



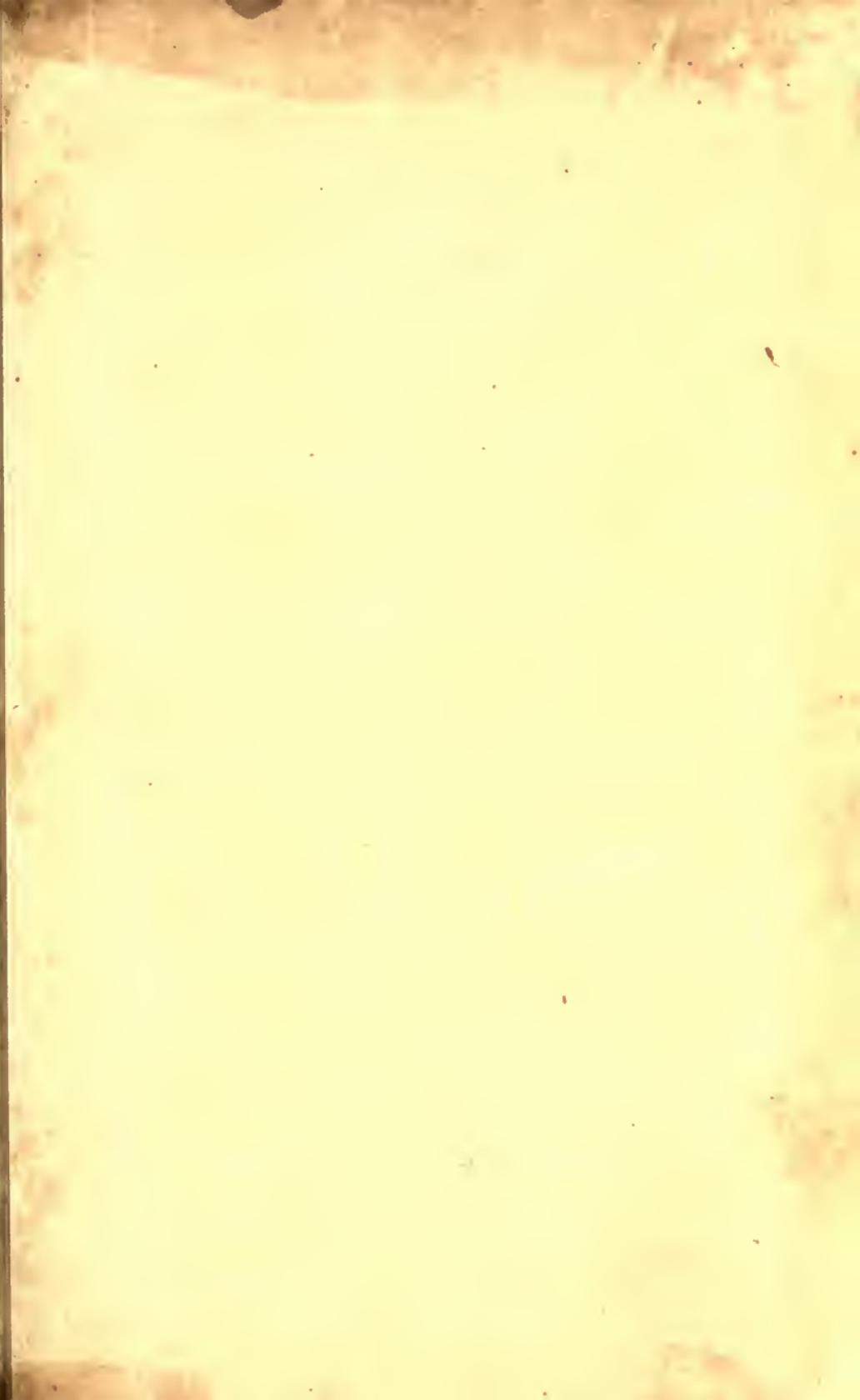
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Dr. HANCOCK'S  
**SERMONS**  
A T  
Mr. Boyle's Lecture, 1706.

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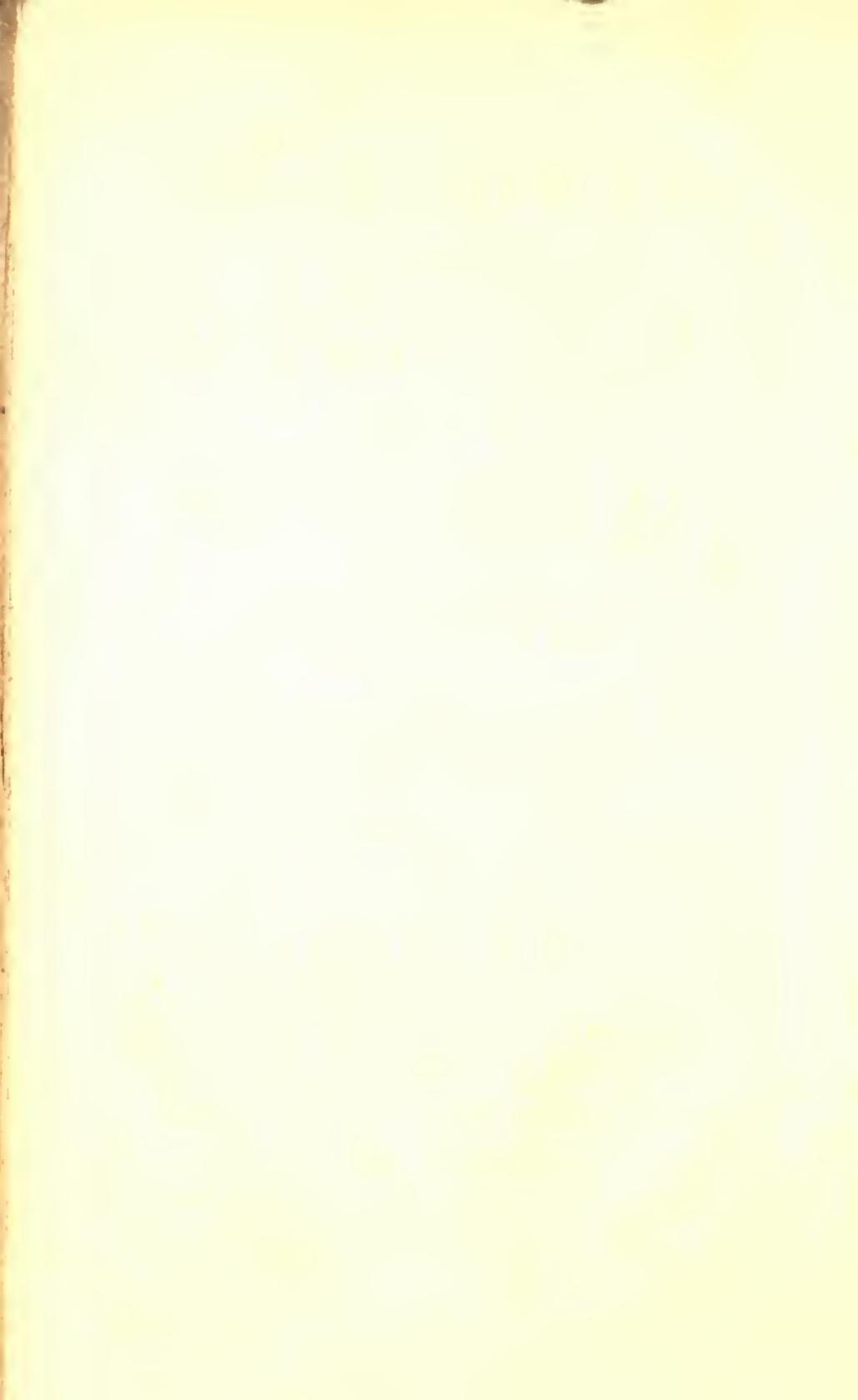
ARGUMENTS  
To Prove the  
BEING of GOD.  
WITH  
OBJECTIONS  
Against It,  
ANSWER'D.

Being Several Sermons Preach'd at the  
Cathedral-Church of *St. Paul*, in the  
Year 1706. on Account of the Le-  
cture Founded by the Honourable  
*Robert Boyle*, Esq;

By *JOHN HANCOCK*, D. D.  
Rector of *St. Margaret's Lothbury*,  
*London*; and Chaplain to his Grace  
the Duke of *Bedford*.

L O N D O N :

Printed for *B. Aylmer*, Sen<sup>r</sup>. & Jun<sup>r</sup>. at the  
Three Pigeons against the *Royal-Ex-  
change* in *Cornhill*. MDCCVII.



To the Most Rev<sup>d</sup> Father in GOD,

*T H O M A S,*

Lord Archbishop of *Canterbury*,  
Primate of all *England*, and  
Metropolitan :

And to the Right Worshipful

*S<sup>r</sup> Henry Ashurst, Bart.*

Trustees for the LECTURE Founded  
by the Hon<sup>ble</sup> *Robert Boyle, Esq;*

*Most Rev<sup>d</sup> and Hon<sup>d</sup>,*

**I** Humbly presume to beg your  
Favourable Acceptance of this  
mean Discourse. I confess, 'tis  
as far below the Dignity of the  
Subject, as the Author (among  
so many Great Men that have  
gone before, and are likely to fol-

low after,) is below the Notice of the Publick. I can rather wish than hope the Performance may answer the Design of the Founder, and be no Disparagement to the Trustees, to the Lecture, or to my Self. With my humble Thanks for the Honour you have done me ; I am,

*Most Rev<sup>d</sup> and Hon<sup>ble</sup>*

*Your most Obliged Humble Ser<sup>vt</sup>*

JOHN HANCOCK,

THE

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T H E  
P R E F A C E.

**I** Think fit to acquaint the Reader, here are but Six of the Eight Sermons: The other Two beginning another Subject, could not properly be printed. I am sensible, I have Reason to make some Excuse for the Language, which (I fear) will seem to some, less elaborate than it ought to be: But I hope for the Readers Pardon, tho' the Diction be sometimes a little mean and homely, if he find it (as I believe he will) plain and intelligible. I have not troubled my self with Citing many Authors, which would have swell'd the Bulk of the Book, without much Advantage to the Common sort of Readers. As to those whose Objections I answer, I have seldom cited their Words at large, much less (as I might easily have done) brought a great many Citations under each Head: My Answers are often so short, it would have look'd like an Indecency

gency to have done it. I think I have not misrepresented them in any thing : If any object this against me, I can easily do My Self Right by shewing the contrary; or Them, by owning my Mistake. I confess, I design'd to bring the Discourse into as little compass as I could, being of Opinion that few read, and fewer understand long Books : And therefore, I am not without hope this little Tract may be of some Use to those that have but little Leisure (or, it may be, less Mind) to read larger Discourses. If any despise this for its want of Learning, there are bigger Books enough on the same Subject ; where they may receive full Satisfaction. Begging the Reader's Candor, as to any Imperfections, or Mistakes he may find in this little Piece, I bid him heartily farewell.

ACTS

ACTS XVII 23. Clause ult.

Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship;  
him declare I unto you.

**T**HE Context runs thus:  
Ver. 22, 23. *Then Paul stood  
in the midst of Mars hill, and  
said, Ye men of Athens, I per-  
ceive ye are in all things too superstitious  
For passing by, and beholding your Devo-  
tions, I found an Altar with this Inscr-  
ption, To the unknown God. Whom  
therefore ye ignorantly worship, him de-  
clare I unto you. Ver. 24. God that  
made the world, and all things therein,  
he being Lord of heaven and earth, dwel-  
leth not in Temples made with hands,  
neither is worshipped with mens hands.  
as though he needed any thing; seeing he  
giveth to all men life and breath, and  
all things.*

In the Beginning of this Chapter  
we have an Account of St. Pauls  
6 Preach-

Preaching at *Thessalonica*: And when the *Jews* there raised a Tumult among the People, he was forced to leave that Place, and comes to *Berea*; and by his Preaching making several Converts there, we have a great Character given of 'em, That they were more noble than those of *Thessalonica*; for they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things that were preached by St. Paul were so.

But when the *Jews*, hearing of St. Paul's preaching at *Berea*, followed him thither too, he was brought by the Brethren to *Athens*: Where he was pressed in Spirit to preach the Gospel, when he saw the City wholly given to Idolatry. And having disputed in the Synagogue with the *Jews*, was encounter'd by some of the *Epicurean* and *Stoick* Philosophers: And being brought to *Arcopagus*, makes this Discourse to these Learned *Athenians*, of which my Text is a part.

*Ye men of Athens, &c.*

These Words will easily lead me (if Opportunity offer it self) to speak both of Natural and Reveal'd Religion,

on, and particularly of that which is the Foundation of both, the Belief of a God. We see the Apostle does not here go about to convince 'em that there is a God: He supposes 'em, from the Universal Consent of Mankind, and other Arguments that might be brought from undeniable Principles and Matters of Fact, fully convinced that there was a God.

The Fault he charges 'em with, is, That they were erroneus in their Belief of many Gods. *He was pressed in spirit, when he saw the City wholly given up to Idolatry;* and that they were too superstitious in their Worship; when lest they should miss any God, they would erect an Altar to the *Unknown God.*

But things in these Latter Ages (at least with a great many who would be thought Men of deeper Reach and Sagacity, and of more Philosophy than other Men), go quite otherwise: They are not to be charged with believing many Gods; we have Reason to think some believe none at all; are so far from being superstitious in their Worship, that they do not pretend to any such thing as Worship of any God;

and Atheism is come in the room of Polytheism.

Before I enter upon my Proof of the Being of God, it may not be amiss to say something briefly of that Question, Whether there ever have been such Men as Atheists in the World?

And here I think there are Two Sorts of Men that may, not without Reason, be called Atheists.

1. There are a sort of Ignorant, Careless People, that are so immers'd in Sense, and whose Minds grovel so on the Dust, and are so buried in the Cares and Pleasures of the World, that they never so much as think of God: *God, as the Psalmist says, is not in all their thoughts.* Such as these the Apostle says are *without God in the world*; ἄθεοι ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, a kind of Atheists in the World.

These are not the Atheists we are enquiring after; but, *Secondly*, Whether there ever have been, or are, any Atheists in Principle; that is, such Men as have reason'd themselves into an Opinion, That there is no God.

Some indeed have been call'd Atheists, that are not: ——— So *Socrates* was

was call'd an Atheist, because he was against the Plurality of Gods.——So the Primitive Christians were called Atheists, because they rejected the Religion of the Heathen, and would not worship their Gods.

Nay indeed the most Atheistical Gentlemen of our Modern Times, are often a little shy of the Name of Atheist, because in some Places it might happen to expose 'em to the Lash of the Law. So *Vaninus* being afraid of the Inquisition, pretended to submit all his Opinions to the Judgment of the Church. We may observe likewise, the most Atheistical Writers, often in their Books, talk of God like other People, as if they believed there were one, but in other Places they speak out: However they advance such Principles and Assertions as effectually destroy the very Supposition of a God.

I see no Reason indeed why we should reject the Testimonies of *Diogenes Laertius*, *Plutarch*, *Cicero*, and others of old, who mention several, such as *Diagoras*, *Protagoras*, &c. that were commonly in those Times reputed Atheists: Or of *Vaninus* and others that

confess there are Atheists now: Or why we should think *Vaninus* himself, *Hobbs*, *Spinoza* and others, who tho' they talk of God, yet advance such Principles and Assertions as are utterly inconsistent with the Belief of a God; I say, why we should think 'em any thing less than Atheists, is hard to imagine.

To proceed therefore to what I intend to discourse on from these Words, that which is the Foundation of all Religion, The Existence of a God.

I believe I need not tell any one what we mean by God——To wit, a most perfectly Wise and Powerful Self-existent Independent Being, that is the Maker and Governor of all Things.

Now before we proceed to those Reasons that may serve to prove the Certainty of the Existence of such a Being, we must consider of what kind those Arguments must be, and whence they must be fetch'd, whether from Reason or Revelation.

And one would think this should never have been a Question among any that pretend to Common Sense, when 'tis so plain at first sight, that Revelation

tion must suppose a God, and therefore the Testimony of the Scriptures that contain that Revelation cannot properly be brought to prove it.

Indeed those Maraculous Works that attend an Extraordinary Revelation, often are, and justly may be brought to prove the Existence of God, that makes the Revelation: But to prove the Being of a God, only from the Testimony of those Books that are pretended to contain that Revelation, is only to beg the Question in dispute.

'Tis hard to give an Account why the *Socinians*, that pretend so much to Reason, that they will scarce depend upon Revelation for any thing that does not at first sight appear agreeable to their Reason, should defend such a Doctrine, That the Knowledge of God must be had only by Revelation: 'Tis much if Reason, (that they pretend to be such a Guide in Religion) should fail us in that which is the Ground of all Religion. But they pretend Scripture for it. They tell us this Knowledge is called Belief and Faith. *Heb. 11. 6. He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, &c.* Now Belief (say they) must be grounded on Revelation.

But the Answer is easy, That Faith or Believing, in the Language of Scripture, as well as in our Common Way of speaking, does not always signify Faith in the strictest Sense, or Assent to some Truth upon Testimony; but Knowledge or Opinion, any kind of Assent, be the Ground and Reason of it what it will; So that this Argument signifies just nothing.

They urge again, That the Scriptures tell us, some Men believe no God, *Psal. 14. The Fool hath said in his Heart there is no God.* Which (say they) could not be, if Natural Reason could convince us there is a God.

But no-body ever said Natural Reason would convince us there is a God, if Men will not use their Reason, and attend to those Arguments that may be had from Reason to prove there is a God.

So that upon the whole, it remains unquestionable, not only that Reason may be sufficient to prove the Existence of a God, but that Arguments taken from that chiefly, are proper to be insisted on in this Matter.

From hence another Question easily offers it self to our Consideration;  
Whether

Whether the Notion of God be *innate* and *inbred*, in the strictest Sense ; or whether only Man, being endued with a Faculty of Reasoning, assisted by the Notices of Sense, and Instruction from others Observation, &c. comes to form such Arguments as may convince him of the Existence of a God ? For both these Ways of Notice may well enough be signify'd by the Terms of *innate*, *inbred*, *natural* Notions of God.

I should not much dispute with those that plead so stiffly for Innate or Connate Ideas, or Notions bred in us, or born with us ; but yet if any think all that can truly be meant by 'em is, that Man is born with such Capacities, that by degrees, and in time, upon the Information he receives from his Senses, and Reasoning from 'em, and the Notions he gets from Instruction, Education, and Conversation in the World, he comes to the Belief of a God ; I cannot think they undermine the Belief of a God, or assert any thing dangerous to Natural or Revealed Religion.

For, as far as we can tell, the Soul upon its Union with the Body, exercises

cises few, if any Acts of Reason ; or attends to any supposed Innate Notions of any thing , much less of God, for a considerable time.

Yet I would not say with some, that the Soul is a meer *Rasa Tabula* ; because I do not think that is a proper Metaphor in this Case. The Soul is an Active Principle ; tho' when joined with the Body , not capable for some time of Exerting and Exercising its Reasoning Faculties, at least about very few Objects.

What Principles or Seeds of Knowledge may be Connate with us , we cannot tell. But whatever Natural Capacities there may be in the Soul, certainly a great Difference will be made by Instruction, Education, Conversation , the Customs of the Places where, and the Notions and Opinions of Men among whom we live : And the same Man brought up in *England*, would be almost as different from himself if he were brought up in *India*, as if he were another Man.

Not but that the Arguments to prove a God are so clear, that scarce any Man that attends to 'em, but must be convinced by 'em. But suppose

pose a Man were born and bred in a Wilderness among Beasts, without ever Conversing with Men, 'tis questionable, whether these supposed Connate Inbred Notions of a God, would ever appear and exert themselves.

This Question about Innate Ideas may be sufficiently determined, by observing the Difference between the Case of *Adam*, who was created a Perfect Man, with Reason and Speech: and that of his Posterity, who are born Infants in an imperfect State. No doubt he had Inbred Connate Ideas; for we find he at first understood the Natures of the several Beasts, and gave Names to 'em. But whether those that are born in such a weak and imperfect State as all Men now are, have such Connate Ideas, may justly be question'd: However, we are willing every one should enjoy his own Opinion in this Case.

Another thing we should take notice of, before we enter upon the Proof of the Existence of a God, is; Whether this Proposition, *God is, or there is a God*, be such a self-evident Proposition, that it needs no Proof, but the understanding the Terms of the Proposition.

position. Whether, that as every one knows the Truth of this Proposition, The Whole is greater than any of its Parts, that does but know what is meant by Whole, and what by Part; so every one must see the Truth of this Proposition, *That God is*, who knows what is meant by God, and what it is to be.

But this is not a safe Way of Arguing, nor is it at all fit, to build so important a Point of Doctrine on so weak a Foundation: for if you should tell a Man he must believe this Truth, because it is self-evident; he will tell you, he doubts of it only because it does not appear self-evident to him.

No doubt this Proposition, *That God is*, or *that there is a God*, is a certain and necessary Truth; but it may not be self-evident to us, and therefore must be proved by, and deduced from other Truths that are *notiora quoad nos*, more evident to us. And therefore, notwithstanding the necessary Existence of God, that God is, and cannot but be, this Truth, that *God is*, wants to be supported by other Evidence, if we would convince any  
Man

Man that pretends to deny or doubt of it.

I now come to the Consideration of those Arguments that may serve to Evince the Being of a God.

And here I shall first take a very short Notice of Two Arguments, upon which great Stress is laid by the Great *French* Philosopher *Des Cartes*. And they are these :

First, he tells us, That if we consider well this Matter, and have a clear and distinct Idea of God, we shall find Existence is an inseparable Property of his Essence; and that we can no more conceive an absolutely perfect Being (such as we suppose God to be) without Existence, than we can Conceive a Mountain without a Valley, or a Triangle that has not its Three Angles equal to two Right ones.

But if we consider, that Existence is as necessary to the Actual Perfection of any other Being, as it is to that of God; and the Ideal Perfection (from which that Philosopher argues) of any Being, may be conceived without it.

When we might have the same Notion of a Mountain or Triangle, tho' there were no such things in Being.

When

When all the Philosophy in the World has distinguish'd between the Essence and Existence of Things; or if you will, between their Ideal and their Actual Existence.

When it will be harder to prove in the way that Philosopher takes, that Existence pertains to the Essence of God, than it is another way that God does actually Exist.

When if we grant that Philosopher, that actual Existence must be imply'd in the Notion of an absolutely perfect Being, such as we suppose God to be; yet the Question will still return, Whether there be any such absolutely perfect Being in the World? And so we are but just where we were before.

When a Man that has a mind to be an Atheist; will certainly tell him, That because he has formed, as he thinks, a clear and distinct Idea of an absolutely perfect Being, whose Essence is Existence, it does not really follow there is such a Being in the World; and that he only supposes and begs the thing in Question.

And when whatever some nice Speculators, and Men of Metaphysical Heads, may make of the Argument;

to confirm themselves in the Belief of a God, yet as it will never convince an Atheist, so it will not be understood by, nor is it fit to be proposed to, the generality of Men.

Being these things, I think, are so, I do not think it safe to insist upon this nice Argument, in the Case before us.

I know there have been a great many Learned Men, and great Philosophers, that have stoutly defended the Argument ; and I suppose have made it clear to themselves, tho' I believe they will find it hard to do it to some other People.

Another Argument that 'Philosopher makes use of, to prove the Existence of a God, is from the clear and distinct Idea of God, that is Born with us, Bred in us , or Imprinted on our Souls.

'Tis impossible, says that Philosopher, we should have such clear and distinct Ideas, but from some Being that has all the Perfections contain'd in those Ideas ; that is, from God ; and consequently we may infer from such Ideas, that there is a God.

But

But this Argument I doubt, is worse than the other; for 'tis plainly in our Power to form Ideas of Beings more perfect than our selves, yea of an absolutely Perfect Being.

And though we should not suppose such Notions or Ideas of God imprint-ed on our Natures, yet we see by Ex-perience we can from Institution, Con-versation with other Men, Observati-on of the Creatures, form such Noti-ons of God.

So, though when we do believe a God, and are rightly inform'd of our Dependance upon him, as to the Frame of our Natures, we may believe such clear and distinct Ideas of himself were woven by him in the Frame of our Na-tures (though that, as I have shew'd before, is a Question); -- yet sure if a Man had no Knowledge or Belief of the Existence of a God, he would ne-ver conclude, that because he finds in his Mind a clear Idea of an absolutely perfect Being; therefore there is such a Being: And that only because if it were not from that Being, he could have no such Ideas, when he plainly finds in himself a Power of Forming such Ideas.

I would

I would be far from running down any Argument that might be of any Service against the Atheists; or from thinking that Great Man that used these Arguments, design'd to betray the Cause, &c. But it looks a little odd, that that Philosopher should insist on these, and lay so much Weight upon them, when he pass'es by all the common and long-received Arguments to prove the Existence of a God.

