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KINGSTON ONTARIO CANADA

A SECOND
ADDRESS
TO THE
INHABITANTS

Of the Two Great CITIES of

London and Westminster:

Occasion'd by

A Second Pastoral Letter.

WITH

REMARKS ON *Scripture Vindicated,*
and some other late Writings.

Our best Reason is short and imperfect: But since it is no better, we must make use of it as it is, and make the best of it.

Tillotson's Sermon. since his Death, Vol. I. p. 68, 69.

To suppose a Creature to have Reason to direct him, and yet that he ought not to be directed by it, is a Contradiction.

Bp Sherlock's Sermon. before the Society for propagating the Gospel, &c. p. 18.

For my part, I profess, if the Doctrine of the Scripture was not as good, and as fit to come from God, the Fountain of Goodness, as the Miracles, by which it was confirm'd, were great; I shou'd want one main Pillar of my Faith; and for want of it, I fear, should be much stagger'd in it.

Chilling. Relig. Protest. Part I. c. 2. p. 53.

L O N D O N :

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Al 911, 1730 T56

A

Second Address, &c.

GENTLEMEN,

THE main Reason of my writing this second Address, which I again humbly offer to your Consideration, is, the great Good the former seems to have done; since most Points about which Christians damn'd and persecuted one another, even to Death, are now own'd by this Writer, not to affect them; by saying, * *It will appear, that the several Denominations of Christians agree in the Substance of Religion, and in the necessary Inforcement of the Practice of it; That the World, and all Things in it, were created by God, and are under the Direction and Government of his all-powerful Hand, and all-seeing Eye; That there is an essential Difference between Good and Evil, Virtue and Vice; That there will be a State of future Rewards and Punishments, according to our Behaviour in this Life; That Christ was a Teacher sent by God; and that his Apostles were divinely inspired; That all Christians are bound to declare and profess themselves to be his Disciples; That not only the Exercise of the several Virtues, but also a Belief in Christ, is necessary in order to their obtaining the Pardon of Sin, the Favour of God, and Eternal Life; That the Worship of God is to be perform'd chiefly by the Heart, in Prayer, Praises, and*

B
Thankf-

* Past. Let. 2. p. 24, 25.

Thanksgivings; and as to all other Points, That they are bound to live by the Rules which Christ, and his Apostles, have left them in the Holy Scriptures. If this is all that is requir'd of Christians in general, to believe concerning God, and the Person of Christ, (without one word about the Person of the Holy Spirit) what Havock must this make in the *Creeeds* and *Articles* of all the particular Churches now in being? Must he not condemn, as most uncharitable, that Creed which in the Beginning, Middle and End, denounces Damnation against all, who do not keep it in every Article whole and undefiled? Must he not abhor the *Athanasians* and *Arians* (especially the former, who begun the Practice) in murdering one another for such things as do not concern the Substance of Religion, and the necessary Inforcement of the Practice of it? And ought not the *Papists*, as well as *Quakers*, *Socinians*, &c. to return him Thanks for this unusual Favour? And

IF this Writer has deserv'd Thanks of his Clergy, for thus explaining, and on this foot defending Christianity, (as if it were on any other indefensible) I shou'd have hoped, that he, who caus'd him to make these most charitable Concessions, might have deserv'd from them at least some Acknowledgment: however, I'm pleas'd to find, that the Dissenters of all sorts may be Christian Churches, without Diocesan Episcopacy; tho' the contrary was strongly insinuated in his former * Pastoral Letter; and 'tis with the highest Pleasure I observe, that this Letter is wrote with a very different Spirit from the former. Here is no calling on the Magistrate to determine Controversies in Religion by the Sword; or any thing against the natural Rights of Mankind, universal Toleration, &c.

THO' this Writer says, that " this Pastoral Letter
 " is occasion'd by some late Writings, in which it is
 " asserted,

“ asserted, That REASON is a sufficient Guide
 “ in Matters of Religion, without the Help of RE-
 “ VELATION;” yet since Men may believe Reason
 to have been a sufficient Guide without Revelation,
 when there was no Revelation to help it out;
 he ought to have been more particular in what he
 makes the Foundation of this Letter; and not endeavour
 to lead his Reader into a Mistake by so general
 a Charge.

THE Words in the Address, to which this Writer
 seems to refer, relate to those who liv'd before the
 Coming of Christ, and are; * “ If we are religious
 “ as we are rational, the endeavouring to exalt *Re-*
 “ *velation* by depressing *Reason*, is subverting the
 “ Foundation, in order to raise the Superstructure :
 “ And if Reason was the only Guide God gave
 “ Mankind for many Ages together, to lead them
 “ to eternal as well as temporal Happiness, is not
 “ this *Writer's* saying, † *That Reason, without the*
 “ *Assistance of Revelation, has in Fact appear'd to be a*
 “ *very insufficient Guide*, arraigning the Conduct of
 “ God; in supposing that tho' Means and Ends
 “ were alike in his power, yet that he, not knowing
 “ how to adjust one to the other, ordain'd such
 “ Means as cou'd not answer the End for which he
 “ intended them? Or in his Words, *That the Guide*
 “ *he gave them was in Fact, a very insufficient Guide;*
 “ and that all Mankind, except the *Jews* (to whom
 “ || *God gave Statutes that were not good, and Judgments*
 “ *whereby they should not live*) were, till the Coming
 “ of Christ, under the Conduct of this very insuffi-
 “ cient Guide; and that the greater Part ever since
 “ (tho' God has chang'd his Mind as to some) have
 “ had no other Guide than this very insufficient one.
 “ Is this the Character of a Being of consummate
 “ Wisdom, and of impartial and universal Bene-
 “ volence?

“ ARE NOT the Dictates of Reason the Dictates of
 “ God himself? Or what can more shew the Per-
 “ fection of the Law of Reason, than that God can’t
 “ dispense with his Creatures, or with himself, for
 “ not observing it? And is it not as criminal, to
 “ reflect on a Law as insufficient, that is eternal, im-
 “ mutable, and universal, as on a Revelation that is
 “ not so; except in such Things as are the Precepts
 “ of Natural Religion? For whatever is owing to
 “ a positive Institution, may be repeal’d by it; nay,
 “ may be different, in different Places, and oblige
 “ only for some Time. How can we know God’s
 “ Veracity, or that he will deal with us, as he de-
 “ clares he will, in any positive Institution, but by
 “ what our Reason tells us of his Nature? Or how
 “ can we be certain of the Immutability of the divine
 “ Will, but as it is inconsistent with infinite Wisdom
 “ and Goodness to require any thing of us, that is
 “ not fit, or reasonable; since if he cou’d once act
 “ without Reason, there cou’d be nothing to hinder
 “ him from always acting thus? Or, if he cou’d at
 “ any Time make some things Mens Duty, with-
 “ out letting them know what they are; why not at
 “ any other Time?

“ How can this *Writer* call Reason *an insufficient*
 “ *Guide*, if God requir’d nothing more of Men (for
 “ several Ages) to make them happy here, and
 “ happy hereafter, than following its Guidance?
 “ And must not the *Pagans* be faultless, if what we
 “ impute to them as Crimes, were not owing to
 “ themselves, but to their religiously following the
 “ only Guide God gave them? If this Notion be not
 “ down-right Nonsense, it’s the most impious that
 “ was ever vented; and would equally prove Reve-
 “ lation to be a very insufficient Guide; because
 “ such Notions have prevail’d among-Christians as
 “ are more destructive to human Societies, than any
 “ which obtain’d among *Pagans*. And what he
 “ asserts,

“ asserts, is directly contrary to the Apostle, who,
 “ in the first of the *Romans*, amply declares, that
 “ the Duties the *Gentiles* ow’d to God and Man,
 “ were implanted in their Minds; and that when
 “ they transgress’d either, they sinn’d against *Know-*
 “ *ledge*, and *were inexcusable*. And in the second
 “ Chapter, that the *Gentiles* (those govern’d by Rea-
 “ son) *did by Nature, the things contain’d in the*
 “ *Law.*”

THE *Pastoral Letter-Writer*, without taking the least notice of this, or any thing else, which was said to justify the arraign’d Conduct of God, with relation to all Mankind, still goes on to arraign it, and says *, ‘ *It was very agreeable to the natural notions we have of the divine Goodness and Wisdom, to suppose that He would make a farther Revelation to Mankind; which might give them a clearer Knowledge, and a stronger Sense of Duty; unless we will suppose, that he had utterly abandon’d them?*’ Which is owning, that God, for four thousand Years together, had in fact utterly abandon’d Mankind; and still continues to abandon the greatest part of ’em to this very day, and that this is agreeable to the natural Notions we have of the divine Wisdom and Goodness: These, sure, are Expressions so shocking, that nothing, as far as I can see, can excuse them, unless a Man’s having, in this Point, abandon’d common Sense, will do it.

THIS *Writer*, to shew what a miserable Condition all Men were in, before the coming of Christ, supposes, that by the Light of Nature, they could not know, that the *Pardon of Sinners* was consistent with the *Wisdom of God’s Government, the Honour of his Laws, and his Hatred of Sin, so as to render their Salvation possible*. ‘ *For these, says he †, are things which depend wholly on Revelation; and without the Knowledge of these, Mankind must remain in a per-*
 ‘ *plex’d*

* *Past. Let. 2. p. 44.*

† *Past. Let. 2. p. 15.*

plex'd and desponding State, as to the Pardon of Sin, and the Favour of God? Can any thing be more inconsistent with the Character of a Being of impartial, universal, and infinite Benevolence, than to leave all his Children, for so many Ages together; and the greatest Part to this day, in a desponding state, as to their possibility of being sav'd? Can any Man read this without Horror and Detestation? Or can this *Writer* say worse of the very worst of Beings? Wou'd not despairing Mortals, upon this supposition, be tempted to cry, "To what end shou'd we repent and amend; if yet we are so made, as not to be able to live without sinning; and, by the very first Sin, we have lost all hopes of Pardon; and are doom'd to eternal Misery?" But with humble submission,

IF doing Evil is the only Foundation of God's Displeasure, ceasing to do Evil, and doing the contrary, must take away that Displeasure. As long as Men continue in their Sins, they must continue the proper Objects of God's Resentments; but when they, forsaking their Sins, act a part suitable to their rational Nature, they of course become the proper Objects of his Approbation: and, indeed, if Sinners, since the coming of Christ, are not to be sav'd without Repentance and Amendment, and Sinners, at all Times, were to be sav'd on these Terms, or else cou'd not be sav'd at all; must not Repentance and Amendment, which suppose a Knowledge of what was to be repented of and amended, put all Mankind, at all Times, upon a Level, with relation to their future Happiness?

IF God, whose Nature and Property is ever to have Mercy and to forgive, was not as willing to forgive Sinners, upon Repentance and Amendment, as they were to be forgiven; how cou'd it be said, that *There's more Joy in Heaven for one Sinner that repents, than for ninety nine just Persons who need no*

Repentance? Or, that *God desires not the Death of a Sinner, but that he should turn from his Wickedness, and live?* Was it not for the returning Prodigal, whom his Father embrac'd with open Arms, that the fitted Calk was kill'd? God did not want to be reconciled to the World, but the World having departed from God, wanted to be reconciled to him: and it was the business of Christ, and his Apostles, to bring them to those moral Rules, which wou'd * reconcile them to God. Hence the Apostle says, *We pray for you in Christ's stead, that you be reconcil'd to God.*

And indeed, not only the Goodness, but even the Wisdom of God, will oblige him to forgive the Penitent; since he then becomes what God in his Wisdom requires him to be; and it wou'd be Cruelty and Rage, not Wisdom or Justice, to afflict him unnecessarily. This *Writer* seems not to know the true End of Punishment, which never has any Retrospect; for what is past can't be help'd, but is design'd only to prevent the like for the future: and tho' God is said to hate Sin (which is a figurative expression, Persons only being the Objects of Love or Hatred) yet he cannot hate any thing he has made; and when God chastises his Children (*† for we are all his Offspring*) either in this, or the next Life; 'tis only to hinder them from continuing in a state of Sin and Misery. However plain this Point is, yet because this *Writer* has more than once quoted *Mr. Locke*, and under the just Character of an acute Philosopher; I shall mention what he says on this Head: “ God, says he †, had, by the Light of
 “ Reason, reveal'd to all Mankind, who wou'd
 “ make use of that Light, that he was Good and
 “ Merciful: the same Spark of the divine Nature,
 “ and Knowledge in Man, which making him a
 “ Man,

* 2 Cor. 5. 18, 19.

† Acts 17. 28.

‡ Reasonableness of Christianity, &c. p. 255, 256.

“ Man, shew’d him the Law he was under as a
 “ Man ; shew’d him also the way of atoning the
 “ merciful, kind, compassionate Author, and Father
 “ of him, and his Being, when he had transgress’d
 “ that Law : He that made use of this Candle of
 “ the Lord, so far as to find what was his Duty,
 “ cou’d not miss to find the Way to Reconciliation
 “ and Forgiveness, when he had fail’d of his Duty.
 “ — The Law is the eternal, immutable Standard
 “ of Right : and a part of that Law is, that a Man
 “ shou’d forgive, not only his Children, but his
 “ Enemies, upon their Repentance, asking Pardon,
 “ and Amendment. And therefore, he cou’d not
 “ doubt, that the Author of this Law, and God of
 “ Patience and Consolation, who is rich in Mercy,
 “ wou’d forgive his frail Off-spring ; if they ac-
 “ knowledg’d their Faults, disapprov’d the Iniquity
 “ of their Transgressions, begg’d his Pardon, and
 “ resolv’d in earnest for the future, to conform their
 “ Actions to this Rule, which they own’d to be
 “ Just and Right. This way of Reconciliation, this
 “ Hope of Atonement, the Light of Nature reveal’d
 “ to them.”

THIS *Writer* having in his first Pastoral Letter,
 said *, ‘ *There are many things that Revelation has*
 ‘ *discover’d to us, which were either wholly unknown,*
 ‘ *or known very imperfectly, to the best and wisest of*
 ‘ *the Philosophers ; and yet are absolutely necessary to*
 ‘ *give Mankind a full Knowledge of their Duty :—*
 ‘ *as, The way in which an acceptable Worship may be*
 ‘ *perform’d to the Deity, &c.’ To this it was re-*
 ‘ *ply’d, that “ If by the Light of Nature God com-*
 ‘ *manded Men to worship him ; he, certainly, cou’d*
 ‘ *not intend a Worship that was not acceptable to*
 ‘ *him. And yet to suppose he did not let Men*
 ‘ *know how to worship him acceptably, is to sup-*
 ‘ *pose he did, and did not intend to be acceptably*
 ‘ *worshipp’d.”* This

* Past. Let. 1. p. 9.

THIS he repeats, adding, * ‘ *That the Founders of States and Kingdoms found it necessary to ground their Schemes of Religion upon pretended Revelations, as the only Way to give them a proper Sanction; and the People Assurances that their religious Performances won’d be accepted.*’ This, since it shews how easily People may be impos’d on; and how ready their Governors, with the Help of their Priests, were to impose what idolatrous Worship they pleas’d, ought to put us on our Guard; especially as to such Things, which tend to the separate Interest of the Imposers: And if no Revelation can be true, as this Writer owns †, that *contradicts the natural Notions, which Reason gives of the Being and Attributes of God*; we can’t but know from these natural Notions, what Worship will be acceptable to God; because, as Dr. Scot justly observes ‖, “ If we truly understand what God is, we can’t but apprehend what Worship is suitable to him, from the eternal Congruity and Proportion between Things and Things; as obvious to the Mind, as Sounds and Colours are to the Ears and Eyes.”

THE two above-mention’d Arguments are the main Proofs, by which the *Pastoral Letter-Writer* pretends to prove, that the Philosophers were intirely ignorant of many important Points of Religion; and that their Knowledge was dark and imperfect in several others, as important: but because the whole of what he says on this Head seems to be borrow’d from Dr. S. Clarke’s Discourse of the Unchangeable Obligation of Natural Religion, &c. and every Particular the Doctor urges is fully consider’d in the last Chapter of *Christianity as old as the Creation*, &c. I shall refer the Reader to that Chapter; only observing from thence, that

“ I F

* P. 15. † P. 4. ‖ *Christ. Life, p. 2. Vol. 1. c. 6. p. 323.*

“ * IF Men alike, at all Times, owe their Existence to God, they, at all Times, must be created in a State of Innocence, capable of knowing, and doing all God requires of them ; and we must conclude from the Wisdom and Goodness of God, that he will at no Time command any Thing not fit for him to command, or for Man to do ; and therefore, cou’d we suppose some Things commanded by external Revelation, which were not commanded by the Light of Nature, we must conclude, that till then it was not fit for God to command them, or for Man uncommanded to do them.” And consequently,

NOTHING can be more absurd, than this Supposition (on which Dr. *Clarke’s* and this Writer’s Reasoning is built) that God left all Mankind, for 4000 Years together, and even the greatest Part to this Day, destitute of sufficient Means to know, and do their Duty ; and that, for want of these necessary Means, they fell into, and continued in a universal State of Degeneracy and Corruption : But if it was not their Fault that they either at first fell into, or continued in this State ; must not this be the State God design’d they shou’d be in ? And wou’d it not only be in vain, but a Crime in them, to endeavour to change that State, in which God, of his infinite Wisdom and Goodness, thought fit to place them ? What can be more shocking than this Hypothesis ? And yet this is the Foundation upon which both Pastoral Letters are built.

THIS *Writer*, tho’ he ransacks all the Corners of the Earth, to discover what unreasonable Things Men have been guilty of, in order to prove how insufficient Reason is, to answer the End for which God gave it ; yet from the Reason of Things he is forc’d to own the Unreasonableness of that Supposition, in saying, † *If, indeed, it appear’d, that God*
would

* Christianity, &c. c. 14. p. 375, 376. † Past. Let. p. 45, 46.

would judge Men for the Transgression of any Duty, which they did not, and could not know to be their Duty; and that he would make them accountable for not being influenc'd by Motives which he had never acquainted them with; it would be difficult to reconcile such a Proceeding to the divine Justice. But since the contrary to this is true, and it is certain God will not punish Men for invincible Ignorance, surely He is at liberty to dispense Extraordinary Favours at what Times, and in what Measures, to what Nations, and to what Persons, he thinks fit.— Are we then to quarrel with God, that He raises us to a greater Degree of Perfection, in order to advance us to greater Degrees of Happiness and Glory? Can there be a more flagrant Instance of Perverseness, than to refuse his Favours, for the very Reason which ought to increase our Thankfulness for them; namely, that he vouchsafes them to us, and not to others? But is it not a flagrant Instance of Perverseness, and a high Degree of Ill-Nature, to suppose it ought to increase our Thankfulness for Favours, because God has not vouchsafed them to others? A good-natur'd Man wou'd think his Happiness increas'd by seeing others as happy; and wou'd praise and adore the impartial and universal Goodness of the divine Being; and, in imitation of him, endeavour to communicate Happiness to as many as possible. But I do not wonder to find this narrow selfish Notion in our Writer, since there are too many Divines who have taken, perhaps, more pains to damn others, than to save themselves.

HE owns, * *As to the Heathens, tho' the Light of Reason is but dim, yet they who have no better Light to walk by, and who honestly make use of that, as the only Guide God has given them, cannot fail to be mercifully dealt with by infinite Justice and Goodness.* Which is owning, that Reason was a sufficient Guide for all Mankind in Matters of Religion, and is still so, for—

the greatest Part ; since by it alone they are capable of knowing and practising their Duty, even all that God requires of them. And if God deals with Men *according to what they have, and not according to what they have not* ; this, suppos'd dim, and insufficient Light of Reason must have given them a Title, nay, an equal Title with Christians, to the ordinary Favour of God ; who, as * *Chillingworth* observes, ‘ can never ‘ require Brick where he has given no Straw ; can’t ‘ expect to gather, where he has not strow’d ; to reap ‘ where he sow’d not ; or be offended with us, for not ‘ doing what he knew we cou’d not do.’ Can this be reconciled with his asserting, that God had in Fact abandon’d all Mankind for 4000 Years together, and the greatest Part to this Day ? But

ONE wou’d think, his allowing so much to those who follow the dim Light of Nature, was a Favour he cou’d not well here avoid giving them ; since he afterwards resumes it, and says, † *However the due Use and Application of our Reason may answer the Purposes of this Life, it is in no Means sufficient to guide us in our Way to the next.*

THAT God is at liberty to bestow *Extraordinary Favours*, as he thinks fit, is no Doubt ; but here the Question is, whether he will not, as in every thing else, be govern’d by the Rules of infinite Wisdom and Goodness ? Otherwise how can we tell upon what Motives, and to what Nations, and for how long, these *Extraordinary Favours* will be bestow’d ? I’m afraid the ordinary Favours will hardly fall to their share, who first libel the impartial and universal Goodness of God, and represent him as giving Mankind a Light not sufficient to answer the End for which it was given ; and at last, after a great deal of Chicane, are forc’d to give it up, and own, that the dim Light of Nature (which shines more or less in all

* Answ. to the Pref. of Char. maintain’d, *sect.* 16.

† *Past. Let.* p. 63.

all Men) was sufficient to intitle them to the ordinary Favours of God.

WAS this *Writer* consistent with himself, the only Question cou'd be, not, Whether God design'd to make Men happy, who liv'd up to the Light he gave them? but, Whether he is a Being of universal Benevolence, and will bestow on all who do so, the Happiness their Nature is capable of, and that enjoyment, for the sake of which Man was created; or else, as a partial Being and a Respector of Persons, will bestow it on a few, as extraordinary Favourites? Here, I think, this *Writer* shou'd have been more explicite, and told us, whether these extraordinary Favours were design'd for all Christians, of what Denominations soever, or else only to those of his own Persuasion.

