at all; He knows too, that every Configuration of Matter without Motion is as senseless as any Thing that is most so; and this Man so hard to believe any thing of Religion, can believe that a Composition of Matter and Motion shall be Thought and good Sense, tho' separately there is not a Grain of Sense in either of them. He can believe one Sort of Figure to be nothing more than a Termination of Extension, but another Figure besides this shall be an Act of Sensation, by which it perceives its own Existence, and that of the Figures that surround it; that if Matter happens to fall into the Shape of Nerves and Bones, then Thought shall immediately start out of them; but if you mix up Matter in any other Shape, 'twill be nothing but senseless Matter,  
and

and not a single Thought to be got out of her. He can believe one Sort of Motion to be nothing but bare Change of Situation, when another Sort of Motion shall be, besides this, an Act of Joy or Grief, of Hope or Trust in God. He would be thought to be more nice and scrupulous in Examining into the Bottom of every Question than other People; and 'tis for this Reason he cannot go such Lengths in believing as the Religious Man. And yet this very Cautious Person can easily see that a Being made up of infinite Parts, may be the Cause of the most simple Thing in Nature, *viz.* Personality; That the Union of the Parts of Matter, is the same Sort of Union as that by which all our Sensations are united into one Thinking Person. He can believe as we have just now seen, that a Material, Divisible Soul may be *tota in toto, & tota in singulis partibus*; and yet can see nothing but unintelligible Jargon in it, if a Schoolman offers to apply it to a Soul that is not Material or Divisible into Parts. But I am persuaded these  
will

## S E R M O N VIII.

will appear to be Articles of Belief of so hard a Digestion, that the *Atheist* must not pretend to defend his Infidelity by objecting Difficulties in Religious Belief.

*Now to the King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, the Onely Wise GOD, be all Honour and Glory for ever and ever. Amen.*







## SERMON IX.

ACTS XVII. 28.

*For in Him we live, and  
move, and have our Be-  
ing.*



IN the precedent Discourse I have shewed, That the Unity of Thought by which all our Sensations are united into one Thinking Being, and by which we are conscious to ourselves that we are not many, but one Thinking Being, could never be reconciled with the Compound and  
Divisible

Divisible Nature of Matter; and therefore not with any Construction of Matter whatsoever.

I COME now to offer another Argument, why Thought cannot be an Effect of any Composition of Matter. Because we see the Consciousness of being the same Thinking Being, not only continued with all the particular Sensations of the Body, but even carried thro' all the Changes of Figure or Organization, that must happen to the Body, in the different Stages of a Man's Life. The Man shall be conscious to himself that he is the same Thinking Being, for Instance, at this present, that he was Forty Years ago; or as far as his Memory will carry him backwards to any distant Part of his Life already pass'd. Those who place Thinking in every Particle of Matter, cannot tell how 'tis possible to continue the *same* Thinking Being for even Twenty Years together, in which Time and much less, any *Anatomist* can tell us there will be a Sett of Atoms wholly new, and not one of the old ones left; and yet the  
Man



which was perhaps never so much as dream'd of. Supposing all this to be true, that we are not really the same Thinking Being that we were some Years ago, but only think that we are such; yet the *Atheist* would be obliged to shew some probable Reason of a Man's thinking himself to be the same Person, when he is not such. And this I believe would prove as great a Difficulty as the other; for when the Subject of Thought is wholly changed (as we suppose) and a new one succeeds, there can be no more Reason for a Man's being conscious of what was done by his former self, than there would be for his being conscious of what was done by any other Person in the World. His present Self would have no more Relation or Acquaintance with his former one, than it would have with the most distant Man upon Earth, of whose Thoughts he neither knows nor pretends to know any Thing.

AND as to the second Account of solving human Thought by the peculiar Organization

Organization of an human Body, this will as little account for the Sameness of Person in the different Stages of Life as the former; for those who make Thought to depend upon the particular Arrangement of the Parts, must allow, that the Difference in a Man's Opinions, in his Inclinations and Passions, will depend upon the Difference of Organization; and yet a Man when he has changed his Opinions and Thoughts of Things, and has quite different Inclinations from what he had before, is yet fully persuaded that he is still one and the same Person with him who held those different Opinions, with him who had Inclinations different from his present ones. The Objects that move the Passions and Inclinations of Children, are usually very different from the Objects that delight the same Child when grown up into a Man; and yet the Child and the Man, for all this Difference, are united into the self-same Person; if we should compare a Man of the greatest natural Abilities that ever was, sup-

pose *Cæsar* with *himself* when Five Years old (for so far backwards a Man's Memory may possibly carry him into the Childish Part of his Life, and we have already seen that the Consciousness of being the same Person, reaches as far as the Memory can acquaint us with what was done by ourselves) I say, if we should compare the Man *Cæsar* with himself at Five Years of Age, there would be as much Difference between the Spirit and Understanding, the Passions and Affections of the Boy and the Man, as there would be between *Cæsar* the Man and another Man: And yet the Boy and the Man, with all their different Sentiments are acknowledged to have been the same Person. But this would be impossible, if Organization was the Subject of Personality, because then every Change in the Organization, must of Necessity produce a Change of Person; for I will defy any Man to conceive it possible, that the Subject of Personality shall be changed, and yet the Person continue the same. There being no possible Reason to be given,

given, why Two Men, considered as Persons, should be really different from each other, but because the Subject of Personality is not the same in both of them: Which shews to a Demonstration that the Subject of Thought in Men, must be something that is Steddy and Permanent, not any Composition of Matter which is perpetually changing.

ACCORDING to the Religious Man's Scheme of Things, this Diversity of Opinions and Practices in the different Parts of Life, is very conceivable by supposing some Alteration made in those Organs of Sense, by the Means of which the Soul has Notice conveyed to it of what passes without it. This, I say, would be easy enough to conceive, were there no Difficulty in conceiving the Union of an Immaterial Being with one that is Material, no Difficulty in imagining what those Bands and Ligaments should be, that could fasten together a Pair that are so little like one another, that there is not any one Quality or Feature, any one Disposition, internal or external, in which they resemble one

another ; and yet to find that whenever Body is affected by external Objects, that *Psyche* conceives a Thought, as if Body was the *Natural Parent* of that Thought ; that from the Motion or Agency of Matter in an human Body, Thought should as certainly and steddily arise, as if Thought was the genuine Off-spring of Matter, and its Motion the real and entire Cause of that Effect : These 'tis acknowledged are great Difficulties ; and come now in Course to be considered with the second Argument by which the *Atheist* is wont to justify himself, *viz.* “ That there is as much  
 “ Difficulty in conceiving that Corpo-  
 “ real Motions should constantly ex-  
 “ cite different Ideas by acting upon  
 “ an Immaterial Substance, *viz.* that  
 “ certain Motions in Objects should be  
 “ the Reason of there being certain  
 “ Sensations in an Immaterial Being ;  
 “ as that Thought should arise from  
 “ some particular Situation of the Parts  
 “ of Matter.” And yet we cannot allow this Difficulty to be a sufficient Reason for rejecting an Immaterial Soul ;



Soul; because we find by Experience that there are many Difficulties in Nature, which the *Atheist* must allow as well as we. For he must grant Something to be Infinite, and then there must be some Effects flowing from the Action of an Infinite Power, that will not fall within the Cognizance or View of a limited Understanding; and therefore the fairest Way of Determining, when there is a Necessity of Determining one Way or other, is to weigh the Difficulties on both Sides, and see which preponderates, and determine ourselves accordingly. And then I am sure the *Atheist* will gain nothing by this Objection; for if we have shewn it to be impossible that Thought should be Figure or Motion, or should arise from either separately, or from both together, or that it should be an essential Attribute of Matter, and that there is no other possible Way of Accounting for Intelligence, unless they will admit an Immaterial Soul; there can be no Reason for suspending a Determination in such a Case on account

of any Difficulties in conceiving the Action of Material upon Immaterial.

BUT the *Sceptick* will perhaps put the Objection in this manner; “ That the  
 “ Difficulty of conceiving the Opera-  
 “ tion of Material upon Immaterial,  
 “ must be at least as great as that of  
 “ conceiving Thought to arise from  
 “ the Action of Matter or Body; be-  
 “ cause supposing the last to be incon-  
 “ ceivable, ’tis no more so than the  
 “ former, which no Body pretends to  
 “ understand; and if the Inconceivable-  
 “ ness of it be no Reason for rejecting  
 “ the Action of Material upon Imma-  
 “ terial, neither ought the Inconceiv-  
 “ ableness of Thought’s arising from  
 “ Matter, be a Reason for our rejecting  
 “ a Material Soul, because Matter be-  
 “ ing Infinite, many Effects may arise  
 “ from it that a Finite Being can-  
 “ not conceive; and then, Why not  
 “ Thought? If we think ourselves sure  
 “ that Thought is not Figure and  
 “ Motion; we may be as sure that  
 “ Matter can have nothing to do  
 “ with

“ with what is not Matter. Consequently  
 “ the Difficulties being equal, the *Scep-*  
 “ *tick* will say, there can be no suffi-  
 “ cient Reason for determining this  
 “ Question either Way. ”

IN Answer to this, 'Tis granted that we can no more conceive the Action of Material upon Immaterial, than the producing Thought from Figure and Motion, that is, we can conceive neither of them ; so far then they shall be equal. But this is not all, we assert not only that we cannot conceive the Production of Thought from Figure and Motion, but also that we are sure 'tis impossible it should be produced merely from Figure and Motion ; and this we are persuaded of, not because such a Thing is out of the Limits of our Conceptions, which the *Sceptick's* Objection drawn from the Infinity of Matter supposes ; but because we see in such an Assertion a manifest Repugnance or Contradiction to our Conceptions, as I have already shewn \*.

But

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\* See Sermon VIII.

But I will defy the *Sceptick* to shew such a Repugnance in the Action of Material upon Immaterial; for since we have proved \*, That the Principle of Motion cannot be a Material Being, thence it must follow, that an Immaterial Being does, and must act upon a Material one. And if Immaterial may act upon Material, I am sure it can never be proved impossible, that Matter should act upon that which is not Matter. For it can't be denied, that we may as easily conceive Matter to act upon *that* which is *not* Matter, as that what is *not* Matter should act upon Matter: We can as easily conceive that Thought should be a Consequence of the Motion of Body upon an Immaterial Soul, as that Motion in Body should be a Consequence of *Volition*, which is the *supposed* Action of an Immaterial Being upon a Material one. This being plain, a fair Examiner would conclude, tho' he does not understand how 'tis, that the Action of Matter or Body upon the  
Soul

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\* See Sermon VI.

Soul depended upon the arbitrary Disposition of that GOD, who tho' Immaterial Himself, does move Matter, and was therefore able to unite Material and Immaterial in such a Manner, that the Motions of the former should affect the latter; and not, as the *Atheist* pretends that such a Difficulty as this hinders him from seeing that some Simple Being, (exempt from those Changes which Matter, and every Organization of Matter is subject to) is the Cause of Personality, or the Sameness of a Thinking Being. We have then gained the Existence of something in Man that is not Material, *viz.* an Immaterial Soul.

FROM whence we may observe, That the *Atheist* is deprived of the principal Advantage he proposed to himself in quitting Religion. We are told by the *Epicureans*, That the chief Aim they had in quitting Religion, was to free themselves from any Solitude and anxious Fears concerning a future State, as appears by *Virgil* and *Lucretius*.

*tius* \* When our modern *Freethinker* quotes with Pleasure these or such-like Passages, we may fairly believe him to be swayed by the same Motive; but 'tis evident he can never free himself upon any rational Grounds from such Fears. For if the Principle of Thinking cannot be a Being of a Compound Nature, he ought to tell us and satisfy himself if he can, what can alter such a Being, and make it leave off Thinking as soon as his Corporeal Structure becomes unfit for continuing any longer the Vital Functions. We can easily conceive that the Union of the Parts of a Compound Being, such as an human Body, may be broken; the Parts disband and take different Routs, and afterwards appear in another Form, by

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\* Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas,  
Atque metus omnes & inexorabile fatum  
Subjecit pedibus, strepitumque Acherontis avari.

*Virgil. Georg. Lib. 2. v. 490.*

Et metus ille foras præcepit Acherontis agendus  
Funditus, humanam qui turbat Vitam.

*Lucret. Lib. 3.*

by joyning together in a different manner, and composing some new System with different Qualities: Because such Parts, notwithstanding their Union, are really different from each other, and therefore will be capable of existing apart from each other; whereas there is no conceiving any real Difference in a simple Substance: Therefore as such it must be incapable of putting on another Form, or being divested of any Qualities that 'tis naturally possess'd of, and then the Dissolution of the Parts of an human Body will never infer a Total Cessation of Thought in such a Being as Man.

IF it be said that since a Defect in certain Organs of the Body shall cause a Disorder and a Distemper in our Thinking Faculty, why should not a Total Destruction of all the Organs bring on the Death of the Thinking Being, or a Total Cessation of its Thinking; or if an Original or Accidental Fault in any one of the Instruments of Sense, such as those of seeing and hearing, shall make us incapable

ble of having any Thoughts concerning Colours and Sounds, or make us incapable of receiving any further Notices concerning the visible or audible Qualities of Bodies; therefore why should not the entire Destruction of all the Organs of Sense put a final End to all our Thoughts: It will be a sufficient Answer to this Objection, if we say that the Dependence which the Principle of Thought has upon the Body in its Operations of thinking while 'tis united to it, can never be so good a Proof of its totally ceasing with the Body, as the Simplicity of the thinking Principle will be to prove that it has no separable Parts, by whose Separation from each other, the whole might be supposed (as in Compound Beings) to exchange its thinking Quality for another that was not such. And therefore the Dissolution of a Compound Being, such as an Human Body, can never give the *Atheist* any reasonable Grounds for believing the Extinction of a Simple Being, such as the Principle of Thought is already proved



proved to be. And as he allows not any Annihilations of Beings, he will never be able to tell us by what Means the thinking Principle in Man should lose its Faculty of thinking. Thus then the *Atheist* seems to be entirely disappointed, when he hopes by throwing off Religion to get quit of the Fears of an After-state.

2dly, GRANTING the *Spinozist* for once that the Consciousness of a Man's being the same Person or thinking Being in all the different Parts of his Life, may be reconciled with the Flux Nature of Body, with the continual Changes of its Materials; giving him even this I say to make the best he can of it, I am confident that upon second Thoughts he would not thank me for this Concession: For he will then be as little able to secure himself against the Fears of Evil in an after-State as he would be by believing a GOD; because there will be no destroying Thought even in this Case by destroying the Body. For supposing Thought to be Extension, then

then the Dissolution of the Body at Death could by no Means put an End to its thinking, any more than it could to its Extension: And notwithstanding the Separation of the Parts of an human Body when 'tis corrupted, yet all the Particles still continue to be extended Substances, and therefore thinking Substances, if Thought be Extension, and Extension Thought. And then such thinking Substances, may be obnoxious to as great or greater Evils and Miseries in another State than they are in this. For when the Corporeal Particles that compose our *Atheist* are separated at his Death, they must still retain a Sense of Pleasure and Pain, or be capable of receiving either, if every Atom of Matter be thoughtful; and he cannot be so weak as to think that no other Atoms, but those that form the Thoughts of a Man, can be malicious, and do him a Mischief. And then there may be many Thinking Substances in the Air and elsewhere, that may be as well qualified to do him a Mischief

chief in the future State, as the Atoms that compose the Thoughts of Men are in this present One.

I F he says that the Thinking Atoms, of which his dead Carcass will consist, can have no more relation to him than the Atoms of any other dead Body, and therefore that he shall not be affected by any Sufferings of theirs; I would then ask him the Reasons he has for believing so, so long, I mean, as he believes that the same Conscious Being shall continue in a Man for Seven, or twice Seven Years; and yet every Body knows, that in such a Distance of Time, there is not perhaps a single Atom left of the old ones. If after all these Changes the Man still feels to his Grief, that he is the same Man now in a Fit of the Gout, suppose, that he was Ten Years past in a Fever; what Security can the *Atheist* have that Death will put an End to his Troubles? Why not rather fear, that his dead Body may enter into the Composition of some other System of Thinking Matter; and he become as sensible of the Good or Evil

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that

that shall befall such a System, as he is of what befalls his present Frame? I must affirm this to be as conceivable, as that every Atom in a Man's Body should be changed, and yet the same Person or Thinking Being continue; supposing the *Atheist's* Scheme a true one, *viz.* That human Thought hath no other Cause of its *Being*, besides the perpetual Changes in the Particles that compose an human Body. Thus we see that giving the *Spinosist* what he contends for, he is yet as far as ever from gaining what he chiefly aimed at, and which he could not hope for in Religion, *viz.* Rest and Impunity after he is dead.

BUT perhaps the other Account of Thought, which places it in a particular Organization, may be espoused by some Persons as a better Security against the Apprehensions of Evil in another World; as they think the Destruction of that particular Organization must carry with it a total Extinction of Thought, and consequently of Conscience. Because if the Soul be nothing  
more

more than what *Dicæarchus* believed it, *viz.* A Body consisting of Parts of such a particular Figure as is necessary to Life \*, when the Body loses that Figure which is necessary to its Life, the Power of Thinking must be entirely lost with it. But even here, safe as the *Atheist* thinks himself, while he endeavours to avoid the Immortality of Thought by denying that it is an essential Attribute of Body, is not so near a total Cessation of Thought as he hopes for. For he must allow Thought to be one of the Modifications which Body is capable of receiving; and then he must acknowledge, that there is no destroying any Mode, without producing another of the same Kind; because it fares thus with all the Modes of Body with which we are acquainted; for the Corruption of one Mode is always the Generation of another of

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\* Nec quidquam nisi corpus ita figuratum, ut remperatione Naturæ vigeat & sentiat. Vid. Cicero Tuscul. Quest

the same Sort; as we see the discharging of one Colour, is an introduction to another; the loss of one Figure the gain of another. If it be said, That Motion is a Mode, and may be totally extinguished, and therefore why not Thought? I answer, That Motion is not a Mode which depends upon Body or any Attribute of Body for its Production, but upon a Cause wholly different from and foreign to it, as I have already shewn\* ; whereas Thought is supposed by the *Atheist* to be entirely derived from the Body, and therefore must either depend upon some Attribute of Body, or proceed from nothing. But of all such Modes as are founded upon the essential Attributes of any Substance, and derive their Modality from thence, it will be always most true to affirm, that you only Change one Mode for another of the same Sort, but no more destroy them all, than you can destroy the essential Attributes from whence they flow. And therefore tho'

that

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[ See Sermon VII

that particular Way or Mode of Thinking which belongs to the human Fa-  
brick may cease, yet we can see no  
Reason why all Sort of Thinking should  
be extinguished with it, any more than  
why the Extinction of one particular  
Figure in Body should draw after it  
the Destruction of all Figure, which  
we know to be impossible without an  
utter Annihilation of the Body. This  
Reasoning would equally hold tho'  
Thought was not a Mode of Extension,  
but of some unknown Attribute of  
Matter, because it would be no more  
possible to destroy a Mode of that un-  
known Attribute without generating an-  
other, than it would be in the Case  
of Extension.

BUT then the *Atheist* will say, That  
a different Mode will have no concern  
with him, and he cannot be affected  
by any Sentiments of Pain that his Bo-  
dy may be affected with in another  
State. I will allow him to be as posi-  
tive in this as he pleases, when he is  
able to tell me (I mean upon any Foot  
of *Atheism*) what 'tis makes him to be

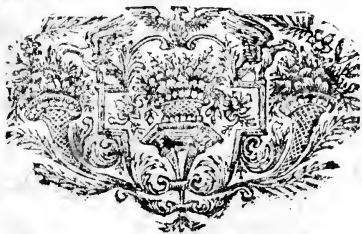
the same Person at this Time, when he believes Matter or the World to be the supreme and onely Being, with that self who perhaps formerly believed, as we do, an Intelligent Being that created the World. What it is that makes him believe himself as much concerned in the Pleasure and Pains of the former Parts of his Life, as in those of the present Time, tho' many considerable Alterations may have happened in his internal and external Fabrick. When he can reconcile this Sameness of Person with all the Changes that his Body has undergone in a Course of many Years, it will be then time to grant, that the Thoughts of the dead Person may have no Concern with those of the living one. Till then, the *Atheist* by this Scheme, no more than the *Spinosist*, will be able by any fair Deductions from his own Principles to secure himself against the Fears of Evil in a future State, since we have already seen he cannot prove a total Cessation of Thought after Death, nor tell us what Change of Organization will certainly destroy Con-

sciousness



sciousness. Or that such a Change as that at our Deaths, must necessarily do it, so long as he allows Consciousness to keep pace with all the Changes that happen to a Man in a long extended Life.

THUS then the *Atheist* must be a most unhappy Creature, when he cannot live without GOD in *this* World, but he must be without *Hopes* too of being at Rest when he is *out* of it







# SERMON X.

ROMANS I. 22.

*Professing themselves to be  
Wise, they became Fools.*



THESE Words were designed by St. Paul against those who frequented the Schools of the Philosophers, and yet did not leave off the Assemblies of the Heathen Temples, where GOD was worshipped in an Image or Similitude of a Man, or what was more unworthy of Himself, a Bird or Beast, or even a Reptile or creeping Thing, as  
we

we find by the 23<sup>d</sup> Verſe. No doubt theſe Men richly deſerved this Censure of *St. Paul's*, viz. That notwithstanding all the Learning of the Schools, their Conduct ſhewed them to be as ignorant of the Nature of GOD as any of the meanest of the Vulgar, whilst they joyned with them in paying Honour to ſuch ridiculous Representations of the DEITY. And yet I cannot help believing that the School of *Epicurus* in *St. Paul's* Days, and their Successors the *Spinofists* in ours, have a much better Title to this Censure of our Apostle, than any other Sect or Sort of Men that either now are, or ever were in the World; and that they have not shewn stronger Marks of Ignorance and Folly in any one Point of their *Philosophy*, than when they endeavour to account for the curious Contrivance of this World, without the Help of a Contriving Agent.

THE *Atheist's* Way of Rearing up the World is thus: He supposes the whole Material World, such as we find

find it, to be the onely God or Necessarily-existent Being; that the whole Frame of Things, the Heavens, the Earth, and the regular Order in which they appear to us, proceeded as an Effect from the unguided, but necessary Laws of Motion from Eternity: That the several Species of Animals, as well as the Inanimate Parts of the World, and even Rational Beings, such as Men, did all spring up from these unguided Motions.

THE *Alchymists* with their Philosopher's Stone, may pass for sober and serious Persons when compared with these Men; for they pretended only to the Secret of moving Matter in such a Manner as to transmute it into Gold; but these People pretend to give us a World full of Contrivance and Curiosity merely by the Help of Motion, tho' there shall be no Body to direct that Motion. For tho' *Spinoza* supposed his Matter to be furnished with Understanding, yet he did not allow it to make any Use of its Understanding in directing any of its Motions; for these  
are

are supposed by him to be the Necessary Laws of Matter in Motion: Whereas the *Chymist's* Matter that was to make Gold was managed by an Intelligent Agent, and 'tis possible to suppose a proper Motion among the several Degrees of Motion might be given it. but the *Atheist* has left his Matter to shift for itself, he allows it may be stirred, tho' he cannot tell by what, or by whom, as we have already seen \*; but however, he will have no Sense or Wisdom to stand by, either to distribute proper Quantities of Motion, or to direct the Line they were to describe; and yet he is confident that this regular and orderly Frame of Things shall arise from such undirected Motions, *an admirable Conceit!* as the Author of the *Characteristicks* says, *believe it who can.*

AND yet this Man pretends to be shocked at Difficulties in religious Belief, at the same time as he sees no Difficulty in Rearing up this World without any Assistance. The greater the

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\* See Sermon VI.

the Undertaking, the greater, I suppose, is the Share of Credit he proposes to himself; but sure I am, his Share of Credit will dwindle into that of the Wise Men in my *Text*, who *professing themselves wise, became Fools*. For none but a Fool would offer to confound the Differences between Wisdom and Folly, Sense and no Sense, Contrivance and Chance, or uncontriving Necessity. For if unguided Motions shall execute as regular a Piece of Work, and as well fitted for answering any Ends or Purposes, as those that are directed by the best Sense, we have then nothing left us whereby to judge what makes the Difference between good Sense and no Sense, between Wisdom and Folly. If it were possible for us to be mistaken in the Nature of Thought and Motion; yet as the *Atheist* will not say, that all Motions are wise, and directed by good Sense, we will ask him, how he distinguishes those that are such, from others? If he judges by their Effects, so may we too; and I would willingly ask him, Whether he can  
give

give us any better *Criteria* to help us in distinguishing them, than these? That such Works are an Effect of Motions guided by Understanding, as discover a Regularity in them, and a Propriety or Fitness to answer some End or Purpose; especially if we see a great Diversity in those Works, and yet much Curiosity in them; in these Cases we are apt to judge them to belong to some Masterly Hand. These are our Ways of Judging, when we determine whether any Thing is a Work of Art contrived by such Intelligent Beings as we confessedly are; or whether 'tis only a Quantity of Matter heaped up without any kind of Order, and unfit to answer any particular Purpose. These are the Rules by which we are willing to try the Works of Nature, and the *Atheist* must be contented with them, unless he will give us a Reason, Why in a Work of Art these shall be Indications of Thought and Contrivance, and none in a Work of Nature?

ALL that the *Atheist* says, comes to this, " That the Greatest and Best of  
 " all



“ all Beings, in the Religious Man’s  
 “ Opinion, is no Effect of Wisdom or  
 “ Contrivance; and therefore why must  
 “ the World, which he believes the  
 “ greatest and best of all Beings, be  
 “ an Effect of any Thought or Design;  
 “ altho’ particular Works do arise from  
 “ the Agency of some Thinking Be-  
 “ ings. That the Religious Man be-  
 “ lieves GOD to be the most Accom-  
 “ plished BEING, and yet that He  
 “ owes not his Accomplishments to  
 “ any Wisdom or Contrivance, but is  
 “ Necessarily what He is; and there-  
 “ fore, Why may not the Curiosity  
 “ in the Works of Nature be an Ef-  
 “ fect of Necessity, tho’ less perfect  
 “ Works, such as those of Art, be an  
 “ Effect of Thought and Counsel.”

LET us see then, whether the Evi-  
 dence for the Frame of the World’s  
 proceeding from Necessity, be sufficient  
 to out-weigh the Evidence for its be-  
 ing the Contrivance of some Intelligent  
 Being. And since the only Argument  
 he brings against the Appearances of  
 Thought and Intelligence in the Works  
 of

of Nature, is, that the Frame of the World *may* be the Necessarily-existent Being: If I can shew, That there is no Ground for such a Supposition, that the Appearances of Nature do argue the Cause of them to have acted arbitrarily, and disposed of Matter with the utmost Freedom, it must then follow, that if there be any Thing like Wisdom or Contrivance in the Fabrick of the World, these, and not Necessity, are the true Causes of it. I will therefore shew,

*1<sup>st</sup>*, T H A T the Frame of the World cannot have its Existence from Necessity.

*2<sup>dly</sup>*, T H A T there are plain Signatures of Wisdom and good Sense in those Parts of the World with which we are best acquainted; and therefore that it must have been the Effect of some Wise and Intelligent Being.

*1<sup>st</sup>*, T H A T the Frame of the World cannot have its Existence from a Necessity of Nature, and that for these two Reasons.