I now come to those Arguments I shall insist upon for the Proof of this Truth.

And, by way of Preparation for our better Reception of those Rational Arguments that do directly prove the Being of a God, I shall in the first place insist upon that which is commonly brought, from the universal Consent of Mankind in this Matter.

And here we may, in the first place, consider the Matter of Fact; whether the Consent of Mankind in the Belief of this Truth, be so general and universal as is pretended.

It hath been generally taken for granted, that there was no Nation so barbarous, but we might find some

Footsteps of their Belief and Worship of a God. And it is certainly true of all the more Civilized Nations; that were formerly known to the more Learned Parts of the World.

But since Navigation was improved, and many Discoveries have been made of several People that were unknown before, some have pretended to find some Exceptions from this General Rule.

And indeed some Travellers give us a dismal Account of those People that live about the *Cape of Good Hope*, in *New Holland*, and some other formerly unknown Parts of the World.

But as to these pretended Exceptions from the universal Consent of Mankind in the Belief of a God, we may consider,

I. That 'tis possible those that assert those things may not have well enquired into the Matter, or have sufficiently informed themselves.

'Tis plain, those that by accident light upon such barbarous Countries, can take but a transient View of any of the Customs of such Countries, much less of their Religion, or their Notions of a God; whereas if they had

had lived among 'em, and had more Opportunity of Conversing with 'em, they might have found Reason to give another Account of them.

2. Accordingly, in some Instances we find, that later and more full Discoveries have given another kind of Account of some of those Barbarous People.

3. That most of those People that are pretended to Believe no God, and to have no Religion, appear so very Unciviliz'd, that they are little better than Brutes: And 'tis no great Wonder, if those that are fallen so far below the common Pitch of Human Nature in all other Things, should proportionably sink below it in their Sense of Religion, and Belief of a God.

4. If we should grant there may, in the more Barbarous and Unciviliz'd Parts of the World, be some People that own no God this is no just Exception to the general Consent of Mankind in this Matter.

We believe there are some Philosophical Atheists; Does it therefore follow, that Atheism cannot be disproved by true and sound Philosophy?

The *Pyrronian* Sect of Philosophers were Scepticks, and deny'd there was any Certainty of any thing in the World : Does it therefore follow, that Mankind must not generally believe their Senses and their Reason too, in the plainest Instances of Sense and Reason? Some Men are born Monsters : Does this prove Human Nature to be a Monstrous Thing?

5. 'Tis very possible, those Nations that are said to be Exceptions to the universal Consent of Mankind in this Matter, may Believe a God, and yet have no Rites of Publick Worship, and so be thought not to own a God.

So that upon the whole, it is possible those pretended Instances of some People that Believe no God, may not be true ; or if any of 'em be so, there is no great Reason they should be thought to signify much by way of Exception to this Universal Consent of Mankind as to the Belief of a God.

Having thus far consider'd, how Matter of Fact stands, as to the Universal Consent of Mankind in the Belief of a God, I shall now, as to the

Validity of this Argument, propose these Things to your Consideration,

1. That the Ancient *Roman* and *Greek* Writers insist much upon this Argument, to prove the Being of a God. Passages to this Purpose are so numerous, and so common in Authors, that 'tis needless to cite 'em.

2. Whatever Original we assign to this general Consent of Mankind in the Belief of this Truth, it will still add to the Force of the Argument.

If we suppose with some, it comes from a kind of a Natural Instinct that the Notion of God is imprinted upon, and woven into our very Natures: This shews, how natural the Belief of God is to Mankind; and that they can scarce be thought Men, that have cast off this Belief.

If we suppose with others, this general Belief comes from the Common Observation that all the World do and may make of the Excellency and Beauty of the Creatures, and thereby learn to know God as the Creator: This plainly shews how Cogent those Arguments are, that are taken from the

*Arguments to prove*

Works of God, to prove his Being, when all the World agrees in 'em.

Or whether we suppose this Belief to come by Tradition from some common Parent of Mankind; this makes it very probable, that that Common Parent of Mankind was Created and Instructed by God.

So that which Way soever we suppose this Belief of a God came to be so common in the World, still it adds Strength to the Argument, and makes it of greater Force to prove the Existence of God.

3. Indeed so General and almost an Universal Consent of Mankind in this Truth, is it self of great Weight and Moment, to confirm our Belief of the Truth of it.

We use to argue so in other Things. What seems true to some Wise Men, seems somewhat probable: What seems true to most or all Wise Men, is very probable: What most Men, both wise and unwise, assent unto, doth still look more likely to be true. But what all Men generally consent in, hath the highest Probability, and comes so near Demonstration, that it may pass for ridiculous Arrogance and Self-conceit,

ceit, to deny the Truth of it.

How ridiculous did *Anaxagoras* make himself, when he denied Snow was White? ——— *Zeno*, when he said Motion is impossible? ——— *Heraclitus*, that Contradictory Propositions might be both True? And *Epicurus* little less than they, when he pretended the World was made by Chance? And they upon the same account are little less than Ridiculous, that deny there is a God, as going contrary to the general Suffrage and universal Consent of Mankind; and saying in effect all the World are Fools but themselves.

But the Atheist endeavours to invalidate this Argument Two ways.

1. By giving a parallel Instance of a false Opinion that has been received with almost as general a Consent as that of the Existence of God.

2. By pretending to give an Account how this Opinion of the Existence of God might come to be so common, without supposing the Truth of it.

1. The Atheist tells us, that this general and almost universal Consent of Mankind concerning the Existence of God, is no more an Argument of the

Truth of it, than the like almost general Consent as to Polytheism, is an Argument that there are more gods than one.

But as to this we may consider,

1. That the wisest and best in all Ages dissented from the Multitude in that point.

2. That even among the generality of the grossest Idolaters, and in the worst times of Polytheism, the general Opinion was, That there was one Chief and Supreme God, that had Absolute Power over the other gods, as well as Men; so that it seems probable, that at least those of the Heathen Idolaters that consider'd any thing, looked upon the other gods to be but an inferior sort of Beings, a sort of *Semidei*, Mediators between God and Men, and to whom, by the Will of the Supreme God, some kind of Worship was due: As the *Romanists* now do their Saints, the Worship of which, they pretend ultimately terminates in God himself.

And I think *Tertullian* or *St. Cyprian* somewhere observe, (and upbraid the Heathen with it) That it was common with them in their ordinary Discourse, to speak of God in the Singular

lar Number ; which was an Evidence Reason taught them to believe there was but One that was truly God.

3. This seems rather an Argument that there is a God, that the generality of the World should be so fond of the Belief of a God, as to run out into so much Superstition in the Worship of him. So the Worship of so many false gods rather shows there is a true One. — As Counterfeits infer a real Thing.

4. That which most of all alters the Case as to the Belief of One God, and the Belief of many gods, is this ; that as to the One there is all the Reason in the World for it ; and as to the other, that of Polytheism, there is all the Reason in the World against it.

But there are several ways the Atheist pretends to tell us how this Notion of a God might become so Universal. As

1. From Ignorance of Second Causes. — When any extraordinary Events happen either good or bad , Ignorant Men, say they, are apt to attribute 'em to invisible Powers , and to interest God in 'em.

But if this were all, how come the wise as well as the unwise, the greatest Philosophers as well as the meanest Mechanicks, to Believe a God ?

'Tis indeed quite contrary ; it's generally Men's Ignorance of, or at least their not rightly considering of, and arguing from Second Causes, that is the cause of Atheism : For Second Causes, if consider'd right, naturally lead us to the First Cause, that is, God.

2. The Atheist tells us, the Notion of God might come from Tradition.

This makes against the Atheist, for it is impossible there should be any such universal Tradition, unless we suppose all the World to come from one first common Parent, who probably was made by God, and delivered down the Belief of a God to all his Posterity.

3. The Atheist tells us, this universal Consent of Mankind in the Belief of a God, might come from an extravagant Fear, and so be only a Sign of the extream Weakness and Frailty of Human Nature.

But this is a meer Pretence.

If these supposed Fears proceeded from without, 'tis the same with Tradition; if from within, 'tis probably from Conviction of a God.

'Tis much more reasonable to believe Men's Fears proceeded from a just and well-grounded Belief of a God, than that their Belief of a God should come from an uncertain Jealousy and a groundless Fear of they know not what.

*Spinoza* indeed says, *That Fear is the Cause of all Religion.* So it is indeed, if we mean a just and reasonable Fear of God. But 'tis a silly thing to suppose that Religion took its Rise from a general and groundless Fear of Men knew not what.

We find, for all these Men's Pretences, that most Men are not very apt to those groundless Fears; for notwithstanding Men are fully persuaded there is a God, and that 'tis a foolish and dangerous thing to neglect their Duty to him, yet they are too apt to forget themselves, and to put far from them the Fear of God.

But how comes this Fear of a God to be so universal over all the World; the greatest Princes, the wisest Statesmen,

men, the most Learned Philosophers, the most Valiant Captains? Are all these a Pack of Fools? Yet we find such as these are no less subject to these Fears of God than other Men.

Nay, even these Atheists themselves, while they pretend to be above the Belief of a God, yet cannot wholly free themselves from the Fear of him; and their Hearts give their Tongues the lie: And therefore we find, some of our Modern Atheists (as is said of *Hobbs*) durst scarce be alone by themselves.

One would think, if it were as these Men pretend, those should be most in fear, that know most of God, and are ofteneft thinking of him: But we find the contrary, Atheistical Persons are most disturbed with them, even while they do what they can, *that God* may not be *in all their Thoughts*.

'Tis a vain Pretence therefore that this universal Consent of Mankind in the Belief of a God, can proceed from I know not what Fear of Invisible Powers.

4. The Atheist pretends, this universal Consent of Men in the Belief of a God,

God, might proceed from the Designs of Crafty Politicians, who to make the People more submissive to Government, began and propagated the Belief of a God.

But this, if we consider it well, will appear to be as groundless a Surmise as any of the other.

It's strange, if this were so, we have no Account in History who was the first Inventor of the Belief of a God.

'Tis common enough for Princes and Politicians to make use of Mens Fiery Zeal and Bigotry, or to encourage some particular Sect of Religion, to serve their own Ends: But they are not often known to be the Inventors of a New Religion, much less can they be supposed the first Authors of that Belief which is the Ground of all Religion.

We find all the Lawgivers that History informs us of, suppose this Belief of a God, and take it for granted as that which had long since taken root in the Hearts of Men, and was carried by the Vogue of the World.

This Suggestion seems to suppose that all Mankind were sometime or other under one Government, else no one Prince would attempt it, nor could any great number of 'em agree to undertake it.

These Atheistical Men we have now to deal with, say, 'Tis impossible we should have any Notion of a God: If this be so, those Politicians that should go about to impose this Belief of a God upon the World, would have an hard task to beat it into the Heads of Mankind.

In short, the very Supposition is absurd in it self: For if the Belief of a God had not been grounded before in the Reason of Mankind, no Prince or Politician would attempt to possess the World with such a Notion: Nor could all the Princes and Politicians in the World, if they could join together, by all their Power and Cunning, bring the Belief of a God to be so universal as it is.

Having thus spoken of the Argument to prove the Being of a God, taken from the general Consent of Mankind, I shall now proceed to insist upon some other Arguments to prove the same.

And

And for some Reasons I shall produce the chief Arguments I intend to insist on for the proof of this Truth, without giving a particular Answer to all those Objections that are commonly made against 'em, by the Defenders of Atheism; and shall reserve a more full Answer to those Objections till afterwards.

And here, in the first place, the Atheist must needs grant that something has existed from all Eternity. If he will grant that there is any thing that now is, he must grant that something always has been.

There is nothing in the World clearer than this, That nothing can come out of nothing, without some Cause besides it self; for then the same thing must be both before and after it self; must at the same time be, as a Cause, and yet not be, as an Effect: That is, be, and not be, at the same time; which is a flat Contradiction.

Now since 'tis so plain that something is eternal, and this Self-existence, or Eternal Existence is certainly a Perfection; sure 'tis much more reasonable to believe it to belong to such a Perfect Being as we suppose God to be,  
than

than to such a dull unactive thing as Matter is; which yet the Atheists believe to be eternal.

I dare not indeed rely too much upon that Argument the *Cartesians* take from the Notion they have of Self-existence, or Necessary or Eternal Existence, being implied in the very Idea of God; because I am afraid the Atheist will say, they beg the Question.

But methinks when we are sure that something must have been from Eternity, or else nothing could now be; and the Atheist himself believes Matter to have been so; it is much more reasonable to believe that this Perfection of Self-existence, or Necessary or Eternal Existence, should belong to such a Perfect Being as we suppose God to be, than to such a dull stupid senseless thing as we find Matter to be; and consequently, that there must be a God.

And thus I have spoke briefly of the first Argument I think fit to insist on, for the Proof of this Truth, That there is a God.

2. Another Argument may be taken from the impossibility there is, that  
there

there should be an infinite Succession of Causes and Effects.

As, for instance, in the Generations of Mankind, we must at last come to a Man that was not generated.

Now as to these first Parents of Mankind, we must either suppose they were from Eternity, which I believe none will think, that considers the frail Condition of Human Nature in the State it is now in :

Or we must say, as some of the Atheists too boldly assert, That Men sometime or other sprang out of the Earth, like Mushrooms in a Night. And if so, 'tis strange the Earth has so long ago lost its Virtue, that no such Things should be known or heard of now for so many Thousand Years.

Or we must say, That these first Parents were made by some Superior and Powerful Being ; and that is him we call God.

3. 'Tis plain, the Scripture sends us to the Works of God, to learn his Existence. *Rom. I. 21. For the invisible things of him are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead. Psal. 19. 1, 2. The Heavens declare the*

*Glory of God, and the Firmament sheweth his handy-work.*

Indeed, there is no Account to be given, how such a Glorious and Regular Frame of Things, as the World that is now before us, should come to be, without supposing a God; that is, an infinitely Wise and Powerful Being, that was the Great and Wise Creator, and is the Governour of it.

*Tully* somewhere speaks of this Matter, to this Purpose. Says he, If any of us should come into a great House, every way exactly contrived for Use and Ornament, and should find there no Inhabitants, nothing but Rats or Mice, or some such mean Creatures; Should we think that the several Parts of that House jumbled together by Chance? Or were contrived and made by those despicable Creatures? Or that it never was built at all, but had been for ever? No certainly, we should rather conclude, that it was some wise Architect, (tho we saw him not, nor knew who he was,) that was the Builder of such an House.

So the Case is here: We see before our Eyes a most Noble Fabrick and  
Frame

Frame of Things. We find no Being, that we know any thing of, that can make so much as one Pile of Grass, nor an Hair of our Heads, nor the meanest Creature that creeps upon the Earth. Shall we think this Noble Frame was never made? Or that it was made by a Casual Jumblement of Atoms? No; 'tis much more rational to conclude, there is One Intelligent, Wise, and Powerful Being, that was the Maker of it; and this Being we call God.

To instance particularly in Two Parts of this Noble Frame; the Heavenly Bodies; and the Bodies of Animals, and particularly that of Man here on Earth.

1. The Heavenly Bodies. Not to enquire into the Nature of those Bodies which we know little of, more than that probably the Sun is a Vast Ball or Globe of a Fiery Nature; for we see Fire on Earth casts forth both Light and Heat: And that the rest of the Planets are Solid Opake Bodies, something like that Earth on which we live. I say, not to enquire into this, the very Motions of the Heavenly Bodies, which we are by Expe-

rience plainly assur'd of, are so stupendous and wonderful, as may well convince us, that there is some infinitely Wise and Powerful Being, that was the Cause, and is the Director of 'em.

'Tis much the same thing in this Case, whether with the Old Philosophy we suppose the Earth to be the Center; or with the New Philosophy, we make the Sun to be the Center of this Orb in which we live; and all the Planets, and our Earth among the rest, to move round about it. I say, this is all one; their Motions are so wonderful, as may convince us there is a God.

That so many Vast Bodies, some of 'em so many times bigger than this our Earth, swimming only in Liquid Air or *Æther*, should yet so exactly keep their Places and Distances from their Centre, perform their Motions round the Centre of their Orb or *Vortex* in so exact a Space of Time, and at the same time many of 'em move round their own Centres. That these Stupendous Motions should be so regularly continued, without any considerable Variation, for so many Thousand

land Years ; is such a Wonder of Nature, as may force any Man to believe there is a God.

To give any tolerable Account of the Reason of this, has non-plus'd all the Ancient and Modern Philosophers.

The Astronomers, by long and many Observations, may attain to a pretty accurate Knowledge of their several Periodical Revolutions : But when they pretend to dive into the Original Cause of these Wonderful Motions ; by what Internal Principle, or by what External Force they were begun, or are carried on for so many Thousand Years ; they are at a Loss what Account to give of it. They tell us indeed of Gravitation, and Attraction, of *Vis Centripeta's*, and such fine Words ; but they leave us as much in the dark as we were before. And they had e'en as good plainly confess they know nothing of the Matter ; and spend the Time they use to employ in enquiring into the Reason of 'em, in admiring and adoring that infinitely Powerful Being that is the Cause of 'em.

For my part, if any one should tell me of a Cannon that would throw a Ball to the *West-Indies*, or of a Globe that with one Turn of a Man's Hand would turn round its Center for an Hundred Years together ; I should think it much more easy to give a Philosophical Account of it, than it is to give any Account of the Heavenly Motions , without supposing something above the Power of Matter, or the Common Laws of Motion we can observe in this Lower World.

Another Instance of the Works of Nature I chuse to insist upon , is, the Bodies of Animals here on Earth, and particularly that of Man. Well might the Psalmist cry out, (*Psal. 135.*) *I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*

If we consider how wonderfully these our Bodies are conceived and nourished in the Womb, that so many Parts of such different Contexture and Solidity, should grow, and that so regularly, from a little Moisture. That when we are Born, the Parts of our Bodies should be ordinarily so exactly Uniform , and fitted for the Use and Convenience of the Body. That Monstrous Bodies should be so rare as they are. If

If we consider the vast Variety of the Parts and Humours in the Body : The Veins and Arteries , the Nerves and Ligaments , the Flesh and Bones : How exactly the several Parts are suited to the Uses of the Body , either for Receiving in its Aliment , Concocting and Distributing of it ; or for Voiding its Superfluities and Excrementitious Juices.

And particularly , if we consider the *Crafsis* and Circulation of the Blood , which is the Life of the Animal . That the Blood should receive Nutritional Particles from such a vast Variety of Aliment ; and continue for so many Years in so exact a *Crafsis* and Temper , as to be fit to Circulate through so many little Passages , particularly in the Extream Parts of the Body .

Nay , indeed , the Circulation itself of the Blood through the Body , is the greatest Wonder of all . 'Tis a kind of perpetual Motion in the Body . The best Anatomist or Natural Philosopher in the World , cannot give any tolerable Account how this Circulation is begun , or carried on , or what is the true Principle or Cause of

it. As for Instance, Whether the Motion and Expansion of the Blood, do first cause the *Diastole*, or Opening Motion of the Heart; or whether the *Systole*, or Contracting Motion of the Heart, do originally cause the Progressive Motion of the Blood?

In a Word; The whole Oeconomy of the Animal is so Wonderful, that *Galen* himself could not forbear, upon the Contemplation thereof, to break out into the Praises of God, the Creator of it.

I might here say something of that more Noble Part of Man, his Soul; which as it could not Exist of it self, so certainly, if we regard those Noble Faculties of Understanding, Willing, Remembring, Chusing, Refusing, Self-moving, Contemplating, and Considering Things that are above Matter, and depend not on it; cannot come from any merely Material Cause. And which, as it is a Proof and Evidence, so it is a near Resemblance of such a perfectly Wise and Good Being as God is. But of this I shall have a fitter Occasion to speak, among the Objections that are made against the Being of a God.

4. Another Argument we may use, to prove the Being of a God, may be taken from the Regularity of the Acting even of Inanimate Creatures, in order to the Accomplishing of those Ends for which they were designed by Nature.

We may lay down this for a Rule; That whatever acts constantly, and regularly, and certainly, in order to some End; either must understand and design that End it self, or be guided and directed by some other Being that does so.

Now if we look upon the several Creatures, even those that have no Life, Sense, or Understanding, and see how regularly they are directed in their Motions and Actions; it will make us, whether we will or no, own and believe an infinitely Wise and Powerful Being, that does either immediately it self direct those their Motions, or has fixt such an Order of Nature, that they cannot vary from it.

Thus, if we consider how regularly Heavy Things descend; the Plants grow according to their several Kinds; Animals are begotten, brought forth, and grow up; the Heavenly Bodies  
are

are constantly and regularly moved, while they know nothing of the matter.

If we think that even those Creatures, that have not only Life, but Reason and Understanding, yet in those Actions that belong to Vegetative Nature, act without Counsel or Design: The Mother does not consult, how the Child shall grow in her Womb. We eat our Meat, and consider (it may be) so far as to chuse Things we think wholesome; but after that, we take no further Care, but leave Nature to do its Work. We Plant Flowers, or Trees, but leave the Earth to nourish them. And all these Works are done as certainly and regularly, as if we our selves had the doing of them. If we consider these things, we shall easily think there is a God.

But some one may say, Nature does this.

What do they mean by Nature? If they mean the particular Nature of every Individual Thing, 'tis no more than to say, Such things are done, tho' we know not how, or by whom: Which is in effect to say nothing.

If they mean Common Nature, abstract from Individuals; that is but a Logical Notion, and can do nothing.

If they mean by Nature, any Active Principle, distinct from the Things themselves; it must be either such a particular Plastick Nature, as some suppose to be in every Individual thing, and that is an Active Principle in the Formation of it, tho' it have it self no Sense or Understanding.

Now, it may justly be question'd, Whether there be any such Nature: tho' some great Philosophers do assert it: Or, if there be, they that assert it, make it to depend on God.

If they mean by Nature, any Active Intelligent Principle, that so certainly and regularly guides these Inanimate Creatures; then by Nature they mean God; and so before they are aware, confers there is a God.

However, the thing is clear, that 'tis utterly impossible that so vast a Variety of Creatures as we here see in the Universe, that have no Life, Sense, or Understanding, should go on so regularly as they do, without the Guidance and Direction of some Superior

perior Intelligent Mind and Being, such as we suppose God to be.

And thus the Regular Acting of Inanimate Things, in order to those Ends for which they seem so well to be design'd, is a plain Proof of an infinitely Wise and Powerful Being, that is, of a God.

Indeed, we cannot much wonder the *Epicureans* of old banish'd all Final Causes out of Philosophy; and tell us, Those Aptitudes that are in the several Creatures, or in the several Parts of any of 'em, for such and such Uses, were found out afterwards.

For certainly, these Final Causes do not well agree with their Doctrine, of Blind Chance being the Cause of this Regular Frame of the Creation.

Nor need we any more wonder, that *Spinoza* ridicules 'em, and tells us, That Nature proposes no End to it self; and that all Final Causes are but *Humana Figmenta*, the Fictions of Men.

For these agree no better with that no less Blind Necessity he sets up for his God, when he says, that *ex necessitate divinæ Naturæ, infinita infinitis modis sequi debent: An infinite Number of Things,*  
by

by no less infinite Ways, must follow from the absolute Necessity of the Divine Nature. Which Hypothesis, (when he makes the Universe to be his God) as I shall shew hereafter, is but another Name for the *Epicurean* Chance.

Nay, *Cartesius* himself, being too much addicted to his Mechanick Principles, tells us, It is not for us to guess for what End God made such and such Things thus or thus; and that we are not able to judge of the Designs of God.

We confess we are not able to dive into the Abyss of Divine Providence, nor to make an adequate Estimate of all the Wise Ends of God in his Works: But there are many Things that are so obvious, that he that runs may read 'em.

Can any one think, (to instance in our own Bodies) that the Eyes were not made for the use of Seeing; the Ears, of Hearing; the Mouth, to receive Aliment; the Teeth, to chew it; the Stomach, to digest it; the Bones and Sinews, for Strength; the Joints, for Bending; and the Muscles, for the Motions of the Body? And can we not plainly see the Use  
and

and End of these; tho' we do not know so exactly the End and Use of all the Parts and Humours of the Body?

The *Epicurean* will tell us very wisely, no doubt, that all these came by Chance; and that their Use was found out afterwards, I suppose, by Chance too.

And 'twas very easy to do it; for we find, even Children themselves find the Use of these Things as soon as they are born.

Well! even these *Epicureans*, or Fatalists themselves, if they will think a little, must own, these and such like Things would not have been made otherwise, and could not have been made better, if the Highest Wisdom had been concern'd in the making of 'em: And therefore, that they are very absurd, to ascribe those things to Blind Chance, or Necessity, in which so plainly appears the Footsteps of the Greatest Wisdom, and which are so plain a Proof of a God.

Another Argument we may make use of, to prove the Being of a God, is, The Excellent Harmony there is found in the several Parts of the Creation.