I SHOU'D think, if God wou'd make any Distinction in this Case, it wou'd be in favour of those to whom God had been so kind as to require nothing but what naturally tended to their Good, and which it was their Interest, tho' uncommanded, to observe; and had not burthen'd them, on the severest Penalties, with any arbitrary Commands.

THO' this *Writer*, which shews how fit he is to deal in Controversies of this nature, owns*, *It is not in any Man's power to believe what he pleases; because as Things appear at this, or that Time to his Understanding, so his Belief must be; and we can neither be charg'd with Guilt, nor be liable to Punishment for what we cannot help: yet he says, † It will be necessary that I caution you against Scepticism, or an unreasonable Difficulty in believing, and suspending the Assent of the Mind after it has receiv'd the proper Grounds of Conviction.*

THIS *Writer* is positive, that God (tho' no Respector of Persons) will make an arbitrary Distinction amongst Men in relation to their future State; and
labours

* *Past. Let. i. p. 73, 74.*

† *Ib. p. 50.*

labours to prove it by an Argument borrow'd from Dr. *Clarke*, which the Doctor in a few Words thus fully and clearly expreffes: “ * As God was not oblig'd to make all his Creatures equal, or to make Men Angels, or to endow all Men with the fame Capacities and Faculties ; fo he was not bound to make all Men capable of the *same Degree*, or the *same Kind* of Happinefs, or to afford all Men the very fame *Means* and *Opportunities* of obtaining it.”

THO' this Argument can extend no further than a bare Poffibility of God's doing fo ; yet becaufe fo many Things, inconsistent with the Honour of God, and the Good of Man, are built on it, I fhall mention what is faid in Reply.

“ † THO' infinite Variety of Creatures, and frequently Inequality, is neceffary to fhew the great Extent of the divine Goodnefs, which plainly appears from the beautiful and well-form'd System of the World, and the due Subordination of Things, all contriv'd for the Happinefs of the Whole ; yet fure, it does not from thence follow, that God will not, either here, or hereafter, beftow on the Rational Creation all the Happinefs their Nature is capable of, fince that was the End of God's giving it them.

“ CAN God, who equally beholds all the Dwellers on Earth, free from Partiality and Prejudice, make fome People his Favourites, without any Confideration of their Merits, and merely becaufe they believe certain Opinions taught in that Country where they happen to be born ; while others, far the greater Number, fhall, from Age to Age, want this Favour, not upon the account of their Demerits, but becaufe deftin'd to live in Places where God, who always acts from Motives of in-

“ finite

* Unchang. Oblig. of Nat. Relig. &c. p. 217, 409.

† Christianity, &c. c. 14. p. 408, 409.

“ finite Wisdom and Goodness, thought it best to
 “ conceal from them all such Opinions? What can
 “ more represent God as an arbitrary and partial
 “ Being, than thus to suppose, that he vouchsafes not
 “ to afford the greatest Part of Mankind the Happi-
 “ ness of which himself had made them capable?

ARE there any of our Divines, who when they
 oppose, either the *Manichean* or *Predestinarian*
 Schemes, but agree with the Reverend Mr. *Wharton*?
 who says *, “ God’s Goodness and Mercy were,
 “ from all Ages, equal and uniform; his Justice
 “ always impartial and universal, in excluding none
 “ from his Favour, but for Reasons common to
 “ them with all Mankind.—— The Universality
 “ and Impartiality of the divine Justice and Favour,
 “ is founded on the Excellency of the divine Na-
 “ ture; which can’t be suppos’d to want That,
 “ which above all is necessary for the Government
 “ of the World, impartial Justice in the dispensing
 “ of Rewards and Punishments.—— All Men
 “ were equally created by God, and if we respect
 “ That alone, all have an equal Title to his Fa-
 “ vour.—— Otherwise we cou’d not but conceive
 “ Injustice in God; nor were it possible to reconcile
 “ such a Partiality with his infinite Excellency. The
 “ Reason why *God is no Respeeter of Persons*, is said
 “ to be, because † *there is no Iniquity with the Lord*.
 “ All reasonable preference of one Person to another,
 “ must be founded on some just Cause, otherwise it
 “ wou’d be trifling, and fond; nay, even unjust
 “ and foolish.—— Far be it from us, to imagine
 “ any such Imperfections in God; in him *there is no*
 “ *Variableness, nor Shadow of Change*.—— He
 “ ever proceeds upon fix’d and immoveable Prin-
 “ ciples, which equally serve for all Actions and
 “ Causes.—— God has fix’d most impartial Laws
 “ of Government, which universally affect all the
 “ Members

* Vol. of Sermons, p. 305, &c.

† 2 Chron. 23. 49.

“ Members of Mankind.— Is God the God of
 “ the *Jews* and *Christians* only? Is he not the God of
 “ the *Gentiles* also? Are not his Attributes always
 “ unalterable; and the Influence of these equally
 “ deriv’d down to all his Creatures?” This alone,
 I think, is a sufficient Answer to all this Writer has,
 or can say on this Head. And Dr. *Clarke* himself
 (in his Sermons printed since his Death) declares,
 “ * The Notion of divine Justice, includes an abso-
 “ lute *Impartiality* with regard to *Persons*.— There
 “ are, indeed, in Scripture many particular *Instances*,
 “ which at first sight may seem not easily reconcile-
 “ able with this great Truth: But the *general Rule*
 “ *itself* is so clearly and expressly laid down, and so
 “ perpetually repeated and appealed to upon every
 “ Occasion; that no Obscurity or Difficulty in the
 “ Explication of particular Cases, can be opposed to
 “ the Evidence of so plain a Rule.”

THIS *Writer*, in going on to libel the infinite
 Wisdom and Goodness of God, in giving all Man-
 kind for so many Ages, and the greatest Part at pre-
 sent, an insufficient Guide, shews a great Parade of
 Learning, to prove the *Gentiles* were guilty of Ido-
 latry, and gross Immoralities: but if these were
 Crimes in them, (which, I think, this *Writer* can’t
 deny, without supposing these were the Dictates of
 Reason, and that these wou’d intitle them to the
 ordinary Favour of God) does not this necessarily
 infer a Law so fully promulgated to Mankind, that
 they cou’d have no Plea from their Ignorance, or
 Excuse not to be try’d by it.

CAN we suppose, that Reason is not as certain a
 Guide for rational, as Instinct is for irrational Crea-
 tures? Or can we imagine, that God, who has been
 so good to all other Animals, to give them not only
 in one Country, but in all alike, sufficient Means to
 act for their Preservation, has had less Kindness for
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the immortal Souls of Men, made after his own Image, and not given them at one Time, or one Place, as well as another, sufficient Means to provide for their eternal Happiness? Or if Men, at one Time as well as another, in one Country as well as another, are capable of knowing what makes for the Good of their Bodies, can we suppose an infinitely good and universally benevolent Being has not in all Times and Countries made them capable of discovering whatever makes for the Good of their Souls? Can any thing be more absurd, than to suppose that Men are only accountable as they are rational; and yet they are not to be dealt with hereafter by an impartial and righteous Judge, according as they have, or have not used their Reason? If God can treat Men so partially hereafter, as this Writer supposes, how can we prove, that a future State was design'd to make up the Inequalities of this Life?

ALL our rational Divines, such as *Tillotson*, *Cumberland*, *Barrow*, *Whitchcot*, *Fowler*, *Scott*, and most of the Preachers of the *Boylean* Lectures, have more exalted Notions of the universal and impartial Goodness of God, and of that Light of Reason, (which this *Writer* represents so dim and obscure, and consequently, unworthy of coming from the Fountain of all Light) that they give the Law on which it is founded the highest *Encomium*: as that it is “ universal, eternal, and immutable; and not excellent, because God wills it; but he wills it, because it is in itself most excellent: and that as God governs all his own Actions by this Law, so he wills, that all his Creatures govern all their Actions by the same Law; and that this Law needs no Miracles for its Support, or any Messages from Heaven to publish it, in this or that Corner of the Earth.”

ONE wou'd think what *Dr. Clarke* has said in his late Sermons, was chiefly levell'd against such crude and confus'd Notions, which this Pastoral Letter is

stuff'd with; particularly when he says*, " God, the great Creator and righteous Governour, and merciful Judge of the whole Earth, offers to all Men the gracious Terms and Possibilities of Salvation.— God speaks to Men originally, by the Light of Nature, by the Order and Proportions of Things, by the Dictates of Conscience. 'Tis every Man's Duty, and 'tis in every Man's Power to hearken to this Voice of Reason and Conscience, to this Candle of the Lord, as the Wise Man stiles it, Prov. 20. 27. And concerning them who do so, St. Paul declares, that, having not the Law, (that is, having no revealed Law given them, yet) they are a Law unto themselves. And by that Law, by the Law of Reason, of Nature and Conscience, shall they finally be judged. For every Man is accepted according to what he hath, and not according to what he hath not.— This Light of Reason is universal; the first, and great Gift of God; implanted in the Minds of all Men; acknowledged by the Conscience, even of the Unrighteous themselves; attested to by the necessary Judgment and Approbation, even of the most abandoned and corrupt, in all Cases wherein their own particular Interest is not concerned. The acting contrary to this Light, by any profane, unjust, fraudulent and debauched Practices whatsoever, is in all Persons, under all Dispensations, the highest and most inexcusable Fault; as being destructive of the very Foundation of all Religion. And the acting agreeably to it, is in all Persons, always acceptable to God; and in those to whom no Light of Revelation hath been afforded, 'tis all that is required of them. For in every Nation he that feareth God, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted of him."

* Dr. Clarke's Serm. Vol. 4. p. 335.

BISHOP *Cumberland* *, as well as Dr. † *Clarke*, had no such Notion of the Obscurity of the Law of Nature, as this Writer seems to have, when they say, “ This is that Law of Nature, to which the Reason of all Men every where as naturally and necessarily assents, as all Animals conspire in the Pulse and Motion of their Heart and Arteries; or as all Men agree in their Judgment concerning the Whiteness of Snow, or the Brightness of the Sun.”

DR. *Whitcomb*'s Expressions † are as full.

IF these Divines reason justly, there can be no need of any new Law, on pretence that this Law of Nature could be obliterated, or defaced; or upon the account of its Imperfection: since 'tis the Perfection of all Beings, even the most perfect, to be govern'd by the Law of their Nature.

ALL these Writers do not only describe the Religion of Nature after this Manner, but do justice to the Religion of the Gospel; and suppose it, like the Law of Nature, requires nothing but what naturally tends to the Good of Mankind; as may be seen by a Number of Quotations taken from them, in *Christianity as old as the Creation*, &c. particularly Chap. 3.

I need not insist on particular Persons of this, or that Persuasion, since the Authority of Mankind is on my side: who, did they not agree, that true Religion may be known by its internal Marks; could not cry, that their Religion is the true Religion, as containing every Thing worthy, and nothing unworthy of having God for its Author. And when they attack any other Religion, endeavour to shew its Falsity, by shewing it has Things in it, which want those internal Marks; and are not worthy of a divine Original: and having prov'd this, they with Scorn

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reject

* *Cumberland de Leg. Natura*, p. 167.

† Dr. *Clarke* of Natural and Reveald Religion. p. 83. Edit. 4.

‡ Vol. of Sermons, p. 38.

reject it, without giving themselves the trouble to inquire into its internal Proofs; and say, its Miracles are either false, or done by a diabolical Power. And when they find Expressions in their own External Revelation, which taken literally, seem to be unworthy of God, they torture it to make it speak a Sense that their Reason tells them is worthy of him; and which plainly shews, that they believe their Reason can tell them, what Things carry such internal Marks as must shew themselves to be the Will of God. So that if they are consistent with themselves, they do not believe Things to be true, as contain'd in their Revelation, because then they would be oblig'd to believe the contrary were they there contain'd; but believe their Revelation to be true, because of those Things, which, whether contain'd in it, or no, carry their own Evidence with them. Did they take a contrary Method, they would find, tho' they liv'd as long as *Methuselah*, they would not have had Time to examine into all the Traditionary Religions in the World, and their external Proofs; and without internal Proofs, they had no reason to prefer one traditional Religion, before an Infinity of others.

THIS Method of judging, would hinder Men from admitting any Thing into Religion, which did not, from its innate Excellency, speak the Wisdom and Goodness of the divine Legislator; and must soon have put an end to those Controversies, which divide, and distract Mankind; and render them as happy as Religion design'd they should be: yet This would not in former times satisfy the Christian Priesthood; they seem'd to think Religion good for nothing, except they could make it turn to their separate Good; and consequently, to the prejudice of those for whose Good, both they and it were wholly instituted; and therefore, made it their Business to bring such Things into Religion; nay, to make them

them the main Points of it; as wanted all the internal Marks of their being the Will of God: well knowing that then they might gain the Rule and Government of the Christian World; but that as long as Reason bore a sovereign Sway, and every Thing was to be try'd by it, this grand Design could never be accomplish'd: and therefore they labour'd by Reasons, such as this Pastoral Letter is full of, to combat Reason, and shew its Insufficiency in Matters of Religion.

THIS Point once gain'd, they soon introduc'd what Doctrines they pleas'd; and not only made the Honour of God a Pretence of acting against the Good of Man; but robb'd God himself of all his Honour, by claiming a Power of determining of Men's future Condition; and left nothing to him, but to execute in the next World the judicial Sentences they pronounc'd in this World. And,

NOT content with this Almighty Power with relation to the next World, they assum'd all Power in This; on pretence that the Magistrate, as the Church's Subject in all Spirituals, of which themselves were the sole Judges, was himself bound to submit to all their Laws; and to force his Subjects to pay them the same blind Obedience.

As they would allow of no God, either in Heaven or Earth, but who was bound to execute their Decrees; so they further claim'd a divine Right of obliging all Persons to shew the utmost Marks of Hatred and Detestation against any one, of what Rank soever, whom they excommunicated, by requiring them to avoid all Commerce and Converse with him; and that whoever presum'd to do otherwise, incurr'd the same dreadful Punishment. Thus from the meanest Person on Earth to the most High God in Heaven, all were to be employ'd in the vile Drudgery of executing the arbitrary Commands of Priests. And,

THEY could not, like God, see into Peoples Hearts, yet not to be wanting to themselves in getting a god-like Power, they contriv'd an Expedient to oblige Men to discover their secret Thoughts, in making *Confession* necessary to *Absolution*; and *Absolution* to *Salvation*. Thus, while they were crying up a Doctrine so beneficial to Mankind, as that of a future State, they perverted it to the vilest Purposes; and oblig'd People to torment, and torture in this Life, those whom they, by their Anathema's, had condemn'd to suffer eternal Tortures and Torments in the Life to come. And,

THEY pretended a great Reverence for the Scripture, yet by deifying their own Interpretations, and requiring an implicate Obedience to what they declar'd to be Scripture; they artfully substituted their own Writings in their stead, and (there being but a verbal Difference between a Law-maker, and a sovereign Interpreter of Law,) they govern'd Mankind by their own Laws, while they pretended to govern them by the Laws of God. In a word, they dealt with God, as Builders do with their Scaffolds, they made use of him to erect their *Babel*, and then pull'd him down. And,

TO secure to themselves the quiet Possessions of these Powers, they pretended that a Church was necessary to Salvation, and a Priesthood necessary to a Church; and that none but Priests could ordain Priests; who being independent of Prince and People, in the Exercise of an Office not deriv'd from them, must be as independent as to their Lives, and every Thing else they judg'd necessary for the due Exercise of that Office.

IN short, it was for the sake of these and such-like Maxims, that Reason has been represented as an insufficient Guide in Matters of Religion; and *Christendom*, even from the Reign of the first Christian Emperor, for the sake of such Things as are no

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ways founded on Reason, has been made a perpetual Scene of Persecution, Sedition, Tumults, Murders, Rebellions, Wars, Massacres; and I may add of pious Frauds, holy Forgeries, religious Treachery, and dispensing with all moral Duties, even with the most solemn Oaths: And, indeed why should they stick at Perjury, since they only made bold with the Name and Honour of the Executioner of their own Orders. But to return to our Writer:

HE, tho' he owns, that the *Pagans*, were taught by their Reason, to know all that God, who expects no Impossibilities, requir'd of them; and that * *Revelation itself is to stand and fall by the Test of Reason*: yet labours to prove, that Reason, *the due Use of Reason*, will lead Men into Idolatry, and other absurd Opinions, from the Practice of those Nations which were unknown to the Ancients; and to this end having quoted one *Millar*, (a Divine of *North-Britain*,) and assured us that he has given a faithful Account of their religious Notions, he concludes, with saying, † *These and the like Instances of Corruption in Worship, Doctrine, and Practice, which have prevail'd, and do still prevail, in several Parts of the Heathen World, may further shew the Insufficiency of natural Reason to be a Guide in Religion, and into what monstrous Opinions and Practices whole Nations may be led, where that is their Guide, without any Help from Revelation. Nor will it take off the Force of this Argument, to say, that these were owing to an undue Use of their Reason, which is in effect to beg the Question; or that the Measure of Reason they had was low and imperfect, since they appear'd to be skilful and dextrous enough in worldly Matters, in the Arts of annoying their Neighbours, and defending themselves against Incursions, in entering into Leagues for their mutual Defence, and conducting the ordinary Affairs of Life, according to the Manners and Customs of their*
several

* Pastoral Letter, p. 4.

† Pastoral Letter, p. 35.

several Countries. Nor are the Absurdities in Religion; that have been found among them, greater than those that have been found among the most polite Nations before the Publication of the Gospel.

WHAT this *Writer* here advances, must not only please the *Popish* Priests, who, on pretence that Reason is an incompetent Guide in religious Matters, set up their Church as infallible; but puts an unanswerable Argument in the mouths of such, if there were any such before he wrote, as are against all Religion. They will cry, If the Practice of Idolatry, and all those other things he calls abominable, were Crimes in these *Pagans*, then the due Use of Reason in Religious Matters, which led them into these Practices, must be equally criminal. And, indeed, upon supposition, that Men fell into Idolatry, and other as absurd things, by the Use of their Reason, it must either have been their Duty to observe them most religiously, as being the Product of the only Guide God gave them in Matters of Religion: Or else, since there's no *Medium*, conclude that Religion did not concern them; and they were faulty in applying their Reason about a matter Reason had not qualify'd them to judge; as it had about worldly Matters, in the managing of which, he supposes they were dextrous enough.

IF these *Pagans* are to be converted (as we have a Society for that religious Purpose, which, perhaps, he is at the Head of) I wou'd be glad to know how this can be done, but by applying to their Reason, and desiring them to make a due Use of it; nay, can this *Writer* as much as offer to reason with them, without supposing some Principles of Reason in common between them; and that these Principles, and the Consequences necessarily flowing from them, must, had they duly attended to them, have oblig'd them to have avoided these Absurdities, he supposes the due Use of Reason led them into.

IF Reason is such an incompetent Judge in Matters of Religion, that it led the whole Race of Mankind for 4000 Years together, and the much greater Part still, entirely wrong; what Argument from Reason can this *Writer* urge to convince *Pagans* of the Unreasonableness of theirs, and the Reasonableness of his own Religion? If he argues for its Reasonableness, because it has long prevail'd in some Parts of the World; wou'd they not laugh at such an Argument from a Man, who contends that the whole World, by the Use and Prevaiciency of their Reason, were led into the most unreasonable Religions? And,

As little cou'd he plead to these *Pagans*, Prophecies and Miracles; since he owns *, that with *their idolatrous Worship, Sorcery, Divination, and Magick, were found to be common among them*: Which supposes, that they had their Predictions, and standing Miracles (the Effects of *Magick* and *Divination*) to plead against his traditionary Miracles. If he shou'd tell them, there are two sorts of Beings, one good, and the other bad, and that both had a Power of doing Miracles; and then endeavour to shew them that their Miracles were done by evil Spirits, but his Miracles by good Spirits; must he not by Reason convince them, that there are two such sorts of Beings, and that both of them can do Miracles? and that his Miracles were done by good Beings, but theirs by evil Beings? If they ask'd how they shou'd distinguish between the Miracles done by these two sorts of Beings, must he not reply, that Reason, the due Use of Reason, will tell them, that some Things are in their own Nature essentially good, and others not; and that 'tis contrary to the Nature of good Beings to command any thing, but what is essentially good; and forbid what is essentially evil? If they shou'd ask further, how they shou'd distinguish between these essentially different

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* *Past. Let. p. 33.*

Things, must he not say, that Reason will teach them that such as are for the Good of Mankind, are essentially good; and those that tend to their Hurt, are essentially evil? If they shou'd desire further Satisfaction, and cry, Of what Use then are Miracles, if opposite Miracles, consider'd by themselves, destroy each other's Virtue; and without Miracles, Doctrines essentially good, from their own Nature, eternally bind? Must he not say that Reason will shew us what those Doctrines are?

I HAVE so much Charity for this *Writer*, as to suppose he is not sensible of what fatal Consequence it is, both to Natural and Reveal'd Religion, thus to libel that Reason, by which we are made like to God, and fram'd after his Image; nay, by which alone we can know there is a God, and what He is; and that no Revelation can be true, which is in the least inconsistent with any of its Dictates.

THIS *Writer*, before he endeavour'd to prove from the Practice of the *Pagan* World, that Reason was an insufficient Guide in Matters of Religion, shou'd have consider'd, whether from the Practice of the Christian World, he might not as strongly have argu'd against the Sufficiency of Revelation.