*1<sup>st</sup>*, B E C A U S E



What Sort of Being this must be ; and whether Matter in its various Compositions, such as the Frame of the Universe is made up of, can be that Wise and Intelligent Being ? and, Whether it could look so much like a Production of Wisdom and Contrivance as it does, if it were the real Parent of Wisdom, and owed that Wisdom to nothing but the Necessity of its own Nature ? The BEING that the Religious Man supposes to be Necessarily-existent, is a most Simple BEING, and whose Nature is for that Reason not subject to Change or Alteration. The *Atheist's* Necessarily-existent Being, is a Compound one, a Being capable of receiving all manner of Changes, such as Matter and all its Compositions are ; for *Spinoza* allows all the Modes of Being under which Matter appears (as well as the Substance of Matter abstracted from any particular Mode of Existence) to be the Necessarily-existent Being ; and so must all who affirm the Frame of the World to be Necessarily-existent. — But the Religious

Religious Person is persuaded, that a Compound Being, or any Being that is capable of receiving different Modes of Being, can never be reconciled with the Idea of Necessary Existence; because every Composition in a Compound Being may be conceived by us capable of being changed into some other, that shall be entirely different from what it was. And therefore no one Composition can be truly and properly Necessary; unless a Possibility of being or not being, were consistent with Necessity. *Spinoza* saw there was no avoiding the Force of this Reasoning, and that there was no defending Matter unless he could make her a Simple Being: And therefore he entirely alter'd the received Notion of its being divisible and changeable; tho' without Reason, as I have already proved \*; thinking it would be easier to persuade the World even to alter their Notion of Matter, than to make them believe that any Composition of Being could

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\* See Sermon IV.

be a sufficient Support for Necessary Existence.

*2dly*, THE Frame of the World cannot be the Necessarily-existent Being, because there are evident Marks of a free and arbitrary Disposal in its Constitution, such an arbitrary Disposal, I mean, as is consistent with good Sense. If there was one uniform Appearance of Bodies in the Infinite Space, if all the Compositions of Matter were exactly of the same Bulk, and did all exactly describe the same Motions; there would be an Appearance that would much better resemble Necessity, than the present Face of Things; tho' even this would not prove these Magnitudes, and these Motions to be necessary; because there might be conceived very different Combinations of Matter floating in an infinite Space, very different Lines of Motion, and yet equally uniform; therefore none of them could be absolutely necessary: because, as I have already proved, whatever exists from a Necessity of Nature, cannot be conceived to be any Thing but what it is.

is. But the present Face of Things has all imaginable Variety; instead of one vast System consisting of a great Number of uniform Bodies with a Sun at the Centre of it, we have probably a prodigious Number of Systems, as many as there are fix'd Stars, with such a Star, as we have a Sun, at the Centre of each of them; and yet we can see nothing in the Nature of Matter that should determine it into this great Diversity of Systems, rather than into one. The System of which our Earth is a Part might have been different from what it is, it might have been bigger or less than it is, as Space is infinite, and nothing but Will and *Pleasure* can be a Reason of the Dimensions of *ours*, or of any other System. No other Reason can be given for the particular Number of Planets, and of their different Magnitudes in this System; nor why some of them have more, others fewer, *Satellites* attending upon them; and if we were as capable of Judging of any of the other Systems, as we are of our own, we should probably

bably find great Differences in all these Respects from ours; but to confine ourselves to our own of which we have some Knowledge, we will consider the different *Orbits* in which the Planets and Comets of our System move; the one move in *Elliptical*, the other in *Paraboli- cal* Figures: 'Tis evident, that the moving Force, impress'd upon Bodies that describe such different *Orbits*, must be different too; and 'tis as evident that such a Diversity can have no Foundation in Necessity; but must be resolved into the free Agency of some Being who thought fit to impress a greater Quantity of Motion, or more of the Projectile Force upon some Parcels of Matter than He did upon others.

AGAIN, we must never look for a Reason in Necessity of the Earth's moving about its *Axis* in a Motion oblique to its *Æquator*; because we are sure that the most simple and the most obvious Motion had been in an *Orbit* that was parallel to it; and that its Motion upon the *Ecliptick* is a Deviation from that simple Motion; and therefore



therefore the *Atheist* ought to give a Reason why the Earth must needs have been of such an outward Form, or have such a Difference in its inward Contexture, as might be the Cause of the Obliquity of its Annual Motion to its Diurnal. But I am persuaded he will never find any thing like a Reason for it, till, with us, he looks for it in some Free and Intelligent Cause that was pleased to contrive it in this Manner. I do not pretend to say, That any Variation from the present Appearance of Things, would have been for the better. But that such a Supposition would carry with it no Repugnance to our Conceptions of Things, and that we cannot see any Reason for such a Diversity, unless we resolve it into the Will and Pleasure of some Being who made such Divisions of Matter, and gave them such Motions, when Matter was equally susceptible of any other.

I know *Spinoza* in the sixteenth *Proposition* of his *Posthumous Works*, would endeavour to account for all the Di-

versity in the World by Necessity, when he says, *Ex necessitate Divinae Naturae Infinita infinitis modis (hoc est, omnia quae sub Intellectum cadere possunt) sequi debent.* That is, that all Possibility of Being must of Necessity flow from the Divine Nature; consequently all that Variety of Concretions, and Diversity of Motions, which we have instanced in as Arguments of Freedom, would be the Effects of Necessity; but let us see how he proves this; why, he refers us to his sixth *Definition* in the same Book, in which he defines GOD to be a Being that consists of an infinite Number of Attributes that are different from one another; from which Infinity of Attributes, by necessary Consequence, must arise an Infinity of Things infinitely varied in the Manner of their Existence. He does not tell us how a Simple Being may have many Attributes really differing from one another, nor whether these different Attributes are not beholden to Motion for their Existence, which would be supposing Matter to have been always in Motion,

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altho' we have already seen that *Spinoza* would never give an Answer to those who ask'd him, How it came into Motion \*? But to let that pass; supposing Matter to be infinitely moved, or in infinitely various Degrees, yet no one can give a Reason why this particular Variety of Beings should be more necessary than any other. For if every Possibility of Being must arise from the Motion of Matter infinitely varied, then the present Frame of the World must contain in it all that Variety which 'tis possible to conceive; and yet nothing is plainer than that the Mind of Man does conceive it possible, that the Order of Beings might have been different from the present one. And yet I would not have the *Atheist* quit his Necessity to take up with Chance, as something that would be better qualified to account for this Variety; because Chance is a Word that signifies nothing but the Ignorance of him that makes Use of it, and can have no Signification

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\* See Sermon VI.

nification nor Use in a Philosophical Account of Things; for if the Motions of Matter be not directed by a Free Being, they must be pure Mechanical Necessity, or necessary Consequences of Matter in Motion, which leaves no Room for *Epicurus's* Fortuitous Concurrence of Atoms.

HAVING now shewn, That the great Variety which appears in Nature could not proceed from Necessity, but must be the Effect of some BEING that acts with Freedom; it must be perfectly unreasonable to Doubt whether that Agent, who freely produced this Variety, be a Wise and Intelligent Being, if we can observe as strong Appearances of Thought and Contrivance in the Works of Nature, as we do in those Artificial ones which do confessedly owe their Birth to some Intelligent Beings. The Rules we have of distinguishing Works of Art from those which are merely the Effect of Chance or a blind Necessity, are these: That there be a Regularity in the Work, and a Fitness to answer some End or Purpose.

Purpose. Whenever we find these, we never hesitate in pronouncing them to be the Work of some Being that knew what he did, and why he did it. The *Atheist* himself, since his beloved Necessity will not help him out, must allow this to be a fair Way of proving the Wisdom of the MAKER of the World, or else be so Ridiculous as to believe that there may be such a Thing as Art without an Artificer. I shall therefore proceed to shew

2dly, THAT if we Judge of the World by the Rules now mentioned, we cannot avoid discovering many Signatures of Wisdom and good Sense in those Parts of it with which we are best acquainted. I am sensible this Argument has been so often and so thoroughly urged against the *Infidel* by many of those Learned Persons who have Preached these Lectures, that I should have entirely pass'd it over, but that it compleats the Proof of Unreasonableness upon the *Infidel*, if he defends himself by any Difficulties in Religious Belief; because the Difficulty  
himself

himself lies under, will appear to be no less than that of Believing, that there is neither Thought nor Contrivance in a World, which every Body else sees to be most Artificial. However, what I have to say upon it, shall be in a few Words, by offering an Instance or two of Regularity in the Works of Nature, and plain Indications of Thought and Design in adapting those Works to certain Ends and Uses.

THE first Instance I shall mention, is, The Annual Motion of the Earth, by Means of which every Part of the Earth receives as proper Degrees of Heat for the Plants and Animals of that Part, as if this Motion had been contrived on Purpose by the best Understanding. As I have already shewn, that the Obliquity of the Earth's Annual Motion about the Sun, to its Diurnal one about its Axis, must have some Free Agent for the Cause of it, it being Nonsense to say, That this particular Obliquity was necessary, when there are so many other Degrees of Obliquity besides this particular one ;

I will

I will now shew, That it must have for its Cause a Wise and Contriving BEING that saw the Consequences of every other Degree of Obliquity, and pitched upon this, as what would be fittest for the several Animals that were to be dispersed over the Face of the whole Earth. That some Degree of Obliquity would be more beneficial to the Inhabitants of this Earth in general than none, cannot be denied, without Denying that the different Seasons of the Year are a Benefit, or that those Plants and Animals that live near the *Poles* would fare as well, and receive as comfortable a Share of Heat, without a Summer as with one. For 'tis evident if its Annual Motion had been parallel with its Diurnal one, we must have wanted the Vicissitudes of the Seasons of Summer and Winter; if it had been much less oblique than it is, the Inhabitants near the *Poles* would have received little Benefit from the Summer; and if it had been much more oblique to the *Aequator* than it is at present, the Heat must have been  
much

much greater in the *Torrid Zone* than it is now. And if the Ancients thought it, such as it is, to be incapable of receiving Inhabitants by Reason of the extream Heat, they would have had much more Reason for such a Belief upon an Increase of the Obliquity of the Earth's Annual Motion. But if no Declination at all, or any other Degree of it, that should differ *much* from what we have at present, must have been worse for the Plants and Animals in general than it is; we can have no Pretence to look any where for the Cause of this exact Contrivance of the Earth's Motion, but in the Fore-thought of some Wise and Intelligent BEING. He that will do otherwise, will find himself reduced to the Necessity of Asserting, with *Lucretius*, That the Eye was not designedly contrived for admitting the Rays of Light, nor the Ear for receiving the tremulous Motions of Bodies, tho' an Organ well fitted for that Purpose, nor the Air, tho' a *Medium* well fitted, for conveying those tremulous Motions to it. And as the  
modern



modern *Atheist* will confess this to be ridiculous upon the *Epicurean* Foot of Chance, so it will be equally ridiculous to affirm, that this particular Degree of Obliquity in the Earth's Annual Motion, (altho' there are so many other Degrees of Obliquity which our Earth might have been equally capable of receiving) was the Produce of a blind Necessity.

2dly, A N O T H E R Instance I shall give of Fore-thought and Contrivance, is, the Natural Oeconomy of the World, by which a sufficient Provision is made for that vast Family of Animals that dwell upon the Face of the Earth. If we had found our Globe filled with a Variety of Animals, and the Quantity of Provision for Food and Maintenance no ways answerable to such a Number, or if there were Food enough, that those Animals had not Skill enough to find out such Food as would be proper for the Support of their Lives, we should judge aright, if we concluded they came here by Chance or Necessity. But if we find that nothing is  
wanting

wanting for the Support of fo large a Family of Creatures as there are upon our Earth, fuch a Variety of feveral Sorts of Food as fully answers the Occafions of fuch different Kinds of Creatures, and that all thefe Kinds, whether living in the Air, the Water, or the Earth, have a great Sagacity in finding out each their proper Food, which is undeniably the Truth of the Matter; and was long ago taken Notice of as an Argument of Senfe and Contrivance \*; we muft confeß, that there muft have been fome Underftanding BEING that had computed what Quantity of Food would be neceffary for their Maintenance, and had alfo furnifhed them with proper Inftincts for finding out in a wide World fuch Food, and fuch Accommodations,

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\* Vide Tull. de Natura Deorum, Lib. 2. p. 206. *Davies.* Pastum animalibus large & copiofe Natura eum qui cuique aptus erat comparavit. *And a little farther,* Dedit eadem Natura belluis & fenfum & appetitum, ut altero conatum haberent ad Naturales pastus capeffendos, altero fecernerent peribifera a falutaribus. p. 207.

modations, as would be fittest for them; or if all this will not amount to a Proof of Fore-thought and good Sense, we must for ever despair of finding any such Thing, and must believe that a Fleet or an Army of Men may be as well provided with all Necessaries, so as nothing shall be wanting, whether we computed and proportioned the Supplies to the Number of the People, and the Time that either was to be out upon Duty; or whether no Consideration was had beforehand what would be needful for such Numbers, and for such a Time: But if this be ridiculous to the last Degree, we cannot but joyn with the \* *Psalmist* in adoring and admiring GOD'S Wisdom in the Contrivance of our Earth, where we find all well adjusted to the Occasions of the Creatures that were to inhabit it, and say with him, O LORD, *how manifold are thy Works! in Wisdom hast Thou made them all: The Earth is full of Thy Riches. So is this*

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*great and wide Sea, wherein are Things creeping innumerable, both small and great Beasts. These wait all upon Thee: that Thou mayst give them their Meat in due Season: That Thou givest them, they gather: Thou openest Thine Hand, they are filled with Good.* For we still see the same good Provision holding out for the Use of the Animal Race, without any considerable Diminution from what it was in the *Psalmist's* Days; tho' some Thousands of Years have pass'd since the *Psalmist* made this Observation, yet the Stock of Provisions has not failed, *and the Eyes of all do still, as well as then, wait upon GOD, and He giveth them their Meat in due Season.* The Instances of Wisdom and Contrivance are as many as the Things of the World; if we cannot find out all the Uses they serve for, we should be so fair as to acknowledge, That such Things may have proper Uses, tho' we know not what they are. This I think is reasonable, so long as we cannot deny, that there are many Things which do as regularly tend to a certain End and Purpose, as if they had been

been

been formed and contrived for such an End by the best Understanding. In such Case our not knowing the Uses of some Works of Nature, ought to pass for no Proof of any Thing, unless it be of our own Ignorance; and we might as well argue, that there is no Contrivance in the Works of human Art, because perhaps, the Animals below us cannot discover our Intention in the Contrivance of them, as that there was no Intention or Design in the Works of Nature, only because we cannot always find what it was.

HAVING now, by the Help of Motion, Intelligence, and the Regularity of the World, evidently proved, That there must be some Powerful, Wise, and Intelligent BEING different from Matter, the *Atheist* must be contented to come into the Number of those Persons which my *Text* was fitted for, who professing themselves to be wiser and more knowing than others, were yet so unfortunate as to make no other Discoveries but that of their

own Folly. For whilst he pretends some Difficulties in Religious Belief, as the Reason of his leaving us, he is, as I have already shewn, contented to take up with much greater ones in avoiding them, and can give no tolerable Account of the most remarkable *Phænomena* in Nature, such as Motion, Intelligence, and the regular Variety that appears in the Universe; and therefore must have suffered himself to be byass'd by Prejudices while he was examining the Question in dispute between us; the Consequence of which will be, That he cannot secure himself from the Apprehensions of Punishment from the Hands of *That* GOD, whom he has wilfully denied. For I have already shewn, That a Man may be culpable for his Errors and Mistakes, if he has not taken due Care to avoid them, but has suffered himself to be sway'd by any Passion or Inclination, or any other Motive besides a sincere Love for the Truth \*. The only Refuge he has left

left must be this; That tho' there be a Wise and Powerful BEING, that at first created, and does still govern and direct the *Natural* World, yet he sees no Reason for believing, that He has any Regard to the *Moral* World, to the Virtues and Vices of Men, or to their Religious Behaviour here; that there is no such Things in Nature as Vertue and Vice, Honesty and Baseness; or if there be, that GOD will take no Notice of them. What Grounds there are for such a Supposition, will be considered in the following Discourse.









# SERMON XI.

ISAIAH V. 20.

*Wo unto them that call Evil  
Good, and Good Evil; that  
put Darknes for Light,  
and Light for Darknes;  
that put Bitter for Sweet,  
and Sweet for Bitter.*



THE Persons here mentioned were not Speculative *Arbeits*, but only very wicked Livers, that endeavoured to conceal their own bad Actions by the pretence of some good and laudable Design they had in their View; and would therefore

pass them upon the World for Acts of Virtue and Goodness, whereas the really good Acts of others, by their Misrepresentation of them, pass'd for either Acts of Weakness or Wickedness. They were not hardy enough to deny a real Difference between Good and Evil, Light and Darkness, Bitter and Sweet; they only endeavoured to put off their own Deeds of Darkness, for such as would bear the Light, and the nicest Observation; and the Actions of their Adversaries, tho' they had never so fair an Appearance, for such as would not bear to be look'd upon, or abide the Test of a careful Inspection. Their *own* Acts of Injustice, how bitter soever to those who suffer'd by them, must be taken for Acts of Kindness, and the Effects of Sweetness of Temper; whilst the most indulgent and best natured Acts of other People shall pass with them for a bitter and malicious Design of Cheating and Ruining Men.

'Tis true, the Character of these Men does not come up to that of our  
*Hobbiſt;*

*Hobbist*; because tho' they did in Reality confound all the Distinctions of Moral Good and Evil; yet they did not offer to tell the World, as the *Hobbist*, with great Gravity pretends to do, That there was no Difference between Virtue and Vice; much less did they undertake a serious Defence of so monstrous a Proposition: But neither any sacred or profane Author would furnish me with a *Text* or a *Motto* that would exactly answer this Character of our *Hobbist*; because there was generally more Modesty in the World, before *he* made his Appearance in it. For *he* scorns to palliate his Faults, or to impose upon the World by making them pass for Virtues, but openly and aloud maintains, That there are no Faults, or any such Differences in Nature as those of Virtue and Vice, in the usual Meaning of those Words; and that nothing deserves such Names, but what is profitable or unprofitable, pleasant or unpleasant; that whoever talks of an unprofitable or unpleasant Good, or a profitable and pleasant Evil,

talks

talks Nonsense, has no Meaning in what he says, but utters mere Sounds without any Signification belonging to them.

I HAVE already shewn the Necessity of admitting a Wise and Intelligent BEING that concerns himself in the Government of the *Natural* World, in keeping up that Order which He at first designed, and does continually execute; there are many who profess to believe this true, and yet pretend, “ That  
 “ they cannot see the same Evidence  
 “ for his concerning himself with the  
 “ Behaviour of *Moral Agents*; and think  
 “ that GOD does not mind which Way  
 “ Things go in the *Moral* World; they  
 “ are contented to believe that he has  
 “ taken all proper Care in ordering  
 “ and contriving the Motions of *Natural Agents*, and in seeing them fully  
 “ executed according to his first Design; but that a *Moral Agent* having  
 “ received from Him a Freedom of  
 “ Acting as he pleases, whenever he  
 “ acts freely, he acts in pursuance of  
 “ that Nature which He has given  
 “ him,

“ him, and his Actions are equally agree-  
 “ able to him, whether properly Free  
 “ or Licentious, morally Good or mo-  
 “ rally Evil.” The Reasons by which  
 they pretend to Support this Opinion,  
 are these :

1<sup>st</sup>, “ THAT they cannot see any  
 “ Difference between Moral Good and  
 “ Evil, Virtue and Vice. Or,

2<sup>dly</sup>, “ IF there should be such a  
 “ Difference, they are sure that GOD  
 “ would not concern himself about the  
 “ Behaviour of *Moral Agents*, because  
 “ they cannot observe Him making a-  
 “ ny Distinction by Rewards and Pu-  
 “ nishments, between the Observance  
 “ or not Observance of what is called  
 “ Moral Good.”

As to the first of these : “ They are  
 “ persuaded that there is no such Thing  
 “ in Nature as Virtue or Vice, but that  
 “ ’tis merely the Fashion and Fancy of  
 “ People, because it varies in different  
 “ Countries , and at different Times :  
 “ that Legislators have always made the  
 “ Publick Utility, such as it appeared  
 “ to them, the only Rule of their Laws.

“ This

“ This they think cannot be doubted ;  
 “ because when ’twas believed that the  
 “ Publick might be better served by  
 “ the Breach of a Law of Moral Ho-  
 “ nesty, they made no Scruple of en-  
 “ couraging the Subject, to break it.  
 “ Consequently, Utility is the only Rule  
 “ whereby to judge of Moral Ho-  
 “ nesty : And therefore no such Thing  
 “ as Moral Good , when it differs  
 “ from the Natural Good ; but it loses  
 “ its Nature from the Time it ceases  
 “ to be Profitable, and becomes Evil  
 “ or Unprofitable. Which shews Ho-  
 “ nesty or Virtue, when deserted by  
 “ Utility, to be an empty Name that  
 “ has no Existence in Nature, and a  
 “ fit Subject for none but a *Stoick*, who  
 “ knew little of Nature, and was al-  
 “ ways talking against it, to spend his  
 “ Time upon. ”

BUT for all this Objection, the Re-  
 ligious Man affirms Virtue to be Vir-  
 tue in Adversity, even when the Pra-  
 ctice of it is Unprofitable to us ; and  
 Vice to be Vice, tho’ we outwardly  
 thrive

thrive and seem to be Gainers by it. And for these Reasons :

1<sup>st</sup>, B E C A U S E if we suppose the Existence of Intelligent Beings, such Beings I mean, as can compare one Thing with another, and *understand* as well as *feel* Differences, the different Circumstances of Persons will necessarily make a Difference in the Character of their Actions, with regard to the Judgment of such Intelligent Beings.

2<sup>dly</sup>, B E C A U S E those who have considered the Nature of human Actions with the most Care, such as Philosophers and Legislators, have built their Rules and Laws upon the Supposition of there being such a Difference in Nature.

3<sup>dly</sup>, B E C A U S E those who least of all observe Moral Differences in their Practice, but referr all to Pleasure or Profit, cannot but confess a Difference in some Cases.

1<sup>st</sup>, B E C A U S E so long as there are such Intelligent Beings, as can compare one Thing with another, and *understand* as well as *feel* Differences ; the different Circumstances of Persons will necessarily

necessarily make a Difference in the Character of their Actions, with Regard to the Judgment of such Intelligent Beings. The great Fallacy of the *Hobbist's* Argument lies in this: That they consider a Man only as capable of receiving the Ideas of Pleasure and Pain, Convenience or Inconvenience, without considering him as a Rational Being that by comparing one Thing with another, and observing how far they agree, and wherein they disagree, may take Notice of other Differences, which his Reason assures him to be as real as those of Pleasure and Pain, Convenience and Inconvenience. That the Animals inferior to Man discover nothing in the Nature of Things beyond the Pleasure and Pain they receive from them, may be probable enough; because we do not find they have such a Power as Man has, of comparing their Ideas with one another, and of forming Complex ones, such as are those concerning Moral Truths; or of forming general Propositions from any reflex Act of the Mind upon particular Things;



Things; but to an Intellectual Being furnished with such Powers of Mind, which Man confessedly is, we affirm, that there must appear to be what we call *Moral* as well as *Natural* Differences antecedent to all positive Laws made concerning them; because the different Circumstances of Things and Persons must necessarily make a Difference in *human* Actions, altho' the Material or Natural Action considered by itself, and without Regard to those Circumstances, be exactly the same. For it cannot be denied that different Circumstances will necessarily make the Relations of Persons to each other really different, and must therefore so far alter the Nature of any Action, as to give it a different Character; as for Instance, The Action by which we put an End to a Man's Life, may be varied very much by the Circumstances of the Person whose Life we take away; as, Whether he be an innocent Man, or whether I had been much obliged to him, or there were none of these Considerations, but I did it for  
preserving

preserving my own Life; tho' the Action be the same in either Case, considered as the taking away the Life of a Man; yet sure every one must see a Difference between taking away another Man's Life for the Preservation of his own, and taking it away from a Man that has done him no Hurt at all, nor given any Indication of any such Intention; much more, if he has always been a great Benefactor and a Friend to him. These Differences in Cases, Reason by distinguishing Circumstances does discover to us; and so long as there are such Rational Agents as Men, Reason will make such Discoveries, let the *Hobbist* wink as hard as he pleases. And we have a remarkable Proof of it in *Vaninus*, who gave stronger Evidence of his being a sincere *Atheist*, than any of the Brother *Atheists* since have cared to give us; for tho' he might have saved his Life by renouncing those *Atheistick* Opinions he was charged with, yet he chose rather to die, than to do so mean and unworthy an Act, as to deny or disown what he  
himself

himself believed to be true. *Atheist* as he was, he could not avoid giving his Testimony against our *Hobbist*, and acknowledging, “ That a Man may be  
 “ in such Circumstances of Life, as shall  
 “ make him guilty of a base and dishonest  
 “ honest Act in saving his own Life.” And therefore that there may be such Things in Nature as Honour and Honesty, Baseness and Cowardice, abstracting from all Considerations of Pleasure and Profit. The labouring a Point so plain as this, might look like a Misrepresentation of our modern *Atheist*, if Mr. *Hobbs* had not told us \*, “ That  
 “ all the natural Right GOD has to  
 “ our Obedience, is founded upon this;  
 “ That his Power is infinite, and that  
 “ all our Obligations to obey Him in  
 “ Virtue of the Law of Nature, arise  
 “ from this, that his Power is irresistible.” The Consequence of which must be, That in a State of Nature we can be under no Obligation to Him or any other Being on account of Justice

X

or

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\* *Hobbs, De Cive, pag. 260, 262.*

or Gratitude for the Benefits of Creation, and Preservation of our Beings; or for any other Reason, but only this plain one, That we cannot help it. I cannot see any Thing the *Hobbist* can with any tolerable Shew of Sense answer to the Arguments I have already urg'd against him, unless it be, That our conceiving such Moral Differences in human Actions, will not prove their real Existence in Nature: as the Mind of Man is capable of forming Complex Ideas, that have no Existence out of the Mind; and that Moral Differences must be such, because if they had a real Existence in Nature, there could be no more Dispute about them, than there is about Pleasure and Pain. But our Answer is, That the Cases are not parallel; because Pleasure and Pain are felt and judg'd by our Senses, without any Want of Reflection to assure us of their Difference, and therefore all Persons whether wise or unwise, are equally affected by them; but the Beauty of Virtue, and the Deformity of Vice, will require some Degree of Reasoning from  
us,

us, if we would discover them; and yet this Reasoning of ours does not make these Differences, but finds them what they are in Nature. For no Man sure will allow it to be a good Argument to prove there is no such Thing in Nature as Symmetry and Proportion, because all Persons are not equally affected by them, or because some Persons shall admire that which has neither Justness nor Elegance. And why then should it be an Argument against the Difference between Vertue and Vice, that all Persons are not equally sensible of the Beauty of one, and the Ugliness of the other; but that some shall have so corrupted a Taste, as to see as much Beauty in the one as the other? The internal Characters of Mind, as well as the external Proportions of Body, will continue to be what they are, notwithstanding any wrong Judgments we may make of them; for the Nature of Things is inflexible, whatever Thoughts we entertain of them. What the Author of the *Characteristicks* has said on this Occasion is very just,

in these Words: " Should a Writer up-  
 " on *Musick* (addressing himself to the  
 Lovers of that Art) " declare to them,  
 " that the Measure or Rule of Har-  
 " mony was Caprice or Will, Humour  
 " or Fashion, 'tis not very likely he  
 " should be heard with great Atten-  
 " tion, or treated with real Gravity;  
 " for Harmony is Harmony by Na-  
 " ture, let Men judge ever so ridi-  
 " culously of *Musick*; so is Symmetry  
 " and Proportion founded still in Na-  
 " ture, let Mens Fancy prove ever so  
 " barbarous or Gothick in their Ar-  
 " chitecture, Sculpture, or whatever  
 " other designing Art: 'Tis the same  
 " Case, says he, where Life and Man-  
 " ners are concerned, the same Num-  
 " bers, Harmony and Proportion, have  
 " Place in Morals, and are discoverable  
 " in the Characters of Mankind \*."