And

And this may be consider'd Two Ways.

1. With respect to the greater or less Perfection of those Creatures that are visible to us.

2. With respect to the Subservien-  
cy of the less Noble to the more No-  
ble Creatures.

1. With respect to the Perfection of those several Sorts of Beings that are visible to us.

Some there are that are without any Power so much as of Vegetation, or Propagation of their Kind. Others there are, that are endued with a Power of Vegetation, that are propagated from Seeds according to their Kind, that grow, and live, and dye. A Third sort, are, Animals that have a Life of Sense; if not (as 'tis probable) some Degree of Reason too, in their Sphere.

But there are yet a more Noble sort of Animals we call Men, that have not only Sense, and some low Degree of Reason, but such Noble Faculties as enable them to understand Things that are above the Reach of Sense.

I would

I would not drive any Argument further than it will easily go; but methinks this plain *Climax* in the Creatures that are visible to us, can scarce chuse but lead a considering Man to believe there are a Higher sort of Rational Beings that depend less on Matter, and are not so clogg'd and press'd down with it, as these Rational Natures in Mankind seem to be. And consequently, that we must at last come to some One most perfectly Rational, Intelligent, and Wise Being, that is the Cause and Original of all Things.

A Second Thing, in which this Excellent Harmony of the Creatures appears, is, in the Subserviency that the less Noble have to the more Noble Creatures.

Those that want Life are subservient to those that have it. If we look up to Heaven, the Heavenly Bodies do not shine only for themselves, but by their Benign Influence do assist the Vegetation and Growth of Plants and Animals on Earth. If we look down on Earth, the Earth, by the Heat and Moisture that comes from the Heavens, brings forth Grass and  
Plants;

Plants; those feed and nourish the Brutes; and both they, and Herbs and Plants, are useful unto Men.

So that here seems to be plain Foot-steps of the Wisdom of a God, who hath made such ample Provision for all his Creatures, and particularly for that Noble Creature Man, that he might devote himself to the Service of him that made him.

But here we have some so absurd, as not only to deny, but even to ridicule this Order and Harmony of the Creatures, and the Subserviency of one Part of the Creation to another.

This *Spinoza* plainly does, in the first Part of his *Ethics de Deo*, and founds it all in Imagination.

I know not whether it be fit to dispute with, or possible to convince Men that will advance such absurd Assertions.

However, we cannot much wonder he should do it; for any thing that looks like Wisdom and Design in the Frame of the World, must destroy his absurd *Hypothesis*, of God's being a *Necessary Agent*.

But some tell us, 'tis not likely that such vast Heavenly Bodies were made to serve so vile and mean a Creature as Man is.

But to this it's easily answer'd ;

That Man, nay the meanest Animal may, for any thing we know, be a more Noble Creature than the Sun it self : Inasmuch as the meanest Creature, that has Life, and Sense, is and must be more Noble than the greatest that is destitute of them.

However, 'tis plain to Experience, that the Sun it self is subservient, not only to the Vegetation of these our Bodies, and those of the Inferior Animals, but even of the Plants themselves ; even of the meanest Seeds or Grains that are cast into the Earth.

What other Ends and Uses there may be of those Heavenly Bodies, besides their illustrating the Glory of their Creator, we cannot tell : But I think we may well argue from the Harmony of the Creation, and the Subserviency of the less Noble to the more Excellent and Noble Creatures, that there is an infinitely Wise Being, that is the Author of 'em.

Another Argument to prove there is a God, may be taken from Natural Conscience.

Rom. 2. *The Gentiles, says the Apostle, who have not the Law, are a Law unto themselves; which shew the Work of the Law written in their hearts, their Conscience bearing witness, &c.*

Now 'tis plain, that Conscience of Duty and Obligation, must imply a Respect to some Law, either Natural or Positive; and a Law must suppose a Lawgiver.

Since all Men then have a Sense of Duty and Obligation, this must suppose a Natural Conviction, either impressed upon their Natures, or gathered by Rational Collection, that there is a God.

That there is generally more or less such a Sense in Mankind, appears, in that their Heart smites 'em, not only for those Faults that are open to the View of Men, or may expose 'em to the Penalties of Human Laws, but for the most Secret Miscarriages of their Lives.

But some may say, This only argues, they have through Prejudice, or upon Mistake, entertain'd an Opinion there

there is a God ; which will have ( as to Matter of Conscience ) the same Effects as if there really were one.

To this I answer , There is a mighty difference between this, and the Case of a Superstitious or prejudiced Religionist : For the one, when he is convinced (as he often is) of his Mistake and Folly , will be easy and quiet.

But here we find these Things very plain.

That the greatest Scoffers at Religion, such as the *Roman* Emperors *Tiberius* and *Caligula*, have not been proof against the Pangs of Conscience, and their guilty Fears. That those that have studiously made it their Business to disengage themselves from all Sense of Duty, have not been able to do it ; but ever and anon these Natural Sentiments would return upon them.

And further, those that have pretended upon Philosophical Principles to have already done it, as to the Stings of Natural Conscience, and the guilty Fears that issue from it, have been just like, if not worse than other Men.

So that it's plain, the Notions of a God are either so firmly imprinted upon, and so thoroughly rooted in the Nature of Man; or at least by a necessary and unavoidable Reasoning from the Works of God to his Existence, do so stare 'em in the face; that they cannot easily be obliterated, but convince Men whether they will or no, that there is a God.

But indeed, if we consider this Matter well, we shall find there cannot be any such thing as Conscience, nor any just Ground for a Sense of any moral Obligations, without the Supposal of a God.

Some may tell us, it may be, that these Obligations may arise from the Nature, Reason, and several Relations of Persons and Things, antecedently to our supposing 'em agreeable to the Will of God.

But this, tho' it may found a Fitness and Agreeableness of Virtue to the Nature of Things, yet it is far from superinducing any Obligation, and laying a Foundation for Natural Conscience.

We may see then what Friends the Atheists are to Civil Society, and how much they consult the Good of Mankind, when they assert that which in the true Consequence of it, looses the very Bonds of Duty, and sets every one at liberty to do what they list, to injure and wrong their Neighbours as they please.

No doubt there does appear a General Fitness and Agreeableness in Virtuous Actions; and it would be an honourable and a generous Thing, so far to consult the General Good of Mankind, as to practise accordingly: But alas! how weak an Incitement will this Point of Honour be to Virtue and Justice, without the Belief of a God.

The Atheist is so sensible that what I now assert is a just Consequence, that he is not ashamed boldly to assert, That there is (antecedent to Human Laws) no real Difference between Good and Evil, no moral Obligation.

Mr. *Hobbs* tells us over and over, That there is nothing simply or absolutely Good or Evil; nothing in its own Nature Just or Unjust. That  
Good

Good and Evil are only Names that signify our Appetites and Aversions. *Spinoza* has several Passages exactly to the same Purpose. And *Mr. Blount* tells us, The Virtues that Men extol so highly, are not of equal Weight and Value in the Balance of Nature.

I am not very careful in Citing what they say, for it will be hard to abuse 'em in this Case, by saying worse Things than are to be found in their Writings.

But, by those Gentlemens Leave, they herein contradict the General Sense of Mankind.

For tho' there may be some Difference in the Sentiments of Men in stating some nicer Cases in Practical Things; yet in the greater Lines of Duty, all Mankind agree. Who ever thought it was all one, Whether we Worship God, or Blaspheme him? Or, if this be not a proper Instance for the Atheist, who pretends to think there is no God; we may ask him, Is it all one, to Honour our Parents, or to Affront 'em? to Love and Oblige our Neighbour, or to Kill him? to be Merciful, or Cruel? to be Kind to our Brother, or Rob and Spoil him?

Is there no Obligation as to any of these Things, but what comes from Human Laws?

Indeed, if these Vices were establish'd by never so many Human Laws, would that make 'em Just and Reasonable?

But these Atheists think they solve the Matter, by telling us, That 'tis necessary Men should, for Peace and mutual Security, enter into Civil Society, and make mutual Contracts; and that superinduces an Obligation to Justice and Virtue.

Well, if it be necessary that these Things should be secured by Civil Contracts, sure there must be an antecedent Obligation to 'em: And if they be so necessary to the Good of Mankind, that Publick Peace cannot be maintain'd without 'em, 'tis a Sign they were Good in themselves before.

But we may ask these Men, How it comes to pass, that there lies such an Obligation upon Men to keep their Contracts when they are made?

It seems we must suppose there is something Good and Evil in it self: 'Tis not all one, to keep our Contracts,

tracts, or to break 'em. And why may not all the other greater Instances of Virtue be as good as this?

Or what Reason can be given, why we should be more obliged to this, than any of the other?

The Truth is, unless we suppose what the Atheist pretends to deny, a God, our most solemn Engagements and Contracts will signify but little; and when we think it our Interest to do it, we may as easily break 'em, as make 'em.

The Sum is, Virtue, Justice, &c. moral Good and Evil, is founded in the Nature and Reason of Things; and issues from those Relations we stand in to God and one another. We may be sure, if there be, as we believe there is, a Just and Holy God, that did Make, and does Govern the World, 'tis agreeable to his Will, that his Rational Creatures should govern themselves according to the Eternal Rules of Reason. And, I think, we may safely assert, That those Rules that Establish the greater Instances of Virtue and Morality, are as plain, clear, and undoubtedly certain, as any Principles in Philosophy, or any Propo-  
sitions

positions in Mathematicks can be. And therefore the Atheist, (let him talk what he will of the Obligation of Human Laws, and of keeping Contracts) he really dissolves the very Bonds of Civil Society, turns the World into a Forest of Wild Beasts, and is a Publick Enemy to Mankind.

Another Argument that may be brought to prove the Being of a God, are some extraordinary *Phænomena* that prove there are Invisible Beings, whose Power exceeds what we can observe of the Ordinary Course of Nature.

Such are these that follow; Apparitions, Witches, Demoniacks, Prodigies and Prophecies.

These, I confess, do not directly and fully prove the Being of a God: Because they may more immediately sometimes proceed from Beings, (tho' of greater Power than Men, yet) in Power inferior to the Supreme God.

If we can convince the Atheist, that there is an Invisible World, a World of Spirits, of Beings Superior to Man, and that do not depend on Matter; he will be almost forced to acknowledge One Supreme, Independent,

dent, Omnipotent Spirit, that is the Maker and Governor of that Invisible World. If we can thus take the Outworks, the Fortrefs in which he defends himself will not hold out long.

The Atheift seems well aware of this, for he starts at the very Mention of any of these extraordinary *Phænomena*, and musters up all his Forces to attack the first Appearance of any such Things.

And I confess, I cannot look upon any one Thing as a surer Sign that the Age we live in hath a Tangle of Atheism, than the so common Disbelief of such extraordinary Occurrences as are above the Power of Visible Nature.

But above all, I cannot but wonder at those that pretend to believe the Scriptures, by which all these Things are plainly asserted, and yet generally ridicule and run 'em down.

It cannot be deny'd, there are many false and feigned Stories of such Things; and therefore it well becomes Wise and Prudent Men, not to be too hasty in Believing 'em.

But it does not therefore follow, but there may be such Proof, and (no doubt)

doubt) sometimes is so, as may and ought to satisfy a wise and cautious Man of the Truth of some Matters of Fact of this Nature.

A Man would not presently conclude, because there are a great many Cheats that pretend fair, therefore there is no Truth among Mankind. Or, because there are a great many Fables interspers'd in History, that all History is fabulous. Or, that because there is a great deal of Bad Money, that there is none Good. Neither would one conclude, that because some People have been deceived by a weak and fearful Imagination, and some others have impos'd upon the World out of Design; that therefore the wisest, and most curious and considerate Men, that have sometimes pretended have received full Satisfaction as to these Things, have either themselves been deluded, or designed to impose upon Mankind.

But to speak more particularly as to Apparitions. We have so many Instances of 'em in Holy Scripture; (and we hope the Atheist himself will at least allow that to be as credible as other Histories :) Almost all Historians

ans so abound with 'em, and we have so many authentick and well-attested Instances of 'em in modern Times; that I think it is very absurd and unreasonable, wholly to deny, or suspect the Truth of 'em.

Nor is it necessary that we should be able, or fit we should be required to give an account of all the Difficulties that occur about 'em. As for instance, whether Apparitions ( supposing some of 'em to be true ) be the Spirits of Men departed, or any other Spirit. For what End and Design God may permit 'em to appear; whether upon any particular Reasons that might concern them or their Relations in this Life. What Power they have of assuming Bodies, whether Real or only Appearances; and of what Nature those supposed Bodies are; how they put 'em on, and what becomes of 'em when put off, whether they are condensed Vehicles, or of any other Nature: These and many other curious Questions, we are not bound or able to answer.

We know so little of that intermediate State of Souls departed, that we cannot pretend to say much about it.

This

This indeed we believe, that there is no occasion for such Apparitions now, either to make any new, or to confirm the old Revelation. *We have Moses and the Prophets ; a Revelation well attested and confirmed already ; and they that will not bear them, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.*

But yet we cannot say, but there may be occasion, ( so far as God sees fit ) by some such extraordinary Occurrences, to convince a Sceptical and Infidel Age, that there are invisible Powers, when they are so commonly deny'd and run down, by many that would be thought to have more Wisdom and Philosophy than the rest of Mankind.

For my part, I cannot see why those that believe there ever were Apparitions, ( as those that believe the Scriptures must ) should deny there are any such now ? Or why the Atheist, that pretends to build all Knowledge upon Sense, should deny such sensible Appearances, (if well and sufficiently attested) unless he will leave Mankind no Knowledge at all.

As to that Question, Whether there be any such thing as Witches or Wizards; that is, Persons that deal with the Devil, or have Familiar Spirits, I think there is no great Reason wholly to doubt of it.

I know the Common People are too forward in their Censures as to this Matter; and 'tis like, many may have been thought to be such, that are not; and 'tis not unlikely some may have been condemned by Rash Judges, or Ignorant Juries, without any just Occasion.

But still I think, when Scripture is so clear in the Point, when there are so many Authentick Histories of Persons that have been so accounted, even by the wise and sober part of Mankind, and that have confess'd themselves to be so, I think it is absurd wholly to deny it.

As to Scripture, I confess we are told the Word in the Original signifies Poysoners; and suppose it be so, that will not do the business: For what shall we say to those Scriptures that mention those that have Familiar Spirits? What shall we say to the Witch of *Endor*, consulted by King *Saul*?  
where

where we have an Instance of a Witch and an Apparition together. For whatever Spirit it was that appeared, an Apparition there was, and raised by a Witch; which is enough to our Purpose.

But it may be the Atheist will laugh at Scripture History; let him then enquire impartially into Matter of Fact, and I believe he will find Authentick Histories of those that have been counted even by the discreet and sober part of Mankind, Witches, that have by the Power of Evil Spirits done things above the ordinary Power of Nature.

As to the Question, Whether there be any Demoniacks or no? the Scripture, so far as we will believe that, is clear in the Matter; We read *our Saviour cast out many Devils, and suffer'd them not to speak, because they knew him.*

'Tis said indeed by some Writers, that this was a Common Form of Speech used by the *Jews* of that time, for those that were distemper'd in their Bodies. But besides that Scripture is clear against it, *Josephus* himself assures us, the *Jews* were of another Opinion.

And

And many Instances we find recorded by the most Learned Physicians, such as *Sennertus*, *Fernelius*, and Others; of Persons, that after all the best Judgment they could make, and Means they could use, they could not but judge to be possess'd by Evil Spirits.

Now when such Persons do not only discover Secrets, and declare Things past, but future also, and besides this, speak in Languages they had never learnt; we cannot think such to be mere Madmen, but rather that they are possess'd by Evil Spirits.

I confess, the *Roman Church* (tho' perhaps they may afford us some Instances of Persons too well acquainted with Evil Spirits; and some of their Pretended Saints have not without some Reason been suspected;) yet they have so tired the World with their Apparitions of Saints, and their pretended Demoniacks, that perhaps that has not been the least Occasion of the Scepticism of the present Age as to these Things; nothing being more common than for Men to run from one Extreme to another, from gross Superstition to open Infidelity.

Well, upon the whole, I think there is no Reason we should deny there have been, and sometimes still are Apparitions of Good or Evil Spirits; or that there are such Persons as we call Witches, Wizards, Magicians, or Conjurers, that deal with Evil Spirits, or Demoniacks that are possess'd by 'em.

And so far as there is Evidence enough to satisfy any Rational Man from these extraordinary Appearances, that there are Invisible Powers, we may be well prepared for, and strongly inclined to the Belief of God.

And particularly; As, if there be Good Spirits that are the Guardians of Mankind, it seems very probable that they were made by, and depend upon, and do Service to One Infinite, Eternal, Good Spirit: So on the other hand, if there be a great Number of Evil and Malicious Spirits, of so great Power and Might, 'twill be hard to suppose they should not do more Mischief in the World, but that there is an infinitely Wise, Good, and Powerful Spirit, that superintends the Affairs of the World, sets Bounds to the Power and Malice of such Evil Spirits,

rits, and without whose Permission they can do nothing.

I now come to speak something of Prodigies and Prophecies, but especially of those real and unquestionable Miracles recorded in the Holy Scriptures, done by *Moses* and the Prophets, and by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and his Apostles.

As to Prodigies; That such Wonderful Works have often happen'd in the World, as are above (what we can observe of) the ordinary Course of Nature, and must be attributed to some Invisible Powers of greater Might than any Agents we are acquainted with; we have the Concurrent Testimony of the best Heathen Authors. To assert these to be wholly fabulous, is little less than to call in question the Verity and Authority of all History.

Now these, as I said before, (at least many of them) do not directly prove a God; but they are a certain and undeniable Proof of such Invisible Powers, the Acknowledgment of which will naturally lead to the Belief of a God.

Another Thing fit to be insisted on in this Case, is, Prophecy. We find by Experience, that the Wisest Men, assisted by the Power and Sagacity of mere Nature, cannot certainly tell us what will be on the Morrow.

When we find therefore such Predictions made by any Men as come to pass, we may well conclude they were assisted by some extraordinary Inspiration, or Revelation.

The Heathen Writers, and particularly *Cicero*, argue thus: *Si est Divinatio, sunt Dii*; If there be any such thing as Divination, or Foretelling future Things, there must be Gods.

Now, of those Things that are told before they come to pass, there are Two sorts.

1. Such as are foretold but a little before, and whose immediate Causes are then in being.

And these (we can easily believe) may be foretold by the Natural Sagacity, or Knowledge, of Finite Spirits, whether good or bad.

For they, so far as God permits, by their Invisibilty and Agility, may be privy to the Designs of Rational and Free Agents, and may know Things  
that

that happen in far distant Places, or are design'd by the most Close Politicians; and so be capable of Foretelling Things beyond the Reach of the Wisest Men.

And this Kind of Prophecy is at least, as I said before, an Evidence of Invisible Rational Powers; the Extent of whose Knowledge far exceeds that of Mankind, and so may lead us a good way towards the Belief of One Infinitely Wise and Intelligent Spirit, that is, God.

Or, 2. The Things foretold may be such as are to come to pass in far distant Ages to come: And, as far as we believe any such Prophecies made and fulfilled, so far we must be convinced that there is a God.

For we cannot easily believe, any Finite Limited Spirit, can by any Natural Sagacity foretell Things to come to pass, at the distance of some Hundreds or Thousands of Years.

Now, not to mention the Pretences made by prophane Histories to some such Things, we that are Christians firmly believe, that there have been Men endued with such a Prophetick Spirit. Witness the Prophecies record-

ed in Scripture of the *Messias*, nay that of *Daniel* concerning the Succession of the Four Great Empires, so clear and plain, (as to some Things at least,) that some of the Ancient Writers against the Christians not being able to deny it, have been so bold as to pretend, they must be written after the Things were come to pass.

Now I take such Prophecies as these, to be a most irrefragable Witness of the Being of God; it being utterly impossible that any Man, or indeed any Finite Spirit, should foretell Things at such a distance, without some special Revelation from such an Infinite and Omniscient Being as we suppose God to be.

As to those true and proper Miracles that have been (if we believe our Religion) done by *Moses* and the Prophets of old, and by our Saviour and his Apostles under the Gospel-Dispensation; as they are certain Proofs of the Truth of our Religion, so they at the same time prove the Being of a God.

For whatsoever extraordinary Work proves the Truth of a Revelation from God, must at the same time  
 prove

prove the Being of that God whose Revelation it is.

Of these there are Two sorts.

1. Such Works as are above the Power and ordinary Course of Nature, tho' not above the Power of some Invisible Spirits, of greater Might than Mankind. Now these at least prove (as I have said before) an Invisible World of Spirits, and so lead us to the Belief of a God.

Or, 2. They are such Works as are above the Reach of any Creature, and so are proper only to God: And these are a direct and full Proof of the Being of a God.

Some (it may be) here may ask, Why Miracles are ceased, and are not wrought now as well as formerly, to confirm our Belief of a God?

To which I answer; That 'tis hard to say, whether they be totally ceased, or no.

But if they be so, 'tis because the Christian Revelation is sufficiently confirmed already, so that there is no Occasion for the Continuance of this Miraculous Power in the Church, for the Confirmation of the Truth of our Religion.

*Objections against the*

And as to the Belief of a God, the Existence and Attributes of God are so plain from his Works, that we need not any further Confirmation of the Truth of 'em.

However, so far as Miracles may be looked on as a Proof of a God, those that have been already wrought are a sufficient Evidence of this Truth.

I might here insist on some other Metaphysical Arguments to prove the Being of God, and which may have (if well consider'd) some Weight in 'em: But because it is my Design, as near as I can, to propose only such Arguments, and in such a way too, as may be obvious to the Understanding of all, I shall omit them, and proceed now to consider the Objections that are made by the Atheists against the Being of a God.

And I shall chuse to rank those Objections that are advanc'd by the Atheists, under the several Heads of the Attributes that those that Believe a God usually ascribe to him, and to which they seem most directly to be oppos'd.

And here in the first place, the Atheist is so bold as to assert, That we have no Idea of God at all. That the Word *God* is only an empty Sound, a Name that signifies nothing, a Word that has no Idea belongs to it.

This Bold Assertion is no less than an open Affront to the common Sense and Experience of Mankind.

For do we not find, that the Generality of Mankind have some such Notion of God as this, That he is a Being of Absolute Perfection, or a Being of the most Perfect Power, Knowledge, and Goodness? Or (if you will) yet more explicitly, A most Perfect Understanding, Being or Mind, existing himself from Eternity, and the Cause of all other Things: That he is himself Independent; that all Things else depend on him.

Is not this a sufficiently clear and plain Idea of God?

Do not we find by Experience, that there are Words in all Languages to signify such a Being? And that tho' those Words many times differ in Sound, as much as any one Word can well differ from another; yet the Idea and Notion they are apply'd to  
signi-

signify, is very much the same all over the World.

Nay, the Atheist himself cannot deny, that he has at least some such Notion of a God ; else how comes he to deny there is any such Thing ?

For the Argument returns upon himself ; and as he objects against the Theists, that when they talk of, and assert a God, they assert they know not what ; so 'tis no less true, that when the Atheist denies a God, if he have no Notion at all what is meant by the Word God, he denies he knows not what.

For certainly, 'tis as necessary to have some Notion of a Thing to the denying, as well as to the asserting the Existence of it.

Nay indeed, the Atheist in this Point confutes himself : For one Account he gives of the Opinion that there is a God, is a certain feigning Power in the Mind of Man, whereby it can by compounding and dividing its own Ideas, form a Notion or Conception of Things impossible, of Things that neither were, are, nor ever will be.

Now he himself must grant, there is in the Mind of Man a Power at least of forming an Idea of such a Being as we call God, as well as other Things; and therefore it must be a wild Assertion to say, we can have no Idea of God.

But I have spent too much time on so extravagant a Notion.

The Atheist insists further on another Argument much of the like Nature; and that is, what the Theists say and confess of God, That he is Incomprehensible; and so according to his wise Way of Reasoning, must be nothing.

To which I answer;

I. There is a great difference between Apprehension and Comprehension; between any Thing's being inconceivable, and incomprehensible; between knowing nothing of a Thing, and knowing all that is to be known of it.

We should count that Man very absurd that would assert, a good Anatomist knows nothing of the Body of Man, because he cannot exactly tell the Ends and Uses of every minute

Part of it. Or, of a Scholar, that he knows nothing of Natural Philosophy, because there are some *Phænomena* that baffle the best Philosophers. Or, of a Seaman, that he knows nothing of the Sea, because in some Places he cannot fathom the Depth of it.

'Tis true, we have no just and adequate Notion or Idea of the Essence of God; but we do and may clearly know many of his Attributes, at least that such Attributes do and must belong to such a Perfect Being.

2. 'Tis one thing to know the Existence, and another to know the Essence of Things.