To make Religion an Handle to destroy the End of all Religion; and the Honour of God a Pretence to act against the Good of Man; is a Crime beyond *Paganism*, and worse than *Atheism* itself. An *Atheist*, who believes no future Life, can have no Motives from thence to do mischief in this Life; but Christian Priests have made the Belief of a future State, an Handle to commit such Crimes, ever since they were curs'd with Power, as *never enter'd into the Hearts of Pagans to conceive*.

IF Christians were govern'd by better Morals than the rest of the World, and those enforc'd by stronger Motives, and supernatural Assistances; how greatly must Mankind in these Countries, where Christianity had

had for so many Ages been planted, have increas'd? And how happy above all other Mortals must their Religion have made them! Yet, alas! if we look into most Christian Countries, particularly *Italy*; especially the *Pope's Territories, Sicily, Sardinia, Portugal, Spain, Muscovy, Poland, Denmark, Sweden*; and I may add, *Germany*, and even *France*; how thin are the Inhabitants, in respect to what they were in antient *Pagan Times*? How numerous were the People of *Greece*, and the neighbouring Parts of *Asia*, as well as *Roman Africa*; till by religious Quarrels and bloody Persecutions, the Eastern Parts of the Empire was so thinn'd, as that it became an easy Prey to *Barbarians* unacquainted with the Arts of War? And do not those Christians, who live under *Mahometans*, think themselves in a better State, than if they were under that great Body of Christians, who assume the Name of *Catholicks* to themselves? and who, had they Power, wou'd treat the lesser Sects, as the *Spaniards* (in order to promote the holy Catholick Religion) did the *Americans*; of whom, according to the Account of one of their own Bishops, *Barth. de las Casa*, they butcher'd forty Millions, mostly in cold Blood, with the utmost Cruelty. So that if these and other pernicious Maxims, (particularly that of placing the highest Perfection in a perpetual Virginity) had prevail'd from the Beginning, the Earth at this day had been in a manner desolate. I will not answer for any other Sect: Did not the Reform'd at Home, as well as Abroad, practise the same Cruelty they condemn in the *Papists*, of burning Hereticks? And did not the *Episcoparians*, and *Presbyterians*, in defiance of the Principles on which their Religion is founded, as they became uppermost, go on in a constant Road of Persecution, till the Necessity of Affairs at the *Revolution* forc'd a *Toleration*?

HAVE not private Christians, on account of their different Opinions, every where treated one another with all Uncharitableness, Animosities, Spite, Bitterness, Envy, Malice, and Hatred? infomuch that in most Places it has been too true, that the only Marks Christians generally shew'd of having Religion, was by their hating one another upon the account of Religion? Was it not by this Conduct that they prov'd themselves true Disciples of the Church? Have not the Seeds of this Hatred been so carefully instill'd in them, that in spite of all the Government can do, it will sometimes break out into Rage and Fury? of which we had a late remarkable Instance.

WHERE do we find such Maxims among the *Pagans*, as, “ * That by the Law of God, all Things belong to the Faithful ; that Infidels had no Right to what they possess'd ; and that *Hereticks* ought to embrace the Catholick Faith, or else be rooted out? And that *absolute Passive Obedience* is the indispensable Duty of all Subjects? ”

THE former is a Maxim of St. *Austin's*, which has been religiously practis'd ever since, with this addition, That Infidels have been stript of Life as well as every thing else ; and that rather than Hereticks might escape, the Orthodox themselves shou'd suffer ; *God at the last Day knowing his own* : And the latter was not long since look'd on as a Characteristick of the True Church, which puts all that are not to be rooted out, as Infidels, or Hereticks, in such a State, that if Princes were sure their Subjects wou'd always be passive, Hell itself cou'd only be more intolerable.

How many things are there among Christians, that contribute to the Poverty and Misery of the
Common-

* Epist. 48. p. 166. D, &c. and p. 174. C. 50. Edit. Froben. Basil. 1556. See *Bale's* Philos. Com. Part 3. p. 130, &c. and *Le Clerc's* Ars Critica, p. 353.

Commonwealth, which the *Pagan* Policy avoided? particularly the prodigious Swarms of Beggars; the vast Numbers, immense Riches, and extravagant Power of the Ecclesiasticks. The *Pagans* were entirely ignorant of the divine Right of Priests as well as Kings; and so avoided all that Confusion and Disorder, which the setting up *Imperium in Imperio* has occasion'd among Christians. With the *Pagans*, *Salus Populi* was the supreme Law, and their Religion chiefly consisted in promoting the common Good; and accordingly their Laws were admirably well contriv'd for that End: but have not Christians been taught a contrary Maxim; That the Good of the Church (meaning the Priesthood) is the supreme Law? and for the sake of this separate Good, what Mischief has not been done to the Publick? What Persecution, what Tumults, Seditions, Rebellions, Murders, Assassinations, Massacres, have not been committed; and what Frauds, Forgeries, Violation of Oaths, and all Things sacred, have not been practis'd? Where shall we find in the *Pagan* World, such an History as that relating to *Crusadoes* and *Inquisitions*?

I SHOU'D be glad, for the Honour of the Priesthood, that this *Writer* with all his Skill in Church-History cou'd shew, where the generality of the Church-men did not countenance the most impious and flagitious things, the greatest Tyrants cou'd practise, when the *Order* was sure to be a Gainer? Or what good Things and Governments they did not oppose, when they believ'd their independent Interest might be prejudic'd by it? Can these things be objected to *Pagans*? Did their Priests ever pretend to dispense with Vows, Oaths, Leagues and Covenants; much less that it was their Duty not to keep Faith with Men of different Persuasions? Or did the *Pagans* ever make War on account of *Religious Tenets, Creeds* and *Articles*? Or damn one another

other to Eternity about different Speculations? And for the sake of them leave Men no other Choice but Perjury, in obliging them to abjure; or perpetual Punishment if they did not?

THE Reply to all this will be, that *Pagans* were guilty of Idolatry; which is true, if holding but one supreme God; and that others, tho' called *Gods*, were only Ministers and Mediators, be Idolatry. But wou'd not they have been guilty of a much greater, if they had made those they worshipp'd co-eternal and co-equal, and worshipp'd them as such? And tho' they distinguish'd them as much as Men cou'd the Objects of their Worship; yet shou'd impudently deny in Words, what was notorious in their Practice: and yet, not content to do this themselves, shou'd force others to do the like, on Pain of Death and Damnation.

THIS *Writer*, who libels Natural Religion from the Conduct of *Pagans*, in such things wherein they were not govern'd by it, has sure forgot, that in a manner all Christendom for many Ages together believ'd it the higheft Piece of Religion, to deny what all their Senies conspir'd to tell them, that a Bit of Bread was not the supreme God; or that a Priest cou'd not make that God that made him, or crumble a Bit of Bread into a Number of the self-same God: in this case who can blame the *Arabian* for saying, *Si Christiani comedunt quod adorent, sit anima mea cum Philosophis*. Does not the Religion of the *Papists*, chiefly consist in turning a Bit of Bread into God; and making another that is God to be the Executioner of their Decrees? And a third they have at their Finger's end, to bestow on whom they think fit, provided they will own they are inwardly mov'd by him.

BECAUSE this *Writer* supposes*, that the Cruelties, Disorders, and Excesses, of all kinds, are not so great,

* P. 34.

great, so general among *Christians*, as among *Pagans*; I could shew him, would it not swell this Paper too much, that from the Accounts given by almost all Travellers, whether *Protestant* or *Papist*, *Clergy*, as well as *Lay*; that they exceed all other Nations, (except God's own People the *Jews*) in Wickedness of all kinds; and upon that score make themselves infamous wherever they go; and by it prejudice those they design to convert.

Do not the poor *West-Indians*, in their broken English, cry, *Christian Religion Devil's Religion; Christians much Devils; Christians beat much; Christians do much wrong, beat much, abuse much?* And they in the * *East-Indies* believe the God of the Christians to be the worst God in the World, because his Worshippers are the worst of Men; for sure, say they, he is the most cruel God, whose People are the most cruel People.

AND if we go to Church-History, we shall find, that tho' the Ecclesiasticks pretended to stricter Lives than others, yet what *Grotius* says †, is too true, *Qui Ecclesiasticam Historiam legit, quid legit nisi vitia Episcoporum.*

DR. *Prideaux* of *Norwich* has written, but not publish'd the *History of the Ruin of the Eastern Church*, beginning in the Year 602 ||, and ending in 936; which he owns to be a “ *History of Christians turning*
 “ their holy Religion into a Fire-brand of Hell for
 “ Contention, Strife, and Violence; and that they
 “ continually provok'd each other to that Malice,
 “ Rancor, and every evil Work, that they lost the
 “ whole Substance of their Religion, and in a man-
 “ ner drove Christianity quite out of the World by
 “ those very Controversies in which they disputed
 “ with

* An Account of the Success of the *Danish* Mission in the *East-Indies*. Printed 1721.

† Epist. 22.

|| Preface to the Life of *Mahomet*.

“ with each other about it. And he thinks their
 “ Ruin by the *Saracens* to be a just Judgment of
 “ God upon them for their Wickedness.” * And
 another Christian Author imputes the *Prevalency of*
Mahometanism, to the general Wickedness of Chri-
 stians. And *Joseph Scaliger* says ‡, *The Christians*
are more wicked than the Pagans, or Mahometans.
The Greeks were so wicked, while they had the Go-
vernment, and before they were subject to the Turks,
that no People ever exceeded them. But,

WHOEVER desires an impartial Account of the
 monstrous Wickedness of the Ecclesiasticks, at least
 till the Reformation, I refer him, if he will not be
 content with *Baxter's* short Church-History, to Arch-
 bishop *Usher, de Christianarum Ecclesiarum, in Occi-*
dentis præsertim partibus, ab Apostolicis temporibus ad
nostram usque ætatem, continuâ successione & statu
Historica Explicatio.

How the Laity behav'd under these Guides, I
 need only quote that excellent Man *Salvian*, who
 liv'd in the fifth Age || : “ What is every Congrega-
 “ tion of Christians (says he) but a Common-shore
 “ of Vices ! Who will you find in the Church, that
 “ is not either a Drunkard, or a Glutton, Adulterer,
 “ or Fornicator, Extortioner, or Robber ; a Thief,
 “ or Murderer ?——And I appeal † (says he) to
 “ the Conscience of every Christian, whether there
 “ is a Man free of some of these Villanies and Wic-
 “ kednesses I have named. 'Tis easier to find one
 “ thorough-pac'd in all, than one who has nothing
 “ of them all. Our Congregations are so wicked,
 “ that among Christian People, 'tis a piece of Sanc-
 “ tity to be less wicked than their Neighbours. If
 “ any one would know what they think of at Church,
 “ let him observe what follows. As soon as Church
 “ is done, some go to steal, some to be drunk,
 “ some

* *Brerewood's Enquiries, p. 85. ‡ Scaligerana, p. 49.*

|| *Oper. p. 57.*

† *Ibid. p. 59.*

“ some to whoring, and some to rob on the Highway.— We have a better Law than the *Barbarians*, but then as to Life and Conversation, it grieves me to the heart to think that we are worse.” And in another Place he says*, “ The *Barbarians*, who are of one Country, love one another; but the *Christians* persecute one another.” And this is no more than what *Ammianus Marcellinus* had observ’d before †, “ That no wild Beasts were more savage to Men, than Christians generally were to one another.”

WERE not those glorious Times, when the Ecclesiasticks (as Monsieur ‡ *Barbeyrac* observes) maintain’d Sieges in their Monasteries; they battled it in their Councils; they enter’d the Churches Sword in Hand;” (|| in one Church, in a Dispute, to whom the Holy Ghost shou’d give the Bishoprick of Rome, were more than 130 slain) “ they treated with the utmost Cruelty, all whom they but suspected to favour Opinions, which too often prov’d to be such as no body understood; not even those who defended them, with the greatest Zeal and Obstinacy**.”

“ SEE what a Bishop of the fifth Century, who was persecuted for *Nestorianism*, says on this Head. *I pass by in Silence*, says he, *the Chains, the Dungeons, the Confiscations, the Notes of Infamy, those lamentable Massacres, the Heinousness of which is such, that even they who have had the Misfortune to be Eye-witnesses thereof, do with Pain believe ’em to be true: All these Tragedies too are acted by Bishops.— Amongst whom downright Impudence passes for Courage; they call their Cruelty Zeal; and their Knavery is honour’d with the Name of Wisdom.*”

How

* Oper. p. 102. † P. 302.

‡ Introduct. to Puffend. of the Law of Nature and Nations, § 10.

|| Ammianus, l. 27. & Grot. de Verit. Christ. Relig. l. 6.

** Eutherius Tyanorum Episcopus, inter opera Theodorici, Tom. V. p. 688, 689.

How cruelly Christians treated one another, and what vast Numbers were butcher'd in the fourth Century, even under *Constantius*, the second Christian Emperor, I refer you to *Julian's* Letter to the *Bostrens* translated in the *Characteristicks* *. Nay, no sooner was *Constantine* settled in the Throne, but the holy Fathers taught a very different Doctrine from what they did before; and persuaded the Emperor to break all the Edicts he had made for an universal Toleration; and all Christians but those of his own Church were treated as bad as *Pagans*. They were forbid to meet either in publick or private; and their Oratories given to the Catholick Church, and the rest of the Places adjudg'd to the Publick, and all their Books were to be sought after, and burnt: and for this he is highly magnify'd by † *Eusebius*, that prevaricating *Arian*, who yet can't forbear exclaiming || against the unspeakable Diffimulation of those, who craftily crept into the Church, and the Violences of insatiable ill Men, who then infested almost all Mortals; and yet this wou'd not satisfy the Bishops: *Constantine* the first Christian Emperor, in a Letter to one of them, says ‡, “ The *Barbarians*, for fear of us worship God; but we mind
 “ only what tends to Hatred, to Dissension; in one
 “ word, to the Destruction of Mankind.”

To shew how things were manag'd before the Empire became Christian, I shall mention what *Eusebius* says of the Christians, even before the *Dioclesian* Persecution **; “ That then Prelates
 “ dash'd against Prelates, and the People rais'd
 “ Factions against the People; and unspeakable
 “ Hypocrisy and Diffimulation arriv'd at the
 “ height of Mischief.” And even after the Persecution

* Vol. 3. p. 88. Euf. Eccl. Hist. l. 10. c. 5.

† Euf. Life of Constant. l. 3. c. 65, 66. || L. 4. c. 54.

‡ Wake's Author. of Christ. Princes, p. 307.

** Eccl. Hist. l. 8. c. 1.

secution began, *he says*, “ We, like Atheistical
 “ Persons, supposing our Affairs to be manag’d
 “ regardlessly, and without any Inspection, added
 “ Impieties to Impieties; when they who seem’d
 “ our Pastors, rejecting the Sanctions of Religion,
 “ were inflam’d with mutual Contentions, studying
 “ nothing else but the augmenting of Strifes, Me-
 “ naces, Emulations, Envy, and mutual Hatred,
 “ and greedily challenging to themselves the Pre-
 “ eminence, as it were a Dominion.” And the
 Character which *Cyprian* gives of the Christians,
 even in his Time, when they enjoy’d but 15 Years
 Quiet is *, “ That there was no devout Religion in
 “ the Priests, or Compassion in others; that Deceit,
 “ Swearing, Perjury, Hatred abounded, and many
 “ Bishops follow’d secular Business, and neglected
 “ their Flocks. And when the Persecution begun,
 “ many ran, and without being compell’d, offer’d
 “ themselves to sacrifice, and renounced Christ;
 “ and that many, who cleaved to Christ, tho’ im-
 “ prison’d, and sent to work in the Mines, were dis-
 “ orderly and unruly.” But,

To return to the present Times, *Bishop Tillotson*
 says †, “ Many Christians had been excellent Men,
 “ if their Religion had not hinder’d them; if the
 “ Doctrines and Principles of their Church had not
 “ perverted, and spoiled their natural Innocency and
 “ Good-nature.” And again, “ || Better it were,
 “ that there were no Reveal’d Religion, and that
 “ human Nature were left to the Conduct of its
 “ own Principles, which are much more mild and
 “ merciful, much more for the Peace and Happi-
 “ ness of human Society, than to be acted by a Reli-
 “ gion, which inspires Men with so wild a Fury.”

BISHOP Burnet says ‡, “ I do not see, that the
 “ *French King* is so much to be blamed as his Reli-

* De Lapf. & ad Rogat. & de Unit. Eccl.

† Serin. Vol. 3. p. 26, 27. || Ib. p. 350. ‡ Travels, p. 265.

gion, which obligeth him to extirpate *Hereticks*, and not to keep his Faith with them : so that instead of censuring him, I must only lament his being bred up in a Religion, that does certainly oblige him to divest himself of all *Humanity*, and to violate his Faith, whenever the Cause of his Church and Religion require it." And " * That the whole Popish Church is the cruellest, and most implacable Body of Men, that ever yet appear'd in the World." And the Bishop, who, by long Experience, well knew the Ecclesiasticks both at Home and Abroad, says †, " I always believe well of Laymen, till I see cause to change my Mind ; tho' as to Churchmen, it is quite otherwise with me ; for I have seen so much amiss in that Profession, that I am always inclin'd to think ill of them, till I see cause to think otherwise." But I refer you to his Pastoral Charge, as an Answer to this Pastoral Letter. And,

BISHOP *Kidder*, speaking of Christians in general, says †, " That were a wise Man to choose his Religion by the Lives of those who profess it ; perhaps Christianity wou'd be the last Religion he wou'd choose." But

NOT to mention any more human Authorities, tho' of the greatest Weight ; is it not our Saviour himself who has said, ** *Think not that I am come to send Peace on Earth : I came not to send Peace, but a Sword. For I am come to set a Man at variance against his Father, and the Daughter against her Mother ; and the Daughter-in-Law against her Mother-in-Law. And a Man's Foes shall be they of his own Household.* And in *Luke* it is mention'd with this Addition, †† *I am come to send Fire on the Earth,*
and

* Pref. to Lactantius's Death of the Persec. p. 25.

† Specimen of a Secret Hist. p. 16.

‡ Demonst. of the Messiah, Part 2. p. 78.

** Mat. 10. 34, 35. †† Luke 12. 49, 50, 51, 52, 53.

and what will I, if it be already kindled? — Suppose ye that I am come to give Peace on Earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather Division. For from henceforth there shall be five in one House divided; three against two, and two against three. The Father shall be divided against the Son, and the Son against the Father, &c. And is it not plain from hence, that there was no such Fire kindled on Earth before his coming; nor such Divisions which from *henceforth* were to commence? And this seems to have been all along literally fulfill'd, especially in the Disputes about the *Trinity*. And this Spirit of Discord was thought by that first and great Reformer *Luther*, so inseparable from Christianity, that he says*, “ If in case (as God forbid) there shou'd be Rest and Quietness; then the Gospel had an End: for wheresoever that cometh, it raiseth Tumults; and if not, then it is no upright Gospel. Therefore Christ says, *I am come to kindle a Fire on Earth, &c.*”

IF this *Writer* says, The Gospel is a Law of perfect Love, tho' the different Sects of Christians from the earliest Times, shew'd all the Marks of Hatred to one another; and each, in their Turns, exercis'd without Intermiſſion the greatest Cruelties: If, he says, The Ministers of the Gospel shou'd be Ministers of Peace, tho' he can tell no Time when they were not for the most part *Beautefeu's* and Incendiaries: If he owns, That the Idolatry of the *Papists*, in worshipping a Bit of Bread, and the Cross, (*Poper*y for many Ages having in a manner engross'd *Christendom*) and their other monstrous Absurdities, (not to be equal'd in *Paganism*) are not Arguments against the Sufficiency of Revelation; let him be so impartial as to apply this to the Religion of Nature.

CAN the Superstition of the *Pagans* be imputed to any Defect, or Insufficiency in the Light of Reason, when it was wholly owing to their abandoning
that

* Table-Talk, p. 225.

that divine Light; and in defiance of it, running into senseless Traditions? Was not the whole History of their Deities, their appearing to Mortals in Visions and Dreams; their extravagant Exploits, their absurd, and sometimes leud way of Worship, deriv'd from Tradition? Were not the Cheats of their juggling Priests, their Oracles, their Divinations, wholly owing to the same Cause? Did the Light of Nature teach Men, that those Impostors cou'd interpret Dreams, help Men to stolen Goods; tell the Fortunes of States, as well as private Persons, and determine the Fate of Battles, not by *Urim* and *Thummim*; but by the Intrails of Beasts, and Flight of Birds?

IF this Writer thinks there never was any thing practis'd among Christians, equal to that religious Leudness observ'd by some Pagans as a Part of their religious Worship, he is much mistaken. For * the *Gnostick* Christians, from whose great Number the second Century is by many call'd *Seculum Gnosticum*, were guilty of much greater devotional Leudness; for they held, that Women, as well as other Things, ought to be in common, (a Thing maintain'd by the *Nicholaitans* in the first Age;) and after they had celebrated their *Love-Feasts*, (which the Sect of the † *Adamitæ* did naked) they put out the Candles, and Men and Women mix'd promiscuously: and, which is most monstrous, they not only eat a well-spiced Infant, begot in their promiscuous Copulations, esteeming it a most perfect Passover; but they then (a thing almost too gross to mention) swallow'd *Maris Profluvium* & *menstruus Fluxus*; an abominable Absurdity they were led into, by taking those Words of *eating the Flesh and drinking the Blood of the Son of Man*, in a literal Sense. And to the same Cause

* See Echard. Hist. B. 6. c. 1. A. D. 112.

† Epiphani. Har. 26. See Reeve's Not on Just. Apol. p. 57.

