



14-2
23
John Partridge

27

LIBRARY
OF THE
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,
AT
PRINCETON, N. J.

DONATION OF
SAMUEL AGNEW,

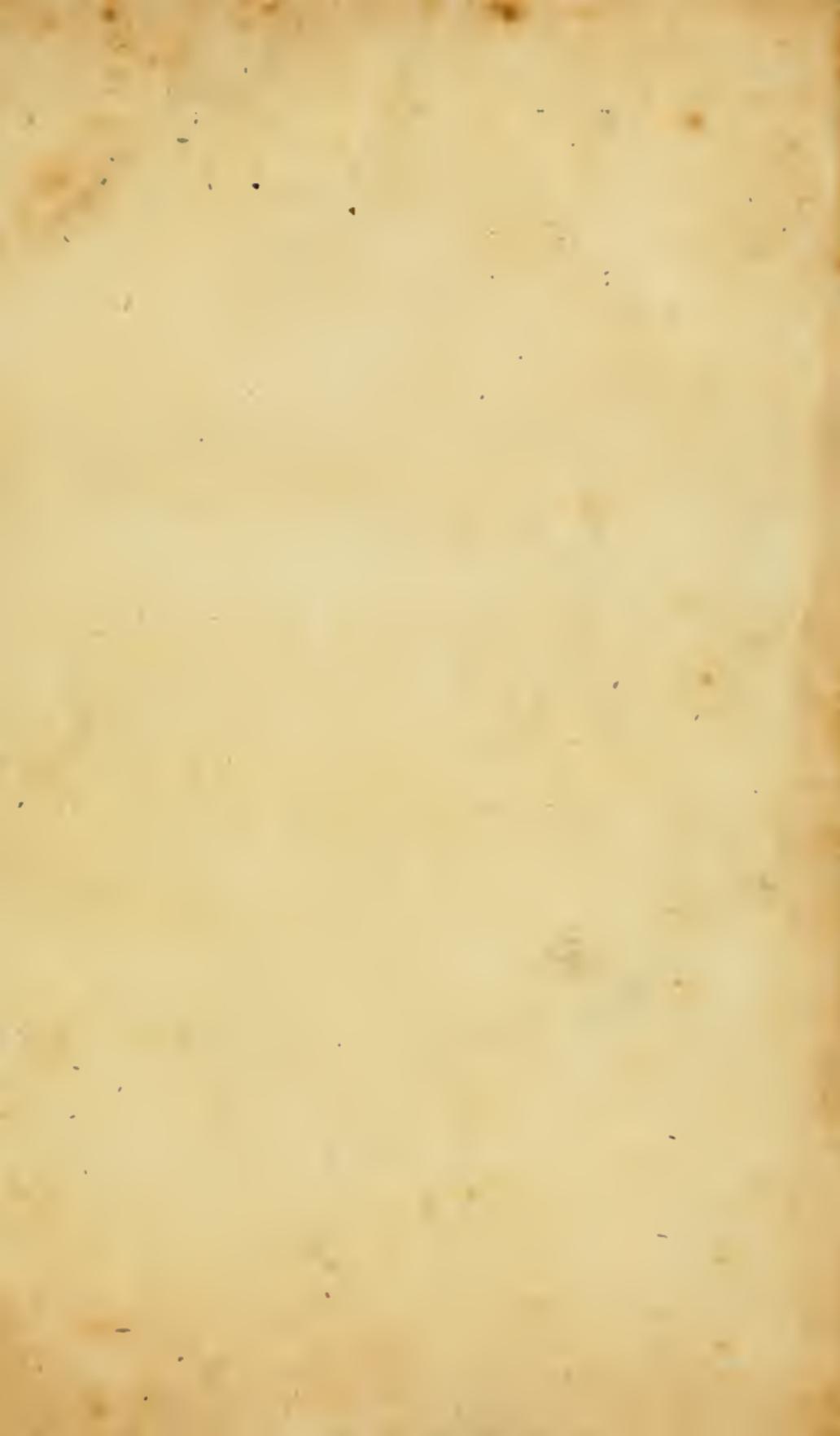
OF PHILADELPHIA, PA.

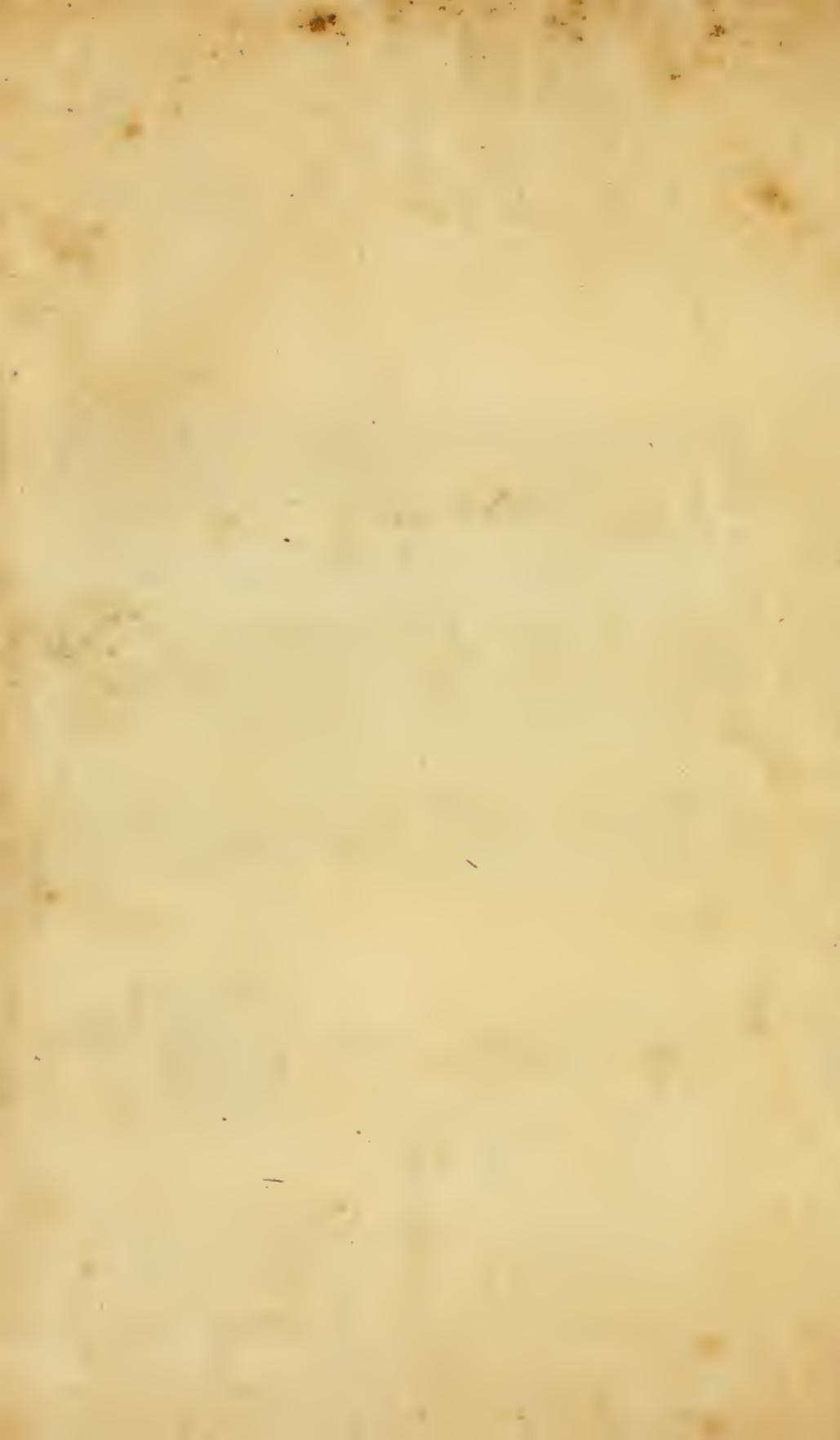
Letter
No.

March 15th 1855

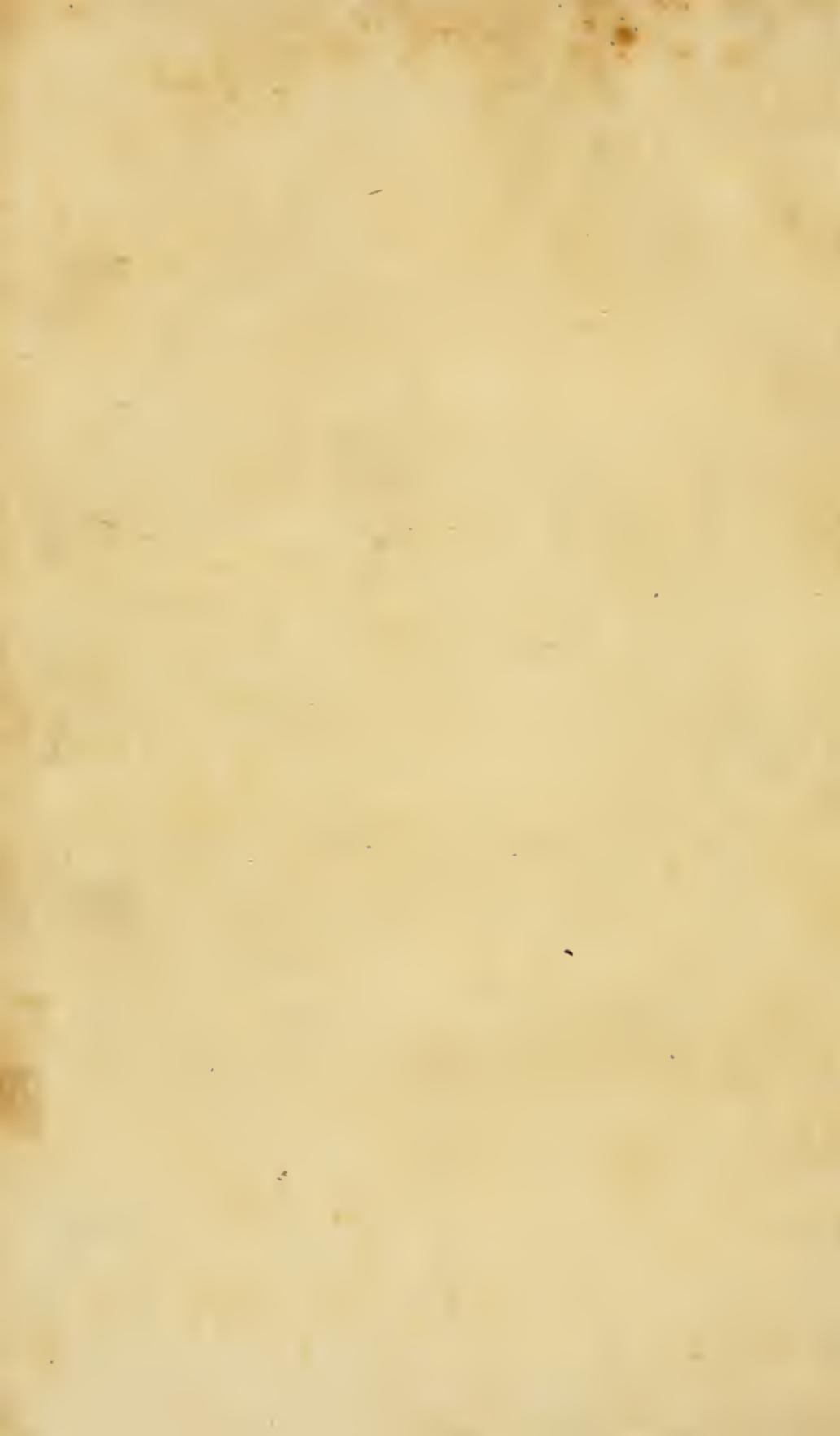
Case	Division
Shelf	Section
Book	

5CC
1902
C.1









T H E
Certainty and Necessity
O F
Religion in General:
Or, the First
Grounds and Principles
O F
Humane Duty
Establish'd ;

In Eight Sermons Preach'd at *S. Martin's in the Fields* at the Lecture for the Year 1697, founded by the Honourable *Robert Boyle*, Esquire.

By *Francis Gastrell*, D. D. Canon of *Christ-Church*, and Preacher to the Honourable Society of *Lincolns-Inn*.

The Second Edition corrected with some Additions.

L O N D O N,
Printed by T. W. for *Tho. Bennet*, at the Half-Moon in *St. Paul's Church-Yard*, 1703.

B

i

T O T H E

Most Reverend Father in God *Thomas*
Lord Archbishop of *Canterbury*.

Sir *Henry Ashurst*, Baronet;
Sir *John Rotheram*, Serjeant at Law;
John Evelyn Senior. Esquire,

Trustees by the Appointment of the Hono-
rable *ROBERT BOYLE*, Esquire

Most Reverend and Honoured,

HAVING, by Your Appointment,
preach'd the following Sermons,
and publish'd them, by your Command;
I humbly desire, this Dedication of them
to You may be accepted as some Ac-
knowledgment for that great Trust you
have been pleas'd to honour me with.

I have nothing to say for the Perfor-
mance, but that I have endeavour'd, all
I could to proportion my Care to the
Subject, and Design of the Lecture; and,
where the Management is faulty, I have

The Epistle Dedicatory.

reason to hope that the Evidence of the Truths, I defend, will bear me out.

I have taken the Liberty to Print my Sermons all together, in a continu'd Discourse, that the Strength of the Proofs there given may appear more plainly from their Connexion.

If it shall please God to render what I have done, in any degree, or measure, serviceable towards the raising, or promoting a Sense of Religion among us, I shall extremely rejoyce at my Success; and, I am sure, I shall have my Satisfaction encreased by Your Approbation of my Endeavours, and by your farther Protection and Defence of the same Cause, in which I am now particularly engaged, and which ought to be the general Concern of Mankind.

I am,

Most Reverend and Honoured,

Your most faithful and obedient Servant,

Francis Gastrell.

THE
PREFACE.

IN every Age of the World, of which we have any Account left us, the Wickedness of Mankind has much the largest share in their History: and if we intirely credited the Complaints of the several Historians, who acquaint us with what passed in their days, we should be disposed to conclude, that those particular times, of which they write, were certainly much worse, than any that went before, and, consequently that Vice, having been always growing, and gathering Strength, as the World advanced in years, the Present Generation of Men must far exceed all their Predecessors in Wickedness. But, tho' I have a very ill Opinion of the Age we now live in, I cannot look upon this Reflexion as just, and well-grounded.

The true Occasion both of the Observation, and the Complaints grounded upon it, I take to be, that variety of Wickedness, whereby the several Ages, and Countries of the World have been distinguish'd from one another. For there have been as many different Methods,

and Fashions of sinning, among Men, as Forms of Government; and as many Changes and Revolutions in Vice, as in Empire. Some Periods of Time have been remarkable for open Cruelty, Rapine, and Oppression; some for Treachery, and private Revenge, and all the secret ways of Destruction; others for Luxury, and Riot, and all manner of extravagant Lust, and Debauchery; At some Seasons Profaness, and a publick contempt of Religion have prevail'd; at other times Indifference, and an utter Neglect of all that's good and sacred; sometimes Hypocrisy, and an open pretence to Piety and Virtue have been generally used for a Cover to a close and secret practice of all sort of Vice; and sometimes Men have had the Impudence to defend the worst Actions, by endeavouring to make them appear consistent with Religion.

These, and many such Differences as these are observable in the History of former times; but the peculiar, distinguishing Character of This Age, is a publick Denial of Religion, and all the Obligations of it, with an Endeavour, to disprove the Evidences brought for it, and to offer a more rational Scheme of Libertinism. 'Tis true indeed, this ought to be the Plea of all wicked Men who are resolv'd to continue in their Vices;
and

and, upon that account, it may be justly wonder'd at, that the number of Atheists, and profest Libertines has not been much greater in former Ages, than in this, in which we pretend to juster Views, and stronger Proofs of Religion than were heretofore known: But 'tis plain, there never were more than there are now, to whom those Characters do truly belong, whatever softer Names they are pleased to distinguish themselves by; and this I apprehend to be the reason of it.

The Scriptures of the new Testament, which are, generally, in this part of the World. believed to contain the Revelations of God, are so plain and particular, so full and express, in the Account they give of the Duties required of Men, and of the future Rewards and Punishments annexed to the observance or breach of them; and the World is so enlightned now by the great Improvements of Knowledge which have been lately made, especially by a critical and exact Search into the Design, and Meaning of the Sacred Writings, that 'tis impossible for Men of Sense to reconcile a Profligate Life with those Ideas of God and Religion which they meet with in the Scriptures; and therefore they find themselves obliged, in defence of their Vices, (which they cannot perswade themselves to part

with,) to deny, not only Revelation, but all manner of Religion too; since, if there be any Religion at all, they are forced to acknowledge that we have the fairest, and most rational Draught of it presented us in the Writings of the New Testament.

This Method of reasoning is, now, found to have a stronger Influence in quieting the Conscience, and making an ill Man satisfied with himself, than any Plea formerly used; because it has a greater shew of Fairness and Sincerity in it: 'tis so very reasonable, and honourable a thing for a Man to act up to his Principles, that wicked Men are easily disposed to entertain a good Opinion of the Principles of Irreligion, because the constant Agreeableness of their Practice to them makes their Character consistent, and all of a piece, and give them a great Advantage both in point of Judgment, and Honour, over those, who pretend to other Principles, and yet act just as they do.

But, whatever Preference may be due to these Men upon a comparison of them with wicked Professors of Religion; and whatever Ease, and Satisfaction it may afford them, in a continued Course of Vice, that their Judgment and Practice agree together; I think it may be made very evident, that
they

they have only found out a new Artifice to deceive themselves; and that all their Reasonings are not only vain and groundless, but directly opposite to the clearest Conceptions of Truth, and Happiness, which Mankind is capable of.

This is the plain Design of the following Discourse; and, to render it more effectual for the checking, and putting some stop to the reigning Corruption of this Age, I have so contrived it, as to make it bear with equal Force against all the Principles which can be made use of, to support Irreligion.

I know very well, that the Folly and Unreasonableness of downright Atheism are so manifest, and the pernicious Consequences of no Religion-at-all, so visible in themselves, and have, besides, been so justly and largely exposed already, in many late Discourses, that no body will dare to own the Title or Character of an Atheist, whatever his private Sentiments may be; and therefore, I have endeavoured to give such a Proof of Religion, as will overthrow all the loose Principles and Objections now commonly made use of to evacuate the practical Force and Power of it: all which may properly be rank'd under the Style of Irreligion, if they will not be allowed to come under that of Atheism; which, as far as we are concern'd to know or do any thing
in

in the World, I take to be much the same thing; as will more fully be made out in the Discourse it self.

The Being of a God is not, indeed, openly and directly question'd, because the Theory of the Universe cannot be so easily, and conveniently explained, without some such Notion, to which the Name of God may be given; but, if what some Philosophers vouchsafe to call by the Name of God be not an intelligent Being, or be not the Governour of the World, or do's not particularly concern himself with the Actions of Men; 'tis all one to us, whether there be any such Being as God or no: all Hypotheses concerning the Origin, Duration, and present state of the World are then alike, that is, they are all equally fit to entertain our Imaginations, and to help us to be insensible of the Tedioufness of living: which, if the notions of God, hereafter laid down are not true, is all the Business we have to do here.

*But still it will be urged, that, allowing that Notion of God which I have given, there are few, if any who can properly be called Atheists, because the generality at least, of those who are commonly thought to deserve this Name do profess to believe a God, of all those Attributes I have ascribed to him, and to acknowledge
that*

that Men are under some Obligations of Religion: but, if we examine all their Principles together, and consider the necessary Consequences of them, we shall find that they are distinguish'd from Atheists, by Title and Profession only, and not by any real Difference in their Faith: For the Religion of these Men is nothing else, but a few honest Principles relating to Justice, Friendship, and Society, which are wholly owing to their Complexion, or Education, and not to their Belief of a God; and the practical Influence even of These commonly reaches no farther, than that particular Set of Men, in whose Company or Interests they are most engag'd, and is intirely bounded and regulatea by their present Ease, Advantage, or Reputation, and not by any Future Prospects in another Life; and those of them who seem to admit a future State, when they come to explain themselves, make it such a one as Men need have very little regard for in This.

These are all the Principles which the generality of those who have lately insulted the Christian Faith do really believe, and act upon; this is the sum both of their Faith, and Practice, however they are pleased to magnify the Excellence and Perfection of natural Religion, and whatever regard they

they pretend to have for the clear and easie parts of the Christian Revelation.

By Religion, therefore, I would here be understood to mean that whole Scheme of Humane Duties, we find delivered in the Writings of the New Testament, as recommended and enforced by such a Future State as is there described; which may properly be call'd, with respect to the Author of it, Christian Morality. 'Tis in this Sense and Extent of the Word that I have endeavour'd to establish the Certainty and Necessity of Religion; and 'tis plain, that the Arguments, made use of for this purpose, will fit no other Scheme but this, there being no other Draught, or Model of Life to be conceived, that would be capable of producing such a noble Scene of Happiness, as I have shewn, would be the certain effect of an universal Practise of the Christian Morality.

I have not descended to a particular Defence of several Duties, commonly insisted upon as Principles of natural Religion, the Reasonableness, and natural Obligation of which is questioned by some who are willing to lye under as few Restraints as they can; this, I say, is not done, both because it was necessary to give a general Idea of Religion first, and a particular

cular Examination of the several Parts of it, was too long a Task to come within that compass of Writing which I was confined to; And because I am fully satisfied, that it is a shorter and better way of reasoning to prove the Truth of the Christian Revelation, which being thoroughly proved, it will follow, that we are to submit entirely to the Authority of it, and to regulate all our false and imperfect Views of Religion by that most perfect Plan which God himself has given of it in the Scriptures.

'Tis for the same Reason that I have made no particular inquiries into the Condition, and Duration of our Future State, and the Nature of those Rewards and Punishments which we are to expect hereafter, nor have offered at any explication of the several Difficulties which occur in the Doctrine of Divine Providence; because a full and Satisfactory Account of these things can be had no other way than from Revelation; and in general, 'tis a sufficient Answer to all the Objections which may be raised from hence, that there is a God; that there are Marks and Tokens of Wisdom, in the whole Oeconomy, and Course of the World; that Man is made and designed for Religion, here, while he lives, and for a future State, after Death.

If

If any of these Principles hold, they all hold; and no particular Difficulties which do not evidently overthrow the whole Scheme, can have any force at all. If there be no future State, there's no Religion; if there be no such thing as Religion, there is no such thing as Wisdom, or Design in the Frame and Constitution of Man; and if the Appearances of Wisdom here have no Reality under them, we shall have more reason to distrust all the Signs and Tokens of it, which any other Parts of Nature can afford us, and consequently, we can have no proof of such a wise and intelligent Being as God. In this Process of Reasoning, we argue upon a full and comprehensive Knowledge of the Principles we argue from, because, if there be no future Life after this, we know the utmost that can be known of the State and Condition of Man: But the seeming Inequalities of Providence, in the Conduct of the Universe, can be no Argument against any of the Principles before advanced; because, while we have certain Tokens of Wisdom remaining, no doubtful Appearances of the contrary will be sufficient to overthrow them; and all those must needs be so, where we cannot carry our Observations to the farthest end of things, in all the different Points of distance from us; which is the present Case.

For

For except we were able to take a full and exact View of the whole Universe, and all the Relations which the several parts of it bear to one another, 'tis impossible for us to know, that such or such a thing was ill contrived in it; If we are not sure that there is no such thing as a future State, we cannot condemn the present Course of Humane Affairs as unequal, or fortuitous; and unless we were thoroughly acquainted with all the Circumstances of our Condition in another World, the just Proportion of future Rewards and Punishments to the Actions of this Life, and the exact Manner and Methods of God's dealing with us hereafter, we can never make it appear from Reason, that the Scripture-Account of God's future Appointments for us is contrary to the Rules of Justice or Wisdom, and consequently that our Expectation of a future State is vain, since the most probable Representation we can have of it, which is that we find in the New-Testament, is ill-grounded.

If, therefore, the General Proof of Religion hereafter given stand good, no particular Difficulties either in the real Phenomena of Nature, or in the arbitrary Schemes and Hypotheses of Men ought to have any weight with us. The next and the only thing
which

which remains to be done by us, is, that we should search and examine into the Scriptures, and being convinc'd of their Truth, should sincerely endeavour to form both our Opinions and Practice upon that most perfect Model of Religion which is there laid down.

By the same Author.

THE Certainty of the Christian Revelation, and the Necessity of believing it, Established; in opposition to all the Cavils and Insinuations of such as pretend to allow Natural Religion, and reject the Gospel.

Some Considerations concerning the Trinity, and the ways of managing that Controversie, The Second Edition, together with a Defence of them against the Objections of the Dean of St. Pauls.

THE
Certainty and Necessity
 OF
 RELIGION
 In General, &c.

HEB. xi. 6.

He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Religion has been so long in Possession, so powerful hath been its Influence, and so universal its Authority, so nearly is Mankind concern'd in all its promises, or threatens, and such mighty Consequences attend

: B

the

the Truth, or Falshood of its Pretensions, that I have often wonder'd, how the Men of these latter days, who are at such a distance from the first Rise of things, durst dispute a Title so well owned and attest-ed; the Denial of which is so dangerous, and which, if it had at first been false, they have no possible means left of dispro-ving: whereas, on the contrary, the Evi-dences of its Truth are still in being, still fresh, and in all their strength of Convi-ction: as I hope in some measure to make good in the following Discourse.

I am very sensible that I engage in a Subject, which several great and learned Men have already, and some of them very lately, treated of, with the wisest Refle-ctions, and justest Reasoning imaginable. But, besides that Truth it self is fruitful, and a Subject of this nature is hardly ever to be exhausted; the same Object may ad-mit of different Views; there may be new, and more suitable ways of offering the same things to the Understanding; or old Arguments may be strengthen'd and fenc'd in from the Objections which have been formerly rais'd against them, by some ad-ditional Supports: or, should there be no-thing of all this in what I have to say, yet

I think I am justifiable in repeating the same things once more, to the Shame and Confusion of those, who have hitherto been unable to answer them, and yet continue in their Sins and Unbelief.

But since it is not so much Their Conviction, (which nothing, I fear, but unpromis'd, irresistible Grace can effect) as the securing and confirming Others in the Truth that I chiefly aim at; since the encreasing and propagating a true Sense of Religion among Men, is my principal Design, and not a learned Triumph over an Adversary, I have ordered my Method accordingly, and consequently have made Choice of such a one as in the general Management of it is different, tho', in several of its parts, it will be found to fall in with that of others.

The *Certainty* and *Necessity* of Religion, is, what I undertake to prove; and therefore I shall consider Religion in the full Latitude and Extent of the Notion, as it takes in all those Obligations which result from the *Nature of Man*, the *Being* and *Attributes* of God, and the *Relation* in which the *one* stands to the *other*. In the prosecuting of which Subject, I shall

4 *The Certainty and Necessity*

chiefly make Choice of such Arguments, as, being taken from what we know, of our selves, and of such Objects without us, as we are best acquainted with, are most easily perceived by us, and entertain'd with the least Resistance or Suspicion.

All nice and philosophical Reasonings I shall forbear, as much as I can; but, where the Nature of the Subject, or the particular Prejudices of the Persons to be satisfied require a more speculative and metaphysical Account of things, I shall chuse out such Arguments of this kind, as the Understanding may with the least difficulty comprehend, and shall but lightly mention such, which, tho' convincing to some, who are already well used to Speculation, may chance to be suspected, by others, of too much Fineness, and so will probably, tho' very unjustly, create in them a Disgust to all the rest. And I shall all along take a due care to distinguish between such Notions and Opinions as are absolutely necessary to the *Being of Religion*, and those others, which, tho' oftentimes used in the Defence of it, and earnestly contended for, are of that nature, that Religion would no ways suffer, if they should prove to be false.

Now,

Now, in order to pursue my intended Method, with the more Clearness, I think my self obliged in this place to give an account of what I mean by *Religion*; a right Notion of which being first laid down, it will afterwards be easier to judge, whether there be any such thing; and if there be, whether it be reasonable and necessary, that Mankind should be influenced by it.

By Religion then, in general, I mean all that *Worship, Service, or Obedience*, which we, who call our selves *Men*, ought to pay to *God*; or whatever we are, in any respect, *obliged* to upon the Prospect of his Favour, or under the Penalty of his Displeasure, in *this* or a *future State*.

From whence 'tis plain, that, in order to make it appear, that there is such a thing as Religion, we must prove that there is a *God*, or some superior Being, who can, and does *oblige Man* to live after such a particular manner; and that *Man* is capable of, and actually under such an *Obligation*; the Performance, or Neglect of which, will be attended with very different Consequences, and those, sufficient to determine him to act one way, rather than another.

6 *The Certainty and Necessity*

But if a Man were desirous of convincing such Persons as denied all this, where should he first set out in his Proof? What Order should he give his Thoughts? Whence must he take his Rise to prove original Foundation-Truths? What Evidence will be powerful enough to prevail upon those, who love a Lye, and hate to be reform'd; How are they to be attempted who are strongly fortified with their Prejudices, and have hardly left a Man, who would attack them, any Ground to stand upon? Such an unreasonable Defiance of the common Sense of Mankind, is justly thought by the Wisest Men, to deserve Punishment, rather than Confutation. However, since those, who are yet innocent, or indifferent, may be corrupted; and those who are just entering upon the ways of Irreligion may be farther advanced and confirm'd in them by more settled *Atheists*, the same Care is to be taken for the Security of the former, as should be applied to the Conviction of the latter, were they judged capable of being convinc'd; and therefore, the Method to be used upon this Occasion must be such, as will most surely destroy the Pretences of *Atheism*, as well as give the easiest Account,

count, and most undeniable Proof of Religion; that so the Arguments, made use of by the Perverters of Mankind, may lose all their Power and Force upon others, by losing the Advantage of coming unanswer'd.

In order, therefore, to satisfy those who have not quite renounc'd their Reason of the Truth of Religion, according as I have before described and stated it; and of the Falshood of those Grounds upon which it is opposed, I shall proceed, in this manner.

First, I shall give some Account of the Nature of Man, the Nature of God, and that Relation which there is between them; so far as is necessary to establish the Notion of Religion.

Secondly, I shall prove that there is a God, or a Being of such a Nature as is before supposed.

Thirdly, From the Knowledge which, under the former Heads, it will appear, that we have, or are capable of having, concerning the *Humane* and *Divine* Natures,

8 *The Certainty and Necessity*

tures, I shall deduce a positive and direct Proof of *Religion*.

Fourthly, I shall farther evince the Truth of *Religion*, from a *Comparison* of it with *Irreligion*, and the necessary Consequences arising from thence.

Fifthly, I shall consider the *Grounds* and *Prétences* of *Irreligion*; what can be offered in Defence of it, and what are the usual Pleas for it; and from thence shew the Absurdity and Folly of their Conduct who have no better Reasons for what they Believe, and Do, than those, which they allege, upon Examination, will be found to be.

Sixthly, I shall make some Enquiries into the *Causes* of *Atheism* and *Irreligion*, or the Reasons which induce Men to take up such Opinions.

And shall conclude with a short Explication of the different Notions of *Atheism* and *Deism*.

I. First

I. *First* then, I am to give some Account of the *Nature of Man*, the *Nature of God*, and the *Relation* which is between them, so far as is necessary to establish the Notion of *Religion*.

The Knowledge of *Religion*, as of all other Things whatsoever, must begin from the Consideration of our Selves. Now our *Existence* being granted, the same Consciousness which satisfies us of this, if we carefully attend to what passes within us, will farther inform us, that we are capable of *Thinking*, *Perceiving*, and *Knowing*; which Capacity is usually stiled *Understanding*: And that we have likewise a Power of *Acting*, or *not Acting*; that is, we can entertain a *Thought*, or dismiss it; cause a *Motion*, or hinder it, when we have so *determin'd* with our selves, and that barely *by determining* so to do; which general Power, as it relates, both to *thinking* and *moving*, is called the *Will*.

'Tis plain also from the same Experience, that we are capable of *Pleasure* and *Pain*: by which I mean all manner of *agreeable* and *disagreeable* Sentiments whatever, whether caused by our selves, or occasioned by any thing without us.

And

And upon farther reflection we may find, that *Pleasure* and *Pain*, of some sort or other, are the first, and only Springs of *Action*, which set all our Powers on work, and give Rise to all our Determinations; (The obtaining the one, and avoiding the other, being the continual imployment of the Soul.)