If this Author has Reasoned truly, the  
*Hobbist's* Denial of Moral Differences  
 will be no better a Proof of there being  
 no such Things in Nature, than ignorant  
 Persons

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\* *Characteristicks*, Vol. I. p. 353.

Persons not discovering the just Proportions of any Work, would be a Proof that there is no such Thing in Nature as Proportion; for since there is and must be a wrong as well as a right Taste in judging of the internal Characters of the Mind, as well as of the Proportions and Figures of Bodies, the vitiated Taste of a *Hobbist* ought to pass for no better an Argument against Ethical Truth, than the Gothick Taste of an illiterate Person be taken as an Evidence against the Truth of any other Science.

2dly, THOSE who have considered human Nature with the most Exactness, such as Philosophers and Legislators, have formed their Ethical and Political Schemes upon the Supposition of Moral Differences in Nature. And

1st, OF the Philosophers, there was none of them of any Note, without excepting even *Epicurus* himself, who did not agree in prescribing Vertue, as that which would best of all alleviate the Miseries that human Nature is subject

to, and, generally speaking, procure for it all that Happiness which it was capable of receiving. They all of them observed that there were two principal Motives of human Actions, *viz.* Reason and Appetite, together with all the Train of Passions accompanying those Appetites; they observed that these last did often incline us to pursue either improper Objects, or proper Objects in an improper or undue Manner; but that there was another Principle of human Actions, *viz.* Reason or good Sense; which when it prevailed and could be hearkned to, would direct what Objects ought to be courted, and in what Degree; that as the former Motive inclined us to take the Agreeable, as the Way to true Happiness, so this last discovered a more excellent Rule of Action. We cannot possibly mistake their Meaning, because we see the whole Design of their Ethical Treatises turned upon promoting the Influence of this Rational Principle, and because we find them always making Honesty or Moral Good, the Rule of this Principle, which  
is



is taking for granted, That the Happiness of Man, considered as a Rational Creature, was no otherwise attainable, but by hearkning to Reason, and that there was no Truth, Reason or good Sense, separate from Virtue. The *Stoicks* were so far from being of Mr. *Hobbs's* Opinion, that there was nothing in Nature but Pleasant and Unpleasant, Convenient and Inconvenient, that they would not allow these even a Share in making up human Happiness; but that the Happiness of Man consisted in his having so reduced his Appetites, as to be able to live without them; and to be contented with the *τὰ ἐν ἡμῖν*, by which they meant the Practice of Virtue, which was always in a Man's Power, as 'tis always in his Power to be an honest Man, tho' not to be a rich Man or at his Ease. Even the *Epicureans* themselves, who first pretended to make Men happy by rescuing them from the Fear of the Gods, and from the Restraints which Religion then laid upon them, were so far from taking off those Restraints which Virtue

lays upon Men, that, as the Learned Dean of *Norwich* tells us, they acknowledged Virtue to be the only Way that leads to all that Happiness which the Life of Man is capable of receiving \* ; and 'tis certain, the good Dean did not speak too favourable of them, if what *Laeretius* says of *Epicurus* in his Life be true †. He owned, “ There could be no such Thing as Pleasure, (in which he made the Happiness of human Life to consist,) “ without Virtue. That bodily Pleasures or Freedom from Pain, were among the “ τὰ ἄλλα, which might be separated “ from Happiness; but Virtue was inseparable from it : That Pleasure and Profit were Things of a changeable Nature, βρωτά, such as were “ sometimes Good for a Man, and “ sometimes Evil, according to the Discretion

\* *Prideaux Connexion. Part 1. p. 434*

† Ἐπίκουρος κ' ἀχάριστον οὐσι τῆς ἡδονῆς τῆς ἀρετὴν μόνον, τὰ δ' ἄλλα χωρίζεται ἀπὸ βρωτά.  
Sect. 138.

"cretion of the Man that enjoyed  
 "them; but Virtue was always Good  
 "for him." So far was *Epicurus* from  
 denying Moral Differences; which ought  
 to shame our *Atheists*, who would sub-  
 vert the original Nature of Things, in  
 order to gratify their base Appetites;  
 and therefore, as the before mentioned  
 Learned Dean expresses himself, "Tho'  
 "our modern *Infidels* build their impi-  
 "cus Doctrines upon *Epicurus's* Philoso-  
 "phy; (they both agreeing to make  
 all Things spring from Matter in Mo-  
 tion, without taking In a Powerful and  
 Wise BEING to move Matter, and di-  
 rect its Motion) "yet they cannot their  
 "immoral and wicked Lives." And  
 therefore must be inexcusable, while  
 they pretend not to see any Difference  
 between Virtue and Vice, tho' the  
 Beauty of the one, and the Deformity  
 of the other, were acknowledged by all  
 those *Atheists*, who lived under a Reli-  
 gion in which Virtue and Vice were  
 not

not near so truly described, as they are in our Christian Religion But,

2dly, I AM to shew, That all Legislators or Founders of *Free-States* have supposed the Obligation to be just and honest, as the Foundation of their several Constitutions, and the best Supports of them. It cannot be denied that Legislators were Persons sufficiently qualified for Deciding this Question, as they are supposed to have been as well acquainted with the Springs of human Actions as any Persons whatever. That they took for granted there was such a Thing in Nature, as Moral Honesty, and believed that the World too was of the same Opinion, is evident from hence, That they depended more upon the Consent of the People than upon Force (the only Support of Tyrannical Governments) for the Preservation and Continuance of their Establishments: But every Body sees that the Consent of the People could never be a Foundation for a durable Society, unless they supposed the People prepossess'd with an Opinion, That this Consent of theirs  
once

once made, had laid them under an Obligation of continuing it; which they could have no Reason to believe, unless they supposed them under an Obligation of keeping their Word, even whilst they were in a State of Nature, or before they met together, and had given their Consent. The *Hobbist* supposes them obliged by Virtue of their Compact, but that antecedently to this Bargain made with their Governor, there was no Obligation upon any of them to be faithful or just: because there was no such Thing as Faith or Justice in Nature, the Obligation to Practice these being to be fetched entirely from the voluntary Agreement we made at our first entering into Society. But supposing the ancient Founders of States to be persuaded, as Mr. *Hobbs* pretended to be, That there was no such Thing as Faith or Justice, Breach of Promise or Iniquity, before the Laws of Societies had made such a Distinction in human Actions, they must see that Men would be no more obliged by any Consent they had given,

or any Promises they had made, either to continue their Consent, or to make good their Promises, than if they had done nothing at all of either; for it would be impossible in the Nature of the Thing, that by any Act of theirs they should lay themselves under an Obligation, because such an Act would be made in a State of Nature, when 'tis supposed there was no Difference between Faithfulness and Unfaithfulness, breaking of Promises, and keeping them: And therefore their Consent being given at a Time, when they were under no Obligation of keeping their Word, they cannot be obliged to make good what they had consented to. This is so evident, that had the Founders of *Free States* believed as Mr. *Hobbs*, they cannot be supposed weak enough to have laid any Stress upon the Peoples Promises: but as we are sure they did, and thought them the best Security of their Establishments, we cannot doubt whether moral Differences were acknowledged in their Times as Obligatory, even before any  
positive

positive Constitutions were made by them. And if Mr. *Hobbs* had not been the worst Politician in the World, he would have kept his Thoughts to himself, and not taken away the strongest Supports of those Societies, which the Ancients thought to be the only Societies worth preserving; and left us the Possibility of only *such*, as none that had either Courage or Honesty would care to be concerned in.

BUT it may be said, That some of the ancient Legislators could not believe there was any Justice or Injustice independent of positive Constitutions, because they gave Impunity, and even Encouragement to the Breach of some Moral Laws: an Instance of which is seen in *Lycurgus*, the *Spartan* Legislator, by whose Laws a Licence was given to young People of robbing their Neighbours, if they could do it without being discovered; and this Licence was given by him as a Means of sharpening the Wits of the *Spartan* Youth, and making them fitter for Out-witting their Neighbouring States:  
Here.

Here it should seem that Equity and Honesty were forced to give way to an Appearance of Publick Utility.

IN Answer to this Objection, we say, That the making Laws concerning Property, is making Laws concerning a Thing which is allowed to be of a Changeable and Positive Nature. And as no Body doubts, that a Legislator may take away Part of a Man's Property for the Support of the Publick; so *Lycurgus* might think it lawful or equitable for him, without offending against the Eternal Rules of Right and Wrong, to subject the Properties of particular Persons to such an Inconvenience as this, for obtaining what he imagined would be a Publick Service. But,

2dly, THE last Act of *Lycurgus* before he left *Sparta*, evidently shews that he was fully persuaded of the Obligation of one Law of Nature, *viz.* Of performing a Religious Promise, at least, he believed that the People of *Sparta* were univerversally of that Opinion: for in order to make his Laws perpetual,



as *Plutarch* tells us \*, He gathered all the People together, and persuaded them to bind themselves by an Oath not to alter his Laws, till he should return again; which he never intended. This would have been a very weak Contrivance, unless he supposed the *Spartans* thought themselves obliged by their Promises. For if there was no Difference in Nature between keeping one's Word, and breaking it, there would be no Reason to fear the Displeasure of the Gods for doing what was in its own Nature indifferent; and therefore he could not be so weak a Man, as to believe they would observe their Oaths when he was gone, if he had not been well assured that his *Spartans* did universally believe there was such a Thing as Faith and Honour, before he had given them a Being by his Laws.

3<sup>dly</sup>, THOSE who least of all observe Moral Differences in their Practice, and refer all to Pleasure or Profit,

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\* *Plutarch* in *Vitâ Lycurgi*.

fit, cannot but confess a Difference in some Cases; for if they can have their Pleasure or Profit as well by observing the Rules of Equity, as otherwise, there are Few that would not choose to have them in an honest Way; scarce any Man of the most vitiated Taste, would choose to have what he wished for by injuring his Neighbour, if he might have it as well without hurting him. If at any Time there have been particular Persons that have wantonly injured their Fellow-Creatures, they have been wont to pass under the Character of Monsters. The Unbeliever ought to assign some Reason of this constant Appearance in Behalf of what we call Virtue; for if the Reason of this *Phenomenon* is to be drawn from hence, Either that the *Reason* of Man discovers, even to the most vicious Person, a Fitness and Unfitness of Things abstracted from Pleasure and Profit, and which he cannot avoid taking Notice of when his own Pleasure and Profit are not concerned; or that there is an Inclination in the human Species which

which moves it to Acts of Benevolence and Good-nature, when not checked by private Interest; which ever of these be assigned as the Cause of this Appearance, it will still be a strong Proof of a Difference in the Nature of Things. For if Rational Creatures in Virtue of their Reason discover any such Things, they must have as good a Foundation in Nature as the Reason of Rational Agents; or if Inclination leads them to such a Behaviour, so long as this Inclination appears to be almost Universal, admitting very few Exceptions, nothing less than the Nature of Things can be a Cause sufficient of so regular and extensive an Effect.

THERE is one other Difficulty, which is sometimes raised against the Proof of Moral Differences, which is, That granting such Differences do indeed appear to us, yet they may not appear *such* to the Supreme, Intelligent BEING; that is, That Truth, Justice and Goodness, may appear otherwise to GOD than they do to us Men: and they pretend to support this Opinion of  
Y theirs,

theirs, in this Manner: That the Nature and Perfections of GOD are Incomprehensible, his Ways are in the Deep, and his Footsteps not known; and therefore what may be just and equitable in our Opinions, may not be so according to the Judgment He forms of Things; consequently, the *Infidel* will say, Let it be never so certain that some Things do appear to us Morally Good, others Evil; yet till it appears that GOD judges of them as we do, we may still be safe, altho' we do not practice agreeably to those Differences as apprehended by us. And they pretend to be confirmed in this Belief, because they cannot see GOD making any visible Distinction between Good and Bad Men.

IN Answer to the first Part of the Objection, we say, That how incomprehensible soever the Nature of the Supreme BEING, and his Manner of Thinking, may be to us, yet as we have proved, That the Morality of human ACTIONS is founded upon the Nature of Things, upon the Fitness  
OR

or Unfitness which Things evidently appear to us to have in their Relation to each other, if we could be supposed to mistake when we judge according to such Evidence, and that Things appeared quite different to GOD than they did to us, it would be best for us to leave off Reasoning upon any Kind of Truth whatever, and content ourselves, as some of the Antients did, with the bare Appearances of Things. For if those Relations of Things which are the Foundation of Moral Differences, appear to us with as strong an Evidence, as any Thing of whose Nature and Existence we think ourselves most assured, we must then believe them to be really such as they appear to us, or else be contented to doubt of every other Kind of Truth, as well as Religious Truth. And then the *Atheist's* Safety will lie in this; That Men are always deceived: Which may be true enough with Regard to himself and his Friends, while they mispend their Time in accounting for Things by Chance or Necessity,

cessity ; but I am persuaded the rest of the World will conclude that Cause to be a very bad one, which cannot be defended without giving up the Truth of our Faculties. For let there be never so much Difference between the Perfection of GOD'S Knowledge and that of ours; yet 'tis plain, our Knowledge, as far as it reaches, must be real; or else there will be no such Thing as human Knowledge.

As to the second Part of the Objection, That GOD makes no visible Distinction of Good and Bad Men; which they think a good Proof, that He does not judge of Good and Evil as we do: In Answer to it, I will shew,

2dly, THAT GOD may have such Apprehensions of Virtue and Vice as we have, (abating for the Difference between a perfectly Wise BEING, and a Being whose Knowledge reaches to few Things) and yet not make any greater Distinction between the Good and the Bad, than what we see at present. The *Infidel*, as I have already

ready

ready proved \*, cannot be sure that he shall not continue to Think after he is dead, and be conscious too of his being the same Thinking Person he was; and therefore he can never be sure that this Life is not a State of Probation for another; and then he may be a Sufferer afterwards, tho' not now, by his Infidelity. For it is not at all inconsistent with the Notions we have of Holiness, that a Holy BEING should permit Wickedness to thrive for a Time, and Goodness to be the Sufferer, supposing a Time to come when the Good and Bad shall be visibly distinguished by Rewards and Punishments; unless any Man could prove it inconsistent with Goodness to make a Trial of the Behaviour of Free Agents, (which no Body I think will offer to say.) For 'tis certain an exact Discrimination of the Good and the Bad by Rewards and Punishments, would not be consistent with any State of Probation: if the Wicked constantly

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met

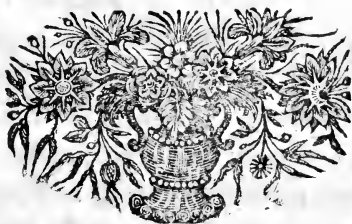
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\* See Sermon IX.

met with Vengeance from Heaven for Acts of Wickedness, who would dare to be wicked? And what Merit in being otherwise? Which is Reason enough for a Good BEING's not making any such Difference, altho' there be a real Difference between Virtue and Vice, and altho' this Difference appears *such* to the Supreme BEING as it does to *us*. We ought rather to judge from GOD's making no Distinction at present between Good and Bad Men, that He intends to do it some other Time. That 'tis only delayed for the present, because such a Distinction would not serve the Purposes of trying how Free Agents would behave themselves; but that when the Time of Trial should be over, which will be at our leaving this World, that then Virtue should meet with that Happiness that naturally belongs to it, and Vice the Evil and Misery which are its proper Portion. These are such necessary Consequences from the different Natures of Good and Evil, and from their being apprehended as such by the Supreme BE-



ING, that 'tis as impossible that it should be otherwise, as that *Bitter* should have the same Effects as *Sweet*, or *Sweet* as *Bitter*; *Light* as *Darkness*, or *Darkness* as *Light*: And therefore GOD's Forbearance of Sinners at present, is no reasonable Ground for the *Atheist* to build any such Hopes upon, as tho' it must *always* fare as well with him, as it does *now*.







## SERMON XII.

JOHN XV. 24.

*If I had not done among them  
the Works which none o-  
ther Man did, they had  
not had Sin.*



**I**N the foregoing Discourse I proved, That the Behaviour of such a Moral Agent as Man, could not be indifferent in the Sight of GOD, because there is a real Difference in the Nature of Things between some of our Moral Actions, and others of them,

them, between those we call virtuous, and the vicious ones: and that such a Difference must appear to the Supreme BEING. The Consequence of which will be, That it concerns every Man that has a Regard to his own Welfare, to inform himself what Behaviour will be most agreeable to HIM; and what will be displeasing to HIM. And as he has heard of many Persons who pretend to have received Instructions from Heaven, in order to tell Men what Behaviour GOD would require at their Hands, to examine, Whether there be not Truth in the Pretensions of some or other of them.

IN Answer to this, the *Infidel* says,  
 “ He has no Reason to concern himself  
 “ in any Pretensions to Revelation, because he is persuaded,

*1<sup>st</sup>*, “ THAT there can be no rational Proof given of any Revelation  
 “ from Heaven.

*2<sup>dly</sup>*, THAT if there were any Means  
 “ of proving, that a Person had received  
 “ Authority from GOD to discover  
 “ some Truths to Mankind, that all  
 “ such

“ such Discoveries would be useleſs or  
 “ unneceſſary; and therefore cannot  
 “ come from G O D, becauſe He does  
 “ nothing in vain, or without great  
 “ and good Reaſons.

3dly, “ B E C A U S E there have been  
 “ ſo many Pretences to Revelation, and  
 “ all of them pretending to have been  
 “ ſupported by the extraordinary Pow-  
 “ er of G O D, that there is no finding  
 “ which of them is the true one, if  
 “ any ſuch were.”

As to the firſt Argument againſt Re-  
 velation, “ That there can be no Ra-  
 “ tional Proof made of any Revelation  
 “ from Heaven; they ſupport it thus:  
 “ That the Nature or Goodneſs of the  
 “ Doctrines which a Man pretends to  
 “ have received from Heaven, will ne-  
 “ ver of itſelf prove its Extraction to be  
 “ from thence; becauſe the ſame good  
 “ Doctrines have been taught by thoſe  
 “ who never pretended to any Reve-  
 “ lation, as well as by thoſe that did;  
 “ and therefore that the only Means  
 “ left of proving a Perſon to be a  
 “ Teacher commiſſioned from Above,  
 “ muſt

“ must be his doing some uncommon  
 “ Works in Proof of his Commission,  
 “ which cannot possibly be done by  
 “ any Powers that are lodged in Na-  
 “ ture; by the *mere* Power of Man, or  
 “ of any Agent inferior in Power to  
 “ G O D himself.” But the *Spinofist* says,  
 “ That extraordinary and uncommon  
 “ Works are as much the Effects of  
 “ some Powers of Nature, tho’ un-  
 “ known to us, as those that are the  
 “ most common, and for that Reason  
 “ better known to us; consequently,  
 “ whenever they happen, they will  
 “ never prove that the Person by  
 “ whom they seem to be done, was  
 “ impowered by G O D. That the Ar-  
 “ gument here used by our SAVIOUR  
 “ to prove his Divine Mission, drawn  
 “ from the uncommon Works He had  
 “ done among them, as being more  
 “ and greater than any other Per-  
 “ son had pretended to before him,  
 “ might be a good Argument to the  
 “ *Jews*, and make them worthy of  
 “ Blame in not accepting Him upon  
 “ such

“ such an Evidence, because they  
 “ must acknowledge such uncommon  
 “ Works to be a good Proof of a  
 “ Divine Mission, their Religion  
 “ being founded upon such Kind of  
 “ Works; That *Origen* himself thought  
 “ our SAVIOUR chose to come among  
 “ the *Jews* rather than any other Na-  
 “ tion, because they having been used  
 “ to Miracles, would be more easily  
 “ convinced by comparing our SAVI-  
 “ OUR’S Works with what they had  
 “ heard of \*. But that in themselves  
 “ they really prove nothing but our  
 “ Ignorance of the Powers of Nature;  
 “ and therefore can never prove, to a  
 “ Person not prepossess’d in Favour of  
 “ Miracles, that GOD is any more con-  
 “ cerned in producing them, than He  
 “ is in any the most common Appear-  
 “ ances of Nature.” For *Spinoza* plain-  
 ly

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\* Contra Celsum. Lib. 2. p. 95.

\* Διὰ τῆτο δ' οἶμαι καὶ τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐκ ἄλλων  
 ἔθνων ἢ Ἰουδαίοις ἐπιδημηκέναι, τοῖς ἐθάσει γενο-  
 μένοις πρὸς τὰ ψευδέστα, τῇ ψευθέσει τῶν πεπι-  
 τευμένων πρὸς τὰ ὑπ' αὐτῶ γενόμενα, κ, τ, λ,

ly places miraculous Facts to the Account of Mens Ignorance of the Works of Nature, in these Words : *Miracula & ignorantiam pro equipollentibus sumpsi.* And he gives this Reason for his making Miracles and Ignorance to be equivalent Terms ; *Quia ij qui Dei Existentiam & Religionem miraculis adstruere conantur, rem obscuram per aliam magis obscuram & quam maximè ignorant (viz. the Powers of Nature) ostendere volunt, atque ita novum argumentandi genus adferunt, redigendo scilicet non ad impossibile, ut aiunt, sed ignorantiam †.* That is, “ We pretend to prove the “ Truth of certain Propositions, of “ which we can judge by our Reason, by certain wonderful Facts of “ whose Causes we are not able to “ judge at all, and therefore must “ be less known than the Propositions “ which they are intended to prove.” From thence he inferrs, “ That Miracles,



“ racles, the Causes of which are un-  
“ known to us, can never be a Proof  
“ of any Thing, unless it were pos-  
“ sible or allowable to enlighten an  
“ obscure Proposition by another that  
“ was equally or more obscure than  
“ itself.” This is the chief Difficulty by  
which the Unbeliever pretends to de-  
fend himself in not believing any Thing  
of our Christian Revelation.

H O W E V E R *Spinoza* being aware that  
he might be pressed with some extraor-  
dinary Facts mentioned in the *Gospels*,  
such as raising *Lazarus* to Life, after  
he must needs have been dead, having  
lain Four Days in the Grave; and our  
S A V I O U R'S own Resurrection, after  
He had been known to be really dead  
by vast Numbers of Persons, who  
were Spectators at his Crucifixion; and  
by great Numbers who saw him alive  
after his Resurrection; that such Facts  
as these seemed to exceed all the Pow-  
ers of Nature, and therefore that Mi-  
racles would not be, as he had sup-  
posed, an Argument whose Strength  
lay only in our Ignorance of the  
Powers

Powers of Nature; He goes on to say farther, " That if some Facts " be related in the *Gospels*, which do " truly exceed all the Powers of Na- " ture, such Facts were not real, but " in Appearance only." *Oldenburg* had press'd him to declare what he thought of the Instantaneous Cures, and the restoring of dead Bodies to Life again, of which the Writers of the *Gospels* take Notice, whether those could be the Effects of some occult Powers of Nature, if *really* performed; or whether he thought they were to be taken in a figurative Sense, or that the Relators of these Facts intended to impose upon us. *Spinoza* would not take Refuge in the last of these; but frankly owns, " That he could not deny " them to be in earnest in the Accounts " they had given us of these Extraor- " dinary Works." The Air of Simplicity, and a plain Sincerity which appears in their manner of Writing, extorted this Confession from him; and therefore he grants in his Answer to  
*Oldenburg,*

*Oldenbourg* \*, “ That the Disciples of  
 “ our Lord were as fully persuaded that  
 “ they saw their Lord after his Refur-  
 “ rection, and at his Ascension, as they  
 “ were of having ever seen Him du-  
 “ ring his Life-time; but that they were  
 “ deceived in believing those Appear-  
 “ ances of their Lord after his Death  
 “ to have been *real*; or any thing  
 “ more than Impositions upon their  
 “ Senses.”

I WILL therefore shew *1<sup>st</sup>*, That the  
 Extraordinary Works related in the  
*Gospels*, supposing them for the pre-  
 sent to have been really performed,  
 would be a sufficient Proof of a Divine  
 Mission.

*2<sup>dly</sup>*, THAT the Disciples of our  
 LORD were well qualified for judging,  
 whether some of these wonderful Works  
 were *really*, and not in *Appearance only*,  
 done; and consequently their Testimo-  
 ny concerning such Miraculous Facts,  
 would be as credible a Testimony, as  
 it would have been concerning any  
 Z other

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\* In eadem Epistola.

other Matters of Fact, of which we are able to assign a Natural Cause; and then a Revelation or Divine Mission may be made evident and credible to Men.

1<sup>st</sup>, THAT the Wonderful Works related in the *Gospels*, supposing them for the present to have been really wrought, would be a sufficient Proof of a Divine Mission.

BUT before I proceed to the Proof of this Proposition, it may not be amiss to shew the Possibility of such Works being done, as those our SAVIOUR appeals to in my *Text*, and yet of not being the Effects of some Powers of Nature. For those who deny the Authority of Miracles, do even deny the Possibility of them, when considered as Works done by some Power or other, superior to Nature, and acting freely upon Nature. But the Reason of their Denying them, is built upon a Supposition, which is a mere begging the Question in Dispute between us and the *Atheist*; viz. That GOD is a Necessary Agent, and therefore the

the Laws of Motion must be necessarily what they are; for then it would be true indeed, that all the Effects of those Laws would be equally natural, tho' perhaps not equally common, or coming so often under human Observation: And then such extraordinary Occurrences, when they happened, must be as much the Effects of the Powers of Nature as any of those that are most common. But we suppose, and have already proved, That the Motions of Matter are by no means necessarily such as they are; but depend upon an Intelligent and Free B E I N G, who moved Matter as He thought fit: And tho' He chuses an uniform Manner of acting upon Matter, according to what we call the Laws of Matter in Motion; yet there can be no Difficulty in conceiving that He may act otherwise if He pleases, as well as we can conceive that He might have at first impress'd different Powers upon Matter from the present ones; which cannot be doubted while the Principle of Gravitation that acts upon Matter,

is not essential to it; for then 'tis plain, there can be no absolute Necessity in the Nature of Matter for its gravitating at all, much less for its gravitating according to these Laws, by which our Experience tells us it now does; and then there can be no Difficulty in conceiving that GOD may change them for a *short* Time as well as for a *long* one, which makes all the Difference between Miracles or Works produced only upon extraordinary Occasions, and such as are the Effects of the settled Course of Nature; for, according to the Religious Man's Scheme, the Laws of Nature are nothing more than certain Rules which GOD has freely proposed to himself, according to which He would usually act upon or move Matter; which shews there could be no Foundation for questioning the Possibility of Miracles, without taking it for granted that there was no such Thing as a Free Agent, or a Being that acts upon Choice. It being then not impossible that such Works should have been performed, as are related in the *Gospels* altho'

altho' they were not an Effect of any Natural Powers of Matter in Motion :

I COME now to shew that such extraordinary Works, supposing them to be done, will be a sufficient Proof of a Divine Mission; for these Two Reasons :

1<sup>st</sup>, BECAUSE they could not be the natural Effects of any Laws of Nature whatever.