Cause it was owing, that “ * the *Montanists*, if St. *Austin* says; Truth, as well as the *Quintillians*, mixt with Flower the Blood of a Child prick’d with Pins; and with it celebrated their Eucharist: if the Child dy’d, he was reckon’d a Martyr; if he surviv’d, he became a Chief Priest.” And do not the *Papists* at this day believe they eat the Body, and drink the Blood of both God and Man; and urge the same Texts as those Primitive Christians did?

’Tis certainly no good Argument against the Sufficiency of the divine Light of Nature, that Men cou’d not err, except they left it, and follow’d vain Traditions; and whoever considers, how all Mankind, even the wisest Nations, have been impos’d on by senseless Tales, and idle Stories, consecrated by Length of Time; will not be fond of relying on Tradition in matters of Religion. God gave Man, with his very Being, a Law of Uprightness; || *But they*, as the wise Man says, *found out many Inventions*; by which they more or less destroy’d this Law of Uprightness.

TILL this Writer can shew, that all the Absurdities even Christians, as well as Pagans, have been guilty of, are not owing to their acting contrary to the Dictates of the Light of Nature, his haranguing on the Insufficiency of that Light, can only shew his own Insufficiency. However,

THERE’S this Difference between the *Pagans*, and the *Christians*; the *Pagans* did not pretend to found their Absurdities on the Law of Nature; whereas the different Denominations of *Christians* do all theirs either on the Old or New Testament; and tho’ they act never so inconsistently, pretend Texts, either from one or other, to justify their Conduct: and ’tis in vain generally to argue with them upon the Principles of Reason; because the weak, the

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dim, the insufficient Light of Reason, must submit to Revelation; and the unalterable Nature and Reason of Things must yield to Words and Phrases, susceptible of various Meanings, and generally express'd hyperbolically.

THIS Writer sure did not design a Panegyrick on Reason, in making use of such Expressions as these; * *Whatever human Reason pretends to discover, must be judg'd by human Reason, whether it be true, or false; and it was not likely the Generality of People shou'd be able to make such a Judgment.* — † *Is every Man to have the framing of his own Religion? — There is great Cause to apprehend, that many may give too favourable Entertainment to a Scheme, which thus flatters the Pride of human Understanding.* Shou'd a Talopoin argue thus for his Traditional Religion, wou'd not this Writer be oblig'd to own, that every Man must frame his own Religion, according as things appear to his Understanding; and by his Reason judge which, if either, of the two Religions has the best Pretence? Nay, if this *Writer* himself had a divine Revelation, cou'd he convince a Person that he had such a Revelation, but by having recourse to Reason, to satisfy him of the Truth of it? Nay, since Numbers take Reveries for Inspiration, how cou'd he distinguish supernatural from natural Impressions, but by consulting his Reason? But suppose that Difficulty remov'd, how cou'd he distinguish the Impressions made by a good, from those of an evil Being; both being allow'd to make Impressions; and to do Miracles in Confirmation of 'em, but by what his Reason tells him of the Nature and Tendency of the things themselves?

I AM sorry, a Man, who has so great a share of Reason, shou'd employ it against Reason; and consequently, against Revelation, which is founded on it: It is usually said, *Men are never against Reason,*
if

* Past. Let. 2. p. 41.

† *Ib.* p. 2, 3.

if Reason is not first against them. And does not Reason declare open War against that Man's Religion, which contains things unreasonable, unfit, and unexpedient?

OUR best Divines are far from talking after this rate: The excellent Dr. *Whitby* says*, “When Men give Reason ill Names, calling it weak and blind, and carnal Reason, (it being certain, that God has given us no other Faculties by which we can discern, or judge what is matter of our Faith and Duty;) this must be in effect, to charge God with this blasphemous Imputation, that he has left all Men, in things on which their everlasting Interests depend, to a blind and weak, uncertain and deceitful Guide.”

AND that great Master of Reason, Archbishop *Tillotson*, rallies these Undervaluers of Reason very justly, in saying †, “I have often wonder'd, that People can with patience endure to hear their Teachers and Guides talk against Reason; and not only so, but they pay them a greater Submission and Veneration for it. One wou'd think this but an odd way to gain Authority over the Minds of Men; but some skilful and designing Men have found by Experience, that it is a very good way to recommend them to the Ignorant, as Nurses use to endear themselves to Children, by perpetual Noise and Nonsense.”

TO remove, therefore, this *Writer's* unreasonable Prejudices against Reason, I shall lay down six short Propositions, by which Reason demonstrates, not only the Being and Unity of God, but the most substantial Points of Religion, on which the rest depend.

PROP. I. Reason will tell Men, that did they but consider their own beautiful System; and how admirably

* Vol. of *Scrm.* p. 5. † *Serm.* since his Death, Vol. 1. p. 68, 69.

admirably well all things are dispos'd for the Happiness of living Creatures; the Vegetable World for the Use of the Animal; and the Animals in due Subordination to one another; and all conspiring to the Good of the Whole; they cou'd not but see, that the framing Things after this Manner, plainly point out, even to the most Ignorant, a Being of infinite Wisdom and Goodness, as well as Power.

PROP. II. Reason will likewise inform Men, that as One such Being is necessary, so more are wholly unnecessary; a Million having no more Power, Wisdom and Goodness than One; and that it was impossible for them to conceive, more than One Being, every where present: because ever so many Omnipresent Beings taking up no more Space than One, cou'd not be distinguish'd from that One; it being inconsistent with our Ideas of Identity and Diversity, to suppose several Beings of the same sort taking up the same Space. And that to suppose this necessary Being has any Equals, and Associates in the framing and governing the World, must divide that Love, Praise and Adoration among several, which only belongs to One; and that they cou'd not say any One was God most High, there being others as High as He; or that he was All-knowing, All-wise, or All-good; if there were some, as *Pagans* and *Papists* contend, to inform his Omniscience of People's Wants, and offer up their Prayers; and either by their Reasons, or by their Importunities prevail on him to be kinder to Men, than otherwise he design'd to be.

PROP. III. Reason likewise tells Men, that the Deity being infinitely happy in himself, cou'd not create Mankind to add any Happiness to himself; but to communicate to them all that Happiness their Nature is capable of; and that they fully answer the End of their Creation, who contribute all they can to their own, and others Happiness. And, that a
 God

God of universal and impartial Goodness, cou'd have no Reason antecedent to his bringing Men into Being, to have a greater Kindness for some, than others; or afterwards to consider them but as they do, or do not act, according to the Law of their Creation. And nothing can be a greater Motive to induce Men to deal impartially with their Fellow-Creatures, than their believing God will have an equal Regard to the Happiness of all his Children.

PROP. IV. Nothing can be more repugnant to the Justice, as well as Goodness of God, than to suppose that this short Life was design'd as a State of Probation for Mankind, in order to their existing hereafter in a State of perpetual Happiness or Misery, and yet that he did not let them know there was to be a such a State. And tho' 'tis impossible, considering the present System of the World, that the Sun must not shine on the Bad, as well as the Good, and that the very best Men may here suffer for answering the End of their Creation; yet we may be as certain as there is a Being of infinite Goodness, and of impartial and universal Benevolence, that they who have suffer'd here upon this account, will be amply rewarded hereafter; and that Man's great Happiness consists in having a most impartial, intirely disinterested Legislator and Judge, who acts wholly for their Good; as having no Motive on his own account to give them Laws, or to punish the Breach of them.

PROP. V. Human Legislators, for want of Power or Wisdom, may not be able to make their Laws plain to all their People; but God can't, certainly, want either, to make his Laws at all Times, and to all Nations alike plain; notwithstanding the Uncertainty of Tradition and of the Meaning of Words, and the Infinity of Languages; and those too perpetually changing. Since those Duties, which Men owe to God, and one another, necessarily flowing

from the immutable Relations Men stand in to their Creator and Fellow-Creatures, must be as discernible as the Relations themselves: And all Duty, supposing certain Relations between Persons, no Duty can extend further than the Relations do; and we may be certain, from the Wisdom and Goodness of God, that he can require no more of Men, than the Relation which he, either as Creator or Governor, enter'd into with them, and that too purely for their sake, makes fit to be requir'd.

PROP. VI. The Means to promote our common Good, in which all the Laws of God center, cannot for the most part be perform'd without appointing Time, Place, Persons, and certain Circumstances, &c. To imagine God has not left all such things to humane Discretion to determine as it thinks fit, and to vary them as Exigencies require, but prescribes a particular Method himself of doing any of these things; supposes him not only to interpose unnecessarily, but to the prejudice of the Ends for which he interposes, in making immutable Ends give place to mutable Means; and can only serve, as in fact it has done, as a pretence, for designing Men, to impose on a credulous World whatever they please.

CAN Reason, which affords a Demonstration of these Truths, be such an insufficient Guide in matters of Religion, as this Writer wou'd have it thought? What is there that tends to the *Glory of God in the highest, on Earth Peace, and Good-will towards Men*; that these Maxims do not direct us to?

IF what has been said will not satisfy this Writer, but he will still insist on Reason's being an insufficient Guide in matters of Religion, upon the account of the Diversities of Opinions among the *Pagans*, I wou'd have him consider, whether an Argument drawn from Diversity of Opinions, will not equally affect Christianity. For tho' that is not as far spread as
Paganism

Paganism was, nor has had so long a Duration ; yet the Divisions among Christians, if we take in those in the *East*, as well as the *West*, will appear to be very numerous ; and are own'd by the different Sects, to be of the greatest Moment ; and accordingly, they damn and persecute one another about them.

THE grand Argument of *Protestants*, as well as *Papists*, for Persecution, is, That if Liberty of Conscience was allow'd, there might be almost as many Religions as Men ; which is, in effect, saying, (so uncertain does this Supposition render Religion) *Rather than not prevent different religious Sentiments, we will have no Religion at all ; since all Religion consists in Men's using their Reason to find out the Will of God, in order to act according to it.* But if this is hinder'd, in order to make Men obey the Will of Priests, they then are not Worshippers of God, but of the Priests, whose Will they execute : And has not this been so, in most Countries, ever since the Priests have had Power ? Nay, are not Priests themselves, for the sake of their common Craft, ty'd down by *Creeds, Articles, Canons, &c.* to say the same Things ; and accordingly are they not either *Papists, or Lutherans, or Calvinists, &c.* ? And yet this wicked Method has not hinder'd innumerable Divisions ; tho' a verbal Agreement, owing to Force, is no Argument of a real Agreement ; and wherever it has been effectually us'd, it has only produc'd most monstrous Absurdities. Has there not been, for many Ages, the best part of a Million of Priests, richly set apart to explain Revelation ? and yet how little have they agreed ; except in interpreting such Texts where the Reason of Things points out their Meaning ? And even here have not other Texts been often trump't up, to render those Texts useles ? 'Tis said, the nearer the Fountain, the clearer the Streams ; yet, alas ! we find in the primitive Times endless Divisions. St. *Epiphanius* reckons up no less than

than 80 sorts of *Hereticks*; and St. *Austin*, in his *Quod vult Deus*, makes them 88; and *Predestinatus* 90.

To shew what Confusion, what Uncertainty there was, not only about the Meaning of Scripture, but what Books were Scripture; I need only quote a Passage from Mr. *Dodwell**, tho' the whole he says on this Head, deserves to be consider'd; viz. "That
 " the Canonical Writings lay conceal'd in the Coffers
 " of private Churches, or Persons, till the latter
 " Time of *Trajan*, or rather of *Adrian*; so that
 " they cou'd not come to the Knowledge of the
 " whole Church: For if they had been publish'd,
 " they had been overwhelm'd under such a multi-
 " tude as were then of *Apocryphal* and suppositious
 " Books." Nay, *this Writer* himself gives up the
 first Century or Age for any Proof, that the Evangelical Writings were then in Being †, and refers us for a Proof to the second; without mentioning what Part of the second. Indeed he adds, ' *We are assur'd,*
 ' *that the Original Writings of several of them were*
 ' *preserv'd for some Ages, and frequently appeal'd to*
 ' *by the Christians in their Disputes with Hereticks.*'

WHAT shall we think of a Man who talks thus, if he can't produce one Writer, who ever pretended to have seen the Writings of the Evangelists; or any one, much less several, who appeal'd to these Hand-Writings in their Disputes with Hereticks. And

ALL this seems to be founded on mistaking the Meaning of a Word in *Tertullian*, a most obscure Writer; who yet does not speak of the Evangelists but of several of St. *Paul's* Epistles; as is fully prov'd by that great Critick *Pere Simon*||.

AND his other Argument, that ' the Gospel has
 ' been admitted to belong to those whose Names they
 ' bore, both by *Jews* and *Pagans*, in their Writings
 ' against Christianity;' might have had some Force
 in

* Dissert. on *Iren.* §. 38, 39. † *Pass. Lct. i. p. 22.*

|| *Critical Hist. of the New Test. c. 4.*

in it, if they had had the same Opinions of those Writings as the Christians had: But how cou'd they endeavour to shew that those Writings deserv'd not the least Credit, except by citing them under the Names they were then usually call'd by, tho' when they first* appear'd in the World, they had no Names prefix'd to them; nor is there any thing in the Books to shew who they were wrote by? And if the second Century, especially if far advanc'd, cou'd have no Light in this Matter but from the first, the Ages further remov'd certainly cou'd have none.

ONE wou'd think, a Man, who weakens the internal Evidences of the Evangelical Writings, by supposing they, as I shall strait shew, contain Things which have no Wisdom or Expedience, shou'd have produc'd more substantial external Proofs.

THIS *Writer*, tho' he labours to shew, that Reason is not only an insufficient, but a false Guide in matters of Religion, having led all Mankind so many Ages, and the greatest part at present, into most absurd and abominable Notions; and that without Revelation, God wou'd have abandon'd Mankind; yet this is contrary to the very Foundation his Pastoral Letter is built on: for in his first Head of the true and proper Use of Reason with regard to Revelation, he says †, ' If it were true, that if you will embrace Revelation, you must of course quit your Reason, this wou'd doubtless be a strong-Prejudice against Revelation. But this is so far from being true, that it is universally acknowledged, that Revelation itself is to stand, or fall by the Test of Reason; or, in other Words, according as Reason finds the Evidences of its coming from God, to be, or not to be sufficient and conclusive; and the Matter of it to contradict, or not contradict, the natural Notions which Reason gives us of the Being and Attributes of God, and of the essential Differences between Good and Evil.'

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* Chrysoft. hom. 1. on Epist. ad Rom. † Past. Lett. p. 4.

Is not this owning Reason to be the sole independent Rule? *First*, If our Duty to each other consist in not only doing no Harm, but all possible Good to one another; and Reason teaches us what is Good or Evil, and the essential Differences between them; Is not Reason here the sole Rule? Can Revelation command us to do, or avoid doing any thing, which Reason does not command, or forbid? *Secondly*, If it is from Reason we must know that there is a God, and what He is, or what are his Attributes; must not all Revelation whatever, even in this Writer's Opinion, be rejected, that shou'd command, or forbid any thing whatever that is inconsistent with those natural Notions which Reason gives us of the Being and Attributes of God? And do not Divines themselves lay it down as an infallible Maxim, that when the Letter of the Scripture recedes from what Reason tells us concerning the Perfections of God, and the essential Differences of Good and Evil, it is our indispensable Duty to recede from the *killin*g Letter? And by virtue of this Maxim, do they not reject numberless Texts; even tho' the Scripture makes them the Foundation of most of God's Actions? And the Reason they give for taking this Liberty with the Sacred Writ, is, That God has made Men moral Agents, and thereby given them Faculties to discern Good from Evil, Religion from Superstition; and therefore they say with this Writer, that Revelation is to stand or fall by the Test of Reason: and when they express themselves more fully, they say with Dr. *Prideaux* *,

“ Let what is written in all the Books of the *New*
 “ *Testament*, be try'd by That, which is the Touch-
 “ stone of all Religions; I mean, that Religion of
 “ Nature and Reason, which God has written in the
 “ Hearts of every one of us, from the first Crea-
 “ tion; and if it varies from it in any one Particular,

I

“ if

* Letter to the Deists, p. 127.

“ if it prescribes any one Thing, which may, in
 “ the minutest Circumstances thereof, be contra-
 “ ry to its Righteousness, I will then acknowledge
 “ this to be an Argument against us, strong enough
 “ to overthrow the whole Cause, and make all
 “ Things else that can be said for it, totally inef-
 “ fectual for its Support.”

THIS being premis'd, we will see whether this Writer in endeavouring to prove*, that reasonable Creatures are bound to believe that to be the Will of God, in which they can see neither Wisdom or Expedience, observes his own Rule in examining this Assertion by the Test of Reason; and shews it does not contradict the natural Notions we have of the Being and Attributes of God, and of the essential Differences of Good and Evil. This he ought to have attempted, since it seems at first sight most certain that God is no arbitrary Being, or can command for Commanding-sake, Things, which shew neither Wisdom or Expedience? If infinite Wisdom and Goodness are the essential Attributes of the Deity, must they not govern all his Actions? And must not all his Laws (the chief Subject wherein his Wisdom and Goodness display themselves) have, like his Works, both these Attributes impressed on them? To deny this, is it not to deny he is either Wise or Good; much less infinitely Wise or Good? Are we not certain from his Wisdom, he can't be mistaken in the Nature of the Things he commands; or command useles and needless Things, such as neither tend to His own, or Creatures Good? And if such Commands are inconsistent with his Wisdom, they must certainly be so with his Goodness; especially, if severe Penalties are annexed to the not observing them.

T H I S

* Page 4.

THIS *Writer*, without taking the least Notice of these obvious Objections, says*, *When Reason, upon an impartial Examination, finds the Evidences to be full and sufficient, it pronounces that the Revelation ought to be receiv'd; and as a necessary Consequence thereof, directs us to give up our selves to the Guidance of it. But here Reason stops, not as set aside by Revelation, but as taking Revelation for its Guide, and not thinking it self at liberty to call in question the Wisdom and Expedience of any Part, after it is satisfy'd that the Whole comes from God.* But he does not tell us, how we can be satisfy'd the Whole comes from God, if it teaches such Things as will not bear the Test of Reason; or is inconsistent with the natural Notions Reason gives us of the Being and Attributes of God, and the essential Difference between Good and Evil.

Mr. *Locke*, tho' frequently rail'd at from the Pulpit, and represented by Bishop *Stillingfleet*, and other eminent Divines, as a Promoter of Heretical Depravity, has the honour to have his Sentiments quoted by this *Writer*, as pious and wise: but perhaps, he will not long retain such an Opinion of this acute Philosopher, as he justly calls him; when I shew, he was so far from believing that Revelation could contain Things which shew no Wisdom or Expedience, that he declares, † “ It cannot be expected, that God should send any one into the
 “ World on purpose to inform Men of Things
 “ indifferent, or of small moment; or which are
 “ knowable by the Light of their natural Faculties.”
 And he supposes in the preceding Section, that every Thing relating to the Honour of the One Only, True, Invisible God, and the Good of Man (which certainly take in all Religion) are knowable by Reason. His Words are, ‡ “ That no Mission can be look'd
 “ on

* *Past. Lett.* p. 4, 5.
 † *Ib.* p. 226.

‡ *Locke's Posth. Works*, p. 226, 227.

“ on to be Divine, that delivers any thing derogating
 “ from the Honour of the One Only, True, Invisible
 “ God, or is inconsistent with natural Religion and
 “ the Rules of Morality : Because God having dis-
 “ cover’d to Men, the Unity, and Majesty of his
 “ Eternal Godhead, and the Truths of natural
 “ Religion and Morality by the Light of Reason, he
 “ cannot be suppos’d to teach the contrary by Re-
 “ velation ; for that would be to destroy the Evi-
 “ dence and Use of Reason, without which Men
 “ cannot be able to distinguish Divine Revelation
 “ from Diabolical Imposture.”

SINCE this *Writer* has quoted an acute Layman,
 I beg leave to quote an acute Divine*. “ No
 “ Man, says he, ought to contend against the
 “ Force, or Obligation, or Sufficiency of *Reason* ;
 “ the Religion of Nature is capable of being shewn
 “ to be obligatory upon reasonable Creatures: And
 “ Reason must be first heard, and its Dictates fol-
 “ lowed, before you can know that there is a Re-
 “ velation; and after that you are convinced there
 “ is a Revelation, even still Reason is to maintain
 “ its Province, and you are to judge of every
 “ Thing in that Revelation by it; the Meaning of
 “ every Command, and of every Prohibition, is to
 “ be examin’d and determin’d by it; and every
 “ Doctrine revealed is to be searched into, and if
 “ any One be found inconsistent with Reason, it
 “ cannot be admitted. A Man may acknowledge
 “ that he was taught from Revelation, to reason
 “ right about the Obligations of Morality, just as
 “ he may confess that he was taught to reason right
 “ about philosophical Matters, from the Discoveries
 “ made in Philosophy by Sir *Isaac Newton* : but
 “ still Reason is Reason, however discover’d, and
 “ must be attended to by Man as Man. Therefore

H 2

“ since

* Def. of the Answer to the Remarks on Dr. *Clark's* Expof. of the Ch. Catechism, p. 93, 94.