Must we conclude we our selves have no Bodies, because we do not exactly comprehend the whole Oeconomy of an Animal? Or that we have no Souls, because we cannot discover the Naked Essence of a Spirit, nor how it is and can be vitally united to the Body? Or that we do not see and hear, taste and smell; because we cannot tell what it is in these External Objects that affects our Senses, or how they do it?

So in the Case before us, we have such weighty Arguments to prove the Being of a God, as may convince any Man that is not an obstinate Sceptick, and such as must prevail with us, tho' we knew much less of the Attributes of God than really we do.

This Truth, That there is a God, shines upon us from the Creatures like the Sun in the Firmament; but as if we gaze too much on that Glorious Luminary with our Bodily Eyes, we shall be so far from seeing into its Nature, that our Eyes may be dazzled, and we may lose our Sight by looking on it:

So here, tho' as the Apostle says, *Rom. i.* *The eternal Power and Godhead of the Divine Nature, be clearly seen by the things that are made;* yet we must not pretend to look too wishly upon that Glory, lest we become vain in our Imaginations, and our Minds be struck blind with the Lustre of it.

God is not Inconceivable, tho' he be Incomprehensible: We may know that he is, tho' we should not know what he is: We may know something of him, tho' far from all that is to be known: We may be assured of many  
of

of his Attributes and Properties, tho' we cannot have any adequate Notion of his Essence: We may know enough of those Attributes, if not to gratify our Curiosity, yet to ground our Worship and Obedience.

3. 'Tis not to be expected we should comprehend the Essence of God, when perhaps we do not perfectly understand the Essence of any thing in the whole World.

We have a great many sorts of material Objects daily before our Eyes, and we are apt to fancy we know a great deal of 'em; but 'tis in a great measure Prejudice, and we take things upon Trust, without a due and thorough Examination of the Grounds and Measures of our pretended Knowledge.

We hear and see, and taste and smell, we reason and discourse, we move and walk; and perhaps all this while, if we are put to it, cannot give any tolerable Account how we do so, nor of the true Reason how and why we move so much as one of our Fingers.

And shall we think to search into the Depths of the Divine Nature, or must we not believe there is a God, unless we can do so? The

The Atheist makes a mighty Noise against Spirits, Immaterial and Incorporeal Beings, as unintelligible things. But will he pretend to tell us exactly wherein the Essence of Matter, his darling Deity, consists ?

One calls it Extension, a Property that, for ought any one knows, belongs to empty Space as well as Body. Another calls it resisting Bulk, or impenetrable Substance ; but this seems to be only with respect to it self : There may for ought we know, be a great many sorts of Beings, that may penetrate the bulk of Matter.

The truth is, we are deceived by the Appearances that Matter makes to our Senses, into a fond Opinion that we know a great deal of it, when perhaps we may know as little of the true Essence of Body, as we do of Spirit.

There is no Reason therefore the Atheist should argue against the Being of God, because we own him to be Incomprehensible.

Another Attribute, or rather Mode of the Attributes of God, is that of Infinity.

This the Atheist quarrels with, and tells us, The word Infinite signifies nothing in that which is so called ; that he that calls any thing Infinite, does but attribute an unintelligible Name to a no less unintelligible Thing.

But if we consider what is truly meant by Infinite, when apply'd to God, we shall find neither the Name nor Thing is truly unintelligible.

Now there's a Negative and Positive Infinity.

A Negative Infinity.

So we say Number is Infinite, because whatever Number we suppose, we may by adding more Units make it greater. So we may say Matter is Infinite, because suppose what extent we will of it, we may yet add to it, and suppose a greater. So Time is Infinite, because if we suppose any definite Number of Years past, we may yet suppose more ; or if we suppose Millions of Ages to come, we may yet suppose more to succeed'em.

There is likewise a Positive Infinity, and this we apply to God.

By which we do not mean, that God is every thing that is or can be, for then every thing would be God,  
or

or at least a Part or Property of him ; which seems to be something like *Spinoza's* Notion of God.

For God (if I may so speak) tho' Infinite, is at it were limited and bounded by the Perfection of his Nature. He that should say God were a Body, would derogate from his Excellency and Perfection.

Nor when we call God Infinite, do we mean that every thing we attribute to God, is to be ascribed to him in the highest degree that can be suppos'd ; but in such a degree, as is consistent with the truest and highest Perfection.

Thus when we say, God is Infinite in Mercy ; we mean only such a degree of Mercy, as is consistent with the Perfection of God, as he is a Just Governour. For, as Justice without the Mixture of Mercy would be severe Tyranny, so Mercy without Justice would be Folly.

Thus, when we say, God is Infinite in Power ; we mean only, that God can do every thing that is possible and fit to be done ; every thing that does not imply a Contradiction to the Truth of Things, or to the Excellency

cellency and Rectitude of his Nature and Will.

So that we see, the Attributes of God are as it were bounded and limited by one another; and the Excellency of the Divine Nature is chiefly seen, in the Glorious Harmony that may be observed among them.

'Tis easy to see from what I have laid down, what is the true Notion of Infinite, when we apply it to God.

'Tis neither more nor less than absolute Perfection. When we say, God is Infinite in Power, we mean Perfect in Power; that he can do all Things that are possible and fit to be done: And so of the rest.

So that tho' (at first sight) this Term of *Infinite* may seem a little dark and intricate; yet, if we attend to the true Sense and Meaning of it, it will appear easy and obvious to the meanest Understanding.

But because this Term of Infinite is most especially (and perhaps most properly) applied to Two particular Attributes of God, his Immensity, and Eternity; I shall here take Occasion to say something of 'em. God's Infinite

nite Presence is his Immensity, and his Infinite Duration is his Eternity.

As to his Omnipresence, tho' we cannot pretend to understand the Manner how he is present in all Places, yet not only Scripture, but Reason assures us he is so.

That Objection the *Socinians* make against the Omnipresence of God, from impure and nasty Places, is frivolous; for it supposes God to have Sense as Animals.

The greatest Difficulty, is, to conceive God's Immensity, without Divisibility into Parts; and how the Divine Essence can be whole every where.

I think it is not safe for us to define any thing as to the *Modus* of this Immensity of God; and freely to confess, that upon this as well as other Accounts, the Nature of God is to us Incomprehensible. But

1. It seems most rational to conclude, That the most Perfect Being must be every where; not included in, or limited by any Place, nor excluded out of any.

2. It seems very clear, That such an Extension as we find Bodies have, that infers Divisibility into Parts, is an Imperfection, and below the Excellent and Perfect Nature of God. And therefore, if God be every where, he must be so in some more perfect Manner than that of Corporeal Extension: For the Essence of God, whatever it be, must be Simple and Indivisible.

3. The Difficulty of conceiving the Omnipresence of God without Divisibility, is no greater than that of conceiving a Finite Spirit, that we suppose to be in this or that Place, and not in any other at the same time.

For unless we suppose such a Spirit to be in a Mathematical Point, the same Objection about Divisibility will still return.

And therefore the *Socinians*, who own Finite Spirits, have not at all mended the Matter, by supposing God to be only in Heaven as to his Essence, and every where only as to his Power and Energy.

For besides, that it seems absurd to separate God's Power from his Essence,  
and

and no less absurd to make him a Finite and Limited Spirit ; there will be the same Objection against the Simplicity and Indivisibility of his Essence upon their Supposition, as there is upon our supposing him Omnipresent.

Unless ( as I think some of them are not very averse to ) they suppose God, as the *Anthropomorphites* did, to be only a vast Great Body of Human Shape ; and then indeed they effectually destroy both his Simplicity and Immensity.

Nay, it seems as inconceivable, how God's Power and Providence can be every where, when his Essence is confin'd to a certain Place ; as it is, how he can be every where whole and entire.

For if he be only in Heaven, we must either suppose that he hath Created an Infinite Number of Finite Spirits, to whom he leaves the Government of this Lower World : This was ( as we find in *Hesiod* ) the Opinion of some of the Ancient Heathen :

Or else we must suppose, he acts upon this Lower World only by the Mediation of Matter, as the Sun in the Firmament. And tho' this Sup-

position may be Conceivable as to some few *Phænomena*, yet we can no more conceive, that the whole Scheme and Extent of Providence can be accounted for this way, than we can have any just Notion of the Manner of the Omnipresence of God.

But there is a greater Difficulty yet ; and that is, How God can be said to Preserve and Uphold all Things in their Being, if he be not Omnipresent ?

For tho' we might suppose God to keep the World in Motion, by acting upon it at a distance by intermediate Matter ; yet 'tis utterly unconceivable, how he can by the Influence of any intermediate Matter, conserve Things in their Being, when he is not present with them.

I confess, according to the Opinion of those who think there is requisite a Positive Influx of an Omnipotent Cause, to Annihilation as well as to Creation ; this would not be so great a Difficulty.

But I rather incline to think, that without the continual Power of God exerting it self in Conservation, as it  
did

did at first in Creation, all Things would fall to their first Nothing.

And the Scripture seems to favour this Opinion, when it tells us, that God *upholds all things by the word of his Power*, Heb. 1. And the Apostle, *Acts 17.* says, *In him we live, and move, and have our being.*

Tho' the Greek Particle *ev*, according to Hebraisms very common in the New Testament, hath a great Variety of Signification; yet in this Place it seems to be very Emphatical, and to imply not only the general Conserving Power of God, but his Intimate Presence with all his Creatures.

However, as I said before, if we have this (as I think, Just) Notion of the Conserving Power of God, 'tis utterly impossible to conceive it can be, without his Omnipresence. The Atheist perhaps will be apt to start the forementioned Objection, against the Existence both of an Infinite and Finite Spirit too; but (I think) without all Reason: For when such an Extension as implies Divisibility is plainly an Imperfection, and the very Ground of those Mutations and that Corruption that Material Beings are

liable to; methinks 'tis highly probable there are nobler Beings, whose Essences are Simple and Indivisible. And if we allow any such Finite Spirits, notwithstanding this Objection from Extension and Divisibility; I see no Reason why we may not suppose an Infinite and Omnipresent One too.

As to the Attribute of Eternity, the first Question is, How we must conceive of the Eternity of God?

The Common Definition given of Eternity is, that it is *Interminabilis vitæ tota simul & perfecta possessio*.

The Schoolmen generally, and not a few of our modern Authors, interpret this Definition so, as to assert that there is no such thing as Succession of past, present, and to come, in the Eternity of God; but that it is *tota simul*, all at once, an Eternal *nunc stans*, an Eternal Now.

So that according to them, there must be an Essential Difference in the Duration of God, from that of the Creatures.

Others think that this, if it be not an absurd, yet it is at least an unintelligible Notion, and never to be cleared up, so as to make it intelligible to,

or of any Use against the Sceptick or Atheist. That we may as well suppose a Point commensurate to a Line, as such a *nunc stans* to a Perpetual Duration. That we may as easily suppose the Immensity of God to be a Point, as his Eternity an Instant.

These Men think it sufficient to assert, That God has as full and comprehensive a Knowledge of all Things past, present, and to come, with one View of his Understanding; and that Things to come are as much subject to his Knowledge, and his Powerful Guidance and Direction, as if they were all at once actually present to him. That as long as we secure the Immutability of God, and believe that God neither gets nor loses any thing by a Successive Duration; that he is the *same yesterday, and to day, and forever*; their Notion of Duration, or Time, will serve as well to all the Purposes of God's Excellency and Perfection, as that of the other.

And indeed it seems, that Time (as related to any particular Being) is nothing but the Duration of it; which seems to have no relation at all to the Rest or Motion, to the Mutability

lity or Immutability of the Subject of that Duration.

Only when we come to compare the Duration of one Thing with that of another, we are forced to measure their common Duration by some Regular Motion; by the certain, constant, and regular Process of which, we may judge of that Duration.

But if any judge this will not clear the Matter, and that there must be such an Essential Difference between the Duration of God and the Creatures, and that not to assert it would derogate any thing from the Excellency and Perfection of God; I shall not dispute the Point with them.

That God is Eternal, is plain; for Something must be Eternal, or else Nothing could be at all. If God be not Eternal, he can never be at all: For certainly, tho' if we suppose such an absolutely Perfect Being as God is, to be Eternal and Self-existent, we may easily grant him to be the Author and Cause of other Things: Yet if we suppose him not to be Self-existent, or (which is all one) Eternal, we are sure upon that Supposition, he can never be at all: It being utterly  
impos-

impossible, that any thing that was not before should come into Being without a Cause; and we are sure, nothing in the World can possibly be the Cause of such a Being as God is.

Nay indeed, the Atheist himself cannot have the Confidence to object any thing against the Being of God, upon account of our ascribing to him this Attribute of Eternity; when he must own, that something must be Eternal, and he himself attributes Eternity to dull and senseless Matter, the most imperfect of all those Things that deserve to be called Beings.

And therefore we find, the Atheists do not object against the Existence of a God, because we say he is Eternal; but that they may shew, there is no need of an Eternal God to solve the *Phænomena* of Nature; and that they may not be forced to acknowledge such an Eternal Being as God is, they ascribe this Eternity to other Things, which they substitute instead of a God. As

1. All sorts of Atheists agree in this, that they assert Matter to be Eternal, Ingenerable, and Incorruptible.

Some suppose the Atoms, or small Particles of Matter, by infinite Motions and Essays, at length by Chance fell into this Regular Frame. This was the *Hypothesis* of the *Epicureans*.

Others, much to the same purpose; That out of the Power of Matter were generated Forms and Qualities; as *Anaximander*.

Others; That not only Motion, but Life, Sense, and Understanding, is included in Matter, and Natural to it. These are called the *Hylozoists*, or those that assert Life belongs to Matter as Matter.

Others there are, that assert there is One Common Regular (tho' Senseless and Unintelligent) Plastick Nature; that forms Matter into this Regular Frame: And these were the Stoical Atheists.

As to the Eternity of Matter, I have these Two Things to assert against the Atheists.

1. That it seems very Rational to conclude, That Matter did not Exist from Eternity. 2. That if it did, it will be still as difficult to give any tolerable Account of the Regular Frame of the World, as it was before.

I. That

1. That it is much more probable, that Matter did not Exist from Eternity; but was Created by God. And that if we consider,

1. That it is agreeable to Reason to conclude, That there is but One Independent, Self-existent, Eternal Being. The very Notion of Independent and absolutely Perfect, which is very near allied to Self-existent or Eternal, seems to imply Unity in it self.

2. The very Supposal of Independency, Absolute Perfection, Omnipotence, seems to imply, That all other Beings must (as to their Existence) depend upon that One Independent, absolutely Perfect, Self-existent, or Eternal Being; and consequently, that Matter, as to its Existence, cannot be Self-dependent, but must originally come from that One Independent, Self-existent, Eternal Being, that we call God.

3. It is reasonable to think, the lower and meaner any thing is in the Rank of Being, the more likely it is to be dependent upon some more Noble Being.

Now mere dull and stupid Matter, divested of all noble Forms and regular Frame, *the rudis indigestaque Moles of Matter*, is the meanest of any thing we know in the Rank of Being, and therefore most likely as to its Existence, to depend upon some such Noble and absolutely Perfect Being as we suppose God to be.

4. Being it is most rational to believe there is but One Eternal, Self-existent, Independent Being, 'tis much easier to suppose that God created Matter, than to make a kind of God Almighty, as all Atheists do, of such a dull and stupid thing as Matter is ; and to suppose it some way or other ( no-body knows how ) not only to be That out of which, but by which all things were made.

Indeed *Spinoza* makes it plainly appear, that Matter is his God. He tells us, that Existence is included in the very Nature and Notion of Substance ; and that the Existence of it is an Eternal Truth ; that there is but one Substance : That Substance is infinite : That there neither is nor can be any Substance but God ; for no Substance can be produced, nor can one Substance pro-

produce another. That the essential Properties of Substance are Extension and Cogitation. And because he must assert but One God, he makes Substance indivisible, (that is, there is no Vacuum) and that it is not compounded of Parts; and that all the supposed Parts are only modally distinguished.

So that it's plain Old *Strato's* Ghost, tho he hath been dead so long ago, begins to walk again. This is but the old *Hylozoick* Hypothesis, ( with some absurd Additions, ) That Life, Sense, and Understanding is essential to Matter; set out with a great Pomp of precarious Definitions, and pretended Demonstrations, in the Mathematical way.

For when he tells us there is but One Substance; and that there is no Substance but God; and that the essential Attributes of this Substance are Cogitation and Extension; by this Substance he must mean (and 'tis plain from his Book he does so) Corporeal Substance or Matter to be his God.

I now come to the Second Thing, and that is, If we should suppose Mat-

ter to be Eternal, yet that will not at all supersede the necessity of believing a God: It being utterly impossible to give any tolerable Account of the Frame and Fabrick of this World, (tho Matter were Eternal) without the Supposal of a God.

It cannot be denied, but most of the Ancient Philosophers that we have any Acquaintance with, held the Eternity of Matter; such as *Plato*, *Aristotle*, and others.

They generally make Two Principles, Mind and Matter.

And if any should think so now, I should be far from charging them with Atheism, as long as they own and believe a most Perfect Intelligent Being, that presides over the Motions and Mutations of Matter, and by its powerful Operation produces out of it such an orderly and regular Frame, as that of the World that is now before us, and preserves and governs it when it is made.

And here it may be worth our while to consider, what Account the Atheist gives of this regular Frame of Things, without supposing a God.

And the first Supposition is that of *Democritus* and *Epicurus*, That all Things came not from any Mind and Understanding, but from Senseless Nature and Chance. That after the various infinite Motions of the Atoms and Particles of Matter, wherein all Tricks were tried, and all manner of Forms experimented; they came at last to Settle in this Orderly and Regular Frame of Things, we see before our Eyes.

But as to this *Hypothesis*, we may consider, That it may seem one of the most absurd Things in the World, to attribute that to mere Chance, in which there appear plain Footsteps of the Highest Wisdom.

*Tully* somewhere tells us, That the Order and Constancy of the Heavenly Motions, can neither be ascribed to Nature, nor Fortune; but is full of the highest Reason and Wisdom.

And in another place; What can possibly be clearer, says he, than when we look up to Heaven, that there must be some Deity, of a most excellent Mind and Wisdom, by whom these Things are govern'd? And again;

That all the Parts of the World are so framed, as they could neither be fairer to the Sight, nor better for Use.

And therefore he concludes; He scarce deserves the Name of a Man, that ascribes 'em to Chance, and does not see in 'em the Prints and Footsteps of the Highest Wisdom.

2. 'Tis utterly impossible, that such a Regular Frame, where there is such vast and infinite Variety of Noble Creatures, should ever arise by the mere Casual Motions of the Parts of Matter. It might, as far as we can see, move for endless Ages, before it could hit on any one such *Species* of Animals, as we find so vast a Variety of in the World.

We have a famous Passage even of Mr. *Hobbs* himself ('tis a little Wonder how it came to drop from him,) to this purpose; They, says he, that can look upon all the Parts of an Animal, and yet not see they were made and adapted to their several Offices by some Mind; *Ipsi profecto sine mente esse censendi sunt*, they must be thought not to be Men themselves. *Hobbs de Hom. C. I.* And

And if it be out of the Power of Casual Nature ever to light upon any such Regular System as that of any one Animal, how much more upon so infinite a Variety of Regular Systems of Matter, as are to be found in the Heavenly and Earthly Bodies we daily see, and others perhaps in other Orbs that we know nothing of.

If we see any excellent and regular Piece of Art, (as for instance, a fair Structure, or a fine Picture;) we presently think of, and admire the Skill of the Artificer, tho' we do not know who he is, or did not see him work.

How much more Reason is there we should believe the same of the Works of Nature, that are so incomparably more accurate and artificial, that all the Art that ever was shewn in the World (put it all together) comes not near that of the Structure of the meanest Animal; why, I say, should we not think there is a Divine Artificer, or an infinitely Wise God, tho' we do not see him work?

*Tully* says, If the Casual Concourse of Atoms can make a World, why can it not make a Porch, a Temple,

an House, or a City, which are so much easier than that ?

If any (some Hundred Years hence) should assert of this Noble and Stately Fabrick where we now are, That the Stones, Brick, Lime, Mortar, and Timber, met together by mere Chance, and rang'd themselves without the help of any Hands or Engines, without the Art or Contrivance of any Architect, into this Stately Regular Frame in which now they are; he would only deserve to be laugh'd at for his Folly.

Yet this is a Thousand times easier than the *Epicurean* Supposition, of the World's being made by Chance.

If all the Men upon the Vast Continent of *Europe*, *Asia*, and *Africa*, were struck blind on a sudden, and required to meet together in the Plains of *Mesopotamia*; how many Ages (if they could be supposed to live so long) might they wander up and down before it were done? Yet this is infinitely easier than what the *Democritick* Atheist would have us think is a possible and plausible Account of the Beginning of the World without a God; (*i. e.*) That blind and senseless Matter,

ter, should (tho' it were by never so many Millions of Casual Motions) ever meet and fix in so many Regular Systems, as we see in this Noble Fabrick of the World.

So that we may well conclude the Hypothesis of the *Epicurean* Atheist is utterly impossible.

3. How comes it to pass, that in so many Thousands of Years, as far as History informs us, no new Species of Being, suppose of Animals, have been produced?

Chance is so irregular a thing, that we may as well suppose it to produce Hundreds and Thousands more Species of Beings out of Matter, as those it is supposed to have produced already.

And therefore we may well conclude, that since no new Species have been, as far as we can tell, produced for so many Thousand Years, those that are already, depend upon the Will and Wisdom of some such Intelligent and Powerful Being as we suppose God to be; and not upon the mere casual Motions of blind and senseless Matter.

4. Nor is there any account to be given, why and how the World should so long continue in such a regular Frame as now it is, and we are sure for some Thousands of Years it has been, without any considerable Alteration.

If Chance had made the World, in all probability Chance would long e're now have marr'd it too.

Nor is there any Reason to think, if the World by some unimaginable Chance had sometime hit into this regular Frame, that it should have continued so, tho it were but the space of one Day, much less for so many Thousand Years; and that it does so, upon the *Epicurean* Supposition, is the greatest Chance in the World, next to the making of it by Chance.

For since by the very Supposition, Matter is indifferent to all Motions, and its Motions are merely casual, the Motions of the Atoms and Particles of any quantity of Matter, that by Chance has hit into a regular System, must be still casual; and there will be a much greater Tendency in the Motions of that particular System to a Dissolution of the System, than there

there was or could be in the general casual Motions of Matter to the making of it.

Indeed the *Epicureans* talk of a certain Gravitation in Matter, that they suppose is the Principle of its Motions: But this is in a sort to suppose the World made before it was made: Nor could there be any Gravitation of Matter, or Tendency in it to a Center, when probably there were no Centers; nor could the World be made by Chance, without a great many other sorts of Motion, besides that of Gravitation, or a direct Tendency of Motion towards some Center.

If the Atheist shall say, The present Frame of the World is most easy and natural, and therefore continues as it is; how will he prove it, or what Reason can he give why it is so?

I may with much more Reason say, That on his Supposition there is no such thing as Nature: For Nature, in the lowest Sense and Signification of it, must denote a fixt and regular State, and process of Motions, of Generations and Corruptions; but upon the *Epicurean* Supposition there can be no such thing.

If we mean indeed by Nature, a distinct Powerful Intelligent Principle, that by its Power and Energy preserves and continues the present Frame of the World ; this is what we would have the Atheist believe ; *i. e.* a God. But then we say, that if the World cannot be continued in this beautiful and regular Frame, without such an Intelligent Principle as they may call Nature, and we call God ; much less could it be made without it. But if we could suppose, that by the infinite variety of the casual Motions of the Parts of Matter, there could in some lucky Moment happen such a regular Frame as that of this World ; yet it could scarce continue a Moment, without such an Alteration as would be destructive of the Beauty and Harmony of it.

And therefore we cannot but think *Des Cartes* much too bold, when only supposing that God had impressed upon Matter at first such a quantity of Motion, he takes God along with him no further, but pretends to tell us how the World might be made, or rather make it self.

And tho' we cannot accuse him of Atheism, yet we think his Hypothesis has too great a Tendency to it, and borders too much on this *Epicurean* Account of the making of the World.

Nor would I have any think the Time is ill spent in exposing this Hypothesis: For tho' our Modern Atheists do not so much insist on the *Epicurean* Scheme directly and explicitly, yet it is easy to shew that all the other Atheistical *Hypotheses* that shut God out of the World, must be derived from and grounded upon this.

And yet the *Democritick* Atheists are so sensible how weak and insufficient this Account is of such a Glorious and Regular System as that of this World, that they tell us for their Excuse, there are infinite Worlds besides this; tho' (it may be) not one of them so exactly uniform and regular as this is. This is *gratis dictum*; 'tis enough for us, that we know such a World as this we live in could never be made by mere Chance, without some Wise and Powerful Being guiding and directing the Motions of Matter.