2<sup>dly</sup>, BECAUSE they could not be done by any inferior Agents independently of GOD: For the only Reasons that can be possibly given, why the Extraordinary Works related in the *Gospels*, should not prove, that the Person who appeared to work them, was impowered by GOD, and therefore sent by Him, must be either because these Works were as much the Effects of Natural Causes, as any other not so much taken Notice of, because not so usual; or that they might be performed by some invisible Agents superior in Power to Man, tho' vastly inferior to GOD.

1<sup>st</sup>, T H E R E is no Ground for supposing that the extraordinary Works related in the *Gospels*, as performed by our S A V I O U R, were the natural Effects of any Laws of Nature unknown to Men; because if they were such, no Reason can be given,

1<sup>st</sup>, W H Y no more of them are produced. And,

2<sup>dly</sup>, B E C A U S E supposing them to be so; yet how should our S A V I O U R come to the Knowledge of them? Since they are supposed to be unknown to Men.

1<sup>st</sup>, I say, That the Works we are told to have been done by our S A V I O U R, could not be the Effects of any Laws of Nature; because no Reason can be given why no more of them are produced. 'Tis certain, if we take in all the *pretended* as well as *real* Resurrections of dead Bodies, with which the History of Mankind will furnish us, that they are exceeding few in Number; and if we leave out those that want a due Attestation, their Number will be much smaller. That Nature should



should be many Hundreds of Years, I may say, many Thousands, in bringing forth the Resurrection of a dead Man; and yet that this should be as natural a Product of hers, as the Birth of a Man, which happens every Day, is what no Body sure can be persuaded to believe. As natural as the common Way of propagating Mankind is, yet if there had been very few Instances of its Success in many Ages, we should scarce have judged the Productions in that Way a Work of Nature; because there is no supposing any Thing to be the real Cause of an Effect, when it scarce ever produces that Effect. 'Tis not doubted that a real Cause may be sometimes defeated by the contrary actings of other Causes; but that it should be almost always so, is what can never be reconciled with those Signatures of Wisdom and Contrivance, which appear in all those Parts of Nature, with which we are best acquainted \*. And tho' the *Atheist* will not allow them to

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\* See Serm. X.

be the Products of an Intelligent B E I N G, yet he will not deny that there is any Regularity in the Productions of Nature, or that generally speaking, natural Causes do produce their proper Effects; but no Body will say there can be regular Productions, when the Causes of those Productions shall fail a Million of times for once succeeding.

I DO not deny that many natural Effects may have pass'd upon the World for Prodigies, because Men have not been always careful in observing the Workings of Nature, and that more accurate Inquiries have justly enough thrown many of them out of the Number of such Works as exceeded its Power: That many Things, if seldom taken Notice of, have pass'd upon the World for Prodigies or super-natural Effects in some illiterate Ages, which are now accounted for by the ordinary Laws of Nature. But then 'tis also to be considered, that it has not been for Want of observing the Nature of *dead* Bodies, that the Resurrection of such Bodies has pass'd for a Prodigy, but be-  
cause

cause Men were well assured by a continued Observation of them, that it was not the Nature of *such* Bodies to spring out of their Graves, as Corn does out of the Ground; and because in all their Observation and Reading, they had met with exceeding few Instances of this Nature, and therefore rightly judged, that *Nature* was not qualified for making dead Carcasses to spring out of the Ground. For whatever occult Qualities there may be in the Nature of Things, yet they might easily see that if any Thing fell out directly contrary to the constant and settled Course of Things, or that a *dead* Body should become a *living* one, instead of a *living* Body becoming a *dead* one, that this could not be a mere Effect of the Laws of Nature; but must have some Cause superior to those Laws, that was able to act upon Matter in a different Manner from what was usual. Some Cause that had chosen to act for the most Part upon Matter in an uniform Manner, and yet reserved to itself a Liberty,

Liberty, upon some Occasions, of departing from that Rule. But,

*2dly*, SUPPOSING some of those Extraordinary Works which seemed to be done at our SAVIOUR'S Command, because they appeared immediately upon his Speaking, as in his Instantaneous Cures of Blind, Lame, and Sick People; supposing, I say, these to have been merely Effects of some secret Laws or Powers in Nature, there still remains a great Difficulty in accounting for these Miracles, and that is, How our SAVIOUR could know, when these unknown Powers would exert themselves? He foretold before his Death, That after he had been laid in his Grave, He should rise out of it the third Day. Taking it for granted, that the Resurrection of a Man falls within the Compass of the Powers of Nature, tho' unknown to us, because they seldom appear, it would be natural to ask this Question, How our SAVIOUR could know that the Laws of Nature would be ready to restore a dead Body to Life again just at that Time when He had

had

had foretold He should rise again? There had been Millions and Millions of Bodies, that had lain very quiet in their Graves for many Ages, and no Historical Observations could possibly have furnished our SAVIOUR with any Light, whereby to discover when Nature would be strong enough to raise a dead Body; because the Instances must have been too few to afford any Ground for forming a Judgment upon them. When He raised *Lazarus* out of his Grave, it seems to be as impossible that he should know that Nature would have Power to restore him to Life again just at that Time when he called to him to come out of his Grave, as it would be for a mere Man by his own Natural Powers, to restore a dead Body to Life again. So again, What could have induced our SAVIOUR to have attempted the giving Sight to a Person that had been blind from his Birth, had He trusted to the Powers of Nature for the Success of that Operation? When there had not been at that Time one Instance from the Crea-  
tion

tion of the World, of a Person's Seeing that had been born blind; *Since the World began was it not heard, that any Man opened the Eyes of one that was born blind* \*. How our SAVIOUR should be possess'd of a Piece of Knowledge which no Body has ever had either before or since his Time, and is confess'd by the *Spinofist* to be a Secret which he pretends not to fathom, is what he ought to give some Account of. Till such Time, we have a Right to insist upon it, That those Instantaneous Cures our SAVIOUR performed upon the Person born blind, upon the Dumb and Deaf, upon the Sick of various Distempers, and even upon such as were really dead, should be taken for some uncommon Exercises of the Power of GOD, and not for any Natural Effects of certain Powers of Nature.

*2dly*, HAVING shewn that some Miraculous Works mentioned in our *Gospels*, supposing them to have been really performed, could not be the Effects

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\* John IX. 32.

jects of any Powers of Nature, I am now to shew, That such Works could not be performed by any Agents inferior to GOD; and for this plain Reason, Because some of them, as for Instance, the raising a Body to Life that has been once really dead, requires as great a Power as the giving Life at first to such a Body. For, if we can judge at all, it will require as great a Power to restore a Piece of Matter to Life again, when that Organization is spoiled which was necessary to Life, tho' it had been before animated, as to animate any Parcel of Matter, that never had any of the Organs necessary for Life. And therefore the same Power, which could re-animate a Body that was reduced to an inanimate State, would be sufficient for animating any Part of Matter whatsoever. But whatever Extraordinary Works may be done, whether *really* or in *appearance*, by any Invisible Agents inferior to the Supreme BEING, yet so long as the *Deist* believes him to be the Maker of the World, and of all Things that are contained

tained in it, he cannot believe any Inferiour Beings to have a natural Power, or a Power independent upon GOD, of making any new Species of Animals, or of forming any Individuals out of lifeless Matter, of the same Species with the present ones of GOD's making; because a Power lodged in any Hands different from those of the CREATOR, of encreasing the Number of Animals in any other way than of His Appointment, would be inconsistent with the Oeconomy of the World, and the Fitness of Provisions, both with Regard to the Quantity and Quality of them, for the Use of such Animals. For there is no conceiving how there should be such an exact Adjustment of Provisions for the Animate Part of the World, as I have already shewn there is \*, without supposing that there was some Intelligent BEING, who had calculated what Quantity of Provisions would be necessary for supplying the Wants of such a Number of Animals, as He intended

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\* See Sermon X



tended should dwell upon the Face of the Earth. And it cannot be supposed that GOD would furnish any of his Creatures with a Power of disturbing his own Plan, and making it unbecoming his Wisdom to execute.

IF there have been any Instances pretended of the Exercise of such a Power by inferior Agents without GOD's Assistance, because in Opposition to Him; as in the Case of the *Ægyptian* Magicians, and of *Apollonius's* raising a Lady to Life in *Rome* when she was carrying to the Funeral Pile :

I ANSWER, That as to the Instance of the Magicians, there is no Evidence that their Performances were more than Delusory or in Appearance: The Works which they did, as well as *Moses*, were these Two; the turning their Rods into Serpents, and bringing Frogs upon the Land of *Egypt*: These are the only Wonders performed by the *Ægyptians*, that have any Pretence to the making any of the *Animate* Kind: And yet neither of these Instances will prove, that they had a Power of giving Life

to Lifeless Matter. For as to the first, *viz.* the Conversion of their Rods into Serpents; we have no Reason to think that this was a real Change or Conversion into a living Creature; because we find that *Aaron's* Rod, after it had been at two different Times converted into a Serpent; this same Rod, I say, was ever after called by the Writer of the Book of *Exodus*, a Rod or Wand, and employed to the Purposes of a Rod †, *The Rod which was turned into a Serpent, shalt thou take in thine Hand.* and Verse 17, 'tis employed as a Rod to smite upon the Waters; Chap. viii. 16. it was used in smiting the Dust of the Land. So as after it had been twice a Serpent, it resumed its primitive Nature of a Rod, and this too without the Help of any miraculous Change, as far as appears by the History; and seems to have continued in that State ever after. But however it might have been with *Aaron's* Rod, yet had the Magicians Conversion of *their* Rod in-

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† *Exodus*, Chap. IV. and Chap. VII. v. 15.

to a Serpent, been a real Change, it would be hard to give a Reason, why they were not able to form Lice out of the Dust, as well as a Serpent out of their wooden Wand: For as to the first of these, the Magicians immediately cry'd, as soon as they saw it, *That it was the Finger of God*, and did not pretend to any Thing like it. And yet no Body will pretend to see more Difficulty in animating Dust than in giving *Life* to a Piece of dead Wood.

As to the second Instance, the Scriptures say nothing of Frogs being made by the Incantations of the Magicians, but only that they brought them out of the Water upon the Land; which certainly may be done without the Power of forming such Animals as Frogs. The last Instance is that of *Apollonius* of *Tyana's* raising a Lady to Life that had been carried out for dead. The Account which *Philostratus* gives of it, tho' he was well inclined to do all the Honour he could to *Apollonius*, shews it to be very doubtful,

A a ful,

ful, whether the Lady was really dead or only in a Trance. “ For, says he, “ whether there was any Spark of Life “ left in her, which her Physicians did “ not perceive, or whether she was “ really dead, is a Matter of Doubt “ not only to me, but was such to “ those who were present when *Apol-* “ *lonius* seemed to bring her to Life “ again \*. And therefore this Instance, any more than the former, will never have Weight enough to prove, that any inferior Agents have a Power, independent of GOD, of giving Life, or making new Individuals. Consequently, it cannot invalidate my Proof of a Divine Mission, drawn from the Exercise of such a Power as that of giving Life to a dead Body.

IF

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\* Εἴτε συνθήκη τῆς ψυχῆς εὔρειν ἐν αὐτῇ, ὃ, ἐλελήθει καὶ θεραπεύσας — Εἴτε ἀπεσβεσθῆσαν τὴν ψυχὴν ἀνεθαλάξε τε καὶ ἀέλαβεν, ἀρρηθῆ ἢ κατὰ ληψις τέτε γέγονεν, ἐκ ἐμοὶ μόνω, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς ὄρατουχοῖσιν. Philostrat. de vita Apollonii Tyan. Lib. IV. cap. 45.

IF we may believe Mr. Bayle \*, *Spinoza* himself acknowledged, if he could have believed the Matter of Fact of *Lazarus's* being raised to Life again, after he had been really dead, that he would have given up his System of Infidelity, owned our SAVIOUR'S Mission to have been from GOD, and embraced the Christian Faith. Mr. Bayle tells us, That *Spinoza* confessed this to some of his most intimate Friends. We cannot doubt whether *Spinoza* had heard of the Account that *Philostratus* has given of *Apollonius* raising a Roman Lady to Life; whether he believed any more of this than he did of our SAVIOUR'S raising *Lazarus* to Life; yet thus much may be inferred from this Confession of his, which is all I want it for at present, That if good Proof could be made of any such Fact, it would be a good Evidence of a Divine Mission.

HAVING finished the Proof of Miracles, and shewn, That some of the Works which our SAVIOUR is said

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\* Bayle Histor. Dict. voce *Spinoza*.

to have done, could not be the Effects of any Powers of Nature, nor of any Agent inferior to G O D,

I AM to shew, 2dly, That the Disciples of our L O R D were qualified for judging, Whether such Works were really done or not; particularly with Regard to his Resurrection, that they were able to judge, whether it was *Real*, or only in *Appearance*. For I cannot find that *Spinosa* doubted, whether the Apostles were sincere Persons, and spoke what themselves believed to be true. The Objection which *Oldenburg* had made to him upon this Head, and his Answer to it, supposes him satisfied of their Sincerity: For thus he says \*, *At dices Apostolos omnes omnino credidisse, quod Christus à morte resurrexerit, quod ego non nego.* And he says farther †, “ That the Circumstances of our Saviour’s Appearing  
 “ to his Disciples were so strong, that he  
 “ does not only say, that *they* believed  
 “ what they reported of his Appearing to  
 “ them; but that even *Infidels* would have  
 “ thought

\* Epist. 22.

† Ibid. 25.

“ thought they had seen him, if they had  
 “ been present in those Places in which  
 “ He appeared to his Disciples. ” *Fateor  
 quidem hanc viz. Resurrectionem, iis narrari  
 circumstantiis, ut negare non possimus ipsos  
 Evangelistas credidisse Christi corpus resur-  
 rexisse, & quod ab Infidelibus etiam potuisset  
 videri, si unà in iis locis adfuissent in qui-  
 bus ipse Christus discipulis apparuit.* This  
 I think is speaking fully in Behalf of the  
 Sincerity of our Witnesses, and of the  
 Motives too of their Belief in the Re-  
 surrection; tho’ after all these Conces-  
 sions, he will have it, that the Disciples  
 might be deceived, and take an Ap-  
 pearance for a Truth. I have therefore  
 nothing more to do, but to shew from  
 the Circumstances they give of this  
 Fact, that they could not be deceived  
 as to the Fact of the Resurrection;  
 that they must have been able to di-  
 stinguish their real Master from his  
 Ghost or Apparition.

IN the Morning immediately after  
 the Sabbath was over, certain Women  
 went with Spices to embalm our SA-  
 VIOUR’S Body; when they came to the

Sepulchre, they found the Stone rolled away, tho' they could not imagine by whom; they went into the Grave, and were in a great Consternation upon not finding our SAVIOUR's Body there; they went and told this to Two of his Disciples, who went to the Sepulchre, and found what the Women had told them to be true; no *Body* there, only the Burying-Cloaths to be found. Thus far then must be evident to them, That the Body was not in the Sepulchre, whatever was the Cause of its Removal: This is a Matter of Fact, of which no Body will deny they might be good Witnesses: The only Difficulty that can be made, is, Whether the Appearances of our SAVIOUR to his Disciples were *real*, or only *imaginary*. It must be observed, from the Account which all our Evangelists give of this Matter, that the Disciples were so far from being credulous, or ready to believe that their Master was risen, that they all rejected the Story of the Women, concerning his being risen to Life, as an idle Tale: They might therefore  
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be capable of being good Witnesses, when they witnessed *against* their Prejudices. But let us see what Reasons prevailed upon them, prejudiced as they were, to believe that He was really risen; and whether such Reasons would not have determined any Reasonable Man to believe as they did. They *saw* him at several Times, knew that *He* was exactly like that Person, whom they saw t'other Day hanging upon a Cross: They *heard* him talk often with them, they knew 'twas so like their Master's Voice, that they did not doubt they as really heard him talk, after He was *dead*, as they had done, while He was *alive*, and as if the Testimony of two of their Senses was not a sufficient Proof of his being their old Master, One of them, *viz. Thomas* was so incredulous, that he declared ' he would not believe it was really his Master, unless he might not only *see* in his Hands the Marks of the Nails, with which the *Jews* had fastned them to the Cross, but also *thrust his Fingers into the Holes, and thrust his Hand into*

*his Side*, that had been wounded by the Spear. *Thomas* was gratified in all this, and convinced that it was not an Apparition that only counterfeited the Aspect and Voice of his Master, but really and truly his Master raised to Life again; for by touching and handling his Master, he had a farther Evidence that it was his Master, and not an Apparition, because, such *have not Flesh and Bones*, as *Thomas* found his Master had, and therefore cried out for Joy, *My LORD, and my GOD*. He did not appear to his Disciples once, twice, or thrice, but a great many Times before his Ascension; and these Appearances were not short and transient, but in some of them He staid so long with them, as to eat and drink with them; so as they had sufficient Opportunities, and Time enough for examining, whether it was He or not; and at last they saw the same Person whom they had so often seen, parted from them, and ascending up into Heaven. If after all this Evidence, these Witnesses were deceived, we must give up the Testimony of the

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the Senses as not to be depended on in any Case whatever; and the *Spino-sist* might, if he had pleased, with as good Reason have said, That the Disciples of our L O R D were deceived in believing their Master was any Thing more than a *Man in Appearance* only even before Crucifixion; 'till he is pleased to tell us what Sort of Evidence he would have insisted upon, which the Apostles had not.

IT will not be sufficient to say, That I have allowed the Magicians Rods to be only in *Appearance* turned into Serpents, and yet no doubt the Standers by were as fully persuaded that the Rods were *really* become Serpents, as the Apostles were that they saw their L O R D, when they saw his *Apparition*: Because we don't find that the Standers by were difficult in believing the Conversion of the Magicians Rods, and therefore not careful in examining, whether it was so or not. Whereas in this Instance of the Resurrection, his Disciples were averse to believing it true, and therefore nice in their Examination;

mination; they had several Opportunities at different Times of seeing our SAVIOUR; whereas this Conversion of the Magicians Rod was once made, and quickly destroyed by *Aaron's* Rod, so that there was not much Time allowed for examining the Truth of that *Appearance*; and there was no Necessity for *Moses's* discovering that the Change was not *real*; because their Rods being made to disappear by *Aaron's* Rod, was a sufficient Confutation of the Power by which the Magicians acted, altho' the Conversion in both Cases had been only in *Appearance*.

IF it be said, That had our SAVIOUR really risen with the same Body He laid down in the Grave, the Two Disciples of his whom He joined as they were travelling to *Emmaus*, must have known him, because they both saw him, and had a long Discourse with him. Our Answer is, That *St. Mark* tells us, our SAVIOUR appeared to them *ἐν ἑτέῳ μῶσει*; in a different Dress from what those Disciples had been used to see him in; as He appeared at  
another

another Time to *Mary Magdalen* in the Habit of a *Gardiner*. That it often happens that we do not know our most intimate Friends, when they have disguis'd themselves with a Design to be concealed from us; especially if we meet them at a Place or Time, when and where we not only did not expect to see them, but were fully persuaded they were at that Time in another Place; which was plainly the Case of the Two Disciples with Regard to our SAVIOUR: For notwithstanding the Report the Women had made to them of his being living, they seem to have believed nothing of the Matter, and therefore could have no Thoughts of meeting upon the Road a Person whom they did not believe to be alive: And then 'tis very possible, they might entertain no Suspicion of its being their *Master*, altho' the Person they saw and conversed with, might very much resemble him, both in his Aspect and his Voice. And therefore nothing can be inferred from this Fact, to the Prejudice of a *real* Resurrection: Nothing that

that ought to hinder us from concluding, That if after those frequent Occasions which the Disciples of our LORD had of *seeing Him*, of eating and drinking with Him, of handling Him after his Resurrection, their Testimony of of his being alive might still be false; they must have been Deceivers, and believed nothing themselves of the Facts they tell us: But *Spinosa* has already acquitted them from any Design of imposing upon us; consequently, our SAVIOUR must have *really* risen again, and not in *Appearance* only: But by *Spinosa's* Confession, such a Fact exceeding all the Powers of Nature, must have GOD for its Author. Which is enough to shew, That some uncommon Works may be a good Proof of a Divine Mission; and therefore that it cannot be a good Reason for refusing a fair Examination to any Revelation, to plead, That there is no other Way of Proving it *such*, but by some Extraordinary or Uncommon Works.



## SERMON XIII.

I COR. I. 21.

*For after that, in the Wisdom of GOD, the World by Wisdom knew not GOD, it pleased GOD by the foolishness of Preaching to save them that believe.*



THE Design of our Apostle in this Chapter was, to mortify some Persons, who at that Time pretended to despise the Christian Religion, because of its Plainness and Simplicity. Besides many other Exceptions they made against it, such as the mean

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Estate of its first Author, and his dying so much like a common Malefactor, they were not a little offended at it, because its Professors did not give their Doctrines the Air and Turn of the Schools, nor proved them from any of the then admired Principles of Truth; but required Men to take them upon the Credit and Authority of one JESUS, whom they affirmed to have been sent on Purpose by GOD to publish them to the World: They expected to have had the Immortality of the Soul, a Resurrection, and such-like Doctrines made out to them from Principles of Reason and *Philosophy*; for, as the Apostle tells us, They *sought after Wisdom*, v. 22. with which goodly Title they were wont to dignify their Speculations in *Philosophy*; but when they found the Apostles were Persons altogether unacquainted with any of their Systems, the then reputed Standards of Truth and good Sense; and that they chiefly insisted upon the Authority of their MASTER, they slighted their Preaching, as fit only for the Entertainment



tainment of the illiterate and credulous Part of Mankind; the Authority of a Master, especially of One that came to so bad an End, appeared to them to be no better than Foolishness, or foolish Talking. CHRIST crucified, to the Greeks Foolishness, v. 23. As an Answer to this Way of Reasoning, St. Paul tells them, That if Christianity was Foolishness, it was only such to those who perished by rejecting it; but as to those who embraced it, it was the Power of GOD, and the Wisdom of GOD: And as a Proof of the Truth of what he said, he bids his *Corinthians* ask these vain Men, What they with all their Wisdom had done towards bringing the World to a true Sense of Religion, and whether they could shew any such Effects of their Instructions, as were every Day produced by the Preaching of the Gospel? *Where is the Wise? Where is the Scribe? Where is the Disputer of this Age? Hath not GOD made foolish the Wisdom of this World?* v. 20. Of which he gives an undeniable Instance, That after all their Attempts, and all their  
boasted

boasted Wisdom, they were not got so far as to know the Object of their Worship aright; or, allowing some Few of them to have had just Notions of the DEITY, that yet they were never able to propagate any of them among the Rest of the World. And therefore as the Way of Wisdom and Knowledge had not sufficiently answered the Purposes of informing the Bulk of Mankind in their Duty, he tells them, GOD was pleased to proceed with Men after a new Method, and to bring them to Himself and an holy Life, without profound Knowledge, in a Way of Believing. *For after that, in the Wisdom of GOD, the World by Wisdom knew not GOD, it pleased GOD by the Foolishness of Preaching to save them that believe.*

FROM the Text thus explained, I shall take an Occasion of comparing together these two different Ways of Instruction, by Faith, and Reason: And after having established the Reasonableness of submitting to the Instructions of Faith, shew, That this is on many Accounts better fitted for Teaching  
Men

Men their Duty, and the Principles that enforce it, than Reason or *Philosophy*: And consequently, tho' the Nature and Will of GOD, as far as is necessary to be known, was discoverable (as the *Deist* says) by Natural Light; yet a Revelation might be of great Use to Mankind; and therefore such a Method of Instruction not unworthy or unbecoming the Wisdom of GOD.

I HAVE already observed, That the Reasons by which the *Deist* pretends to defend himself, while he rejects Revelation, without giving it a fair Hearing, are these:

1<sup>st</sup>, " THAT there is no proving  
 " a Revelation, but by Miracles; and  
 " that Miracles will never prove any  
 " Thing but our own Ignorance.

2<sup>dly</sup>, " THAT if they could be made  
 " to prove Something, they could not  
 " prove a Revelation, because a Reve-  
 " lation would be useless, and therefore  
 " cannot have GOD for its Author, who  
 " does nothing in vain, or without good  
 " Reason.

3dly, “ BECAUSE there are so many Pretences to Revelation, all of them pretending to be supported by the Extraordinary Power of GOD, that there is no discovering which of them is the true one, if any such were.”

THESE are the Difficulties which hinder him, as he pretends, from believing as we do.

As to the first of these, I have considered it already \*. The second Difficulty they support by these two Reasons: 1. “ Because Authority cannot be a sufficient Ground to form a Rational Assent upon. 2. Because whatever is needful to be known in Religious Matters, may be found out by Reason and Discourse.”

I SHALL therefore shew 1st, That Authority may be a good Reason for giving our Assent to a Proposition.

2dly, THAT a Revelation is better fitted on many Accounts for Teaching Men their Duty, than Reason or *Philosophy*.

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\* See Serm. XII.

*lofophy* : And therefore that 'tis not unbecoming the Wisdom of GOD to make one.

1<sup>st</sup>, THE Reasonableness of Believing, or the Reasonableness of such a Persuasion, as is entirely built upon Faith or Authority, is to be proved. By a Persuasion formed upon *Faith* or *Authority*, in Distinction from a Persuasion that rests upon *Reason* only ; I mean, a Persuasion, That a Proposition is true, altho' our Reason cannot discover any necessary Agreement between the Parts of the Proposition ; but believes them to be truly connected, because we are told as much ; so as if GOD reveals a Proposition to us, which Natural Reason discovers to be evidently and necessarily true, as He has done in the Moral Law ; all such as do evidently perceive it to be true, can't be properly said to take it for a Truth upon Faith, or the Authority of GOD, but upon the Reason and Evidence of the Thing : because where the Proof is clear and evident, the Reason of Assent will be resolved into its Evidence, not into the Authority of the

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Person.

## S E R M O N XIII.

Person who relates it to us for a Truth. And therefore when a certain † Author tells us, “ We neither ought, nor  
 “ can Assent to any Proposition, till the  
 “ Mind does thoroughly understand, and  
 “ evidently perceive it to be true;” he effectually excludes Authority from being any Reason of our Assent; it being then only that our Assent proceeds from a Principle of Faith, when ’tis given before any such Evidence appears.