“ since the Religion of Nature is universal, and
 “ obligatory upon all, that Principle should be
 “ *consistently* and *uniformly* allow'd, in all its Confe-
 “ quences. From hence 'twill follow, that by the
 “ Religion of Nature Men may know that God *is*,
 “ and *what* he is, and *how* God is to be worship-
 “ ped: That will shew how Men, being placed in
 “ the Circumstances they are, full of Passion, full
 “ of Infirmities, and surrounded with variety of
 “ Temptations of all sorts, may be reconciled to,
 “ and accepted by God: That will shew a future
 “ State of Rewards or Punishments: and That will
 “ shew the Duties we are to practise to one another.
 “ He that doubts of all this, may see it demonstrably
 “ proved in Mr. *Woolaston's* immortal Book, *The*
 “ *Religion of Nature delineated.*

“ WHEN therefore any * Deist pleads for the Reli-
 “ gion of Nature, or for the Sufficiency of Reason
 “ to be a Guide in matters of Religion,—— these
 “ should not be the Subject of Controversy, but
 “ may be all safely admitted: for 'tis certainly true,
 “ that they, who, to magnify Revelation, and to
 “ shew 'tis absolutely necessary, endeavour to weaken
 “ the Force of the Religion of Reason, do, in reali-
 “ ty, strike at all Religion.” These, I think, are
 the Sentiments of those who are justly term'd rational
 Divines; and as for the irrational, they seem to
 have no consistent Scheme, but talk backward and
 forward at every turn.

THIS Writer, in pursuance of his Argument of
 admitting Things into Religion, of which we can't
 see any Wisdom, or Expedience, says, ‘ that God
 ‘ has a Right to give us a Rule;’ and ‘ who can
 ‘ give us no Rule, but what is true, just, and good:’
 But then, does it not suppose we must judge whe-
 ther any Rule said to come from God, is consistent
 with our Ideas of Truth, Justice and Goodness?

Had

* *Ib.* p. 96.

Had we not Ideas of those Words, we shou'd mean nothing, when we apply'd them to the Actions either of God, or Man. And does not this Writer confess as much, in owning we must admit * *nothing to come from God, which contradicts the natural Notions, which Reason gives us of the Being and Attributes of God, and of the essential Difference of Good and Evil?* And indeed, it wou'd be an high Affront to a Being of infinite Wisdom and Goodness, not to be first satisfy'd that a Thing is agreeable to what Reason tells us of his Nature and Attributes, and the essential Differences of Good and Evil, before we examine whether it is contain'd in a Revelation suppos'd to come from him. But this Writer is for a contrary Method, and labour'd also in his former *Pastoral Letter* †, to prove a Doctrine may come from God, tho' we can see no Fitness, no Expedience, or Reasonableness in it; yet, in defiance of both his Letters, he here gives such a Description of the Christian Religion, as makes all things of that nature inconsistent with its Perfection: and among many other things to the same purpose, he says ‡, that
 ' *The Method the Gospel lays down for our Salvation*
 ' *is throughout a consistent and uniform Scheme, worthy*
 ' *of God, and contriv'd with the greatest Wisdom and*
 ' *Goodness for the Comfort and Happiness of Man.*'
 But how can he say, ' the Gospel contains through-
 ' out a consistent and uniform Scheme,' if there are Things of so different a Nature in it, as Things which have, and Things which have not Fitness, Expedience, Reasonableness, or Wisdom? Or how can he say, the Gospel is contriv'd with the greatest Wisdom, when he contends, there are Things in it, which shew no Wisdom? Or how dares he say, Things which shew no Wisdom, Fitness, or Reasonableness, are worthy of God? And again ||, ' *The*
 ' *great Ends Revelation proposes, are the Perfection*
 ' of

* *Past. Let. p. 4.*† *P. 15.*‡ *P. 63.*|| *P. 51.*

‘ of human Nature, and the Happiness of Mankind ;
 ‘ to remove us from the State of Brutes, and advance
 ‘ us to the Perfection of Angels ? ’ But can human
 Nature be any ways perfected by Things that have
 no Perfection ? Or the Happiness of Mankind be ad-
 vanced by Things which no ways tend to promote
 their Happiness ? Or can such Things remove us
 from the State of Brutes, and advance us to the
 Perfection of Angels ? He, after having declared,
 ‘ || Such and so many are the Excellencies of the
 ‘ Gospel Revelation, that every wise and good Man
 ‘ must wish it to be true ; ’ and produced a number
 of Texts to prove all its Precepts to be wise, reason-
 able and expedient ; concludes this Pastoral Letter
 with saying, that ‘ the Evidences of the Christian
 ‘ Religion are compris’d under two general Heads,
 ‘ external and internal : ’ and among the internal, he
 reckons * *the Excellence of the Doctrines contain’d in
 it ; and the visible Tendency of the whole to the Im-
 provement and Perfection of human Nature, and the
 Happiness of Mankind in this World, and the next.*

Does not this Character exclude every thing,
 which is not fit, expedient, wise, and reasonable ?
 Can such things have an internal Evidence of their
 being the Will of God ? Or can they belong to a
 Religion, where the visible Tendency of the whole
 is for the Improvement and Perfection of human
 Nature, and the Happiness of Mankind in this
 World, and the next.

IF moral Precepts are founded on the eternal
 Reason of Things, and can’t be alter’d by God him-
 self ; and Precepts that are not moral (if there are
 any such) can only be founded on mere Will and
 Pleasure ; to say †, *It was necessary that the Gospel
 Precepts shou’d be built on higher Principles than those
 of Morality ; and that they shou’d be of a more pure,
 refined, and exalted Nature ;* is making Things that
 have

have no Excellency, nor internal Marks of being the Will of God, but are at the best merely indifferent, to be of a more pure, refined, and exalted Nature, and built on higher Principles than those God governs all his own Actions by, and requires all Mankind at all Times to govern all their Actions.

THIS *Writer*, was he consistent with himself, cou'd not differ with the Author of *Christianity*, &c. since he intirely agrees with him, in what he calls the Substance of the Christian Religion; and the necessary Inforcement of the Practice of it. And

As he requires no other Belief concerning the Person of Christ, but that *he is a Teacher sent by God*, does not the Author of *Christianity*, &c. give as high a Character of him, in saying, “ * That in
“ supposing an external Revelation, I take it for
“ granted, that there's sufficient Evidence of a Per-
“ son's being sent from God to publish it; nay, I
“ further own, that this divine Person, by living up
“ to what he taught, has set us a noble Example;
“ and that as he was highly exalted for so doing,
“ so we, if we use our best Endeavours, may ex-
“ pect a suitable Reward. This, and every thing
“ of the same nature, I freely own, which is not
“ inconsistent with the Law of God being the same,
“ whether internally, or externally reveal'd.”

And can it be otherwise, if all its Precepts carry an internal Evidence, and by their innate Excellency shew themselves to be the Will of God? Nay, Is it not from Reason, and from that alone, that this *Writer* must judge what Things are worthy of God, or have an internal Evidence, and an innate Excellency; and are for the Improvement and Perfection of human Nature. But 'tis the fate of some very learned Men, to prove what they endeavour to confute, and to confute what they design to prove.

THE

* *Christianity*, &c. c. 1. p. 7.

THE Popish Priests, in order to bring Men into their Church, exhort them to use their Reason; and impartially to consider what they urge in its behalf; but if once they are got in, they must then for ever quit their Reason, and intirely rely on their Authority. So, tho' this *Writer* represents the Christian Religion under the highest Character of *internal Excellency*, and as a consistent and uniform Scheme, worthy of God, and contriv'd with the greatest Wisdom and Goodness; yet the Scene is often chang'd, and there are Things in it, which are so far from having any internal Excellency, or shewing that the whole is contriv'd with the greatest Wisdom, and worthy of God, that they neither shew Consistency, Expedience, Fitness, Reasonableness, or Wisdom.

THE Papists do not condemn the Protestants as Infidels, for denying several meerly positive things they contend for; or even for disowning several of their canonical Books: but this *Writer* seems to outdo them; and if you can't believe as he does, about certain things, which, he owns, shew no Wisdom or Expedience, you are an Infidel. So that he seems to assume a more than Papal Authority; and makes his Opinion the Standard of Christianity. Our Divines generally own, 'tis impossible that the complex Doctrine of Popery, as containing things unworthy of a divine Original, shou'd ever come from God: and I wou'd advise this *Writer* not to tack such things to his Christianity, as cannot be supported by any Authority whatever.

To state this Dispute fairly, here is a disinterested Layman, out of the highest Veneration for the supreme Being, and his infinite Perfections, asserts that all God's Laws, like his Works, shew the highest Wisdom; and are so contriv'd for the Good of his Creatures, as manifest the greatest Goodness: and this most evident Truth is asserted over and over

by the Letter-Writer himself, as well as other Ecclesiasticks. — Where then is the Difference? — the Layman has so much Impudence as to be consistent with himself, and to shew so little Complaisance to his Betters, as not to follow their Example, and contradict himself, to the high Dishonour of his Maker, and the great Prejudice of his Fellow-Creatures.

'T IS plain from a number of Quotations in *Christianity*, &c. that our most eminent Divines, whether high or low, thus represent the Christian Religion; and suppose it contains nothing but what is moral, nothing but what tends to the Good of Mankind; of which I will beg leave to mention one short Quotation. The incomparable *Dr. Barrow* says*, “ That
 “ its Precepts are no other, than such as Physicians
 “ prescribe for the Health of our Bodies; as Poli-
 “ ticians wou'd allow to be needful for the Peace
 “ of the State; as *Epicurean* Philosophers recom-
 “ mend for the Tranquillity of our Minds, and
 “ Pleasures of our Lives; such as Reason dictates,
 “ and daily shews conducive to our Welfare in all
 “ respects; which, consequently, were there no
 “ Law enacting them, we shou'd in Wisdom choose
 “ to observe, and voluntarily impose them on our-
 “ selves, confessing them to be fit matters of Law;
 “ as most advantageous and requisite to the Good,
 “ general and particular, of Mankind.” Our Writer, tho' he can't † deny they give this Character of Christianity, yet he wou'd have it thought they only talk'd thus to expose *Antinomianism*; but that they were so inconsistent, as, after they had given this Character of Revelation, to assert, that it contain'd some Things, as neither shew'd Wisdom, Fitness, or Expedience.

BUT not to examine into this Matter at present, I think nothing can be more easy than to know when the Love of Truth obliges Clergymen to speak their fair Sentiments, and when Interest makes them

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* Vol. of Sermon. p. 82. † P. 64.

to difsemble. Whatever Authority Men may have when they ſpeak againſt their Intereſt, they certainly have none, when they either muſt have ſtarv'd or own'd, even after the moſt ſolemn manner, ſuch or ſuch Opinions. What muſt we think of the Clergy then, if, as Mr. *Whiſton* obſerves, *Arminians* ſubſcribe *Calviniſtical*, and *Arians Athanaſian* Articles; and yet not think it fit to get them alter'd? But

SINCE the Happineſs of Mankind ſo much depends on this Queſtion, Whether there are things in Religion, that are not founded in Reason, or ſhew the Wiſdom, or Goodneſs of the divine Legiſlator? I ſhall conſider all that can be ſaid for this Writer's Opinion. And firſt, I grant him, whatever God requires, we are bound to do; tho' to fit croſs-legg'd a certain time every Day in Honour of the Croſs; or any thing elſe that has as little Virtue: But the Queſtion is, Whether it is conſiſtent with the Character of infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs to command ſuch things, tho' not on the ſevereſt Penalties; ſince all ſuch Commands depending on Will and Pleaſure, are the Effects of mere Power? But can God's Power be ſeparated, tho' but for a moment, from his Wiſdom and Goodneſs? To ſuppoſe he can act without them, is to deſtroy all the other Perfections of his Nature, in compliment to his Omnipotency. And if Power was the Meaſure of Right, it wou'd follow, that all the other Perfections of God were of no moment; and that whatever the worſt of Beings did, provided he had alſo full Power, wou'd be as juſt and righteous as the Actions of an All-wiſe and Infinitely-good Being. This I'm afraid, at leaſt, borders on Blaſphemy; tho' 'tis too common with ſome reverend Perſons, to cry, *God may command ſuch Things to ſhew his Power; or, to try our Obedience.* A Man, who can't foreſee how others will act, may indeed think it prudent to try People in Things of no moment, before he truſts them in Things

Things of the greatest: But can God, who always foresees, what all Men will do on all Occasions, need such a Tryal? Besides, can Things which are not of a moral Nature be a proper Subject of a Tryal? What indifferent Things will not an ill Man practise? Or what speculative Articles profess, to be indulg'd in the Practice of any Immorality?

It is further urged, That tho' God can't command such Things as have no Expedience, Fitness, Reasonableness, or Wisdom, yet they may be such in themselves, tho' they appear otherwise to rational Creatures: But since we can't judge of Things, but according to our Ideas, this is making no Distinction between the Dictates of infinite Wisdom, and the Ravings of an Enthusiast. Besides, this Argument may be equally urg'd in relation to Things good and evil; and it may be said, they may be good in themselves, tho' they appear otherwise to us. To suppose we are not to judge of Things by our Ideas, and rely on our Understandings, even in Things of the greatest Moment, must end in a universal Scepticism.

To avoid these Absurdities, we ought to say with the excellent *Tillotson**, “ That 'tis little less than
 “ dreadful and horrid Blasphemy, to imagine that
 “ the Pleasure and Will of the holy, just, and good
 “ God is not always regulated and determin'd by the
 “ essential Laws of Holiness, Goodness, and Righteousness:” which supposes we must know what those Laws are, before we can know what the Will of God is, nay, before we can know whether there is a Being essentially holy, just, and good.

If the Honour of God and the Good of Man take in the whole of Religion; can we dishonour God more than in supposing he can command Things that shew neither Wisdom nor Goodness, Fitness or Expedience? Or will such Commands shew God's Love to Mankind? Or can such Precepts, as neither

* Serm. Vol. 6. p. 216.

tend to make us wiser and better ; and only hinder us from attending to those that wou'd render us so, be for the Good of Mankind ; or can come from a Being, who has no Motives in all his Commands, but the Happiness of his Creatures? Or can that Happiness be promoted by subjecting Men, when no good Purpose is serv'd by it, to the severest Penalties? For a Man to talk thus, at any time, is absurd ; but much more so, in magnifying reveal'd Religion as infinitely above natural ; when by this very Argument he debases it much below it ; because that contains nothing but where we see the infinite Wisdom and Goodness of the Lawgiver ; and all its Precepts shew their Fitness and Expediencè. What an Inundation of superstitious Notions must unavoidably flow in upon admitting this Principle? Hence it is, that so many contend for it, as *pro Aris & Focis*. But

IF such Things as shew no Wisdom or Fitness in other Religions, be a Proof of their Falshood ; how can we assert there are such Things in the Christian Religion, and yet maintain its Truth ?

GOD, certainly, gave us Faculties not to delude us, but such as are sufficient to direct us in all our Actions: which they could not do, were they not able to distinguish between what was pleasing or displeasing to God ; or, in other Words, what was fit, or unfit ; right, or wrong ; good, or evil ; useful, or useles. If Things could be otherwise than our Reason represents them, it could not lead us into the Knowledge of our Duty ; or be a Foundation of our being guided by any other Being, not even by God himself ; and then, farewell all Duty and Obligation. Thus some Men, by taking away the Authority of Reason, take away the divine Authority founded on it. But

TEXTS are urged to prove this Absurdity, and that there are frequent Expressions in Scripture of God's Ways being unsearchable ; yet these are never
apply'd

apply'd to those Things wherein our Duty is concern'd; the Judgment of God in those Matters, is according to what Reason thinks right: by making us think so, *He hath shewed us * what is good*; and what does the Lord require but *to do justly, love Mercy, and walk humbly with him*? He appeals to us to judge of the Rectitude of his Actions, and on our own Principles asks us †, *Which now thinkest thou was Neighbour unto him that fell among Thieves*? And the Answer is, *Go, and do likewise*. And does not God himself ‡ offer to reason with his People? Which supposes there are Principles of Reason in common between them: Nay, God himself several times appeals to their Reason for the Justification of his own Conduct ||. And in the Gospel itself, whose great Commendation it is, that 'tis a ** *reasonable Service*, are we not bid to use our Reason in proving all Things; and to judge of ourselves what is right; and to judge as wise Men? And our Saviour often repeats it in his preaching to the *Jews* ††, *He that has Ears to hear, let him hear*: And are not the *Bereans* ‡‡ commended for not relying on *St. Paul's* Authority? And had not the Church at *Jerusalem* a Right to debate Matters with the whole College of the Apostles, in relation to abstaining from Blood, ||| *and Things strangled, &c*? Tho' after much Debate, the Apostles carry'd the Point, and the whole Church agreed in the same Decision; yet, as solemn as this Decision was, and as religiously as it was observ'd for many Ages, who now does not think it Superstition to abstain from black Puddings? And is not the Reason the same in all things of the like nature? Was it not for neglecting to use their Reason, the best Gift that God cou'd bestow, that many of the *Gentiles* ran into Idolatry, and other abominable

* Micah 6. 8. † Luke 10. 36. ‡ Isa. 1. 18.

|| Isa. 5. 3. Ezek. 18. 25. Mic. 6. 2, 3. ** Rom. 12. 1.

†† Mat. 11. 15. ‡‡ Acts 17. 11. ||| Acts 15. 20.

abominable Practices; while those who used their Reason, * *did by Nature the Things contained in the Law?*

“ † It will afford just Matter of Wonder, (*says the judicious Dr. Morgan*) that when Men are so well agreed concerning the Nature, Reason, and moral Fitness of Actions, they should yet differ so widely about the governing Will or Law of GOD. Natural Virtue, we find, is the same every where; but Religion has more Phases than the Moon, and changes its Appearance with the Climate.—— I think ‡, we have a plain and obvious Principle, whereby to judge of Religion.— And this Principle of Judgment, is nothing else but the natural immutable Reason of Things, appearing in the moral Fitness of Actions.—— All the Laws of God, or all the Doctrines and Duties of Religion, must have this Signature and Impression visibly stamp'd upon them, to prove them to be true and genuine.—— If this Principle, or Rule of Judgment, be not admitted, there can be no clear, or certain Criterion, whereby to distinguish the Laws of GOD from human Inventions, or diabolical Impositions.—— Perhaps ||, it may be said, that Miracles, the clear irrefutable Testimony of Miracles, is a sufficient Evidence and Criterion of a Revelation from GOD; whether the Doctrines thus revealed, do all of them, at least, bear the Characters of Reason and moral Fitness, or whether they visibly conduce to the social Virtue, Peace and Happiness of Mankind, or not. But I would fain know, what Miracles there are, which may not be wrought by the Power of some invisible evil Spirits, or malicious and wicked Agents, at least, as to Appearance, and so as to impose on the Spectators,

* Rom. 2. 14. † Collect. of Tracts, Pref. p. 7, 8.

‡ Ib. p. 9. || Ib. p. 10, 11, 12.

“ tors, beyond their Capacity of detecting the
 “ Cheat? If it be urged here, That as God him-
 “ self cannot confirm any false Doctrines by Mira-
 “ cles, so it must be inconsistent with his Wisdom,
 “ Truth, and Goodness, to suffer others to confirm
 “ any such Doctrines by false and pretended Mira-
 “ cles, and thereby impose upon Mankind in a
 “ Matter of such high Consequence, as their eternal
 “ Salvation: It is easy to reply, That this is argu-
 “ ing against Fact and Experience; for that a very
 “ considerable, and perhaps, the far greater part of
 “ Mankind always have been, and still are, thus im-
 “ posed on, by the pretended Miracles of wicked
 “ Priests, and the lying Wonders of Satan, is evi-
 “ dent in fact. And therefore to maintain, that this
 “ cannot be done, is not to prove the Truth of
 “ Doctrines by Miracles, but to impeach Provi-
 “ dence, and deny the Perfections of God. But
 “ the truth is, that the People in Popish Countries,
 “ or wherever Miracles are in vogue, are not to
 “ blame for not detecting the Cheats of juggling
 “ Priests, and designing Knaves, who impose on
 “ their Senses: But what they are really to blame
 “ for, is, their receiving Doctrines as true and divine,
 “ upon the bare Attestation of Miracles, as a full
 “ and sufficient Proof, without regard to the Nature
 “ and intrinsic Character of the Doctrines them-
 “ selves.— Perhaps, * there are none of the Mira-
 “ cles recorded in the Evangelical History, as done
 “ by Christ and his Apostles, but what, with respect
 “ to the bare Power of acting, might have been
 “ done by the Devil and evil Spirits: And there-
 “ fore, when this was objected to our Saviour him-
 “ self, that his Miracles might be perform’d by the
 “ Power of Satan; he does not say in answer to it,
 “ that the Things done exceeded the Force of evil
 “ Angels, and cou’d only be effected by the imme-
 diate

* Ib. p. 13.

“ diate Power of God: But such were the visible
 “ Effects of that miraculous Power, and the Nature
 “ and Design of the Doctrines for the Good of Man-
 “ kind, that they who made that Objection, must
 “ suppose the Devil to be at odds with himself; and
 “ that he had form’d a deep and cunning Design,
 “ for the Destruction of his own Authority and
 “ Kingdom. And as this was our Saviour’s own
 “ Reply to that very Objection, so it was doubtless
 “ the only clear, and solid Answer that could have
 “ been given.”

THIS *Writer* himself affirms*, *That to say* (as
 the *Jews* did) *that those Miracles were wrought by the*
Assistance of evil Spirits, is to fall into the Absurdities
with which our Saviour justly charges them, viz.
 “ That Satan casts out Satan: That a Person, whose
 “ Life was most holy, and his Doctrine divine, pure,
 “ and heavenly, was all the while carrying on the
 “ Work of the Devil: And that a Preacher of
 “ Righteousness, Justice, Mercy, Charity, Truth,
 “ Meekness, Patience and Peace, cou’d be enabled
 “ to work Miracles by any Power, but what was
 “ divine.” Which is supposing that if his Doctrines
 had not this Character, and by their internal Evi-
 dence shew’d themselves to be the Will of God,
 there was room for the Objection of the *Jews*; and
 consequently, that no Miracles that shew no Expe-
 dience, Fitness, Reasonableness, or Wisdom, can
 prove the Worker of them to act by a divine Com-
 mission.