But the particular *Reason*, *Motive*, or *End* of any Action being always something *future*, and the Views and Prospects we act upon being commonly remote, we are farther convinced, that we may, and often do act foolishly, and to our own Prejudice, either by lessening or discontinuing our present Satisfaction, or by bringing more Pain and Trouble upon our selves, than what we already feel; and that the only cause of this, is, the different representation of things *future*, from what they are perceiv'd to be when *present*, both in themselves and in their Consequences. From whence we infer, that there is no other way of remedying this Evil, and preventing our being accessory to our own Misery, but by rectifying our Notions of such things, as, being future, do not, by immediate Impressions, assure us, that they really are, what to us they appear to be. Now

Now as to the *Knowledge* we are capable of in this kind, we are to consider, what every Man may be sensible of that will reflect, *viz.* That there are some things, which appear with such a Light and Clearness to our understandings, that we cannot possibly deny our Assent to them: That in many Cases, there is not Evidence enough to command our Assent, but so much only, as inclines us to give it one way, rather than another; and this in different degrees. That sometimes we are held in suspense, by equal motives of Credibility, so that we find it difficult to determine our selves either way: And that many things there are, whereof we have no manner of *No-*tions at all, and so can determine nothing concerning them.

And here 'tis farther to be observed, that what is in its own Nature certain, may appear doubtful to us at one time, and probable at another; and what we Assent to as probable now, may afterwards command our Assent as certain: And that in such matters, where we cannot certainly determine what is True or False, we may oftentimes be sure, that
we

we know as much as can be known of them, by the Strength of our present Faculties.

But, besides these general differences in the appearance of things to us, with respect to *Truth* or *Falsbood*, as *Certain*, *Probable*, *Doubtful*, or *Exceeding our present reach*; We are moreover to take notice of another difference in the appearance of things to us, with respect to *Action*, and the consequences of it, *Happiness* or *Misery*. For, it often so happens, that, where the *Truth* of a thing seems doubtful to us, it plainly appears to be *safer*, and more to our Present Advantage, or affords a better prospect of Future Happiness, to Act one way, than another. And abundance of Instances there are, in which, we find our selves under a *necessity* of *Acting* one way, or other, where neither side appears certainly *true*, and there the considerations of *Safety* and *Danger* must determine us.

But after all, when we *know* as much as we can, we find that we are not *Equally disposed* to close with whatever is offered to our *Choice*; but that sometimes we are under a *necessity* of *preferring* one thing, and *rejecting* another; And, when it is in our *Power* to *determine* our selves
either

either way, we cannot always *do* what we *will*, either for want of *Knowledge* and *Strength* to effect what we desire, or because we are *Forced* and *Overruled*, by some *Extrinsick Violence*, to *Act* contrary to what we would, and could have done, if we had not been under that *Force*.

This is all the Account of *Humane Nature*, which I thought necessary to my present Design of establishing the *Truth* of Religion: And I perswade my self, I have said nothing upon this Subject, which any Man, who fairly consults himself, can possibly call in question.

All Questions concerning the *Origine*, and *Substance* of the *Soul*, its *Union* with the *Body*, and *separate Existence*, I have purposely waved; as things which do, in a great measure, ly out of the Reach of *natural Reason*, and, consequently, admit of no *certain* Proof from *thence*; are, as commonly handled, involved in great *Ambiguity* of Terms, and, which way soever explain'd, I think, as far as I have hitherto seen, make no manner of change, either as to the *Truth*, or *Nature* of Religion.

Whether the *Soul* be *infused*, or *derived*, *material*, or *immaterial*; whether it *depends* upon the *Body*, in all its *Actions*, or
some-

sometimes *acts of it self*; is *dissolved with it*, or *exists after it*; if, what I have said before concerning our own Experience, be true, it will be found, that Religion has a very good bottom to stand upon, whichsoever of these Opinions be admitted. But, if the Soul came from *without the Body*, is of a *different Nature* from it, can *Act independently of it*, and *Exist after its Dissolution*, as is extremely *probable from Reason*, and very *certain from Revelation*; then here are so many additional Arguments, for the Truth of what may be sufficiently prov'd, without 'em, from plainer and more undeniable Principles; as I shall endeavour to make good in the following Discourse.

The next Thing I am to do, is to consider the *Nature of God*, or, what that Notion, or Idea is, to which I affix that Name: which in short is this; An *Eternal Being*, of all *possible Perfections* in himself, and from whom every thing else deriv'd its Being, and whatever belongs to it.

But, to give a more particular Account of my Thoughts in this Matter: I conceive God to be *One unchangeable Being*; of an *intelligent Nature*; who *always necessarily*
Ex-

Existed of himself; who Knows every thing that can be known; and can Do every thing that is possible to be done; who does every thing that he Wills, and nothing but what he Wills himself; who enjoys an unalterable State of the greatest Happiness that can be enjoy'd; who never Wills, or Does any thing inconsistent with this State; who makes *himself* the ultimate end of all he does; and next, to that, the Good, or *Happiness* of all *such Beings*, as are capable of it; which, together with all other Beings, and every thing that belongs to them, had their Original from him, and depend upon him for their Continuance; and, lastly, who brings about whatever he Wills, or Designs by the fittest and most proper Means.

This seems to me to be the easiest Notion of God that we are capable of conceiving: and, if it can be proved, that there really is such a Being as is here describ'd, I think 'tis all that's necessary upon this Subject, with respect to what I have undertaken.

For, whether we represent God to our Thoughts as a *pure and simple act*, a *spiritual Substance*, or *subtle Matter*; as the *whole mass*, or *Substance of the World*, taken all

together, or as the *Soul* and *active Principle* of it; as *confin'd to the Heavens*, or *diffused through the whole extent of Being*; as the *Maker and Creator* of all things, or as the *Principle and Fountain* from whence they flowed; or whether we consider him under any other Idea that our Reason, or Imagination can frame; if we allow all the Characters of a Deity before mentioned, 'tis the same thing, as to Religion, which soever of these Opinions we embrace; as will hereafter appear. But, if any of them are urged to overthrow that Notion of a Deity which I have given; the Proof of such a Being, to which that Notion belongs, will be a full and sufficient Answer to them.

Now, as to the *Relation* which is between *God* and *Man*, we thus conceive; That God is our *Creator*, and *Parent*, the *Author* of our Being and Nature, and of all the Powers and Capacities belonging to it; and that we are his *Creatures*, the *Issue* of his Power, and the *Workmanship* of his Hands; that God is our *Protector*, *Governour*, and *Master*, and that we are his *Dependents*, *Subjects*, and *Servants*; that God is our *Benefactor* and the Author of all our
Happi-

Happiness, and we *obliged* and *indebted* o him for whatever we enjoy. All which Relations do necessarily result from the Natures of the Beings related; as will plainly appear, upon a just Comparison of them together; and will be farther manifested, when we enter upon the particular Proofs of Religion.

Supposing therefore that I have given a true Account of the *Nature of Man*, (which being taken from Experience, can admit of no other Proof, nor of any greater Certainty:) the *only* thing remaining to be done, before I come to the main Argument I propos'd, is, to prove,

II. That *there is a God*, or a Being of such a Nature as I have endeavour'd to represent; which is the second Thing I undertook.

In discoursing on which Subject, that I may express my Thoughts with the more Clearness, give every Argument its due weight, and everywhere proportion my Building to my Foundation; I shall consider the Being of God under the different Degrees of *Possible*, *Probable*, and *Certain*.

C

First,

First then, As to the *Possibility* of such a Being; I cannot imagine any Man of such an irregular Make of Understanding, as to apprehend that Description I have given of a Deity to be *absurd*, and *chimerical*, or to have any *Inconsistency*, or *Contradiction* in it. I am sure I have said nothing but what I very well conceive my self; and what I think, is as easily conceivable by any Body else; and I have used the plainest and most intelligible Expressions, I could, upon this Occasion.

But farther to assist the Weakness of our Understandings, in framing a more distinct Conception of God, we will consider the several Idea's, of which this complex Notion is made, and see whether they will not suit very well together.

Now, 'tis plain to any Man who reflects upon the Ideas which are lodged in his Mind, that he has a Notion of *Time* and of the several *Periods* of it, which he can place at what distance he pleases to measure the *Duration* of any thing by them, but never, at such a distance, by all the Addition his Imagination is capable of, but that he can still suppose some Being to exist, both *before*, and *after*; and the Being

ing, before and after which he cannot conceive any Time, or other Being, he calls *Eternal*.

In like manner, when we consider the *Variety of Beings* in the World, we are not able to imagine, or suppose such a number of any of them, as that there cannot still be a greater: and this *possible Variety* of Things, never to be exhausted, is stiled *Infinite*. And if we can conceive such an *Infinity of Things possible*, we can conceive also a *Power* proportionable which can produce whatever we suppose possible to be produced, and a *Knowledge* answerable to it, which takes in whatever can be known; and *that* is, whatever can be.

Thus it is that we conceive an *eternal, intelligent* Being, of *infinite Knowledge* and *Power*.

And this we do very easily, without such Intensity of Thought, and *nicety of Abstraction*, as may be imagined necessary on this Occasion: for we find *Infinity* almost in every Thing; All our Studies, and Enquiries, lead us to this Notion.

As for instance: When we consider the *Dimensions of Matter*, we lessen, and magnify them, till we are lost either way:

and still we find our selves as far from any Bounds as when we first set out upon the Search.

In like manner, when we turn our thoughts to observe the *Various kinds of Natural Bodies* in the World, the farther we advance our Inquiries, the more still do the *Species* or *Sorts* Multiply upon us; and the possible variety of more does proportionably increase, till, confounded with the growing prospect, we are content to admire, what, invain, we tried to Reach.

'Tis the same thing if we contract our View, and keep within the compass of *one Kind* or *Division* of Bodies only as *Plants, Minerals,* and the like, the more differences we perceive in them, the more we comprehend possible, every new *Mode, Quality, or Relation,* that we take notice of affording an inconceivable variety of *Combinations* with those observed before.

'Tis thus, also, in the *intellectual Nature.* The *different Degrees* of *Knowledge, Power, and Happiness,* which we are conscious of, do sufficiently assure us, that we are capable of greater, and greater still; and, whatever Notion we can
frame

frame of our own State, with respect to any of these Qualifications; from the utmost top of what we are arrived to, we can look farther still, and conceive higher Advancements of each kind possible, either in our selves, or in other Men, or at least in other Beings of larger Capacities; and this, in a continual Rise, without any thing to *terminate* our View.

From whence we are farther enabled to conceive, that God is *infinitely happy*, as well as *infinitely Knowing* and *Powerful*; that is, that he enjoys all the Happiness which can possibly be enjoyed by any Capacity of being.

Having got thus far into the Notion of a *Deity*, I think, we may with less Difficulty conceive, that such a Being as this did *necessarily exist of himself*; that is, that an *eternal Being* had nothing *before* it, to be the *Cause* or *Author* of its *Existence*; And farther, that he is *unchangeable*, or *always the same*; that is, that an *eternal Being* *always is*; and a Being of *infinite Knowledge*, *Power*, and *Happiness*, is *always alike*, *Knowing*, *Powerful*, and *Happy*.

The *actual Production* of all things, which are not God, *by him*, and their *Dependance* upon him for their Continuance,

and all other Circumstances of their being, are not Things hard to be conceived by those who acknowledge that he can do all things possible; and he who knows every thing, that can be known, may as easily be supposed to effect whatever he designs, by the fittest and most proper means; and that is, to be *infinitely Wise*.

And what other *Reason*, or *Motive* can we Imagine that an intelligent Being, of infinite Happiness, should *act* upon, but *his own free Pleasure*? and who can hinder the Almighty from doing what *he will*; But that the *Happiness* of all such Beings, as are capable of it, so far as it is consistent with the *Wisdom of God* to grant them the Enjoyment, should be very agreeable to his *Good Will* and Pleasure, we are not, I believe, disposed to doubt.

And this compleats the Account of the *Nature of God* which I gave before in short, and have now examined over again, more particularly.

From all which, I think, it may safely be concluded, that the *Idea*, we have form'd of a *God*, is no *Chimera*, or *extravagant work of the Imagination*, but a very *possible consistent Notion*; and that those, who

who affirm that there is some such *Being*, to which this *Idea* belongs, cannot be censured for vain incoherent Thinkers, who have put things together without any Ground, or Warrant from Reason.

How far the *bare Conception* of such an *Idea*, as that, which we have framed of God, or the *meer Possibility* of such a Being, does, without the Assistance of other Principles, prove the *Reality* of his *Existence*, I shall not here examine. The Arguments drawn from hence, tho' in themselves, perhaps *certain*, to several Persons *convincing*, and not to be *disproved* by any, do not fit every Understanding; nor have that regular uniform Face of Truth, which takes at first sight, as well as pleases after farther Examination: only thus much I shall alledge, in their Defence, that the greatest, and commonest Objection, made against this kind of Proof, is very ill grounded.

It is not true indeed that *whatever* is *possible*, or whatever we have any *Idea* of, for that Reason *actually* is; and therefore 'tis urged, that the *actual Existence* of a God does by no means follow from the *Possibility* or *Conception* of such a Being: But then it is answered that the Conclu-

tion may and does hold in this Case, and in no other whatsoever. Because *Conception* supposes *Possibility*, and *Possibility* a *Correspondent Power*; and a *Power of Existing*, when applied to such a Being as God, must necessarily infer *Actual Existence*; but the unusual Niceness of such a Proof as this being likely to raise some Prejudice against it, I shall wave the Prosecution of it; and, to cut off all Colour of Advantage from such as are disposed to cavil, I shall content my self at present with having shewn that 'tis *very possible* and *conceiveable*, that there *may be* a God; and pass on to the next Enquiry I am to make, whether it be not *very probable* that there *is* one.

A *common* Argument for the Being of a God, (and 'tis never the worse for being common) is the *general Concurrence* and *Agreement of Mankind* in the Acknowledgment of this great Truth. We will consider the Argument it self, in its full Strength, and then see, what fairly follows from it.

The Sum of what may be said upon the first, is this: That all Accounts and Relations of the *present* State of the World, and

all the Histories of *past* Ages which are now extant do agree in assuring us, that, since the first Memory of Things was preserv'd, till now, there was no period of Time, nor any Nation under the Sun, in which the Being of a God was not acknowledg'd and believed by a *vast* Generality of all who were *then* and *there* living.

And farther, that not only the greatest part of *Mankind*, taken in gross, and the greatest part of every *Nation*, considered as a distinct Society of Men, were of this Belief, but the greatest part of every *Seēt* or *Division*, as they stand distinguish'd by their different *Opinions* in other things; their different *Capacities*; *Interests*; *Ways*, and *Manners of Thinking*; as, the *Learned* and *Ignorant*; those who had examined the Point, and consider'd the Reasons for and against it, and those who had it only propos'd to them, without any proof either way, but what was immediately offer'd from the nature of the thing; the *Mahometan*, and *Idolater*, who add absurd things to the Nature of God, as well as the *Jew*, and *Christian*, who think more consistently of him; those who hold the *World to be Eternal*, or made by *Chance*, as well as those who look upon it as the
Effect

26 *The Certainty and Necessity*

Effect of Wisdom; those who explain the Works of Nature by *Mechanical Powers*, and those who in their Account of the System of things make use of *Intelligences*, and *Abstracted Notions*: not only the *Religious* and *Superstitious*, and such as expect that any good or ill Consequences should attend their Belief of a God, but those, whose other Opinions declare that they have nothing at all, or very little, to hope or fear from a God, as the *Epicurean*, the *Sadducee*, the *Hobbist*, and the *Deist*: and lastly, all sorts of *wicked Men*, who are uneasy under the Thoughts of a God, and endeavour to shake them off.

Those few who in different Ages of the World, have opposed the common Belief, have had no Followers; and several of them, at the Seasons of greatest Seriousness and Recollection, have renounc'd the Opinions which they maintain'd at looser hours: so *universally* has the Opinion of a God obtained among Men!

From whence I think thus much at least may be fairly inferr'd, That such a Perswasion, as this, is very *suitable* to the *Understanding*, and *agrees* very well with all the *Principles of our Knowledge*: and, therefore, tho' it could not be *certainly* proved

proved to *follow* from those *evident Perceptions* that we have of *other Truths*; yet, being readily entertained by our Reason, without any Opposition from them, it must, upon this Account only, be *extreamly probable*, and worthy of belief.

For suppose it to be an *Error*; what can we assign for the *Cause* of such an *universal Error*?

'Tis possible indeed, that the *Generality of Mankind* may be *deceiv'd* in a Judgment founded upon the Reports of *Sense*, or *Imagination*; they may believe that the Sun is very near of the same bulk in which it appears to the Eye, when 'tis many times bigger than the Earth; or that it moves, when it stands still; or, if they do not believe Wrong, in either of these Points, there may be something else of such a Nature supposed, in which all Mankind may be mistaken; as most of the Learned think that the rest of the World are, in both these Judgments. But the *Notion of a God*, is Matter of *pure Thought*, and *Reason*, in the Conception of which *Sense*, and *Imagination* have no share: and therefore, it can never owe its Original to *them*.

There

There is nothing in the *Idea* of God, as I have endeavoured to describe it, which falls under the cognizance of our *Senses*; nor is any Man conscious to himself, that he has perceived God at any time *this way*. For which reason, the *sensible* representations that are made of the *Deity* may occasion a great variety of Errors concerning him; but it cannot be inferr'd from hence, that those Notions and Opinions of a God, which are purely *intellectual*, and in which all Men agree, proceed from the same Fountain as these additional Errors do, in which they differ very much, and consequently that those may be, in their own nature, as false as these, tho' they are not yet discovered to be so. This I say, will by no means follow, because the difference of the representation, in this latter case, proves an incapacity in the *Faculty*, to perceive the objects about which it is employed; whereas in the other supposition, where all Men constantly think alike, concerning Objects not perceivable by *Sense*, 'tis a certain sign that their *Ideas* are *suitable and proportionate* to the *Faculty* which perceives them; and therefore, 'tis very probable also, that they are truly sorted, and put together. Where-

Where-ever there is a *general Agreement* in the *Perception*, there is certainly an *Uniformity* in the *Appearance*; which is as necessary to make an *universal Error*, as an *universal Truth*; and, therefore, supposing all Men mistaken, about the *Bulk*, or *Motion* of the Sun, it necessarily follows from hence, that, whatever *appears* to the *Sense*, in this Case, *appears the same* to all Men: But then we need not have made any Judgment at all concerning these *Appearances*, offered to our *Sense*; because several Requisites to a *just Sensation* are wanting, without which, we know, that we are incapable of judging with Assurance; and tho' we are deceiv'd for the present, by judging too hastily; our Opinions concerning these things may be afterwards altered, and corrected by *Reason*; which, being a Faculty superior to *Sense*, may preserve us from the Illusions of it.

But when all Men agree in Matters of *pure Reflexion* and *Reason*, we have all the Assurance which we can have, that they are in the *right*. Because, in this Case, we are certain, not only that the *Appearance* is *uniform*, but that the *Faculty* is employed about its *proper Object*. And
if.

if, the Understanding should be deceived in such things as fall within its own immediate cognizance; there is no *higher Faculty* to correct the Mistake: How, then, can we imagine the Minds of Men to be so disposed as to be under a *Necessity* of being deceiv'd? which they must be, if a *constant universal Appearance of Truth* should be only the Veil of *Falshood*.

But here, perhaps, it may be said, that where the *Evidence* is not so strong as to *command* our *Assent*, *Error* may carry the Face of *Truth*, tho' we have not yet been able to discover the Cheat; and therefore, 'tis our own Fault if we are deceived in *this* instance, as well as in those of *Sense*, since we are not under a *necessity* of giving our Judgments accord- to the *Appearance*. To which I answer, that, allowing a *bare Possibility* of *Erring*, in the present Case, all that I design'd to prove from this Argument of *General Consent* holds good still; which is, that, because all People have agreed to acknowledge a God, 'tis therefore *very probable* that there is one, and *very agreeable* to the *Reason of Mankind* to believe there is: so that, altho' a Man is not from hence *fully convinc'd* of the *Certainty* of it, he cannot help

help believing that it is a *very reasonable* Opinion, and that there's *very great likelihood* of its being built upon *sure Foundations*, tho' he has not yet search'd so far as to discover them. For he cannot give an Account, how all Men should come to be mistaken in a *matter of this Nature*; and, if they were, how they could ever be undeceived; which may be done, in all the Instances of *Sense*, or *Imagination*, in which any *Error* can be judg'd *possible*.

All that can be farther supposed to countenance a Suspicion, is, that, possibly, there was a time when Men believed *otherwise*; but, some People having started such an Opinion, and dress'd it up very plausibly, it took mightily in the World, and so was handed down from one to another, and, in succeeding Generations, spread and prevail'd, 'till it became *universal*. But there is no manner of ground for such a *Supposition*.

1. Because, let us look as far back as we can, there are no *Marks* or *Footsteps* to be found of the *Rise* and *Original* of this Opinion, no *gradual Propagation* of it discoverable, it being, in *every Age*, that we have any account of, as *universally* believed, as it is *now*.

2. Be-

2. Because no *parallel Instance* can be assigned, which might give any colour for a suspicion in *this*; no Perswasion of the like nature, having ever been detected to be an *Error*, after so long, and so wide an Establishment.

I do not know of any Opinion whatsoever which *actually* obtained so *universal* a *Belief* as that of a God, and afterwards was proved to be false; and 'tis very difficult to imagine how such a thing should come to pass: However, I can conceive and allow it to be possible, that a mistaken *matter of Fact*, or a *conjectural Hypothesis* of something belonging to *natural Knowledge*, may, at some distance of time from its first appearance in the World, be pretty generally believed as certain; and afterwards by a Discovery of *fresh Circumstances* in the *one*, or making *new Observations* about the *other*, a great part of Mankind may come to be of another Opinion, of the Truth of which they may be *much surer*: but an *Error* in matters of this nature cannot prove the *Possibility* of a *Mistake* in the *Case in question*. Because the notion of a God results from *common Reflexion* and *Reasoning*, and does not depend upon any, such *Particular Circumstances* of
Time;

Time or *Place*, or any other *External helps*, and *instruments of Knowledge*, by which the *Learned* have sometimes made new discoveries in the Cases before mentioned.

All the *Observations of Sense*, upon which the Belief of a God is founded, lie open to *every Man*, and are the same now that they ever were; and the *Inferences* drawn from them are *very easie*, and within the reach of *common Capacities*. If some have refined upon them, and carried their Reasonings much farther than others, it has been only to satisfy the *unwarrantable Scruples*, and *Suspensions* of a few *Pretenders to Learning*, who make use of that *little Knowledge* which they have, to argue themselves out of *all*. But the *Generality* of Mankind, both *Learned*, and *Ignorant*, have so *firmly* believed, a God upon the *first plain obvious* grounds of Assent, as not to require, or stand in need of farther Satisfaction; and, therefore, their *Faith* cannot be owing to the *plausible Colours*, or *specious Reasonings*, of any *first Inventors* of *false Notions* and *Opinions*.

But, after all, allowing the Supposition to be true, (which I think impossible) that there was a *time*, in which God was

no where acknowledged in the World; whoever *invented* the *Notion*, whatever were the *occasions* of its being first Started or the *Arguments*, upon which it was first believed, the *Propagation* of it afterwards, and the *Constancy* and *Universality* of the Belief ever since, must have Sprung from the *Agreeableness* of such an Opinion to the *common Reason of Mankind*, and to all their other Knowledge, and from the *Strength* and *Sufficiency* of those *Reasons*, upon which it is now, and has been so long received. For all the *first Arguments* and *Grounds* of believing it, if they were any other than what we have now, and which have been the same in all Ages, whereof any Knowledge is left us, have been all lost, and, consequently, their Influence hath been spent, long ago: neither, in any of the ancient Discourses yet extant, concerning the *Being of a God*, is there any Appeal made to *Authority*, or *Antiquity*; as if Men were obliged to believe this Truth, because it was so antient, or because such, and such eminent Persons had first recommended, or enjoyed the Belief of it: But all the Arguments made use of are wholly built upon the *Nature* and *Necessity of the thing*, which are always the same; and

and therefore have the same plain Reasons for the Being of a God, always had the same Influence, and they will upon Examination, be found to have no Art or Sophistry in them, and every body that pleases may examine them.

Nothing then remains, but to enquire into the Force, and Validity of those Reasons, upon which our *Belief of a God* is originally founded.

I suppose it now but a *probable Perswasion*, arising from that Readiness and Assurance of Assent, with which we embraced this Truth, and yielded to the *first obvious Proofs* of it, upon a bare Proposal of them to the Understanding; in which Perswasion we are very much confirm'd by knowing, that *all Mankind* have constantly agreed with us in it; being fully satisfied from hence, that no *peculiar Temper of Mind*, or *Scheme of Thoughts*, no *private Interest*, or *national Byass*, has disposed us to make this Judgment, but something *common* to the *whole humane Nature*.

Upon these grounds have the *Generality of the World* always believed in God: and tho', to a nice Examiner of things they

may not appear Strong enough to Create *certain irresistible Conviction*, yet are they sufficient to justify a *full and entire Assent*, and to warrant our *acting* according to it. For to suspect a thing to be false, and to *act* as if it were so, upon a *bare imaginable Possibility* that it may be so; or rather, because we have not received the *highest degree* of Proof which the thing is, in its own Nature, capable of, when, at the same time, we have no manner of Reason to distrust that evidence *we have*; can be neither *rational, prudent, nor safe*.

However, since there are Persons, whose *Actions*, and (at least, *pretended*) *Opinions* come up to *this Character*, we will consider the *common Proofs* of a Deity *more closely and thoroughly*, and see if, what upon the first View appears so *probable*, and makes so strong an Impression upon the Mind, may not, upon farther Examination, strike us with such *Certainty* and Power of Conviction as we cannot resist, without questioning all our other Knowledge, and disclaiming all manner of Distinction between Truth and Falshood: which is,

The Third Consideration I proposed in treating of this Argument: Whether it be, not *only* a possible, or *probable* Opinion that there may be a God; but a *certain* and *infallible* Truth that there is one.

All the *common natural* Arguments and Reasons; upon which the general Belief of a God is founded, are taken from the *visible frame of things*, called the *World*, and from those several *parts* of it, which fall under every man's Notice and Observation; upon a slight Survey of which, any man who is in the least capable of Reflection, where ever his Thoughts light, will *perceive* or imagine that he perceives, plain Marks, and Tokens of *Power*, and *Wisdom*, much of the same kind, tho' in proportion far greater than ever he has observ'd in any of the most wonderful Effects of *humane Skill*, and *Strength*; the immediate Result of which, I believe, would be this Conclusion, That certainly there is *some Being*, exceedingly *more powerful*, and *knowing* than *Man*, who was the *Author*, and *Contriver* of this stupendous Fabrick.

And, if *Admiration*, and *Curiosity*, invite him to farther Enquiries, (as 'tis dif-

ficult to suppose they should not,) the *Compass*, and *Extent* of the whole Work, the *Variety* of Objects in it, the *Constancy*, and *Uniformity* of some Appearances, and the *regular Changes*, and *Revolutions* of others; the *Connexion*, and *Dependance* of the several parts; the *Union*, and *Confederacy* of multitudes, of different kinds, towards some common Production; and the *various, particular, Ends* and *Uses* of things, all *assistant* to one another, and *subservient* to some *general Design*; all these, I say, well consider'd, and weigh'd together, would strengthen, and confirm his former Judgments, and farther dispose him to conclude, That the *Author* of all these Instances of Power is *able* to do whatever else can be conceived *possible*, nothing else conceivable seeming more difficult to this Inquirer than what he sees already done; That a Being of so much Knowledge, as his Works declare him to be, so vastly exceeding *Man's*, is able to do Things, which are far above *Man's* Reach, and *Comprehension* to conceive at all; And that he who has so wisely order'd and dispos'd every thing he has made to the most proper Ends, has therefore exercised his *Power*, so far, and no farther,

farther, because it was most agreeable to his Wisdom so to do.

There is nothing, I think, in all this, but what is easie, and natural, and what may very well be imagin'd to be found out, without the help of much Learning, or an extraordinary Talent of Reflexion; and yet, this is what has constantly, in all Ages, satisfied both the *Learned*, and the *Thoughtful*, and stood the Test of *Time*, and *Sophistry*, and *Malice*.

But suppose, *some extravagant Thinkers*, entirely under the Government of their *Senses* and *Lusts*, should distrust all their reasonings of this kind, and, because they were not by, when the World was made, and do not see the Hand which supports the Frame, and moves all the several Wheels of it, should therefore doubt of the Being of a God, notwithstanding the *Testimony of Nature*; is there no *certain* Proof to be given, that we are not mistaken who believe a God upon *these* Grounds? Several have already shewn that there is, and this is what I shall at present endeavour to make good, in the clearest and most unexceptionable manner that I can.

Now, *Certainty* or *Evidence* (which I shall all along take in the same Sense) is such a *firm well-grounded Assent*, to the Truth of what we perceive, as excludes, not only all manner of *doubt*, but all *conceivable possibility of a Mistake*: And thus, I suppose, and take it for granted, that we are *certain* of all our own *Perceptions* and *Sensations*, whatever we feel or are conscious to our selves of; and that we are fully, and undecivably assured of a great many of our *Judgments*, founded upon the just, and well-regulated Reports of our *external Senses*, to the same *degree* as we are of the Agreement and Disagreement of any *pure intellectual Ideas*.

Except this be allowed, we have no *Principles* to reason from, nor indeed any *Knowledge* at all, not so much as *Scepticism*; but universal *Darkness* and *Confusion* cover humane Nature: But he who grants thus much, and is true to his own *Reason*, must acknowledge that *there is a God*; as will appear from the following *Considerations*.

Being then, as I suppose, by an *infallible Consciousness*, satisfied of our own *Operations*, and *Existence*, and, by various *Impressions*, made upon certain *Organs* of
the

the *Body*, fully convinced of the *reality* of things *without* us; upon farther *Observation* and *Reasoning* we come to these *certain Conclusions* :

That there are a great many *Changes* in the *World*; That a great many *new Appearances* present themselves to us, which, before, were no where to be found; and that others go off, and disappear, the *rise* and *original* of which we never knew; That, under all these *Changes*, and *Varieties* of *Appearance*, there is something, *constantly the same*, which we call *Matter*, or *solid extended Substance*; That the *different Appearances* in *Matter*, which our *Senses* inform us of, proceed *immediately* from the *Differences* of *Bulk*, *Number*, *Figure*, *Motion*, or *Rest*; That we are *conscious* of several things in our selves, which we perceive to be *different* from all *these*; That we were not *always* thus conscious, but that there was a time, when this *Consciousness* began. and when *all* that we *perceive* in our selves as *distinct* from *Matter*, (which we call *Mind* or *Spirit*,) was first *joined* and *united* to a certain portion of *Matter*, called *humane Body*; That, when this *humane Body* *changes* its *Appearance*, and such a parti-
cular:

cular *Union* of the parts of it is *dissolved*, then that *Consciousness*, and all those *internal Operations*, which are now the Object of it, *cease* to be joined with that *Matter* which they were just before united to.

Being well assured of the Truth of all these *Conclusions*, we are immediately led to these following *Enquiries*.

From whence arise all these things? How came there to be such a thing as *Matter*? When and by what means, did it begin to exist? What is the Cause of all those successive *Changes* in it? And why does it exist after so many different manners? Whence are we our selves? What was it that gave us such *conscious Beings*; How are they united to our *Bodies*? what limits the Continuance, and afterwards dissolves the Bond of this wonderful *Union*?

Now, in pursuit of these *Enquiries*, we find it utterly *inconceivable*, and *impossible* that any thing should *make it self*; that a *Being*, which once did not exist, should begin to be, of it self, without the Assistance of some other *Being* which existed before it; From whence we are

irre-

irresistibly convinc'd that something must be *eternal*; since otherwise, nothing could ever have been: for, if any Time can be supposed, in which *nothing did exist*, *nothing would ever have existed unless that*, which once *was not*, could raise *it self* into Being; but this is *impossible*, and 'tis *certain* that something *now really is*, therefore something must be *eternal*.

And, as, from hence 'tis evident that something *must be eternal*, so, 'tis plain from the *several Changes* which we observe in the World, from the Succession of *new conscious Beings*, and from the *different Dispositions of Matter*, that *Every thing is not eternal*; now, if something be eternal, and a great many things are not eternal, then it plainly follows, that every thing which is *not eternal*, was derived from that which *is*; (*i. e.*) *originally received its Being*, and whatever belongs to it, from some *eternal Author or Cause*: because, if it had not, we must suppose, either that something *made it self*, which before is shewed to be *impossible*; or, that *one temporary Being produced an other*, which it could not do, but by the Force and Efficacy of *such Powers*, which, together
with

with its *Existence*, it *received* from some *other* temporary Being, and so on, till we come to some *eternal Fountain* of all *Power*, and *Being*.