The next Atheistical *Hypothesis*, is, that which derives all Things from Dead and Senseless Matter, by way of Forms and Qualities.

This is very much of the same Nature, and liable to the same Exceptions with that of the *Democritick* or *Epicurean* Atheists.

For if these supposed Forms and Qualities be really any thing distinct from Matter, they must either proceed from some distinct, intelligent, generating Principle: And if the Atheist suppose this, he must suppose a God :

Or they must be made by some Native Energy, that is supposed to be innate in Matter. And this Supposition falls in exactly with the *Hylozoick Hypothesis*, that makes Life it self Natural to Matter; and is to be spoke of when we come to that *Hypothesis*. Or else these Forms and Qualities must be educed out of the Power of Matter; and this must still be (if we suppose no God) by the mere Casual Motions of the Parts of Matter: And then they must be supposed to be only so many Appearances to our Senses, arising

sing from the infinite Variety in the Figure, Site, and Motion of the Parts of Matter. And this falls in with the *Epicurean Hypothesis*: So that there is no Occasion I should say any thing more of the Absurdity of this *Hypothesis*.

The Third Supposition is, That all Matter is endued with a Natural Plastic Life, necessary, ingenerable, and incorruptible.

This Supposition has indeed a close Connection with Atheism: For if Matter have such a self-active Power, as to improve it self into Life, Sense, Conscious Understanding, and Self-enjoyment; there needs no God.

This is indeed a very wild Assertion, and therefore tho' very anciently affirmed by *Strato*, yet never gain'd any Reputation, till lately reviv'd by some modern Atheists.

This is indeed to suppose Matter perfectly wise, when it has no Knowledge at all, as far as we can discern by Experience and Observation. To suppose Matter, and every Particle of it, to understand all its own Congruities and Capacities; which we must sup-

suppose, if we suppose it to form it self into Plants or Animals, is indeed to suppose it to have a greater and more perfect Knowledge before its Formation into the several *Species* of Being, than it has after, and to know that which the most Rational Beings know little or nothing of.

Nay indeed, if all Matter as Matter is endued with Sense and Understanding; what Account can be given why the whole Mass of Matter should not become Animals, and we should have nothing but Sensitive or Rational Beings in the World?

Nay, we might drive this a little further, and say as some have done, That the World it self may be a great Animal, or (as *Spinoza* seems to suppose) a God.

But since all these Suppositions are so absurd in themselves, and so plainly contrary to Experience; we may well conclude, That Life, but especially Sense and Understanding, are distinct from Matter, and above the Power of it.

But of this I shall say more in another Place.

The Fourth Atheistical Supposition is that of some of the *Stoicks*; That there is One Common, Regular, and Methodical, (but Unintelligent) Plastick Nature, that is the Cause of this Regular Frame of Things.

If they mean by Plastick Nature, the Course of Nature, they must return to some One of the foregoing Suppositions; That all Things were generated, either by mere Chance, and the fortuitous Motions of Matter, or by some Native Life and Energy in Matter; and so they assert nothing distinct from the rest of the Atheists.

If they mean by Plastick Nature, some Active Principle distinct from Matter; I think, they in effect give up the Cause of Atheism. For,

1. It is as impossible to suppose, that any such Unintelligent Plastick Nature should be so constant and regular in its Operations, as we see it must be by the Frame of the World; without depending on, and being guided by some Superior Intelligent Nature; as it is to suppose the World made by Chance, or to proceed from any Native Life and Energy of Matter.

2. If

2. If we can suppose One Vegetative, Unintelligent, Plastick Nature, distinct from Matter; why may we not suppose such a Rational, Intelligent, Powerful Being as God is? And to be sure, 'tis much easier to believe such a Being to be the Cause of such a Regular Frame as that of this World, than such a Blind and Senseless Nature as the Stoical Atheists suppose to be the Cause of it.

And thus I have said something very briefly of the several Accounts the Atheist gives of the Existence of this World without a God: And upon the whole it will appear, there is no Reason at all to believe (from what Account the Atheist gives of the Existence of the World) that there is no God; and that we may well conclude, that there is a God, that is the Creator, and Maker of the World.

And I should now come to speak of those Objections, that are made by the Atheist against what we attribute to God, as we suppose him to be the Maker of the World.

But before I do this, I might speak a word or two, whether the World it self, not only as to the Matter, but

as to the Form of it too, may not be supposed to be Eternal.

Now as to this Eternity of the World, there may be two Suppositions; the one supposes a God, and the other not.

I. Some that have asserted the Eternity of the World, seem to have supposed it to be so, by way of Emanation from the Divine Nature, as Light is from the Sun.

This seems to have been the Opinion of *Aristotle*; who tho he asserts the Eternity of the World, yet so plainly in other places owns a God as the Cause of it, that one cannot but think he was of the Opinion, That the World it self was Eternal, by way of Emanation from God.

This is indeed an absurd Opinion, as making God a necessary Agent, and discarding all Liberty and Freedom in the Will of God, as to the Creation of the World. But however, they that hold this, cannot so properly be called Atheists.

Some have pretended likewise, That the World might be in the Form it now is, from Eternity.

But

*Objections against the*

But this seems absurd; it being hard to conceive an Eternal Succession of any sort of Motions, ( for instance, those of the Heavens, ) or of Generations and Corruptions, such as those of Animals on Earth: Our Thoughts will naturally lead us to some beginning of 'em.

'Tis true, we can easily have a Notion of the Eternal Existence of such an immutable Being as God is; that is, that there never was a Time when he was not: But it must be confess'd, that it is very hard to apply this to any Succession of Motions and Generations; and therefore it appears at first sight absurd to suppose the World, in the state it now is, was Eternal.

I confess I cannot insist upon this as alone an infallible Demonstration of the Being of a God, and the Creation of the World: But I must say it is much easier to apprehend the Eternity of such a Perfect and Immutable Being as God is, than to apply that Notion to the World collectively consider'd, or to any Beings that are a part of it; the very Frame and Constitution of which suppose many Motions and Mutations, which in their own Nature  
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imply a Beginning some time or other of such Motions and Mutations.

And therefore I cannot but think (tho we should set aside Revelation) it is much more rational to conclude the World had a Beginning, and that it some time or other was made by such an infinitely Powerful and Wise Being as we suppose God to be.

But here the Atheist makes an Objection against the Possibility of Creation, by alledging that common Rule in Philosophy, *Ex nihilo nihil fit*; Out of nothing can be made nothing.

As to which Maxim, we may first consider what is the Sense of it. And 'tis this; That no real Essence can begin to be, that was not before, without some material Cause, or without some preexistent Matter, out of which it must be made. And in this true Sense of the Proposition we may justly believe it is a false Proposition. For,

1. Many of the Ancient Philosophers did not think so. 'Tis plain, many at least of the *Platonists* did believe Human Souls, as that they were Essences distinct from the Body; so, that they were created by God out of nothing; that is, they were made  
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without any preexistent Matter out of which they were made.

And therefore they must needs understand that Maxim in Philosophy, *Ex nihilo nihil fit*, Nothing can come from Nothing, only of those Productions that are made according to the ordinary Course of Nature; none of which are made without some pre-existent Matter.

2. I think there is a great deal of Reason we should distinguish between what is done by the ordinary Course and Power of Nature, as now established; and what may be, or is not impossible to be done, by an Absolute, Unlimited, Infinite Power. It is not very reasonable for us to pretend to determine what can or cannot be done by the most Perfect Power.

3. And this will appear the more reasonable, if we consider we can never prove, That to suppose Something to be produced from Nothing (that is, some real Essence to begin to be, that was not before, without any pre-existent Matter, by the Power and Energy of some Cause,) implies a Contradiction.

'Tis true, it implies a Contradiction, that a Thing should be and not be, at the same time; but not at all, that a Thing that was not before should begin to be; if there be (as for ought we know there may) some Cause of sufficient Power to produce it, tho' there be nothing out of which it is made.

These Arguments will be the more cogent, if we consider there are a great many Operations in Nature, that as they have been all along thought by the best Philosophers to be above the Power of Material Beings, so may be sufficient to convince a Rational Man, that there are Substances distinct from Matter, and that were not made out of it, but probably by the immediate Power and Energy of some infinitely Powerful Being, such as we believe God to be.

And if we are convinced that there are such Immaterial Beings, distinct from Matter, created out of Nothing by some infinitely Powerful Spirit; we may much more easily suppose, Matter it self, (that is a much less noble and excellent Being, than those other by their Operations appear to  
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be;) was at first made out of Nothing by the Power of God.

But of these I shall speak in another Place.

We are apt indeed, in our Disputes both in Philosophy and Divinity, to run up every thing that we do not understand the *Modus* of, to a Contradiction; as the Atheist will (no doubt) do all Creation out of Nothing, from this received Principle in Philosophy, that *ex nihilo nihil fit*; Nothing can come out of Nothing.

This comes from our want of considering; That Contradictions are only clear in those Propositions, whose Terms being truly understood, the Assertion does destroy the very Supposition. As if we should say, The Whole is less than the Part: This (if we mean it in the same respect) plainly implies, the Whole not to be the Whole, and the Part not to be a Part.

But there are (and may be) Ten Thousand Things, possible or impossible, that we do not know enough of 'em to say, whether they be so or not; we cannot disprove 'em, by shewing that they imply a Contradiction.

Of

Of this kind, I suppose the Thing in question to be. For tho' it be a justly received Truth, That according to the Natural and Ordinary Course of Generations and Corruptions, Nothing is made out of Nothing, or without Pre-existent Matter; yet there is no Reason at all we should carry this so far, as to deny Creation out of Nothing, to an Infinite or most Perfect Power.

Nay indeed, the Atheist is guilty of more absurd Suppositions than this.

The *Epicurean* Atheist, that asserts the World was made by the Casual Motions of Matter, if he do not suppose such a Principle as God is, he must suppose that Motion originally came from Nothing; or that either all the whole Mass of Matter, or at least some Parts of it, contains in it a self-moving Principle; which yet he denies to God, the most Perfect Being.

Those Atheists that suppose Forms and Qualities, must either fall in with the *Epicureans*, and confess they are only Modifications of Matter; or they must suppose 'em generated out

of Nothing, and corrupted again into Nothing.

Those that suppose Life, Sense, and Understanding to result from Matter, do (in effect) suppose it to arise from Nothing; the noblest and highest Thing in the World, to come from the basest and meanest: When we see plainly by Experience, that the noblest and most active Kinds of Matter have no such things.

Those that assert a blind, senseless, Plastick Nature, in effect assert, That the Highest and Noblest Effects of Wisdom result from Nothing; at least from a Cause utterly insufficient for the Production of 'em; that is, from a mere dull, lumpish, senseless Nature.

And all this must be supposed to be done without any efficient, at least any intelligent Cause at all: Which one would think should be a wilder Supposition, than to suppose that Something may come from Nothing, by the Power and Efficacy of an Infinite or most perfectly Powerful Being, such as we believe God to be.

Well,

Well, (in short) 'tis certain, Nothing can come from Nothing, without some Powerful Efficient Cause: But that there is no Cause so Perfect in Power, as to be able to produce Something out of Nothing, or out of no Pre-existent Matter, may be asserted, but can never be clearly proved by the Atheist.

And here it may not be amiss, to say something of that which those that believe a God ascribe to him; That he is the Original of Motion; as to which, I think, we may assert,

That an Infinite Series of Dependent Motions is impossible; and that it is a false Assertion of *Spinoza* and others, That whatever Body is moved, must be moved by another, and that by another, and so on without end.

For no Number of Motions can be actually infinite; we must at last come to a Beginning of Motion.

And therefore, wherever the Motion begun, or whencesoever it originally came; whether we suppose it from a Body, or some other more Noble Being, that Being must have in itself a self-moving Principle.

Now sure, it is much more reasonable to ascribe the Original and Beginning of Motion to such a Perfect Being as we suppose God to be, than to such a dull and senseless Thing as Matter.

And 'tis so far from being true, (as the Atheist boldly asserts,) That a Spirit cannot act upon Matter; that (according to the truest Idea we can get of Matter) 'tis impossible that any Part of Matter can be the First and Original *Motor*, or begin any Motion, without being first moved by some Being or other, that has in it a self-moving Principle; which to all appearance Matter cannot have.

But here some object, that Motion is Natural to Matter.

Here we must enquire, What those that assert this mean, when they say, Motion is Natural to Matter?

Do they mean, that Motion is Natural to all Matter? Then must all Matter be naturally and constantly in Motion, and so there would never be any Rest in any Parts of Matter, and consequently there could be no Productions in Nature, nor any fixed State of Material Things.

Do they mean, that Motion is Natural to some Parts of Matter; as for instance, to the finer and more subtile Parts of it, such as *Cartesius's Materia primi Elementi*?

This may easily be granted, when there is really such a subtile Matter: But it may justly be question'd,

1. Whether such subtile Particles be originally in Matter? Or whether they did not rather come from that Motion that was impress'd upon, and conserved and carried on in the vast Bulk of Matter, by the first Original of Motion, that is, God? Or

2. Whether it be any thing to the Atheists purpose to assert this, when 'tis so plain to Reason, that this subtile fiery Matter, supposed to pervade all the grosser Bulk of Matter, cannot do any thing without the powerful Influence of some Higher Being, towards the Making such a World as this is.

3. To be sure, this *Materia subtilis*, that *Cartesius* supposes to be in perpetual Motion, (and therefore, if Motion be Natural to any Matter, 'tis to this;) could never it self have been generated by the mutual Attrition of the grosser Parts of Matter, without the

the special Influence of some Superior Being, carrying on those Motions.

But (it may be) those Men that assert Motion to be Natural to Matter, will say, they mean not actual Motion, but a *Conatus*, or Tendency to Motion in Matter.

If they mean by this Tendency to Motion, only a Natural Fitness or Aptitude for Motion; this is easily granted: But then this is nothing to the present Purpose, and must still suppose some Original *Motor*, some Original of Motion distinct from Matter.

If they mean something more yet by this *Conatus* or Tendency to Motion, and suppose this to be in all Matter as Matter; either they must suppose an equal Tendency of the Parts of Matter, every way at the same time; and then this will be but to suppose all Matter to be perfectly at Rest, and that there can be no such thing as Motion in Matter.

For when there is an equal Tendency of one Part of Matter this way, and of the adjacent Part of Matter the contrary way, and so of every Part of Matter every way; this is indeed to suppose there is no Tendency  
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to Motion any way; or at least if there be, 'tis to no purpose, and can never produce any Motion at all in Matter. This is much like a late Notion and Assertion in Philosophy, That every thing attracts every thing; which is in effect to say, that nothing attracts any thing.

Or if they suppose the Parts of Matter to tend one way more than another, they must suppose all the Parts of Matter to tend the same way: And tho' they should suppose this, 'tis very questionable, whether they can produce any Motion, without some *Vis impressa*, which supposes an Original of Motion.

Or if we could suppose any sort of Circular (or Direct) Motion to be begun in Matter, by any Native Gravitation of it, or such a Tendency of Matter directly to some Center; this can never be supposed to produce any such Mixture of Matter, as we plainly see is necessary to the Production of the several Species of Beings in the World.

Indeed, if we should grant all that some modern Philosophers do or can assert, or even suppose, concerning  
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Motion's being Natural to Matter ; we are come no further than the very Beginning of the *Epicurean Hypothesis*.

And therefore this Supposition will not at all serve the Atheist, unless he could shew it possible, that the mere Casual Motions of the Parts of Matter, can (without some Intelligent Mind, and All-powerful and Wise Being) ever hit upon so Orderly and Regular a Frame as that of this World.

So that admit what Supposition we will, 'tis clear enough, that the World was Created ; and that it could not ever come to be as it is, without some infinitely Wise and Powerful Being, such as we believe God to be.

And thus I have done with those Objections that the Atheists make against the Belief of a God, as to his being supposed to be the Creator of the World, and (which is much the same) the Original, the Source and Fountain of all the Motions of it.

I should now come to consider those Objections which are made against the Being of a God, with respect to another Attribute that all that believe a God ascribe to him, and that is Om-  
niscience,

niscience, or perfect Knowledge and Wisdom.

But because the Atheist must own there is such a thing as Knowledge and Wisdom in the World, and yet is unwilling to own a God, that is, a Being Omniscient, or of most Perfect Knowledge and Wisdom, he must some way or other ascribe this Knowledge to meer Matter, and assert there is no such thing as immaterial or incorporeal Beings in the World.

Before I proceed any further therefore, I must say something as to that grand Objection the Atheist makes against the Being of a God, as he is supposed to be a Spirit, or an incorporeal and immaterial Being.

Let us consider therefore what is the Opinion of the ancient and modern Atheists as to this Matter.

Both *Plato* and *Aristotle*, *Sextus Empiricus*, and *Lucretius*, assure us, there were many of Old that thought there was but one Nature; that there is nothing but Body, and that all other things are but the Passions and Affections of that.

So that our modern Atheists are not the first Inventors of this Notion, they only  
only

only tread in the Steps of the Ancients; only they have a little refin'd upon some of their Notions, and exprefs themselves with something more of Confidence in the Matter.

Thus Mr. *Hobs* tells us, That to assert immaterial Substance, is not Error, but Nonsense; that to talk of incorporeal Substance, is as much as to say an incorporeal Body; and because he must for Fashion sake own a God, he asserts God to be a most pure, simple and corporeal Spirit.

*Spinoza* asserts as much, tho' not in exprefs Terms, yet in just Consequence, when he tells us there is but one Substance; that there is no Substance but God, whose essential Attributes are Extension and Cogitation; so that according to him there must be no Substance, but Matter, only one of the essential Properties of this Matter is Cogitation as well as Extension.

But on the contrary, we believe that there is in the World a Substance or Essence distinct from and much more noble and excellent than that of Matter or Body, and particularly that there is one infinite and most perfect Essence or Substance that we call God.

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'Tis plain the Scripture tells us that God is a Spirit, and speaks every where of Angels or good Spirits, and Devils or evil Spirits, of the Souls of Men as distinct from the Body.

Nor can what either Mr. *Hobbs* some Time ago, or some other later Authors have said to elude those places of Scripture that speak of these things, so much as put any tolerable Gloss on their Opinion.

And 'tis no less plain that the Generality of the ancient *Greek* and *Roman* Philosophers own immaterial or incorporeal Substances, and plainly distinguish between Mind and Body, between the passive and active Principle.

And even those of them that seem to think Matter to be eternal, yet plainly own there must be a powerful active Principle they call Spirit or Mind, distinct from Matter, without which Body or Matter would remain a dull unactive and stupid thing, incapable of ever arriving at any regular Frame.

And whereas Mr. *Hobbs* pretends this Notion proceeded only from the abuse of abstract Names, and of *Aristotle's* Philosophy about Forms and Qualities,  
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'tis to be observ'd that this Opinion prevailed among the best Philosophers, long before *Aristotle* himself was born; much more, long before his Philosophy had such a Vogue in the World.

It was the common Opinion under the ancient and truly genuine Atomick Philosophy, long before *Democritus*, *Leucippus* or *Epicurus*, corrupted that Philosophy, by pretending to make a World by the meer casual Motion of Matter without a God.

Sure if incorporeal Substance were such a nonsensical or contradictory thing as these Gentlemen make it, it would scarce have been so generally received by the best Philosophers, both Heathen and Christian, so long ago.

We have a late Author that (being to prove the Mortality of the Soul, or rather that there is no such thing as a Soul in Man, distinct from the Body) throws off this Argument, by ridiculing the Notion of Soul or Spirit, as an old Heathenish and Popish Notion; as if it had been only a Piece of Priestcraft, for a pretence to kindle the Chymical Fire of Purgatory to make Gold.

But we may suppose he takes this Course, because he saw it would be hard upon him, to dispute not only against the Reason of the Thing, and Scripture too, but against the commonly received Notions of the Wisest Men, and Best Philosophers, (both Heathen and Christian) from the first History we have of Philosophy, down to this present Time.

And to make such Insinuations pass the easier upon Mankind, we may observe another Artifice our modern Corporealists make use of; and that is, (in their Books) to write a long Chapter of the Power of Prejudices; whereby they would insinuate, that all the Old-received Notions of Incorporeal Substances distinct from the Body, are only Prejudicate Opinions, Notions taken upon trust, and built upon the Authority of Others.

And you must take it for granted, that these Free Thinkers have reason'd, forsooth, without the least Prejudice, and have set Philosophy free from its Bondage to the Authority of Men.

Well, be this as it will; let us come to the Thing it self.

It is a very unfair and uncertain way of arguing, to dispute against the Existence of a Thing, because we have no just Notion and Conception of it. For there are a Thousand Things that may be, and ('tis likely) really are, that we have no adequate Idea of, if any at all, and therefore we cannot argue certainly about 'em, whether they be or not.

Nay, those Things that are now most obvious, if we had been created without such Faculties as give us notice of 'em, would probably have appeared impossible. Thus, What Idea could a Man born blind have of Colours; or a Man without Ears, of Sound; or one that never had any Taste, of Savour?

If any shall say, We might be convinced of these Things by Reason, and the Information of other Men: The Case is so here. We not only have the concurrent Testimony of the best and wisest Men in all Ages, that there are Incorporeal Beings; but we are as sure as we well can be in any such Case, that the Faculties we plainly see in some Intelligent Beings, are above the Power of mere Matter.

And

And we are no less sure, that such a Glorious Regular Frame as that of this World, could neither make it self, or come to be without a Cause, by any Native Power in Matter, or the Casual Motions of it, nor be made by any thing that is obvious to Sense; but must require such an infinitely Wise and Powerful Being as God is.

2. Upon strict Enquiry we shall find, we have no just Notion of the true Essence of Matter it self, farther than that we are sure that such and such Properties (that we plainly perceive in it) must have some Subject in which they inhere, and that must be the Support of 'em.

3. It is the Opinion of some great Philosophers, That there are such Properties as cannot belong to Body, that yet are as plain, and clear, and intelligible, as those that Sense and Experience tell us are the Properties of it.

The Properties of Matter that are obvious to our Observation, are these, Extension, Divisibility, Figure, Capacity of Motion, Impenetrability.

The Properties that are commonly ascribed to a Spirit, are, Self-penetration, Self-motion, and Indivisibility: And, with respect to Matter, Penetrating, Moving, Altering Matter, and being United to an Organical Body.

As to the Indivisibility of a Spirit, they object, That 'tis impossible to conceive such a Being without Extension, or that without Divisibility into Parts. But

I think, 'tis clear, that Divisibility into Parts is an Imperfection; and an Essence Simple, and Uniform, and Indivisible, and consequently not naturally subject to Dissolution, by any Difunion or Disjunction of Parts, must be more perfect than any Material Things can be.

2. There is no greater Difficulty in conceiving a Simple Essence, without such Extension or Quantity, as must imply its being divisible into Parts; than there plainly is in conceiving the Divisibility of Matter *in infinitum*.

We find, those that are thoroughly vers'd in Mathematicks, assert roundly, That Matter is (and must be) divisible *in infinitum*; and that this

is as demonstrable as any thing in the World can be, tho' to vulgar Apprehension this seems to imply, there must be as many Parts in a Cube of an Inch Diameter, as there is in the whole Body of the Earth.

All that is to my purpose, is, Whatever Demonstration there may be given of the infinite Divisibility of Matter, our Understanding must be as much at a loss in the conceiving of it, as it can be in conceiving a Spirit, or a Simple Essence without such Extension as implies Divisibility.

Another thing commonly attributed to a Spirit, is, Self-motion, and the Moving of Matter.

Now the Atheist has no Reason to object against this, when he himself ascribes it to Matter.

But if Self-motion be impossible in Matter, as no doubt it is, there must be something such as we call Spirit in the World, or there could never be any such thing as Motion.

Most Philosophers (and particularly *Des Cartes*) allow Matter to be originally Uniform: So that if we suppose either Motion or Rest to be Natural to Matter, it must be so to all Matter.

If we suppose Motion Natural to all Matter, it must be absolutely necessary, and so there could never be any Regular Productions out of Matter; for the same necessary Motion that might happen to make 'em, would unmake 'em again.

If (as is more reasonable) we suppose Rest originally Natural to Matter, and that it was only endued with a Capacity of Motion; 'tis plain, Motion could never be begun, without some higher Principle than Matter.

So that which soever of the two we suppose, there must at once be supposed some infinitely Powerful Being, that must either begin Motion in Matter, or guide, direct, stop, and bound the irregular Motions of Matter, in order to the Production of Beings out of it.

Indeed, it may not be so proper to call this Power of Motion in an Infinite Spirit, Self-motion, because it is supposed to be Omnipresent; but when this is communicated to a Finite Spirit, as we have no Reason to doubt it may be, 'tis proper enough to call it Self-activity, or Self-motion.

And

And'tis much easier to conceive this of a Simple, Undivided Essence, such as we suppose a Spirit to be, than of any Part of Matter.

But they object, A Spirit cannot move Matter, because it is supposed to penetrate it, and cannot act upon the Surface of it.