I HOPE, this *Writer* has no Design to expose
 Christianity, in representing it as an inconsistent
 Scheme, and containing Things, that neither shew
 Wisdom, Reasonableness, or Expedience; but that
 his Mistake is owing to his not distinguishing occa-
 sional Precepts (which must frequently occur in so
 miscellaneous a Book as the Bible, taking in such a
 vast

vast Period of Time, and in many Parts of it wrote to People in widely differing Circumstances) from Moral Precepts; which from their own Nature and Tendency eternally oblige. Some Things in certain Circumstances may be very fit and expedient, and in others as unfit and unexpedient: But to take a Handle from hence to declare, that there are Things requir'd of all Mankind, at all Times, and in all Circumstances, which shew no Wisdom, Reasonableness, Fitness, or Expedience, and in some Circumstances must be very unfit and unreasonable, is strangely absurd.

IF there are but two ways to know when or how Things can oblige, *viz.* either from the Nature, or Reason of the Things themselves, or from a positive Command; and if no Things in the Scripture are commanded to be observ'd at all Times, and by all People, and no Commands can oblige those to whom they were not given; I wou'd ask this *Writer*, how he can know what Things oblige eternally, but from the Nature and Tendency of the Things themselves?

THAT you may the better judge of the Nature and Genius of the Christian Dispensation, I shall mention the Description which is given of it both in the Old and New Testament: in the former, God himself declares, that in the New Covenant, * *I will put my Law into their inward Parts, and write it in their Hearts.*— *And they shall teach no more every Man his Neighbour, and every Man his Brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me from the least of them, to the greatest of them.* And to prevent any possible Mistake, St. Paul † applies these Words to the Christian Dispensation, making use of the Word *Minds*, instead of *inward Parts*.

CAN any thing which shews no Wisdom, or Expedience, or indeed, what depends on meer Will

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* Jer. 31. 33, 34. † Heb. 8. 10, 11.

and Pleasure, be said to be *wrote in our Hearts*, and *put into our Mind*; and that so plainly to all who attend to its Dictates, as to need no other teaching?

HERE'S a Description of a Religion that is worthy of God, and containing nothing, but what from the eternal Reason of Things has been from the very Creation, Men's indispensable Duty; and that the Business of Revelation can only be to inculcate those Duties, and to free us from all arbitrary Impositions: and according to this Description, the Gospel is declar'd to be a * *reasonable Service*, and † *a Law of perfect Liberty*, which we are oblig'd to maintain in all our Words and Actions; and consequently, frees us from all Obligation to merely positive Things; all outward Rites and Ceremonies; which can only obtain under a carnal Law of Bondage, and are inconsistent with the Nature of a spiritual Religion; and leaves to human Discretion to appoint such Circumstances, without some of which, publick Worship, no more than the Administration of publick Justice, or other civil Affairs, cou'd be performed.

WHAT reason can we have to believe those Men in earnest, who contend there are Things, at the best but merely positive, of an eternal Obligation, in the Christian Institution; till we see they are for restoring the Order of *Deaconess*; *Saluting with an holy Kiss*; *Praying with Hands lifted up*; *Anointing the Sick with Oil*, &c. and do not evade the Precept of *profelyting Men*, and then *baptizing*, or *immersing* them, by only *sprinkling* of Infants, incapable of being profelyted?

CAN these Men deny, that *abstaining from Blood*, and *Things strangled*, is not most strictly and solemnly commanded? Or that *washing one another's Feet* was not requir'd by a dying Saviour, as necessary to *have a Part in him*; and inculcated by his own Example?

* Rom. 12. 1. † Jam. 1. 25. 2. 12.

ample? All that I request of them, is, that they wou'd once, in their Writings, be consistent with themselves, and not let the World see 'tis purely Interest which makes them distinguish in this Case.

THERE'S at present, a warm Dispute among Divines, not, Whether God is an arbitrary Being, commanding for Commanding-sake, certain Things which have no Foundation in Reason? but, Whether such Commands have not only an equal, but in many Cases, a superior Virtue to those founded on the eternal Reason of Things; and which carry in them the highest internal Excellency: Which is questioning whether Things, that have no Excellency, no Virtue, no Value in them, may not be prefer'd to those that have the highest; and is supposing God does not see Things, as they are in their own Nature; Things indifferent as indifferent; but puts that Value on such Things, as no wise or good Man wou'd do. And there's one Writer (who, in all the Controversies he has been engag'd, has always took the wrong Side, and defended it by shuffling, and prevaricating) does not scruple to affirm, “ * That all moral Virtues are light in the Balance, “ and have no proper Efficacy in themselves towards “ promoting Salvation; that Morality is short and “ defective; that it stands in need of Pardon.” I think one, who durst advance so immoral a Proposition, stands in need of Pardon, both of God and Man. I shou'd be glad this was the only way he has shewn his Disregard to Morality.

THE *Pastoral Writer* says †, *'Tis unfair to interpret a Zeal that is shewn for Reveal'd Religion, as a Disregard to Morality.*

THE Unfairness lies in those who introduce such Things into Reveal'd Religion as tend to depreciate Morality; in putting indifferent and needless Things upon a Level with it; much more in preferring them

above it. To shew the Perniciousness of this Notion, I must observe, that

THE Mind may, certainly, be overloaded, as well as the Body; and the more it is taken up with Things, not of a moral Nature, the less it can attend to those that are so. If once People are brought to believe such Things, as have no Goodness in them, are good for any thing; they will be apt to conclude, there's some ineffable secret Virtue in them, which makes them good for every thing: and not knowing how to leave their Vices, and yet willing to secure their future Happiness, they hope to atone for the former, in being punctual in observing the latter; and at last, come to idolize them, at least, the Dispensers of them; and not content to observe those Things themselves, think there's Merit in forcing others to do the same: and Men, when they want Reason to support their Opinions, seldom fail to have recourse to Force. And 'tis chiefly for the sake of these Things, that Persecution in most Places has raged to such an Height. If any doubt of this, let him but see what Things have been made the persecuting, damning, burning Articles of all Churches.

CAN the Superstitious, who generally expect to be happy in another Life, for such Things as do no Good in this Life, but frequently Hurt, have that Regard for Men's present Happiness, as they, who think the only way to obtain Happiness hereafter, is to render themselves and others as happy here as possible. And is it not notorious, that Mankind are every where immoral, and I may add, miserable, in proportion to the Number, they admit into their Religion, of Things, which carry no Virtue; and on the Stress they have put upon them? And has not the Christian Priesthood, taking an handle from hence, enslav'd the Christian World, by making such Things necessary to Salvation, and themselves as necessary in the Management of them? By what means

means the Bishop of Rome, and his Adherents, got and gather'd to themselves the Government and Rule of the World, the 37th of H. 8. c. 17. will inform us.

THEY, and they alone, have a just Regard for Morality, who consider it as it is in its own Nature, most excellent; and mix nothing with it to depreciate it, or to hinder them from wholly attending to it; and believe that no Tricks, no Artifices, no Expedients, can in the least atone for the want of it; much less that there can be any commuting, or compounding with Heaven; and that no Merit, no Mediation, no authoritative Absolution, no Death-bed Repentance (which some mistakenly call *Coming in at the last Hour*) will be available.

I AM persuaded, that Christians wou'd not go on in such a Road of sinning, as they generally do, if they were taught to have a just Value for Morality, and believ'd they shou'd be dealt with hereafter, as they had spent their whole Lives in the Exercise of it; and not what they themselves did, or said, or what others did, or said unto them in their last Moments. And if the *Papists* are more immoral than others, is it not because they have a greater Stock of Expedients to rely on; and their Priests (if well paid) never fail to speak Comfort to their Souls?

THE Bishop of *London*, when of *Lincoln*, expresses himself very justly on this Head, in saying,
 “ * However agreeable those (moral) Duties are to
 “ Reason and Religion, they are by no means
 “ agreeable to the Lusts and Passions, and corrupt
 “ Inclinations of Men; who, when they are con-
 “ scious of great Neglects in the substantial Parts
 “ of Religion, and find no Disposition in themselves
 “ to secure the Favour of God that way, are willing
 “ to come up to some *Shew of Religion*, that is less
 “ disagreeable to corrupt Nature, and to atone for
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“ the Want of inward Piety and Goodness, by a
 “ strict Care, and an immoderate Zeal about out-
 “ ward Performances. The *Jews* were exceeding
 “ punctual in Sacrifices and solemn Fasts, in Wash-
 “ ings, and other legal Ordinances.— In like
 “ manner, the *Papists*, to obtain Pardon and Indul-
 “ gence for their Sins, will readily submit to Pilgri-
 “ mages, corporal Penances, and pecuniary Mulcts,
 “ or any thing but true Repentance and Amend-
 “ ment. And they have among them, one Article
 “ of this outward kind of Merit, which is not only
 “ like that of the *Jews*, but exactly the same; I
 “ mean, Zeal for the Honour of the *Temple*, and
 “ the *Church*.— And as to the *Papists*, it is well
 “ known, that there are no Impieties, or Villainies
 “ so great, but what are excus'd, and even sanctify'd
 “ among them, if they have been committed in the
 “ Service of the Church; and Vice and Immorality
 “ is pardon'd there, far more easily than the least
 “ Opposition to what they call the Catholick Cause.
 “ — I am sorry to say it, but it is too visible to
 “ be deny'd, or conceal'd, that this Piece of *Popery*
 “ among others, is flowing in upon us.” I shall
 conclude this Head, with a Quotation from another
 eminent Divine, which seems to be directly levell'd
 at this Writer's *Hypothesis**; “ That to suppose the
 “ Will and Power of God is not perfectly subject
 “ to his moral Perfections, is to suppose him a very
 “ defective and imperfect Being; a lawless Will
 “ and Power being the greatest Defect in Nature:
 “ wherefore to secure our Minds against all injurious
 “ Apprehensions of God, this is a most necessary
 “ Rule, that we conceive him to be such a Being,
 “ as can never will, nor act any thing, but what
 “ his own essential Wisdom, Goodness, and Justice
 “ do approve.”

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* Scott's Christian Life, Part I. Vol. I. p. 362.

THIS *Writer* musters up several Reasons, to shew the Insufficiency of Reason; in which, whether he prevails, or not, 'tis Reason still that carries it. He says *, *There's no arguing from the Powers of Reason in a State of Innocence, in which the Understanding is supposed to be clear and strong, and the Judgment unbiass'd, and free from the Influences of inordinate Appetites and Inclinations, to the Powers and Abilities of Reason under the present corrupt State of human Nature.*

I AM surpriz'd to find, that we, at present, are under a corrupt State of Nature; since we are told, *Christianity has removed us from the State of Brutes, and advanced us to the Perfection of Angels.* But why are not Men now as much created in a State of Innocency, and continue in it till they offend against a known Law, as *Adam* and *Eve* did? Are not our immaterial Souls as immediately deriv'd from God? And is it of any moment, whether the insensible Body is fram'd from organiz'd, or unorganiz'd Matter? How can this *Writer* talk of *Adam's* clear and strong Understanding, and Judgment unbiass'd, and free from the Influence of inordinate Appetites; when those quickly work'd so strongly, as to cause that weak Man strait to break the very first Command, and poorly yielded to a Temptation which scarce deserv'd that Name? And all the Excuse he cou'd plead to his Maker, was †, *The Woman thou gavest to be with me, gave me of the Tree, and I did eat.* And if the Light of Nature taught *Adam* to repent, (Repentance, the *Rabbies* say, was the first thing that was made; God ordaining the Remedy before the Disease :) does it not teach his Posterity the same? And if it was a Law of absolute Perfection to *Adam*, why is it not so to his Descendants? since they are equally bound by it; as is, in a few Words, demonstrated in an excellent Discourse of
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* P. 7.

† Gen. 2.

the present Bishop of *Bangor* * : “ If our first Pa-
 “ rent, *says he*, was the Creature of God, so are
 “ we ; and whatever Service and Duty he owed in
 “ virtue of this Dependance, the same is due from
 “ us ; nor can this Relation be ever made the Ground
 “ of different Duties in his Case, and in ours. If,
 “ therefore, Nature rightly instructed him at first,
 “ how to serve his Maker ; our Obligations being
 “ the same with his, our Rule must be the same
 “ also. The Case is the same with respect to the
 “ Duties arising from Man to Man : It wou’d be
 “ as reasonable to suppose, that the three Angles
 “ of a Triangle should be equal to two right ones
 “ in one Age, and unequal in another, as to suppose
 “ that the Duties of Religion should differ in one
 “ Age from what they were in another ; the Habi-
 “ tudes and Relations from which they flow, conti-
 “ nuing always the same.”

THEY, who have hitherto done *Christianity*, &c.
 the Honour to write against it, very well know,
 that a Law, as far as it is imperfect, is no Law ; and
 that such a Law can’t come from a God of absolute
 Perfection ; it being impossible, but that he must
 know what makes Men acceptable to him ; and that
 we, as well as *Adam*, are so bound by this Law,
 that God himself can’t dispense with his Creatures,
 for not observing it : yet notwithstanding these Con-
 cessions, *they say*, that this Law, tho’ immutable,
 and equally obliging at all Times, was only a perfect
 Rule for the first Pair in their original State ; which,
 perhaps, was but a few Hours ; *Eve* being, as Di-
 vines generally maintain, seduced before *Adam* had
 known her ; otherwise *Cain* might have been born
 without original Sin. And therefore, since these
 Writers agree in this Point, I shall only quote Dr.
Stebbing, who says †, “ I can’t help taking notice
 “ of

* Sermon before the Societies for Propag. the Gospel, &c. p. 14.

† Use and Advantage of the Gospel Revel. p. 61.

“ of one very gross Mistake, which has been ob-
 “ truded upon us of late ; viz. That according to
 “ the Christian System, *God left Mankind for four*
 “ *thousand Years together — destitute of sufficient*
 “ *Means to do their Duty, and to preserve themselves*
 “ *from sinking into a corrupted and degenerate State :*”
 And he there quotes * *Christianity, &c.* whereas he
 shou'd have quoted *The unchangeable Obligation of*
Natural Religion, &c. and the *two Pastoral Letters* ;
 and not a Book wrote on purpose to expose these
 Notions. However, to shew how absurd and wicked
 these Notions are, he has not recourse to the Suffi-
 ciency of the Law of Nature, but to the Gospel Co-
 venant ; “ † Which, *he says*, came in as soon as
 “ there cou'd possibly be any Occasion for it, and
 “ is as old, not indeed as the Creation, but which
 “ comes little short of it, as the Fall of *Adam* ;
 “ this Covenant, to those who embraced it, was
 “ an effectual Means of Salvation before the Coming
 “ of Christ, as it has been since.”

A COVENANT must, at least, be between two
 Parties, both of which have it in their power to
 make, and observe the Covenant they made ; and
 that they voluntarily enter into it, and stipulate to
 observe the Conditions of this Covenant, which must
 take in every thing that Men, on their Part, are to
 do, in order to obtain eternal Happiness ; and all
 that God has promis'd on his Part ; otherwise it
 cou'd only be a Promise, that such a Covenant
 should be made hereafter. And if all Mankind, as
 well before as since the Coming of Christ, might be
 sav'd by embracing it, it supposes, they might all know
 it ; since 'tis Nonsense to suppose Men can be bound
 by a Covenant, which they never made, or knew.

THIS Covenant, it seems, is contain'd in Words
 spoken neither to *Adam* or *Eve*, but to the Serpent ;
 or, as the Doctor will have it, in defiance of the

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Text,

* P. 375, 390, 401.

† P. 28, 66.

'Text, to the Devil himself; and are contain'd in these Words*, *I will put Enmity between thee and the Woman; and between thy Seed, and her Seed; it shall bruise thy Head, and it shall bruise his Heel.* In this Curse, in this Enmity between Serpents, and those who are afraid to be bit by them, is placed the whole of this Reverend Doctor's Covenanting Divinity. But to return to the Pastoral Letter-Writer.

HIS second Reason against the Sufficiency of Reason, he thus introduces †: *Another fallacious Way of Arguing, is, that as Reason is our Guide in the Affairs of this Life, it may also be our Guide in Religion, and the Concerns of the next Life. Whereas in one, it has the Assistance of Sense, and Experience, and Observation; but in the other, it is left, in great measure, to Conjecture and Speculation.*

WHEREAS the contrary is true, that in the Affairs of this Life, tho' Reason is our Guide, and we have the Assistance of Sense, Experience, and Observation; yet we may greatly mistake to our vast Prejudice: but 'tis otherwise in relation to the Life to come; there no Mistake can turn to our Prejudice, if we do our best to find out the Will of God, and act according to it. And, I think, 'tis no small Reflection on Religion, to represent it so uncertain, as that it is in great measure, notwithstanding the utmost our Reason can do to find it out, left to Conjecture and Speculation.

I Wou'd ask *this Writer*, in what Point is it that Men are thus left to Conjecture and Speculation? Will not their Reason inform them, with relation to their Duty to God, what Sentiments inspire them with Love and Reverence for the Deity? And need they much Reflection to know, that the more any Sentiments do this, the more they ought to be cherish'd? And that every Notion, which tends not to raise in them the highest Conceptions of the divine Being, is derogatory to his Perfection; and that the greatest

* Gen. 3. 15.

† Past. Let. p. 8.

greatest Honour and Worship they can render him, is solemnly to own him to be what he is; a Being of impartial and universal Goodness? And that as they ought themselves to have the highest Ideas of Love and Veneration for their Creator and Benefactor; so they shou'd, on all proper Occasions, endeavour to excite the same in others? And that, as they cannot but see, it wou'd be in them affronting God, to offer him a Worship, which they believe he abhors; so they must think it the same in others? And

As to their Duty to one another, can't they perceive, that 'tis fit, in the Nature of Things, and agreeable to the Mind of their Creator (who has endow'd them with Reason for this End) to introduce into his Creation as much Happiness as they can; by being ready to assist, and prevent one another in all good Offices? And

IF in some nice and difficult Points, they shou'd mistake, in applying this Rule of acting for their common Good; yet in being intirely govern'd by it, they govern their Actions by the same Rule as God governs his; and their Will is the same with his: and they concur in the same Design with him, and cannot but have done all that God requires; who, having made Men fallible, will not impute to them want of Infallibility.

To corroborate this last Argument of the Insufficiency of Reason in Matters of Religion, this Writer says*, *It is usually seen, that the wiser Men are about Things of this World, the less wise they are about Things of the next World.* I hope, our Writer himself is an Exception to this general Observation; since all the World will own, he is very wise, as to Things of this World: and let me add, that if Mankind have been so much mistaken in judging about Religion, as this Writer suggests, has it not been

* Ibid.

generally owing to their trusting to such Guides, who, being very wise in worldly Matters, have, in order to create the greater Dependance on themselves, confounded the plainest Thing, design'd for the most Ignorant, as well as the most Learned?;

HE says*, *A Rule of Duty is one and the same to all Persons, and in all Ages; and when a standing Test is once given to distinguish Truth, it is equally a Test at all Times, and in all Places; supposing it to be convey'd to them with sufficient Evidence. This is the Case of the Gospel Revelation.*

IF there was no standing Rule, or Test, to distinguish Truth from Error, till the Time of the Gospel; Men, till then, cou'd not be moral Agents; or for want of a standing Rule to govern their Actions, be accountable for them. If this be orthodox Divinity, God deliver me from Orthodoxy.

TO prove this orthodox Paradox, he says†, *They who think it had been most agreeable to the divine Wisdom to have given Mankind one certain Rule from the Beginning, which shou'd have been a sufficient Guide to all future Generations; and that the Need of a new Revelation implies Want of Knowledge and Foresight in God, seem to forget that Man was created a free Agent, and as such might have it in his power to fall into a State of Degeneracy and Corruption. But does not this State suppose a standing Rule, for Men to have guided their Actions by? Where there is no Rule, there can be no Deviation from a Rule; no Degeneracy or Corruption: and Men being free Agents, had it in their power to come out of that State.*

IN short, there's no Nature, whether divine or human, but what has some Law inseparably annex'd to its Nature; God himself, who has no Superior, can't act contrary to the Law of his Nature; and Man being a reasonable Creature, his Perfection must

* Past. Let. p. 47.

† P. 44.

must consist in acting up to the Law of his reasonable Nature ; which teaches him what Actions are fit, and what unfit ; and what are useful, and what useless, in the State he is in : and that Revelation (which can't alter the Nature of Actions) can neither abrogate, or change, in whole, or part, this Law of Reason ; but only excite reasonable Creatures to observe it in all their Actions. And by his own arguing, “ If once there's a Rule given, there's no need
 “ of a new Rule ; since a Rule once given, is one
 “ and the same Rule to all Persons, and in all Ages ;
 “ and equally a Test in all Times, and all Places,
 “ if there's sufficient Evidence of its coming from
 “ God.” And can there be a greater Evidence of a Rule coming from God, and of its absolute Perfection, that it is universal and immutable, as founded in the eternal Reason of Things, and those unalterable Relations Men stand in to God, and their Fellow-Creatures ; and which God daily dictates to all Mankind, Christians as well as others ?

IF God's Will was not immutably the same, Mankind wou'd be in a very uncertain Condition, not knowing what to depend on ; and therefore Dr. *S. Clarke* very justly observes *, that “ in a
 “ Being, who always knows what is right, and can
 “ never possibly be deceiv'd, or aw'd, or tempted,
 “ or impos'd on, his general Will and Intention of
 “ doing always what is best, most fit, and right,
 “ will in reality be as certainly and truly unchange-
 “ able, as his very Essence itself.” And he adds,
 “ † that God in his Laws, that is, in the uniform
 “ Intention of all his Commandments, is perfectly
 “ unchangeable ; because they are always founded
 “ on the immutable Reasons, the eternal Differences
 “ of Good and Evil ; the original Nature of Things,
 “ and universal Equity ; and they always tend to
 “ the

* Serm. on the Immut. of God, p. 148. † Ib. p. 352.