G O D had left Mankind, except a very small Part, the *Jews*, almost without any other Directions, than what Natural Reason could furnish them with. For excepting some few Traditions, such as those concerning the Formation of the Earth, and the Drowning it by a Deluge of Waters, and some others, (which too had the usual Fate of Doctrines conveyed in the Way of Tradition, *viz.* of being so confounded with Fable and Story, that to discover how much of them was true, what added to the Original Tradition, was near as difficult,

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† Christianity not Mysterious.

difficult, as it would have been to have discovered those Truths without the Help of any Tradition;) excepting some few Traditions, whatever they found out, was in a Way of Reason and *Philosophy*, by such Inferences as Reason was able to draw from its own Principles. GOD sent no Prophets amongst them to declare authoritatively what their Duty was, but every one was to find it out as well as he could. Not but that He raised up Great and Learned Men, such as many of the Philosophers in the several Sects were, to be the Interpreters of Duty to the People, and perhaps assisted them too in those great Discoveries they made concerning Himself, and their Duty to Him; but then GOD did all this in a Way of Reason and human Wisdom: They never pretended they had them from GOD, or urged Men to the Belief of them on that Account; the only Arguments they insisted on, were such rational Deductions from the Nature of Things, as Reason and Observation might have furnished them with. But notwithstanding all

their wise Instructions, and the Discoveries<sup>s</sup> made by them concerning the Object of Worship; yet we find the Bulk of Mankind made small Improvements under them; for *St. Paul* tells us, the World with all its Wisdom was not gotten so far, as to know the True GOD; and therefore GOD observing the small Proficiency Men made under this Sort of Teachers, was pleased to take it upon Himself to teach Mankind, and free them from the Trouble of Searching what their Duty was, by long and elaborate Deductions from Principles of Reason; that now they should rely upon his Credit for such Truths as they wanted to be satisfied in; that they should have His Authority for a Proof, instead of those tedious, and often Times slippery Inferences from Reason, or those much more uncertain and ill-grounded Traditions, which were the best Means they had of coming at the Knowledge of some Truths of the greatest Importance.

ONE would think that Mankind should have received this Method of  
being



being Taught by G O D with the greatest Satisfaction, and a due Sense of their Obligations to G O D their Teacher; that no one should have put Him upon proving what He asserted, before they could believe Him; that his Veracity, whom Natural Reason discovers to be too Wise to be imposed upon *Himself*, and too Good to impose upon *others*, should have removed all Objections against such a Method of Instruction: And yet some People pretend to assure us, That Assent given to what we don't thoroughly understand, tho' supported by the greatest Authority, is repugnant to the Nature of a Rational Being: That clear and distinct Ideas are to the Understanding, what Light and a fit *Medium* are to the Eye; and that a Man may as well see an Object, when either of these are wanting, as the Mind assent to any Truth, of which it has not clear and distinct Ideas: That Authority, as such, being a Thing foreign to the Proposition, to which we give our Assent, and not making it more intelligible than it was before, cannot

therefore induce a Rational Assent ; and consequently, that the Obedience of Faith, and Resignation of Understanding, so much talk'd of, are a perfect Contradiction to the Nature of an human Mind.

IF this Objection were just, it would not be easy to make out what the Apostle contends for, *viz.* The Preferableness of the Way of *Faith* above that of *Wisdom*, for the Salvation of Mankind. For, if all Assent must be resolved into clear and distinct Ideas as the sole Cause of it, and no Man could Assent, 'till he had such Ideas ; there would be no Room left for Assenting upon a Principle of Faith ; for, as I before observed, all Propositions of Faith, properly so called, do suppose that the Person to whom they are such, does not thoroughly understand them. That all Assent must be grounded on some Kind of Evidence or other, is very certain ; and also that a Man must have a clear and distinct Perception of the Sense of a Proposition, before he can give any Assent to it ; otherwise he would Assent  
to

to he knows not what: But then it does not follow that a Man can't give his Assent, 'till he is able to find out those Proofs, which shew the Connexion and Agreement between the Parts of the Proposition; for why may not Authority, affirming the Truth of a Proposition, be a sufficient Evidence to warrant our Assent? 'Tis true, Authority, as *fact*, does not help us to understand the Proposition better than we did before; and yet the Opinion we may have of the Person's Skill and Veracity, who tells us the Proposition is true, may be to us, who have this Opinion of him, a probable Evidence of its Truth, and a Rational Ground of Persuasion. For no one can doubt, whether a Man may not rationally enough give his Assent to the Truth of any one Proposition in *Euclid*, if he understands the Terms of it, altho', being unacquainted with that Science, he may not be able to demonstrate it; and yet the *only* Ground of his Assent, in such Case, would be the Authority of some Person, whom he believed

believed able to do it. For the same Reason, tho' we are far from having any clear and distinct Ideas of a Resurrection, and can see no Connexion between our dying and rising to Life again, yet we may Assent to this Proposition, That the Dead shall live again, if we be once satisfied that the Person who tells us it shall be so, is a Lover of Truth, and able to connect the Parts of this Proposition. And therefore a clear and distinct Understanding of a Truth, cannot be previously necessary to every Assent of the Mind of Man.

If we should also consider the limited Nature of our Faculties, that they fall vastly short of reaching the whole Extent of Being; that there are few Things about which we can certainly determine; many Truths of great Importance to us, for which in a Way of Reason we should want evident Proofs; that there are many more, which the Generality of Mankind would scarce be capable of understanding, for want of Skill to use such Proofs as

Reason

Reason discovers: Considering all this, one might think it no Injury done to any Man's Understanding, if he received these Truths in a more *certain*, and much *easier* Way, as I shall presently shew, from the Eternal Fountain of Knowledge. For no Body, I think, would blame a Person who was sensible of a Defect in his Eye-sight, for believing the Report of another upon the Subject of *Seeing*, if he thought him to be an honest Man, and to have better Eyes than himself; and yet the Report of such a Person does not help him to *see* the Thing better, than he did before. But,

*2dly*, I PROCEED to shew some of the Advantages of this Way of Teaching the World by Faith, above that of Reason: As,

*1st*, UPON account of its Certainty. Whilst Mankind was left to the Directions of Natural Reason, we meet with nothing but Uncertainty and Irresolution about Truths of the highest Concern; they were perpetually Disputing about the *Origin* of the World, some

some contending it owed its Original to a lucky jumbling together of the Parts of Matter : Others, That besides Matter, there was another Principle, *viz.* Mind, that actuated Matter, and raised it into that beautiful Order we now see it in. Others not seeing how the many Goods and Evils that lie every where so intermixed, could, being so contrary in their Natures, proceed from the same Principle, concluded, That besides Matter, there must be Two other Principles, One the Author of all the Good, and the Other of all the Evil in the World. Nor were they less at a Loss about the Government of the World ; one, and that no inconsiderable Sect of Philosophers, leaving it to the Guidance of *Chance* ; others to *Fate* or *Necessity* ; and others to a GOD or *Free Agent*. The Generality of Men were under great Uncertainty as to their Forgiveness, after their having offended the DEITY. Some hoped their Concern for having done so, and a Resolution to behave better for the future, would be sufficient to make their Peace with

GOD ;

GOD; but the greatest Part would not trust to this, without adding a Vicarious Death, as an Atonement for their Faults: But whether either, or both of them, would be accepted, was more than Reason could inform them; because it could not appear that GOD was obliged by any of his Perfections to accept of either or of both; and such Things as depend upon his Will, and are Acts of Bounty or Favour, cannot be known 'till He pleases to reveal them. If we look into their Debates concerning the Happiness which GOD designed Man for, we shall find them at a great Loss where to fix it; however, they generally look'd no farther for it than on this Side the Grave, many of them denying any Reward beyond this Life, and the rest very much doubting it; so as *St. Paul* might justly charge the *Gentile* World with not knowing the True GOD. For tho' some of them had very just and honourable Notions of GOD, and did discover there was a Great and Good BEING, that at first made, and does still govern the World; yet they  
could

could not, neither was it likely that they should, persuade the rest of the World to be of *their* Mind. Because there were some Objections which *then* lay against this Supposition, for which Reason was unable to account; as for Instance, They could never give any Man a satisfactory Account of the many Evils, both Moral and Natural, that were too visible in the World; or reconcile them with the Supposal of a Good and Gracious BEING at the Helm of our Affairs; because they knew nothing of the happy State of the first Parents of Mankind; and that they were deprived of it for an Act of wilful Disobedience, and that our Mortality, with all the Consequences attending such a State, is an Effect of their Mismanagement \*. For as to the pre-existent State, which was the best Account they were able to give of this Difficulty, no Proof could be made of it; and therefore those who would not take up their Opinions upon trust, chose to ascribe the

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\* Rom. v. 19.



the Government of the World to Fate, or any Thing rather than GOD, upon whose Goodness they thought it would highly reflect, if He had created a Rational Being with such a Bias to Evil, and placed it in so uncomfortable an Habitation. The Difficulties attending some Religious Truths in a Way of Reason, seem to have determin'd some of them to the Way of proposing their Sentiments as Matters disputable; in which Manner the *Academy* proceeded with their Scholars. They declared against all Dogmatical Determinations in Matters of Religion, and contented themselves with examining the several Pretences of others, without establishing any Opinion of their own upon more than *probable* Grounds. Thus we find *Cicero* who was one of the Learnedest among them, engaging the several Sects of Philosophers in a Dispute about the Nature of the Gods, exposing in their Turns the Weakness of each of them, and at last refusing, tho' desired by *Cotta*, to tell us, what himself thought of  
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the Subject \*. We have then the most considerable Man of a Sect remarkable for Men of Abilities, at a Time too when Learning and good Sense were at the highest Pitch in *Greece* and *Rome*, tacitly giving up the Cause of Reason and *Philosophy*, as insufficient to *insure* any Man in Truths concerning GOD and Religion.

WHAT then could the rest of the World do, when their greatest Men were so much divided in these Matters? especially when those who had the most *Truth* on their Sides, made the least Pretences to *Certainty*; we may easily imagine that but Few, and those of very inquisitive Tempers, would give themselves the Trouble of entering into their Speculations, that the rest of the World would slight their Lectures, as despairing to find where the Truth lay, when *they* were so much divided about it. And so it proved; their Divisions did so weaken their Authority, and the Influence which otherwise they must

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\* Vide Lib. 3. Ad finem, de Natura Deorum.

must have had, that altho' many of them were convinced of the Unity of the DEITY themselves, they were never able to stop the Progress of *Polytheism*, or oblige the Government of any one State in the World, to set up the Worship of the One True GOD. They were so little able to reform Mankind in this Particular, that in *St. Paul's* Time their Disciples (the *Heathen* World) still went on in their old Way of Worship; *In changing the Glory of the incorruptible GOD, into an Image made like to corruptible Man, and to Birds, and Four-footed Beasts, and Creeping Things* \*. Whereas when GOD Himself undertook to teach the World in a Way of Faith, all Wavering and Irresolution concerning his Nature and Will, quickly vanish'd. The Apostles were well agreed in publishing the same Doctrines, and propos'd them to their Hearers as certain Truths; and those that gave in their Names heartily to this New Institution, left off all Disputes of this Kind, and adhered sted-

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\* Rom. i. 23.

dily to what the Apostles taught them ; being fully persuaded that what they taught them was the Truth : The good Effects of this Agreement quickly appeared in the wonderful Success they had in Propagating the Christian Doctrine ; *Polytheism* and *Idolatry* being forced every where to give Place to the Worship of the One True GOD, which in a very few Centuries became the established Worship of almost the *then* known World. And tho' the first Preachers of this Way lay under great Disadvantages, as being of a Nation that the *Greeks* and *Romans* look'd upon as little better than barbarous, tho' they were not versed in the Ways of Reasoning, and the Arts of Persuasion, that were then most likely to have recommended their Doctrines ; yet when the World came to consider the Strength of that Evidence, which they brought in Proof of them , and from thence saw plainly that Truth was to be found amongst them, which the endless Disputes and Wranglings of their great Men had forbidden them to expect, they

they quickly came over to them, quitted all their old Engagements in Favour of the Religion of their Country, and submitted *themselves* to their Instructions; which was more than the Philosophers, those great Masters of Reasoning, and who so well understood the Art of managing Mens Passions, could ever effect. For, whatever Repute their Schools might have as fit Places for Teaching Men the Rules of human Wisdom; yet it is plain from the Multitude of their Oracles, and the frequent Recourse that was had to them upon all Occasions, that the World did not think their Reasonings in Matters of Religion were much to be depended on, and that Faith was a much more certain Principle of Truth.

P E R H A P S it may be thought I have used an Argument that may be turned upon me, and upon that Faith which 'tis brought to defend, because it does not appear that there has ever been any better Agreement in *Opinions* among Christians, than there was among Heathens; and therefore if the

great Diversity of *Opinions* amongst them, be a good Argument to prove the *Uncertainty* they were in, then as great a Difference amongst Christians, ought in all Reason to inferr as great an *Uncertainty*; that the Histories of pass'd and present Times, and the large Catalogues of Heresies that are given us by *Epiphanius*, *Philastrius* and others do abundantly shew, that the Disputes between Christians concerning Articles of Religion, come not short of those among Heathens. That tho' the Authority of Scripture be granted, yet the World is never the nearer to an Agreement in the Articles of Religion, as is plain by the infinite Number of *Commentaries* upon the same Scriptures, and the constant Appeal of all Sects of Christians, how opposite soever in their Opinions, to the same Holy Writings: and therefore the Way of Faith seems not to have any great Advantages above that of Reason on the Score of *Certainty*.

IN Answer to this, it may be said, That as to the Catalogues of Heresies given

given us by the Ancients, they were not much to be relied upon; that many of them were concerning Matters of small Consequence, and not belonging to the Essence of Religion, as appears by the Catalogues themselves; and the Writers of those Times observe, That People were then very forward in making unfair Representations of their Adversaries Opinions, and calling every Opinion that differed from their own, by the odious Title of Heresy. That if Christians did differ about the Sense of some Places of Scripture that contained Articles of Importance, such as those which concerned the *Incarnation of the Word in the Person of our SAVIOUR*, a TRINITY in *Unity*, and some other difficult Doctrines; that yet as to those Articles in which I have charged the Heathens with being very much divided, such as those concerning the MAKER and GOVERNOR of the World, whether there was any one Intelligent BEING to whom these Titles did of Right belong: If there was, whether He had made any Provision in some

*other* State for such as had served Him faithfully, tho' imperfectly *thus*: As to any of these Articles, the Disputes among such as professed the Christian Religion were always exceeding few, if compared with those amongst the Heathens: And no Christian Sect of any Note at this Time, denies any of them. That these are of all others Truths of the greatest Concern, as without which there could be no sufficient Reason for serving GOD at all; for he that cometh to GOD, must believe these two Things; *that He is*, and that He is a *Rewarder of them that seek Him*. That the Belief of the other Doctrines of Religion is chiefly required of us for this very End, that our Faith in *these* might be more firm and better grounded; and therefore an Agreement amongst Christians, so much wanted among such as were under the Guidance of *Natural Light*, tho' it were to be found only in *these* Truths; yet if we consider the Importance of them to Religion, would sufficiently prove a *Revelation* to be better qualified for Teaching



Teaching Mankind the Principles and Motives to Duty, than *Reason* or *Philosophy*.

HOWEVER, supposing that by Deductions made from Principles of Reason, the wiser and more intelligent Part of the World could have arrived at as great *Certainty*, and been as well agreed in these Articles I have now mentioned, as we Christians are by the Help of Revelation; yet still the Way of Faith would be much more effectual towards a general Instruction of the World, than that of Reason; because a Revelation teaches in a Method that is better suited to the different *Opportunities* and *Apprehensions* of Men. And that

1<sup>st</sup>, BECAUSE its Way of Teaching is much shorter and more compendious than that of Reason, therefore better fitted for the different Opportunities of Men.

2<sup>dly</sup>, BECAUSE 'tis more easy and more intelligible; consequently, better suited to the different Degrees of Understanding among Men.

1st, BECAUSE its Method of Teaching is shorter. If we consider the State of Mankind, we may observe that much the greatest Part are given up to Labour, and enslaved to a mean Condition, almost all their Time and Pains laid out in making the necessary Provisions for Life. And therefore if we would undertake to teach such Persons their Duty, we must use the shortest Method with them that's possible \*; but if we compare together the different Ways of Proof from *Reason* and from *Faith*, we shall easily observe that any Truth will be much sooner learnt, when 'tis proved by an Argument drawn from *Faith*, than the same Truth would be by *Reason*; for if we would learn any Thing in the Way of Arguing from Principles of *Reason*, we must be oftentimes content to go Step by Step thro' several Consequences, before we can arrive at our Conclusion; especially if the Truths we would understand, be of a Complex Nature, such as are those  
which

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\* Origen contra Celsum. Lib. 1. p. 9.

which concern our Duty. For before we can understand our Obligation to any of the Moral Laws by *Reason*, we must consider our own Natures, and observe the natural Tendencies of Things; and from these infer our Obligations. As for Instance; If I would understand whether I am obliged to be just in my Dealings, *Reason* would discover it to be so, because Man is naturally made for Society, and can't live with tolerable Comfort without it; and the World is so ordered, that unless just and fair Dealings were observed, no Society could possibly be kept up, but would quickly end in Tumult and Confusion: From thence I would conclude, That since G O D had made Justice so necessary to the Well-being of Mankind, that He intended Men should practice this Virtue; to understand our Obligation to this, or any other Duty in a Way of Faith, nothing more is necessary, than seeing what the Scriptures, which are the Word of G O D, determine in this Matter. There we may presently learn what our Duty is, by  
applying

applying what the Scriptures say, to our own Case, and discover at one View what Reason can't make evident to us, 'till it has put us to the Trouble of ranging our Thoughts, and observing the Relation and Dependence they have one upon another. This is none of the least Advantages which Faith has above Reason, that it instructs us in so compendious a Method, that there is no Man, let his Circumstances be never so strait, but may find Time enough to learn his Duty.

2dly, As Faith teaches us in a shorter Way, so in a more intelligible one, and which is therefore better fitted for the different Degrees of Understanding amongst Men. Whilst there was no other Way of Teaching the World but by Natural Reason, we find the wiser Heathens were so sensible of the Difficulty of Teaching Men their Duty, that they would constantly run thro' a Course of the difficult Parts of Knowledge, with their Scholars, before they could think them capable of learning *Morality*. The *Epicureans* required the  
 Knowledge

Knowledge of Natural Things, the *Platonists* some Skill in the *Mathematicks*, as a Preparatory to their *Ethical* Lectures. They found by Experience how little the Generality of the World could apprehend them, when they were Reasoning concerning the Supreme BEING, and their several Duties to Him, and therefore generally agreed in excluding the Bulk of Mankind from a Possibility of attaining to any great Degrees of Virtue; looking upon such only as capable of Virtue, who were furnished with good Natural Abilities, and had enjoyed the Benefits of a liberal Education; but as to all the rest of the World, we find *Seneca* ranking them among the Beasts that perish; so as by their own Confession, the Way of Reason could never have done much towards bringing the World to a Sense of their Duty, when they shut out the greatest Part of it from a Capacity of receiving Benefit by it. And 'tis easy to observe, that the Generality of Men are hardly capable of any other Notices of Things, than what are impress'd  
by

by the Objects of Sense ; they have not Skill enough to compare simple Terms so exactly with one another , as to compound them into true Propositions, and then to infer from every Proposition its Natural Consequences and Deductions ; nor when they are made for them, always to see the Connexion and Force of the Argument. An Argument that strikes their Senses shall much more effectually convince them of any Truth, than any the most exact and elaborate Reasonings upon it : And therefore the Miracles performed by our SAVIOUR and his Apostles, did quickly draw the Multitude after them, and in a little Time brought them in more Disciples, than the abstruse Speculations of the Philosophers had ever done before. For every Man is able to judge whether a blind Man had been restored to his Sight ; whether the Deaf to their Hearing, and whether the Dead had been raised to Life again ; Sense being the proper Judge in these Cases, and then any Man, that had either seen or heard of such Things done, would

would naturally draw the same Conclusion from them, as the poor Man in the *Gospel* did, when cured of his blindness, that the Person who had perform'd that Cure must be one that came with Power from above; *If this Man were not of GOD he could do nothing* \*. Thus far every Man will be able to Reason, let his Understanding be never so mean or shallow. The Advantages of a Revelation for teaching Men their Duty would be farther seen, by comparing the Practice of Preaching the Religion to the People, as 'tis done in our Churches, with the Lectures of the Philosophers, or the Instructions of *Pagan* Priests: Which will be done in the following Discourse.

IN the mean Time this Observation naturally arises from the Whole, That all Endeavours of undermining Revelation, and weakning its Authority, are direct Attempts upon the Good and Happiness of Mankind; since the destroying its Credit, is bringing the  
World

World back again to the Instructions of Natural Reason, which how little qualified it is for an Universal Guide, we have already seen. And therefore, before any undertake to run-down Revelation, I would beg of them to consider a few Things; That they would look back upon former Times, those Times of Ignorance, which GOD is said to have wink'd at; I would desire them to reflect upon the extravagant Superstitions, and absurd Rites that made the greatest Part of the Established Worship of the Heathen Nations, and then I would ask them, Whether it was not greatly for the Honour and Happiness of Mankind, to be rescued from such Errors as were a Reproach and Scandal to human Nature; and to have a Rational Worship and Religion in the Room of 'em? And whether 'tis not highly probable, that if the Credit of Revelation were once destroyed, the World would in a few Ages return to as bad a State as that in which Christian Religion found it? I am sure they can't bring any good Arguments



Arguments to prove it would not be so; and tho' it must be confessed, that notwithstanding Revelation, the World is still bad enough; yet if we compare the Histories of the Times that were before, with those that succeeded, we shall soon see that it has been much improved by it; as might be shewn in the many irrational Customs, and obscene Rites of Worship (such as those paid to the *Mother* of the *Gods* \*) that have been abolished in the several Nations, where *It* has been received; when the Preachers of Natural Religion could never prevail with the People to part with any of them.

FROM hence too we may observe, That the Unbeliever cannot be safe from the Apprehensions of Punishment in a future State, while he has no better Arguments for rejecting our Christian Revelation, than pleading the Difficulty of seeing what Use a Revelation could be of to Mankind.

S E R M.

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1 Vide Aug. de Civitate Dei. Lib. 2. cap. 4, & 5.





## SERMON XIV.

I COR. I. 21.

*For after that, in the Wisdom of GOD, the World by Wisdom knew not GOD, it pleased GOD by the foolishness of Preaching to save them that believe.*



HE Want of a Revelation has been proved from the Uncertainty in which Mankind was, with regard to such Truths as it nearly concern'd every Body to know. Such as these; Whether there were any Supreme Intelligent BEING that took notice

tice of the Actions and Behaviour of Men; and whether, supposing such an one, He would forgive Mens voluntary Mistakes, upon their being sincerely concern'd for them, and resolving to do better for the future; and whether He designed to take any farther notice of them after they were once dead, by restoring them to Life again, and Rewarding or Punishing them for their Behaviour here. As to all these, I have already shewn, That the World labour'd under great Uncertainties. I have also proved the Insufficiency of Reason for rescuing Mankind from this Uncertainty, and for instructing them in their Duty, from the Consideration of those different Ranks and Orders seen amongst Men: That the lower Order, which is the Generality of Men, is enslaved to a mean Condition, that such a Condition will not allow Time sufficient for Speculation, or for considering in a Way of *Reason* what their Duty was. That in a Way of *Authority* Mens Duty might be made much more easy and intelligible to them than by *Reason* or *Philosophy*.

*Philosophy.* I am further to prove the Usefulness of a Revelation by one Method of Teaching Men their Duty *peculiar* to it, which is, By Preaching that Religion in mix'd Assemblies, where Persons of all Degrees may meet, and receive Instruction by that which the vain Philosophers in my *Text* called the *Foolishness of Preaching*.

I AM not obliged to consider, Whether under Natural Religion the World might not have been better taught than they were, in Virtue of such Principles as Natural Reason might have suggested to them; tho' I have already shewn\*, That Morality could not be explained so familiarly in a Philosophical Lecture, as it is in our *Homilies* or Discourses to the People; but whether in Fact, after a Trial of Four or Five Thousand Years, they did hit upon so good a Method of Reforming the World, as this of Preaching, which was introduced among us by *Revelation*. The Excellency of this In-

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stitution

\* See Serm. XIII.

stitution will easily appear, if we consider it as inviting all Sorts of Persons to come and be Hearers; and also the Number of Places which have been usually set apart for the Performance of this Religious Exercise. I have already observed, That only Persons of Letters or of a liberal Education, pretended to go to the Schools of the Philosophers, but now all Ranks of Men, the lowest and most indigent of the People, all Ages, the Old as well as the Young, Women as well as Men, have always had a free Access to these Schools for the Education of a Christian, I mean our Churches. And if the Schools of Philosophers had made their *Lectures* as intelligible as our *Sermons*; yet it must be considered that their Discourses, so far as Religion was concerned in them, were merely *Ethical*, regarding Mens Behaviour towards one another, without concerning themselves to tell the People the Manner of Reverence or Worship, that would be most agreeable to the Supreme B E I N G ; they none  
of

of them approved any of the then established Ways of Addressing the Divine BEING, and had not Courage enough to teach their Scholars any other, only in general Terms, That the best Way of Worshipping Him, was to imitate Him, and that they told them was best done by studying and observing his Laws; which was, in other Words, nothing more than persuading them to observe Moral Duties on account of their *Beauty* and *Excellency*, as being a Transcript of the Divine Nature; without pressing upon their Disciples the Practice of Morality upon any *Religious* Motives, such as the Hopes of GOD'S Favour, and the Fear of his Displeasure; without telling them, they must practice Virtue, because GOD would reward them for so doing, and punish them if they did otherwise. Accordingly we find some of the Fathers of the Church reproaching the *Pagans*, with this unlawful Divorce which *their* Philosophers had made of *Religion* from *Morality*. “The *Pagan Philosophy*, says

## SERMON XIV.

*Lactantius* \*, “ and Religion, are Two  
 “ Things quite distinct one from the  
 “ other; *Morality* has its particular Do-  
 “ ctors, ( meaning the Philosophers )  
 “ who do not teach the Manner of  
 “ approaching the Gods.” So that had  
 the Lectures read in their Schools,  
 been more intelligible than our Sermons,  
 yet this *Institution* would have been in-  
 ferious to our *Preaching*, as one great  
 Branch of Religion, *viz.* The Manner  
 of Addressing to GOD in Religious  
 Worship, together with the only solid  
 Supports of a Virtuous Life, *viz.* A  
 Religious Fear of the DEITY, were  
 not taught by *them*.

AND as to the Heathen Priests,  
 whose peculiar Business it was to  
 teach the People how to behave to-  
 wards GOD; these, I say, made no  
 Discourses to the People concerning  
 their

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\* *Philosophia & religio Deorum disjuncta sunt, si quidem alij sunt professores sapientiæ per quos utique ad Deos non aditur. Alij Religionis antistites, per quos sapere non discitur. Lactant. Institut. Lib. 4. cap. 3.*



their Duty to their Neighbour; they never gave themselves the Trouble to teach Men the Rules of Virtue; but spent their Time in performing Sacrificial Rites, and certain Ceremonies of their Religion, and in instructing People to follow the prescribed Formulary of external Devotion. “ Those (says “ *Lactantius* \*) who teach the Wor- “ ship of the Gods, take no Notice of “ any Thing that may serve to regu- “ late Manners and the Conduct of “ Life, they do not in the least search “ after Truth, but apply themselves “ only to learn the Ceremonies of Di- “ vine Worship, which require nothing “ but the Ministry of the Body, and “ in which the Sentiments of the Heart “ have no Part.” And in another Place †, “ Religion has likewise its “ Ministers, who do not teach the  
D d 4 “ Rules

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\* Nihil ibi differitur quod proficiat ad mores excolendos vitamque formandam, nec habet inquisitionem aliquam Veritatis, sed tantummodo ritum colendi, qui non Officio mentis, sed ministerio corporis constat. Institut. Lib. 4. cap. 3.