The only Question then is, *What is eternal?* for upon this depends the Resolution of all our other Doubts and Enquiries: and for our better and more certain Satisfaction in this point, I shall,

First, Consider all the *Claims* and *Pretensions* that are made to this glorious Privilege of *eternal Existence*:

Afterwards, I shall examine what those *Attributes* are which must *necessarily* belong to an *eternal* Being:

And then shew that *that Being* to which *these Attributes* agree, is what we call *God*, and that there is *no other* Being which *is*, or *can be* vested with the *like* Characters.

1. First then, As to the *Claims* and *Pretensions* to *eternal Existence*: these, I think, are all the *Suppositions* that can be made.

Either that *Matter alone* is eternal.

Or that *Mind alone* is eternal.

Or that *Mind* and *Matter* are *both* eternal.

But

But *Matter* may be considered under three *different* States.

For either we imagine it as having continued from all Eternity in *one entire* solid *Mass*, without any *Distinction*, or *Motion* of its parts.

Or we consider it as *loose*, and *divided* into innumerable little *Particles*, all in *constant Agitation* or *Motion*. Out of which *quiet Mass*, or *Moving Atoms*, the *present frame of things* was, in time, struck out, and *form'd*.

Or else we must suppose that it has *eternally* existed under that *Form*, which we now call the *World*, which, in the *principal parts* of its *Structure*, was always the same, with a *constant Succession* of several of the *chief Species*, or sorts of things in it.

There is nothing else *imaginable*, but an *eternal Succession* of *new Worlds*, and *new Species* of Beings in them; which is an Opinion too extravagantly absurd to be owned by any body: Because, who ever affirms this, must be obliged to grant, either that every new World *makes it self*, (which is a contradiction already exploded) or that what he calls *new World's* are only

only so many *new Forms*, all owing their production to some *common principle*, which is *Eternally the same*; and so the notion falls in with some of the other before mentioned.

2. But, which of these Hypotheses has *Truth and Certainty* of its side, is the next thing to be enquired into; and the best way to determine it will be by considering the *necessary Attributes*, and *Characters* of an *eternal Being*.

It has been proved already, from the *present State of things*, that all *Beings*, which exist *in Time*, must be *made* by something which was *eternal*, because it was *impossible* that they should have existed any *other way*: The same will now appear *à priori* from the *Nature* of an *eternal Being*, the *inseparable Characters* of which are, *necessary Existence*, and *all possible Perfection*; both which are included in the *Notion* of an *eternal Being*, and do evidently infer each other; For an *eternal Being* must *exist necessarily*, and have *all possible Perfection*; and whatever *exists necessarily* must also have *all possible Perfection*; as whatever has *all possible Perfection* must *exist necessarily*.

An

An eternal Being must *exist necessarily* because it exists *of it self*, for it *always was* what it is, it *always* had the *same Nature* which it has, and therefore there *always* was the *same Reason*, that is to say, the *same necessity* for its existing. This is too evident to need a farther Proof.

The other necessary Character of an eternal Being is, that it has *all possible Perfection*; that is, that there is nothing *conceivable*, or in the Nature of things *possible* which added to it would give it any *Advantage*, or, in any sense, render it *more perfect* than it is.

This is plain from the very Notion of *Possibility* which implies is a *Power* somewhere correspondent to the utmost *Extent*, and *Capacity* of things *possible*; so that to say a thing is *possible*, is to say that there is some *Power* capable of *producing* or *having* it; and, therefore, if you suppose an *eternal necessary Being* to want any *Perfection*, what is imagin'd to be *wanting* to it must be, for that very reason, *impossible*; for, it cannot be conceived to want what it is in its *own Power* to *have*, and it can receive nothing which it has not from *any other Being*; because no other Being of *greater Power* is *conceivable*, not a
tempo-

temporary Being, because the *Existence* and *Perfection* of all temporary Beings are derived from that which is *eternal*; not an *eternal necessary Being*, because this which is supposed *imperfect*, is *as much* an *eternal necessary Being* as the *other*, and therefore must have all the *same Perfections*. For why should the *Perfections* of the one be limited and those of the other not? And whence should this *Impotence* proceed in one *eternal necessary Being* which was not in another, when neither of them has any other *Principle* of its *Existence* and *Perfection* but its self? There can be no difference assigned or imagined between one *eternal necessary Being*, and another; and therefore wherever these attributes are found they must be accompanied with *all possible perfection*.

3. Now if *something* certainly be *eternal*, and *necessary Existence*, and *all possible Perfection*, be the *essential Characters* of an *eternal Being*, (as has been proved,) then *this eternal Being* must be what we call *God*; the *Characters* and *Attributes* of an *eternal Being* belonging to *Him*, and to *no other*, as will easily appear, by applying them first to that notion which we have framed

framed of God and afterwards to the several *Hypotheses* before mention'd.

That knowledge *Power*, and *Pleasure*, are *Perfections*, cannot by us Men be doubted of, who can frame no Notions of *any other*, and who measure the *goodness* and *perfection* of every thing else by its *Ministry* and *Subserviency* to these, so as to conclude that, were there no Beings which enjoyed these *Perfections*, there would be no difference between a *regular World*, and a *Chaos*; or between *Multiplicity*, and *Variety of Being*, and eternal *universal Nothing*.

These, therefore, must be the *principal Characters* of an *eternal Being*; and his *Knowledge*, *Power* and *Happiness*, must be *commensurate* to his *Existence*, that is, *eternal necessary Qualifications*, bounded only by *himself*; and, whatever else is *made* by this eternal Being, as 'tis proved that every thing *is*, which *is made*, must be made for his *good Pleasure*, and for the *Happiness* of those *Beings* which are capable of it; there being no other *end*, upon which *such a Being*, as we here suppose, can *act*; and all his *Works* must carry the Marks of their *Author* upon them, that is, be such as are fit for a Being of those *glorious Qua-*
E
fications

fications to make, and design for such Ends.

Thus may the *whole Idea* of God, as it is before described, be easily made out, by *positive direct consequence*, from the *Principles* just now laid down, and prov'd; as plainly appears from the *nature*, and *extent* of the *Principles themselves*, and from *those Instances* which I have given, in the *chief*, and most *distinguishing*, most *contested* Characters of the Deity.

But I am sensible that this way of proving a God, tho' in it self the truest, and most *direct*, is not like to meet with *so general* an Acceptance, or convince Men so effectually, as a *less degree* of Evidence in *another kind*; because, the *Demonstration* consisting of many parts, and the *Ideas* upon which it is founded being *purely intellectual*, and not admitting of any *sensible Representation*, there are but few who are capable of so much *Steadiness*, and *Attention* of Mind, as is required to perceive the *whole force* of the Proof.

But then 'tis certain, that *those*, who deny a God, must not own themselves to be of the number of those, who are incapable of comprehending such an Argument as this, because they will, from hence, be
proved

proved to act very unreasonably, in *denying*, what, by their own Confession, they *do not understand*, and consequently are not *fit Judges* of; which is as absurd, as to deny a *Proposition* in *Mathematicks*, without being able to understand the *Demonstration* given of it: and, here, it will be allowed by all, that the *Demonstration* is never the *less true* and *concluding*, because there are but few, who have made so great a progress in *this Science*, and are so well vers'd in *this sort of reasoning*, as to perceive the *Validity* of it.

And therefore, it cannot be altogether improper to offer, what may be call'd a *metaphysical abstracted proof* of a *Deity*, for the *Satisfaction* of such, as by steady *Reflection*, and a just *Use* of their *Reason*, will easily understand it; and, for the *Shame* and *Confusion* of those, who renouncing *common Opinions* and *Arguments*, upon no *Grounds*, pretend to *new Discoveries*, in Matters which they *do not understand*, and consequently *cannot disprove*.

However, I have been as short as I possible could be, upon the *positive* part of the *Argument*, and as plain as the *Subject* would give me leave to be, having

made use of the *commonest, easiest* Terms, which the Language would furnish me with, upon such Matters as I have had occasion to speak of: so that, all the Difficulty I can imagine in the Apprehension of what I have said, must arise from the *nature* of the *Ideas*, and from the *connexion*, and *variety of Consequences*, which are not easily to be *comprehended in one view*, especially without any Assistance from *Sense*. But this could not be avoided.

Having therefore, as *clearly and intelligibly* as I could, in a *positive direct* manner, proved, that *there is a God*, by shewing, That there certainly *is* some *eternal Being*; that all the *Characters and Attributes* of an eternal Being do agree and belong to *that Idea* we have conceived of *God*; and therefore that *that eternal Being*, which *certainly is*, is *as certainly* what we call *God*: Having, I say *positively*, and *directly* proved this, I proceed to make good the same Truth *negatively*, or by way of *Consequence*; which, taking this for proved That *there is some eternal Being*, I do, by shewing, that the *Characters and Attributes* of an eternal Being can agree to *nothing*

thing else but what we call God, therefore they must agree to God, therefore *that eternal Being*, which certainly *is*, must as certainly be God.

In the Prosecution of which Argument, tho' I make use of the *Principles* insisted upon in the former, and tho' the *Conclusions* from them, not being *direct*, have not, in *their own nature*, the *same* degree of Evidence as *positive direct Deductions* have, yet I question not but I shall be better, and more generally understood, and shall more satisfactorily prove what I have undertaken, to a *great* many Persons, *this* way, than the *other*.

For, besides that the *falsehood* of all *wrong Hypotheses* is, generally, much easier *demonstrated*, and *perceived*, than the *certainty* of the *true* one, I shall have frequent recourse to *sensible instances*, which, rendering the things present to our Minds, seem Clearer, to most People, than *pure intellectual Ideas*, tho' our reason assures us that they are not: And therefore, that I may not be wanting to my *Subject*, and my *Design* in treating of it, I think my self obliged to accommodate my self, to *all understandings*, and to *all* manner of *Prejudices*.

It has been proved already, from the *present Existence* of things, that something must be *eternal*; we have reckon'd up the several Pretensions that can be made to *Eternal Existence*; and have consider'd the *Characters* and *Attributes* of an eternal Being

Now, if that which is eternal *be not God*, and the *Characters* and *Attributes* of an eternal Being *do not belong to him*, then *something else* must be eternal, and some other of the fore-mention'd Suppositions must be true; but, upon Examination, I believe, it will be found, that *none* of those Suppositions, which *exclude the being of a God*, can be true; and, therefore, what I have proved concerning God must stand Good,

This it is my present Business to shew: and, moreover, I shall endeavour to make it appear, that, as *God* is certainly *eternal*, and *nothing else* can be eternal, *exclusive of him*, so likewise he is the *only eternal Being*, and whatever in any of the other *Hypotheses* is conceived to be eternal, if it really be so, must, in some manner, *entirely belong to him*.

First then, Let us frame to our selves a Notion of *Matter alone*, with its Parts all *united*, and *at rest*: and when we have done so, we shall easily judge, how impossible it is to conceive, that matter should have so existed, *necessarily of it self*, from all *Eternity*, and that, *in time*, the World, and all things in it, in the manner we *now* behold them, should have *proceeded from* or have been *produced by it*.

For, without running over all the Characters of an eternal Being, the absurdity of *this Supposition* will sufficiently appear, by what we *plainly perceive*, and know, and what *constantly*, and *irresistibly* offers it self to our *senses*, and *understandings*, in the present frame of things.

Solidity, Extention, Figure, Motion, Perception, and Will, are the chief of all our Ideas, and what we are the best acquainted with; and, so far as we perceive them *distinct* from one another, *Separately existing*, or *necessarily connected*, our *Reasonings* about them are the *surest* of any we have; so that, if we are *mistaken in these*, I cannot see how we *have*, or *are capable* of having, any *Knowledge* at all.

Solidity, Extension, and Figure, I do not only perceive to be *constantly united*, but *necessarily*, and *inseparably* to co-exist together in the same *Subject*, which I call *Matter* or *Body*; so that we cannot conceive any *sort of Body, or Portion of Matter*, without these three Qualities belonging to it; but it does not follow, that, where-ever *these three Qualities* co-exist together, *there is either Motion, Perception, or Will*, there being no *necessary Connexion* between any of *these latter Ideas* and the *other* before mentioned; as is plain, not only from the *Natures* of the Ideas themselves, but from their *separate Existence* actually perceived by us.

How then does *Matter*, which we now suppose to exist without any *Motion, Perception, or Will*, come to have *Motion* added to it?

All the *Motion* that we perceive in *Bodies without us* is made by *Successive Impulses* from one *Body* to another, where every *portion* of *Matter* owes its *Motion* to *some other*; but this cannot help us to conceive how *Motion* should *begin* where every thing is *at rest*: the only *Idea* that we receive from *Body*, with respect to *Motion*, is that of a *Capacity of being moved* when

when it is at rest, and not of a *power of moving its self*: this we have from what passes *within us*, when, without any *external Impulse* upon us, by a *bare Thought*, or *Determination* of our selves, we begin a *Motion* in our *own Bodies*, and, by that means, *communicate* it to *other Bodies*, which were before at rest; which *power of beginning Motion* is included in what we call *Will*: but *Matter* Being supposed to exist without *Perception* and *Will*, and consequently without this *power of beginning Motion in its self*; and there being *nothing else* to *communicate Motion* to it; it necessarily follows from hence, that it must *eternally continue* in the same state of *Union, Indistinction, and Rest*.

There needs no more for the overthrowing *this Hypothesis*, no stress being ever laid upon it.

In the next place then, if we imagine *all the parts* of this *Material World* *loose* from one another, and all *in motion*; it will be quite as irrational to think, that so it must have been *eternally* and *necessarily*, till, at *some certain time*, the *scattered Atoms* met together, or were disposed after such

such a manner, as produced the *present Structure, and Constitution* of things.

Many are the *Absurdities* and *Inconsistencies* with which this Opinion is chargeable; but I shall, at present, instance but in two.

The first is, the supposing an *eternal motion* of different *Particles* of *Matter*, before the *Production* of the World; which implies an *infinite succession* of *Effects*, without *any Cause* to produce them: For, *Motion*, being something *distinct* from *Matter*, does not *necessarily exist*, because *Matter* exists, for then, it would *always exist*, in every *Particle* of *Matter*; which we see it does not; nor does it exist *of it self*, *independently of Matter*, because it cannot exist *without it*; and 'tis plain that *Matter* could not produce it in its self *from all Eternity*, because it cannot produce it *at all*: and therefore there can be no such thing as *eternal Motion*, or *succession of Motion*, in different parts of *Matter*; because, every *Motion* is a *meer Effect* and *Passion*, and there is *no active power* any where assignable, or conceivable, which could *produce*, or *cause* such an *Effect*: so that to suppose an *eternal Motion* without an *eternal Power of moving*, is one very great

great Absurdity, which those are guilty of who set up the Hypothesis of *Atoms*.

The *other* is, the ascribing such *new Effects* to *Matter and Motion* together, in the production of the World, as, for a whole Eternity before, never proceeded from them, and could not possibly, at any time, be produced by them. For, *Matter and Motion* not implying *Perception and Will*, (several *Bodies in motion* being now actually perceived to exist without them, and the whole System of moving *Atoms* being, in the present Hypothesis, supposed so to exist, before the Beginning of the World,) we shall never be able, from hence, to account for the Existence of Beings endued with *Perception and Will*, which are Qualifications, in their own Natures, utterly distinct from those of *Extention, Figure and Motion*, and have no conceivable relation to them.

That these three latter may be, where the former are not, is plain: How then do those other come to be added to them? If *Matter at rest*, whatever degree of *Extention*, or kind of *Figure*, it is imagin'd to have, can never make us conceive any possibility of *Motion* in it, without the help of something else besides *Extention* and

and *Figure* to produce it (as is prov'd before;) so neither can *Matter and Motion* together, whatever variety of *Bulk, Texture, or Velocity* we represent to our selves, give us any Idea of *Perception and Will*, or of a *Power of producing* them: But, *Matter in motion* must eternally move on, or rest and move by turns if you please, without advancing to any new *Perfections*. For whether the parts of which it consists, be grosser or finer; be of *this or that Figure*; or move quicker or slower; which way soever we consider *matter*, 'tis, in all Forms, equally incapable of *Thinking, Willing, or Moving it self*. Nor is there the least ground to expect any Powers of this kind from *Flame or Air*, rather than from *Stone or Clay*; or to suppose that the glorious *Body of the Sun* has any nearer resemblance to what we ascribe to *God*, than the contemptible stock of a *Tree* hath.

But this Subject has been so learnedly, and fully handled already by others, that I shall not enlarge any farther upon it, nor expose this ridiculous Scheme of things, by shewing all the peculiar *Inconsistencies* which attend it; but shall proceed to examine the other *Hypothesis* concerning the
Being

Being of the World, which is thought, by some, to be more defensible.

In the third place then it is supposed, that the World has *eternally existed*, under the *same Form* wherein we now behold it, as to the *principal parts* of its Structure, with a *constant Succession* of several of the *chief Species* or sorts of things in it.

But this Opinion of the *Eternity of the World* has been the most exploded of any, tho' most of the Favourers of it have, at the same time, asserted the *eternal Existence of a God* too. And the Reason of this is, because the greatest part of the *most ancient Philosophers* and *learned Men* thought that they perceived such visible Marks and Tokens of the *Newness of the World*, in the *Rise, Propagation, and Increase of Societies and Governments, Languages and Laws, Arts and Sciences*; and the *Tradition* concerning the *Original and Beginning* of Things was, in *their time*, so *fresh*, and so *generally* received in all Countries, that few of them were able to reconcile all this with the *eternal* existence of *the World*: And *this Tradition* having all along *continued*, and the *Truth of those ancient Observations* having been more and more confirm'd

firm'd by *many new Inventions* of things *since*, some of which were of such *general Use*, that 'tis impossible to imagine, either that they should not have been invented *before*, if the World had been of a *very long continuance*, or should have been lost again after they were once invented, the *same Objections* have constantly lain against the *Eternity of the World*: and these have been strengthen'd by several *other Arguments*, drawn from the many *Absurdities*, and *Inconsistencies*, which seem to be implied in the Notion of *eternal Succession*.

All which, and whatever else can be said against the *Eternity of the World*, when asserted *together with the eternal Existence of a God*, do more strongly conclude against this Supposition, when the *Being of a God* is not taken into it, under which respect I now consider it; and thus consider'd, it is moreover, besides what has been already alledg'd, attended with the *same Difficulties*, and Chargeable with the *same Objections*, as the *former Hypothesis* was.

For, supposing the *main bulk and frame of the World* to have been *eternally the same*: *Matter* and *Motion* were no more capable of *eternally producing*, such a Succession of various Objects, as we now perceive in
the

the World, than they were of producing them, and the World together, *in time*; and yet, if we suppose an *eternal Succession* of new Objects *without a God*, they must all be produced by the Power of *Matter* and *Motion*: For, every *particular new Object*, being produced *in time*, must owe its Being to that which was *eternal*; and nothing, in this Supposition, being *eternal* but *Matter* and *Motion*, every *new Generation* of Beings must have their *Original* from *these*, the *precedent Generation* having no other *Powers* nor *Differences* than the *succeeding*, but what arise from the *various Disposition* of *Matter* and *Motion*.

This is plain, in relation to all such Beings as want the Faculties of *Perception* and *Will*; and, upon Examination, the Case will be found to be the same, with respect to such as are endued with *these Qualifications*: For, even *these* also, in the present Hypothesis, must be allowed to derive their *whole Being* from *Matter* and *Motion*; because they are *temporary Beings*, which *began* to be, and there is *nothing else eternal* but *Matter* and *Motion*, and consequently there is no other *Cause* assignable for their *Production*.

Which

64 *The Certainty and Necessity*

Which need not be proved to those, who hold the Eternity of the World, *without a God*; because, there are none, I believe, of this Opinion, but such as do ascribe the *Original* of *Perception* and *Will* to *Matter and Motion*, alledging that the *former* are only different *Modifications* of the *latter*: in which they act very consistently with themselves, in making an absurd Scheme all of a piece, not blending *Truth* with *Falshood*, but taking in *all* the *Absurdities*, which do any way depend upon one another, and belong to the main building.

However, that I may leave no room for Exception from any side, I think myself obliged to shew, that, if *Perception* and *Will* are not the *Issue* and *Effects* of *Matter* and *Motion*, as I have already shewn that they are not, the *Existence* of *intelligent Beings*, without a *God*, is *inconceivable*, and *impossible*; because *no other Cause* of their Production can be assigned.

For, suppose it should be enquired, how such a *particular Man* came to *exist*, how he came to *begin* to be a *conscious Being*; he did not *put himself* together, in such a manner as we now perceive him to exist, he did not *give himself* those *Capacities*, and
Powers

Powers which he is *conscious* of, together with his *Consciousness* of them; this is a flat *Contradiction*, and granted to be so on all hands.

Whence then did he derive this mighty *Difference of Being*, which we perceive in him, by which he is distinguish'd from all other things that fall under our *Cognizance*? Not from *some intelligent Being*, of infinitely greater *Perfections*, but of the *like kind* with those he perceives in himself; nor from any *mechanical Powers of Matter*, and *Motion*: both these Causes are set aside, in the present Enquiry.

Nothing then remains, but that the Man, who *now exists*, and *sometime ago began to be*, must have received his *Existence*, and all those *Qualifications* which distinguish him from *Matter*, from *some other Man* of the *like nature* with himself, who existed *before* him; who likewise received his Being from some other Man, &c. But this is *absurd*, and *irrational*; not only, upon the account of the *infinite Subordination* of *Causes*, and *Effects*, which follows from this Supposition, and which is by every body rejected as a shocking repugnant Notion: but, because it is hereby affirm'd, that *one Being* may, *solely*, by its

own power, produce another Being of the same Nature and Perfections with its self; which I take to be the next Impossibility to that of a Being's making it self.

For *Body*, and *Mind*, are the only kinds, of being, that we know any thing of; and, by all that we can learn of *Body*, or *Matter*, we conceive it utterly impossible that any sort of body should produce the least new *Particle* of *Matter*: nay, 'tis generally affirmed by the Learned, that *one Body* never imparts any *Motion* to another without losing itself what the *other* receives: This is certain, that, in all the *material Productions* observable by us, there is only a *new disposition of the parts of Matter*, and not any *new Being* made; neither is this new *Disposition* received *entirely* from some *other Being*, of the same kind, or texture with itself, but from *material Particles* and *Motions*, conveyed from several distant parts of Nature.

Thus, we see, that it is not *one Seed*, or *one Tree*, that immediately begets another; but the *Sun*, and the *Rain*, and the *Earth*, and *other Bodies*, contribute their share towards raising the *Seed* into a *Tree*: which produces new *Seed*, that must undergo the like *Changes*, and borrow from
the

the same Causes, before it can attain to the form of another Tree.

And 'tis farther remarkable that none of those *different dispositions of Matter*, which we find in the World, can be conceived to be the *product of Matter and Motion alone*, without the Assistance and Regulation of some *other Being of higher Perfections*, as has been shewn before.

How then is it possible, that *one Mind*, or *conscious Being*, should produce *another entire distinct Mind*, or *Being*, of equal perfections with it self, without losing any thing from it self, or *borrowing* any Assistance from any other kind of *Being* existing in the World? and, what is as strange, do all this, without being as *conscious* of *this* it's *chief Perfection*, as it is of all its *other*?

This, I say, cannot possibly be; and, therefore, If the World be *eternal, without a God*, all the *continual Changes*, and *new Productions*, which have ever been in it, must be ascribed to *Matter and Motion*; only, *Matter and Motion* not being able to *produce such Effects*; from hence I conclude, that the *Eternity of the World*, considered as it now is, *without the eternal Existence of a God*, is *impossible*.

And thus I have consider'd all the several *Hypotheses*, which pretend to give any account of the present Constitution of things, called, the *World*, *exclusively to the Being of a God*. And, from what has been offer'd upon these Heads, it sufficiently appears, that *nothing else*, which is supposed to be *eternal*, besides *God*, hath the *essential properties* of an *eternal Being*, viz. *necessary existence*, and all *possible Perfection*; or can be the *cause* of all those *Temporary Beings*, which have been *produced in time*.

For, whatsoever is said to be *eternal*, which is not *God*, is, at the same time, said to want those *Perfections*, which we ascribe to *God*, and which are certainly the chief, if not the only ones, imaginable by us. And, as 'tis manifest that, where these are wanting, there cannot be *all possible perfection*; so, 'tis absurd to suppose, that, what is destitute of *Knowledge*, and *Will*, should *necessarily Cause*, and be the *Author* of all *Temporary Productions*, rather than such a Being, as is indu'd with these Characters, in the highest and most perfect Degree.

'Tis very plain, then, from hence, that there is such an *eternal Being*, as we call
God,

God; because *nothing else* can be *Eternal exclusive of him*: all the suppositions of this nature, being proved to be false, and absurd.

The next thing, to be inquired into, is; Whether *God* be the *only eternal Being*, or Whether *anything else*, that has been formerly supposed, can be likewise *Eternal together with him*.

But, before I enter upon the Consideration of those several *Hypotheses*, which do, all, tho' in a different manner, establish an *eternal Co-existence* of *Matter* and *Mind*; I think it necessary to premise something concerning the *Nature*, and *Distinction* of these two kinds of Beings, as far as we are capable of perceiving them; that, so, I may cut off a great many *Disputes*, and *Mistakes*, occasion'd by the *Confusion* of our Ideas upon this Subject, and, what I have to say afterwards, may be better understood.

I do not perceive any such *Connexion* between the Ideas of *Perception*, and *Will*, and those of *Extention*, *Figure*, and *Motion*, that, where-ever the *former* are, there must the *latter* be also; nor, do I see any Reason, why *Perception*, and *Will*, are

not as easily believed to exist *separately* from *Extension, Figure, and Motion*; as *Extension, Figure, and Motion* are, to exist *separately* from *Perception*; and *Will* only, because *these* are *actually* perceiv'd so to exist, and we have not, yet, been *actually* conscious of such a separate Existence of *the other*. But this does not hinder but that *Perception, and Will, may so exist, and have a Subject, or Substance* of their own, *distinct* from that which supports these Qualities of *Extension, Figure, and Motion*.

If *Thinking, and Willing* were *common* to every Being that we knew, we could no more frame an Idea of a *pure material Substance, existing without these Qualifications*, than we can, now, of a *pure thinking Substance, existing without those Qualities*, which we attribute to Body: but 'tis certain, from an *actual Separation* of *these different Ideas, perceivable in different Subjects*, that *some* of them may exist without *the other*, tho', without this *actual Separation*, we could not have been so certain of it; and, therefore, tho' *the other* have never yet been perceived to exist *separately* from *these*, it does not follow from thence, that they *cannot* so exist: but, considering the vast distance that
there

there is between the *Natures* of the several *Ideas*, without any *conceivable Resemblance*, or *Relation* to one another, 'tis *very probable*, that they do *arise* from *different Principles*, and are founded in *different Subjects*.

However, having no farther *Certainty* of it from *natural Reason*, (and I purposely wave all other *Proof* at present,) let us suppose, that *Perception* and *Will*, *Extension*, *Figure*, and *Motion*, have all the *same common Subject* to support them, are *radically*, and *ultimately* founded in the *same Substance*, and issue from the *same Principle*; of which *Subject*, *Substance*, or *Principle*, we know nothing more, than that it is *something*, which *sustains* these different *Qualities*, or whatever else we call them, which could not *exist* of themselves, *without it*: Supposing, I say, all this, 'tis *ridiculously*, any, without any colour of *Reason*, inferred from hence, that, therefore, *Perception* and *Will* are only different *Modifications*, or *Dispositions* of *Extention*, *Figure*, and *Motion*; or do, in some manner, or other, wholly *result* from them: For, why may not *distinct Qualities* *co-exist* together in the *same Subject*, without being derived

one from another? or, why should Perception, and Will, be Modifications of Extension, Figure, and Motion, any more than Extension, Figure, and Motion are different Modes of Perception, and Will? I cannot see, what ground They can have to believe otherwise, who affirm, what we call the Mind or Soul of Man, to be nothing else but Matter, under a peculiar Disposition of it's Parts.

But, that *Thinking, and Willing*, upon a Supposition, that they actually exist *in matter*, and cannot exist *without it*, are not, therefore, *Modifications, or Effects* of the *other Qualities of Matter*, which are in it, antecedently to the Addition of *these*, may be farther illustrated by this Instance.

Motion is something added to the *original, and essential Qualities of Matter*; owes it's *Capacity of existing*, to it, and cannot exist, *without it*: and yet 'tis plain, that *Motion* is no *Modification, or effect* of *Solidity, Extension, or Figure*; which are every thing, that we conceive in *Matter*, before *Motion* is added to it; but is something, in *its own nature distinct* from all *these*, and not resulting from any conceivable Difference of them: So that it
does

does not follow that, because *Matter* is *solid*, or *extended*, or of such a figure, therefore it must be *in motion*.

And if this be true of *Motion*, it must be much more true of *Thinking*, and *Willing*. For that Idea we have of *Motion* does involve *Matter* in it; we had never known, what *Motion* was, had we not perceived something that was *moved*; and we cannot perceive a thing, as *moved*, without perceiving it, as *extended* too; and *Extension* necessarily implies the other essential Properties of *Matter*: but I can form a Notion of *thought* and *Will*, and be conscious of something, which thinks, and *wills*, without having any Ideas, at the same time, of *Solidity*, *Extension*, *Figure*, or *Motion*; and, therefore, if *Motion* may be joyned to the other Qualities of *Matter*, without *resulting* from them, tho' in the Idea, we have of it, it cannot be conceived, without them; 'tis much more probable, that *Thought*, and *Will*, may co-exist with *Motion*, and all the rest of the material Qualities, without being the effects, or product of them, when they carry no Marks of such an *Original* upon them, and, in their Conception, have no appearance of any

Re-

Relation to them. And, if it does not follow, that, because *Matter* is of such a *nature*, and so *modified*, therefore it *moves*; *much less* can it be inferr'd, that, because *Matter* is so and so *disposed*, and *moved*, therefore it *thinks*, and *Wills*.

This being premised, it plainly appears from hence, that 'tis *much more probable* in *Reason*, that *God* should be the *only Eternal Being*, than that *Matter*, any way considered, should be *co-eternal* with him: For, the *Notion* of *God* is *full* and *complete*, without any *Consideration* of *Matter*; and the *Addition* of the *Idea* of *Matter* to it, does not *add* any thing to the *Perfection* of the *Divine Being*.

The *Power* of producing *Matter*, and *Motion*, and of forming an *infinite variety* of *Beings* out of them, is indeed a *Perfection*, very worthy of *God*, and what we justly attribute to him: but the *actual Existence* of any of these *Beings* does no way *heighten* the *Idea* we have of him; whom we conceive to be *as perfect in himself*, before their *Existence*, as after it.

The *actual Communication* of some of his *Perfections* to a particular rank of his *Creatures*, and his giving them the *Use*
and

and *Enjoyment* of his *other Works*, do raise a new Idea of him in *them*, which they call by the name of *Goodness*; but this they look upon only as a *voluntary opening* and disclosing the *Glory* of his *original Nature*, and not a *necessary additional Advancement* of it.

It is, therefore, *most agreeable* to our *Reason*, and to all the *Notions* we have of the *Divine nature*, that *God* should have *existed alone*, from all *Eternity*; and, in *time*, have *produced* the *World* and all things in it.

But, if any *Man* had *rather* believe, that *Matter at rest*, or *Matter and Motion*, or the *present Frame of the World*, with the several kinds of beings in it, were *co-eternal* with *God*, he must, at the same time, hold, that, whatever was *co-eternal with God* did either subsist eternally *of its self*, *distinctly* from, and *independently* of him;

Or, is really a *necessary* part of the *Divine nature*, and helps to make up the *Idea* of *God*;

Or, did *eternally* proceed from him, because he had, *eternally*, an *effectual will* to *produce* it.

But,

But, the first of these Suppositions cannot be true: for neither *Matter* alone, nor *Matter and Motion*, nor the *present Constitution of things* can be eternal, *independently* of God; because, (as has been fully proved already,) none of them could have *existed eternally, without a God.*

And, therefore, what ever is supposed to be *eternal*, which does not enter into the *Idea* we have given of God, must be taken into it; as *necessarily belonging* to the *Divine Nature*; or must be look'd upon, as the *free eternal effect* of his *eternal Will.*

Thus some have affirm'd, that the *World*, and *every thing* that we see, or know, is God:

Others, that all things *flowed from God*: by which Expression, if they mean *necessary Emanation*, they must be all referred to his *Being*, and *Essence*; if *production*, to his *Will.*

So that, however we express our selves upon these Matters, *every thing* that we can imagine, or frame any Notion of, must be either God, or, some way, *proceed from him*, be ascribed to his *Nature*, or reckoned among his *Works.*

The *Inference* from all which is this; That 'tis *most rational* to think, that no
more

more belongs to the Idea of God, than what we have before attributed to him; and that he did, *in time*, of his own free will, *produce every thing*, not contained in that Idea, even *original Matter and Motion*, as well as the *frame and Structure of the World*, and the *Variety of particular Beings* in it.