“ the same regular End, the Order and Happiness
 “ of the whole Creation.”

THIS Writer says*, *Mankind are oblig'd to enquire, whether any Revelation has been made; and what Evidence there is of its coming from God.* Where-ever Men are oblig'd to enquire, they must see sufficient Reason for that Enquiry; and in this Case, they must have Reasons previous to any external Revelation, to induce them to enquire whether God has made any such Revelation; otherwise this Enquiry would be wholly unreasonable. And here it is to be consider'd,

First, WHETHER God, who gave Mankind from the Beginning, Reason to enable them to discern Good from Evil; Religion from Superstition; did not design that as a compleat Rule, by which they were to govern themselves in religious, as well as in other Matters.

Secondly, SINCE a Change of Mind in God is not to be presum'd, must there not be some previous Reasons to induce Men to examine whether God has not alter'd his Mind, and instituted, at least for such and such Places, a Religion distinct from the universal Religion of Reason, and which, as such, must be wholly owing to Will and Pleasure; otherwise it wou'd be the same with the Religion of Reason.

Thirdly, SINCE 'tis impossible to enquire into all the Revelations, that do, or have obtain'd in the World; there must be previous Reasons to direct Men to enquire into this, or that Revelation, rather than into an Infinity of others.

Fourthly, IF there are previous Reasons, which, at present, oblige Men to make this Enquiry, ought not this Writer to shew, why the same or other previous Reasons, wou'd not always have done so? What Advantage that wou'd have been to Mankind,

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or to a Revelation unknown till the Time of *Tiberius*, and still unknown to the greatest part of the World, I leave him to judge; who can't be ignorant, that all the World, in not adhering to the Religion of Nature, but by following vain traditional Religions, fell into the grossest Absurdities. And since he is so gracious as to say, *I am far from desiring Men to rest implicitly on the Belief of any Age, or Country*; I shou'd be glad to know what previous Reasons he can give, for enquiring into the Religion of his Country, which a *Talapoin* might not urge at *Siam*?

MEN of ever so different traditional Religions say the highest things of their Revelations; the *Bonzes* of *China* call their God *Fo-He* †, the *Saviour of the World*; and that *he was born to teach the Way of Salvation, and to give Satisfaction for all Men's Sins* ‡; and the *Talapoins* say, their God, *Sommonocodom* ||, who gave them their Law, *was born of a Virgin, and was the God expected by the Universe* **. And the *Bramins*, the *Persees*, the *Dervises*, &c. give the highest *Encomia* of their sacred Writings, and of the inspired Persons by whom they were composed. And if the Priests of these different Religions press'd Men to examine into their Revelations, how cou'd they, thus press'd, well avoid asking, Whether it wou'd not be renouncing their moral Agency, and slighting the best Gift God cou'd bestow, and highly affronting the Donor, to think the Religion of Nature or Reason cou'd not answer the End for which it was given? If it shou'd be said, Reason wou'd tell them, that Reason was no sufficient Guide; wou'd

† *Navarette's Voyages*, p. 86.

‡ *Salvator Genetis Humani. Conf. Sin. Phil. Proem. Diff. p. 28.*
Le Dieu Fo-he a été le Sauveur du monde. Il est né pour enseigner le voye du Salut, & pour expier pour tous les Pechez. Le Comte,
Vol. 2. p. 132.

|| *Tachard Voyage au Siam, Vol. 1. p. 408.*

** *Ib. Vol. 2. p. 253.*

wou'd they not reply, that if Reason told them as much, it cou'd only be, because some Things were their Duty, for which they cou'd see no Reason: if it cou'd, Reason wou'd teach them what those Things were; but that the supposing such a general Defect in Reason, and that Things might be Men's Duty, of which they cou'd have no Knowledge, serv'd to no other End, than to introduce a general Scepticism in Matters of Religion, or rather, to make Men downright Atheists; for they who believe a God, can never believe he requires Impossibilities.

IF Men thus press'd, shou'd further say, If your Revelations, and the Proofs, on which they are built, are wrote in dead or antiquated Languages, pray let us know, by some previous Reason, why we are bound to study all or any of those antiquated Languages; or rather, shew us that you do not require Impossibilities of the Bulk of Mankind?

IF Men were further press'd to examine into any of their Superstitions, wou'd they not cry, If you can shew us where thro' Prejudice we deviate from the Law of Reason, which God has implanted in human Nature; or can inform us of any thing that will make us wiser and better; or be any ways serviceable to us in the Conduct of our Lives; we are ready to hear you; and of these we, as rational Creatures, are capable of judging: but for such Things as have no Foundation in Reason, and can only be learnt from the Tradition, which obtains in this or that Country, we are so far from imagining it our Duty, for the sake of these to examine, were we capable of it, into your pretended Revelations, and the antiquated Languages in which they are wrote, that we shou'd think it a Crime to question whether such unnecessary Things can come from a Being of consummate Wisdom and impartial and universal Goodness. Besides, how can we depend on
any

any of your Traditions ; when Tradition, as all of you own, is so far from being a certain Means of conveying Truth in religious Matters, that it has at all Times, and all the World over, convey'd nothing but Falshood ; except where that particular Religion which each of you profess is taught ?

BUT to return to our *Writer* ; I hope it may be ask'd him without Offence, since he owns *Revelation is to be try'd by the Dictates of Reason, and those natural Notions it gives of the Being and Attributes of God, and the essential Differences of Good and Evil* ; whether a plain, simple Man may not know his Duty by having thus recourse to Reason, as easily as by a round-about Way ; by trying every Part and Point of Revelation by the Test of Reason, and comparing it with Natural Religion in every Particular ? and seeing it contains nothing which Reason tells him is mean, trifling, or any ways unworthy a Being of consummate Wisdom, and all other divine Perfections ; and that in the Whole, and every Part, it tends to the Good of Man ? And, since God can give no inconsistent Commands, to see whether the different Parts of this voluminous Book, taking in so many Periods of Time, agree together without the least clashing ; and that the Old Testament does not contain such Things as evidently shew they cou'd not be wrote by those whose Names they bear, but by Persons who liv'd many Ages after ; and that the New Testament (both Testaments being equally divine) does not forbid what the Old either commanded, or approved ; and that the Facts related in the New Testament, said to be wrote by inspir'd Persons, and for the most part Eye-witnesses, are not told with such different Circumstances as wou'd destroy the Credit of the Tellers, in any Court of Judicature ? And when this Labour is over, and Satisfaction gain'd as to the *Dubia Evangelica*, (for reconciling of which, such a number of Books have been wrote)

then external Proofs are to be examin'd, and the Bulk of Mankind, the Illiterate, are to search into Antiquity, and see whether all Evidences, except of one Side, are not destroy'd or lost; and what Certainty there is, that those Books we now esteem Sacred, were wrote by inspir'd Persons; and that too exclusively of numbers of other Books, which were admitted as such, by several Sects of primitive Christians, even before ours appear'd; and when they appear'd, were rejected by them. And here might be added, the judging whether these Writings have undergone any, or what Alterations; or whether they have been rightly translated. After these Difficulties (of which the common People, no doubt, are qualified to judge) are got over, I am afraid they are still but where they set out, since *the Letter kills*; and the most celebrated Fathers own *, “ Shou'd we
 “ understand a great part of the Sacred Writ literally,
 “ we shall fall into enormous Blasphemies; nay, that
 “ the Scripture is not only dead, but deadly, &c.”

I PUT these Queries the rather, because this *Writer*, if we may judge by what he says, supposes the Old and New Testament give such a Character of the Nature of God, as clash with one another. His Words are †, *Christianity gives us a true Knowledge of the Nature of God; that it is not impure, as the greatest part of the Heathens believ'd; nor severe and terrible, according to the general Tenor of the Jewish Dispensation, as given to a stiff-necked and obstinate People; but that he is a Being of a pure spiritual Nature, and is kind to us, and loves to do us Good.* If the true Knowledge of the Nature of God, is the Foundation of all Religion; and if the Knowledge which the general Tenor of the *Jewish Dispensation* gives us of the Nature of God, is contrary to that which the Gospel gives, can both be true? Is not the Nature of God immutably and eternally the same?

* See Christianity, &c. p. 207. † Past. Let. p. 53.

same? Will the *Jews* being a stiff-necked and obstinate People, alter it? Is not this striking at the Authority of the New as well as the Old Testament; since the New owns the divine Inspiration of the Old? And if they thus differ in so essential a Matter, what have we to trust to, but our Reason, to know the Nature of God; and consequently, the Whole of Religion, which is founded on it? since from the Nature of God, we may in general be certain of the Nature of all those Things God can command or forbid. And how to apply his Commands in particular Cases may easily be acquired, by considering our own Nature, (to which God has inseparably united a Desire of Happiness) and the Nature of our Fellow-Creatures.

THIS Writer, who owns Revelation is to be try'd by the Test of Reason, must, if consistent with himself, approve the trying any particular Text by it; and condemn the Writer of *Scripture vindicated*, who, to discourage all such Enquiry, uses not only all the bitter Invectives, all the inflaming Exclamations Malice can suggest; but also groundless Insinuations, and in many Places notorious Falshoods. As for instance, he says*, *The Author whose Works I have now in hand, tho' he studiously disguises himself, and takes great pains to put fair Glosses on what he is doing; yet sometimes he discovers the Secrets of his Heart. He gives broad Hints in one place, that he looks on Incontinence in single Persons, as one of the Rights and Privileges God has allow'd by the Light of Nature.* When all the broad Hints in the Place † he quotes, amount to no more than that the Priests have no divine Right to judge in this Matter. And with the same Sincerity he says, *The noble and generous Aim, which the Writer I am now concern'd with, boasts of in his Preface, is to ease every Libertine, if possible, of his just and well-grounded Fears; and to steel his*

M 2

Heart

* *Introduct. p. 7.*† *Christianity, p. 119.*

Heart against a Judgment to come. That this Writer scruples no Falshood, when it can serve to blacken, his Introduction alone is instead of *mille Testes*; and yet all this envenom'd Rage, which appears thro' the whole Book, is only for doing what himself in this Pamphlet pretends to do; examining Texts by the Test of Reason. If impotent Malice had not blinded him, he wou'd not so frequently, and so grossly misrepresent a Discourse, which is got into many hands; and by his thus recommending it, must get into many more. I hope, for the sake of the Church, there are not Two such Men in it, so void of Truth, Charity, and good Manners; at least, so prefer'd: for that wou'd be too great a Scandal for any Church to bear. And I am afraid the World will think, that they who pick'd out this *foul-mouth'd* Writer to throw Dirt, were sensible, the Cause cou'd not be supported by any other Arts, but those of Lying and Calumny; if so, all the World must approve their Choice.

To prejudice his Readers, he * reckons up those that opposed the Apostles, not forgetting even *Diotrephes*; of whom our *English* Apostle *Cranmer* says, “ † That *Diotrephes*, who desired *gerere Primatum in Ecclesia*, had more Successors than all the Apostles; of whom comes all these glorious Titles, “ Stiles, and Poms, in the Church.”

ALLOWING what he says ‡, that the Author of *Christianity*, &c. discovers no Acquaintance with the Original Languages; not so much as with common Criticks and Commentators; and that several of his Objections are pure English Objections, such as affect only our Translation: yet since the Religion of the Unlearned, for whom alone he pretends to write, depends not on Criticks, and Commentators, whether common or

uncom-

* *Introduct.* p. 4.

† *Hist. of the Reformat.* Part 3. *Collect.* Part 3. p. 88.

‡ *Introduct.* p. 8.

uncommon ; who too, for the most part, dare not speak their own Sentiments, tho' they nevertheless pretend to speak the Sentiments of the Holy Ghost more plainly than he himself has done ; must not the *English* Bible be to those, who are unacquainted with the Originals, the Word of God ? for otherwise they will have no Word of God at all : And yet how frequently do Divines, to serve a present Purpose, find fault with the *English* Word of God ?

THE only Motive the Objector, as he terms the Author of *Christianity*, &c. had to mention the History of the Fall, was to expose an impious Notion, which the Books of Divines are full of, and upon which the Writer of the Pastoral Letters lays the greatest Strefs ; *viz.* that upon this *Fall* all Mankind were in, and continued in an unavoidable State of Corruption ; and that the Philosophers, not knowing the original Dignity of human Nature, run into endless Absurdities : This oblig'd him to shew, * that, had the Philosophers been acquainted with the History of the *Fall*, as it is related in the Scripture, they could have no reason from thence to doubt of the impartial and universal Goodness of God ; or to question whether he has not had at all times, after, as well as before, the Fall, the same Regard for the Welfare of Mankind, both eternal and temporal. The Primitive Christians, as well as the *Jews*, were so far from building such an Hypothesis on it, that they, as † *Celsus* remarks, and *Origen* does not contradict, turn'd the whole History of the Creation, with the taking a Woman out of a Man's Rib, all into Allegory, &c.

THE Writer of *Scripture vindicated*, tho' he will not have this Account to be allegorical ; yet dares not say that it, as related in Scripture, is literally true ; much less that 'tis told after a plain and simple manner,

* *Christianity*, p. 375—387.

† *Orig. cont. Cel. l. 4. p. 185, 186.*

manner, as Facts of the greatest moment ought to be, and which an inspir'd Writer cou'd not want Ability to do ; and in explaining them, he takes such a liberty as would, allowing it to be just, render the whole Bible uncertain.

HE does not pretend there was any thing in the nature of the Injunction of our first Parents not eating of the forbidden Fruit, that required it ; but that * it was a Tryal of their Obedience : yet does not tell us for whose sake this Tryal was made. It certainly could not be for the sake of God, who must know beforehand what our first Parents would do ; nor could it be for their sake that this Tryal, which cost them so dear, was made ; much less for the sake of Generations to come ; since, † as our Articles declare, by reason of original Sin, *every Man born into the World deserves God's Wrath and Damnation.*

IF all God's Commands are for the Good of Mankind, can a needless Command, given only by way of Tryal, and which has entail'd so much Misery on the whole Race of Mankind, be for their Good ? Or how cou'd it be said, that God design'd Paradise as an everlasting Habitation for them, when he never intended that they, tho' ever so innocent, shou'd enjoy it ? If this Difficulty (which alone sufficiently shews the whole to be an Allegory) was got over, yet this is not sufficient ; nothing will satisfy the Vindicator of *Moses*, but his representing *Moses* as an unfaithful Historian, in omitting the principal, nay, the only Actor in seducing *Eve*, by imputing that to a Serpent, which he assures us was done by the Devil ; whom he introduces, *tanquam ex machina*, to solve Appearances ; and makes his Devil use the Organs of a Serpent, whose Organs, Naturalists observe, are incapable of Speech, for his Speaking-Trumpet : and that for this

* P. 19. † Art. 9.

this wicked Stratagem of the Devil, the whole Species of Serpents have ever since been accurs'd.

To justify his introducing the Devil as the sole Agent, when both the * New and Old Testament impute the whole Transaction to the Serpent, he takes upon him to tell what was best for *Moses* to do, in saying, *It was best Moses should say nothing of the inward Agent, having said nothing of Angels, good or bad, in his History of the Creation.* As tho' saying nothing of them, where it was not necessary, wou'd justify *Moses* for saying nothing of them, where, for the sake of an important Truth, it was absolutely necessary. Besides, had this been a good Reason, *Moses* ought not to have mention'd *Cberubims* with a flaming Sword, to hinder *Adam*, naturally mortal, to become immortal; being before, by eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, as the Serpent predicted, and God himself declares, *become like one of us, to know Good and Evil.* But this and several other things he takes no notice of, or else says they are meer Cavils, not worth his Notice.

As he has different Views, so he talks differently of our first Parents: in one place he says †, *God consider'd their Weakness, and want of Experience, and their being lately brought into a new World;* in another ‖, *Adam had Dignity and Perfection both natural and supernatural, which his Posterity, as such, have not; that he was supernaturally vested with great Clearness of Understanding, as to divine Matters.* And yet, notwithstanding this natural and supernatural Perfection, and his having got ‡ *Words, partly from God, and partly from his own Ingenuity*, by means of which he gave Names (which Names, he being then alone, cou'd be of no Use) to every living Creature; he all along supposes his Ignorance so gross, as not to know that even a Serpent cou'd not speak. And

To

* 2 Cor. 11. 3.

† P. 18.

‖ P. 22.

‡ P. 11.

To shew it was not unworthy of God to talk to a Serpent, he says*, *It was in the Hearing of Man, and for the Use of Man:* But of what Use cou'd that be to Man, who believ'd that God only talk'd to, and curs'd a Serpent? To shew its Use, he says †, *That in the visible Serpent there was contain'd an invisible Fiend, seen only by God; and God in cursing one, laid a Curse on both, the Words of the Curse having a literal and mystical Intendment, well known to Divines:* Tho' he is not pleas'd to instruct the Unlearned, to whom he writes, by what *mystical Intendment* the same Words can relate to a dumb Beast, and to an immortal Spirit.

HE says ‖, *A Man must be next to an Ideot, if he takes God's walking in the Garden in the cool of the Evening literally, as a Man walks; God can chuse what Symbol of his Presence he pleases.* If God is alike every where, and in every thing, no one Thing more than another can be a Symbol or Sign of his invisible Presence; and if God is in his own Nature invisible, no Symbol can represent him as visible; and the Apostle makes Invisibility an essential Character of ‡ *the One only true God.* And we meet with such Expressions as these in the most early Fathers; "That none, who have the least Sense, will dare to affirm, that the Maker and Father of the Universe did appear in a small Spot of the Earth: and 'tis impossible** that the Eyes of Mortals cou'd ever see the Supreme God." Which shews, those Fathers had a different Opinion of Christ from a certain Author, who is so far from supposing him to be a Symbol of the divine Presence, when on Earth, that he makes him the Supreme God; there being nothing in Nature why the Son might not send the Father, as the Father the Son. And must not this Writer think him next to an Ideot, for supposing
God

* P. 20. † P. 21. ‖ P. 27. ‡ 1 Tim. 1. 17. Col. 1. 13.

** See Christianity, p. 87, 88.

God can have any other visible Presence but what is symbolical ; I mean, if he sticks to his first Exposition of the Text: which I think he does not, in saying *, *If the Author's Delicacy is offended at that, he may understand the Words not of God's walkings, but of the Voice walking.* But himself gives up both these ingenuous Solutions, and owns the visible Presence of God: His remarkable Words are †, *That the Presence of God in that visible manner in which he was then pleas'd to appear, had the same Effect on our first Parents, as any strange Company has been apt to have upon Mankind in such Cases ever since: God impress'd Shame upon them then, as a part of their Punishment; and he has left the same Shame upon their Posterity ever since, as a perpetual Memorial of it.* 'Tis somewhat strange, that Mankind, to whom God never appear'd after a visible manner, should be punish'd with Shame for a perpetual Memorial, for his once having appear'd after such a manner to two Persons and one Serpent. Can this Writer be ignorant, that a great part of Mankind to this very day, as our Ancestors formerly, go naked, with no more Shame than Men and their Wives are to be seen naked by one another; or Maids are to shew their bare Necks and Breasts, where it is the Custom? Besides, if this Shame was natural, Children cou'd not be without it: And he pays no small Compliment to those he calls impudent Wretches, who he owns || are free from this Punishment. If the Devil (whom we bring in on most Occasions) did not owe him Shame, he could not talk so shamefully about Shame, especially when by it he contradicts the Scripture; since That supposes their Eyes upon eating the forbidden Fruit were strait open'd, and they not only knew they were unclothed, (Inspiration, I suppose, giving them an Idea of Cloathes) but were so ashamed of it, that to cover their Nakedness they sew'd

* P. 28. † P. 26. || P. 25.

few'd Fig-leaves together, before God, or God's Symbol, or God's Voice walk'd in the Cool of the Evening in the Garden; and that upon hearing his Voice, Shame being then so strong on them, they *bid themselves from the Presence of God among the Trees.*

HE supposes, God permits wicked Spirits (endow'd with a universal Knowledge of what is past,* and a deep Penetration into Futurity) to range about, deceiving Mankind: And all he says to justify this *Manichæan* Scheme, is, that to question it, is *presuming too far, and making too familiar with an all-wise Governour of the World.* But Dr. J. Clarke † has presum'd so far, as to destroy this impious Hypothesis; which can never be reconcil'd with what St. Jude says of God's || *having reserved the Angels, which kept not their first Estate, in everlasting Chains of Darkness unto the Judgment of the last Day.* And I may add, that one part of this *Manichæan* Scheme about Witchcraft, upon the account of which an Infinity of innocent People have been murder'd, is abhorr'd now by all who have any Notion of the divine Goodness; nor can they persuade themselves, that the Devil does now so much as haunt a single Cottage, or possess or obsess any Mortal, no, not even this Writer.