† Ibidem.

“ Rules of Morality.” St. *Austin* \* has a Passage to the same Purpose, in which he challenges the *Heathens* to shew “ any such Places as our Church-  
 “ es, where the Precepts of the Mo-  
 “ ral Law are usually read by the  
 “ Priests, and heard by the People,  
 “ which, he tells them, is the Case  
 “ wherever the Christian Religion pre-  
 “ vails.”

WE have no Reason to think these Fathers have wronged the Heathen Priests, if we consider that *they* could not with any Decency pretend to have given the People any Lessons of Morality; because they must have sounded very ill from the Mouths of such Persons as were obliged, if they would talk consistently with the Principles of that Religion, to give such frightful  
 Ideas

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\* Dicatur in quibus locis hæc docentium Deorum solebant præcepta recitari, & a cultoribus eorum populis frequenter audiri, sicut nos ostendimus ad hoc Ecclesias institutas, quaquaversum Religio Christiana Diffunditur. Lib. 2. cap. 6. De Civitate Dei.

Ideas of the Divinity, ascribe to it so many gross Imperfections, Weaknesses, and even Vices, as would be abhorred by any Man that had but a moderate Sense of Honesty.

BUT farther, if we consider the Number of Places set apart for the Performance of this Religious Exercise, we shall still find the Advantages to lie on the Side of a Revelation; these Places are to be met with, not only in Cities and great Towns, but even in the meanest Villages, by which a Provision is made for the Countryman, as well as the Citizen, that he may be taught his Duty, and well skilled in his Religion, without stirring out of the Bounds of his Village or Parish. Whereas the Schools of the Philosophers were very few, and those in Places only where there was on *other* Accounts a great Resort; they were not enough dispersed, as our Churches have been from the Beginning of Christianity, for the general Instruction of Mankind; so that had their Lectures been as plain as our Sermons, the  
greatest

greatest Part of the World could not have resorted to them, by reason of the Distance they lived from those Schools: The lower Sort of People not having Time from their Trades and Employments, to travel far for Instruction. I cannot forbear transcribing the Words of the most Learned Dr. *Prideaux* in his *Connexion* \* upon this Occasion.

“ As the *Jews*, says he, had their Synagogues, in which the Law and the Prophets were read unto them every Sabbath Day, so the Christians had their Churches, in which from the Beginning all the Doctrines and Duties of their Religion were every Lord’s Day taught, inculcated and explained to them; and by GOD’S Blessing upon this Method, chiefly was it, that this Holy Religion still bore up against all Oppressions, and notwithstanding the Ten Persecutions and all other Artifices and Methods of Cruelty and Oppression, which Hell and Heathenism could devise to suppress

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\* *Connexion*, Part 1. pag. 309.

“ suppress it, grew up and increased  
 “ under them; which *Julian the Apo-*  
 “ *state* was so sensible of, that when  
 “ he put all his Wits to work to find  
 “ out new Methods for restoring the  
 “ Heathen Impiety, he could not think  
 “ of any more effectual for this Pur-  
 “ pose than to employ his Philosophers  
 “ to preach it up every Week to the  
 “ People, in the same Manner as the  
 “ Ministers of the Gospel did the  
 “ Christian Religion \*.” The Use that  
 I would make of this Passage is, To  
 shew, what Opinion one of the subtlest,  
 as well as most malicious Adversaries,  
 that ever the Christian Religion met  
 with, had of this Way of doing Ser-  
 vice to any Religion, by Preaching it  
 to the People, as ’tis done in our  
 Churches. Which is a sufficient An-  
 swer to such of our Unbelievers, as will  
 not allow it possible for a Revelation  
 to be of any Use or Service to Man-  
 kind.

BUT

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\* Gregory Nazianzen Oratio contra Julianum.

BUT then, if a Revelation be really of such Use to Mankind, it may be ask'd, Why there have not been more Preachers of it, so that all the World might have had the Benefit of it? and in particular, Why the Christian Religion was confined to the *Roman Empire*, or at least not extended much farther? That as GOD is acknowledged to be the Common FATHER of All, and no Respector of Persons or Nations, if this Religion had GOD for its Author, it would have been communicated to the *Upper* as well as the *Lower Asia*, to the *Chinese* and *Tartars*, as well as to those Parts of *Asia* which were in the *Roman Empire*, or bordering upon it; to the *large* Continent of *America*, as well as to the smaller one of *Europe*. The Want of such an Universality, has been urged by a late Author †, as a sufficient Reason for Rejecting any Revelation, tho' it comes recommended by every other Proof that can be desired; and for this Reason,

That

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† Blount's Miscellanies, put out by Gildon.

“ That if no one Revelation has been  
“ *equally* made known to All, that none  
“ can be wanting or needful to *any*.  
“ And then, there being no real Want  
“ of a Revelation, there can be no  
“ Reason for expecting any other Light  
“ from G O D, than what He commu-  
“ nicated to us when He gave us our  
“ Reasoning Faculty, as He does no-  
“ thing in vain, or gives any *extraor-*  
“ *dinary* Powers, when the *ordinary* ones  
“ are sufficient. ”

I H A V E already shewn, That a Re-  
velation was wanting on several Ac-  
counts; and therefore am only obliged to  
see, whether a partial Revelation be as  
good an Argument to prove that such  
a Religion cannot come from G O D, as  
any Miracles or extraordinary Works  
would be to prove that it must come  
from Him. That the first cannot be  
so good an Argument to *invalidate*  
a Revelation, as the latter is to *con-*  
*firm* it, is evident, because we are sure  
'tis inconsistent with the Nature of  
G O D to exercise his Power in so extra-  
ordinary as Manner, as is that of a Mi-  
racle,

racle, in Behalf of a Falshood, (which must be the Case, if a *false* Religion was supported by true Miracles \*) as 'tis impossible that a BEING, whose Character is that of a Lover of Truth, should, consistently with its own Nature, countenance an Imposture or Falshood. Whereas we are so far from seeing any Inconsistence with the Nature of GOD, altho' a Religion should be communicated to some, and not to others, that such Communications appear to be mere Matters of Favour, which may be granted or refused, without affecting any Moral Attribute of GOD : And then the Argument drawn from the former cannot be depended upon ; because there is nothing for it but the Will and Pleasure of a BEING, who was not at all restrained from acting either Way ; whereas the latter depends upon his Nature, which is necessarily what it is ; and therefore the Acts flowing from it as incapable of Change, as the Nature itself from which they flow. But, *2dly,*

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\* See Sermon XII.



2dly, SUPPOSING it was not a Matter of mere Favour; yet if it was to be communicated at some Time or other to all Nations, and any Reason could be given, why not to all at the *same* Time, then no Argument could be drawn from the partial Preaching of the Christian Religion, which would affect its Divinity. But,

1st, ALTHO' when we consider the Uncertainty Mankind was in with Regard to the Will of GOD, we might have believed that GOD of his Goodness would, some Time or other, make Himself better known to us, yet it would be a Favour in Him to go out of the common Course of his Providence for any of our Advantages. The Light of Reason He had given us for our Direction, and if that shone but *darkly*, yet if GOD would have been merciful to such as made the best Use of that *dim Light*, neither his Justice nor Goodness could have been called in question, tho' He had not made any *extraordinary* Communications of his Will to Mankind. We can be grateful in owning the Advantages

vantages we *Christians* have above *Heathens* (in as much as we are assured of Forgiveness of our Sins on Account of the meritorious Death of our S A V I O U R, of which the *Heathen* could not be certain) without presuming to say, that G O D could not, consistently with his Attributes, have remitted our Offences, and will still forgive those, who never had the Gospel Preached to them, without the Knowledge of such an Atonement. We freely own the Advantages of Faith or Revelation for a general Instruction of the World, and yet will not say that G O D has left himself without a Witness in the heathen World: that it was possible for Men to find out the main Strokes of their Duty, and to hope that G O D would pardon upon Repentance, is Evident from many of the Heathen Writers upon Morality. If others of meaner Capacities, and whose Opportunities of Improvement were less, could not strike out their Duty in a way of Reason; this plainly shews that G O D was not obliged to give all Men equal Abilities for understanding *Natural Religion*,

ligion, and therefore it can never be a good Argument against a *Revealed Religion*, should any one argue, That 'tis not from G O D, because not equally communicated, or not given to All, as well as to Some. Since no Reason can be given, why G O D should be at perfect Liberty in distributing *Natural Light* in various Degrees to different Men, and different Nations, which will not equally hold with Regard to *Supernatural Light*, or that superadded Assistance, in the Way of a Revelation. But,

2dly, SUPPOSING it was not a Matter of Favour in G O D to make a Revelation of our Duty; yet if our Christian Revelation shall be communicated to All at some Time or other, and some Reasons might be assigned, why it should be communicated to *Some* and not to *Others*; then its Want of Universality would not affect its Divinity, or its having G O D for its Author. for those who lay Stress upon this Argument, must take these Two Things for granted, *viz.* That the Gospel will

never be universally propagated; and that no possible Reasons can be assigned, why *all* Nations, as well as *some*, have not the Gospel communicated to them at the *same Time*. If there is no Reason for taking either of these for granted; then the whole Support of this Objection is taken away.

As to the first of these, an Apostle of our SAVIOUR'S, St. Paul †, has told us, That the Time will come, when the Fulness of the *Gentiles* shall be brought into the Church of CHRIST; and that then the *Jews* too should universally come into a Profession of our Christian Religion. A Preacher then of this Religion having told us, that this would be the Case, no *Deist* can with Reason object, that because the Time is not yet come, therefore it will never come. If St. Paul had told us the precise Time, when this should be; and such Time had been elapsed, we must have given up this Argument concerning the Universal Propagation of our Religion,

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† Romans xi. 25.

Religion, and owned that the Apostle had mistaken our SAVIOUR's Meaning. But as there are no particular Marks or Signatures, by which we may judge at what particular Time this should be brought to pass, no Argument can be fairly drawn against our Christian Religion, from its not being as yet universal. But then it may be said, That if Revelation is a great Benefit, it cannot be thought, that as the whole Earth is the LORD's, and the Fulness thereof, and that He is as much the Common FATHER of the *past* Generations, as of those which are *yet to come*; it cannot be thought, that He would have left so many Parts of the Earth in Darkness for so many Ages since the *Gospel* was first published in the *Roman* Empire; but would have long e'er this communicated the *Gospel* to them. Our Answer to this is, That tho' we do not pretend to tell the particular Reasons which determined an infinitely Wise BEING not to send his Apostles into *China*, *Tartary*, or *America*, at the same Time as He sent them over all the

*Roman* World : Yet if any probable Reason can be assigned, why it was not at the *same* Time Preached to them, *that* will be sufficient to destroy the Force of this Objection.

ONE Reason why the Christian Religion was not Preached to every Nation of the Earth, at the same Time as it was to those who lived within the Bounds of the *Roman* Empire or bordered upon it, might be, That such Nations were not qualified for receiving the *Gospel* at that Time. All Lawgivers have been won't to suit their Laws to the Nature of the People for whom they designed them ; if the People they were to govern were ignorant and unpolished , the prescribing to them at *first* the most exact Rules of Behaviour , would be Labour lost upon them, they would be incapable of bearing with them, and therefore receive no Benefit from them. As their Barbarity wore off, some Irregularities, which had been before tolerated, would be then with good Reason corrected and reformed, according to the strictest Rules

Rules of good Sense. The Great Legislator of the World seems to have acted in this Manner, with Regard to the Two Institutions He gave by *Moses* and by CHRIST; by the first He allowed of some Things in Condescension to the Obstinacy and Stupidity of the *Israelites*, such as Divorces upon the slightest Pretences; He enjoyned many carnal Ordinances, of which the Prophet \* *Ezekiel* says, by Order from GOD, that they were not *good* in themselves, nor acceptable to Him on any other Account, than as they were at *that* Time necessary to preserve them from imitating the Fashions of their Neighbouring Nations, and paying Divine Worship to Stocks and Stones. When they were well cured of this Inclination to worship the DEITY after the Manner of their Neighbours, as 'tis allowed on all Hands they were before our SAVIOUR'S coming amongst them, He then sent a Person to deliver them a more perfect Religion. When their

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\* Ezekiel xx. 25.

Notions concerning the Nature of the Supreme BEING were improved by the spiritual Interpretations, which their Prophets from Time to Time gave of the Law of *Moses*, and by their Converse with the *Greek* Philosophers, which appears plainly by the Writings of those *Jews* that lived after the *Babylonish* Captivity, such as the Writers of the Book of *Wisdom*, *Ecclesiasticus*, and others, then GOD sent his Son to them, to teach them a more Spiritual Worship; a Worship or Honour more suitable to the real Nature of GOD, than entertaining Him, as they had hitherto done, with Sheep and Oxen, which GOD was pleased to accept at their Hands, 'till they were capable of knowing Him better. At this Time, 'tis to be particularly observed, That all Nations, as well as the *Jews*, viz. all that lived within the Bounds of the *Roman* Empire, or were Borderers upon it, had more or less profited by frequenting the Schools of the Philosophers, and Reading their *Ethical* and *Metaphysical* Lectures, in which they treated concerning the Nature of GOD, and the



the Excellency of Virtue, in a much clearer Manner than any *others*, in any *other* Parts of the World, had ever done before them. And tho' their Excellent Discourses were not sufficient for persuading People to give up the Establish'd Religion; yet they prepared Mens Minds for receiving a better, whenever it should come to them well recommended.

WHEREAS the other Parts of the World which had no Commerce with the *Romans*, as far as we know any thing of them, were perfectly Barbarous, being ignorant of the first Rudiments of Religion; if they had any Traditions of the first Antiquity, yet they knew not how to make any Use of them, or draw any useful Conclusions from them, as Dr. *Burnet* observes \*. Tho' the *Babylonians* and *Egyptians* had been in Possession of very ancient Traditions for many Ages, yet nothing of Use was drawn from them, 'till the *Greek* Philosophers un-

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\* Archæologia, cap. 8. p. 72. 75.

dertook them, of which he gives one remarkable Instance, “ That tho’ *these* “ Nations had Records of all the *Eclipses* “ that had been from the Beginning of “ the World, yet they were never a- “ ble to foretell an *Eclipse*; that this “ Discovery was reserved for *Thales*, “ who from *their* Historical Registers “ of *past Eclipses*, took the first Hint of “ calculating the Times of *future* ones.” And therefore *such* Persons for Want of improving their Minds, would have been incapable of relishing a Religion so perfectly Rational as our Christian: It would have been casting Pearls before Swine, giving them what they would not have thanked God for, because too much above their Way of Thinking.

As to the *Americans*, we know not when that Continent was first peopled, or whether it was at all before our SAVIOUR’S Coming; for *Garcilasso* tells us when the *Spaniards* first came there, they could give no Account of themselves higher up than Five Hundred Years, and therefore the Gospel not being

being preached in that great Continent of *America* at the same Time, as it was in the *Roman* Empire, ought to be no Objection against it. I need not take any Notice of the Objection, as it concerns the *Scythians* or *Tartars*, because having none of their Histories to inform us of them, we are at full Liberty to suppose them as barbarous, and as unqualify'd for receiving Christianity, as we please.

THE onely Nation which could pretend to any Degree of Politeness at that Time, and which had not the Gospel preached to them, were the *Chinese*: And yet how much soever the Literature of these People has been cried up, 'tis certain it was very mean. 'Tis plain they were very poorly skilled in *Metaphysics*, not having any Notion of a Supreme BEING; and this cannot be doubted. Since \* Fa-  
ther

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\* De summo ac primo rerum Authore mirum apud omnes Silentium; quippe in tam copiosa lingua, ne nomen quidem Deus habet. Martini Historia Sinica. Lib. 1.

## SERMON XIV.

ther *Martini* who was long in the Country, and well understood their Language, assures us, " That there  
 " was not a Name in the *Chinese*  
 " Language which would express the  
 " lowest Idea, which the most barba-  
 " rous Nations had of a God: " And  
 the *Syrian* Inscription, discover'd in  
 1625, is a farther Proof of it: For tho'  
 there had been *Syrian* Missionaries in  
 that Country for above One Hundred  
 Forty-six Years, and therefore some  
 of them must have throughly under-  
 stood the *Chinese* Language, yet when  
 they were to erect a Monument with  
 an Inscription for perpetuating the Me-  
 mory of their Mission, they were  
 forced to express the Sovereign †  
*Being* by the *Syriack* Word *Aloho*,  
 tho' every other Word of the Inscrip-  
 tion is in the *Chinese* Language: Just  
 as the *Spaniards* use the Word *Dios* to  
 instruct such of the *Americans*, who have  
 not any Idea of a GOD, or any Word  
 in

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\* China Illustrata. Kircheri, pag. 22.

in their Language by which to express it. And therefore if any People were disqualified for receiving so excellent an Institution as our Christian, the *Chinese* must be of that Number, as being ignorant of that which is presupposed to every Revelation, the Being of a G O D, or a Free, Intelligent, and Powerful Agent. Whereas the *Greek* Philosophy, being spread over all the *Roman* Empire, had formed Mens Minds into a truer Way of Thinking, and from thence insensibly led them into juster Notions of Religion, than were to be met with in those Places where it was not known; and made them ready to embrace a Rational Religion, as soon as it was proposed to them; which would be a sufficient Reason why our Gospel should be preached to *them*, and not to the *Chinese*, and other barbarous Nations. And therefore, for all this terrible Objection, a Revelation might have G O D for its Author, and be of use to Mankind, tho' all Nations were not at the same Time favour'd with it.

H A V I N G

HAVING shewn some of the Advantages of a Revelation, and that it may be of Use to Mankind, altho' no one Revelation has as yet been communicated to *all*, and that 'tis possible such Evidence may be given of a Revelation's being from GOD, as ought to satisfy every Reasonable Enquirer; nothing more seems to be necessary, besides proving that our *Christian* is supported by *such* Evidence.

IN the mean Time I shall observe, That it concerns every serious Person, who does not believe GOD has communicated Himself by a Revelation, to examine carefully into the several Pretensions to Revelations: For since there appears nothing unworthy of GOD, nothing but what highly becomes Him, as He is a Good and Gracious BEING, in communicating what would be a Benefit to his Creatures; it must appear very probable, that He has before this Time made some Revelation some where or other. As the *Deist* has heard of the Christian Religion, I would particularly

larly recommend *That* to his Consideration ; and he will, if he be a serious Person, think himself obliged, before he settles himself in *Deism*, to consider carefully the Nature and Force of the Evidence by which 'tis supported, and not, as a great Part of our *Deists*, reject it merely for such Reasons, as must affect Revelation in general. For if it were barely possible, that the Goodness of G O D might have inclined him some Time or other, to supply the Defects of Natural Light by a Message from Heaven, it would be both our Duty and Interest to enquire, Whether he had done so or not, and not offer to shew our Wit against the Christian Religion, as the Manner of some is, before they have well considered it, and found any Thing in either its Doctrines or Precepts that is unbecoming G O D to require of us. For so much Respect is due from us to every Thing that carries the Title of a Revelation from God, that we should give it a fair Hearing before we reject it ; lest haply while we may think

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we are Exposing and Laughing at a Cheat, we be found in *earnest* fighting against G O D. So much Regard is due to our own Interest, as not to make a Jest of an Offer that may be to our Advantage, 'till we were sure that the Person who made the Offer in G O D's Name, did it without his *Authority*. We only desire that the *Deist* would not laugh, before he knows what 'tis he laughs at; and then we are sure to hear no more from him of the Religious Books of the *Bramins*, *Persee's*, and *Siamese*, as Books of Equal Credit and Authority with those of our Christian Religion. For I am perswaded he cannot mean, that all Religions are equally Rational, or equally usefull to Mankind, (because if he knows any Thing, he knows they are not;) but he thinks that they are, and must be all of equal Authority, one of them as much from G O D as another, the same Evidence for one as another, that is, none at all. And the Reason given for this  
this



this, is only this poor one, *viz.* That there is no distinguishing what we call Miracles from the meer Effects of Natural Causes, and then indeed there can be no knowing when G O D speaks, when not. If this be false, as I am fully persuaded it is, and have already shewn it to be so in a *former* Discourse \*, then the *Deist* will *one Day* sorely repent of his having made a Sport of the Christian Religion, and will then call himself Fool, for not being able to distinguish between the Voice of G O D speaking to him in the Persons of C H R I S T and *Lazarus* raised from their Graves, and when it only speaks to him in the most ordinary and common Acts of his Providence: He will then wish he had been more serious in a Concern of this Nature, and not jested, when he should have soberly examin'd, whether G O D had not spoken to him by his *Son*; whether

ther there was not some Truth in what St. Paul told the *Corinthians* in the Words of my Text, that after the World had tired itself in seeking after GOD by the Help of Wisdom or Philosophy, *it pleased God* by a Revelation, or what some at that Time, and what he, and his Brethren still call *Foolishness of Preaching, to save them that believe.*

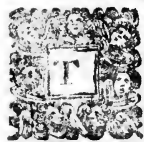




# SERMON XV.

2 P E T. I. 16.

*For we have not followed cunningly devised Fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, but were Eyewitnesses of His Majesty.*



THE Writer of this Epistle in these Words endeavours to remove a Suspicion, as if he and the rest of his Brethren had magnified their Master's Performances. He tells those that should read

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this Epistle, that they had not drawn up, as some others, an artificial Account of Things, but had given them a plain Narrative of the Miraculous Powers which themselves had seen their LORD Exercising. That they had not, as the manner of some was, drest up a Life with a proper mixture of the *Miraculous* to set it off the better; for they had told them nothing concerning our SAVIOUR but what themselves had been Eye-witnesses to. And as another of the Disciples says \*, *That which we have heard, which we have seen with our Eyes, which we have looked upon, and our Hands have handled. That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you.* And yet this plain and honest Declaration of these Apostles will not satisfy some Persons. They will not believe the Disciples ever saw any of these miraculous Works which, as they pretended, were done by their Master. I have already shewn, that if such uncommon Works, as are related in our Gospels, had been really

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\* 1 John i. 1, 3.

really done by Him, they would have been a good Proof of his Mission, and that the Religion He taught was from G O D : We have also seen \* that our L O R D'S Disciples could not be imposed upon in the Account they have left us of those *uncommon* Works, by taking *Appearances* for *Realities*. The only remaining Difficulty is, to satisfy the Unbeliever, That they were Honest Men, and believed their own Account.

T H I S leads me to the third Reason by which the *Deist* defends himself, in not examining into the Merits of any Revelation; because there are a great many Pretences to Revelation, and no certain *Criteria* whereby to distinguish the true one, if any such were, from Impostures; for that there will be always Reason for suspecting Persons that pretend to extraordinary Communications with Heaven: That to be the Heads of a Religious Party, is a tempting Consideration; if it meets with

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\* See Sermon XII.

wished for Success, Riches and Honours attend them : And therefore the Testimony of such Persons will be always suspicious; and then as much Reason for suspecting the Account given by the Apostles of our SAVIOUR'S Miracles, as the fabulous Accounts contained in other Religions ; which if true, would put the *Gospel* upon a Level with the *Zendt* of *Zoroaster*, the *Shaster* that contains the Religion of the *Indian Bramins*, or any other Book that pretends to be Divine. That by the Confession of Protestants, the Successors of the Apostles have invented many cunningly devised Fables of Miracles, and the *Deist* will not believe but that the first Witnesses to Christianity, as well as those that came after them, might have some worldly Views in deceiving us; for besides the Honour of being Heads of a Party, they had not much to lose, and were like to have a Chance for mending their Circumstances of Life.

I WILL therefore shew, That the Apostles, as Things *then* were, could lie under no Temptation of forging Miracles;

cles, and that 'tis altogether improbable they should intend to deceive us, by giving an Account of Things that they knew to be false; because supposing their Account of our SAVIOUR'S Miracles to be a false one, they would have had no Inducement for making a Profession of the Christian Religion, as they must see, if they saw at all, that the making such a Profession, would make them Abundance of Enemies, that would have the Power, as well as the Will, to ill use them, and no Prospect of an Equivalent to balance Inconveniencies. Mankind does usually balance the Chances for Profit with those of Loss, and satisfy themselves, that what they aim at, is feasible, before they will undertake it: And therefore if the Apostles were Deceivers, they must have proposed to themselves an Advantage greater than the Pains they were to take, otherwise they would have been no better than Fools, which they cannot be supposed to have been by any that look into their Writings; besides, no body can

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believe,

## S E R M O N XV.

believe, that a few Fools should be able to cheat all the Wise Men in the World. But as the State of Things was at that Time, there was no Ground for expecting any Profit or Advantage by Preaching the Religion, unless the Generality of those to whom they Preached the *Gospel* received it, and that 'twas probable the Apostles would meet with such Success. But I will shew,

1<sup>st</sup>, T H A T the Apostles could not possibly expect to live easy, unless they could reconcile the greatest Part of those, with whom they lived, to a liking of the *Gospel*.

2<sup>dly</sup>, T H A T there was no Probability that the *Gospel* would have any such Success, at least in their own Times; and who would care to have their Brains knock'd out for the Benefit of they did not know who, that were to succeed them?

1<sup>st</sup>, T H E Apostles could not expect to live easy, unless they could reconcile the greatest Part of those they were obliged to converse with, to a liking



liking of the *Gospel*. The World was then divided in Point of Religion into *Jews* and *Gentiles*. The Writers that are called profane, do agree with our Received *Gospels*, that at the Time when Christianity first appeared, the World, in Point of Religion, was divided into *Jews*, and *Heathens* or *Pagans*. With Regard to the *Jews*, the Apostles could expect nothing from them, but the worst of Usage, as they were obliged to speak in the best Manner of that Person, whom the whole Nation of the *Jews* had treated as a Malefactor, and whose Crucifixion they had been very instrumental in procuring. They could not therefore but think they should draw upon themselves the utmost Displeasure of the *Jewish* Government, if they reflected upon its Proceedings; especially if they were to tell the People, as *Peter* did, That their Governors were either so weak, or so wicked, as to procure the Death of that Person, whom God had sent to be the Saviour of their Nation. And yet the Apostles spoke thus plainly, and in a publick Manner, as we see

in the *Acts of the Apostles* \*. The chief Priests and Elders must see, that there was no Way of keeping up their Authority, unless they could Silence these Persons. And the Apostles must see too, that they would stick at nothing to stop the Progress of this Sect. The Apostles also could not but know, that a People so tenacious of the Ceremonies of their Religion, would never endure any Persons, if they offered to depreciate them, or draw Men off from their Esteem of them; they might reasonably fear their MASTER'S Prediction would prove true, That those who killed them, would *think that they did God good Service*. The Account which is given of the *Jews*, by such Writers as lived near the Time when the *Gospel* was first Preached, sufficiently shews their Fondness for the Ceremonies of their Religion. *Juvenal* tells us, That they would not shew the most common Acts of Civility, such as the putting a Man right, when he was out  
of

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\* Chap. ii. 36

of his Way, or directing him to a Place, where he might find Water, to any but such as were of the *same* Religion \*. And we may observe from *Horace*, That they were taken Notice of in his Time, as a Sect of Religion that was most industrious in making Profelytes †. We may easily guess, and so might the Apostles, what sort of Entertainment they were to meet with from a People so much wedded to their own Religion. And tho' the Apostles *at first* allowed Converts from *Judaism* to retain many of the Ceremonies of their Religion, together with Christianity, and were even so complaisant to them, as to oblige the *Gentile* Converts to abstain from some Things that were most disagreeable

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\* Non monstrare Vias, eadem nisi sacra colenti,  
Quæritum ad fontem solos deducere Verpos.