To this I answer;

'Tis confess'd, that Matter acts upon Matter by its Surface: But it cannot do this without a *Vis impressa*, which must originally come from some higher Principle than mere Matter.

If we grant this, it takes off the Objection; and we ought not to suppose a Spirit cannot act upon Matter, (when we plainly see it must do so) because we cannot understand how it takes hold of it, or acts upon it.

Nay indeed, it seems reasonable to suppose, that Spirits, as their very Nature gives 'em a Capacity of penetrating Matter, so (as they are Free Agents) when they please they may have a greater Power over any Part of Matter, than any Material Thing can be supposed to have.

Nay, if those that object this will suppose with us that Spirits can penetrate Matter, I think they may easily believe, that they have a greater Power over Matter by this Penetration, than they could have, if they could, like Bodies, act only on the Surface of it.

And it seems reasonable to suppose, that upon the account of this very Penetration of Matter, there may be a closer Union of Spirit with Body, than there can be of any Parts of Matter between themselves.

And this leads me to another Property of a Finite Spirit, that it may be united to an Organical Body.

It was the Opinion of some Ancient Philosophers, That only God the Supreme, and Infinite, and most Perfect Spirit, was without all Body; and that all Created Spirits had some kind of Bodies, some Terrestrial, others Aerial, or Ætherial, with which they were united, and in which they acted.

But this ( will the Atheist say ) is impossible, that such a pure simple Essence, as we suppose a Spirit to be, should

should be united with such a gross Thing as Matter is.

Now before we grant the Atheist this, we request him to tell us, how the Parts of Solid Matter (such as Wood and Stone) are so closely united?

What Hooks or Cement is the Cause of this Union? And since those must have Parts, (for Matter is divisible *in infinitum*;) What unites those Parts together?

Is it only close Contact of Surface? The most Solid Bodies (as appears to Experience) have many Interstices and Vacuities, that are capable of being fill'd with, and are pervious to some more subtile and Heterogeneous Matter.

Is it (as *Cartesius* seems to suppose) only Rest that does it? This likewise is against Experience.

So that 'tis plain, we know as little of the true Cause (or *Modus*) of the Union of the Parts of Matter, as we do of the Uniting of Spirit with Matter.

Will the Atheist say, there is no such thing as Solid Matter, because he knows nothing of the Cause of that Solidity? So

So that as far as we can judge, the Properties that are commonly ascribed to a Spirit, or Immaterial Substance, are as conceivable and accountable, as those that are taken for granted to belong to Matter.

But the Atheist (it may be) will say, 'Tis needless to suppose such a Thing as Immaterial Substance, or Spirit; because all the *Phænomena* may be solv'd by mere Matter, and the Properties that are ascribed to Incorporeal Substance, may and do belong to Matter.

Our modern Corporealists tell us, Sense, Imagination, Understanding, Memory, Reason, Spontaneous Motion, may be only the Effects of the Motion of Matter in Organical Bodies. So that a Man may be mere Organized Matter.

And upon the same ground *Spinoza* will tell us, that there needs nothing but Matter: For there neither is, nor can be but One Substance; and Cogitation, as well as Extension, is an Essential Property of that Substance.

As to *Spinoza's* Notion, of Cogitation being Essential to Matter, 'tis so big with Monstrous Absurdities, that

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'tis a wonder any one can have the Confidence to defend it.

Upon this Supposition, every Particle of Matter must be an Intelligent Being, if not a God.

Or if we suppose with him, that all the Collective Mass of Beings is God; What a strange kind of Deity will this make; subject to all the Imperfections, Changes, and Alterations, that can be imagined in all or any of the Parts of Matter?

But to compleat the Absurdity of his *Hypothesis*, as he says there is but One Substance, so he tells us, this Substance is indivisible: When 'tis so plain to Reason and Experience, that each Particle of Matter is a distinct Substance by it self, and divisible from all others.

And yet as absurd as this *Hypothesis* of *Spinoza* is, he was forced upon it, from the Insufficiency of the other *Hypothesis*, That tho' Sense and Reason be not Essential to Matter, yet Matter may (by the Various Configurations and Motions of its Parts) be improved into Sense, Reason, and Understanding; or which is all one, that Sense and Understanding are no-  
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thing but the Motions of the finer and more spirituous parts of Matter in Organical Bodies.

I now come to shew the Unreasonableness of that Supposition, That tho Sense and Reason should not be essential to Matter, yet Matter may by the various Configurations and Motions of its Parts, be improved into Sense, Reason, and Understanding; or, which is all one, that Sense and Understanding are nothing but the Motions of the finer and more spirituous Parts of Matter in Organical Bodies.

Now one Account that some Modern Corporealists give of this, is that advanced by Mr. *Hobbs*, That Sense, Reason, and Understanding, are nothing but the Reaction of the Corpuscles of the *Sensorium*, occasioned by the Object.

By this Reaction I suppose can be meant nothing but the Resistance that is made in the *Sensorium*, to the Impressions of the Object. But this is a very unsatisfactory, and indeed absurd Account of the Matter. For,

Hence it will follow, that wherever there is Matter in Motion, there must be at least Sense if not Reason  
too;

too; for where-ever there is Action, there is some kind of Reaction or Resistance.

Nor is there any Account to be given, why upon this Supposition the Objects of Sense should not themselves have Sense too; for the Reaction will be mutual, and consequently by this Supposition the Sense must be so too.

From this Supposition it likewise seems to follow, that where-ever there is the most violent Action, if there be a proportionable Re-action or Resistance, there must be the quickest Sense and Understanding; and so, for Instance, the Hammer and the Anvil must be the most sensible Things in Nature.

But that which is most considerable in this Case is this, that this Hypothesis does not at all reach the Question; it gives no account at all of those Thoughts, those Acts of Imagination, Remembrance, Reason, Judgment, and spontaneous Motion, that begin from within, and do not at all depend upon the Pressure of external Objects, and therefore must depend upon and proceed from some internal Principle; which, whether it can be Matter or

no, we shall consider more in the Sequel of this Discourse.

So that I think I may dismiss this Hypothesis, as that which appears absurd at first View.

There are some late Authors that pretend to believe there is no such thing as a thinking Substance in Man, distinct from the Body; but that Reason and Understanding is only an Emanation from Life.

They talk of a *Flammula Vitalis*, the *Spirit of Life*, the *Breath and Blood of our Lives*, the *glowing Particles of the Blood*, and such other Cant; but give no tolerable Account of the Matter.

For we cannot but observe, the Acts of Sense, Reason and Understanding are transacted in those Parts of the Man that are most remote from the chief Vitals, the Heart and Lungs, and therefore seem to have little or no immediate Dependence on the *vital Breath*, or the *glowing Particles of the Blood*.

The Brain is of a cool and flaccid Substance, and the Animal Spirits, that may be thought the immediate Instruments of its Operations, seem not to be any such *hot and glowing Particles*

icles as these Authors speak of, but rather a fine liquid Juice percolated from the Blood into the nervous Substance, and which is requisite to keep the Brain in a due Temperature.

And therefore we find nothing so much disturbs the Brain in its Operations as too great a Quantity of these *hot and glowing Particles*, (that come either from acute Distempers, or from the drinking too much of hot and spirituous Liquors,) and dry up the native gentle moisture of the Brain and nervous Substance.

And if the Soul were such a *fery flammeous Body* as some suppose it to be, it would be so far from acting by such Organs, that it would wholly destroy 'em, or at least unfit 'em for such Operations.

Besides, if the Acts of Reason and Understanding did immediately depend upon the Motion of the Blood and Spirits, without any higher Principle, those Thoughts and Acts of Reason that are supposed to be Emanations from 'em, must be always the same, or at least proceed in some certain determinate Course; and there must be the same Train of Thoughts and Reasonings

sonings in all Men, or in the same Man at all Times.

For the Motion of the Blood and Spirits, and the Communications between the Vital and Animal Parts, are always (in healthful Persons at least) uniform, certain, and regular; and the same Causes, acting always alike, must have the same Effects.

So that upon this Supposition, a Man would be a meer Machine, or a finer piece of Clockwork.

But we find by Experience there is in us some voluntary self-moving Principle; that we can think or not, think of this, or that, or the other thing; let our Thoughts ramble in a Moment from *London* to the *East* or *West-Indies*, and our Imaginations can travel in a Minute from the North to the South Pole.

But it may be some may say, this internal Principle may be nothing but the Motion of the finer and more active and spirituous Parts of the Organs of the Animal.

Well, we will suppose this in some measure to be true, and that the several Motions of the Animal Spirits in the Organs, are the Instruments of the  
several

several sorts and degrees of Cogitation; still the Question will return; What is the true Original Cause that begins, guides, directs, and bounds that infinite Variety of the Motions of the Animal Spirits, in the several sorts and degrees of Cogitation, and the Representation of so vast a Variety of Objects to the Understanding?

Is it the Substance of the Brain? That (of it self) to all appearance is such a dull and senseless Thing, that a Lump of Curds, as a great Philosopher says well, may seem as capable of it, as a Lump of Brains.

Is it the Animal Spirits? These neither have any self-moving Principle in 'em, nor can move but as they are moved: Nor can any one Particle of 'em singly, nor any Combination of 'em, so determine their own Motions, as to be the Original Cause of Thought and Understanding in the Man.

There is no Mechanical and merely Material Cause we can have recourse to in this Matter, but the Circulation of the Blood; which being a Motion so constant, simple, and uniform, cannot be the genuine Cause of so many

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Kinds,

Kinds, of so vast a Variety of Voluntary Motions, as must be supposed in the several sorts of Cogitation, and the Spontaneous Motions of the Body ; that partly occasion'd by the Influence of External Objects upon the Senses, and partly without any Dependance at all on them, must proceed from some Internal Spontaneous Principle of Action.

But to speak a little more particularly of the several Acts that are commonly ascribed to the Soul, and that the Corporealists would have us believe may be the Result of mere Organized Matter.

Imagination, as it signifies the common Sense that is as it were the Treasury of the Notices of the External Senses, does in a great measure depend on the Organs.

But we find in our selves likewise a Power of actual Imagination, that is, not only of revolving and recollecting those Images that are, upon the Notice of Sense, or from former actual Imaginations treasured up ; but of compounding, dividing, variously diversifying those Images, nay, of forming  
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ing New ones of Things that (it may be) never were, or never will be.

Now this is that we may justly say is above the Power of Organized Matter, and must be ascribed to some Higher Principle.

Memory is another Faculty in Man: Tho' this, as it is the Treasury of the Mind, may depend in some measure upon the Organs; yet it is certain, that the Acts of Remembrance, or the Attention we give to those Images that are in this Treasury, must be ascribed to some Higher Principle, and cannot be supposed originally to proceed from any part of the Brain, or subtile Matter contained in it.

Judgment, or the Sentence we pass within our selves of the Truth or Falseness of Things, according to those Notices we have, and those Ideas we form of 'em, by comparing our Ideas of 'em: This likewise is a Faculty above the Power of mere Matter.

This we can do, or suspend our doing of it, as we please. Now what is there in the Brain, or the Animal Spirits in it, to which this Power can be ascribed?

Again; Another Power in Man is, that which we properly call Reason; or the Deductions we make, and the Consequences we draw of one Truth from another. Certainly, the Truth or Falshood of Propositions, or of Consequences, are not the Objects of Sense, and are above the Power of the most subtile and spirituous Matter in the World.

Again; Self-reflection is another Power in Man. When we have exercised our Reason about any Objects, we can again recollect and revolve 'em in our mind, judge of, consider, correct and amend, approve or reject these very Acts of our own Reason. This likewise (to all appearance) is above the Power of Organized Matter. Again; Self-consciousness, or the intimate Knowledge we have of our own internal Actions and Cogitations, is (to all appearance) above the Power of Organized Matter. Nor (as far as we can judge) can any, the most subtile and finest Matter in the World, however mixed, modify'd and moved, any more be conscious of its own Motions, than a Stone, or a Clod of Earth.

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Self-enjoyment, or that Pleasure we take in reflecting upon our own Security and Happiness, or the certain Prospect we have of being so for the future, is another Property and Power in Man, that is above the Capacity of mere Matter, and must suppose some Higher Principle to be the Source and Fountain of it.

Again; That Power of Willing, or Nilling, or Suspending, and the Liberty we plainly by Experience find in our selves of Acting, or not Acting, is another Proof of some Higher Rational Principle, than mere Matter. For whatever Motions there are in Matter, tho' never so Casual, are yet (as to the Matter it self moved) necessary, and must depend upon some *Vis impressa* of some other Matter; till we come at last to some Being that has in it a self-moving Principle, which (to all appearance) no Part of Matter can have, and therefore is not capable of beginning any Spontaneous Motion.

Nay, even Sense it self, that seems (more than any of the forementioned Things) to depend upon Matter, if we consider it distinctly, will appear

impossible, without some Higher Principle than bare Matter.

For if we consider well, we shall find, that the Impression made by External Objects upon the *Sensorium*, is not properly what we ought to call Sense, but the Attention to, or Perception of that Impression, by that which is the true Principle of Sensation: And that Matter, however organized, can no more have Sense without some Higher Sentient, than the Soul can have such formal Sensations without the Organs of Sense.

And whether we determine with some, that the Objects of Sense are real Qualities; or with others, that they are only Appearances to our Faculties; 'tis the same thing. Still there must be something above mere Organized Matter, that must be affected by, attend to, really perceive and judge of, those real or apparent Qualities.

But that which most effectually shews the Absurdity of this *Hypothesis*, is this; That 'tis utterly impossible to give any tolerable Account of Spontaneous Motion, without supposing some Higher, and more Noble and  
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Powerful Principle, than mere Matter.

'Tis plain, there is something in us (whatever it be) that has a Despotick Dominion over the Members of the Body, and that we can (within such a Sphere of Natural Power) move 'em when, and as we please: So that in this there is the same Difficulty, as there is in other Acts of Design or Understanding. Tho' the Impressions of Sense may be the Occasion of these Spontaneous Motions, it is impossible they should be the genuine and adequate Cause of 'em. It is impossible, the gentle Impressions that are made by External Objects upon our Senses, should by mere Mechanism force the several Members to exert their utmost Strength, as we see they often do.

Tho' the Impressions of Sense may be the Occasion, yet they can never be the Cause of the vast Variety of Spontaneous Motions of the Body, without the Intervention of some Higher Principle that judges of those Sensations, and directs the Locomotive Faculty in exerting its Strength and Vigor.

What Account can be given, why we should not run as fast from an Horfe, as from a Bear, (when the one as powerfully strikes the Sense as the other;) but the Intervention of some discerning Principle above Matter, however moved and modify'd, whereby we apprehend danger from the one, and not from the other?

So that it's plain, what we call the Soul, cannot be any Concretion of Atoms, as the *Epicureans* assert; for this (if the Atoms be never so fine) is still but Body; and such a Concretion of Atoms cannot be in an Organized Body, without Penetration of Dimensions.

Nor can it be any *Flammula vitalis*; for we plainly see by Experience, there is nothing like any such thing in a Body, when in Health and Vigor. The natural Heat of an Healthful Man is very gentle and moderate, and scarce discernible: But especially the Brain, which by all is held to be the Instrument of Sense and Understanding, is such a moist and flaccid Substance, as has in it no appearance of any such thing.

Nor can it be the Animal Spirits : For however they may be the Instruments of Perception, it is impossible they should have any such Innate Power of directing and determining themselves, in such a manner, as to produce such a vast Variety of Internal Actions in the Man, or Spontaneous Motions of the Body ; or that the Impressions of Sense should by mere Mechanism be the Cause of such Inward Sensations and Cogitations, or such a vast Variety of Spontaneous Motions.

Some late Authors talk indeed of a Spirit of Life in Man, that they suppose is the Cause of Sense, Reason, and Understanding. If they mean only the finer and more active Parts of Organized Matter, I have already shew'd, it is impossible these should be the Primary Cause of Human Actions.

If we could think they mean any simple Essence distinct from the Body ; the Dispute is at an end, and they allow what we call an Human Soul.

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And then (I think) they speak properly enough, to call it the *Spirit of Life*, that is, that Spirit that is the true Cause of Life.

And whereas they argue from the Word *Psyche*, in *Greek* signifying both Soul and Life, that the Soul is nothing but the Life of the Animal; I think they ought to argue quite otherwise, that this is so, because the Soul is in another Sense the Life of the Animal, that is, the true Cause of the Life of it.

But perhaps it may be said, we must not argue, that 'tis impossible that Matter should have Sense and Understanding, because we cannot conceive how it can be: For Matter may have Properties that we know nothing of.

This is the last Refuge of the Corporealists.

But it is to be observed, we do not assert here only, that we cannot apprehend how Reason and Understanding can come from mere Matter; but we think we have Reason positively to assert it cannot be.

That the vast Variety of Motions, that must be supposed to all the Acts of Reason and Understanding, (supposing

posing they were nothing but Motion in Matter) cannot possibly proceed from the regular and uniform Motion of the Blood and Spirits in the Body.

That there is no Kind, or Part, or Particles of Matter in the Organized Body, that can possibly so determine themselves, as to be the Beginning of the Spontaneous Actions and Motions of the Man, (and especially of those that do not at all depend on the Impressions of the External Senses;) without some such Distinct, Internal, Spontaneous Principle, as we suppose the Soul to be.

Some may say, perhaps, What! Shall we say that God cannot give to Matter a Power of Thinking?

I confess, we should be very cautious how we say what God cannot do. And some late Corporealists that pretend to own a God, talk much of the Power of God in this Case; and that he can easily put Sense, and Reason, and Understanding, into mere Matter.

We confess, if these Gentlemen do really believe a God, *i. e.* an infinitely Powerful Spirit, distinct from Matter; the Question about Matter thinking

ing or not thinking, would be of something less Concernment.

But we cannot see then why they should make it the grand Question in Philosophy, (or write grand Essays about it,) Whether Matter can think, or no? and bend their whole Strength to ridicule all the Ancient Philosophy about Human Souls; and (by subtile Evasions) wrest those Scriptures that so plainly speak of the Soul as a Thing distinct from the Body; if there were not a Snake in the Grass, some Design in the bottom of it.

And I think it not hard to guess what that may be. For if they can once perswade the World, that Matter may think, they may not despair of perswading it to drop the Notion of a God.

For the true Sense of what they assert, when they say, God can put the Power of Thinking into Matter, must be this; That God can so modify Matter, as that it may become a thinking Substance, and yet be Matter still.

From this the Atheist will easily draw this Consequence; That Matter may (by the various Motions and  
Confi-

Configurations of its Parts) be improved into Sense, and Reason, and Understanding: Or (it may be) with *Spinoza* assert, That Cogitation as well as Extension, is an Essential Property of his One Substance, that is, of Matter.

But then if there be, as we believe there is, an essential difference between Mind and Matter, between Spirit and Body; if Thinking, to all appearance, be above the Power, and beyond the Capacity of mere Matter; I see no danger in asserting upon this Supposition, That God cannot put the Power of Thinking into Matter; any more than it would be to assert, That God cannot make a Body to be a Spirit while it is a Body, or a Spirit to be a Body while it is a Spirit.

Our Saviour tells the *Jews*, God was able of Stones to raise up Children to *Abraham*: But sure one might safely say, they could not be Stones and Children to *Abraham* at the same time.

If a Man should enquire, Whether God could put the Cold of Snow or Ice into the hottest Fire, and yet at the same time it should be as much  
Fire

Fire as it was before; and should assert it might be done: He might as well, I think, assert, That it might be Fire and not Fire at the same time.

So that though there may be Ten thousand things possible to God, that we might think impossible, yet we must not, under pretence of ascribing Power to God, assert what will destroy the very Nature of Things, and the Being of Truth; unless we will with some of the Schoolmen assert, That God can make two contradictory Propositions both to be true.

In short; since Thought is the quickest thing in the World, if that be nothing but Motion, one would think those things that are hottest, and of the quickest Motion, should be nearest to Thought and Perception.

But we find, for instance, Fire has no more Sense or Understanding than Water; nor Water boil'd to the greatest degree of Heat, than cold Water; nor the most rectified, the strongest, and most exalted Spirits, than the dullest Phlegm; nor is a Red-hot Iron any nearer Thinking, than a Cold one.

Contrary to all this, we find the Brain, that as far as we can tell is the immediate Instrument of inward Sensations, and of Thought and Understanding, is of a clammy and unactive Nature and Substance ; and seems, as far as we can judge of it, to be a mere passive Principle, as to the Acts of inward Sensation and Intellection.

And the Animal Spirits are not any hot and glowing Particles, nor at all of a fiery Nature, but rather a liquid Juice , of a watery Substance; and therefore there must be some active Principle distinct from Matter, that is the true Source and Original of those internal Acts of Reason and Understanding.

There is an Objection that I foresee will be made against our Assertion ; That Sense it self cannot be supposed to be from mere Matter, but must require some higher Principle, distinct from Matter , that may perceive the Impressions made on the outward Senses by External Objects.

The Objection is this : That if we suppose Brutes to have Immaterial Souls, they must be Immortal too, or else we lose one main Argument for the

the Imimortality of Human Souls, that which is commonly taken from their Immateriality.

It was, as we may probably think, to avoid this Difficulty, that *Cartesius* asserted Brutes to be mere Machines, and to have nothing either of Sense or Understanding.

But by avoiding this, I doubt he ran himself upon a greater Absurdity, to deny that to Brutes, that is plain and obvious to Experience; that they have not only Sense, but something of Knowledge and Reason too in their Sphere and Degree.

We are as sure as can be of this, not only from the Likeness of their Organs to those of Men, but from the Signs of Sense they give, and the Actions they do, that they have Sense, and something of Knowledge and Reason too, or something so like it, that we know not what else to call it.

We indeed give it another Name, and call it Instinct; and so with respect to God the Giver of it, we may (if we please) call Human Reason too.

But

But if we shall assert, there is nothing but Mechanism in Brutes, when many of 'em have quicker Sense than we, and in some things in their Sphere they act with as much Sagacity as our selves; I say, if we assert this, we shall find it hard to defend our selves against the Atheist, if he shall take the Boldness to assert, That Man may be only a finer and more curious Piece of Mechanism.

As to the forementioned Objection against this, I confess, the Immateriality of Human Souls has been actually brought as a certain Argument of their Immortality, and that even by those that did not suppose the Brutes to be mere Machines.

And so far the Argument will certainly hold; That what is Immaterial, (such a simple Essence as we suppose the Soul to be) has not in it self the Principles of Corruption, as Bodies have, and consequently is fit in its Nature to be Immortal.

But as whatever received its Being from God, must depend upon his Good Will and Pleasure for the Continuance of it; and the Highest Angel in Heaven (as to his Immortal Duration)

as much depends on God, as the Soul of the meanest Man on Earth ; so we may suppose God to be guided by Infinite Wisdom, in giving this Immortality. And that which seems in Conjunction with their Immateriality to determine and prove the Immortality of Human Souls, is, that Superior Degree of Reason they have, whereby they are capable of Knowing God, and their Duty and Obligations to him, and of having a Sense of Moral Good and Evil ; and, by consequence, of being accountable to God, the Great Governor and Judge of all the World, and of Receiving Rewards, and Suffering Punishments in another Life.

And seeing the common Sense of all Men is, That God hath established a Law for Mankind ; it may well be expected he should call 'em to account, and reward their Obedience, and punish their Disobedience to it.

And seeing this is not generally and exactly done in this Life, 'tis highly probable (even to Reason it self) it will be in another, and that the Soul is immortal.

And being it is clear, the Brutes have none of them Knowledge or Reason in this degree, nor in these Things, nor any Capacity of understanding their Obligations to God, nor any Sense of him, or their Duty to him, (and consequently are not capable of any Account in an Afterstate;) there is not the same Reason to believe their Spirits are immortal, (however capable they may be of it, by their being immaterial,) as there is for those of Mankind.

Nor is it reasonable to expect we should determine what God does with them; that we neither do, nor perhaps can know any thing of.

The Words of *Solomon, Eccl. 3. 21.* may teach us Modesty in this Case: *Who knoweth, saith he, the spirit of man that goeth upwards, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?* Where he seems (tho' he intimates, we know little of these Things) by the *spirit of man's going upward*, to intend a future immortal State. *Then shall the Spirit* (as he says elsewhere) *return to God who gave it.*

But whether he means, by the Spirit of the *beasts going downward*, An-

nihilation, or something else; 'tis not much material to determine.

Whatever Difficulties there may be in this Supposition, I think they are much less than those plain Absurdities even to common Sense and Experience, when we suppose Brutes to be mere Machines, and to have nothing in them, either of Knowledge and Reason, or indeed of Sense it self.

I hope, this Discourse of a Spiritual Substance, or Soul in Man, will not be thought a Digression; for indeed it is so near a-kin to the Subject I am upon, and so almost necessary, as part of an Answer to the Objections made against the Being of Spirit, (or Mind) and Immaterial Substance in general, that I could not prevail with my self to omit it.