IN relation to the Confusion of Language at *Babel*, he, without taking notice of the precedent Texts, mentions only this Verse ‡, *Go to, let us go down, and there confound their Language, that they may not understand one another's Speech.* Upon this, he very rhetorically says, that *the Sons of Noah gathering together in a Cluster, and designing to continue so, instead of dispersing to replenish, and cultivate the Earth, God would not bear their loitering at such a Juncture, but interposed miraculously.*

THIS Account of the Confusion of Language, which he wou'd impose on us as that which the Scripture gives, and as such, pretends to vindicate it,
is

* P. 20. † Of the Orig. of moral Evil, p. 270.

|| Jude 6. ‡ Gen. 11. 7.

is very different from the Scripture-Account, viz. that the Cause of Men's Language being confounded at *Babel*, was to prevent building a Tower, whose Top was design'd to reach unto Heaven; and that the Lord coming down to see what they were doing, said*, *This they begin to do, and nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do.* And then follows that Verse, the only one he thinks fit to mention. Thus, you see, he not only conceals the Account of, and the Reason for the Confusion of Language, which the Scripture gives; but wou'd impose on us, as the Dictates of the Holy Spirit, his own Imaginations, as inconsistent with Reason as with Revelation. The Way to replenish, as well as cultivate the Earth, was, for Men's keeping together for mutual Convenience and Assistance, till Numbers forced them to spread; and when they spread, did they not preserve an Intercourse, new Languages were soon unavoidable. Tho' the confounding an old Language, the only thing the Scripture mentions, cou'd be of no use for replenishing or cultivating the Earth; yet it might be of service, in putting a stop to the building of the Tower of *Babel*.

LET me ask this presumptuous Writer, how he dares claim more than a Papal Power, in adding to, and altering of Scripture; and then making it no less than Blasphemy not to come into his Additions and Alterations? and this too, when he pretends to vindicate Scripture against *Rabshakabs, who blaspheme the God of Israel.* If a Man can't tell Truth when it is for his Interest, and must belye the Scripture, even when he pretends to vindicate it, when can he speak Truth?

THE Remarks he makes in relation to the Conduct of † *Abraham, Sarah, and Jacob*, reflect on his holy Fathers, who, for the most part, say the same things with the Author of *Christianity.* And

* See *Christianity*, p. 254. compar'd with Gen. 11.

† P. 225—231.

what he says of Pagan Sacrifices, no other being mention'd, the Fathers say of Sacrifices in general. *Justin* says*, “ We are sufficiently taught, that the
 “ Creator of the Universe stands in no need of Blood,
 “ Libations, and Incense;— believing this to be the
 “ only Honour worthy of him, not to consume the
 “ Creatures which he has given us for our Use, and
 “ the Comfort of those that want, in the Fire of Sa-
 “ crifice.” Another Father says†, “ Shall I offer
 “ to the Deity, Sacrifices and Oblations of those
 “ Things he has made for my Use, as if I ungrate-
 “ fully turn'd back on his hands the Presents he has
 “ made?” They who judge only by the Perform-
 mance, can't but suspect the Author wrote booty;
 and others must see, even by what I have quoted,
 how unequal he is to the assign'd Task: And therefore
 I shall only now observe, that

HE appears to be as great a Stranger to Philoso-
 phy, when he pretends to argue from it, as he is to
 good Manners, or good Sense: He shews his Wit by
 his Malice; his Reason by his Railing; his Zeal by
 his want of Knowledge; his Religion by his want of
 Charity; his Love to God by Hatred of his Neigh-
 bour; his Regard to Truth, by not writing to Men's
 cool Reason, but by endeavouring to inflame their
 Passions; he shews his Love to Virtue, by putting
 those things which have no Virtue in them upon a
 level, nay, many times above those things which
 have the greatest; he shews his Veneration for Scrip-
 ture, by misrepresenting it; his Sincerity, by pre-
 tending to look into Men's Hearts, and there see
 what he can't find in their Actions, an Enmity to
 all Goodness; tho' at the same time, so great is his
 Sincerity, his real Quarrel is, that they place the
 Whole of their Religion in doing Good: and he is so
 far from following the Advice of the Apostle, in
 treating with *Meekness and Fear* those who differ
 with

* *Just. Apo.* § 16. † *Minut. not. var.* p. 313. || *1 Pet.* 3. 15.

with him, that this Anti-Apostle thinks Spite, Rage, Arrogance, and Insolence more proper. The only thing that can be pleaded in his Excuse, is, that his Head is turn'd by talking backward and forward, in endeavouring to revive an exploded Tritheistical Hypothesis, to prevent the spreading of which, that Clause in the 9th and 10th of King *William* against owning more Gods than one, was enacted.

HAVING, in these hasty Remarks, prevail'd on myself to treat this *Don Furioso* after his own Way and Manner, that he may see the Folly of using others as he does; I shall now, begging pardon for this Digression, return to the Pastoral Letter-Writer.

HE says*, *We ought not to take an Estimate of the Strength and Power of natural Reason, in Matters of Religion, from Books which have been written since the Christian Revelation was made; many of which are clear and uniform in the Measure of Duty, and the Motives to the Performance of it.*

I SHOU'D be glad, cou'd this Writer shew any thing till the 17th Century, that can be compar'd with the *Etbicks* of *Aristotle*, and the Offices of *Tully*; and what we have met with since that Time, has been chiefly owing to Laymen, particularly *Grotius* and † *Puffendorf*; whose Works, when they first appear'd, were strenuously opposed by Ecclesiasticks. As for his holy Fathers, they, as is shewn in a number of Instances by *Barbeyrac*, understood very little of the Science of Morality; and Church-History shews they practis'd less.

THIS Writer, tho' inconsistently with what he had in several Places before advanced, says||, *The Differences among the Philosophers concerning Points of the greatest Importance in Religion, were so many, and so eagerly pursued by the several Sects, that instead of in-*
forming

* P. 12. † Introdūct. to Puffendorf's Law of Nature and Nations, §. 9, 10. || P. 39.

forming Mankind in their Duty, they perplex'd and distracted them, and at last, left them under greater Uncertainties than they were before. But even this he thinks not sufficient, without misrepresenting the Opinions of the most eminent Philosophers; and says, * *In private Life can we reasonably expect to find among them the great Virtues of Love, Meekness, and Forgiveness? when Cicero expressly approves, and professes Revenge. And Socrates declares it neither unjust, or revengeful, to rejoice in the Calamities of our Enemies.* Cicero in this place speaks of no other Revenge, than that for which Magistracy was instituted. To shew the Sincerity of this Writer to all that understand only *English*, I shall mention what Dr. Clarke quotes from him on this Head, who says †, (putting down the Places he quotes in the Margin) “ ’Tis evident every
 “ Man is bound by the Law of his Nature, as he is
 “ also prompted by the Inclination of his uncorrupt-
 “ ed Affections, to look upon himself as a Part and
 “ Member of that one universal Body, or Commu-
 “ nity, which is made up of all Mankind; to think
 “ himself born to promote the publick Good and
 “ Welfare of all his Fellow-Creatures; and conse-
 “ quently obliged, as the necessary and only essential
 “ Means to that End, to embrace them all with
 “ universal Love and Benevolence: So that he can-
 “ not, without acting contrary to the Reason of his
 “ own Mind, and transgressing the plain known Law
 “ of his Being, do willingly any Hurt and Mischief
 “ to any Man; no, not even to those who have first
 “ injur’d him; but ought, for the publick Benefit,
 “ to endeavour to appease with Gentleness, rather
 “ than exasperate with Retaliations; and finally, to
 “ comprehend all in one word, (which is the top
 “ and complete Perfection of this great Duty) ought
 “ to *love all others as himself*. This is the Argumen-
 “ tation of that great Master Cicero.”

PLATO

* P. 29. † Evidence of Nat. and Rev. Religion, p. 75, 76.

PLATO, from *Socrates* in the Place quoted, does say, “ It is neither unjust nor revengeful to rejoice “ in the Calamities of our Enemies;” that is, in their Defeat and the Victories gain’d over them in a just War: for which we Christians usually appoint Days of Thanksgiving. But in his *Crit. Tom. 1. p. 49.* where he expressly treats this Matter, as well as in other Places, he always concludes, *it is utterly unlawful to return Injuries.* If this Writer had read *Grotius, l. 2. c. 20.* he wou’d then have plainly seen what the Antients thought of this Matter; and how awkwardly this Charge is now brought against their Morality.

ARISTOTLE, this Writer says*, *speaks of Meekness, not only as a Defect of the Mind, and as carrying in it too great a Disposition to forgive; but calling the patient enduring of Reproach, the Spirit of a Slave.* But *Aristotle* speaking of the defective Extreme of the Virtue of Meekness, says, “ Not to be angry when “ there is just Cause, is to be a Fool; and also other- “ wise than the Circumstances of Time, Place, &c. “ require: for such a one seems to be utterly insen- “ sible, and not capable of resenting, or vindicating “ himself; then to suffer patiently the contemptuous “ Affronts, is the part of a Slave.”

THIS Writer supposes, that the Philosophers believ’d, that some Things were Men’s Duty, which either they cou’d not know, or when known, cou’d not practise; and that they must wait for Revelation, to enable them to know and do these Things: and says †, *We find two of the greatest Philosophers, Socrates and Plato, despairing of the Recovery of Mankind out of a State of Error and Corruption, without some extraordinary Assistance from God.* *Socrates speaking to the Athenians of himself, tells them, “ That “ when he is gone, they will fall into an irrecoverable “ State, unless God shall take care of them, and “ send them another Instructor.”*

BUT

* Pag. 29. † P. 41.

BUT *Socrates* is so far from speaking of himself as an Instructor sent by God; and that he, as such, had preserv'd them from falling into an irrecoverable State; that he supposes their Crime was, they wou'd not make use of their own Reason in relation to him, but acted as Men asleep, and wanted to be awaken'd. His Words are *, *Quoniam vos quidem fortasse indignabundi, veluti ii qui dormitantes, excitantur, Anyti consilium sequentes, meoque consilio repudiato, facile me interfeceritis: ita tamen habitote, vos reliquam vitam dormiendo traducturos, nisi Deus vobis curam gerens, alium quempiam vobis immiserit.* And *Plato*, says he, † speaking of the wrong Methods of Education among the Athenians, says, “That in such a State of Things, “ whatever is kept right, and as it ought to be, must “ be effected by a divine Interposition.” Whereas *Plato*, speaking of one, who has a good Disposition, and a right Education, supposes he may arrive ad *Fastidium Bonitatis*; then says ‡, *Quod si neque recte sata (natura seu indoles cujuspiam) neque commode fuerit educata, contrarium exitum sit plane consequutura; nisi Deus mirifica quadam ratione præter ordinem ei subvenierit.* And what this Writer quotes from *Socrates's* Scholar, is as little to his purpose.

WHAT he mentions from *Tully*, makes directly against him; where *Tully* says †, “There are in our “ Minds the Seeds of Virtue, by which Nature “ would conduct us to Happiness, if they were “ allow'd to grow up.”

THIS Passage, which is quoted more at large by *Dr. Clarke*, plainly points out the Method, by which the Seeds of Virtue are not suffer'd to grow; and one is, ‘That as we are committed to Tutors, ‘ we are then further stock'd with such Variety, ‘ that Truth becomes perfectly overwhelm'd with ‘ Falshood; and the most natural Sentiments of our ‘ Minds

* *Socrat. Apol. Tom. 1. p. 31. Æ.* † *Ibid.*

‡ *Plato, Tom. 2. p. 492. A.* † *P. 40.*

‘Minds are stifled with confirm’d Follies.’ The Remark that Dr. *Clarke* makes on this whole Passage is, that “ * A livelier Description of the present “ corrupt State of human Nature is not to be met “ with.”

AND, indeed, *Cicero* is so far from owning any such Defect in the Light of Nature, that he says, “ † It is impossible to err, so long as we follow the “ Guidance of Nature.— || That Virtue is nothing “ else but Nature advanced to her highest Degree “ of Perfection.— And that “ ‡ There is no Man, “ of any Nation whatsoever, who following the “ Conduct of Nature, may not attain to Virtue.”

OUR *Writer* says, that *the Doctrine of Fate, or Men’s doing every thing thro’ Necessity, and not by Choice, takes away all Virtue and Vice, and leaves no place for Rewards or Punishments, either here, or hereafter; and yet this was the avow’d Doctrine of one famous Sect among them, the Stoicks: And the Prevalency of this Doctrine of Fate in the Heathen World, together with the pernicious Influence it naturally has upon Virtue and Religion, was the Reason why the antient Fathers of the Christian Church took so much pains in their several Writings to confute and expose it.*

IF the Doctrine of Predestination, like that of Fate, infers Necessity, must it not have the same Consequences; besides that which is tack’d to it, the reprobating from Eternity the greatest part of Mankind? Does not this *Writer*, in order to expose the *Stoicks*, condemn all Protestant as well as Popish Churches? since from the Time of good *St. Austin* they have all maintain’d that as a necessary Doctrine: Nay, has not this *Writer* himself, without regard to the

* Natural and Reveal’d Religion. p. 158.

† Naturâ duce, errari nullo pacto potest.— || Est autem virtus nihil aliud quàm in se perfecta, & ad summum perducta Natura.— ‡ Nec est quisquam gentis ullius, qui ducem Naturam nactus, ad virtutem pervenire non possit. *Cic. de Leg. l. 1.*

the Sentiments of the primitive Fathers, several times solemnly subscribed Articles, which infer Necessity, and not Choice? tho' now, after this Declaration, no Consideration can, sure, prevail on him to do it again. But this Reflection, as ill Fate will have it, does not touch the *Stoicks*, or indeed any of the Antients; who, as it is shewn by Mr. *Wollaston**, tho' generally Fatalists, yet do not seem to have thought they were not Masters of their own Actions. And as for the *Stoicks*, whatever Notion they might have of an internal Necessity, yet they magnified human Liberty, and join'd both together, as is own'd by *Barbeyrac* † in his Introduction to *Puffendorf's Law of Nature*; where you will see that their Principles, their disinterested Principles, carried Piety and Virtue, the Love of God, and the Love of Man, to the highest Pitch.

I Cou'd here shew you, but that I must defer to a more proper Time, from undoubted Authorities, that there's no moral Precept found in the Bible, which is not over and over to be met with in the Books of the Heathen Moralists; nay, that there are now, tho' this Writer supposes || the contrary, Nations, tho' unacquainted with the Old and New Testament, who, in their Lives, as well as Doctrines, carry Morality to the utmost Height, without pulling down with one hand that which they build with the other, to the confounding of all Morality.

I HAVE omitted to take any notice of what this Writer says of the Uncertainty of the Philosophers in relation to a future State; because, I think, it has been prov'd over and over, that the Heathen Moralists generally maintain by most cogent Arguments the Belief of a future State; and the Reward of good, and the Punishment of evil Men: and indeed, to put the whole on Revelation, is, if the Revelation itself is

* Religion of Nature delineated, p. 105.

† English Translation, §. 27. p. 70, &c.

|| P. 13.

is not demonstrable, to make what depends on it only probable. For my part, I entirely agree with a late excellent Author *, that “ The Belief of a future State is so essential a part of natural Religion, that there’s no Man who allows the one, but must likewise admit the other, there being so necessary a Connection between them, and both being jointly supported by such irrefragable Arguments.”

I WILL grant this Writer, that Christianity is little beholden to some Philosophers, who, when the Business of Philosophizing run very low, by reason of the Tyranny which overspread the *Roman Empire*, came into the Church, and brought with them such Notions, as were utterly inconsistent with the Simplicity of the Gospel. It will not be improper to mention what a noble Author says on this Occasion † : “ The *Roman Emperors*, as they grew more barbarous, grew so much the more superstitious. The *Lands and Revenues*, as well as the *Numbers* of the Heathen Priests, grew daily : And when the Season came, that by means of a Convert-Emperor, the Heathen *Church-Lands*, with an Increase of Power, became transferr’d to the Christian Clergy, ’twas no wonder, if by such Riches and Authority, they were in no small measure influenced and corrupted ; as may be gather’d, even by the Accounts given us of these Matters by themselves.

“ WHEN, together with this, the *Schools* of the antient Philosophers, which had been long in their Decline, came now to be dissolv’d, and their sophistick Teachers became Ecclesiastical Instructors ; the unnatural Union of *Religion* and *Philosophy* was compleated, and the monstrous Product of this Match appear’d soon in the World. The odd exterior Shapes of Deities, Temples, and holy Utensils, which by the *Egyptian Sects* had been formerly set in Battle against each other, were now metamorphosed

* Enquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue, p. 26.

† Characteristicks, Vol. 3. p. 78, 79, 80.

“ phos’d into *Philosophical Forms* and *Phantoms*; and,
 “ like *Flags* and *Banners*, were display’d in hostile
 “ manner, and born *offensively*, by one Party against
 “ another. In former Times, these barbarous Na-
 “ tions above-mention’d, were the sole Warriors in
 “ these religious Causes; but now the whole World
 “ became engag’d: when instead of *Storks*, and *Cro-*
 “ *codiles*, other Engines were erected: when *sophisti-*
 “ *cal Chimæra’s*, *crabbed Notions*, *bombastick Phrases*,
 “ *Solecifms*, *Absurdities*, and a thousand Monsters of a
 “ *scholastick* Brood, were set on foot, and made the
 “ Subject of vulgar Animosity and Dispute.—
 “ * *Mysteries*, which were heretofore treated with
 “ profound Respect, and lay unexpos’d to vulgar
 “ Eyes, became publick and prostitute; being in-
 “ forc’d with Compulsion and Violence, on the un-
 “ fitted Capacities and Apprehensions of Mankind.”

AND this, at last, produced that charitable Creed of
Vigilius Tapsensis, under a borrow’d Name; which shews
 the Spirit of those who first impos’d it; and of those,
 who since have been for continuing the Imposition.

THIS *Writer* says †, *It is universally true, that where-*
ever Christianity prevail’d, Oracles ceas’d, Idols were de-
stroy’d, and the Worship of the true God was establish’d.

THAT the Cheats of Oracles were plainly disco-
 ver’d, when the Oracular Temples were demolish’d,
 is fully prov’d both by *Vandale*, and *Fontenelle* in his
History of Oracles ||, as well as that they were the
 Impostures of Pagan Priests; which continu’d more
 or less in repute till that Time: but that Idols were
 then destroy’d, is a Mistake; for we find in the
 Reign of *Theodosius*, *St. Ambrose* asking *Symmacus*,
 why the Pagans were not contented with having the
publick Places, Portico’s, and Baths fill’d with their
 Idols; as if nothing wou’d serve their turns, unless
 the Image of *Victory* be set up in the very Capitol,
 the Place of the whole City where most Christians
 resort. And in the Reign of *Valentinian II.* the Ro-
man

man Senate petition the Emperor to restore the Altar of *Victory*, and prevail'd on his Successor to grant it*. Nor can I think it entirely true, that *wherever Christianity prevail'd, the Worship of the True God was establish'd* †; not only because of the Violence, the Passion, the Malice, the Falseness, and Oppression, which reign'd in most of those Synods held by *Constantine*; and after him, by the following Emperors, on occasion of the *Arian Controversy*: but because *Constantine* himself, as is shewn by that eminent Critick Mr. *Moyle* †, was after his Death *inter Deos relatus*, and pray'd to, and worshipp'd as a God; and the *solemnis Votorum nuncupatio*, which was rank Heathenism, was continu'd; and the religious Worship, which was paid to the Statues of the Emperors, remain'd till the Reign of *Theodosius II.* who forbid it by a Law now extant. And we have several Instances, where the Christian Emperors not only assum'd the blasphemous Titles of *Numen, Divinitas, Eternitas, &c.* but call'd their Edicts ‡ *heavenly and divine Oracles*, and *celestial Statutes*. And I believe there may be several Instances given, where the Bishops themselves did not scruple to give them these Titles; *Themistius* the Philosopher, speaking of the Bishops of his own Time, gives this Character of them **, *that they are a sort of Men, who do not worship God, but the Imperial Purple.*

Gentlemen,

TIS for your sake that I have so fully consider'd this Pamphlet, lest the Name of a Pastoral Letter, and the Shew of Learning, may impose on some of you: Nothing being more irksome to me, than to spend my Time in tracing a Writer, who talks inconsistently thro' a whole Discourse, both of Reason and Revelation, tho' these two are the sole Subject of it; and misrepresents the Sentiments of the most celebrated

* *Moyle's Works, Vol. 2. p. 107.* † *Wake's Authority of Christian Princes, p. 307.* † Of the thundring Legion, p. 187.
‡ *Vandale de Orac. l. 1. p. 558.* ** *Socr. Eccl. Hist. l. 4. c. 32.*

brated Authors of Antiquity ; when it tends to depreciate the universal and immutable Law of Reason : tho' Reason at the same time is own'd to be the Test, by which all Revelation is to be try'd; and consequently, its Dictates must be more evidently from God ; otherwise it wou'd be judging *Ignotum per Ignotius*. Whether such a Method of proceeding is talking deceitfully either for or against God, I will not determine : Or whether, on the whole, it is not supposing that at the Fall of Man, God fell too ; and then, either had no Power to tell People his Mind plainly ; or else could not enable them to perform it. But this I will venture to affirm, that as the Christianity I have laid down, is no other than that which this Writer maintains in several places in this Pastoral Letter, so it tends more to shew the impartial and universal Goodness of God, and to promote the general Happiness of Mankind, than that Christianity, which in other parts he so zealously contends for ; in which he supposes, there are Things that shew neither Wisdom or Expedience : A Pretence, which, I need not say, gave in former times an Handle to the Ecclesiasticks, to bring into Religion what Things they pleas'd ; and what those were, Christians felt to their Cost.

I HAVE one Request to make, since there are Men, who may not scruple to misrepresent what they do not like, That you will, in any Controversy you think of moment, trust to your own Eyes.

AND now I shall conclude, with reciting an excellent Assertion of the Bishop of *London*, publish'd when of *Lincoln** ; *I think it is now agreed on all hands, that by the Terms of Christianity, there ought to be no Persecution purely for the sake of Religion.*

I am, &c.

ANTI-PASTOR.

* *Serm. 2. p. 59. Edit. 2.*

F I N I S.