Juvenal Sat. 14. v. 103, 4.

† Ac veluti te

Judæi, cogemus in hanc concedere turbam.

Horat. Lib. 1. Sat. 4. v. 143.

agreeable to the *Jews*, such as the eating Things that had been offered to Idols, and Blood, yet there was no Reason to think that these Allowances would satisfy the *Jews*; because they must see that the main Part of their Religion, the Temple-Service, must sink, if Christianity prevailed, and that the Apostles only permitted, without laying any Stress upon, any other Ceremonies of their Religion.

NEITHER could the Apostles look for any better Quarter from the *Gentiles*; especially if they offered to make any Profelytes from that Religion: They must foresee, that they should be hated by them, for making Profession of a Religion different from their own, as they saw their own Countrymen, the *Jews*, were universally detested by them for the same Reason. And that Reasons of State as well as those of Religion, would oblige every *Heathen* Government to suppress, if possible, those that opposed the established Superstition, and to take away the Lives and Liberties of such, as would  
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be judged by *them* Disturbers of the State, for endeavouring to carry off Mens Minds from the Government-Worship. And we find in Fact that Christians were so generally hated at *Rome*, when Christianity first appeared there, that when the City was set on Fire by *Nero*, and the People generally believed it was done by his Order, yet they were pleased to see the Christians suffer as Incendiaries. For *Tacitus* tells us, “ That when *Nero* laid “ the burning of the City to the “ Christians Charge, they were not so “ much found Guilty by any Force “ of Evidence, as by the Universal “ Abhorrence which every Body had of “ that Sort of People \* ”. People believed them innocent as to the Firing of *Rome*, and yet were pleased to see them punished as Incendiaries: It was not much doubted, as *Tacitus* tells us, That *Nero* himself was the Incendiary; and yet the Aversion was so strong against the Christians, that  
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\* Convicti odio humani Generis. Tacit. Annal. Lib. 15.

the Compassion which usually attends upon the miserable, when they are believed to be innocent, could not be raised by all their Sufferings : And therefore 'tis plain whilst this Aversion lasted, there could be no Hopes for the Apostles of living tolerably easy with them. But,

2dly, I AM now to consider whether they could have any Probability of converting, at their first setting out, such a Number of *Gentiles* and *Jews*, as would secure them, for the rest of their Life, from the Ill-will of those that continued in their *Infidelity*, and reward them too for the Pains they had taken in converting them. The only Pretence for suspecting the Apostles Honesty must be, that they might have an Eye to the Profits and Emoluments, which many of their Successors met with. That *St. Peter* might dream of faring as well as the best of his Successors at *Rome* have done. So *Porphyry* would have it thought, That those who pretended to Miracles, by which he means Christians, were tempted

tempted by a Prospect of Profit to turn Christians \*. But we have already seen that this could not possibly enter into their Heads, unless they believed they should quickly convert such Numbers, as would be able to support them against all Opposition. But the Improbability of such quick Conversions will easily appear, if we consider,

1<sup>st</sup>, THE Nature of the Religion to which they were to convert them, together with the State of Virtue and Vice, as it was when they began to preach the Gospel. And

2<sup>dly</sup>, THE Difficulty of Imposing upon the World at *that* Time, when they began to preach the Gospel, by false Miracles or a Supposititious Resurrection.

1<sup>st</sup>, LET us consider the Nature of the Religion to which they were to  
convert

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\* Homines rusticani & pauperes, quoniam nihil habebant, Magicis artibus operati sunt quaedam Signa. Hieron. Breviarium Psalterij, Psalm. 81.

convert the *Jew* or *Gentile*, and how they were disposed at that Time for receiving such a Religion.

EVERY one knows the Difficulty of persuading Numbers of Men to quit their Opinions in Religion; tho' they be never so weak and indefensible, if they have been for a long Time the Religious Profession of the Country where they live. And 'tis as well known that the Difficulty will be greater, if the Religion they are to be converted to, flatters none of the Vices of Mankind; and the Difficulty still encreases, when the Persons that are to be converted to such a Religion, are notoriously bad Livers. If this was the true State of the Matter, it must be allowed that the Apostles, supposing them to have common Understanding, could not flatter themselves with the Hopes of many Converts. That the Doctrine which the Apostles preached, such as we have it in the Gospels, (and I shall afterwards prove that we have that Gospel such as it was preach-  
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ed by the Apostles \*) does not indulge Men in any irregular Behaviour, how agreeable soever to the Passions and Appetites of Mankind, cannot be denied by any *Deist* that has ever read the Gospels; they cannot deny that the Gospel contains a more perfect Morality, than ever appeared before in the World: And that it requires the Practice of every Thing that deserves the Name of Virtue, and forbids every Appetite and Passion of corrupted Nature; so far I mean as such Appetite and Passion are Effects of the Corruption of our Natures. It does not allow Men to commute for Internal Goodness by External Performances; it proposes no Advantage to any Body upon any better Terms, than those of parting with every vicious Inclination, and becoming truly good and virtuous Persons. It was a meer Slander which *Celsus*, and afterwards *Julian*, cast upon the Christian Religion, as if it drew People into it,  
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\* See Sermon XVI.

by promising them an Expiation of all Crimes how great soever, if they would only perform some External Acts \*, such as beating the Head, and thumping the Breast, without any real Change of their Way of Life. For every one that reads our *New Testament* must see, that this *last* was chiefly insisted upon by the Apostles. And *Julian* too, as he was once of the Religion, might have known, from the Twelfth and Thirteenth Canons of the famous Council of *Nice*, that the Church in his Time did require a good Life, as a necessary Part of Repentance, and not merely those External Signs of it. Whatever Relaxations may have been since allowed of, will not at all affect my Argument, which is drawn from the Religion such as it was preached by the *Apostles*.

IF we look into the State of Mankind at that Time, we shall find the *Jews* so attached to the Out-side of their Religion, that they had almost  
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lost the Spirit of it. Then there would be small Hopes of persuading such Persons to part with their Ceremonies, the only Cloak for their Wickedness, for a Religion that required a sincere and unaffected Goodness. And as little could the Apostles hope for Success among the *Greeks* and *Romans*; for all the Historians who have left us any Account of those Times, give such a Character of the Corruptions that generally prevailed in them, as would make any Man, who had the least Remains of Virtue left, to detest them. A Religion that enjoins its Followers to moderate their Desires of Worldly Things, would never suit the Taste of such an Age. A Voluptuous, Ambitious, or Covetous Man would never bear the Restraints, which the Gospel lays upon Mens Inclinations; and therefore the Apostles could not expect to make many Profelytes out of this Kind of People, and yet this was the General Character of the Age.

BUT it may be said, that tho' the Nature of the Religion was forbid-

ding enough to a bad Liver, yet they might flatter themselves, that it would quickly make its Way in the World, by the over-bearing Weight of those astonishing Facts, which they related concerning the Author or first Publisher of it, as they knew Mankind, especially the lower Part of it, with whom the Apostles succeeded best, was always apt to be much affected with Prodigies and marvelous Relations.

I WILL therefore shew, 2<sup>dly</sup>, The extreme Difficulty which the Apostles must have met with at the Time when they began to preach the *Gospel*, had they intended to impose upon the World by *false* Miracles or a *suppositious* Resurrection. The Impostures and forged Miracles, that were pretended to some Ages after the Times of the Apostles, have led many Persons into a Suspicion, as if the Miracles which the Apostles relate, as performed by our SAVIOUR and themselves, might be of the same Sort. But if we consider the different Circumstances the Apostles were in from those of their Successors,

cessors, who palmed upon the World many *cunningly devised Fables*, we shall find that nothing was easier, than for them to make the World believe, or at least seem to believe, fictitious Miracles; and nothing harder than for the Apostles to have succeeded with such Miracles. Which will be made evident by considering,

1<sup>st</sup>, THE Circumstances of the Persons that were to carry on the Cheat. And,

2<sup>dly</sup>, THE People that were to be cheated.

1<sup>st</sup>, THE Persons that were to carry on the Cheat. The Number of them was no less than Twelve; if they were to be employed as Witnesses of a Matter of Fact, we would not desire fewer; but they were too many if they were to be intrusted with a Secret. They must be mad that should embark in such a Design with so great a Number, and believe that a Secret could be kept by so many Persons, when any of them might have made his Fortune by betraying it, and

had Reason to fear Gibbets and Crosses for keeping it. And yet had any one of them been tempted by Promises or Threatnings to discover the Secret, the Design had been ruined beyond Recovery, and all their Hopes of making Converts extinguished. The Apostles therefore must have been very weak Men, instead of being Crafty Men, as the Objection supposes them to be, had they built their Hopes of Success upon such a sandy Foundation. Especially too, if we consider the Persons themselves, as well as the Number of them. Men who by the Account they give of themselves, had all forsaken their *Master*, as soon as the *Jewish* Government laid hold of Him; even the Person that appeared to have the most Courage, and Love for his *Master*, when he saw Him charged with Capital Crimes, for Fear of suffering with Him, denied he had any Knowledge of Him. Such Persons, I say, that had not Courage enough to stand by a Truth, cannot be supposed fit Instruments for carrying on a Cheat: As they would in all Probability squeak,

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as soon as their Lives were in Danger; for certain they could never have trusted one another, after they had so notorious a Proof of their Unfaithfulness to their *Master*: For why should they suppose they could stand more courageously by one another, than they had done by their *Master*, whom they disowned at the first approach of Danger? And no Body can believe that the Apostles would have given so scandalous an Account of their own Behaviour, had it not been true.

WHEREAS those who *afterwards* counterfeited Miracles, if they had the Ill-luck to be discovered, ran no Hazard of either Life or Fortune. The Christian Religion had *then* the Support and Encouragement of the Civil Government, and therefore whatever was done in Favour of it, would pass for a pious Zeal for the Service of GOD and CHRIST: There would be little Reason to fear, that those who were concerned in the Cheat, whatever their Numbers were, should make a Discovery of it, because there would be no

worldly Motives to betray one another : For if the Miracle succeeded , they might hope to be Gainers by it ; and if it was discovered , they had nothing worse to fear, than that some People might say of them, That they had more *Zeal* than *Understanding*. And therefore 'tis a groundless Suspicion which is drawn from the Counterfeit Miracles of the VIth, and following Centuries to the Miracles of our SAVIOUR and his Apostles. But,

2dly, IF we consider the People that were to be cheated, the Case of the Apostles and their Successors was very different.

1st, As the Persons that were to believe their Account of Miracles, were Enemies to the Christian Religion.

2dly, As they were better able in their Time to distinguish fictitious from real Miracles.

1st, As the Persons that were to believe their Account of Miracles, were Enemies to the Christian Religion, and as *such*, would not easily give Credit to those Miracles which were to be the chief



chief Support of that Religion. It is natural to believe that those who hated the Religion, would be no Friends to Miracles, because these were to give it a Reputation in the World. The Apostles who must see that nothing but the Force of Evidence would work upon them, would have therefore little Reason for hoping that their Miracles, if *counterfeit*, should pass the Examination of such prejudiced Persons; whereas those who boasted of Miracles in some particular Ages of the Church, did it among such as were Friends to Christianity, and wished to have the same Evidence given to it in their Times, as had been in those of the Apostles. And therefore such Persons being prepossess'd in Favour of them, there would be little Difficulty in imposing false Miracles upon them. They knew that such Persons would wish, for the Honour of the Religion, that their Miracles were *true* ones; and therefore would not be too curious in examining, for fear they should find it to be otherwise than they wished for. Besides,

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2dly, THERE was another Disadvantage which the Apostles lay under, which was that they lived in a discerning and inquisitive Age, that would not take Things upon Trust, because well able to distinguish *Fictions* from *Realities*. When the Apostles first began to preach the Gospel, most Parts of Learning were in as great a Degree of Perfection as they had ever been before; The Inquiries into *Nature* and its several Powers, carried to a very great Height, when compared with some succeeding Ages. And therefore the World would have been much better qualified for distinguishing the *Natural* from the *Miraculous*. The Apostles, considering their Education, could not hope to impose upon such a People, or if they had been so vain to attempt it, must have been quickly convicted of an Imposture. If it be said that they began with the lower Part of the World, and made Converts at first of such as were very ignorant, which *Celsus* charges upon them; supposing it to be true, that they at first made Converts of only the lower Part,

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which yet is false ; it cannot be supposed that the upper Part of the World would sit idle, and let them carry People off from the Established Worship, had they been able to detect them of any Fraud. We find by *Pliny's* Letter to *Trajan*, That the Great Men spared neither Cost nor Pains, neither Promises nor Threats, to make the Christians confess or own a Cheat. If the Apostles had been Men of so much Cunning as the Objection supposes, they would have been discouraged from undertaking a Cheat in so unseasonable a Time. The proper Times for Imposture are Times of Ignorance, when any Thing unusual may be made to pass for a *true* Miracle, and Persons are ready to believe any Thing strange that is told them, and the more unlikely to be true, the more forward in believing. Such are the Times in which Fraud and Impostures are wont to thrive, and such were the Times, when to the Shame of Christians, *counterfeit* Miracles crept into the Church of GOD : And the Histories of those Times shew that the Pretences  
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to Miracles were multiplied, in Proportion as the Ignorance of the People encreas'd. And therefore tho' latter Ages might carry on Cheats successfully, it does not follow that the Apostles could hope to do so : Or because some of the Successors of *St. Peter* in a *dark Age*, might make People believe they work'd Miracles when they did not, that *St. Peter* in a *Critical Age* might have made the World believe the Resurrection of our SAVIOUR, altho' in *Reality* no such Thing had been.

THUS I have shewn that the Apostles could propose no worldly Advantage to themselves by embracing the Christian Religion ; as they could not reasonably expect to make Converts of the greatest Part of the *Roman Empire*, or to get the Christian to be the Established Religion in their own Times ; and that unless this could be effected, they must, instead of Honours and Emoluments, expect the worst of Treatment from both *Jew* and *Gentile*, and that if they built their Hopes of Success upon pretending to a Power of working

working Miracles, that there was not any Likelyhood they would be able to make *false* Miracles pass for *true* Ones, with Persons prejudic'd against the Belief of them. Such Persons too as had Abilities sufficient for distinguishing *Realities* from *Impostures*. These are such Difficulties attending the *Deist's* Supposition of the Apostles being Deceivers; so irreconcilable with the usual Workings of the Human Nature, that we ought to believe them sincere Persons.

I F it be said that the Apostles might please themselves with being Heads of a Party, and in Course esteem'd by such as they could bring into it; which is the only possible Inducement left them; This is such thin Diet, as would never support a Man against the Difficulties which the Apostles expected, and actually met with: For what Inducement would it be, to be esteemed by a small Number of Persons, almost all of them of mean Condition; and at the same Time to be despised by the rest of the World; and not only despised, but persecuted even to Death.

Death. Whatever Pride and Vanity there may be in our Natures, yet no Man of Common Sense can think the Esteem of a few *mean* Persons, a sufficient Recompence for being scorned and despised by all those who had any Character for Reputation in the World. Had the Desire of Glory been their Motive for Preaching the Gospel, they must have been quickly discouraged, when they saw themselves treated with greater Contempt than any other Sort of Men, meerly for Preaching it. They must have given over the Attempt when they found nothing got by it, but the Reputation of being Persons that were either mad or very wicked. St. Paul tells us they were looked upon as *Fools for CHRIST'S Sake* \*, that they were exposed in the Theatres to be a *Speſtacle to the People* †, as profane Persons, that were Enemies to all Religion; they were first laugh'd at, and then put to Death. Those who  
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\* 1 Cor. iv. 10.

† *Ibid.* ver. 9.

can believe, that any Persons can be tickled with such Sort of Fame, may believe any Thing: And therefore the *Deist* labours in vain, whilst he endeavours to persuade himself and others, that the Apostles were Deceivers.

THE only Refuge left him would be this: That the Apostles preached no such Religion at the same Time set down in the Writings of the *New Testament*, but that the whole was a fictitious Account of Things and Persons, published some Years after that Time, when it would not be easy to confute the Publishers. But 'tis impossible this should be true, because if the first Publication of the Religion had been some Years after that Time which the Scriptures mention, as those Scriptures expressly say the Gospel had been preached some Years before *this* Publication of it, and in so Publick a Place as *Jerusalem*, the Metropolis of *Judea*, and the *Jews* dispersed over the *Roman* Empire; every one must presently have found it to be a Cheat, because the *Jews* could have told them, they had  
never

never before heard of any such Religion preached in their Country. But we are further assured that the Gospel was not *first* preached some Years *after* the Time set down in the *New Testament*, because we have an *Heathen* Author of good Credit, that was born but a few Years after the first Preaching of it; who speaking of the Beginning of Christianity tells us, “ That the Author of this Sect was CHRIST; “ who in the Reign of *Tiberius* was “ put to Death by *Pontius Pilate*, Governor of *Judea*, ” which agrees with the Times given by the Sacred Writers: And then he says, “ Tho’ “ it was thus nipped in the Bud by “ putting the Author to Death, yet it “ broke out anew, and spread not only through *Judea*, but reached even “ unto *Rome* itself \* ”. This Author was too exact an Historian to give a false Account of the Original of a Sect, which was so *near* his own Time. But

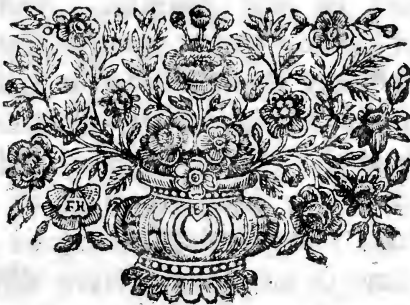


But I shall say no more to this Objection of the *Deist*, because it would be doing it too much Honour to discover all its Weaknesses.

HAVING now shewn, That the first Preachers of the *Gospel* could not be Deceivers, supposing the *Gospel* to have been Preached about that Time, that the Writers of the *New Testament* tell us : That the Reason of the Thing, shews it must have been Preached at that Time ; that the Testimony of an Author that was an Enemy to the Christian Religion confirms it : Having also shewn before, That if the Apostles were sincere Persons, they could not be deceived in the Relation they gave of our SAVIOUR'S Miracles, by taking mere Appearances for Realities : And that such Extraordinary Works as they relate, must have the immediate Power of GOD for the Author of them ; we have then a solid Foundation for the Divine Authority of our Christian Religion to rest upon ; as it cannot be supposed that GOD would have Countenanced

tenanced it in so extraordinary a Manner, if it had not been from Heaven; especially when the Religion itself lays Claim to such an Original: Nothing more can be necessary for justifying the Faith of a Christian, and at the same Time exposing the Unbeliever, for making Difficulties in Religious Belief *his* Reason for not receiving our Christian Revelation, than shewing what Assurance we have, that the Writings of the *New Testament* or our Four *Gospels*, do contain a true Account of the Christian Religion, such as it was at first Preached by the Apostles. And the Ground for any Doubt in this Case is, Because many Persons did put out *Gospels* in the Names of the Apostles, to give them the greater Credit, and perhaps those we have may be of that Sort; that some of those that have born the Name of an Apostle, have differed in some very material Passages from the Received *Gospels*. However, supposing the Books we have were writ by those whose Names they bear, what Assurance

rance have we that many considerable Alterations have not been made in them, considering the Malice and Carelessness of Transcribers, and the Number of Copies which have been taken, since the Originals of the Apostles were first Published. The Answer to these Difficulties will be seen in the following Discourse.







# SERMON XVI.

2 PET. I. 16.

*For we have not followed cunningly devised Fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, but were Eye-witnesses of His Majesty.*



**I**T must be allowed that the Disciples of our LORD, as they were Eye-witnesses, were best able to give us a faithful History of the Actions of their Master. And the Writers of *Apocryphal*

Books plainly shew the Opinion the World had *then* of an History of our SAVIOUR writ by them; since they knew no better Way of gaining Credit to their *Gospels*, than that of affixing the Name of some Apostle to them; and as we have proved them to be Honest Men, nothing more can be necessary for clearing our *Gospels* from any Suspicion of being *cunningly devised Fables*, but shewing *their* Agreement with what was Preached by the *Apostles*.

I WILL therefore shew, *1<sup>st</sup>*, That we have good Reason to believe, that the *Received Gospels* were either writ, or allowed of by some Apostle.

*2<sup>dly</sup>*, THAT there is no good Evidence that any of the *Apocryphal Gospels* were writ by that Apostle or Apostles, whose Name they bear: And how it might come to pass that they were received by *some*, as the Writings of an Apostle, and yet be afterwards rejected.

*1<sup>st</sup>*, I AM to shew, That we have good Reason for believing that the *Re-*  
*ceived*

*ceived Gospels* were either writ, or allowed of by some Apostle. In proving this Proposition,

I WILL shew *1st*, That there were *Gospels* written from the Beginning of Christianity, by the Persons whose Names we have at the Head of our *Gospels*.

*2dly*, THAT those of them which bear not the Name of an Apostle, (as *Mark* and *Luke*) were always supposed to have been seen and allowed of by some Apostle.

*3dly*, THAT the *Gospels* which are come down to *our* Times, were *theirs*, and not any *Apocryphal Gospels*.

*1st*. THAT there were *Gospels* written from the Beginning of Christianity, by the Persons whose Names we have at the Head of our *Gospels*. This is a Matter of Fact, and must therefore be determined by such Writers, as lived nearest to the Times of their being first published. If we can shew, that both those *Heretical* Christians, who did not in all Points approve of *these Gospels*, and made use of *others*, did yet

allow them to be written by those Persons, as well as *those* Christians who made Use of no others, we shall sufficiently prove that these Persons did write those *Gospels*. To begin with the *Orthodox*, or such as allowed them in all Respects to be genuine. We find by *Irenæus* \*, a Person curious in enquiring into Matters of this Nature, who flourished in the II<sup>d</sup> Century, that St. *Matthew* put out a Gospel, after him St. *Mark*, then St. *Luke*, and last of all St. *John*. After him *Eusebius* \*, who took great Pains in searching for all Sorts of Writings from the very Beginning of Christianity, whether Friends or Enemies, tells us, That the Four *Gospels* were ἐν ὁμολογημένοις, among such Books as were on all Hands allowed to be writ by those Persons whose Names are prefixed to them. It is needless to mention any more Authorities of this Kind, because the Church which used these

*Gospels,*

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\* Irenæus edit. Massuet. pag. 174.

† EUSEB. HIST. ECCLESIAST. Lib. 3. cap. 25.



*Gospels*, must be supposed to believe them written by those Persons.

AND therefore I shall proceed to the *Heretical* Christians, whose Testimony will be more considerable, as these *Gospels* did in many Places oppose some or other of their particular Opinions; and yet we find these *Gospels* were in such an universal Esteem, that the earliest Hereticks found it necessary to have Recourse to them, and to defend their Opinions by the Authority of these *Gospels*, as *Ireneus* assures us \*, “ That the Authority of these *Gospels* is so firmly Established, that even Heretical

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“ Christians

\* Tanta est autem circa hæc Evangelia firmitas, ut & ipsi Hæretici testimonium reddant eis, & ex ipsis egrediens unusquisque eorum, conetur suam confirmare doctrinam. Ebionæi etenim eo Evangelio quod est secundum Matthæum solo utentes, ex illo ipso convincuntur. Marcion autem id, quod est secundum Lucam, circumcidens, ex his quæ adhuc servantur penes eum, blasphemus in Deum Ostenditur. Qui autem Jesum separant a Christo, & impassibilem perseverasse Christum, passum vero Jesum dicunt, id quod secundum Marcum est præferentes Evangelium: Hi autem qui a Valentino sunt, eo quod test secundum Johannem plenissime utentes ad Ostensionem conjugationum suarum. *Ireneus* pag. 190.

“ Christians could not dispute it, and  
 “ were contented to support, as well  
 “ as they could, their particular Opini-  
 “ ons by them. That the *Ebionites* de-  
 “ fended themselves by St. *Matthæw’s*  
 “ *Gospel* ; the *Marcionites* by that of  
 “ St. *Luke* : Another Heresy ( whose  
 “ Name he does not tell us ) justified  
 “ their Opinions by St. *Mark’s Gospel* ;  
 “ and the *Valentinians* by that of St.  
 “ *John* ”. That these last received St.  
*John’s Gospel*, because they thought the  
 First Chapter of St. *John* was a Con-  
 firmation of their Notion of the *Æons*  
*being in Pairs*. Thus we find the most  
 early Hereticks endeavouring to defend  
 themselves by the Authority of these  
*Gospels*.

I AM aware it has been question’d,  
 whether the *Ebionites* made use of St.  
*Matthæw’s Gospel*, or whether it was an-  
 other *Gospel*, which was commonly cal-  
 led according to the *Hebrews* ; which if  
 true, *Irenæus* was deceived in saying,  
 That the Four *Gospels* were confirmed  
 by the Testimony of Hereticks ; since  
 one of them, *viz.* St. *Matthæw’s* would  
 not

not have had any such Confirmation. That we may give a distinct Answer to this Objection, it must be observ'd, that if the *Gospel* of *St. Matthew* was writ by him in *Hebrew* or *Syriack* (which the earliest Writers affirm) it must have been for the Benefit of such Persons, as understood *those* Languages, and not the *Greek*: That those Persons were the *Jews* in *Palestine*, that the first Converts to Christianity were made from these *Jews*; that such were for some Time called *Nazarens*; that the *Ebionites* were *Syrian Jews* too, and only distinguished from *them* by a different Name, on account of some Errors which they fell into; that the ancient Ecclesiastical Writers have believed the *Gospel* used \* by the *Nazarens* to be the *true Gospel* of *St. Matthew*, and at the same Time tell us †, That the *Ebionites* made

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\* Epiphanius Hæres. 29. n. 9. Ἐχει δὲ τὸ βιβλίον Ματθαίου ἑβραϊκὸν πληρῆστατον Ἑβραϊστί.