And thus I have said something (as briefly as I could) by way of Answer to that bold Assertion of Atheistical People, That all the *Phænomena* of Human Nature, and all those Noble Acts that are commonly ascribed to the Soul in Man, may be accounted for by the mere Motion of the finer Parts of Matter, in the several Organs of the Body: And consequently,  
That

That Matter is capable (say they) by the several Motions and Configurati-  
ons of its Parts, to be improved into  
a Capacity of Sense, and Reason, and  
Understanding.

I now come to speak briefly of some  
Objections, that are made against the  
Being of a God, with respect to this  
Attribute of Knowledge.

And first ; They object, there can  
be no Knowledge, without the Organs  
of Sense and Knowledge : That is,  
*Flesh, Blood, and Brains*, as Mr. *Hobbs*  
boldly asserts. And that all Know-  
ledge is but Sense, or at least is ground-  
ed in it ; and therefore there can be  
no God, because we suppose him to  
be a Knowing Being, and yet not to  
have the Instruments of Knowledge.

But this is but a weak Objection.  
For,

1. This Knowledge by Sense, is, as  
we have Reason to believe, a weak and  
imperfect Way of Knowledge, and  
perhaps the meanest that deserves to  
be called by that Name ; and ac-  
quaints us only with the Surface of  
Things, and does not thoroughly let us  
into the Nature of 'em.

And I think we may well reason just the contrary way ; That since we, by all the Notices that we can get by Sense, and our Reasoning upon it, know so little of the true and intimate Nature of Things ; there is some other more Noble Being, that by some more perfect way knows Things as they are in themselves, as the Scripture asserts of God ; *Known unto God are all his works, from the foundation of the world.*

And as to what they say, That Sense is the only Knowledge, and that we know nothing, but what we know by Sense ; 'tis manifestly false. For then, he that sees, or feels, or tastes a thing *ipso facto*, knows all that is to be known of it. And besides, Experience tells us, we can form Notions, and have Knowledge of Things, that have little or no Dependance upon Sense.

And whereas they say, All Knowledge is but Passion, or the Impression of the Object upon the Knowing Faculty, Sense, or Imagination ; this likewise is against Experience ; there being a great many Acts of the Understanding that begin from within,  
and

and do not at all depend upon the Impressions of Sense: And we can have Ideas of Things that are not the Objects of any of our Senses.

And whereas they further tell us, That there are but Five Senses, and there can be neither more nor less; and that these are all the Means and Ways of Knowledge: This is neither true, nor to the purpose.

For he that gave us these Senses, could have given us more, or fewer, even external Ways of Notice. Nor are we to judge of the Possibility of Knowledge in the most Perfect Being, by the narrow Scantling of our own imperfect Ways of Understanding.

And it is highly probable, we shall arrive at an higher and more perfect Knowledge, when we are divested of these Earthly Bodies.

So that our Knowledge; and the Ways of arriving at it, seem to be suited to our present State; and those Senses that we here are so affected with, and keep such a stir about, in the State they now are, seem rather to clogg and hinder, than to promote and further the Native Capacities of

our Souls, with respect to any clear, and perfect Knowledge of Things.

And whereas they further object, That Things are before Knowledge, and not Knowledge before the Things known; neither is that universally true.

We have Reason to assert, Whatsoever is possible to be, or to be done, is possible to be known; and that whatever actually is, or is done, is actually known by some Being or other.

And from hence it follows, there is some All-knowing Being, and such a Being is that we call God.

Now, as we have all the Reason in the World to believe that all Things were made by such a Being, so we are sure he must have a perfect Knowledge of 'em, before he could make 'em.

For it must be in Natural, as it is in Artificial Things; he that is now to build an House, may take his Model, and frame his Idea of it from some other House that is built before: But he that built the first House, must form the Plan and Model of it from his own Understanding. So it is here.  
God,

God, the Great Architect of the World, must know it, before he made it.

I might have been more large in answering these last Objections, but my designed Brevity would not give me leave; and they do not seem to be of any great Weight and Moment: And therefore I shall pass on to some other Objections.

Another Objection that is brought by some Atheistical Persons against the Being of a God, is, against his Wisdom, so far as it may appear in the Creation of the World.

Certainly, say they, if the World had been made by a God, it would have been made much better than it is. We should not have so many vile and mean, so many useles and unprofitable, so many noxious Creatures as are in the World, as it now is. To which I answer,

1. That when in the greater Instances of Created Beings, we find such plain Footsteps of Infinite Wisdom as may fully convince us there is a God; methinks we should rather argue the other way; That since 'tis so plain the World was made by Infinite Wisdom, there;

therefore it could not well be made better (all Things consider'd) than it is; and that those supposed Defects or Faults that are found in it, are not in the Things themselves, but in our Apprehension; and that 'tis our Ignorance that betrays us to think so of 'em.

And ('tis plain) this may be the Case. For

To make a right Judgment of the Wisdom of God in the Making of the World, we must not have regard to our private Interests, or selfish Passions, but to the Good of the whole.

And as to Mankind particularly, we must consider 'em not only with respect to the present, but the future: And if we would make a right Judgment in this Case, it would require one comprehensive View of the Divine Providence, and the comparing one Thing with another, and Things present with all those that are to come, both in this Life, and in another.

For, as it is in Reason of State, private Men that cannot be let into the Knowledge of it, cannot make a Judgment of the Wisdom of it; so it is much more true of the Secrets and Mysteries of Creation and Providence.

Those

Those Things may be great and momentous, that we think mean and inconsiderable; those Things highly useful and necessary one way or other, that we think needless and useless: Those Creatures that we think only noxious and dangerous, may (upon some account or other that we know nothing of,) be highly necessary, and greatly beneficial to the World.

So that all that this Objection proves, is this; That we cannot dive into the Mysteries of the Wisdom of God in the Creation of the World; And since there is so much of Wisdom so plainly visible in it, we should (methinks) have the Modesty to think, there may be Wisdom that we cannot understand.

As a good Subject, that plainly sees by the Tenour of his Government, that his Prince is a Wise Governor, will not presently conclude those Actions foolish and impolitick that he does not see the Reason of.

And therefore it was bold Blasphemy in one of the Kings of *Arragon*, who said he could have told God how he might have mended several things in the making of the World.

There

There are indeed several things the Atheists instance in as Faults and Imperfections in the Make of this World; but they are not worth the mentioning; tho a fair Account might be given of all or most of 'em.

For we do or can know so little of the Nature of Things in themselves, or of the Relation they bear to one another, or to the Universe; much less of the whole Scheme of the Wisdom and Providence of the Great Creator, in the making and governing of the World, that a moderate Sense of this will silence all such Objections, that have indeed no ground, but in our own Ignorance of Things.

The next Objections I shall mention, are such as seem to reflect on the Justice or Goodness of God.

All that own a God, an infinitely Perfect Being, must own these and the like Moral Perfections are as essential to him, as any other Attributes.

The great Objection the Atheist makes against the Being of a God, as to this Point, is taken from the manifold Evils, and the great Confusions of this World.

Now as there is a Twofold sort of Evil, that of Sin, and that of Suffering; so if we can give a good Account of God's permitting the one, we shall be able to give an easier and better Account of the other.

But because these Atheists we have to deal with, destroy the Supposition, and take away the very Question concerning God's permitting Sin or Moral Evil, by asserting there is no such thing as Liberty, nothing but absolute and immutable Necessity in the World, (which in the true Consequence of it is to assert there is no such thing as Moral Good or Evil;) before I enter upon that Objection, I must say something of Necessity and Liberty.

In the first place, let us see what these Gentlemen think of this matter. *Spinosi* supposes God himself to do whatever lies in his Power, from an absolute Necessity of his Nature. That from this all things are and must be just as they are, and could be no otherwise. That Things could be made after no other Manner, and in no other Order, than they were made. And to say the contrary, is with him as absurd, as to talk of a Triangle whose  
Three

Three Angles are not equal to Two right ones.

Mr. *Hobbs* likewise in several places of his Works, speaks to this purpose. That no Man can be free from Necessitation. That voluntary Actions have all of them necessary Causes. Nay, as to the Deity himself, we may observe he denies him any Knowledge or Understanding; asserts him to be without any Ends or Designs in his Actions and Operations.

So that the true Consequence of these Gentlemens Opinion is, That there is no difference between Voluntary and Natural Agents; between a Man, and a Stock or a Stone; and that those Beings the World have thought to be free and voluntary Agents, and to have a Principle of acting or suspending their Actions within themselves, make all their Motions with the same Necessity, and with as little Choice, as a Stone falls downward, or an Arrow shot out of a Bow moves forward.

This is the just Consequence of what they assert in their Writings: And to assert, as they in effect do, That every Thing that ever was or is,  
and

and every Action that ever was done, together with every Mode and Circumstance of Being or Action, was of absolute Necessity just as it is, and could not possibly be otherwise, is methinks at first View, to any Man of common Sense, so absurd an Opinion, that it deserves rather to be laugh'd at than confuted. And yet this is what these Gentlemen assert sometimes in little less than express Terms, and at other times in the true Consequence of what they say.

I confess, these Gentlemen sometimes talk of Liberty, as they do sometimes of a God, like other People: Whether they do it with design a little to bring themselves off as to their wild Assertions, or whether sometimes Truth slips from 'em before they are aware, I cannot say; but the main Drift of their Discourses are as I have before described 'em. As to the Liberty of Human Actions, that there is no absolute Necessity in all of them, I may leave every one of you to prove it to your selves: And there is never a Man in the World, but can effectually confute *Hobbs* and *Spinoza* for himself, tho perhaps he may not be able to answer all their Cavils. As

As the old Philosopher, when there was one that was so impertinently bold, as to deny there could be any such thing as Motion, (just as these Gentlemen do there can be any Liberty,) thought the best way of confuting him, was to get up and walk before him.

So let any of us shut our Eyes, and put our selves as much as may be from under the Influence of our Senses, and try whether we must not be conscious to our selves, that we can make a Thousand Spontaneous Motions, and think of as many Things, how, or when, or as we please. And that, for instance, when we rise up, we might if we please sit still; and when we walk this Way, we might as well have walked the contrary Way. When we think of the *Exchange* or *St. Paul's* at *London*, we might as well if we pleased have thought of that at *Amsterdam* or *St. Peters* at *Rome*. Let any of the Admirers of *Hobbs* or *Spinoza* tell us if they can, the *Necessary Causes* of these and such like *Voluntary Actions*. Or say in good earnest if they dare, that we could not in the most minute Circumstance, or Mode of Thought or Action,

Action, do any otherwise, than just as we do.

And as to what *Spinoza* says of his God, he is guilty of so many and so gross Absurdities, that one might justly wonder any Man can have the Confidence to assert such Things, unless he designed to banter Mankind.

He tells us, There is but One Substance ; and that there is no Substance but God ; and that Cogitation is an Essential Property of this Substance : And yet , when he denies any such thing as Liberty to his God , and makes him a Being that acts to the utmost of his Power *ex necessitate Naturæ* ; he (in effect) denies he has any Cogitation, Apprehension, or Understanding at all.

For where-ever there is Apprehension and Understanding, there must be in proportion Spontaneity and Liberty ; the one being a necessary Consequence of the other.

When he denies Liberty to God, he makes him an imperfect Being : For certainly a Being that has Understanding, is more perfect than one that has not ; and a Being that has Election and Liberty, much more noble than

one that acts from an absolute Necessity, and can do no otherwise.

Again : What he supposes concerning God, (in the just Consequence of it) supposes him not to act at all; but rather to be merely passive, and to act only as he is acted upon; or with such a blind *Impetus*, as may be in the meanest Being in the whole World.

And whereas *Spinosa* says, If we suppose any thing could have been otherwise than as it is, it will follow, that the Nature of God might have been other than what it is :

This is a plain Fallacy, for want of distinguishing an absolute Necessity of Nature, from an absolute Necessity of Acting.

There are in God Two sorts of Necessity.

A Necessity of Nature; by which he must be absolutely perfect, and can be no otherwise : And a Necessity of Existence; He Is, and cannot but Be.

And as to his Actions, there follows (from the necessary Perfection of his Nature) a Necessity that what he does, should not be disagreeable to his Infinite Perfection.

But

But to assert he lies under a Necessity of Nature to do all he can do; or that he could not do any thing otherwise than he does; are Assertions that so intrench upon the Liberty and Sovereignty of God, that no Man that has any right Notion of God, can assert or defend 'em. This must infer, that God should make every day a new World, and destroy it when he has done.

But there is no danger of this; for alas, *Spinoza* means no such thing by his God.

For 'tis plain, by laying what he in several Places says of God together, he can mean nothing by God but the Universe, or the vast infinitely extended Bulk of Matter.

And, by Cogitation, he can hardly mean any thing but Local Motion.

And when he ascribes Omnipotence to his God, he can mean only some such thing as the Philosophers call *Potentia materiæ*, the Power of Matter.

And his *Necessitas divinæ naturæ*, the Necessity of the Divine Nature, is but the same with *Epicurus's* Casual Motion of the Atoms, or Parts

of Matter ; which (as they are supposed not to be guided by any Rational Agent, ) may be said to be Casual, as they depend upon the Motions of some other Parts of Matter ; ( according to that Supposition of *Spinoza*, Whatsoever is moved, is moved by some other thing, and that by another, and so on without end ; ) I say, upon that account they may be stiled necessary.

So that what *Spinoza* says, that *Ex necessitate divinæ naturæ, infinita infinitis modis sequi debent*, is so far from being true, that no Regular Frame of Things (neither this that now is, nor any other, ) could ever follow from the Necessary or Casual Motions (call 'em which you will) of the Parts of Matter ; without being begun and carried on regularly by some Being that hath Understanding and Liberty, Power and Wisdom, in the highest Perfection, such as we suppose God to be.

Now as this Supposition of *Hobbs* and *Spinoza* ( That there is nothing but absolute Necessity, no such thing as Liberty in the World ; ) is absurd in the Nature of the thing, so it is of  
 most

most pernicious Consequence to Religion; which, upon this Supposition, must be quite banish'd out of the World.

For certainly, such a God as *Hobbs* and *Spinoza* describe, cannot be the Object of our Worship or Obedience.

For if he made us, and could not help it; he preserves us too, and cannot help it; and (it may be) must reward us, or (as it happens from the Necessity of his Nature) punish us, and cannot help it: In this Case, what are we beholden to him? or what Duty can we owe or pay to him? Especially, when according to what they sometimes say, He cannot know whether he did these Things for us or no.

And the Case is the same with respect to our selves: If we have no such thing as Liberty, and do every thing we do from absolute and immutable Necessity; either we can have no Reason or Religion, or 'tis utterly to no purpose.

Having premised these Things concerning that absurd *Hypothesis* of our modern Atheists, whereby they discard all Liberty, and ascribe all Things and

Actions to an Absolute Necessity; I come now to say something of the Objection made against the Being of God, from a supposed Defect of Goodness, in his permitting Sin (or Moral Evil) in the World.

The Sum of what they say as to this Matter, is this; If God can, and will not, hinder Sin, it cannot be reconciled with that infinite Goodness we ascribe to him.

In answer to this; First, I believe none will deny but it is more for the Honour of God to make a Free Creature, one that hath Understanding and Liberty, than to make only such as are carried by a blind and fatal Necessity of Nature in all their Actings. 'Tis a greater Demonstration of Power and Wisdom, nay, and Goodness too in God, than the other could be.

We may ask any of these Gentlemen, Whether they would rather have been Stocks or Stones than Men?

Nay, if God had made no Rational Creatures, he would have had no Honour at all by the Work of Creation, when there was no Creature that  
could

could know and admire the Beauty and Order of it.

And as 'tis more for the Honour of God that there should be Free and Rational Creatures, so it plainly makes for the Perfection of the World, and the Beauty of the Universe, that there should be such Creatures. And if there had been none such, the World would have been but a few Removes from the Original *Chaos*, or a dead and senseless Lump and Mass of Matter.

And as to the more or less Perfection of the several Creatures, there is a great Beauty in the Order and several Degrees of it. Will any say, the World is not much better as it is, than if God had made all the Stones Diamonds, or all the Flowers Tulips or Lillies, or all the Trees Cedars?

But these Gentlemen cannot reconcile the Defectibility of Rational Creatures, with the Goodness of God.

Methinks, it is easy to distinguish between a Necessity and Possibility of Sinning.

It seems no more necessary, that God should put all Rational Agents above the Possibility of Sinning, than

that he should put all Matter above the Power of Corruption.

God is not at all obliged to impart the utmost Extent of his Goodness to any Creature, nor an equal Degree and Measure of it to all.

As I have said before, his Attributes are as it were bounded and limited by one another ; and so the Extent of his Goodness is bounded by his Wisdom, and the rest of his Glorious Perfections.

Many Attributes in God, and many Virtues in Men, appear more glorious than they could have done, if all Rational Creatures had been created in an indefectible State.

'Tis enough in this Case, that God does not lay his Rational Creatures under a Necessity of Sinning, tho' he does not do all he can by his absolute Power to over-rule their Free Wills to that which is Good ; no more than he stops the Force of Fire and Water, when apply'd to Mischievous Purposes.

'Tis sufficient that he deals with 'em as Rational Creatures ; gives 'em a Sense of Good and Evil, and at least a general Sense and Apprehension of his

his Justice and Mercy, if not to all the special Revelations of his Will.

That he puts 'em in a Capacity of a greater Happiness, upon the good Use of their Reason and Liberty, than that of a State of mere Nature. And that he will expect no more from 'em, than according to what he gives to 'em; he will not expect Ten Talents, where he gives but One.

That when he comes to judge the World, he will proceed according to the Rules of Equity, Justice, and Goodness. They that have had only the Law of Nature, shall be judged only by that; and only they that have had the Gospel, are to answer for the Neglect and Abuse of it.

And this is likewise Answer enough to that other Objection the Atheist makes against the Being of God, from a supposed Defect of his Goodness; That he has let so great a Part of the World lye in gross Ignorance of the Means of their Happiness: He will one day make it appear he does no wrong, nay, that he has been Good and Kind to all Mankind.

But

But the Atheist still objects against the Providence, and on that account against the Being of God, from the unequal Distribution of Rewards and Punishments in this World. He says, there is not a sufficient Distinction made between Good and Bad Men, which there ought to be, and would be if there were a God.

Now, in answer to this Objection, there are these Things fit to be consider'd.

That it must be confess'd, the Good and Bad are not so clearly distinguish'd here by their prosperous or adverse Condition, as that we may venture to say, This is a Good, or that a Bad Man, from any outward Dispensations; where we cannot judge of them by the Tenour of their Lives and Actions. *Solomon* observes, No man knows the Love or Hatred of God, by all that is before him.

It must be confess'd likewise, that this has been an Objection that has not only been made by Atheistical People, but (as appears from Scripture) has puzzled some very Good Men too. When *David* saw the Wicked in great Prosperity, while he himself

self and some other Good Men were under severe Trials and Chastisements, at first he was ready to say, *Then have I cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency.* But when he consider'd the different Ends of these Two sorts of Men, (very often here, and certainly hereafter,) he soon recover'd himself from this doubting Dependancy in the Providence of God.

Alas, we reason wrong as to this Case in abundance of Things.

We are very often mistaken in the Men we count Good or Bad. Some Men that make a fair Show of Religion, may be indeed very Bad Men, and may be secretly guilty of very enormous Vices. And on the contrary, some Men, that we (through Prejudice, or because it may be they do not agree with us in some nice Opinions,) judge to be Bad Men, may in the main be Good Men before God.

Again; We often mistake the Nature of Prosperity and Adversity: We judge of it only (it may be) with respect to this present State, or with respect to the more or less Abundance Men have of this World. Whereas it  
ought

ought to be judged of, rather by the Relation it has to the most Momentous Concerns of a future State, or at least with respect to the more or less true Enjoyment Men have of what they possess in this World.

And therefore we often judge amiss of the prosperous or adverse Estate of other Men: We see (it may be) the fair Outside of their Fortunes, but we know little of their Cares and Fears. They are Rich and Great, and thence we conclude they must needs be Happy and Prosperous. Whereas, the very little that some Good Men we overlook and count unfortunate do possess, may (as to real Enjoyment and Satisfaction) be much better than the great Riches and Power of such Ungodly Men.

However, let 'em possess and enjoy too as much of the World as they will, if their Prosperity in this World be (through their Abuse of it) an Occasion of their Misery in the next, they are not much to be envy'd for their Pomp and Grandeur in this World. Nay indeed, if they go on obstinately in their Wicked Courses, they are  
rather

rather to be pity'd as a most Wretched sort of People.

From hence it easily follows, that God may make a greater Distinction between Good and Bad Men, even in this World, than we are aware of; and make some Good Men really prosperous, and some Bad Men really wretched and unhappy, tho' we know it not.

But it is further to be consider'd, That tho' God do not generally in this World make a visible Difference between Good and Bad Men as to outward Prosperity, yet he very often appears in so extraordinary a manner, in protecting, supplying, rewarding the one, and in punishing the other, even in this Life, as is sufficient to vindicate his Providence, as to this Matter.

But let us suppose the utmost the Atheist can object in this Case; That the Wicked not only Live, but Dye in the greatest Worldly Prosperity; yet as long as he that believes a Just God, must believe that probably there will be another State, this will easily account for the Dispensations of God's Providence in this World, when God  
may

may (in that future Life) make an ample Amends to Good Men for all their Sufferings here; and take a strict and severe Account of the Actions of Wicked Men, however they might possibly escape Punishment in this present State.

And indeed the various Dispensations of Rewards and Punishments to Good and Bad Men in this Life, is a very good Argument that there will be a future State, when God will make a true and final Difference between Good and Bad Men; but if rightly consider'd, it is no Argument at all against the Providence and Being of God.

But there are some other Things that are objected against the Providence and Being of God.

As, that such a Providence as we ascribe to God, is utterly impossible; or if not, that 'tis below God, and inconsistent with his Happiness, to take care of so many, and such little Things.

As to the first; That 'tis impossible for any Being to attend to such an infinite Variety of Things at once: This

*Being of God, Answer'd.*

is to measure God by our selves. We can no more judge of his Knowledge and Understanding by ours, than we can of his Power by our own, which is but mere Impotency.

If I do not mis-remember, some Authors tell us, *Julius Cæsar* was able to dictate to Seven *Amanuenses* at once; which, if we were to judge by the common Capacity of other Men, we should think impossible.

'Tis no harder to believe that God governs and disposes all Things, now the Order of Nature is settled, than that he made 'em before that was done.

But, say they, 'tis below God to take care of such minute and little Things:

*Non vacat exiguis rebus adesse Jovi.*

Well, this is still to argue, as if God were like to Men.

'Tis below the Dignity of a King to be troubled with little and minute Affairs, because it is impossible for him to attend to 'em: But with God the Case is otherwise; 'tis as easy for him to take a Providential Care of all Things,

Things, as it is for us to take care of One Thing.

Those we call little Things, as they are Part of the Creation, and make up the Beauty, Harmony, and Order of it, are Great Things; and therefore however minute in themselves, 'tis no more below God to Order and Govern them by his Providence, than it was to make 'em by his Power.

But would not this Providence of God be inconsistent with his Happiness?

Not at all; for still we ought not to judge of him by our selves. He knows all Things knowable, and can do all Things possible with the greatest Ease and Pleasure.

Indeed, Reason tells us, That all Things possible are equally easy to a Proportionate Power. A strong Man can as easily lift an Hundred Pound Weight, as a weak Child can Ten. An able Mathematician sees as clearly some of the most abstruse Demonstrations, as a vulgar Understanding does the most obvious Truths.

Now let us apply this to the Case before us, and we shall see the Providence of God will appear so far from being

being uneasy, distracting, and cumbersome to him, or any way destructive of his Happiness; that it must be easy, pleasant, and delightful.

And if we might (as these Men do) argue from what we find in our selves, so as to assert any thing concerning God, it would be quite the contrary. As we find, to Men of Active Natures and Tempers Idleness is the greatest Burthen, and to be active in their Sphere the greatest Pleasure; so to God, who (if we may speak with the Schools) is a *Pure Act*, the universal Extent of his Providence is one Part of the Perfection of his Happiness.

And thus I have propos'd some Arguments to prove the Existence of a God, and answer'd some of those Objections that are commonly brought against it.

I confess, there are many other Arguments, that are made use of by some very Learned Men for the Proof of it; I deny not, but when represented in their full strength they may be conclusive.

But I have (to the best of my Judgment) made choice of those Arguments that have been most generally used and approved by Learned Men, especially such of 'em as seem to lye more level with the Capacities of Ordinary Readers, for whose Benefit especially these plain Discourses are design'd.

And I have also chose to answer those Objections chiefly, that (among many others that might have been mention'd) seem to have most Weight in them.