But, if any Man asserts the *Eternity* of *any of these*, together with God, in the full extent of that Idea which we have given of him; whether his Opinion be *true*, or *false*, it can make *no change* in our Thoughts, with regard to *Religion*: Because, the *Idea* of God, being so far the *same here* as we have establisht it, the *same Consequences* will every where flow from it; and the Assertors of any such Opinion will bear the *same Relation* to God, and be under the *same Obligations*, with us, who differ from them, in *some other things*, relating to God; which, however held, have no other *Influence* upon us, than as we are obliged not to Entertain any *false Notions* of God, *willingly*, when we may have *better Information*: or, where we cannot, yet some *Opinions* may appear *more suitable* to our Reason, and, more for the *Honour of God* than

than others; which I take to be the present Case, and, therefore, shall wave any further Enquiry into these Matters, as having no prospect of a Possibility of knowing any thing more about them.

Thus have I, with as much Brevity and Dispatch as the Subject would allow, examined all the Accounts, which are, or can be given, of the *present Existence* of things; and, from particular Observations upon each of them, (not all that might be made, but such as I judg'd sufficient for my purpose) have (I think) made it very evident, that there *must be a God*, or Being of such a nature as I before described, who was the *true and only Cause*, or *Author of every thing* we see, or know, or has ever been, beside him; and, that, without the Supposition of such a Being, the World could not *possibly have ever existed*, as, we see, it does.

I shall now add some *general Reflections*, to strengthen the Doctrine here maintained, concerning the *Original of the World*, and so conclude the Proof of a God.

That the World is, what we now perceive it to be, must be ascribed either

to *Chance*, *Necessity*, or *Wisdom*: but *Chance*, is *nothing*; *Necessity*, without a God, *unintelligible*; and, therefore, *Wisdom*, or what is meant by it, *God*, who is a *wise Being*, made the *World*, and all things in it, in that *form*, and manner, which we now behold, and admire.

To say, that the *World* was made by *chance*, is, to say, that it was made, we know not how, or without any *Cause*; and is, in truth, to use Words, which have no determined Meaning.

There is no Man, who has made any Enquiries into the Nature of Things, but knows, that nothing, which before was not, can ever be, without owing its *Original* to some *real positive Being*, of *antecedent Existence*. *Inadequate*, and *insufficient Causes* are indeed often assigned for the *Production* of things; because, being *next* to, and *immediately preceding*, the *Effects*, they are, *solely*, taken notice of, without any regard had to their being *Subordinate* to, or *Directed by* other Causes; and, oftentimes also, something is thought to be the *next*, and *immediate Cause* of a thing, which hath no influence at all upon it: but, in both these Cases, 'tis some *real*
Effi-

80 *The Certainty and Necessity*

Efficiency, observed by us, that gives rise to these Judgments; which are so far true, as they suppose the Effect to proceed from some *real Cause*, tho' there may be a Mistake in attributing it to a *wrong one*, or to *one* that had only a *share* in producing it; and, therefore, there must be *something real* assign'd, which was *as much*, and *as properly*, the *immediate Cause* of the *meeting of the Parts* of Matter, in order to make a World, as the parts of Matter, *so met*, were the Cause of the *Production of the World*; which can be nothing else, but *such and such particular Determinations* of *Figure*, and *Motion*, in the several parts of Matter: but these must, either have been *eternal*, or have sprung from certain *eternal fixt Rules*, resulting from the *Natures of Matter*, and *Motion*; or have been impressed by a *divine Power*: in all which Cases there can be nothing *casual*, but every thing must have been *necessary*, or *providential*.

For, supposing the *whole System of Matter* *so and so figured*, and *moved*; we cannot consider it as *indifferent* to several Effects, but *necessarily determined* to some, which must inevitably follow upon such a *supposed Disposition*, unless something *extrinsecal*

trinsical to Matter should *restrain*, or *change* the *original Determination*: and if any thing, *extrinsical* to Matter, or, *besides* Matter and Motion, be allowed, it must be *God*. But if there be *nothing else* existing besides *Matter* and *Motion*, then are all the Effects resulting from them *necessary*, because, whatever *Disposition*, or *Motion* of Matter we suppose, and *whenever*, in the whole extent of Eternity, we suppose it, every following *Effect must* have been what it *is*, and there could have been no other produced in the room of it.

The Reason, why certain Portions of Matter, *so* and *so figured* and *moved*, do not *always necessarily* produce the *same Effects*, is, because, their *particular Determinations* are restrained, or over-ruled by the *necessary Impulses* of *other extrinsical Matter*; or by the greater Power of the *Divine Will*: and, this being unperceiv'd by us, we look upon several of these *particular Effects* as *casual*, which can, only, and, that very improperly too, *with respect to our Comprehension*, be stiled so; whereas *in reality*, *with respect to the universal Nature*, and *Efficiency* of things,

G

they

82 *The Certainty and Necessity*

they must be either *necessary*, or *voluntary*.

But, if we consider the *whole Frame* and *Collection* of things *together*, we cannot form any *Idea* of *Chance*, either *in the World as it now is*, or *in its original Formation*; unless we will be so ridiculous as to say, that *every thing* which *is*, is *casual*; that every thing which *has been* from all *Eternity* *happen'd* by *chance*; and that it was *by chance* that *Matter* and *Motion* were *eternal*, or that *any thing* existed at all; *Chance* having the same *Title* to all these *Effects* as to *any one* of them.

I need not consider the other *Occasion* we take of forming this *Notion* of *Chance*, from the *Indifference* that we perceive oftentimes in our selves with regard to *several contrary* *Actions*, which makes our doing one thing rather than another, when the *Mind* seems alike disposed to both, to be look'd upon as a *casual Result*, rather than a *proper Effect*. This may be accounted for otherwise, by the *Preponderancy* of some *motive*, *determining* us to act *this way* rather than *another*; and the *seeming Indifference* may be shewed to have sprung from our *Ignorance* of the whole *Nature*, and all the *Consequences*
of

of the thing in question, and the several Reasons and ways of acting: but there is no occasion for such a Proof, because, those who say that the World was made *by chance*, cannot be supposed to use the Word in *this Sense*, forasmuch as they do not acknowledge, that *God*, or any *intelligent Being* was concern'd in the *Production* of it: and if they did, yet would they not entertain such low and absurd Notions of him, as to think, that some *Chance-Thought* or *Action* of *his* produced it.

'Tis plain then, that *Chance*, is nothing else but an *insignificant Word*, and an *ignorant Pretence*, which, has no *Sense*, or *Reason*, under it, and therefore, can give us no manner of light in our Enquiries into the *Nature*, and *Original* of things.

Neither will *Necessity*, which is the next thing to be consider'd, give us much better Satisfaction: For, if we examine this Notion well, 'twill evidently appear, that there can be no *Necessity* for the *present Existence* of the World, in the manner we behold:

For, nothing can be said to be *absolutely necessary*, but what 'tis altogether *impossible*

possible should be *otherwise* ; but *impossible* it is not that the World should *never have existed*, or that it should *be destroyed* now it does exist ; Because it is not *impossible* but there may be a *Being*, of much greater Perfection and Power than the World, which could have *hindred* the World from *existing*, or can now *destroy* it.

But, if any Man shall say that he cannot conceive such a Being, as could *hinder* Matter *from existing*, or *destroy* it now it does exist, because, he cannot conceive a Power, of *making something out of nothing*, or, of *reducing something to nothing*, the last of which is here supposed, and the first must be allowed, if the World does not exist necessarily, but was made : If any Man, I say, should object this, I answer that it seems to me *conceivable* enough from the *Idea* I have of *God*, that, what is here ascribed to him, may fall within the compass of his *Power* ; which, reaching to *all things possible*, that is, to all things which do not imply a *Contradiction*, may extend to the Acts of *Creation* and *Annihilation* ; which, tho' the *manner* of the Performance be *incomprehensible*,

prehensible, cannot be proved to carry any *Contradiction* in them.

However, if there be those who pretend that they cannot *comprehend* the *Possibility* of these Actions, yet, *this* is very *conceivable* by any Man, that there may be *some Being*, of so much *Perfection* and *Power*, that, tho' he could not *hinder Matter* from *existing*, or *reduce* it to *nothing* now it does exist; yet he might have *hinder'd* it from being put into any *Motion*, *Form*, or *Order*, and might have *continued* it in that State, or can *reduce* it now to a *confused*, *unmoving Chaos*, or *scatter* it into *innumerable incoherent Particles*. There is no manner of *Difficulty* for a Man to frame a *Notion* of these things, who has seen frequent *Instances* of the *same kind of Power*, in a *lesser degree*, exercised by *Men*. And this is sufficient to overthrow the *Necessity* of the *present Frame* and *Constitution* of things, which was the thing design'd.

If, therefore, the World, and all things in it, in the Condition we now behold them, do not subsist by a *necessity of Being*, nor are the *result of Chance*, it unavoidably follows, that they are the *Effect*, and

Product of Wisdom, the Workmanship, and Contrivance of a wise Agent.

This is certainly the most *rational* Hypothesis that can be devised, or maintained; for we, who espouse this opinion, have *clear and distinct Ideas* of that *Power*, and *Wisdom*, by which we explain the *Original* of Things; but those who ascribe the *Existence*, and *Structure* of the World to any thing else, have no Ideas of what they ascribe them to. No Man has any Notion of *Chance*, or *Necessity*, except he annexes the Idea of *Power* to them; and he can have no Idea of *Power* without *Knowledge*, all *Power* proceeding *originally* from *Mind*, which, by *Consciousness*, we are Sensible of; and we can frame no Notion of any other *Seat* or *Spring* of *Power* but this, and, therefore, we make some *Mind* or *intelligent Being* the *Author* of every thing, as being the *only conceivable Fountain* of all *Power*.

Our Notions of *Wisdom*, *Contrivance*, and *Design*, are as *clear* as that of *Power*, and known the same way: And if *Wisdom* be ever plainly discoverable in its *Works* and *Effects*, it is so in the *Frame* and *Constitution* of the *World*, and the several parts of it. If we have any reason to
con-

conclude that *Towns* and *Cities* were built, and *Kingdoms*, and *Common-wealths* were modell'd, by the *Thought* and *Contrivance* of intelligent Beings, we have much more Cause to believe that the *Universe* was made, fashion'd, and disposed, by the *Counsel* and *Wisdom*, of some more perfect and capacious *Mind*; the Marks and Prints of *Wisdom* being plainer, and more legible in the *Frame* and *Disposition* of the *World*, than in any of the most admired *Works of Man*.

And, therefore, if we allow our selves to have any Ideas of *Power*, and *Knowledge*, we must confess, that *Power* is inseparable from *Knowledge*; and, that there is no *Power*, but there is some *Knowledge* commensurate to it, it being utterly inconceivable that any thing should be, or be made, and there should be no Being that knows how it came to be, or in what manner it was produced.

And this, I think is, of it self, a sure Ground of Belief; that *there is a God*, who was the Author of the *World*, and every thing in it, without carrying the Proof any higher; but, for the sake of those who will not be satisfied with *this*, I have given a farther Demonstration of the

Being of God, not with any Hopes of convincing them, but to make it impossible for them to urge any thing to the contrary.

Thus have I finished the *Proof of a God*, and (as I persuade my self) made it *very evident*, that there really is *such a Being*, and that, what we call God, is a Being of *such a nature* as I before described; who is vested with all *those Characters*, and *Properties*, which I there attributed to him.

Which Considerations, together with those plain and easy Reflexions before suggested upon our selves, and our *own Nature*, if carefully attended to, will certainly convince us of the *Reality of all those Relations*, which I have supposed between *God and Man*; and furnish us with many *direct*, and *undeniable Arguments* of the *Truth*, and *Necessity* of Religion: which is the third Thing I proposed, and the principal part of the Design which I am pursuing in this Discourse.

III. From the Knowledge which I have shewn that we have, or are capable of having, concerning the *Humane*, and *Divine Natures*, I shall deduce a *positive* and *direct* Proof of Religion.

Religion, in short, is, whatever we are *obliged to* by God. In order, therefore to prove that there is such a thing as Religion, it must be shewn, that *Man* is *capable* of being obliged to *act* as he is directed; that *God* has a *Power* of obliging him to do what he commands; and that *Man* is *actually* under such an Obligation, or that *God* does *actually will* and *require* something of him.

Now 'tis plain to any Man who consults himself, that he hath, in several cases, a *Power of determining* himself to *act*, or *not to act*; and a *Power of acting*, or *not acting*, according to *such Determination*; that he is *influenced* to *act*, several ways, by *different Motives*, and *Prospects*; that he oftentimes suffers himself to be influenced by *certain Considerations*, which he *ought not* to have acted by, as he plainly perceives by *condemning himself* afterwards for what he has done; and that he often *neglects*, or *refuses* to obey
such

such Motives and Incitements to Action, which he himself Judges that he *ought* to have followed, by *Approving* of them both before, and after such Neglect or Refusal. From whence it evidently follows, that a Man *may be obliged* to act one particular way rather than any other; because, there may be such *Reasons* and *Motives* proposed to him for his acting *such a way*, as, upon a just Ballance of them, with all the several Inducements, which can be offered for his acting any other way, he must acknowledge, *ought* to *determine* him; so that, should he act *this way*, he must *necessarily approve himself*, and, should he act *any other way*, he must *necessarily condemn himself*.

That Being, which hath a Power of offering such Reasons and Motives as these to any Man, may properly be said to have a *Power of obliging* him to act as he shall direct.

And that *God* hath this Power, is very manifest, if we consider, what it is that *influences* and *determines* us to act; which being nothing else but some kind of *Pain*, or *Pleasure*, in *present*, or in *prospect*; *God*, who can do all things possible, and, consequently, who can put us into, and
con-

continue us, to all Eternity, in a *state of Pain or Pleasure*, the greatest of either kind which our Natures are capable of, can, by annexing these to different ways of acting, offer such Motives to us, as, we shall be forced to acknowledge, *ought to determine* us to do what he commands; and therefore, *God can*, if he pleaseth, *oblige* us to obey him.

The only Question then is, Whether we are *actually* under such Obligation? whether God hath given us any Laws, or Rules to walk by, and annexed *such* different *Consequences* to our Actions, according as we obey or disobey him as, make it absolutely *necessary* to our *Happiness*, to conform to his Will?

But, before I enter upon the Resolution of this Question, I think it requisite to give a fuller Account of the *Nature*, and *Ground* of what we call *Obligation*, or *Duty*, and to be more particular in explaining the *Power* and *Right of obliging*.

Now 'tis plain, from what has been already said, That an *Obligation*, with respect to *Man*, is nothing else but such a *Reason*, or *Motive*, as, when duly offered to him, *necessarily determines* him

to

to *chuse* one way of acting before another; and this *Reason*, or *Motive*, can be nothing else but a *greater degree* either of *Happiness* to be obtained, or Misery to be avoided by acting thus, than (all things considered) can be obtained, or avoided by acting *any other way*. Such a Reason, or Motive as this, does, in the strictest and most proper Sence of the Word, *oblige* us to act according to it; that is, we find our selves under a *necessity of* Submitting to it, or we are forced to acknowledge that we ought so to do, and while these thoughts are present to our Minds, we cannot possibly act otherwise.

There is no other *Notion* or *Ground* of Obligation imaginable: or if any other be pretended, it will upon Examination, be found to be ultimately resolvable into this.

'Tis true indeed, we seldom go so far in our inquiries into these Matters, as to Trace the several Reasons of our acting up to their *Original Spring*; but are content to resolve what we do into the *next* and *immediate* motives which determined us, and which, we took, upon publick Credit, to be Just and Sufficient grounds
for

for us to act upon, without ever Examining, our selves, from whence their force is derived.

Thus for example ; when we are asked why we did such, or such a thing ; we think it a full answer to say ; that we were obliged in *gratitude* to do it ; or that the *Laws* of our Country enjoined it ; or that we did it in obedience to a *Parent*, or a *Governour*, or the like ; but if it should be further demanded of us, what obligation Gratitude lays upon us ; what regard is due to the *Laws* of our Country ; why *Parents* and *Governours* are to be obeyed ; we should be apt to look upon such Questions as these as *Captious* and *Impertinent*, and not deserving a serious return ; because we take all these *Notions* of *Humane Duty* to be so well settled, and agreed upon, that there can be no room for a *Dispute* about them. But should we urge the *Command of God* for what we did, we should be astonished to hear it asked, what ground there was for obeying God.

And yet, so it is, that, tho' the *Reasons* here given for our *Conduct* have, (when truly alledged) that *direct* and *immediate* appearance of *Certainty*, in themselves,

selves, that there is no need of a farther Proof of them, to any Man who judges soberly and fairly ; yet there are those to be found, to whom they do not appear so strong and conclusive, as to command their Submission to them. These are they who endeavour all they can, to remove the ancient Landmarks and *Bounds of Duty*, and to take away all *Distinctions of Good and Evil* ; who strike at the *Foundations of Virtue and Religion*, and question the very *Being* as well as *Authority of God* : and, to Satisfie the unreasonable scruples of these Men, 'tis necessary to shew that the Principles before mentioned, together with many others of the same kind, are all founded upon such a Bottom as must be sufficient to support them, the Enemies of Religion themselves being Judges.

The shortest therefore, and surest way of convincing the most perverse disputers of this World, that they are obliged to perform all the particular Duties of Humane life required of them, is, to prove to them ; that there is a *God* who hath annexed *exceeding Happiness* to the *Practise*, and *extream Misery* to the Neglect of those things. For here they must stop.

and

and they can have no further Questions to ask; it being utterly impossible for them to doubt whether they should chuse to be *Happy* rather than *Miserable*; and perfectly absurd to inquire why they should seek their own Happiness.

This is then, in reality, the *True* and *ultimate Ground of Humane Obligation*, tho' 'tis seldom that we have any occasion to search so deep for a Proof of the *common Rules and Principles of Morality*, and it would be an unnecessary undertaking now, if we had not to do with such Persons as obstinately stand out against all the usual Methods of Reasoning.

The *Nature and Ground of obligation in General* being thus fixed; what is meant by the *Right* and what by the *Power of obliging*, in what respect they are the same, or, at least, only distinct Conceptions of the same thing, and in what respects they are different, will plainly appear, if we consider the several Instances to which these Notions are applied.

All the Beings capable of *obliging*, or *being obliged*, are those that we call *intelligent Beings*; which, as far as our Knowledge in these Matters reaches, are only *God, Angels, and Men*. Whe-

Whether there are any *Angels*, or *middle Natures* between *God* and *Men*, and how they are determined to act themselves, or what influence they have upon other Beings, *natural Reason* does not certainly inform us: but, *in general*, with respect to all the *intelligent Beings*, which we can frame any Notions of, it may be affirmed, that *no* one has either a *Right* or *Power of obliging another* to act according to his directions, any farther than he hath a *Power of contributing to the Happiness, or Misery* of that Being, which he undertakes to Govern.

Thus are we led to conclude by all that we know concerning *God*, and *ourselves*;

For first, as to *God*: I am not able to comprehend, how he can lay *Men* under an *Obligation* of Living according to the *Laws and Commandments* he gives them, any other way than by *making them know*, that he hath it *in his Power* to render them *happy, or miserable*, according as they *obey, or disobey* him; and that he *will* certainly Reward or Punish them according to their Behaviour toward him.

'Tis not his great and supereminent
Power

Power in creating Men and giving them Being, which is, *solely in its self*, the ground and foundation of his Title to their Obedience: This, if he had not also given them a *capacity of being happy* could never become a Reason or Motive of acting to them, and, consequently, no Obligation could be founded upon it: For, were they made and ordained *to be miserable*; and were they sure that their *mifery* was to have no End, and would admit of no *abatement or increase*, by what means could the *Author of their Being* oblige them to act one way rather than another, when he could not offer any thing to them which would have any weight in determining them so to act? What, in this Case, could induce them to *obey God*, rather than to disobey him, when 'tis certain that, which way soever they acted, they were not capable, either of the pleasure of approving, or the pain of Condemning what they did, all manner of pleasure, and all Accession of Misery, being, in the State of Mankind now supposed, utterly impossible. They might indeed, by an *over-ruling Power*, be forced to do what was commanded them: but this is not a *rational Obligation*, which is

H

acknow-

acknowledged, and submitted to, as *suitable and agreeable to Reason*, and performed with the *full Concurrence of the Will* of those who obey it.

In vain, then, and very fallshly, do some nice abstracted Thinkers magnify the *Excellence and Perfection of pure Being*, or *Existence*, even when joined with the *highest degree of Misery*: a Moment's Experience would soon convince them, that, *to be*, was no otherwise the *Perfection* of a *rational Being* than as it included a *Capacity of being happy*: but if, after such Experience, they should still think it *better to be miserable*, than *not to be* at all; the *Satisfaction* of knowing themselves *to be*, must out balance the other *Misery* which they felt; and consequently, God's *Right of obliging them* would then be *founded in his Power of making them less, or more miserable*, by continuing, or taking away, that *Satisfaction*, which they enjoyed: which confirms the *Truth* of what I assert.

This will farther appear, if, in the next place, we consider *that Right, and Power of obliging*, which *Men* have, or pretend to have over one another; for whatever
kind-

kind or extent it be of, it is all founded in, and commensurate to, their power of contributing to the Happiness, or Misery of one another.

Many times indeed it so happens, that some Men demand to be obeyed by others, and require them to live according to their Orders and Directions, when, at the same time, they neither have, nor ever will have, any Power to Reward the obedience, or to Punish the disobedience, of those upon whom they lay their commands; so, as to make it more for the interest of such Persons to obey than to disobey them. Upon which account, it is thought that, in many Cases, there may be a *Right of obliging*, where there is no *Power to oblige*: but without any Ground.

For, if there be a *God*, who will judge the Actions of Men, and will give to every one according to his work; and if the Persons, requiring Obedience from others, are commission'd by him to require it; then have they a *Power* as well as a *Right of obliging* them to it: because there are such *Rewards* and *Punishments*, annexed by *God* to the obedience, or disobedience of those who are under any

Authority derived from *him*, as are sufficient to determine them to do what their respective *Governours* or *Masters* require of them: and, consequently, whoever are appointed by God to bear Rule over us, have a *certain Power of contributing to our Happiness*, or *Misery*, tho' it should so happen that they cannot be the *immediate causes* of either *themselves*.

But, if there be *no God*, then are there no Persons *Commission'd* or *Authorised* by *him* to command others; but whoever take upon them to give Laws to their Brethren usurp upon the common Liberty, and Equality of Mankind; and have, in this Case, no more a *Right* than a *Power of obliging* those, whose Interest it is not to obey them; as will more fully appear hereafter, under another Head.

Other Instances there are among Men, where the *Power of obliging* is, or may be exercised, *without the Right*; and that is, when some Men, by the Advantage of a Superiour *Skill* and *Strength*, do, *without any Authority from God*, command Obedience from others, upon the prospect of great Rewards, and Punishments, in such things, where the Persons so commanded,
are

are left at Liberty by God to act either way, as shall seem to them best, or most for their Advantage *in this Life*: In which case, those that prescribe such particular Actions to others, have a *Power of obliging* them to obey, because they have a *Power of determining* them to act, by the Consideration of *greater Happiness* to be obtained, by their doing as they are directed, than could be hoped for, if they followed their own advice: but those who pretend to such an Authority have *no Right* to use that Power, they have, because they are *themselves* under *greater Obligations, with respect to God, not to employ it, than those, upon whom it is exercised, are, with respect to them, to obey it*: but if there be no God, then is their *Power* their *Right*.

From all which it follows, that, wherever there is a *Right of obliging*, there is likewise a *Power of obliging*; and, where there is an *absolute uncontroulable Power* of obliging, there is, for that very Reason, a *Right* also; but, where there is only a *subordinate dependent Power* of obliging, it may be exercised *without Right*, that is, *contrary to some Obligations,*

ons, which the Persons, who exercise it, owe to a *Superiour Power*.

But here, by a *Right of obliging*, I would be understood to mean, a *Liberty of offering such Motives and Considerations to rational Beings, as, when duly applied, will necessarily determine them to act accordingly, with the full Consent, and Approbation of their Mind; And not a title to order and dispose of them, and their Actions, by an irresistible Force, according to the free and unlimited Pleasure of that Being, to whom such a Title is supposed to belong.*

How far it is consistent with the Nature of *God* to order and dispose of his *Creatures* thus, is no part of the present Enquiry; but that he hath *such a Right and Power of obliging*, as I have explained, is sufficiently proved from the necessary *Attributes of God*, before specified; and from the *Nature and Ground* of all *Obligation*, of which I have here given a particular account.

Whether *God* hath a *Right and Title* to our *Obedience* upon any other *Foundation* but that of his *Power to make us happy*; whether it be possible for *Man* to act voluntarily upon any other *Reason or Motive*

Motive but that of *his own Happiness*; and, whether *Happiness* be the *ultimate End* of all our *Actions*, and the *ultimate Ground* of all *Obligation*, or only a *subordinate*, but *necessary* and *inseparable* Consideration in every thing we do, if, what I have already said upon these Matters, does not satisfy, I shall no farther dispute: because I am very well assured, that, whatever other Grounds or Motives for our Obedience to God may be imagined by some, who pretend to act upon more *noble* and *disinterested* Principles than that of their own Happiness; 'tis impossible to persuade a Man, who does not yet believe any Religion at all, to become religious, except it can be plainly, or probably, at least, made out to him, that he shall better his Condition by it. This I am sure is the only Argument which can prevail upon an Unbeliever to *embrace Religion*; and whoever fairly consults himself, will find, that he neither *does*, nor *can* act upon any *other* ground.

It must be confessed, indeed, that, we often act without knowing, or considering what the Consequences of our acting will be; and we are so made and disposed by nature that we readily acknow-

ledge our selves obliged to submit to the Will and Commands of God, *without any express Consideration of future Happiness*, to be obtained by our Obedience: but, on the other side, it must be owned too, that, if it could be evidently prov'd to us, that *Misery* would be the *certain Consequence* of those Actions, which, upon the first View, we thought our selves obliged to, we should then be forced to acknowledge, that we were mistaken in our first Judgments, and that it would be more reasonable for us to act any *other way*, which, upon new and better Proof, we were assured, would be *more for our Happiness*.

These Things being premised, I return to the main Question, Whether we are *actually under any Obligations to God*, or, (which is the same thing, in other terms,) Whether *there be any such thing as Religion*? And, in this manner, I shall prove that there is.

First, I shall shew, that there is *such a particular way of acting*, such a *course of Actions*, or *Scheme and Model of living*, which whoever duly and fairly reflects upon,

on, will be forced to acknowledge, that, if he did *live* after That manner, he should *approve himself* for so doing, and if he *lived otherwise*, he should *condemn himself* for it; and that he who finds himself necessarily determin'd to approve such a particular way of living, and to condemn the contrary, *must acknowledge* that he *ought or is obliged to act accordingly*. From whence I shall draw this Inference, that, all things considered, it must be *more for his Happiness* to act thus than otherwise, because, if it were not, he would not be under a necessity of Judging as he does. And therefore, he *is truly and really obliged to act* as he *judges he ought to act*.

Secondly, I shall prove, that *God*, who was the Author of our Being, *gave us such a Nature*, by which we are necessarily determined to judge after such a manner, for this very *End*, that we should exercise and employ all the *Faculties and Powers*, he has furnished us with, suitably hereunto: From whence I infer, that, what *our Reason* tells us *ought to be done*, that we are *commanded by God* to do; and, therefore, what *God* has made to appear *reasonable or unreasonable*, and what he has disposed us to approve or condemn, will
ac-

accordingly conduce to our *Happiness* or *Misery*, and upon that account are we *obliged* to do the one, and avoid the other. And that God purposely created us after such a manner, with a Design to oblige us to such and such Performances, I shall farther endeavour to shew, not only from the *general Consideration of the Make and Nature of Man*, but from *many other Tokens and Indications* of such an End, or Design, plainly visible in the *World*.

Thirdly, I shall *positively* and *directly* prove from the *Nature of Religion it self*, that a *Regular Practice of all those Duties or Obligations*, of which it consists, would certainly conduce to the *greatest Happiness*, that Man is capable of, considered only in *his present Condition*, as included within the Bounds of *this Life*.

Fourthly, I shall shew, that the *Defect of such a Practice*, and the *Consequences* of that defect, do necessarily lead us to the Acknowledgment of such a *future State*, as is sufficient to determine us to prefer one particular way of acting before another, upon *such Reasons and Motives*, that is, *such Degrees of Happiness and Misery*,
than

than which we are sure *greater*, and *more powerful*, cannot be offered to us.

From all which Considerations, the *Certainty* and *Necessity* of Religion will be plainly and fully evinced.

1. First then, I am to shew, that there is *one particular way of acting*, which we are *necessarily determined to prefer to any other*; so that, upon a clear and impartial View of pure natural Reason only, we cannot but thus acknowledge, that what we prefer that we *ought*, or are *obliged to do*, and whatever is contrary to it that we *ought*, or are *obliged, not to do*; and consequently, that we are *really obliged to act* according to such Judgments, because it must, in the issue, be *most for our Happiness* so to act.

That there are some *Natural Notions* of *Good and Evil, Right and Wrong*, or some such *certain Distinctions*, resulting from the *Natures, and Relations* of things, as cannot be altered, or destroyed by any arbitrary Agreement or Institution whatsoever; and that these Notions are perceivable, by the *bare use of our Reason*,
the

the same way that any other part of our Knowledge is, has been constantly owned by the *greatest* and *wisest* part of Mankind, however they may have differ'd in assigning, *which they were*, and *what were the true Grounds and Foundations* of them.

Now, to put these Matters beyond all reasonable doubt, and to cut off all occasion of Contest concerning them, I only desire this may be granted me, That there are some things so *clearly*, and *fully* proposed to the Mind, that a Man cannot *deny*, or *with-hold* his *Assent* to them; and that, wherever this happens, there is the *greatest Certainty* we are capable of: For then it must be granted also, that we may be as certain, that such or such Things *ought*, or *ought not to be done*, as that such or such Things *are*, or *are not* after such a manner.

For Example; I may be as fully satisfied, that I *ought* to desire, and endeavour after my own Happiness, and that I *ought not* to take away the Happiness of another Man, when I know I shall not add to my own by it, as I can be of the *Truth* of these Propositions; that *everything* which *moves* is; that *the same thing*

thing cannot possibly exist, and not exist, at the same time; that is, in both these Instances, the things assented to, have an equal *Suitableness* or *Agreeableness* to our Reason, and the like Force or Violence would be offered to our Understandings by a Denial of either: Which is the only Ground, and Standard of Certainty assignable by us.

Several other moral Propositions might be brought, which carry so clear and full a Conviction along with them, as is not to be over-ruled by any after Considerations: But the common Rules and Maxims of Morality, which are look'd upon as Laws of Nature, are not so general as those before instanced in, nor have, in all respects, the same degree of Certainty belonging to them; but what they are, how they are known, and how far they partake of Certainty and Evidence, I shall now give a short Account; and from thence shall prove, that we are necessarily determined to assent to, and approve these also, and to condemn, and deny the contrary of them; and, consequently, that we have all the Reason in the World to believe, that it will conduce more to our

Hap.

Happiness, to act up to these Principles, than to live in opposition to them.

The *highest* and *most general* moral Duties commonly instanced in, are such as these; That *God is to be worshipped*; that *Parents are to be obeyed*; and that *all other natural and civil Relations are proportionably to be respected*; that *we ought to abstain from all sorts of Intemperance and Excess*, and to provide *all things necessary for the continuance of our Life*; that *we should not do any other Man an Injury*; but should contribute *all we can to the Happiness of Mankind*, and more particularly, to the Welfare and Support of *that Society we belong to*.

Now these, and such like Propositions as these, are *known*, or *found out*, by the *Use and Employment of our natural Faculties*, in the same way that all other Truths are; that is, Men are *taught the Ideas* which these Terms belong to, or *get them by their own Observation*, and then, by *comparing* them together, they immediately acknowledge such or such a *Relation* between them, without being influenced by *any other Motive* so to judge but what results from the *Things themselves*.