† In Evangelio quō utuntur Nazareni & Ebionite, quod nuper in Græcum Sermonem transfulimus, quod vocatur a plerisque Matthæi Authenticum. Hieron. Com. in Matt. 12. Idem in Catalogo Scriptor. Ecclesiast.

made use of the *same Gospel* with these *Nazarens*; that unless the *Nazarens* and *Ebionites* did make use of this *Gospel* of *St. Matthew* in *Hebrew*, we can scarce find any *Christians* that did; but no one will believe that an *Apostle* should write a *Gospel* which no *Body* read; that unless the *Gospel* used by these *Persons* was *St. Matthew's Gospel*, it must have been entirely lost within a few *Years* after it was published. For neither *St. Jerom* nor *Origen* before him were able to find any other *Hebrew Gospel* of *St. Matthew*, than what was in Use amongst *these Persons*; and it cannot be said that it was neglected, and so lost because no *Body* wanted it; for we are certain that the *Syrian* or *Syro-Chaldaick* Language which was called *Hebrew* \*, continued for some *Ages* after *their Times*, to be the Language best known in that *Country*: It being the *Mother Language* of that *Country*, till the *Religion* of *Mahomet* prevailed, which was long after *St. Jerom* lived. Besides, it is

is confess'd by all, that there was a *Gospel* in the *Hebrew* or *Syriack* in Use among some Christians in St. *Jerom's* Time, and therefore the *Hebrew Gospel* of St. *Matthew* would not have been, what this Objection supposes, useless. If it be ask'd how 'tis possible the *Gospel* used by the *Nazarens* and *Ebionites*, should be generally reckoned in *Eusebius's* Time among Apocryphal Books, if it had been really writ by St. *Matthew*; the Answer is, that those who make this Objection do not, as Father *Simon* observes, duely reflect upon the Original State of Christians. The Primitive Christians of *Jerusalem* and *Palestine*, who made use of this *Hebrew Gospel*, having not long subsisted in their first Estate, and the others on the contrary who spake *Greek* being dispers'd thro' the whole Earth, it hath from thence happened that the *Greek Gospel* only was generally known, and therefore generally allowed of; because all the other Christians had taken their *Versions* from this Copy. Whereas the *Chaldaick*

*daick* Tongue, in which the *Gospel* of the *Nazarenes* was writ, was only understood by some *Jews*. And besides, the *Nazarenes* who had retained *Judaism* with *Christianity*, became odious to the other *Christians* who were converted from *Gentilism*, and there was an irreconcilable Hatred between them; and then no wonder if some *Gentile* *Christians* were not for allowing such *hated* Persons the Honour of using *St. Matthew's Gospel*.

ALL then that can be urged with any shew of Reason, by such as deny that the *Nazarenes* and *Ebionites* made use of the *Hebrew Gospel* of *St. Matthew*, would be this, That those Writers who affirmed that *St. Matthew* writ his *Gospel* in *Hebrew*, were deceived. And yet we know that *Papias* \* in the *East*, who conversed with the Disciples of the Apostles, and was very inquisitive to know what they said or did, tells us positively, that *St. Matthew* writ his *Gospel* in *Hebrew*; he speaks of it as a Matter of

Fact

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\* Eusebius. Lib. 3. cap. 39.

Fact that was not at that Time doubted of. *St. Irenæus* in the *West* says, *St. Matthew*, being among the *Hebrews*, writ his *Gospel* in their Dialect \* ; and others say *St. Matthew* writ it in that Language for the Sake of such *Syrian Jews* converted to Christianity, as were ignorant of the *Greek Tongue* †. But for all this Evidence, the many Additions and Differences from the *Greek* of *St. Matthew*, found in the *Gospel* used by the *Nazarenes* and *Ebionites*, have made many believe, that they did not use *St. Matthew's Gospel*. Whereas they ought to consider (especially as the Evidence is so strong against them) that those Additions and Alterations might be owing to the Custom of those Times, when Christians took a great deal of Pains to inform themselves of what the Disciples of the Apostles had learn'd from their Masters, as appears by *Papias* || ; and to preserve them would probably put them down between the Lines, and

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\* Epiphani. Hæres. 51.      † Euseb. H. E. lib. 3. cap. 3.      || Euseb. lib. 5. cap. 39.

and at the Margin of their Copy of the *Gospel*, from whence such Interlineations and Marginal Notes might by Degrees slip into the *Text*, and so become Part of the *Gospel* itself. Many Alterations too might have been introduced by the *Ebionites* into their Copies, with a Design to favour some of the peculiar Opinions of their Sect. I am persuaded there is more Probability that those Alterations which were found in some Copies of St. *Matthew's Hebrew Gospel*, (as appears by some Passages St. *Jerome* has quoted from it,) might have been introduced in some such Way, than that all the Ecclesiastical Writers who have spoken of this Matter, even the earliest of them, should be deceived in these two Matters of Fact, *viz.* That St. *Matthew* writ his *Gospel* in *Hebrew*, and that the *Hebrew Gospel* which the *Nazarenes* and *Ebionites* made use of, was St. *Matthew's Gospel*. As to those who deny the first of these, *Grotius* scruples not to say, *Nullis justis de Causis maximam pietatis antiquitatis Consensionem repudiant* \*.

BUT

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\* Com. in Matth. cap. 1.



BUT it may be said that if these Hereticks did quote the *Gospel* of St. *Matthew*, as well as the other Hereticks did the other *Gospels*, that this would only prove that such *Gospels* with such Titles were in their Times: But that their not receiving them, should seem to prove that those, which each rejected, were not thought by them to be writ or authoriz'd by an Apostle; that they only made use of them to defend their own Opinions against the *Orthodox*, who allowed them to be writ by those Persons, whose Names they bear. The Answer to this is, That we cannot find any of these Hereticks ever denied these *Gospels* being wrote by those Persons, even when they were hard press'd to reconcile their Opinions with these *Gospels*. If there had been the least Suspicion whether *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke* and *John* had writ any *Gospels*, there would have been an easy Answer to the *Orthodox*, in telling them that it was doubtful whether the *Gospels*, which opposed their Opinions, were writ by those Persons. But when the Church

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press'd them with Passages, drawn from these *Gospels*, they answered them either by giving a different Sense to the Words, if they would admit any ; or by denying those Words to belong to the Writer of the *Gospel* ; for some of them, as particularly the *Marcionites*, struck out of their Copies of the *Gospel*, whatever was offensive to them, as we have already seen by *Irenaeus* : Or else they defended themselves by quoting some Apocryphal *Gospel*, which in an Age not over Critical, they found to be of great Service to them : for by prefixing the Name of an Apostle to *Gospels* of their own putting out in Favour of their particular Opinions, they set up the Authority of one Apostle against another. This shews that in the earliest Times of Christianity, when their Spuriousness might have been detected, there was no Possibility of disputing, whether Four *Gospels* were writ by those, whose Names they bore.

2<sup>dly</sup>, I AM to shew now, That such of the *Gospels* as bear not the Name of  
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an Apostle, *viz.* *Mark* and *Luke*, were always supposed to have been seen and allowed of by some Apostle. To begin with *St. Mark*. He is said by *Irenæus* to have been a Follower of *St. Peter*, and an Interpreter of his Sermons: And one that was antienter, being a Contemporary with the immediate Disciples of the Apostles, \* *Papias*, says, “ That  
 “ *Mark*, who was *Peter’s* Interpreter,  
 “ ter, had written exactly all that he  
 “ had retained in his Memory, without  
 “ observing the Order of the Words  
 “ and Actions of J E S U S C H R I S T ;  
 “ for he had not himself heard J E S U S  
 “ C H R I S T, not having followed Him ;  
 “ but he had followed *Peter*, who  
 “ Preached to the People, according as  
 “ their Necessities required.” *Clemens Alexandrinus* tells us, That *St. Mark*, who for a long Time followed *Peter*, put into Writing the *Gospel* which *St. Peter* had Preached at the Request of the *Faithful*, and that this *Gospel* was  
 I i approved

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\* Marcus Interpres & Sectator Petri. Irenæus. pag. 187 Vide Euseb. Hist. Eccles. Lib. 3. c. 39.

approved by *St. Peter*; for the Truth of which *Eusebius* brings not only *Clemens*, but *Papias* to be his Vouchers \*. If in his † VIth Book he quotes the same *Clemens* for saying, that *Peter* neither approved, nor disallowed of *St. Mark's Gospel*, *Valesius* in his *Notes* upon the Place tells us, That this is easily reconciled; because in the VIth Book he speaks only of a publick Approbation of this *Gospel*, and in the IIId Book of what Encouragement *St. Peter* gave to it in private amongst his Friends. As for *St. Luke*, we find by *Origen* and *Eusebius*, that it was the general Opinion of Christians, That *St. Paul* meant his *Gospel*, when he said of him, “ *Luke* “ the beloved Physician, whose Praise “ is in the *Gospel*.” If this were true, we have the Approbation of an Apostle given to his *Gospel*, and an Answer to *Amyntor*, when he asks us, “ Why “ we do not receive the *Epistles* of *Bar-* “ *nabas* and *Clemens* among the *Canoni-* “ *cal*

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\* Euseb. II. Ecc. Lib. 2. cap. 14.

† Euseb. Lib. 6. cap. 14.

“ *cal Books*, as well as *Mark* and *Luke*,  
 “ since the first were as much Com-  
 “ panions and Fellow-Labourers with  
 “ the Apostles as the later? ” And  
 the Answer is this; That these *Gospels*  
 were not only composed by such as  
 had been Companions with an Apostle,  
 but were also *believed* to have received  
 the Allowance of some Apostle. So  
*Eusebius* tells us, That ’twas commonly  
 believed \*, *St. John* look’d over the  
 three *Gospels* of *Matthew*, *Mark* and *Luke*,  
 and approved of them. But there is no  
 Evidence pretended for the *Epistles* of  
*Barnabas* and *Clemens* being approved by  
 any Apostles. Some have even que-  
 stioned, whether *they* were the real Au-  
 thors of those *Epistles* which now bear  
 their Names, especially of that which  
 bears the Name of *Barnabas*. And there-  
 fore the Church might have good Rea-  
 son for receiving *Mark* and *Luke*, and  
 not *Clemens* and *Barnabas*, into the Ca-

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\* Τῶν περὶ ἀναβασιμῶν τεσσάρων εἰς πάντας, -----  
 ἀποδέξασθαι μὴ (φασὶν Ἰωάννην) ἀλήθειαν αὐτοῖς ἐπι-  
 στήψασαντα. Euseb. Lib. 3. cap. 24. pag. 95.

non of the Holy Scriptures; and the Faith of a Christian may be well grounded which receives these Gospels for a Part of its Rule, without concerning itself about the Epistles of *Clemens* and *Barnabas*.

3dly, WE are now to see, whether the *Gospels* which are come down to our Times, are really the *Gospels* writ by them, or only *Apocryphal* Writings, with their Names to them. And the Reason for such a Suspicion may be grounded upon this, That if the *Hebrew Gospel* of *St. Matthew* could be altered to such a Degree, and so soon after its Publishing, that in the Time of *Eusebius* it was become doubtful, whether it was his *Gospel* or not; what Security can we have, who live at a much greater Distance from the Time when these *Gospels* were first Published, that our *Gospels* are not as much altered, as the *Hebrew Gospel* of *St. Matthew* was in the Time of *Eusebius*: when the Alterations were so many, as to make it pass with several for an *Apocryphal* Book, entitled, *The Gospel according to the Hebrews*.

brews. Our Answer is, That Books in the Hands of the *Gentile* Christians, could not be altered so easily, as those that were in the Hands of only one Nation, *viz.* the converted *Jews*, and those only the converted *Syrian Jews*; for only these made Use of the *Hebrew Gospel* of *St. Matthew*. Whereas those who read the Gospel in *Greek*, were dispersed all over the World; consequently, a Multitude of Copies in Places at the greatest Distance from one another: And therefore if any considerable Alterations had been made in *one* Place, they must have been taken Notice of by those of *another* Place, who had none of them in their Copies of the Gospel. Besides the Number of Copies in Parts very distant from each other, which has always been the Case of our *Greek Copies* of the Gospel; there have been from the Beginning a great Number of Translations from the *Greek*, into the several Languages that were commonly spoken in the several Countries which made Profession of the Christian Religion. If there had been any considerable Alterations

rations made in our *Greek* Copies of the Gospels, they must have been discovered by some or other of the Old Versions; as the *Hebrew* Copy of St. *Matthew* was found to be greatly altered, by comparing it with the *Greek* Version; whereas the *Greek* Copies agree for the *most* Part with all the Versions that have been made from the *Greek*: And therefore we cannot doubt that the Gospels which we receive as *Canonical*, were the Gospels of *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke* and *John*. I shall have occasion to speak more particularly as to the Faithfulness of our Copies of the Gospels; in the mean Time,

I PROCEED to the Second general Head which was, That there is no good Evidence that any of the *Apocryphal* Gospels were writ by that Apostle, or those Apostles, whose Name they bear; and therefore when they give any Accounts different from the Received Gospels, that they are not to be regarded. That no good Evidence can be produced in Behalf of the *Apocryphal* Gospels, will appear, if I can  
 prove,



prove, 1<sup>st</sup>, That they were not taken Notice of 'till many Years after *that* Apostle's Time, whose Writing they pretend to be. Or,

2<sup>dly</sup>, THAT if they were quoted early by some Writers, they were not quoted as the Writings of an Apostle. The Author of *Nazarenus* has express'd a particular Fondness for the pretended Gospel of *Barnabas*, and the Reason of his Fondness seems to be its contradicting the Account our *Canonical* Gospels give of our S A V I O U R ' S Death and Resurrection. But 'tis certain, *this* Gospel escaped the Searches of Inquisitive Men, such as *Eusebius* and *Jerom*, who made it their Business to inform themselves of every Thing relating to Ecclesiastical Antiquity; and was not discovered 'till above Four Hundred Years after it must have been writ, supposing *St. Barnabas* to have been the Author of it. For the first mention that *Toland* could find to be made of this Gospel, was in the Decree of Pope *Gelasius*, in a Council held at *Rome* in the Year 493 \*. But

I believe it will scarce be thought probable, that a Gospel writ by so celebrated a Person as St. *Barnabas*, could have lain hid for so long a Time, especially at a Time when we are told, that Christians were very inquisitive and desirous to learn any Particulars relating to the Words and Actions of our SAVIOUR. 'Twas this strong Desire that encouraged Deceivers to put out *fictitious* Accounts of our SAVIOUR'S Words and Actions under the Name of some Apostles; and the same Desire would never have suffered a Gospel, writ by a *Companion* and *Fellow-Labourer* with the Apostle, to have lain in Obscurity for so long a Time \*. The Author of *Nazareus* does not offer to assign a Reason, why this Gospel was not taken Notice of before the Time of *Gelasius*, or of *Damasus* at the highest; but contents himself with endeavouring to shew, that this Gospel *might* be as old as the Times of the Apostles, altho' it does not agree with the *Canon*.

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cal Gospels in this Particular concerning the Death and Resurrection of our SAVIOUR. And the Reason given for this is, Because this Gospel is not the *only old* one, that tells us, that CHRIST was not *really* put to Death, and therefore that he did not “rise again; for “that the *Cerinthians* and *Carpocratians* “did believe that it was not JESUS, “but one of his Followers, very like “him in Person, that was crucified in “his Stead; and yet *Cerinthus* was Con- “temporary with *Peter*, *Paul*, and “*John* \*. Thus far *Nazarenus*. But this Writer was much deceived in making *Cerinthus* to deny the Death and Resurrection of JESUS; for *Ireneus*, who lived near the Time of *Cerinthus*, was certainly a better Judge of his Opinions, than *Epiphanius*, from whom *Toland* had this Account of the *Cerinthians*, as he lived at a much greater Distance from the Beginning of that Sect. But *Ireneus* tells us, *Cerinthus*’s Belief was, that before the Death of

JESUS,

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\* Nazaren. p. 17.

JESUS, CHRIST left him, and flew back to Heaven, but that JESUS suffer'd Death and rose again. *In fine autem revolasse Christum de Jesu, & Jesum passum esse & resurrexisse* †. We see then this Account to be very different from that of the Gospel of St. *Barnabas*, but agreeing with *our* Gospels in the Fact of the Death and Resurrection; and that this particular Circumstance of some other Body being crucified, and not our SAVIOUR, was a Novel Invention, not heard of in the Times nearest to our SAVIOUR, either by the Orthodox or Hereticks, and therefore a good Proof that this Gospel was writ since the Time of *Barnabas*. But

2ly, As to those Apocryphal *Gospels* which were taken notice of, and cited by the Early Writers; there is no Evidence that they were writ by those Apostles, whose Name they bear; because when they quote any Passage out of them, they either speak of them as *Gospels* forged by Hereticks; or else as  
of

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† Irenæus, p. 105.

of Books whose real Authors were unknown, altho' the Title of an Apostle was prefixed to them. I do not deny that some Early Writers have quoted the Epistle of *Barnabas*, the Pastor of *Hermas*, and some others, as the genuine Writings of those Authors; but as to any *Gospels*, there were none but our Four *Gospels*, which had an undoubted Authority; it not being questioned, whether these *Gospels* were Writ by those Persons whose Names they bear, as we have already seen; whereas every one of the *other Gospels* were rejected by some or other of the *Hereticks*, and all of them by the *Catholicks*, as Spurious Pieces. Thus *Origen* tells us in his First *Homily* on *St. Luke's Gospel*, That the "Church has Four *Gospels*, but Heretical Christians many more;" among which are reckon'd by him the *Gospel* according to *Thomas*, the *Gospel* by *St. Matthias*: To these \* *Eusebius* adds that of *St. Peter* and *St. Andrew*. The *Gospel* intituled *St. Peter's Gospel* is also

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\* *Ecclef. Hist. lib. 3. cap. 25.*

mentioned by *Origen*, but rejected by him as the † Work of some other Author. If some weak Catholicks did for some Time take these for Gospels written by Apostles, this is no more than what commonly happens in all Forgeries, which will have a Currency, till they are carefully look'd into, especially in such Times as were those of the First Ages of Christianity, when the Persecutions Christians met with from their Enemies, did not give them Leisure or Opportunity for enquiring what Evidence there was to support them; and therefore the Reception given them by some Christians at first can be no Proof of their Authority, nor any Reason why they might not afterwards reject them. They might for some Time receive such Gospels, as the Writings of *Apostles*, and afterwards find themselves mistaken, without giving us any Reason for suspecting the Authority of our Four Gospels; because *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke* and *John* were from the Beginning

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† Tom. xi. Comment. in Matth.

*ginsing universally* allowed to be the Authors of them. And thus I have shewn that the Canonical Gospels received by us were the Gospels of *Matthew, Mark, Luke* and *John*, that both the Gospels of *Mark* and *Luke* were generally thought to have received the Approbation of an Apostle, and therefore we may depend upon a true Account of the Christian Religion in these Gospels. That no other Gospels are to be regarded, when they differ from these, whatever pompous Titles may be at the Head of them; because no good Evidence, that any of them were the Work of an Apostle. Therefore nothing more can be necessary for settling a Man's Faith in the Christian Religion, but to shew that notwithstanding the *Originals* of the Evangelists are lost, (from which only we could hope for an exact Copy of these Gospels) and the *Copies* that have been transcribed from them, do differ in many Particulars; yet the *Variations* either do not affect any Thing necessary to be believed or practised, or if they

they do, the true Reading is still preserved in some Copy or other.

'T IS evident to any one that has consulted the Various Readings collected by Dr. *Mills*, that a great Part of them are meer Trifles, that do not affect the Sense of the Writer of the Gospel, which soever Reading we take. That many of those, which are supposed to have been alter'd by Design, had only a Relation to Misquotations of the *Old Testament*, or to reconciling one Evangelist with another, when they thought them to differ in some Circumstance of a Fact; or to leaving out some Passages which they thought might be, or they found actually were, perverted and misunderstood: Or substituting others less liable to Exception in the Room of them: Or else the Alteration might affect some *necessary* Doctrine of a Christian's Faith. To some one or other of these Heads may be reduced most of the Alterations, that are supposed to have been designedly made in our Gospels. An Instance of the first Sort is supposed to be found in *Matth.*



xiii. 35. *That it might be fulfilled by the Prophet, I will open my Mouth in Parables, &c.* \* *Porphyry* read it in the Copy he used, the Prophet *Isaiab*, and made it an Objection against the Evangelist. And *St. Jerom* owns he found in some Copies the Prophet *Isaiab*, but that *Isaiab* was left out of the greatest Part of the Copies in his Time, because no such Quotation was to be found in *Isaiab*; for which Reason he says, *Arbitror postea sublatum esse a prudentibus viris* \*. An Instance of altering to reconcile one Evangelist with another is given in the Time of our SAVIOUR'S Crucifixion, which *St. Mark* says was the *Third* Hour, and *St. John* about the *Sixth*, and yet 'tis observed, that some Copies of *St. John* had the *Third* Hour, as well as some Copies of *St. Mark* had the *Sixth* Hour, just as the Transcriber was inclined either to bring *St. John* to *St. Mark*, or *St. Mark* to *St.*

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\* Hieron. Comment. super Matth. cap. 13.

\* See the Author of the Commentary on the 77th Psalm. Breviarium Hieron.

St. *John*. Of Omissions, and of substituting one Word for another, the Instances are, *Luke* xix. 41. and *John* vii. 8. The first is CHRIST'S Weeping over *Jerusalem*; this was thought a Passion unbecoming our SAVIOUR, and therefore, as *Epiphanius* tells us, was left out of those Copies which were *then* thought most correct \*. In the other Place of *John* vii. 8. 'tis thought that one Word is substituted in the Place of another: Our SAVIOUR had told his Disciples, that He would have *them* go to the Feast of the *Passover*, but as to *Himself* that He designed not to go thither; and yet it appears by the Sequel of the History, that He actually did go. St. *Jerom* observes, that *Porphyry* had mark'd this Passage as an Argument of our SAVIOUR'S Inconstancy, and therefore that the *ἐκ* was changed

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\* Ἀλλὰ καὶ Ἐκλαυσε καὶ τὰ ἐν τῷ κτ' Λυκῶν Ἐυαγγελίῳ ἐν τοῖς ἀδιορθώτοις ἀντιγράφοις. — Ὁρθόδοξοι ὅ ἀρσίοντο τὸ ρητὸν, φοβηθέντες καὶ μὴ βόησαντες αὐτῷ τὸ τέλει καὶ τὸ ἰχυρότατον.

*Epiphanius* in *Ancorato*. cap. 31.

changed into  $\nu\alpha$  to avoid the Force of this Objection.

OUR Answer to all this is, That no Body ever denied there have been such weak Persons among Christians, as might alter their Copies of the Gospels in such Places, as they found themselves unable to defend against the Objections the Heathens made to them. But then we say, that there is no Probability that such Alterations should so far obtain, as to throw out the true Reading in all the Copies of the World. That Copies of the Gospels in the Original were dispers'd into so many Hands, besides the many *Versions* of those Gospels, that neither weak Christians, nor St. *Jerom's prudent Men*, would have it in their Power to carry their Alterations into all the Copies in all the different and distant Parts of the World. And we find it to be true in Fact, that in these Places, which are suppos'd to have been altered by Design, the genuine Reading is preserved at this Day in some Copy or other. And tho' St. *Jerom* says, in his Time *Isaiah* was left

## SERMON XVI.

out of most Copies in *Matth.* xiii. 35. yet *Kuster* in his Edition of *Mills's New Testament* tells us of one Copy in the *French King's Library* that has it at this Day, *viz.* the 6th *Parisian*; as to the other Instances of designed Alterations, we find that which is *supposed* to be the true Reading, in more Copies than are those that Want it; but if it had been otherwise, as no Part of a Christian's Faith or Practice would have been affected by not having the true Reading of the *Evangelist* in any of these Instances;

I WILL proceed to consider the Instances of designed Alterations in a Point of Faith, as concerning the Divinity of the SON; 'tis thought, that the Dispute between the *Orthodox* and *Arians* was carried on with so much Warmth, that the *Arians* altered their Copies in such Places where CHRIST was called GOD, or equalled to the FATHER, as *1 Tim.* iii. 16. GOD *manifested in the Flesh*, this some say, was changed into, *which was manifested in the Flesh*; to avoid the Force of the Word GOD. 'Tis certain  
both

both Readings were supported by a great Number of Copies; which shews the Industry of one of the Parties, to support its Opinion. And the famous *Text* in *1 John* v. 7. of the *Three that bear Witness in Heaven*, is supposed to have been put into this *Epistle* to serve Purposes.

THO' these Instances are not in the Gospels, but the Epistles, yet as the Gospels might have been as easily altered as any of the Epistles at *that Time*, I think myself obliged to shew, that a Christian has less Reason to fear finding the true Reading in *these* Instances of designed Alterations, than in the *former* Ones; because the Alterations before mention'd were made some of them much earlier, when there were fewer Copies of the Gospels, than there were of these Epistles in the Time of the *Arian* Controversy. For when *Arius* first set up his Doctrine, Christianity was the Established Religion, and dispersed over all Parts of the *Roman* Empire, and consequently Copies of the *New Testament* very much multiplied;

and it was the Interest of either Side to watch one another, that neither should corrupt the Witnesses. And therefore whatever Inclination there might be in the *Orthodox* or *Arian* to alter the Scriptures, it would not be in their Power, at least in all such Places as related to this Controversy. Consequently every Christian may have enough to build his Faith upon in the *New Testament*, such as 'tis brought down to our Times. If sometimes there be a Difficulty of determining among many, which is the true Reading, and we know not whether some necessary Doctrine of the Religion be not treated of in the Place, we need not be solicitous; for if it be *such*, we shall find it in other Places, where there is no Difficulty in settling the *Text*; because those which are undoubtedly the necessary Doctrines of the Christian Religion, are so often repeated in the *New Testament*, such as we have it, and so closely woven into the very Body of it, that there would be no removing any one of them out of every Place of the *New Testament*,  
without

without substituting another Sett of Gospels and Epistles in the Room of the present ones, as will be evident to every one that makes the Experiment on any one Article of that which is call'd, the *Apostles Creed*: But we have already shewn it to be impossible that our Gospels should be, as to the main Part of them, any other than those which were writ by *Matthew, Mark, Luke* and *John*; and the same Reason will hold as to these Epistles, which were more universally spread, more Copies and Translations of them in the Time of *Arius*, than there were of the Gospels, when some of the Alterations before mentioned were made.

T H U S I have shewn that there is no Ground for suspecting, that the Christian Religion was from the Beginning of it a *cunningly devised Fable*, because those who first Preached it, must have been sincere Persons, and also that it cannot have been so altered since *their* Time, as to become one in *ours*; because whatever Alterations may have been made in some Copies by Transcribers,

scribers, they could not affect our Christian Faith, or hinder us from receiving the Gospel, such as it was Preached by the Apostles, in all material Points. And therefore whatever the *Infidel* may think of the Gospel, I doubt not, it will appear to all *impartial* Enquirers to be no less than a Message from Heaven made known to us, as St. *Peter* expresses it, in the Words of my *Text*, by the Power and Coming of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, as of a Person appointed by GOD to declare his Will to Mankind.

AND now I hope to have fully shewn the dangerous State of Infidelity; or that all the Difficulties the Unbeliever pretends to raise against Religious Principles, cannot secure him against the Apprehensions of Punishment in a future State; we have therefore nothing more to do, but to beg of GOD, That He would be so Good as to incline the Heart of the Unbeliever to believe in HIM and his Son JESUS CHRIST.



“ O merciful G O D, who hast made  
“ all Men, and hatest Nothing that  
“ Thou hast made, nor wouldest  
“ the Death of a Sinner, but ra-  
“ ther that he should be converted  
“ and live, have Mercy upon all  
“ *Jews, Turks, Infidels and Hereticks* ;  
“ and take from them all Igno-  
“ rance, Hardness of Heart, and  
“ Contempt of Thy Word ; and  
“ so fetch them Home, blessed  
“ L O R D, to Thy Flock, that  
“ they may be saved among the  
“ Remnant of the true *Israelites*,  
“ and be made one Fold under  
“ One Shepherd, J E S U S C H R I S T  
“ our Lord, who liveth and reign-  
“ eth with Thee, and the Holy  
“ S P I R I T, One G O D, World  
“ without End. *Amen.*

F I N I S .











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