As to those Men that are sunk so deep into Sense, or are so busy'd with or even bury'd in the Cares of this World, that they seem to be but a better sort of Brutes in the Shape of Men, they never consider whether there be a God, or not; such Discourses are wholly lost upon them, they never read or think of 'em.

For, those that openly profess Impiety, and have given themselves up to work all Uncleanness with Greediness; if they have (as it often happens) a Tanguage of Atheism, it is mostly rather because they wish there were no God, than that they think there is none; and they run to Atheism as a  
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Refuge, because they cannot be easy under the Apprehensions of a God.

All the Avenues to these Mens Judgments are stop't by their corrupt Affections, and their violent and unruly Lusts.

Those that pretend to be Atheists, or Scepticks upon Principle, that read and think themselves into Speculative Atheism, we may observe yet are generally a sort of People that have a mighty Opinion of themselves, set an high Value upon their own Reason, Learning, and Philosophy; talk much of the Ignorance and Prejudices of other People; run down the Syllematick Divines; in short, talk at such a rate, as if Philosophy, and Wisdom, and Knowledge had begun to live, and were to dye with them: And yet after all this vain Boast of Science and Demonstration, in many Things advance such precarious Assertions for Principles, and such Shadows of Reason for Demonstrations, that one would be apt to think they had a mind to insult the Reason of Mankind.

He that carefully reads *Hobbs* and *Spinoza*, and some other later Writers, I believe, will think I am not much out in what I say of 'em.

I doubt, these Men think themselves in too high a Class of Reason and Philosophy, to be wrought upon by any thing that I can say to 'em.

But there are Two Things I cannot but tell them upon this Occasion.

1. That their way of Writing is very unfair, and unlike (what they pretend to be) great Philosophers.

We may observe, the general Way of almost all our modern Scepticks, is, that of Insinuation :

They in their Writings talk of God and Religion, and Christianity too, like other People ; while in the mean time they advance such Assertions and Reasonings, as undermine the Foundation not only of Revealed, but Natural Religion, and the Belief of the Being of a God.

If they were generous Adversaries, or such as would make the World think they intended to carry their Point by Dint of Reason and Philosophy, they would write at another  
rate ;

rate ; they would modestly signify their Doubts as to these Things, and fairly represent their Reasons for it, and be willing patiently to hear what can be said against them : And they would scorn such Arts of wheedling their weaker and more unwary sort of Readers.

In short, those Arts of Insinuation that plainly appear in their Writings, are as much below the Character of Good Men, as Good Philosophers, and Good Christians.

2. There is another thing that cannot be justify'd by any Men of sober Sense, and which yet too many of their Writers and their Profelytes and Abettors are grossly guilty of; and that is, their Scoffing at Religion, and making the Belief of those Things that concern it, the Subjects of their Ridicule and Railery.

Sure, the Arguments that are brought against their Scepticism and Infidelity, are not so weak and contemptible as to deserve to be laugh'd out of Countenance, and to be made a Jest of, and the Sport of Conversation, Nor do they pretend to such

Demonstration on their side, as should make it a ridiculous thing to oppose 'em.

I doubt it is rather a Sign the Cause and the Men too are not very good, when such Methods are pitch'd upon for the Defence of 'em.

But to add something farther.

'Tis a very uncomfortable State these Men leave the World in, when they suppose all Things to be carried on by a blind Chance, or fatal Necessity, without the Providence and Government of God.

1. The very Thoughts of this must make Men uneasy, and full of Fear and Horror; like Men in a Storm, toss'd upon the Waves of a Rolling Sea, without hope of any Harbour.

And the Atheists themselves are great Instances of this; no Men generally more subject to terrible Fears than they. Whether it be, that their Mind misgives them sometimes that there may be a God, and that they have Reason to dread his Vengeance, whose Providence and Being they have discarded: Or whether it be in part the Natural Consequence of that uncertain and uncomfortable State that

Man

Man must needs be in, that believes there is nothing but blind Fortune, or fatal Necessity in the World. Which foever it be, we cannot wonder if such Men be full of disturbing Fears and Horrors.

2. They loose all the Bonds of Duty, and undermine the very Foundation of Morality. If there be no Law-giver, there can be no Law; if no God, no Reward to be expected for a Virtuous Life, no Punishment for Wickedness but in this Life, and consequently, no Obligation to Virtue but from Human Laws.

And therefore we find most of those Writers speak out, and like themselves in this Point, and plainly own no other Foundation of Virtue and Morality, but what comes from Human Laws, which (they say) are grounded only upon Compact.

So that (with them) the Keeping of our Contracts is the Original Law of Nature, and the very Foundation of all Morality. Tho' it will be very hard to shew there lies any real Obligation upon Men to that, without supposing a God, further than the Fear of Human Laws and Punishments.

'Tis true, some late Writers have advanced the *Point of Honour*, as a Foundation of Virtue; and it must be confess'd, it is a generous thing to observe the Rules of Virtue and Religion.

But 'tis to be consider'd, That this very Notion of Honour implies there is some real Excellency in Virtue; and that there is originally and from the Nature of the Thing, a real Difference between Virtue and Vice, Moral Good and Evil, or at least that the Generality of the World think so.

For Honour is *in honorante*, not *in honorato*; and is nothing but the Opinion that other Men have of our Dignity and Excellency. So that when a Man is virtuous upon a Point of Honour, he is so because he values the Opinion the Generality of the World have of Virtue; and because if he should be otherwise, he would suffer in their Judgment of him.

Which (as I said before) implies at least, That the Generality of the World think that Virtue is a truly Good, Noble, and Generous Thing.

But

But if these Gentlemen will have the *Point of Honour* to be something within them, and to have little or no respect to the Opinion of other Men; then Honour must be nothing but a Noble Scorn to do an ill, a base, and ungenerous thing; and so it must proceed from that which they would pretend to deny, a Sense they have of a real Difference there is between Moral Good and Evil.

But alas, how weak a Principle of Virtue and Morality this Point of Honour is, we see by daily Experience; when the Generality of the World are below the Sense of it, and the Great Men of the World too often act as if they thought themselves as much above the Sense of true Honour, in the just Extent of it; and only place it in some nice Punctilio's, that have nothing either of true Honour or Dishonour in 'em, or (it may be) sometimes in some Things that are truly dishonourable.

So that the Atheist can have no real Principle to act upon but Self-love. Others, whose Principles are good, their Lives may be bad; but it is very  
hard

hard to suppose but the Atheist must be a Bad Man.

3. We may add further, this Opinion is of most pernicious Consequence to Society, to the Publick, and to Government.

'Tis true, these Gentlemen seem to pass a great Complement upon Princes, and to pay a great Deference to Human Laws and to Government: But as their Principles encourage Princes to oppress their Subjects, so they set Subjects at liberty to disturb their Governors.

For if Power and Right be the same thing, then the meanest Subject (if he can get into the Throne, and find Abettors to support and keep him there,) has as good a Right, according to these Men, as can be had in this Case; and what he has done to his Lawful Prince, another may do to him, and so on without end.

It would shock a Man to think what a World this would be, should this Belief generally prevail. This would set Men at liberty to give the full Swing to their corrupt Inclinations; the Ambitious, to be Disturbers of the Peace of their Country; the  
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Lustful, to be Corrupters; the Covetous, to become Cheats, and Perfidious, and Oppressors; the Proud and Passionate, upon every little Affront and Provocation, to reek their Spleen, and to give the full Swing to their Revengeful Resentments: But above all, the Envious and Malicious, to do hurt to their Neighbour, even when they do no good to themselves, and to do Mischief for Mischief sake. And all this they might do upon Principle, and when they had done, defend too.

These and the like things have been often better represented to these Men by many Learned Persons, than I can pretend to do: But 'tis to be feared, they are deaf to good Advice, they are too wise to be instructed, or too proud to be reprov'd.

*Whether they will bear, or whether they will forbear, we ought to bear our Testimony for God and Religion.*

If they be really plunged into the Gulph of Atheism, God Almighty recover 'em, that they may own him their Maker, before they find him their Judge.

If in any of 'em it be Pride and Singularity that is the bottom of their pretended Atheism ; a little Consideration would convince 'em what an heinous thing it must be, to raise themselves a Reputation at the Expence of God and Religion ; and how extremely foolish it is, for the vain Opinion or Praise of a few Loose Men, to affront the Judgment of all the Sober part of Mankind.

But there may be some honest People that may have some Doubts, and be sometimes under some Difficulties as to those things. Tho Arguments and Advice may in a great measure be lost upon such Men as I have mentioned before ; yet there may be some that may have some Inclinations to Scepticism, that yet may be willing to hear Arguments on one Side, as well as on the other. And to such as these, before I part with this Subject, I would give a short Advice.

1. That they would seriously and impartially consider the Arguments for the Being of a God.

And particularly, that they would accustom themselves to the serious Contemplation of the Works of God.

The

The *Psalmist* tells us, *The Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament sheweth his Handy-work.*

Indeed we have the most prevailing Arguments before our Eyes, to convince us of the Being of God, tho we should never look into Books for 'em. He that shall seriously think of the vast Variety, the exact Harmony, the excellent Contrivance, the mutual Subserviency, the certain and regular Motions of the several Parts of the World, will see such plain Footsteps of Infinite Power and Wisdom, as will almost force him to the Acknowledgment of a God.

2. That they would not look upon every little Difficulty that may be started by Atheistical People, as sufficient to balance the clear Evidence there is for this Truth, That there is a God.

If we should act at such a rate in other things, it would soon lead us to a general Scepticism; and we should soon find we must believe nothing in the World. If we must not believe our Eyes, because we cannot tell how we see; nor our Ears, because we know not how we hear; nor that we think,

think, or understand any thing; because we are not fully acquainted with the Manner how we do it, nor can give a clear Solution of all the Difficulties that may be started by a subtile Disputant about these Things; the Consequence would be, That we must deny there is any such thing as Certainty, Sense, and Understanding.

So it is in the Case before us.

'Tis one thing, clearly to know That God is; and another, to know What he is. We may have a full Assurance of his Existence, tho we may be in the dark in many things as to his Essence.

Nay, I will say farther; Tho we should not be able to give a clear Solution of all those Difficulties that may be started as to the Existence of God, from some of his Attributes; yet neither would this be of any weight against such plain Evidence as we have for the Being of a God.

For this may proceed only from our Ignorance, from that imperfect Knowledge we have of God in this present state. And this will appear the more reasonable, if we consider,

1. That the Atheist himself pretends to nothing like Demonstration in this Case. The utmost he pretends to, is, That the Arguments for the Being of a God are not conclusive; that there are Objections against the Being of a God, that cannot be clearly answer'd, and Difficulties that are not easily solv'd; and pretends to give some Account how the World might be without a God: He does not so much as pretend to any thing of Certainty in the Case.

2. We ought to consider, the Accounts the Atheists give of the Existence of the World without a God, are not only attended with some Difficulties that they cannot give a clear Solution of, but such Absurdities, Impossibilities, and Contradictions, as stare in the Face of Reason, and seem to argue a great deal of Partiality in those that propose 'em, and a mighty Willingness, Propensity, and a strong Inclination to believe there is no God.

This has before been shewn in part, and might be much more largely, of all the several Atheistical Hypotheses,  
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of the Existence of the World without a God.

But that which most effectually shews the Absurdity of these Mens Reasonings, is, That they are forced to allow that to dull and stupid Matter, the most imperfect of all Beings, that yet they deny to God.

Thus they object against Eternity and Infinity in God, and yet are forced to allow it to Matter: For if there were not an Eternal God, there must be Eternal Matter; and 'tis certain there may as well be Infinite Matter without God, as any at all.

They will not allow a Spirit to have Understanding, because it has no Flesh, Blood, and Brains; and yet are forced to recur to this as their last shift, That Matter as Matter, has Thought and Understanding; and that Cogitation is as essential a Property of Matter or Substance as Extension: And some others that are not so bold as to assert this, yet profess they do not know but it may be so.

They start a great many Difficulties about the World's being made by a Being of Infinite Power; but they can easily believe the World might make  
it

it self, and be improved by a fortuitous Jumblement of Atoms, into that Glorious and Regular Frame we now see it in, with the Addition too of those Noble Intelligent Beings, that (to all appearance) have Powers above the Capacity of mere Matter.

They will not allow, that a Spirit can be a Principle of Motion to any Matter: But they must allow upon their own *Hypothesis*, either, That Motion is natural to all Matter, (and then there could be no Rest, and consequently no Production of any thing;) or, if Rest be natural to Matter, some Matter that was at Rest must first move it self: Both which Suppositions are absurd enough.

Sure, those who advance so many Absurdities themselves, and give Accounts of their Opinions, liable to insuperable Objections, ought not to reject such plain and demonstrative Evidence for the Being of a God, upon every little Objection that through our imperfect Understanding of the Nature of that God whose Existence we assert, we cannot so clearly account for.

3. I would advise such Persons as I am now speaking to, that they would have a special Care of Pride.

As this has in the Church been the Root of Heresies, so (no doubt) of Infidelity too.

We may observe, there is a strange Itch in some of the more Philosophical and Studious Part of Mankind, to make themselves a Name by advancing something strange and new: And when they cannot do any thing extraordinary in the common way, they think to make themselves considerable by their being singular, by advancing and defending Notions that lie cross to the Sense of Mankind.

And if once they catch this Disease, the more absurd their Notions, and the more extravagant their Assertions are, the more famous they think they make themselves.

And as some drudge on in the old beaten Road of Philosophy, without the least Freedom of Thought; so some others, under the Pretence and Character of Free Thinkers, care not what they say, so it be far enough from the received and vulgar Notions of the World.

And

And as it is with some Superstitious Religionists, the less they have to say for themselves, the more proud, and conceited, and confident they are, and the more they despise other People: So it is generally with these Philosophical Infidels; the more absurd their Notions, the more precarious their Assertions, the more weak their Reasonings; with the greater Pride and Confidence do they vend their wild Notions as New Discoveries, and talk with such a contemptuous Air, as if all Mankind had been led blindfold, till they were born to enlighten the World.

*Plato* gives this Account of the Atheists of his Time. *Diagoras* and *Theodoros* are said to have profess'd Atheism, because they would have the Glory of being the Authors of some New Opinion. And he that reads *Vaninus*, *Machiavel*, *Hobbs*, *Spinoza*, *Blount*, and such others of our modern Atheists; will find such a Vein of Pride and Vanity, and Contempt of others runs through their Writings; that tho he will easily see they have advanced little, but what they are beholden for to the Ancient Atheistical Writers, yet

they have clearly out-done 'em in that great Virtue of pretended Adepts in Philosophy, a good Conceit of themselves.

But above all, let them take care that while they believe a God, they do not live as if there was none.

As Practical Atheism is very absurd in it self, so it is especially in Men of Sense, Thought, and Reading, strangely preparative for Speculative Atheism.

'Tis true, those Men that are so busied about the World, that they never think at all, may go on in their Lusts without remorse: But for those whose Employments (or Curiosity) engages them to read and think of these Things, if they live vicious Lives, 'tis hard to think but they must in a little time alter their Belief or Practice; and if the Power of their Lusts be so predominant, that they will continue to live as if there were no God, they may likely in a while endeavour to perswade themselves that there is none.

The Apostle to the *Romans* says of the Heathen, That because *when they knew God, they glorify'd him not as God,*  
 God

God suffer'd them to become *vain in their imagination*: This he may do, by suffering Men to fall into Atheism as well as Polytheism; or the Belief of no God, as well as that of many Gods.

In fine, let us who pretend firmly to believe in God, that he is the Maker and Governor of us and all the World, live under a constant Sense of our Duty and Obligations to him. Let not us, while we profess to know God, in Works deny him. Let not us give that Scandal to the Infidel Part of the World, as to give 'em occasion to say, That while we pretend to believe better, we live worse than they.

To this end, let us well consider and apply what we believe concerning this God.

That he is in himself a Self-existent, Immutable, Eternal, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, infinitely Wise, and absolutely Perfect Spirit. That he is the Great Creator, Preserver, and Governor of us and all the World. That he is a Just, and Holy, and yet a Good and Merciful God,

That

That from the Consideration of these and the like Glorious Attributes of God, there must needs issue an Obligation upon those Creatures that are capable of knowing God, and those Perfections that are Essential to the Divine Nature, to the Exercise of all suitable inward Affections towards this God, and giving all decent external Demonstrations of the same.

Let us therefore constantly live under an awful Sense of his Majesty and Presence. Let us repose an entire Confidence in his Powerful Providence. Let us have an ardent Love to him, as one that is indeed the Highest Object of our Love, infinitely Good in himself, and Bountiful to us. Let us yield a full Submission to his Pleasure, under all his Providential Dispensations; as knowing it is fit he should do what he pleases, and is Wise and Good, and will do what is best for us.

But particularly, let us Christians who live under the Gospel-Dispensation, and believe we have the clear Revelations of his Word and Will, exercise a firm Faith in his Word, yield a full

full Obedience to his Revealed Will, hope in his Mercy, give him that Spiritual Worship that by his Word appears to be suitable to his Nature, and agreeable to his Will ; and do our best to testify our Gratitude for his Mercies, and to answer the End of Christ's Coming, and walk in all Things worthy of that Religion we profess ; according to that Pathetical Exhortation of the Apostle , *Phil. 1. 27. Only let your Conversation be, as it becometh the Gospel of Christ.*

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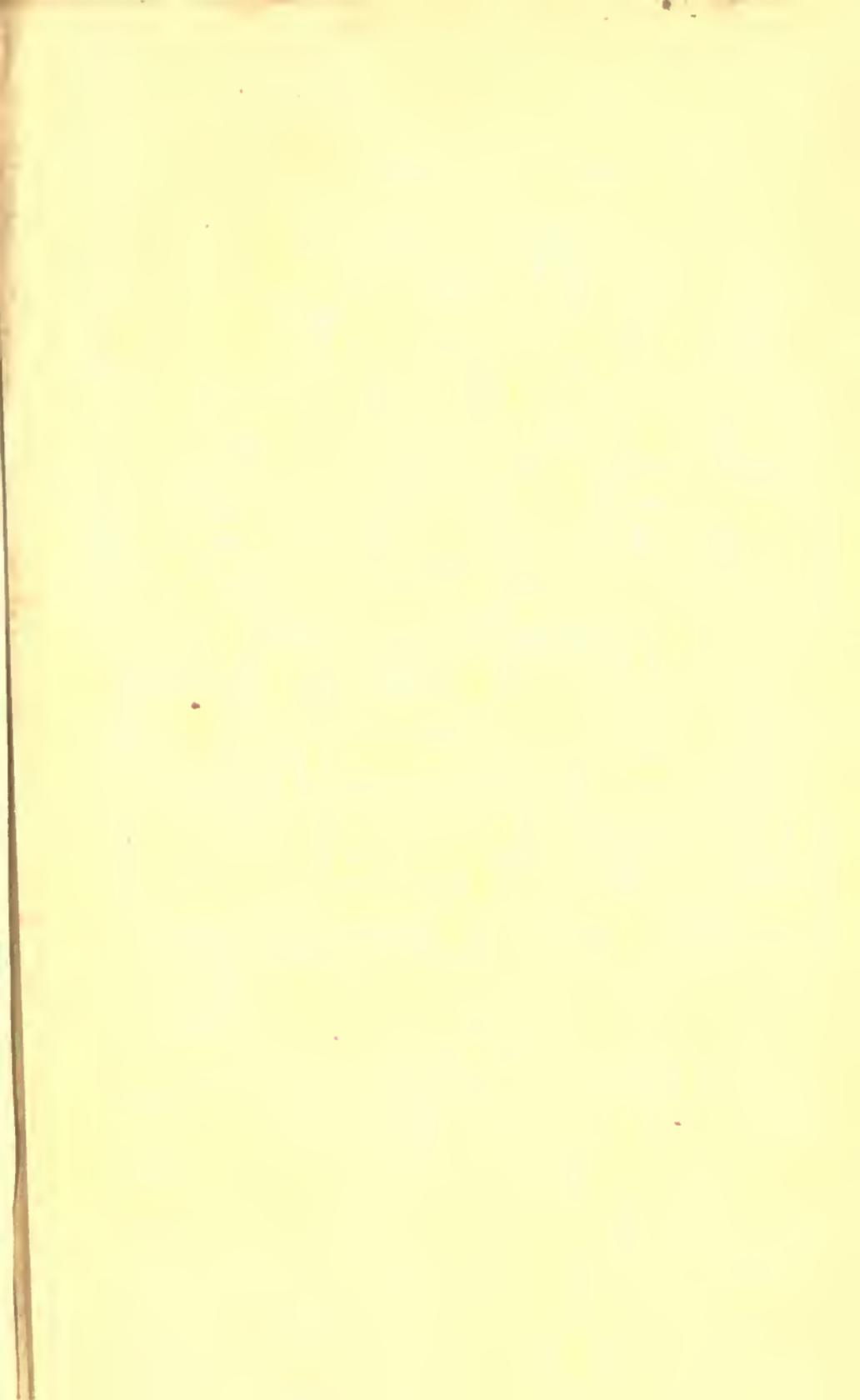
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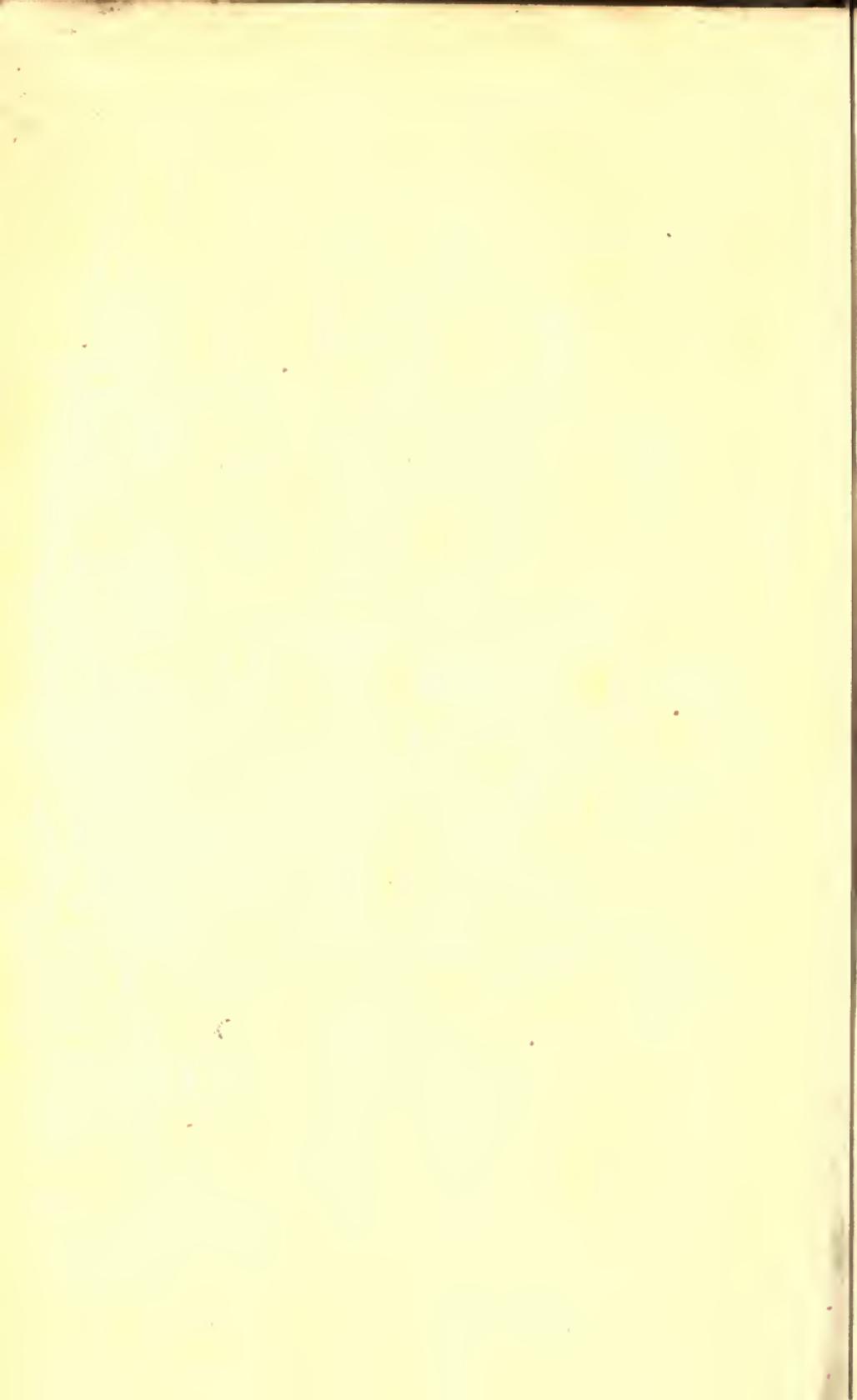
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