The

The *Relations* indeed of *moral Ideas*, as well as the *Ideas themselves*, are, most of them, *learnt* from others first, before we are capable of finding them out our selves: but this is no more an Argument, that our Assent to such kind of Propositions is only the *Effect of Education*, and, consequently, a *meer Prejudice*, and no right Judgment; than it would be an Argument, to prove, that all the *Mathematical Knowledge* which a Man hath, is nothing else but a *Set of false Notions*, thrust upon his Understanding by *Education*, because he happen'd to be taught the first Grounds and Elements of this Science, while he was young, before he was capable of finding them out by his own Observation: for, when we *afterwards* come to review the *moral Knowledge* we got, whilst we were Children; let us be never so jealous over our selves, and let us take all the Care we can to deliver our selves from the *Prejudices of Education*, we shall still adhere to, and be farther satisfied of, most of those Truths which we were then taught; as is sufficiently proved by the Experience of several, who being Religiously Educated, have endeavoured afterwards to divest their Minds

of

of all those found Principles they had been taught, and yet have found the truth too hard for them. The Certainty and Impartiality of whose Judgment, has been strengthen'd by the joint Assent of several of a *contrary Education*; who being loosely, or Ignorantly bred, have, upon sober and mature Reflection, acknowledged the Power of Religion.

And, for a farther Illustration of this Point, should we suppose a Person *entirely ignorant* of all such Matters, but *capable* of understanding them, when proposed, and should one of these *moral Rules* or *Maxims* be *barely explained* to him, without any Reasons offered to *move* or *incline* his Assent either way; 'tis very difficult to imagine, how *he* could judge otherwise than *we* do.

As for Example: Suppose such a Person were justly inform'd concerning *his own Nature*, and the *Nature of God*, and what was meant by *Worship*, and by all the *Notions contrary to it*; and he were ask'd, which he should rather do, *perform such Acts* as would express this *Worship*, or *neglect, slight, and omit* them, or else *ridicule, dishonour, and blaspheme* that Being which we call *God*: or suppose, he
were

whence all the rest are deduced ; such as are those before mention'd, of seeking *our own Happiness*; and not taking away another Man's, when we cannot add any thing to our own by it ; and such as immediately follow from hence, as, that we ought to prefer a greater Good, or Pleasure, to a less ; a lesser Evil, or Pain, to a greater ; and the like : The Evidence of which is as great, as that of any *Mataphysical*, or *Mathematical* Axioms whatever.

But the *other moral Duties* which I had occasion to instance in, concerning the *Worship of God*, *Obedience to Parents*, &c. which are *less general*, have not the *same degree of Evidence* ; because the *Certainty and Necessity of the Connexion* of those Actions with our own *Happiness*, (which is the original Foundation of all Action and Duty,) is not so *clearly discoverable*, that we immediately perceive it ; but the *Evidence* of those common Principles and Rules of Morality which I have mentioned before, is so great, that, when they are fairly offered to the Understanding, *without any Consideration of our own Happiness* being concern'd in them ; (if this may be supposed ; as, in several Instances, no doubt, it may,) we *never refuse our Assent*.

Jent to them: and, if so, there can be no reason assign'd, why we should judge wrong, when there is nothing supposed to determine the Mind either way, but the *Nature of the Ideas themselves* which we judge of; and, when *all Men*, in the same Circumstances, *constantly* judge alike.

But, the truth of all these moral Principles depending intirely upon the relation which they bear to our Happiness, we are farther to examine, what ground there is to believe, that acting up to these Principles is the surest way to make our selves Happy.

Now the Reason we have to conclude that there is a *Connexion* between *such moral Actions* and *our Happiness*; and that the *Performance of those Actions*, which, without any *visible relation to our Happiness*, we approve, will be attended with *more Pleasure*, or *less Pain* than *such Omissions*, or *Actions*, which, without any *prospect of Misery*, we condemn; the reason, I say, we have, thus to conclude, is this: we find our selves under an *absolute necessity of desiring*, and *endeavouring after our own Happiness*, and every thing which we know tends to it; and of *flying*, and *avoiding*, whatever we apprehend

may *lessen*, or *take it away*, or put us into a *contrary State of Misery*: we find also, that *Pleasure*, and *Pain*, *Happiness*, and *Misery*, are the *only Principles*, and *Motives of Action*; and the obtaining the one, and avoiding the other, the *only Ends* of all Endeavour and Pursuit: and therefore, we cannot conceive it possible, that Beings so made, of *such a Nature and Constitution* as this, should be also contrived after such a manner as to be *necessarily determined to approve those Actions*, and to *judge themselves obliged to do them*, which would tend to their *Misery*, and to *condemn those Omissions, and Performances*, and *judge that they ought not to be guilty of them*, which would procure their *Happiness*.

Except then it can be proved from *Reason*, or it be some *other way* discoverable, that *acting according to these moral Rules* will certainly be attended with *more Misery*, or *less Happiness*, than *acting against them*; the present *Approbation* of our Judgment is a sufficient Argument, that the *Observance of them* will conduce *more to our Happiness*, than the *Neglect, or Violation of them*: and if it be impossible to prove the contrary, as I think it is,

is, and as it will plainly appear to be here^r after, when I come to consider a *future* State, then are we *necessarily determin'd* to make *such Judgments* concerning our Actions, as I have mention'd: and, if we are necessarily determin'd to judge thus, we have the *same*, or *very near* the same Reason to conclude, that the Observation of *such moral Rules*, or *such a particular way of acting* as our Reason approves will contribute *more* to our *Happiness* than *that* which it *condemns*; and, consequently, that we are *obliged* so to act; as we have to conclude, that what we are *necessarily determined* to give, or refuse our *Assent* to, should be *true*, or *false*, accordingly.

For the *original Frame* and *Constitution of the Mind*, being the *only Standard* of *Happiness* as well as *Truth*, and the Mind being *as capable of Happiness*, as *Truth*; (nay, if these can be separated, and there be any Precedence of one to the other, being made *first* and *principally* for *Happiness*) there is as *much ground* to suppose, that Men are not deceived when they are *necessarily determined* to *Judge*, that such a thing *ought*, or *ought not* to be done, as when they are determined to judge, that

such a thing *is*, or *is not* : and, if so, then, consequently, such a thing as they have thus necessarily judg'd, ought, or ought not to be done, will *as certainly* tend to their *Happiness*, or *Misery*, accordingly, if they *act* agreeably to the several Judgments they have made ; for, otherwise, they would have been deceived in *so judging* : and, when the *Mind* is no other way concern'd in *any thing else* than as it has a *relation to its self*, and has nothing to do to *know* any further, why should not it judge as truly and certainly of the *Suitableness*, and *Unsuitableness*, of other things, to *its self*, as it does of their *Agreement*, and *Disagreement*, among one another ?

Since therefore these *general Principles*, or *Rules of humane action*, which are commonly lookt upon as the first *Foundations* of all *Morality* or *Duty*, are found so very agreeable to our purest and most impartial Reason, that, upon a bare proposal of them, without any *perceivable relation to our Happiness*, they *command* our *Assent*, and *Approbation*, and we *cannot but acknowledge*, that, what we approve that we *ought to do*, and what we *condemn* that we *ought not to do*, it may, I think, be

be very fairly inferr'd from hence, that it would conduce *more* to our *Happiness* to act *according to* them, than to act *otherwise*; and, consequently, that we are *really*, and *effectually* obliged, in the full extent and force of the Word, to a strict and careful Observation of these Measures, in the whole Course of our Lives.

From all which it plainly appears, that the *Certainty of these moral Axioms or Propositions*, which I have placed in the *second* rank, falls *very little* short of the Evidence of those *first irresistible Judgments*, or rather *Impressions* concerning our *own Happiness*, mentioned before: for *these* latter are known *immediately* by their own light, as the former are; and, if it does not presently appear to us, with the same clearness, that such Actions as are agreeable to these moral Rules, have a necessary Connexion with our Happiness; yet, that there is such a Connexion between them, is, in the *highest degree that can be probable*. And this is the least, that can be inferred, from what has been alledged, upon this Head; and I am very cautious of laying more stress upon any

Argument than it will unquestionably bear.

2. The next Step I am to make in the Proof of *Religion*, is, to shew, that, what our *Reason* approves, or condemns, and tells us that we ought, or ought not to do, that we are commanded to do, or not to do, by God himself, who gave us such a Nature, by which we are necessarily determined to judge, and to be affected, after such a certain manner; for this End, and with this Design that we should act accordingly; of which End, and Design he has given us several Tokens, and Indications: which is a farther Confirmation, that it is more for our Happiness, to observe these Measures of acting, than not; and consequently, that we are obliged by God to observe them.

That we received our Beings, together with all the Powers, Capacities, and whatever else belongs to them, from God, is very evident from the Account before given of the *Divine Nature*; and therefore, when we are necessarily determined to judge, or to be affected, after such a manner, that 'tis plainly out of our Power

to judge, or to be affected otherwise, we must conclude, that such a *Determination* is founded in our very *Frame* and *Make*, and, consequently, is the *Work of God*; who, being an *intelligent* and *wise* Being, must be supposed to order every thing he makes to some *End*: and, there being no *End* which he can be supposed to design any thing for, but that which it is capable of, and which it is peculiarly fitted to attain; what Reason can be given, why we should be *capable of such Actions*, and *peculiarly disposed* to them, by a *necessary Approbation* of them, if it were not *designed by God* that we should *act* accordingly?

And, farther, Since, by our very *Nature* and *Constitution*, we find our selves *irresistibly determined* to seek, and endeavour after *Happiness*, and to avoid *Misery*; we have all the reason in the World to conclude, that *Happiness* is the *ultimate End* of our Being, and all our *Actions*: and, therefore, *God*, who made us after this manner, having also made it necessary for us to approve such *Actions*, and to judge them fit to be done; and to condemn others as not fit to be done; we cannot conceive it *possible*, that he should
make

make it necessary for us to aim at Happiness, in all that we do, and yet at the same time, should *make it necessary* for us to approve such Actions, and to judge our selves obliged to do them, as would not tend to our Happiness: for this is to design, and determine us to a certain End, and, at the same time, to *make it necessary* for us to approve such means as are contrary to it, and to condemn such as would lead us thither; which is a perfect Contradiction to all the notions we have of a wise Being, and cannot be supposed of God.

As therefore we have reason to be thoroughly satisfied, that, what we necessarily judge ought, or ought not to be done, must be in reality what we have judg'd it to be, because it is impossible to conceive, that we should be so disposed, with relation to our own Happiness, as to be under a necessity of being mistaken, in the clearest and most immediate Perceptions, which we are capable of, concerning it; so, likewise, when we consider our selves, as made and contrived by God, we are farther, and more directly convinc'd of the truth of all those things which we find our selves necessarily determined to assent to; because we are fully assured from the

Nature of God that we cannot be deceived by him, and, consequently, that we are not mistaken in any of those Judgments which we are necessarily determined to make, when it is God that determines us.

But, if any Suspicion of a Mistake could be entertained, there seems to be less ground for it in those Judgments, wherein *our Happiness is immediately concern'd*, than in the Judgments we make upon things which have *no relation to us*: for 'tis more reasonable to think, that *God* should make us after such a manner, as to leave us under a necessity of Judging *wrong*, in Matters, where the Consequences would be the same to us, whether we *judg'd right, or not*; than to imagine, that he should *purposely determine* us to judge wrong, where *Happiness, and Misery*, depend upon our Judgment.

Thus it appears, that *God did design* to oblige us to such a particular way of acting, or living, from the *general Consideration of the Nature of Man*; whereby he is *necessarily determined to approve* some Actions, and to *condemn* others, and to judge thus of himself, that he *ought to do* what he so approves, and that *he ought not to do* what he so condemns: and, therefore, we are
obliged

in our Favour, and not to our Disadvantage.

Now 'tis plain, that, in both these Cases, our Actions are not the *Effects of pure Reason*; tho', upon Examination, they are found to be exactly *agreeable to it*: for, besides that, we do not, immediately perceive a necessary connexion between such Actions and our own Happiness; nor upon the strictest Observation of what passes within us, are sensible, of those Steps, and Degrees, which we are conscious of, in all manner of *reasoning*: besides all this, I say, if we acted by *reason only*, what need would there be of those *previous Sentiments*, we feel; when we might perform all the *outward Actions* that were proper, upon a *bare rational Prospect* of the Advantages, which we were likely to gain by them: but, if we look into our selves, we shall be convinced, that we *cannot help having* those *Sentiments* which we feel upon such Occasions; that we do *not reason* our selves into them; and, if, by the Unhappiness of our Temper, or any other way, we should want these Sentiments of Gratitude, Reverence, or the like, we should find some difficulty in reasoning

ting our selves into the *same outward Behaviour*, as would have followed, if we had been *so affected*; and, tho' we were never so well convinced, that *our Happiness* was really concern'd in such a Behaviour, all our Actions would come *slower*, be performed with *more Constraint*, and *less Conformity* to one another, than if they had proceeded from a *lively natural Sense*, till *Habit*, had enabled us to act with greater Ease and Dispatch.

And thus we should find our selves *originally made and disposed*, with respect to all the *general Duties of Morality*, and *Religion*, if we entred upon a particular Examination of our *whole Frame and Constitution*: from whence we may conclude, that these *natural and original Inclinations*, and *Propensions* to some Actions, and *Restraints from*, and *Aversions to others*, which we feel in our selves, without being conscious of any *previous Deliberation* concerning the *Reasonableness*, or *Unreasonableness* of what we do; or, which, after Judgments of this Nature made, we look upon, as certain *Motions* of the Soul, carrying us on to act according to such Judgments, with more *Ease*, *Quickness*, and *Application* of
Mind,

Mind, than we should have done, upon the bare *Conviction* of our Reason, without them: All these *Dispositions*, I say, and *Sentiments* of the Soul, being given us by God, and assisting us, conformably to the Dictates of our Reason, in discharging what we call the *Duties of Religion*; we have sufficient Cause from hence to conclude, that God did design us for the *Practice of such Duties*, and consequently, that an obedient *Compliance* with this Design will contribute more to our *Happiness*, than our *Disobedience* can; which is a farther Proof, that we are actually under *Obligations to God*, or that there really is such a thing as *Religion*.

Which *Obligations*, together with God's *Right of obliging*, we are constantly put in mind of by the *Oeconomy and Constitution of Humane Society*, and the several Relations arising from thence.

The different kinds of *Government*, and *Subjection*, to be found among Men; are the chiefest *Marks and Characters*, by which they are distinguish'd from one another in *Society*; these take up a large share in their *Thoughts and Discourses*,

courses, and a great part of their Actions are influenc'd and determined by the Notions and Opinions they have of them: from whence we are led to acknowledge, that we are under *higher Obligations* of Obedience to God than we can be to any *humane Governour* whatsoever: for, whether we consider our selves as *Servants, Children, or Subjects*, or any other way *inferiour* to others; whatever Reasons are alledged for *our Duty* and Obedience to *Masters, Parents, or Princes*, or for *their Right of commanding us*, will conclude *more strongly* upon us, when we consider our selves *with Relation to God*.

All the *Reasons* which are given for our Obedience to *Men*, and for *their right of obliging us*, are *Power, Goodness, and Property*. When a Person has a *Power* of contributing to my *Happiness, or Misery*, and I do, some way or other, *belong to* him, so as to be call'd *his*, I look upon my self as *obliged to obey* him, or to act according to his Will; and if, besides his having this *Power and Property*, I consider him as *more inclinable* to do me good, than hurt, I conceive my self un-

der *higher Obligations* of Obedience to him.

But now God hath *all these Titles* to our Obedience in the *highest degree possible*; for, by giving us our intire Being, and every thing that belongs to our Nature, 'tis plain, that he hath, not only, a *greater Power of contributing to our Happiness, or Misery* than any Man can have, but also, a *greater Property* in us, by this *Act of Creation, or Production*, than can accrue to any Man by *Conquest, Purchase, Covenant, Generation*, or any other way whereby Men come to have a *Property* in one another. And that he has *more Goodness* towards us, or is *more inclinable* to contribute to our *Happiness* than *Misery*, is manifest from the *Benefits*, which we have already received from him.

The inference I draw from hence is, that, as *our Reason, and Judgment*, which tell us, what ought, or ought not to be done; and as our *natural Inclinations, and Aversions*, which dispose, and excite us to act agreeably to our Reason were given us by God, with a design of engaging us to act accordingly; so, moreover, were we put into such a *State* and

and Condition, with regard to one another, that the necessary Relations resulting from Society might put us in mind of our relation to God, and of the proper peculiar Actions consequent upon it; so that, by a *constant traditional Education* in the exercise of these Duties of Subjection, of different sorts, *to one another*, we should be led to the Acknowledgement of our Obligations *to a Superior Being*, more easily, than if every Man had been left to himself, to find them out, by the use of *his own Faculties only*, without these particular *Occasions* of setting his *Reason* and *Inclinations* on work.

All which Considerations concerning the *State of humane Nature*, and *Society*, are at least *very probable Arguments*; that we are *actually obliged* by God to such a particular way of living as we call *Religion*: and consequently, we have Reason to conclude, that a careful *practice* of *Religion* (all things considered,) will contribute *more* to our *Happiness*, than a *Neglect* or *Transgression* of it; because the same God, who designs us for *Happiness*, designs us also for the *Practice of the Duties of Religion*, tho' we do

not yet perceive an *immediate Connexion* between *Religion*, and *Happiness*; which is the next thing to be proved.

3. In the third place then I shall give some *positive* and *direct* Proof from the *Nature of Religion it self*, that a *regular Practice* of all those *Duties* or *Obligations* of which it consists would certainly conduce to the *greatest Happiness* that Man is capable of, considered only in his *present Condition*, as included within the Bounds of *this Life*.

'Tis plainly perceived upon a short transient View and Comparison of the *Humane* and *Divine Natures* that *Man* was made and designed by God for *Happiness*; and by the *irresistible Desires of Happiness*, and *Aversions to Misery*, that we Experience in our selves, as also by our *constant unalterable Endeavours* to attain the one and avoid the other, we are more nearly and necessarily convinced, that *the Enjoyment* of the purest most unallayed *Happiness* that we are capable of, must be the *ultimate End* of our *Being* and all our *Actions*.

Since therefore God hath made us capable

ble of Happiness, and designed us for it, and we find our selves necessarily determined to aim at this End; since the only way of attaining this End, is by our Actions, and we are assured by Experience that all our Actions do not lead to it, but that Misery as well as Happiness may be the Effect and Consequence of our Actions, it follows from hence, that there must be one particular way of acting, which, if steadily pursued, will certainly procure us greater Happiness than we can possibly attain by any other.

And farther, if we are designed for Happiness, and this Happiness be attainable only by one particular way of acting, 'tis certain that the same God who designed us for such an End must design also that we should use such means as would conduct us thither.

In Conformity to which Designs we cannot but believe that, as he hath given us a certain Knowledge of and necessary Determinations toward our End, he must have given us also sufficient Tokens and Indications of the Means that lead to it; and, upon Examination we are satisfied that he has done so; by framing

our Minds after such a manner that we are necessarily determined to approve some Actions and to condemn others, and to judge our selves obliged to do what we approve, and to avoid what we condemn; by *giving us such natural Propensions and Aversions* agreeable to the Judgments of our Reason, as by a sudden and unperceivable Influence dispose us to, and assist us in the Performance of the same Actions which Reason prescribes; and by *putting us into such a state or condition of Life* with respect to one another, wherein the different kinds of Government and Subjection, and the Notions and Actions resulting from thence unavoidably lead us to the Acknowledgment of God's Superiority, Power, and Right of obliging, and of the Necessity of our Obedience to him, in all the several Instances of Duty, in which we conceive our selves bound to any governing Relation among Men, but in a much higher and more exalted manner, as becomes the mighty Inequality between *God and Man*.

From whence we are farther led to conclude that *all other Duties* and Obligations; which we apprehend our selves

under, with respect to *our selves*, or *others*, are the Effect of our *Obligation to God*, the *Supreme Governour of the World*, whose *Power and Right* are over *all things*, *original*, and *independent*; from whom all *other Powers and Rights* are *derived*; and on whom they *depend*; the Sense of which *Obligation* renders all our *Actions* that are *duely influenced* by it *Religious*, tho' *God* be not the *immediate Object* of them.

And these are sufficient Marks and Evidences to assure us that *God* does *require* us to act such a particular way, and consequently that we are *actually obliged* to frame our *Lives* according to those *Rules and Measures* which come under the Name of *Religion*; unless it can be shewn, from *more certain Discoveries* of the *Nature of Man*, and the *Design of God*, that, notwithstanding all these fair Appearances, *Religion* is not the *Way to Happiness*. But, as 'tis manifest from what we have already observed of the *Nature of God*, and *our own Frame and Constitution*, that no higher Assurances can be given us of the Truth of any thing than what we have had in this

matter, from a Concurrence of our *Reason, natural Inclinations, and external Condition*, and that we cannot be deceived in assenting to such Testimony; so, upon farther Experiences, and Observations, taken from our selves, and the State of Mankind, with relation to Religion, we shall find that *Religion is, in its own Nature, so fitted and suited to the Nature of Man, and so proportion'd to the original Dispositions, and Desires of the Soul, as by a proper Tendency and Efficacy to promote his Happiness.*

This appears first by what we feel in our selves. What just and impartial *Reason approves* we find a *Pleasure* in approving; *Inclination* superadded to Judgment *heightens* the pleasing Sentiment; *acting* what *Nature inclines to* and *Reason warrants*, is accompanied with a new and higher Satisfaction, all which Pleasures we repeat and enjoy over again by *Reflexion*. And, if any *Pain* or *Uneasiness* either mixes with the Pleasure, or attends it, *that* does not arise from the *same Thoughts or Actions* that *this* does, but from some *contrary Application of Mind*, either in our selves, or others, which

which obstructs, and opposes us in the Practice of Religion, or from some other *extrinsical Cause* which has no Dependance upon, or Connexion with Religion; so that the *due Performance* of any Religious Action is never *properly the Cause* of any Pain or Trouble to him that performs it, however in some Instances it may seem to be the Occasion of it.

But, in order to be farther satisfied of the *natural Connexion* between Religion and *Happiness*, and that we may more clearly perceive that the latter is the true and genuine Effect of the former, we should take off our Thoughts from the *present State of Mankind*, and represent to our selves *another Generation* of Men, living together in a *constant regular Observance* of all the Duties and Obligations of Religion: for there we should behold such a glorious Scene of Happiness rising before us, that, considering the *necessary Circumstances of our mortal Condition*, we could not possibly imagine, or form an Idea of any thing *in this Life* beyond it.

This would be a State of *universal Peace, Safety, Tranquillity, and Love*,
where

where there would be no *Injuries* nor *Fears*, no *Envy* nor *Distrust*; where every Man would find all the Pleasures of Friendship in the Company of every Man, and feel his own agreeable Thoughts towards others redoubled, by knowing that others had all the same Sentiments for him: all the *natural Appetites* and *Desires of the Soul* would be *satisfied*, without a painful Eagerness in the Pursuit, or Satiety in the Enjoyment; and there would be no *irregular imaginary Desires* to create the Uneasiness of *Disappointment*: then every Man would be *pleased with all that he did*, and have his Satisfaction heightened by a full and entire Assurance that his Actions were *approved by the World*, and *acceptable to God*.

Was true Religion so *universally*, and *exactly* practised among Men, they would engage the *Power* and *Wisdom of the supreme Governour* in their Favour, by the Honour, Respect, and Obedience which they paid him; they would be sure of all the Benefits and Advantages of *humane Strength and Skill*, by a mutual Performance of all the Duties of Society; and by an equal regular Conduct, and

Mac-

Management of their own particular Capacities and Powers, they would preserve *themselves* in the fittest and most proper Condition of enjoying those agreeable Satisfaction, which God had put within their Reach, and would prolong the Enjoyment of them, by extending their Lives to the utmost Term, to which by any Endeavours of their own, they could possibly carry them.

Whoever takes a full and distinct View of Religion, in all its *Power* and *Extent*, must acknowledge that these are the *true* and *necessary Effects* of it, where its Influence is freely dispensed, without Check or Opposition from contrary Causes. And what *greater Happiness* than this can we conceive our selves capable of without a longer *Date of present Life*, or a *prospect of another*? or, at least, what greater is attainable by any *other Actions* besides *those of Religion*?

But this, I confess, is all but an *imaginary Scene*, a *bare Idea* or Pattern drawn by the Mind, which never was, and perhaps never will be exemplified *in the reality of things*: and therefore it does not necessarily follow from hence that, when the *Generality of Men* act *contrary*

to Religion, as now they do, those few who are mixt with them, and live *exactly according to the Rules and Precepts of it*, shall enjoy more Happiness than any of the rest, much less *such whose Practice is inconstant and defective*, which is certainly the Case of the best and most careful Observers of those measures of acting which Religion prescribes.

However, thus much, I think, may justly be inferr'd, That Religion is, in its own Nature, *productive of Happiness*, and of nothing else, and consequently was *design'd and ordain'd by God* for the obtaining this Effect.

From whence I conclude, that if Man was *made for Happiness*, and was *directed and disposed* to seek it by the means of Religion, and if these means are found to be in *their own Nature sufficient*, but are some way or other, without the Fault of the Person who uses them, *render'd ineffectual for the present*; from hence, I say, we may certainly conclude that God, who in his great Wisdom has order'd all these things, did not order them in vain, but has so *contriv'd* them that, *some time or other*, the End to which they all point shall

shall be *obtained*; and therefore, if a *full* and *exact* Observance of *all* the Duties of Religion be not attended with a suitable Happiness *in this Life*, 'tis a strong Proof that there will be a *future State*, in which there will be Rewards answerable to the highest Performances and Expectations.

We have Reason also, from the *Goodness* and *Wisdom* of God, to hope, that the *sincere Endeavours* of those, whose Course is sometimes interrupted with voluntary Transgressions of the Rules prescribed them, will notwithstanding, by some *Favour* or *Grace*, procure them a *State of Happiness*. But this we may be sure of, that God will put a *mighty Distinction* between such as do but *sometimes* deviate from those *religious measures* which he hath proposed to them, and such as *constantly* act by *different Principles*.

4. The Proof of this Conclusion is the fourth thing I have undertaken, in order to the Establishment of the *Truth* and *Necessity* of Religion, under which head I am to shew, that the *Defect* of a *general* and *regular* Practice of Religion,
and

to Religion, as now they do, those few who are mixt with them, and live exactly according to the Rules and Precepts of it, shall enjoy more Happiness than any of the rest, much less such whose Practice is *inconstant* and *defective*, which is certainly the Case of the best and most careful Observers of those measures of acting which Religion prescribes.

However, thus much, I think, may justly be inferr'd, That Religion is, in its own Nature, *productive* of Happiness, and of nothing else, and consequently was design'd and ordain'd by God for the obtaining this Effect.

From whence I conclude, that if Man was made for Happiness, and was directed and disposed to seek it by the means of Religion, and if these means are found to be in their own Nature sufficient, but are some way or other, without the Fault of the Person who uses them, render'd *ineffectual* for the present; from hence, I say, we may certainly conclude that God, who in his great Wisdom has order'd all these things, did not order them in vain, but has so contriv'd them that, *some time or other*, the End to which they all point shall

shall be *obtained*; and therefore, if a *full* and *exact* Observance of *all* the Duties of Religion be not attended with a suitable Happiness *in this Life*, 'tis a strong Proof that there will be a *future State*, in which there will be Rewards answerable to the highest Performances and Expectations.

We have Reason also, from the *Goodness* and *Wisdom* of God, to hope, that the *sincere Endeavours* of those, whose Course is sometimes interrupted with voluntary Transgressions of the Rules prescribed them, will notwithstanding, by some *Favour* or *Grace*, procure them a *State of Happiness*. But this we may be sure of, that God will put a *mighty Distinction* between such as *do but sometimes* deviate from those *religious measures* which he hath proposed to them, and such as *constantly* act by *different Principles*.

4. The Proof of this Conclusion is the fourth thing I have undertaken, in order to the Establishment of the *Truth* and *Necessity* of Religion, under which head I am to shew, that the *Defect* of a *general* and *regular* Practice of Religion,
and

and the *Consequences* of this Defect, do necessarily lead us to the Acknowledgment of such a *future State*, as is sufficient to determine us to prefer one particular way of Life before another, upon such Reasons and Motives, that is, such degrees of *Happiness and Misery*, than which we are sure greater, and more powerful cannot be offered to us.

'Tis very plain, that Religion is not *universally* practis'd in the World, nor do the *generality* of any *Nation* or *Society* of Men make their Duty to God the governing Principle of their Actions. 'Tis manifest likewise, that *those few* who are *sensible of their Obligations*, and do endeavour to discharge them, do in many Instances *neglect* them, or *act contrary* to them: upon which Accounts it happens, that as there is more Misery in the World than our mortal Condition would otherwise subject us to, so it oftentimes falls to the *religious Man's* Lot to have the *greatest share* of it.

Nor is all the Trouble and Uneasiness he suffers the Effect of *vicious Habits* and *Impressions* mixing with, and obstructing the Performance of his Duty, or carrying him
him

him to contrary Actions, (tho very much be owing to this Cause) but a great many Afflictions and Calamities are brought upon him by the Malice and Hatred of wicked Men, *purely for his being religious*; so that, did he *perfectly* and compleatly fulfil all his Duty to God, there is Reason to believe, that his *Misery* would be proportionably *encreased*.

From whence it plainly follows, that God hath provided some *other state of Happiness* for such as live *exactly* according to his Purpose and Intention *here*; which will be so full and sufficient a Recompence for all the Misery they have indured in this Life, as to justify their Obedience to God, notwithstanding their present Sufferings upon that account.

For, if God *design'd Man for Happiness*, (as 'tis certain he did,) and *appointed Religion* to be the *means* of obtaining it, (as manifestly appears from his annexing Pleasure to the purest and most unmixt practice of *Piety* and *Virtue*, as well as from several other Indications,) 'tis impossible to suppose that, after a due and proper Use of the means, God should suffer his Ends to be *defeated*, by the *derided, dependent Power*, and *Contrivance* of
other

other Beings, and should order things so, that those who were *most diligent and exact* in observing the truest measures of acting, should, *for that very reason*, meet with the *least Success*.

Should we therefore suppose a few *Persons perfectly religious*, afflicted and tormented by wicked Men, barely *upon that account*, (as there can be no other, if they are what we suppose them to be;) we must then conclude, that God has *mighty Blessings in store* for them, in comparison of which their *present Sufferings are as nothing*.

From hence also we may infer, that those whose *sincere Resolutions and Endeavours* are not attended with *exact and universal Performance*, and yet, who are rendered *more miserable* by the Actions of wicked Men than they otherwise would have been, for the sake of those degrees of Religion they have attained to; 'tis reasonable, I say, to conclude that those will, *some time or other*, receive *more Happiness*, or *less Misery* than *others*, proportionably to the difference of their *Obedience*, and *Affliction now*: For, according as they have pursued the Means, so will their Attainments of the End be; or, if no Reward

ward be due but to a *full Discharge* of all *Obligations*, it cannot be imagin'd that those who have Perform'd some part of what they were obliged to, and endeavoured at *general Obedience*, should be punished as highly as those who have been guilty of a *greater*, or of a *total Neglect, Violation* or *Contempt* of their Duty.

However therefore it be as to the *manner of it*, 'tis very agreeable to the *Wisdom* and *Designs of God*, according to all the *Indications* of them which he hath afforded Mankind, to make the Condition of those, who act by the *Principles of Religion*, preferable, to that of others who act by *contrary Measures*, which it would not always be, were there no other *State of Life* after *this* is ended.

From all which it plainly follows, that there must be a *Future State*, in which Men will be distinguish'd from one another, by *different degrees of Happiness and Misery*; according to the *different regard* they had to *Religion in this Life*!

The Certainty of which State we are farther convinced of by the general *Wants, Miseries*, and *Imperfections* of our present

sent Nature; which proceed from some Principle, or Disposition within us, contrary to that of Religion: which Principle, or Disposition is the *Reason* of that *universal Wickedness* which reigns in the World.

Did Mankind enjoy all the Happiness they were otherwise capable of in this *mortal Condition*, yet, so long as they found in themselves *Capacities*, and *Desires*, of *greater*, unknown, degrees of Pleasure, which from the present Frame and Constitution of things they had no Hope, or Prospect of injoying, and felt an *Uneasiness* at the Thoughts of *parting* with those Enjoyments, of which they were *possess'd*, by the unalterable Decree of *Death*, which they knew themselves subject to; were they I say in such a Condition, they would have great Reason from hence to conclude, that God did design them for some other *more perfect State*, where all their *Capacities* would be filled, *all their Desires* satisfied, and *no kind of Pain* or *Uneasiness* would check or allay *the Fullness of their joy*: not that they themselves would have any just cause to Complain, as if God had not dealt kindly by them, in granting them *lesser degrees*
of

of Happiness than what they were capable of; but because, in such a case as is supposed, their *Capacities* and *Desires* would be given them *in vain*; which does not seem consistent with the *Wisdom of God*. And, moreover, the *Uneasiness of Desiring* what was *impossible*, and the painful *Fears* and *Apprehensions* of what was *certain*, which they would then experience, would appear *inconsistent* with *God's Design of making Man for Happiness*; and therefore it would be more agreeable to all the *Notions* we have of God, and to all the *Observations* we have made upon his other Works, to suppose that, had *this Life* been the utmost Extent of *Mans Being* and *Happiness*, God would not have given him a sense, or prospect of *any other*: upon such a Supposition as this, 'tis highly rational to think, that *constant even Contentment* would have bounded all his *Thoughts*, that his *Soul* would always have remained at the *same equal Poize*, and that he would have *lived*, without *desiring more than* what he actually *enjoyed*, and have *died*, without any previous *Fears of losing* what he had in present.

I. 2

And

And, if there be good ground to believe, that there would be a *State of future Happiness*, tho' Men enjoyed all that they were capable of here, according to the present Circumstances of their Nature and Condition; both because their present Happiness was not compleat, by reason of some Pain and Uneasiness mixt with it, and because their Capacities and Desires exceeded all their actual Enjoyments; how much more reasonable is it to make the same Conclusion now, when we, every way, *fall so far short even of that Happiness*, which the condition of *this Life* might allow us? as will plainly appear, if we compare the present State of the World, with that Draught and Representation, which we have before given of Humane Life, under a regular Practice of the Duties of Religion.

We are, now, not only conscious, in general, of Capacities greater of Happiness than what we enjoy; but there are several kinds, and degrees of it, within our Knowledge, and seemingly within our Reach and Power, which, with all the Endeavours we can use, we are not able to obtain: and the more Wants we are
sensi-

ſenſible of, and the better and more particularly we know what they are, the ſtronger are our Deſires to have them ſupplied, and the greater is our Uneaſineſs under Deſeats and Diſappointments, which, Experience aſſures us, are very frequent. Then the Satisfaction which we do meet with, are commonly very ſhort, and mixed with Pain, and we have a great many other things to fear, beſides *Death*.

But the Troubles and *Calamities* of *Humane Life* are too well known to need being inſiſted upon, and too large a ſubject to be particularly treated of in this place. 'Tis ſufficient to my purpoſe to remark in general, what I think may very ſafely be affirmed, that, if what falls to every Man's ſhare was fairly computed, the *Miſery* of the *greateſt part* of Mankind would out-weigh their *Happineſs*.

If, therefore, *Man* was *design'd* by God for *Happineſs*, and is ſo framed that he *cannot enjoy compleat Happineſs in this Life*, without a mixture of Uneaſineſs, and yet has *Capacities*, and *Deſires* of *greater* than he can conceive belonging to his Nature, in the neceſſary Circumſtances of it here; and farther, if Mankind be now involv'd in ſuch a State or Condition of Life, in

which they all actually enjoy much less Happiness than they find themselves by Nature capable of here, and the greatest part of them have a larger share of the Troubles, than the Advantages of Life; from hence I think it may be truly and certainly infer'd, that there will be another State of pure compleat Happiness, answerable, at least, to the highest Notions and Conceptions which we are able to frame of it.

But since, as has before been prov'd, God hath not absolutely and unconditionally determined all Men to be happy, but hath made Happiness and Misery to depend upon our Actions, and consequently hath annex'd Happiness to a particular way of acting, we have all the Reason in the World to believe, that the Happiness of another State will be the Portion of those, and those only, who live according to the Rules of Religion here; and this, I believe, no body who owns a future State, is disposed to doubt of; and therefore I shall spend no time in an unnecessary Proof of it.

And, tho' there are none to be found who exactly discharge all the Obligations of Religion, yet 'tis more agreeable to

our

our reason to conclude that those who *sincerely endeavour* to do it, shall, by the especial *Grace and Favour of God*, in some such way or manner as to his Wisdom shall seem fit, be rendred *capable of future Happiness*, than to believe, that *all Men* shall be *miserable*, and none of them obtain Happiness, contrary to all the Marks and Indications we have of the *Design of God* in making Man.

Supposing therefore what I think has been sufficiently proved under this Head, that there will be a *future State*, in which all Men will be *happy, or miserable*, according as they have behaved themselves here, with regard to what we call *Religion*: this, I say, being allowed, it manifestly follows from hence, that it is *more for our Happiness to act* up to the Rules and Directions of Religion, than to pursue any other Measures, whatever we may happen to suffer in this Life for so doing; because the Happiness of a future State will so far outweigh all the sufferings of this, that, when we come to enjoy it, we shall be forced to acknowledge, that the end and reward of our Labours was very well worth all the Troubles, and Difficulties we

found in the way to it; and if it be *absolutely, with regard to the whole extent and duration of our Being*, more for our Happiness to live Religiously than otherwise, then are we in the highest and strictest sense *obliged* to live so, which was the thing I undertook to prove.

Nay further, if, besides the *natural Pleasure* which results from *Religious Acts*, while we are practising them here, God has given us a *certain Prospect*, and *well grounded Hope* of a *State*, of greater *Bliss hereafter*, I dare venture to assert that, *generally speaking*, Religion will prove the *surest way to happiness, even in this Life*; so that, tho' *sometimes*, the *Sufferings of some particular Men*, upon that account, may exceed all the noble *Satisfactions* which Religion can afford them here, yet, all things being consider'd, and the different *Methods of acting* weigh'd together, with all the probable *Consequences*, which, according to the common course of things, may attend them, there will be sufficient reason for a wise Man to prefer the practice of *Religious Duties* to the ways of *Irreligion*, upon the score of the *present Happiness* which he is likely to enjoy by
that

that means, reckoning in the *Hopes* and *prospect only*, and not the *Possession of another State*: as will more plainly appear under the next General Head of Discourse:

Which is a Proof of *Religion*, from a Comparison of it with *Irreligion*, and the necessary Consequences arising from thence.

IV. I have before given a *positive direct* proof of Religion, drawn from the *natures* and *relations* of the *Beings* concerned in it, I shall now endeavour to confirm the Truth of what I have advanced, by shewing, what *Absurd* and *Unreasonable* things would follow from a *denial of Religion*, and how *Pernicious* and *Destructive* to Mankind, the establishment of a contrary Belief and Practice would be.

In the management of which Subject, I shall first consider the *several Steps* and *Degrees of Irreligion*; and then shew how far

far they all led to the same Ends, and what are the peculiar Consequences of each.

Irreligion, so far as it consists in *Opinion* or *Belief*, is of three Sorts: for either Men deny the *being of a God*, and consequently, all Religious Duty falls of course, when this Foundation of it is taken away; or they acknowledge a God, but deny that *Man is any ways Obliged by him to act* so as we pretend that he ought to act; or else they own that they are in several Instances obliged to Worship God, and to live according to those Rules and Principles of Action, which we have before mentioned, but they do not believe that *there is any future State of Rewards and Punishments* after this Life.

Now these are very different Notions, considered barely in themselves, as matters of *Speculation* only; but, if we examine the *practical Effects and Consequences* of them, we shall find that they all aim at the *same thing*: which is, the establishing a *general liberty of Living as every Man pleases*, upon Principles contrary to those of Religion.

This is plain of the two first Opinions,
which

which take away all manner of Religious obligation, and, upon strict examination, will be found to be True of the last; which so far Loosens and Weakens the Influence of Religion, that it will not be able to bear up against the force of contrary Motives to Action.

But let us consider these Notions apart, and then we shall the better perceive what the *direct*, and *immediate* Consequences of each Opinion are, and how far they fall in with one another.

First then, we will suppose that there is *no God*; and Consequently *no Religion*: this being supposed, what are we to think of *our Selves*? What kind of Beings are we? How came we first to *exist*, and what are we to *do* while we continue to be?

That we *are*, and that we *feel our selves so and so Affected* 'tis impossible to doubt: And the same way, that we are assured of our own *Being*, or of any *simple Perception* whatsoever, we are likewise assured of the *Agreement* and *Connexion* of some things, and the *disagreement* and *inconsistency* of others; *viz.* by such an *immediate consciousness*, as we can neither resist
nor

nor distrust: but if these things, which we necessarily perceive, as together, or asunder, and which we cannot possibly perceive otherwise, should not be Joined or Separated accordingly, *in the Nature and Reality of things*, but only *in our Mind*, then do we know nothing certain beyond *Appearances*, and the *Affections of our own Minds*, and yet are *invincibly Disposed to believe* what may be *False*, with so strong an assent, that 'tis extremely difficult to entertain the least Suspicion of a bare possibility of its Falshood; as any Man may experience in himself, if he will but try to Doubt of what we call a *self-evident Proposition*; which is the reason that there are so few who pretend to be *thorough Scepticks*, if there ever were really any such, as, I dare confidently affirm there never were. But, if it were possible for us to prevail with our selves to doubt of the *Being of a God*, after a full and impartial Consideration of the Proof before given of this Truth, I do not see where our Doubts could stop, or what could determine our Assent to any thing else: *Reason, Truth, and Evidence* would then be bare uninforming Sounds; our whole Life would

would be nothing but Suspence and Amazement; Darknes and Ignorance would cover our Understandings, and continual Uneasiness would arise from a restless Succession of vain, undetermin'd Thoughts.

If therefore there *be no God*, notwithstanding that there is the same *appearance of Evidence* for his Being, as there is for the truth of any thing else; (as those who have fully examined the Proofs of it, must allow) then have we the same Reason to question *all our other Knowledg*. The Consequence of which would be, that we should then feel in our selves a continual desire of Knowing, and a constant agitation of Thoughts in the search or pursuit of Knowledg, joyn'd with a continual distrust of all appearances of Truth, without any manner of Rest or Acquiescence, which would be such an uneasy State as no Man, I believe, could bear; and, such as no Man was ever yet sensible of.

But this perhaps is too much to suppose, it being very easie to imagine, that there may be Men who deny the *Being of God*, and *all manner of Religion*, without suspecting any of their *other Knowledg*,
and

and who; in all other matters, Argue from the same Principles, and Act by the same Rules as the rest of Mankind do. 'Tis very possible, that Persons who never gave themselves the trouble of being acquainted with *Mathematicks*, may think all the Demonstrations, which are there pretended to, false, and the whole Science a Cheat, without calling in question any other parts of Knowledge which they have happen'd to be conversant in: and it is much more conceivable, that such as never duly and fairly considered the Arguments for the being of *God* and *Religion*; should deny both, without distrusting their Faculties upon other Occasions; which is certainly the case of all that pretend to such a denial.

Now in applying my self to these Men, I do not think it sufficient to alledg, that the Proof I have given of these great Truths, is *directly* and *immediately* drawn from *such Principles* as they own, and make use of in other matters, though this may certainly be affirmed; to alledg this is not sufficient, because they may have that easie Answer ready which all People give who are fond of their Opinions, and unwilling upon enquiry to find them

them false: thus, I say, they would be apt to answer; That Arguments drawn out to any length are very Uncertain; that there may be a Mistake in some part of the Deduction; that *consequences*, at a great distance from their *first Principles*, may not have all *the Force and Strength* of those Principles convey'd to them; and that therefore, though the *whole Contexture* of the Proof seems specious, they have no reason to change such Opinions as they are fully perswaded of, for others which they certainly perceive to be False, though they are set out so plausibly, that it is not easie to tell where the Falshood of them lies.

Since therefore the Persons who *deny the Being of God and Religion*, are not well acquainted with what they deny; have very imperfect Notions of these things, and do not trouble themselves to look into them, or to consider the Proofs that are brought for them; but yet are supposed to understand *their own Principles*, which they profess to be well perswaded of, and to act by; it cannot but be very proper to discourse with them upon this Subject, and, supposing *their Principles* true, to consider them

them in their full Extent, and to examine into the genuine consequences of them: and, if when I have given a *true Idea* and *Representation* of *Irreligion*, they will own it still, I desire no better Witnesses to confirm the Truth of what I have urg'd in the Defence of *Religion*.

Supposing then that *there is no God nor Religion*, and that we must *judge*, and *act*, as our *Reason* prescribes we should in such a Case; these two things do *necessarily* and *immediately* follow:

1. That *all Men are equal*, and that there is no such thing as *Superiority*, *Right*, or *Authority* of any kind.

2. That *every Man* is to *act*, as *he himself* shall judge most *convenient* for his *own particular Happiness*.

1. That *all Men are equal* is very plain, if we consider the *Original Capacities*, and *Powers* of Humane Nature, without any external Advantages of *Birth*, *Education*, and *Society*: nor do these Differences, if there be no God, cause any such *Inequality* between particular Men, as to make one Man *subject* to another,
or

or to lay any *Obligation* upon the one to act according to the Will of the other.

There needs no further Proof of this but to consider, That no Man, whatever his Circumstances in the World are, can have such a *certain uncontrollable Power* over any of his Brethren, as to make it *necessary* for another Man to obey him in what he commands. For, whatever a Man promises or threatens, be it never so great in either kind, may, by some sudden unforeseen Accident, be hindered from taking effect, even in the moment of Execution; besides, whatever is promised or threatned, being certainly of no longer continuance than Life, be it never so great in it self, it may not, oftentimes, countervail some other Motive which the Person thus accosted is govern'd by. There may be some particular Enjoyment that he is possess'd of, which his imagination has so heightned, or which Habit has made so necessary to him, that nothing pleasant or grievous in Life can be of weight enough to determine him to a contrary Choice.

Thus have we seen Men of *no Religion*
M facri-

sacrifice all that they had, and bear all that could be inflicted upon them, rather than they would renounce their *Ambition* or *Revenge*, or do any thing that they thought would stain the *glory*, which their former Actions had procured them.

From whence it follows, That, *except there be a God*, no Man can have a *true Right of obliging* another; the *Right of obliging* being founded in *such a Power* of contributing to the *Happiness* or *Misery* of others as their *Reason* must necessarily submit to; which no Man can have, without being supported by *Divine Authority*.

It may indeed so happen, sometimes, by the favour of particular Circumstances, that a Person may propose to me to act after such a manner, upon *such probable Motives and Reasons*, as may convince me, that 'tis more for *my Happiness* to act *thus* than *otherwise*; but this is not sufficient to give any particular Man, or rank of Men, a *Right* to my Obedience; because I can never be *sure* of their *Power* of enforcing these *Motives*: and therefore, tho' I do find the World at present so constituted, that Men of such a *Character*, or *Relation*,
have

have *more probable* Opportunities of contributing to my *Happiness* or *Misery* than others, I am not to look upon them as having any *Right* or *Authority* over me; but such whose Wills and Counsels I follow oftner than those of other Men, because I judge it *more for my Interest* so to do: but when I judge it more for my particular Interest to follow my *own*, or *any other Man's* Advice, then am I *as much obliged* to act accordingly; and in such a case, I have *as true a Right of my own*, or the Person whose Advice I take has *as much Right and Authority* over me, as my *Father, Master, or Prince*.

All which *Titles, and Relations*, and whatever else are used to imply *Govern-ment* and *Subjection*, if there be *no God*, are *false imposing Names*; and, if any Advantage has been taken in our Infancy to convey any *Notions of Authority, Duty, or Obligation* by them, we are to shake off *all these Prejudices*, as well as *those concerning God and Religion*, which, (as we are now to believe) have been made use of, only for the better enforcing *these* upon us.

We must discard likewise those other false *Notions of Right, and Property*; by

the means of which, some Men challenge to themselves larger Shares and Portions of the necessary Supports and Advantages of Life, than are allowed to the rest of Mankind, for which there is no manner of Ground *in reason*: For, all Men being *equal*, they have *all an equal Right and Title* to every Thing which they are capable of enjoying, or possessing; nor can any *Priority of Possession*, any *Pains or Labour of Acquisition*, any *Promise, Contract, or Agreement* whatsoever be sufficient to give a Man, a *Right, or Property* in any thing, to the Exclusion of any other Man; which will appear very plainly if we consider,

2. The second Consequence arising from the Supposition of *no God nor Religion*, which is this; That *every particular Man* is to act as *he himself* shall judge most convenient for his *own Personal Interest or Happiness*.

There is no other *Principle, Reason, or Motive* of Action imaginable in such a case. And, if all Men *do*, and *must act* according to this *Principle*, they must also, if they will be consistent with themselves, *judge*, that there is no such thing

as *Authority*, or *Duty*, *Right*, or *Property*, or any thing else commonly thought to be the *Causes* of them, to be *implied* in them, or to *result* from them; that is, That there can be *no Action* of *their own*, or *other Mens*, or any other *Circumstance* or *Relation* whatsoever, which can be any bar or hindrance to any Man's Endeavours of bettering his Condition, or advancing his Happiness, *when*, and in *what manner* soever he shall think fit.

Now, that this is *the necessary*, and *only Principle*, which such Persons as deny the *Being of God and Religion* can be influenc'd by in their Actions, is very plain, if we consider these two things, which, as has before been shewn, *Reason* and *Experience* assure us of:

First, That we are *naturally*, and *necessarily determined* to seek, and endeavour after our own Happiness, whether there be a *God* or *no*, or whatever other *Notions* we have of things; which is too plain to need any Proof.

Secondly, That, if *there be no God*, no Man hath it in his *Power* to contribute so far to the Happiness or Misery of another, that it must needs be *unavoidably* better for that other to do what he prescribes

scribes, than to act contrary to his direction, and that the Person thus *prescribed* to cannot possibly help judging so.

And, if no *Man* hath such a Power, there are no *other higher Beings* that we know of; none at least, if there be no God, to be imagined, who have *greater Power* over us than *one Man* hath over another.

From whence it follows, That every *Man*, being necessarily determined to act for his own Happiness, and no *Man* having *Power enough* to make the Obedience of others to him necessary to their Happiness, no *Man* is to act according to the Will of another, any further than he himself judges that he shall be the happier for so doing.

And if, moreover, we consider how small the *Differences of Power* are among Men, what *reciprocal Advantages* they have over one another, how *changeable* all these distinguishing Circumstances are, and what *different Notions* and *Sentiments* Men have of the *Happiness of this Life*: If, I say, we carefully consider and weigh all this, we shall be still more satisfied, that there can be no such thing as *Authority*, or *Subjection*, *Obligation*,

tion, Right, or Property; and shall better perceive the whole Force and Influence of the forementioned Principle of Action.

Supposing then that, Societies being establish'd as we now find them, due Care were taken to perswade Mankind, that there was no such thing as *God* or *Religion*; so that every Man, having throughly worn off *those Notions*, was prepared to do whatever he judged most conducing to his own Happiness: upon this Supposition, it must needs follow, that a great many Men would find themselves very uneasy, in the want of several things, which they saw others possess'd of, and in the performance of several Actions, by the command of others, who were free from that Trouble themselves; and what could restrain such Men from seizing upon what they wanted, and freeing themselves from what was troublesome to them, but the consideration of worsting their Condition by a fruitless Tryal? But this Thought could not hold them long, because so many would find themselves in these Circumstances, that they would soon be sensible of their Strength, and, being enraged at the Unreasonableness of those

few, whom they saw distinguished from them by such over-proportioned Advantages of Life, they would join together in a Design of bringing things to a greater *Equality*: And those who had tasted the extraordinary pleasures of Government and Excess, whose Imaginations had been entertain'd with the Pride and Elegance of Living, would endeavour to support the *Difference of their Condition*, and be restless under the Loss of it, and would employ all their Art and Strength to recover their Ground, and trample upon the rest of Mankind.

This would be the Effect of a *full Establishment of Irreligion* in the World, if we consider the *present State and Constitution of all humane Societies*; there being no Nation or Society of Men, in which the *far greatest Part* of the People are not forced to use *Abundance of Pains*, and to undergo a *great many Troubles, and Difficulties*, in *supplying their own Wants*, and in *ministring to the Ease and Pleasure of others*.

But, let us suppose Men united together upon what Terms or Conditions we please, however things are divided among

mong them, if every Man be convinc'd that there is no God nor Religion, the Confusion and Misery of all will be the certain Consequence of such a Belief. For every Man being to pursue his own Happiness, and there being as many several Notions of Happiness as there are different Passions and Inclinations in the Soul of Man, all which require different Methods of Pursuit, 'tis impossible but Men must clash and interfere one with another, and every one's Happiness be built upon, or promoted by the Misery of others; which must end in the worst State of War imaginable. When Lust, Ambition, or Revenge is the ruling Passion in a Man's Mind, what should hinder him from making the Misery, or Destruction of a Nation the way to his Satisfaction, if he can do it securely, or judges nothing more terrible than the Uneasiness of his present Condition? And the same may be said of any thing else that a Man places his chief Happiness in, whatever was the Cause of such a Choice.

All that can be alleged to avoid these dreadful Consequences, which seem to be the certain immediate Effects of *Atheism*,
is,

is, that the *Advantages* of *Society* and *Union* are so very great, and every Man is so sensible that his own particular Happiness is included in that of the Publick, that, by vertue of this very Principle, Men will readily agree to observe all such things as tend to the *common Preservation*, and Welfare of *Society*.

To which I answer, That this indeed, to Persons who have felt or consider'd the Inconveniencies and Calamities of a State of Division, is a sufficient Motive, to *enter into*, or *continue in* Society, upon such Terms as do *then* seem to conduce to their particular Happiness; but if, *afterwards*, it shall appear to any of them, that the *breaking* of any of these Terms and Conditions will contribute more to their Happiness than the *keeping* them, they are *as much oblig'd* to *act contrary* to their *former Promise, Contract, or Agreement*, as they were *at first* to make it.

And, if we rightly consider things, we shall find, That the *Generality* of *every Society* are Men of too narrow and confin'd Understandings, to perceive all the ill Consequences which *their particular Actions*, may bring upon *Society*, and, if they have some confused Notions of them,

them, yet the Mischiefs do not appear to them so near as to fall in *their Days*, and involve *them*, and they have no concern beyond *their own Lives*.

Besides, the *greatest part* both of those who are, and those who are not, capable of such Judgments and Reflexions as these, are too strongly affected with the Sense of *present Good* or *Pleasure* to forego the *immediate Gratifications* of their Desires, upon a *faint Prospect* of *uncertain Mischiefs* that may attend them; and which, if they do happen at all, do not seem *greater* or *more difficult to be born*, than their present Self-denial.

He therefore who is a *thorough Atheist*, and will pursue his Principles as far as they will carry him, must look upon all the Notions of *Government*, *Right*, and *Property*, of what kind soever they be, with all the pretended *Grounds* and *Foundations* of them, and the several *Relations* supposed to result from them, either as *false Pretences*, devised by some cunning Men, by the means of which they would lay certain restraints upon *others*, that so *they* might enjoy *their own Liberty* to more advantage; or as *useless insignificant Inventions*

ventions, which make no manner of Change in the Conduct of Life, but leave every Man to act the same way, as he would do, if there were no such Notions or Expressions ever heard of:

He must look upon *himself* as the *Supreme Judge of his own Happiness*, and the *Chief Governour and Director of his own Actions*: and being fully assured that *every Man else* is so too, he is not to expect that *any other Man* will contribute to *his Happiness*, any further than as he thinks he serves *his own Interest* by it; nor can he conceive a Design of contributing to the Happiness of *another Man*, but upon the *same Considerations*: And, being well convinc'd of these things, and resolv'd to act accordingly, he must examine wherein his *chief Happiness* consists, and how he may best attain it; upon which Enquiry he will find, That he must place his Happiness in the Enjoyment of the *greatest Pleasure* which he is capable of, and which has the *least Alloy, or mixture of Pain with it*. Now, in pursuing what he *thinks* the greatest Pleasure, and avoiding what he judges will be any ways Painful to him, He must *perform, or omit, any Action* whatsoever, the Performance, or

Omit

Omission of which, he judges conducive to those Ends which he has proposed to himself; and so he knows must every other Man, who acts upon the same Principles that he does, be his Notions of Happiness or Misery never so different from his: upon which account he cannot but acknowledge, that all Actions are alike, and of the same Nature, and that there is no ground for any distinction of them into lawful and unlawful, just and unjust, virtuous and vicious; because there is no Kind, or Sort of Action imaginable, but may contribute indifferently, either to the Happiness, or Misery, of some Man: and consequently, he must also grant, that there can be no certain Rules, or Principles of Acting, no particular Set of Actions, or Scheme of Life, which will certainly procure, any Man that follows it, more Happiness, than he could obtain by any other means; but the same Man must be obliged oftentimes to act contrary Ways, and to pursue the same End by the most opposite Methods imaginable; and, if he be utterly disappointed of his Hopes, by the interfering Pursuits of others, he must change his chief Pleasure, and chuse a new Object of his Happiness, lest he should undergo
 a great

a great deal of Misery for obstinately sticking to his former Choice:

And further, the Person, whose Character we are drawing, if he will be true to his own Principles, should not be deter'd from the Prosecution of his Ends, by any *Concern for the Happiness of others*, or *Sense of their Misery*, or by any regard to their *Judgment* and *Opinion* concerning his Actions, and the Measures he takes:

He is never to prefer the *publick Good* of a *City*, *Nation*, or *Empire*, to his *own private Satisfaction*, tho' it were to last but for a moment, if he cannot be *so happy without it*. *Generosity*, *Friendship*, and *Gratitude*, must give place, when they do not serve to promote his Attainment of what appears more agreeable to him than the doing such things as go under those Names; all Sentiments of *Tenderness*, *Pity*, and *Compassion* are to be laid aside, when the *Sufferings* and *Miseries of others* can procure him what he esteems a greater Happiness than the Ease of complying with those foolish Dispositions of his Nature or Temper, which, together with all other Inclinations that he finds

finds in himself, his *Reason* tells him are to be directed toward his *chief Happiness*; which consists in the *Gratification* of the *strongest* and *most vigorous Passion* of the Soul, whichsoever it is that happens to be the uppermost in his *Constitution*:

He is to look upon all the Notions of *Praise*, *Honour*, and *Reputation*, as *meer empty Names*, when ascribed to a Man on account of any thing but *Cunning* and *Art* in the *managing* and *advancing* his *own Interest*, and bringing about all his *Designs* of this nature, by the surest and most effectual Means he can; and therefore nothing which serves for the promoting this end is to be accounted *base* or *dishonourable*; but, if the World will, *contrary to Reason*, and *their own Principles*, agree to call some things so, and reputation be *necessary* to him in the *Prosecution* of his *chief Pleasure*, or the *imaginary Uneasiness* of *Disgrace* spoils his *Enjoyment* of it, he must comply with the *establish'd Error*, while it prevails, but so far only as it *stands in his way to Happiness*, or *helps to promote it*:

And lastly, *The Person thus confirm'd in Irreligion*, being sensible that his *Life* is the *utmost Compass* and *Extent* of his
Happi-

Happiness, all his *Cares* and *Endeavours*, all his *Concerns* and *Designs* are to be confined within the *same Bounds*; he is to have no regard to *Memory* or *Posterity*, he is not to be *concern'd* if the *whole Race of Mankind* should end with him, nor to abate any thing of *his present Satisfaction*, to procure the greatest *Advantages* imaginable to *ucceeding Generations*.

This is a short Draught and Representation of the *Faith*, and *Practice*, of one who, upon a *full persuasion of Mind*, denies the *Being of a God*.

'Tis true indeed, there are *very few*, if any, such *thorough Atheists* in the World, as come up to this whole Character. The Generality of those who are stiled so, are either such as *never thought any thing of the matter*, or else have *some small Remains of Religion* about them, which their *Reason*, and *Education* will not give them leave wholly to cast off: But, if the *Ignorance* of the *one*, and *Prejudices* of the *other* were removed; (as if *Atheism* should spread, and come into a general Reputation, they soon would be,) then should we perceive that the dismal Effects

Effects and Consequences of these Principles were far greater and more dreadful than we can now imagine or describe. For there's a great deal of Difference between an *ignorant*, or *half persuaded Atheist*, and one that is *positively and fully so, upon Judgment and Reflexion*. Should a Nation of People be duly taught and instructed in the *Doctrines of Irreligion*, they would be much more astonishingly wicked than *those* who had *never heard of God*, or who *retain'd some loose imperfect Notions of him*.

And if God should suffer this to be the Result of the bold Talk and Arguing of the *present Atheists of this Nation*; they would then repent that they did not keep their opinions *to themselves*, and make their Advantage of *other Peoples Credulity*: For, if *all the People*, or *any considerable Number of them* were of their persuasion, they would soon overturn *Government*, and bring all things to an *Equality*; and then farewell all the *Pleasures, Enjoyments, and Conveniencies* of Living, when *every Man* must labour and toil to maintain his *own Life*, and

at the same time be in *continual Fear* of having it taken away by *others*.

What I have said of *Atheism*, is, with very little Difference, applicable to all manner of *Deism*, which is such an acknowledgment of a *God*, as includes little or no Religion in it. For, if the *Deist* be of the *Epicurean Sect*, and makes *God* an *unconcern'd Spectator of Human Actions*, he must, as to what concerns his own *Conduct*, *judge* and *act* altogether the *same way* that the *Atheist* does: For, if *God* require nothing of him, if he be *not pleased* or *offended with any thing* he does, nor hath *annex'd* any *Rewards* or *Punishments* to *this* or *that* sort of *Life*, then has he *full Liberty* to chuse for himself, and to prosecute his *own Happiness* in what way or manner he shall think fit; which is exactly the *Case* of the *Atheist*.

It is the same thing, in effect, with those who make *God* a *necessary Cause*, and *Men necessary Agents*: For, according to this Opinion, all *Actions* are *alike*, as being *equally necessary*, and every *Man* must be guided by *his own Determinations*; and then there can be *no general Rules*

Rules or Principles for Men to act by; there can be no such thing as *Obligation*; *Reward* or *Punishment*: nor will any of those *Notions* or *Distinctions*, which are taken away by *Atheism*, have any place or foundation under *this Hypothesis*.

As to the Persuasion of those who believe a *God*, acknowledge *some sort of Providence*, and grant that *some regard* is due to the *sovereign Author* and *Governour of the World*, but deny a *future State*: There seems indeed to be a considerable *Difference* between *this* and the *other* extravagant *Suppositions*; and so indeed there is, as to the *Credibility of the Opinion*, but the *Influence* it has upon *Practice* is very near the same; especially with respect to those of *these latter days*, to whom the *Certainty of a future State* hath been more fully discovered. For, if we consider the *present Posture* and *Constitution of Human Affairs*, and we believe that things have *always* gone on in the *same Course* from the beginning, without any *sensible extraordinary Interposition of Providence*, as they who deny all *Revelation* must believe; if, I say, we are of

this Opinion, and observe how things are managed in the World; how *Wickedness* oftentimes *thrives* and *flourishes*, and that not only *for a season*, but so as to strengthen and fix it self upon as lasting Foundations as our Happiness stands upon; and how, on the contrary, the *Calamities* and *Sufferings* of the *Righteous* are often commensurate to their Lives, and a great many of them are meerly owing to their being *Righteous*; what Force or Power can some *slight Sentiments* of Religion have upon us, when the *present Happiness* of this *Life* may be promoted by acting contrary to it, and we have nothing to *lose* or *fear* after *Death*?

I shall not examine how far we are *oblig'd* to act in such a case, upon the account of the *certain irresistible Power* of *God*, which he may exert, if he will, tho' it should be granted that he has not hitherto done it, or upon the account of the *Benefits* we may have received from him; but we shall find this true *in fact*, that those who are *firmly perswaded* that *God will* exert his Power no otherwise than he hath *done already*, will not, by those *Punishments* which they see light
Pro-

Promiscuously, upon *all sorts of Men*, at *different Times*, and in *different Circumstances*, be deter'd from prosecuting the Designs which they have framed for the Attainment, or Establishment of their *own Happiness*, by *any means* which they shall think likely to succeed.

Thus have I endeavour'd to give a true account, and *Representation* of all kind of *Irreligion*, and to shew the *necessary Effects* of it, with respect to the *Happiness of Mankind*.

And now, upon a fair and just comparison of *Religion* and *Irreligion* together, according to the different *Notions*, and *Consequences* of them, *Religion* must needs appear, not only *more agreeable* to the *Reason* and *true Interest* of *Men in general*, *more suitable* and *proportionate* to the *Capacities* and *Exigencies* of *Human Nature*; but *more conducive* to the *Happiness of particular Men*, in the *present Constitution* and *State of human Societies* in the *World*; so that, upon a due Balance of all the usual Accidents of Life, 'tis *very probable* that a *Religious Man* should enjoy *more Happiness* while he *lives here*, than a *Person of another Character*: as

might be fully and particularly made out if there was occasion; but this requiring a set Discourse, and not falling directly within my present Design, I think it sufficient to mention some few general Considerations only, which shew the Advantages which a *Religious Man* has above another that acts by *contrary Principles*. Such as are these following:

He who acts upon a *true thorough Sense of Religion*, hath, with respect to all the *external Enjoyments* of the World, *more contracted Desires* and *fewer Wants* than another; and, consequently, his Happiness does more seldom interfere with any other Man's, and he is less obnoxious to the Assaults of *Envy, Ambition* or *Covetousness*, than the *Wicked* in their Prosperity are.

He is not eager in the pursuit of the *necessary Supports*, and *lesser Conveniencies* of Life, and he takes care to avoid all manner of *Injury* and *Offence* of others; and therefore he must be freer from the Effects of *Anger, Malice, and Revenge*, than such as advance their own Estate or Fortune by disquieting and robbing others:

He

He professes to contribute all that he can to the *Happiness* of *other Men*, without designing any *Worldly Advantage* to himself by it, upon which account a great many will find it their *Interest* to defend and secure him, and will perform several *Offices of Kindness* to him, in order to engage his future *Endeavours* for them when there shall be occasion; whereas, he that is known to act for himself only, will be trusted and assisted no further than his own present *Interest* is perceived unavoidably to concur with another *Man's*:

And lastly, the *Happiness* which a *Religious Man* proposes to himself in *another Life* is such, as, he is firmly persuaded, exceeds all *Experience, Imagination, or possibility of Comprehension*; and consequently, the *Hopes* of obtaining it, being strong and vigorous in proportion to his *Belief*, must afford him *greater Pleasure here* than the *Hopes of any other Enjoyment of this Life* could; and a well grounded *Hope* of the greatest and happiest *Condition* which a *Man* can frame to himself here, which is gradually increasing, by a successful *Advance* of the best laid *Designs* for the *Attainment* of

it; is, I believe, compar'd with any *actual Enjoyment* whatsoever, the *highest pitch of Pleasure* that we can be sensible of, without the *Prospect* of a future State, which must so far exceed this, as the object of a Religious Hope is *greater, and more durable in the Possession*, than any other, and as the present Assurance of injoying it is *less liable to Disappointment and Defeat*; which it certainly is in many respects, there being no *external Accidents, or Humane Endeavours* which can deprive us of it.

This being the State and Condition of a *Religious Man*, he must be *generally much happier than the Wicked, in Truth and Reality*, tho' perhaps not in *their Judgment* of him; as *enjoying more Ease and Satisfaction in himself*, by a constant unalterable Success in the pursuit of his main End; as being *less exposed to the Injuries of others*, by reason of his assisting some, and his taking due Care not to intrench upon the Happiness of any; and as being *better able to bear those real Calamities and Miseries* which may happen to him, by a certain, comfortable expectation of *such Happiness* as will *infinitely outweigh all* that he can suffer within the Compass of *this Life*.

This

This I think abundantly sufficient for the proof and Establishment of *Religion*: but, for a further confirmation of it, and that I may leave no room for the *Enemies of God, and Mankind* to glory in their Strength, as if they had as much to say for *their Opinions*, if they might be heard, as we have said for ours;

V. I shall, in the next place, consider the *Grounds and Pretences of Irreligion*; what *can be* urged in defence of it, and what are the *usual Pleas* for it; and shall from thence shew the *Absurdity, and Folly* of their conduct, who have no better *Reasons* for what they believe, and do than those which they allege, upon examination, will be found to be.

In the Prosecution of which Subject, I shall observe these Steps or Measures:

1. I shall enquire how far *Irreligion* is capable of being proved, what *Kind or Degree* of proof it admits of.
2. I shall consider the *common Ways and Methods* of defending it.

3. I

3. I shall answer some of the *principal Objections* made use of against *Religion*.
4. I shall make some *general Reflexions* upon the *different Grounds*, and *Foundations*, which *Religion* and *Irreligion* stand upon, and the *different Conduct* of those who act under the Influence of the *one* and the *other*.

1. *First* then, I am to enquire how far *Irreligion* is capable of *Proof*; that is, how far a Man is able to prove that there is *no God*, *no Obligation of acting such a way*, if there be, or *no future State of Happiness*, or *Misery*.

Were a Man disposed to believe all, or any of this, or had he a mind to convince others, of the Truth of any of these Propositions, what way or Method could he take to satisfy either his own, or their Understanding? 'Tis plain, that none of the things enquired into, are Objects of *Sense*, or *Internal Consciousness*; we cannot see with our Eyes, nor feel with any intimate Perception, that there is *no God*, *no Religion*, or *Future State*; and therefore, *no new Experiments*, or *Observations*
of

of this nature, nor any *old Testimonies*, or *Authorities*, grounded upon such, have any place upon this Subject, any further than they furnish Matter for *Reasoning* and *Reflexion*; from whence we must immediately derive all the Knowledge that we can have of any of the Propositions in question; all which being *negative*, there's no other way of proving the Truth of them, but by shewing, either their *Repugnancy*, or their *Disagreeableness* to our *Reason*, and to those *other Principles of our Knowledge*, which we cannot possibly doubt of; the first way we demonstrate them to be *certain*, the latter we make them appear *probable*.

As to *Demonstration*; there's no way of demonstrating a thing *not to be*, but by proving, that 'tis impossible, and a *Contradiction to be*; and who will undertake to convince the World, that it is *impossible* there should be a *God*? or supposing there be, that *Religion*, and a *Future State*, are *downright Contradictions*? What is there in any of these Notions that shocks our *Reason*, and restrains our *Affert*? What other *more certain Knowledge* have we, with which our Belief of these things is inconsistent? There was
never

never any Proof of this kind offered, or pretended to yet; the Vanity of all such Attempts being easily discoverable, upon the first Tryal of our Understandings that way.

All that remains then to be done, is, to produce such Reasons and Arguments for the *Doctrines of Irreligion*, and to shew such Marks and Characters of Truth upon them, as shall render them *suitable and agreeable* to our Minds; so that, upon a fair Proposal, we shall be *easily inclined to embrace, and assent to* them, tho' the Evidence be not so strong, as *irresistibly to determine us*.

This we call arguing from *Probability*; which is nothing else, but an *Appeal to the common Reason of Mankind*; so that what the *generality of Wise Men*, in all *Ages*, have, upon due examination, assented to, as *most agreeable to right Reason*, that opinion is *most probable*; and, in matters of *pure Reflection*, deduced from the *first Principles of Knowledge*, which are common to all Men alike, who have the same use of their Faculties, this must be acknowledged to be a very good *Rule, and Measure of Probability*: But *Atheism and Irreligion* will never stand
this

this test; the wise, and learned part of the World having constantly rejected, and condemned them.

But, supposing the Disquisition were to begin *now*, and Men were to chuse their Opinions again; how would a Person go about to prove, that 'tis *more agreeable to Reason*, and the *Nature of Things*, that there should be *no God, no Religion, nor Future State*, than that there should be any of these Things?

All the Arguments that can be made use of upon this occasion, must be drawn, either from our *own Existence*, and *Constitution*, or from the *Existence, Frame, and Disposition* of the *World*, and all things *without us*. We are *certain*, that we *are*, and we know not our *Original*, or by what *Power* we came at first to be: We perceive a great many things *without us*, the *Beginning* of which we know not, nor can we tell by what means they came to exist: Is it *therefore most likely, and probable*, that there should be *no such Being*, as that which we suppose to be the *Cause* of all these things, than that there *really is some such perfect Being*, as we have before described, who was the *Author*

thor of all these Effects which we perceive? Can we, from the *Oeconomy of the World*, and the *Course of Nature*, infer, that there is *no governing and directing Power in the Universe*? Can we, from the *Frame and Disposition of our own Minds*, prove, that we are under *no Law or Obligation of acting*? or that *Religion is destructive of our Happiness*? Can we, from the *Circumstances of our Nature*, or the *Constitution of things without us*, make it reasonable to think that we shall *not live again*, be conscious of all our former *Actions*, and be *happy or miserable* according to the different *Kinds* of them? However true these things *may*, or are *supposed to be in themselves*, they will by no means follow from the *forementioned Principles*; and there can be *no other* but these imagined *antecedent* to them: For if *God, Religion, and a Future State*, are all *possible*, (as they must needs be acknowledg'd to be,) the *real Existence of anything else* will never furnish any *Argument* for their *Non-existence*.

2. In vain then do we expect any *direct Proof of Irreligion*. In the next place there-

therefore I shall consider the *usual Ways* and *Methods* of defending it; which are these Four.

Ridiculing Religion.

Requiring a *more certain Mathematical* proof of it.

Endeavouring to shew the *Possibility* of things subsisting *without it*.

And raising some *loose Objections* against it, which chiefly aim at the *present Profession* and *Practice* of it in the World.

1. As to the *First* of these ways; 'tis certain that the *Generality* of those who advance, or profess any of the forementioned Opinions, contain'd under the Notion of *Irreligion*, are such as *barely deny* the contrary Truths, without giving any Reason for their Disbelief: they speak a bold thing against *God* and *Religion*, and so fall to their Sins, without ever examining the Truth of what they say; a *light Word* or *Phrase* applied to a *serious Thing*, an *odd Simile* or *Comparison*, a *ridiculous Turn* or *Allusion* is all they pretend to. Now, there's nothing so well establish'd, or confirm'd, but may be *ridicul'd*, tho' it cannot be *confuted*; and the greater
and

and more sublime the Subject is, the fitter it is for *Burlesque*; the Boldness of the Raillery heightens the Wit of it. But I need not spend time to prove, that a *Jest* is no *Argument*: Besides, I shall have occasion to consider the Persons of this Character in another place, and so shall pass on.

2. To the *Second Way* made use of by the Patrons of *Irreligion* to justify their *Infidelity*; and that is, by alleging, that the *Doctrines of Religion*, and the *Proofs* given of it, have not *that Degree of Certainty* which they *ought* to have, in order to their Conviction. Why, say they, are not such important Points as those, in which the Happiness of *Mankind* is so far concern'd, made as plain and evident to our Understandings *as any Proposition in Mathematicks*? prove them to us in the *same manner* and we will believe them. The *Insufficiency*, and *Absurdity* of which Plea, will manifestly appear from these following Considerations.

For, first of all, 'tis very absurd for Persons to call for *more* and *greater Proof* of the Truth of a thing before they have confuted any one of those Arguments
that

that are already advanced; and therefore the Proof that has been given of Religion, whatever it be, is sufficient, till it be overthrown by contrary Allegations.

In the next place, 'tis ridiculous to ask for *other Kind* of Proof than the *Nature of the Thing* in question will bear; it being the same as to desire, that the Nature of things should be chang'd: and therefore to call for *Mathematical Demonstration* in Points of Religion, is as much as to say, let Religion be turn'd into *Mathematicks*, and we will believe it; the Meaning of which is only this, that such Men as these like *Mathematicks* better than they do Religion: For indeed the Persons who call for this kind of Proof in Religion, will allow of no such thing as *Demonstration* any where but in *Numbers* and *Figures*; whereas we have as *clear Ideas* of many other things, and do as evidently perceive the *Agreement*, or *Disagreement* of them, and make as *certain Deductions* from them: particularly, in the present Subject we are upon, we have as clear and distinct Notions of *Knowledge*, *Will*, *Power*, *Duration*, and all those *other Original Ideas*, from whence

O

we

we took our first Rise in the Proof of Religion, as we have of *Number* and *Figure*; we are also as certain of the Truth of those Propositions, that *Nothing can make it self*, that *Something must be eternal*, that *Motion must begin from Will*, and several other, from whence all our Arguments for Religion are deduced, as we are of such *Mathematical Axioms* as these, that *the Whole is bigger than any of its Parts*, that when *equal Numbers are added to equal, the whole is equal*, and the like; and the *Deduction* of other Propositions from those former is, in all the intermediate links of Connexion, as evidently perceived there as here, and the main *Conclusions* are as certain as any *Mathematical Conclusion*, at the same Distance from the *first Principles* of that kind of Knowledge, can be.

In the Proof of a *God* this is very plain; and if the *Obligations of Religion*, and a *Future State*, will not be allowed to have the same degree of *Evidence*, as the being of *God* hath, yet they have all the *Certainty* 'tis conceivable they should have, by way of *Deduction* from any Ideas which our Minds are furnisht with; so that supposing them true, they cannot be proved

ved any otherwise, than they are from *bare unassisted Reason*; and therefore, 'tis very unjust to require a *further Demonstration* of them, when the *rational Grounds* which they stand upon, cannot be overthrown by *contrary Proofs*. I do not mention the additional Advantage of *Revelation*, because that belongs to another place.

But, besides all this, where we are under a *necessity* of *judging* one way, (as we are in all such matters where it concerns our Happiness to *act*, or *not to act*;) 'tis contrary to Reason not to be determined by *that degree of Evidence*, whatever it be, which appears on *one side*, when we have nothing on the *other side* to ballance it; and therefore it must be very foolish and absurd to take the Party of *Irreligion*, for no other reason but this, that the *Proofs of Religion* have not all that *Strength and Evidence of Conviction* which *some other Truths* seem to have. And yet this is the only Defence that some People make for their *Impiety* and *Unbelief*.

3. But others there are who pretend to build their *Irreligion* upon *positive Principles* :

principles; and for that end have made *new Schemes* or *Hypotheses*, wherein they endeavour to explain the *original Disposition*, and *Conduct* of things without a God; but all that they prove, is, that they who *only denied* the common Doctrines concerning *God, Providence, &c.* without advancing any other in their stead were the wiser Men; For all these new Notions of theirs, either signify *nothing at all*, or they *mean the same thing* as we do by a *God*, or else they are altogether *irrational* and *contradictory*.

What are *Fate, Necessity, Chance, and universal Soul*, but meer Covers for Ignorance, of the same kind as *occult Causes*? the true Result of all which Principles is a *new sort of Creation*; where *all things* are made by *nothing*, or *nothing* is set up as the *efficient Cause* of *all things*.

But if those who use any of these Names mean, by the *Maker* or *Cause* of all things, a *Being distinct* from the *things made*; *such a Being* cannot be conceived without *all those glorious Attributes* which make up *our Idea of God*. For, if we will allow the *original Author* of the *World* the *highest Perfections imaginable by us*, as his *Work* certainly required; if the

the first great Cause of all things had the noblest Qualities we can conceive, as the Effects produced by it sufficiently declare; we must grant *this Author*, or Cause to be an intelligent Being, endued with Knowledge and Will: For 'tis impossible for Man to frame a Notion of any Powers, Faculties, or Qualities, greater or nobler than these; and 'tis easier to believe, that some Man of more refined Intellectuals made the World, than that any other Cause, which wanted these Perfections, could be the Author of it.

I shall not here enter into a more particular Disquisition of any Scheme, or Hypothesis, which excludes the Being of a God; having consider'd them all before, in the former part of this Discourse, and shew'd them to be, in those Points, where they mean any thing distinct from the common Notions which we have undertook to defend, very absurd and inconsistent.

And indeed, the Falshood and Absurdity of all these Schemes and Hypotheses, which pretend to give an account of the Frame and State of things without a God, or independently of him, are so manifest and notorious, that I am fully perswaded a

Man may be able to prove them so, against a great disproportion of Parts and Learning ; but this is not my business at present, nor is there any occasion for such an Undertaking now.

For, should we allow the *Atheist's Scheme of things* to be possible, and consistent, (which is the most that is pretended,) yet we are assured, by the *common Reason* of Mankind, that the Philosophy of a God is *most rational*, without the Help of *Revelation*, and *universal Tradition* which confirm the Truth of it: and therefore the *Possibility* of another Hypothesis cannot justify the Defenders of it, unless they can also make it appear to be *more reasonable*, and *more fit to be believed*, than that which obtains ; but the *Atheist* will never be able to give an *easier*, *juster*, and *more satisfactory* account of *all the Phænomena* in the *Universe*, than he can who *owns a God*, if he should offer at such a thing, which is more than any one has ventured at yet.

And the same may be applied to others who *acknowledge a God*, and pretend to shew that there is *no such thing as Religion* and a *Future State*: For they cannot say, that *God*, who *made the World*, and

all

all things in it, is not able to *oversee* and *govern* the Works of his Hands; that He, who gave *Man his Being*, and *all his Faculties* and *Capacities*, cannot require him to *act* after such a manner *while he lives*, or *cannot renew* him again *after Death*, and *continue* his Life to him, in such a State as he pleases to make agreeable, or disagreeable to him, and *as long as he pleases*: This is to bring Weakness out of Strength, to set Bounds to God within the acknowledg'd Sphere of his Power, and to say he *cannot do things* which are *less* than *those* which he *can do*, and *has done*.

Nor can they prove, that 'tis *more agreeable* to the *Nature of God*, and to *all those Notions* we have concerning *Him*, and *our selves*, that he *should not* exercise his Power after this manner than that he *should*. The utmost they pretend to prove, is, that 'tis *possible* God may not do all this that we conceive of him: as will plainly appear, if we consider the chief Arguments made use of upon this occasion; which are taken from the supposed *Materiality*, and *Mortality* of the *Soul*.

Here lies the *Principal Strength* of *Irreligion*; these are the *fundamental Principles*, which the whole *Fabrick* stands upon; and great *Endeavours* have been used to confirm the *Truth* of them. Now, 'tis plain to any *Man*, who duly considers these *Notions*, without that *Confusion* and *Ambiguity* of *Terms*, which they are commonly delivered in, that 'tis *impossible* to prove, that the *Soul* is not something *perfectly distinct* from *Matter*, and *Motion*, and all the *Modifications* of them, and that it cannot *subsist*, and *act* after the *Dissolution* of the *Body*; nor are there any *Arguments* to be produced, which prove, that 'tis *more probable*, that the *Soul* should be something *material*, and be *dissolved with the Body*, than that it should be a *distinct Principle* and *survive it*. All that can be urged in behalf of the former *Opinions*, is, that we *cannot*, from the *Knowledge* we have of the *Qualities* and *Operations* which we attribute to each, *certainly demonstrate*, that what we term *Soul* and *Body*, are *two distinct Substances*; tho', at the same time, it must be confess'd, that *Men* have been, *generally*, *more disposed* to believe *this*, than the *contrary Opinion*; and 'tis as

de-

demonstrable that the *Soul* is not any *Mode*, *Composition*, or *Result* of the *Qualities*, which we ascribe to *Body*, as it is that *any Idea* we have in our *Minds* is *not any other*.

Allowing then that it is *possible*, that whatever we ascribe to *Body* and *Soul* *separately*, may be *united* in *one common Subject*; and that *this common Subject*, doth, by *Death*, lose those *Capacities*, and *Powers*, which we attribute to the *Soul*, in the same manner as it is divested of *Motion*; supposing, I say, this, which is the most that can be supposed; from hence indeed it follows, that it is *possible*, that the *same common Subject* may never subsist in the same manner it did before, as we grant 'tis possible, that what is now at rest, may never be in motion again: But then it is as *possible* also that it *may*: God *may*, if he pleases, put us together again after death, in such a manner, that we shall feel our selves to be the same that we were before we died, and shall be conscious of all our former Life; and that he *will* do so we have a great deal of reason to think, tho' we had not any assurance of it from *Revelation*, as has before been proved, And therefore the Arguments

guments which are brought for the *Materiality*, and *Mortality* of the *Soul*, let them have all the *Weight* and *Certainty*, which they are imagined to have by those who urge them, are wholly trifling and insignificant, with respect to what they are brought to prove : For no *new Discoveries* are hereby made of the *Will* and *Design* of *God* ; and , consequently , the *Proof* that has now been given of *Religion*, and a *Future State*, will have the same *Force* and *Evidence* still, tho' the *Soul* should be granted to be *Material*, and *Mortal* : And we should still have the same *Reason* to believe, that *God* does require us to act after such a manner, and that he will reward, or punish us, in another *Life*, according as we behave our selves in *this* ; because the *Arguments* here made use of in the *Proof* of this *Point*, are not taken from the *Immaterial*, and *Immortal Nature* of our *Souls*, but from what we certainly, by *infallible Consciousness*, know of our selves, and from what, by *evident Demonstration* we collect concerning the *Nature* of *God*, which every *Man* who owns such a *Being* must ascribe to him.

Thus

Thus have I examined the Pretences of those Adversaries of Religion, who take upon them to establish *new Principles* and *Hypotheses*, to explain the State and Constitution of things by; and have shewn, that the utmost they aim at, is, to make it *seem possible*, that *those Appearances* in the World, from whence we infer the *Being of a God, Religion,* and a *Future State*, may be *otherwise* accounted for; and that they do not so much as endeavour, either to *destroy our Scheme*; or, upon a just comparison in all Points, to shew, that *theirs* is a *more rational System*, than ours.

But most of the Professors and Favourers of *Irreligion*, with whom we are now, in *these latter Times*, concerned, are such as never trouble themselves with *Schemes* and *Hypotheses*; They come by their Opinions much easier, and maintain them with less expence of Argument. Some *loose Objection* against *any Notion*, or *Doctrine* which goes under the name of *Religion*, or whatever has *any Relation* to it is enough for their turn: They never examine what is the just Inference that may be drawn from what they Object, or what Answer may be given to it, but im-

immediately condemn all Religion for the sake of some *little remote Consequence*, which their Imagination represents to them as inconsistent with it.

3. Some of the principal of which Objections I shall answer very briefly, and expose the Absurdity of them; which is the Business I proposed to my self under the Third of those Heads, into which I divided my Discourse, concerning the *Grounds, and Pretences of Irreligion.*

The *chief and most common* Objections against Religion are these:

Mysteries, Inconsistencies, and Absurdities in Scripture;

Extravagant Notions, and pernicious Doctrines, maintain'd under the *Name of Religion*;

Variety of Opinions, and Censures of one another, among those who profess to own the same *common Principles* of Faith, and argue from them;

Foolish

Foolish, and ridiculous Arguments,
brought by some in the Defence of
true Opinions;

The Scandalous Lives of great Pre-
tenders to Piety and Vertue, and of
such as are peculiarly design'd to
promote the Practice of them among
others;

*Religion the Effect of Fear, and Educa-
tion;*

Religion a meer politick Contrivance.

As to the first of these Objections; I shall consider it no farther than as it is made use of, to weaken the Credibility of *all Religion*; and 'tis sufficient to expose the Weakness of it, to shew the Argument barely with its Consequences, which is this; Such a *Passage in Scripture* I cannot *understand*, or *reconcile* to another, or such a *Story*, or *Account* of Matter of Fact, *does not agree* with my Knowledge of things of the like Nature, therefore *this Passage, or Account is false*, therefore the *Book* in which it was found is *false*, therefore *all the several Books in the whole Bible*, which were writ by *several Men*, in *several Places* of the World, and at *several Times*, during the space of a-
bout

bout two thousand Years, are all false; therefore there is *no God*, or *no Obligation* of obeying him if there be, or *no Future State*.

Most of the *particular Cavils* against *Scripture*, have been fully answered by those who have purposely undertook the Defence of *Revelation*: but it is sufficient at present to say, that nothing of this kind proves any thing against the Truth of *Scripture in general*, much less against the *first Fundamental Principles of Religion*, which I have endeavoured to establish.

The next thing objected against the Truth of Religion, is; that there are Several *absurd and pernicious Doctrines* proposed to the World, *under the Name of Religion*, and warmly contended for, by those who believe, and maintain them.

Some Men place all their *Religion* in *Shew and Pageantry*, their Worship is all Theatrical, and a great deal of their Faith and Discipline, extravagant and Romantick; therefore all *Religion* is *Priest-craft*, and all *Scripture Legend*; saith the *Atheist*; but *Socrates and Plato*
would

would not have argued thus; those wiser Heathens, tho' they laught at the *Gods*, and *Devotion* of the *People of their Times*, did not therefore turn *Atheists*, but employed the Strength of their Reason in searching out *higher Notions of God*, and in framing to themselves a *more rational Religion*.

Bigotry and *Superstition* have oftentimes produced as dreadful and pernicious Consequences to a Country or Nation, as the wild Liberties and Extravagancies of *Atheism* could do: but what's that to *Religion*, which suffers equally both ways, and is no more the *Cause* or *Occasion* of the *one*, than the *other*? *Cruelty* and *Revenge*, and all Actions tending to the *mischief*, or *Destruction* of Mankind, are as *contrary* to the *Nature of Religion* when exercised by a *superstitious Zealot*, as when practised by an *Atheist*; tho' the former covers them with the name of *Religion*, and the latter does not: and therefore *true Religion* is very unjustly and unreasonably condemn'd upon this account.

Another foolish Objection is taken from that *variety of Opinions* which is found among

mong the Professors of Religion, and their *peremptory Censures* of one another, for holding false and absurd Doctrines.

What a strange *Disagreement* is there among Men in *Points of Religion*? Say those that have none at all. Some believe *one thing*, and *some another*; some expound *Scripture* in *this* Sense, and *some* in *that*; *Creed* is set up against *Creed*, and *Altar* against *Altar*; what *one* Man thinks his *Duty*, *another* apprehends *Damnation* from. Supposing then we have our Opinions to chuse, what is to be done in such a Case? shall we take the *strongest Side*, what the *most*, or what, we think the *wisest* believe? or shall we examine the Reasons of *all Sides impartially*, without *Prejudice*, and let our Judgments be determined by the *greatest Appearance of Evidence*? No, we will do none of all this; but, without examining their several Pleas, we will take up Opinions quite *different from all of them*: and because *one* Man denies *one* thing, and *another* another, that we may be sure to be free from those Errors which they condemn one another for, we will *deny* what *no Body else* does, what *all the different Parties* subscribe to, and *agree* in. These
are

are the Resolutions of the *Irreligious*; and what a strange Contradiction is this, to make *Unity of Consent*, the *Character of Truth*, and yet to allow no Opinions to be true, but those that have the *least pretence* to it?

Neither is it more just and reasonable, to condemn *all Religion* upon the account of the *weak Defence*, and Patronage of *some of its Professors*. What if the *Atheists* should be able to defeat some trifling Argument of *ignorant well-meaning Honesty*, or *superstitious Zeal*? to triumph presently, and cry out that *Ignorance*, or *Phrensy* was the Mother of *all Devotion*, would be as foolish a Boast, as for a General to despise the *Weakness* and *Cowardice* of his Enemy, because he had plundered two or three small open Villages, when all the Great Towns, and the chief Strength of the Kingdom had been unassaulted, or attempted in vain.

The *scandalous Practices of Men of great Pretences to Piety*, and *such* as, by their *peculiar manner of Life*, are look'd upon to be *wholly in the Interests of Religion*, is another very unwarrantable Occasion of

P

some

some Mens disbelieving every thing that goes under that Name: who infer from hence, that such Persons as these do not believe Religion *themselves*, and consequently there's no more Reason to think that *others* do, tho' they disguise their Notions better, in order to serve their present Interest; especially if they be Men of such Sense as is sufficient to put them above the suspicion of *vulgar Credulity*. But this Argument is *false*, and *unconcluding* in all its Parts.

For, First of all, it does not follow, That such Men as these believe nothing *themselves* of what they profess; the *truer Inference* is, That *corrupt Nature, vicious Habits, and a loose Education* are oftentimes too hard for *Conscience and Reason*, it being very plain that the same thing happens in several other Cases. For there's *no Man* whatsoever, be his Principles never so loose and wide, and his Reason never so much deprav'd, but shall many times do what he himself shall condemn himself for doing, and which contradicts the Principles which he resolv'd to stand by: and therefore, for a Man to infer from *some gross Sins of a Pretender to Religion*, that he does *not believe* any thing

thing of what he professes, is as absurd as to prove, that an *Atheist* does certainly believe a God, whatever he says to the contrary, because he often *swears by him*, and *invokes him* in his *Curses*.

Besides, suppose this true of *some Men* who pretend to a great Sense of Religion themselves, or undertake to promote it in others, that they *do not believe* any thing of it; as there are sometimes *Presumptions* strong enough to induce us to judge so; what reason have we from hence to conclude, that *others*, of a more unsuspected Conduct, are all of the same mind, if we could but see to the Bottom of them? or, what if there be a great many *false Pretenders to Religion*? how is this an *Argument* against the *Truth* of it? we have no reason indeed to believe it upon their Word; nor does their contradicting what they say by their Practice give us any more reason to disbelieve it. Nor, if *some of those*, whose *peculiar Employment it is*, and whose *present Interest it seems to be*, to propagate and advance the Belief of *Religion* in the World, should be supposed to believe nothing of it *themselves*, would it follow from hence, that their Unbelief was occasion'd by

knowing more of it's falshood than others, and by being better acquainted with the whole *Mystery* and *Contrivance*: this is evidently proved to be false by the Experience of those, who have thought more, and enquir'd further concerning these things than the rest of the World have done; for the *more they have consider'd* the fundamental Doctrines of Religion, and the *more just and exact* they have been in tracing, and examining all their Reasonings about them, the *stronger* have they been confirm'd in the Belief of them. But if there *really are* any such Men, as, for argument's sake, we have now *supposed*, they were certainly *Atheists* before they put on the *Garb of Religion*: and what should hinder an *Atheist* from taking up this Disguise, and preparing himself for it by a close Diffimulation, who thinks all Means lawful for the promoting his present Interest in this World; and 'tis not every Atheist's good fortune to be better provided for in *another Condition of Life*, than he might probably be by *acting a Religious Part*.

But,

But, if the *Generality* of all sorts of Men must be allow'd really to believe the Religion they profess, this, says the *Unbeliever*, is the Reason of it; A strange prevalence of *Fear*, and strong Impressions of *Education* have captivated their Understandings, and disposed them all to the same way of Reasoning. Upon this account it is that there have been so few true Philosophers, who were able to think rightly, and judge clearly of things; But now and then some bold Genius has ventured to shake off his Chains, and assert the *Liberty* and *Prerogative* of *human Nature*; and as *one Alexander*, or *Cesar*, so *one Epicurus*, or *Lucretius* is enough for an Age: such Spirits are not of the *common Make*, and appear in the World but seldom, and are therefore to be admired. To which it may be sufficient to answer, that I have already proved Religion to be the *necessary Issue* and *Product* of Reason, and of the *first unquestionable Principles* of all our Knowledge; and therefore, whatever else is assigned as a *Cause* of it must be *false*.

But I have these further Considerations to add, *viz.* that the Effects of *Fear*

and *Education* never are so uniform, lasting and universal as the Belief of Religion is observed to be, especially when they operate contrary to the *Truth* and *Reason* of things, as they are supposed to do in this case; That Men are as much, and as often, disposed to *deny*, as to *believe* what they *fear*, when the *Grounds* and *Reasons* for fear are the same, and are more inclin'd to the former, when the things feared are represented at a great Distance; That *sensual Appetites*, *Habits of indulging them*, *present Enjoyments*, or *near Prospects of Pleasure*, and *Customs of living contrary to the Rules of Religion*, have a much stronger and more powerful Influence upon the Judgments of Men, than such Impressions of *Fear*, or *Education* which contradict all these; especially if *Reason* be of the *same side* with them, as the Patrons of Irreligion must say; And therefore, neither *Fear*, nor *Education*, nor *both* together, can be the *true Cause* of such a *general Belief* of *Religion* as is profess'd in the World; nor any thing else but the *Reason* and *Evidence* of the *things believed*.

The last Objection I shall mention,
which

which the *Atheist* thinks the most formidable of all, and a perfect Discovery of the whole Mystery, is, That *Religion* is a *Politick Contrivance*.

Now, that which gives occasion for such a Suspicion, is, That all the eminent Politicians, in their wise Precepts of Advice, have thought it necessary for every Prince to encourage and promote *Religion* in his Country, and to have a Shew of it himself, whatever his inward Sentiments were. But *this* is so far from being any Plea for Atheism, that 'tis a very strong Argument for the *Truth, Reasonableness, and Necessity of Religion*: For that is certainly highly rational, which is most suitable and agreeable to the *publick Reason of Mankind*, considered together *in Society*; without which there would be little Use of *Reason* at all. And, if Men are *born sociable Creatures*, if they *naturally desire society*, and Society cannot possibly subsist without *Religion*, as the Objection it self supposes, then is *Religion* as agreeable to the *Nature of Man*, and as *necessary* to his *Happiness* as *Conversation*, and *living together*. And were it not for *other Mens* having *Religi-*

on, the *Atheist* would find it very uncomfortable living in the World.

These are the chief *Pleas*, *Defences*, and *Objections* commonly urg'd and insisted upon, by the *Enemies of Religion*. And, if there be any other, which have not been here particularly considered, they admit of the same Answers as are given to those which are here mentioned, or they may be as easily accounted for out of the Proofs before laid down, concerning the *Truth* and *Certainty of Religion*; and therefore, without spending more time in making *little Cavils*, and *groundless Suspicions*, look considerable by a formal Examination and Answer of them, I shall pass to the

4. Next thing I propos'd to do, in order to shew the *Aburdity* and *Folly* both of the *Principles* and *Practice* of those, who *reject* the great, and important Truths of *Religion*; and that is to make some *general Reflexions* upon the *different Grounds* and *Foundations*, which *Religion* and *Irreligion* stand upon, and the *different Conduct* of those, who act under the Influence of the one and the other.

Now,

Now, upon a strict and impartial Review of what has been offered in this Cause, we shall find, that all the several Propositions, contained under the Notion of *Religion*, have been proved to be *true*, and agreeable to our Reason, by a direct Deduction from the first Principles of our Knowledge; which Deduction, in most of the Parts of it, has all the Certainty that any consequential Truths can have, and where there is not *absolute Certainty*, there is as much Evidence as the Nature of the things proved is capable of, in the present Condition and Circumstances of our Being, and such as the Mind fully assents to, without being able to entertain the least Suspicion of a Mistake, 'tho it cannot prove there is not a bare Possibility of Error.

It will likewise appear that *Religion* is, in all the particular Branches and Duties of it, admirably fitted for the promoting the *Happiness* of Mankind in general, considering their present State and Condition in the World: And further, it will be found to be very probable at least, if not evident, that the greatest degree of Happiness, which every particular Man is capable

pable of, will be the Consequence of his regular Discharge of all the Obligations of Religion, and that *proportionably* to a Man's Behaviour, in *this respect*, while *he lives*, shall his Reward be in *another State*; but in every proportion greater than can be conceived, or imagined by us now.

And as the Truth of these Matters will appear to be made out from the *Reason* and *Nature of things*; so will it be further manifest, that the *general Opinion of the World* has always gone the same way: and, if *Testimony*, or *Authority* could be of any use here, that the best, and the greatest is on this Side.

Besides, we shall not only be satisfied of these things by a *positive direct Proof*; but we shall see the *contrary Hypotheses* proved *absurd* and *impossible*; or, where any thing *possible* is advanced, we shall perceive it to be *less probable in it self*, and the *Consequences* drawn from it, to be *false* and *ridiculous*.

We shall likewise be convinc'd, that *Libertinism*, and *Irreligion*, do evidently and directly tend to the *Misery of Mankind in general*, with respect to the *State they are now in*, and that every Man who
acts

acts by these Principles, will very probably, if not certainly, be inconceivably miserable in *another State* of Life, in *proportion* to his *Neglect*, or *Violation* of the Duties prescribed by Religion.

On the contrary, we shall find, That the *Doctrines of Irreligion* have *none of those Grounds of Credibility*, nor are, or can be defended by *any of those Ways, or Methods*, by which Religion is establish'd :

That they consist wholly in the *Denial* and *Contradiction* of other Propositions, and therefore do not admit of any *positive direct* Proof, but must be proved by a *Confutation* of the Assertions denied ;

That the *Assertions denied* by the Irreligious, cannot be shewed to be *false*, either from their *Repugnancy*, or their *Disagreeableness* to our *Reason*, and the *antecedent Principles* of our Knowledge ; or from their *Inconsistence* with our *Happiness* ; or from the *common Suffrage*, and *Testimony of Mankind* ;

And that the *negative Principles of Irreligion*, and the *practical Consequences* of them cannot, upon a *just Comparison*, be proved to be more *suitable* to our *Reason*,
or

or *Happiness*, than the contrary *Doctrines* are.

We shall likewise, upon a slight Review of the *common Arguments*, and *Pleas* that are brought for *Irreligion*, be easily satisfied, that nothing of all this is so much as pretended to; but that the strongest Effort of human Invention that way, reaches no further than an *Offer at explaining* the *Original, Order, Course,* and *Event* of things, either *without a God,* or *independently of him,* or with *Exclusion* to those particular Consequences respecting Men, which go under the Name of *Duty* and *Sin,* *Reward* and *Punishment*; and that the most which any Endeavours of this kind can amount to, is, to shew, that 'tis *possible* things *may be,* after that particular manner in which they are explained to be.

These are the *different Grounds,* and *Proofs* of *Religion* and *Irreligion*: And if we carefully compare them together, it will easily appear, that they do not only differ as *more,* or *less* *rational*; but that *all the Reason* lies on the side of *Religion*; the *Conception,* or *Proof* of a *bare Possibility* of the World's subsisting *without* any such thing, being no manner of Argument

ment that there *is none*. And therefore it must be very absurd to deny *all the Principles of Religion*, and every thing that is offered in defence of them, upon *this account only*.

But allowing that there may be a great deal more than this said for *Irreligion*, so as to render it *something probable* to be believed; yet if the *positive direct Proofs* for *Religion* stand good, without considering those which pretend to shew the *Absurdity*, and *Impossibility* of a *contrary Scheme*, the *former* cannot stand upon *so sure and firm a bottom* as the *latter*, nor be advanced to *so high a degree of Credibility*; and therefore it must be very unreasonable to give our assent on that side, where there is the *least Appearance* of *Probability*.

Nay further, should we suppose the *Proof* on both sides to be *equal*, yet *such different Consequences* do attend the Belief of the *one* and the *other*, that 'tis the Extremity of Madneſs and Folly, to prefer the *Party of Irreligion*: Which, besides the *present Pains, Troubles, and Disadvantages* it is said to bring upon the Persons who make this Choice, and the *Mischiefs* and *Inconveniencies* which *Mankind* will cer-

certainly suffer from one another upon this account; besides all this, I say, it is threatned with *eternal, inexpressible Misery* to come *after this Life*. And this is a Consequence so concerning and dreadful, that it must be a *vast Preponderancy of Proof* that can justify our running the hazard of it; which I am sure, is more than any Man that makes the venture, can pretend to.

I do not here argue, that a Man ought to prefer *Religion* before *Irreligion* merely because 'tis *safer* so to do; because, by the *Confession of all Parties*, a Man shall not suffer any thing in another state by such a Choice, whereas he that chuses *Irreligion* has only his *own Opinion* for his security, and is threatned by the Persons of a contrary Persuasion with *eternal Misery* after Death: I do not think *this alone*, a *sufficient* reason to determine a Man's Choice to one side, against all other Arguments to the contrary; for then a Man might be threatned out of *any thing*: but, if the Evil threatned be *very considerable*, and 'tis *full as probable*, that it should happen, as it is that it should not, which is the Case now supposed, he acts very rationally and wisely, who chuses rather

to undergo *some lesser Inconveniencies* at present, than to put himself *in danger of greater*. Now, that the *Misery* annex'd to *Irreligion* is *very considerable*, cannot be denied, it being represented as much greater than can be *imagined or conceived* by us: and that this *Misery* should be the Portion of all those who believe and act by such Principles, is as likely, as it is that it should not be so, whatever *Hypothesis* be allowed.

For if the World were made by chance, notwithstanding all the *Characters of Wisdom* we behold in it, why may it not as well happen, that there should be a *Future State*, and that those whom we call *Irreligious* should be *miserable* in it, and the *Religious* *Happy*? It looks indeed like *Wisdom*, and so does the *Regularity of the World*, and a great many *constant Discriminations* made there. Why should the Wind blow down the *rotten Fruit*, and leave the *souna*? Why should the Plague sweep away *some*, and leave *others* in the same City or House? but (it may be answered) there are *natural Reasons* and *Causes* for these things: And so there may be for the other, for ought we know; the *Wicked* may be *peculiarly disposed* to
be

be *miserable*; the same *Temper* and *Constitution* of *Body* or *Soul*, which inclined them to be *wicked*, may render them *miserable* also when they *live again*, and there is *as much Chance* for their *living again*, as their was for there *first Being*.

But if all things exist by *Necessity*, then a *Future State* may be *necessary* too, and the *Wicked* may be *necessarily miserable* in it, for any thing there is in *this Hypothesis* to the *contrary*.

Where *every thing* is supposed *casual*, or *every thing necessary*, 'tis impossible to give *any reason*, why any thing that may be conceived to be, *should*, or *should not exist*; or *should*, or *should not be*, after *such*, or *such a manner*; and therefore all things of this nature must be *equally probable*; because nothing can be alleged to determine the *Mind one way*, rather than *another*.

But, if there be a *God*, and the *World*, and *all things* that *are*, *have been*, or *are to be*, are acknowledged to be the *Effects* of *his Will*, there are no *Reasons* to persuade us, that 'tis *more probable* that *God will not punish the Wicked* in *another State* than

than that he *will*; at least they have not yet been produced.

From whence it follows, That, it being *equally probable in every Hypothesis*, that the Irreligious will be *extreamly miserable*, they have by *their own Confession*, and *Account of things*, no more reason to chuse *that side* they are of, than the *other*; and therefore, in *this Case*, a Man must not *act at all*, or, if he does, the *general Opinion of others* concerning the *safest side*, should direct him which way he is to act.

But moreover, it is not only *as probable*, that the Irreligious should be *miserable* in a *Future state*, as not, allowing any of *their own Hypotheses* to be true; but, by their own way of Proof, it appears, that *our Hypothesis* is *as likely* to be true, as any other advanced by *them*; nothing further than a *Possibility* of *theirs* being aim'd at.

And not only so; but we do also pretend, by *many direct and positive Arguments*, to evince the *Certainty* of *ours*; and at the same time to shew *all theirs* to be *absurd and impossible*.

Wherefore, if, upon an *equal Probability*, we ought to take the *safest* measures,

Q

much

much more are we obliged so to do, when *Reason and Happiness* are both of the same *Side*.

Nay farther, He who chuses *that Faith and Practice*, against which *Eternal Misery in another State* is denounc'd, ought to have, not only *more Grounds of Probability*, but *Certainty and Evidence of Conviction* of his side; he should be fully satisfied, from *certain direct Principles*, that his own *Opinions* are *right*, or that the *contrary* are *absurd and irrational*: because the *Consequences* are of that *vast importance*, that the *present Inconveniencies* which we are *like* to sustain, by acting a *contrary way*, can bear *no proportion* to the *hazard or likelihood of Misery* that attends our *acting this way*.

Thus do we of the *Protestant Faith*, defend our selves against the *Papists*, when they *peremptorily condemn* us to *everlasting Misery*, for being of *contrary Opinions* to theirs, without meeting with the same *Returns* from us, and then urge us to take the *safest side*: Thus, I say, do we answer; did we believe *their Opinions* or *Censures* to be *probable*, tho' 'twas *possible*, and to us perhaps seem'd *as probable*, or *more so*, that they might be *false*, we
would

would *then* allow some Weight in the Argument: But we do not *now* go over to them upon the account of *Safety*, because we not only *think our Opinions certain*, and *theirs impossible, absurd, or irrational*, and are fully persuaded that we have *proved* them so; but, supposing our selves to err in all the Points in controversy between us, we think it *demonstrable* from *common Principles*, own'd on *both sides*, that none of these *Errors* if they should be such, which, upon due care taken to inform our selves better, are believed by us as *Truths*, can expose us to the *hazard of Damnation*, if in all things else we live up to the Principles of our Religion. And if the *Atheist* can make the *same Defence* for himself; if the *Doctrines of Religion*, and the *supposed Consequences of Irreligion* seem as *absurd and contrary to all the Principles of his Knowledge*, owned by him, as the *Popish Tenets* do to a *Protestant*; or as *ridiculous and unwarrantable* as the *Visions, Resveries, or Predictions* of every little *Enthusiast*, or *Fortune-teller*, to a Man of *calm, sedate Sense*; and if he be able to make this good in the *usual ways and methods of Reasoning*, then may he despise our *Threatnings*, and
Q 2 laugh

laugh at the *Misery of a Future State securely.*

But for Men to deny all these important Truths, without offering at any Proof of their Falshood; to say they are doubtful and uncertain Points, and yet to act with the same Assurance and Security, as if they were certainly false; to refuse their Assent to them for want of greater and more evident Proof, without confuting the Arguments already advanced, or producing stronger on the contrary side; to laugh at the Terrors of the Lord, without proving them first to be vain or resistible; to contradict the general Belief of the World, without making any new Discoveries, or Observations; to lay aside a whole Scheme and System of things, which has been proved and established in all the principal Branches and Connexions of it, because they are not able to comprehend, or account for some little remote Consequence; and to venture eternal Misery upon a seeming Possibility of an Escape, which very few perceive or allow: These are all egregious Instances of the *absurd Faith*, and *foolish Conduct* of the *Enemies of Religion*; and consequently good Proofs of the
Judg-

Judgment and Wisdom of those, who believe and act upon *contrary Grounds* and *Measures*.

There's another thing also which the *Atheist* commonly discovers his Folly in, and that is the *publishing* and *propagating* his Opinions: For, 'tis more the *Atheist's* Interest, that *other* People should have *Religion*, than it is any *Religious Man's*. For, *his whole Happiness* being in *this Life*, the more *other* People are restrain'd, and the better *they* are persuaded, that *he* acts by the same Rules which *they* do, the larger will *his Liberty* and *Advantages* be, and the *less* *he* will suffer from their *Designs* and *Pursuits*; whereas the *Religious Man's Reversion* is not endanger'd, but confirm'd by what he loses, or suffers *here*.

Other Proofs likewise, of the *Unreasonableness*, and *Absurdity* of *Irreligion*, might be brought from the *Inconsistency* both of the *Faith* and *Practice* of those who are profess'd Favourers of it: such as their *Credulity* and *Readiness* of *Belief* in *common* indifferent Matters, and their embracing absurd Opinions, which are exploded by all the World besides, when at the same time they are distrustful of

every thing upon the Subject of *Religion*; their believing Matters which concern their present Happiness upon weaker Grounds; their exposing themselves to greater Troubles and Inconveniencies, and running greater Hazards upon a faint Prospect of future Happiness in this Life; and sometimes, on the contrary, fearing and avoiding things upon a less Appearance or Likelyhood of Danger, than what *Religion* affords; and lastly, their acting contrary to their own Principles, and denying themselves what they esteem substantial Pleasure and Satisfaction, out of a regard to imaginary Notions, which have no Foundation but in the Opinion of Men. But, these being Matters of common Observation, and too long to be fully insisted upon here, I shall think it sufficient to have hinted at them, and so pass on to the,

VI. Sixth and last general Branch of my Discourse proposed in the beginning of it, and that is, To give some Account of the *Causes* of *Atheism* and *Irreligion*, or the *Reasons* which induce Men to take up such Opinions.

There

There is nothing which People are better satisfied of, than of the Power and Influence of *Prejudices*, and *false Motives* of *Judging*; every body being apt to resolve the Cause of another Man's differing in Opinion from him, into some particular *Byass* upon his Understanding. But this we do commonly, without examining whether the Person who differs from us, has not better Reasons for his Dissent, than we have for our Persuasion; whether the Opinion he is of be not, in the Reality of things, true, tho' he believes upon false Grounds; or whether we our selves are not disposed to judg as we do, upon some of the like Motives that we suppose him to have followed. By which means we are often, not only guilty of the same Partiality which we charge upon others, but are either confirm'd in our Errors, or else prevented from making just Enquiries into the Truth of things; so that, if we are in the right, it is by chance, and more than we are able to prove to our selves, or others.

Upon which account, I think it a very preposterous and deceitful Method of proving a thing false, to assign some *peculiar*

liar Prejudices and wrong Motives of judging, which may possibly induce Men to be of such an Opinion, tho' the Truth should be of the other side, and which have often had the like Influence upon Men's Understandings in other Matters; and from thence immediately, without any further Proof, to infer, that such and such Persons have *no other Reasons* for the Belief of the point in question but these, and consequently, that they are in the wrong: this, I say, is not a fair way of arguing. But, after *plain and manifest Proofs* of the Truth of an Opinion, according to the *standing Rules and Principles of Reasoning*, it is not only *proper* to enquire how any Men came to be of a contrary Persuasion, but the Strangeness and seeming Unaccountableness of the thing make it *expected*, and in some respect *necessary*; in order to a fuller Satisfaction of those, who, notwithstanding all the *appearance of Evidence to themselves*, may be apt to have such favourable Notions of Mankind, as to imagine, that Persons, who have the same Faculties, and all other Advantages of Knowledge that they have, would not deny what appears so plain to them,

them, except they had *some rational Grounds* for their Denial.

Having therefore, as I persuade my self, *fully*, and *evidently* proved the *Truth* of Religion; I think, I may now be allow'd to say; That *Atheism* and *Irreligion* must be the *Effect* of *Prejudice* and *Prepossession* only, if any such Cause of it be assignable.

And if we search the Heart of Man, and look into the hidden Mysteries of Iniquity lodg'd there; if we consider what false and corrupt *Reasonings*, and what other Arts and Methods of Deceit are used by Men to delude themselves, we shall soon discover the secret *Spring* and *Original* of all *Atheism* and *Unbelief*.

Now, the *Causes* from whence it proceeds are plainly these two; *The Fear* of an *After-reckoning* for a *wicked Life*, and *The Vanity* of appearing either *greater* or *wiser than other Men*. The first of which is the *principal* and *most powerful* Cause, and is only assisted, and strengthened afterwards, by the *Accession* of the latter. And what other account can be assigned? Or what other Reason can be given of the Rise of *Irreligious* and *profane* Opinions.

It cannot be the *Force and Evidence of Truth* which produces *Atheism*, as is manifest, not only from the *foregoing Proofs of Religion*, but from the *Confession and Conduct* of the *Atheists themselves*. It is not because the *Notions of God, Immortality, and a Future State* shock the *Understanding*, and contradict the *plain Principles of Reason*, that they deny these *Foundations of all Religion*. Were the *Being of a God* consider'd only as an *Hypothesis*, to solve the *Difficulties of Nature* by, without those troublesome *Consequences of Duty, Sin and Punishment*, the *Atheist* would not scruple *this Philosophy*; and *Lucretius* himself would easily grant the *Soul* to be *immortal*, to be *separated from the Body* and reunited again, would you allow him but this *Conclusion*, that neither *separate, nor reunited*, it hath any *Sense or Remembrance* of what was done *before the Separation*. God should also enjoy the *Fulness of Perfection*, he should be clothed with all the *magnificent Attributes* that *Man* could conceive, so his whole *Employment* was the *Comprehension of himself*, and the *Contemplation of his own Glory*, and he was not
un-

unnecessarily troubled to take account of *our Actions*. This is the dreadful Apprehension which perverts Mens Reasons, and makes them deny what they fear, when they are resolved to run the hazard of it.

The quieting and laying these *Fears*, *Lucretius* confesses is the *whole Design* of his Philosophy. Which is a farther Confirmation of what I have undertaken to maintain; as will appear from these following Remarks.

For first *this Philosopher* observes, and seems to wonder at it, that the *Fears of Death* were *very general*, and made *strong Impressions* upon the Minds of Men.

2. He affirms that these Fears were occasioned by an *Apprehension* of *some other State* after *this Life*.

3. He takes notice only of those whom we stile *Wicked*, that were *afraid* of a *future state*; they were the chief Objects of his Pity and Compassion, who, besides the Fear of *Scourges*, *Racks*, and *Prisons* in *this World*, were tortured with the Dread of *new*, and *more terrible Punishments*, in *some other*; and all his Arguments serve only for the **Consolation and Encouragement**

ment of such unhappy Wretches, who, through *Fear of future Pains*, either denied themselves some *present Gratification*, or were uneasie under the Guilt of *past Actions*; none but the *Wicked and Impious* being concerned in all the *Fabulous*, and *Poetick Stories of future Torments*, which he derides.

From all which it is very plain, that a *Resolution to enjoy the Pleasures of Sin*, and to live in them without *Check or Disturbance*, is the reason why Men deny, and seek for Arguments to overthrow, those Opinions, which would otherwise be embraced as most rational; as is manifest from *Lucretius's* own Observations.

For the *universal Apprehension* of something *after this Life*, which he plainly intimates, is no slight Argument of the *Truth of another State*: as, I am sure, the *distinguishing Fears of the Wicked*, are a very strong Proof of the *essential Difference of Good and Evil*, and the *Dueness of Reward and Punishment* accordingly. For, otherwise, why should the *Wicked condemn* themselves for what they do? or, supposing a *future State*, why should they expect

expect to be *punish'd* in it? Why should they not rather conceive *God* to be of their *Side*? Why should they not give him contrary Attributes, and make him *punish the Righteous* and *reward the Wicked*? Or, if that be too harsh a Notion of the *Deity*, why do they not change the Natures of *Good* and *Evil*, and call *Evil good*, and *Good evil*? The Consequence is still the same. If it be *Wisdom* to live as they do, if they live *most up to their Nature*, and *most agreeably to their Reason*, what have they to *fear*? if this be their Case they may be sure, that *Almighty Wisdom* and *Perfection* will *approve*, and be *pleas'd with* their *Actions*. But if these Opinions offer too great a Violence to their Reason to be embraced by them, it is plain that they must acknowledge, not only that there is a *Difference in Actions*, but that *theirs* are *evil*; not only that *some Actions* deserve *Reward*, and *some Punishment*, but that the latter is due to *theirs*, or else what reason is there for *Fears*? Or why do not *all Men* fear a *future State* alike, the *Righteous* as well as the *Wicked*? Now, when Men are resolv'd to commit what they know to be *ill* and *punishable*, there is no Refuge
left

left but to contrive some means of *Impunity*, some way of escaping the Sentence threatned ; and this they promise themselves by *denying* either the *Judge*, or the *Place of Punishment*. And this is the *true Cause and Spring of Atheism*. For no Man ever deny'd a *God* who thought his Way and Course of Life acceptable to such a Being ; no Man ever questioned a *future State* who could possibly persuade himself, that, if there was one, *Happiness* would be his Portion in it.

As then it is not a *Zeal for Truth* which makes Men *Atheists*, so neither is it a *generous Undertaking* to free the World from the *Bondage of Religion*. For they must needs be convinc'd that it would be very much for the Advantage of *Mankind in general*, if all Men lived up to the *strict Rules of Religion*. What noble Ideas doth such a Speculation as this afford us ? and how dismal would the Prospect be, if *Atheism* should spread as fast as *Christianity* did in the *first Ages* of the *Gospel* ? But not to pursue this Thought any farther, what *Bondage* or *Slavery* is there in *Religion* ? and how is our *Liberty* abridged by the *Law of God* ? Those who bear the Yoke think it easie and pleasant,

fant, and, without a *future Reward*, preferable to *Atheism*, as much as a *just and easie Government* is to be preferred to *Anarchy* and *living Wild*. Why then should they who never felt the Burthen complain of the Weight of it? but there are some Pleasures and Enjoyments which Custom hath made them fond of, and rendred difficult to be left off, and these they are resolved to enjoy still: but they cannot do it fully and to the height, without some Check and Regret till they have got rid of those *Fears* of a *future Punishment* which their own *Consciences*, and the *general Faith of the World* threaten them with: in order therefore to this End, every *little Objection* or *Suspicion* is improved into an *Argument* against *Religion*; and that, by the advantage of *strong Wisbes*, and a *gradual Decay* of *contrary Impressions*, is heightned into *Demonstration*; till, what, at first, their Lusts suggested to them, with a *perhaps* there *may be no such thing* as *God*, or a *future State*, is, at last, ripen'd into a *bold Denial*.

And, when they have once got this Mastery over themselves, then do they sit free. and despise the rest of the World
in

in Fetters, and laugh at what others adore. Then do *Novelty* and *Boldness* pass for *Truth*, and the *Pleasure of Believing* is made the *Ground of Faith*. For how exquisite and transporting is the Pleasure of a *new Notion* or *Invention*? and how are Men's Wits set upon the stretch to find out fresh Opinions, and to dress up old ones in a different manner, only to get the Character of such as *think out of the road*? Men shall live like *Beasts* in the *State of Nature*, and devour one another, *couch in their Dens at Night, and in the Morning seek their Prey*: *Beasts*, on the contrary, shall be so *rational* as to erect *Common-wealths*, and *Governments*, if such *Notions* as these will serve to establish the Reputation of their Authors.

Besides, the *exposing* and *ridiculing common Opinions*, especially the despising what is very much respected and admired, carries a peculiar Satisfaction in it; there being nothing which recommends any *Notion* or *Reflexion*, any stroke of *Wit* or *Reason* so much as the *Boldness* of it. From hence it comes to pass, that *Treason*, and *Blasphemy* are entertained with a greater Guilt than *Private Calumny*,
and

and *Detraction*; and the same Expression is counted wittier when it strikes at *God*, or the *King*, than when it is levell'd against a Herd of *common Mortals*. For, to ridicule the greatest Actions that have been done in the World, to laugh at the noblest and most celebrated Schemes of Knowledge that have ever been laid together, is thought to argue a Spirit capable of greater Performances. And to despise and contemn what the rest of Mankind stand in aw of, seems to shew such a *Superiority of Sense*, or *Courage*, as easily tempts Men to affect this Character, without considering whether they are able to support it.

Thus are Men confirm'd and establish'd in *Atheism*, by the *Vanity* of appearing *greater* or *wiser* than *others*, and of being thought Masters of *finer* and *more extraordinary Talents* either of *Wit*, or *Reflexion*: as is plain also from another Instance, in which Men shew themselves to be very much influenced by these Motives in matters of Religion; and that is, a groundless unreasonable *Diffidence* and *Jealousie* of being put or imposed upon; calling every thing *Trick* or *Imposture* which they do not understand, or which

any Body else gets an Advantage by. For, by this means, they imagine, that they establish to themselves a Reputation of great *Sagacity* and *Reach*, and of *seeing far into matters*; whereas, in reality, this overmuch *Cunning* of theirs, only betrays the *Weakness* of their *Judgments*, and shews them to be of the same size of *Understanding* with those foolish *Politicians*, who find a thousand *Mysteries* in *State-Affairs*, more than the *Managers* themselves ever knew of, and who think every the most natural, and undesigning *Action* of a *Prince*, to be the effect of some secret *Counsel*, and *Contrivance*.

Now, that these before-mentioned are the *true* and *proper Causes* of *Atheism*; and that the *Belief* and *Patronage* of the *Doctrines* of *Irreligion* is *solely* the *Result* of *Prejudice*, and not *deliberate Reason*, will further appear from the following *Reflexions*.

1. Those who go under the Name of *Atheists* or *Deists*, whether *real*, *pretended*, or *reputed*, are generally *Persons* of *no great Reach*, or *Capacity*, *Men* of strong *Lusts*,

Lusts, and irregular Imaginations, without a due Ballast of Reason ; impatient of Thinking and Attention, and consequently, unable to examine any Variety of Pretences, or to distinguish betwixt Colour and Argument. Those of them who are furnish'd with a better stock of *natural Sense* than the rest, have it wholly *unimproved* and *uncultivated* ; or, if they have made any Advances in Knowledge by Study, or Industry, they have either *begun late*, and so have fallen into the middle of Learning, without the Assistance of the first grounds and Rudiments of it, applying themselves to such Books they lit upon, or which happened to be recommended to them, without due Choice and Direction ; or else they have been chiefly conversant in *such Studies* as have by no means qualified them to be *Judges out of their own Way*.

For a Man may be very well vers'd in *History*, *Antiquities*, or *Experimental Knowledge* ; he may be a great Master of *Language* and *Criticism*, and a nice Discerner of the *true Meaning*, or *Reading* of an *ancient Author* ; he may have a just Relish for *Wit*, and *Elegance of Expression*, and have Skill enough to discover the

Beauties and Faults of the most celebrated Models of Writing, and yet, after all, in matters of general and abstracted Reasoning, not be able to understand a plain, easie Consequence. For, 'tis not difficult to observe how ridiculouſly oftentimes, Men of known Abilities in ſome of theſe, or the like reſpects, argue and infer in other Matters; and how incapable they are of making, or perceiving a juſt Deduction, in points of moral, or civil Knowledge, and ſuch in which the Conduct of Life, and the Happineſs of Mankind is immediately concerned: whereas, on the contrary, thoſe who are acquainted with the general Rules, and Laws of Reasoning, and the different kinds and manners of Proof, are capable of making true Judgments and Inferences in any Subject, which they have been ever ſo little converſant in, upon a bare explication of the Terms, and a juſt Relation of the Facts belonging to the Matter to be judg'd of. Now, this is a piece of Knowledge, which, I may venture to ſay, the Favourers of Irreligion have been always the greateſt Strangers to; and the leſs any of them have been acquainted with this kind of Learning, the leſs they have employed
and

and exercis'd their rational Faculties, and the less common natural Sense they have been born with, the stronger, more confident, and more unscrupulous Atheists have they been.

2. Secondly, as we are satisfi'd, from the *Character*, and *Capacities* of the *Atheists*, that they are wholly determin'd to their Opinions by *Prejudices* and *false unequal Motives of Judging*; so are we further confirm'd in this Persuasion by the *Manner* and *Process* of their *Faith*. For they commonly *believe first*, before they enter upon any *Examination*, or *Proof* of their *Principles*. Whatever they understand of the matter, all the Arguments and Objections they are furnish'd with are found out afterwards, not to satisfie and convince themselves, but to make a shew of Defence against the Charge of others; they take up their Opinions hastily and on a suddain; they do not proceed by Degrees, by cautious and wary Steps, weighing and ballancing the Arguments on both sides, sometimes inclining to the one, and sometimes to the other, calling in the Advice and Reason of other Men to their Assistance,

and all along shewing a Concern and Fear of being mistaken, suitable to the Importance of the thing to be judged of.

Thus indeed do Men commonly behave themselves in a Change from *one Sect of Religion to another*, if they sincerely aim at Truth, and are not govern'd by any other undue Motive. But who ever heard of a Man who took this Method of turning *Atheist*? Which of them all can say he consider'd, and compared the Proofs of both Opinions before he left the one, and took up the other? When was any body called in to plead in the behalf of *Religion*, before it was cast off, and to settle the first Mistrusts and Waverings of an *Atheistical Conscience*? Afterwards perhaps, upon some Checks and Reluctance of his Mind, an *Atheist* may have had some faint Designs of examining into the Truth of Matters, and may have discours'd with others about it; but then a long Custom of thinking and talking one way, and the troublesome Consequences attending a Change of Faith, may have indispos'd him to entertain or relish the Arguments for *Religion*; not to mention any thing of a *judicial*

cial Blindness inflicted upon him from God, for his long and unreasonable Opposition to the *Truth*. But, if an *Atheist* will examine fairly into the *first Rise* and *Original* of his *Faith*, he will find that it was either a *hasty Effort*, occasioned by *high Blood*, and a *rais'd Imagination*; or some *bold Strain of Wit*, which struck him at a time when he was rightly disposed to be pleased with it. And, if we should examine into these things more particularly, I believe, it would appear, that *all irreligious Opinions* are *first* taken up *in Company*; and that no Man receives the *first Impressions* of *Atheism*, *alone*, from his *own calm* and *sedate Reflexions*.

And thus, as *Irreligion* springs from *Prejudice*, so is it *nourished* and *fed* the *same way*, viz. by a constant Application to such Books and Company, as give it any countenance or colour of Defence; with an industrious avoiding and ridiculing the contrary; picking out such things as minister most occasion for Raillery; and magnifying every bold thing which is said by any Man, without any regard to his other Opinions, or the Consequences even of that which is liked; 'tis no

matter whether it really proves any thing against Religion or no, so it be thought, by the *Professors of Religion*, to bear hard, either upon the *fundamental Principles*, or any *remote Doctrines* which are owned by them.

From whence it comes to pass, that the *present Atheism* is a *promiscuous Miscellany* of all the bold *Notions* that have ever been vented by those who are stiled *Free-thinkers*: where, whatever seems to be levelled against any Point of Religion is embraced as the most sensible and rational account that can be given of the thing; but those Parts of Religion which are established by the same Authors, are slighted and past over as weakly done; whereas I will be bound to prove, that there is never an *Article*, or *Duty* of Religion, profess'd by us, but is own'd and maintain'd by some or other of these bold *Free-thinking Authors*, which are so highly approved and commended by the *present Atheists*. And what a gross Partiality is this, not to allow those, whom they cry up for *unprejudic'd Men*, to talk a Word of Sense or Reason, but when what they say makes for their Purpose?

3. But Thirdly, we have a more convincing Proof, that the *Doctrines of Irreligion* are the *genuine Issue and Effects* of the *Causes* before assigned, from the open *Confession* of several *Atheists* themselves; who, upon just *Convictions* of *Conscience*, having disclaimed their *Atheism*, have freely and sincerely owned that they threw off *Religion*, without ever examining, or considering the *Proofs* of it; that they were disposed and induced to entertain irreligious *Notions* by the *Power* and *Influence* of their *Lusts*, or such vicious *Habits* and *Customs* of living, as they thought irreconcilable with a contrary *Belief*; that the *Reasons* why they endeavoured to persuade themselves, of what their *Course* of *Life* inclined them to believe, were, to defend those *Liberties* of *Practice* which they took, against the *Censures* of others, and to secure their own *Minds* in an easie undisturb'd *Enjoyment* of them; that, commonly, the first and strongest *Impressions* of *Unbelief* they were sensible of, were occasioned by some bold *Hints* and *Insinuations*, or some witty *Ridicule* or *Raillery* upon the *Subject* of *Religion*; that, as
these,

these, coming from others, either in Books, or Discourse, gave them very great Pleasure, and by that means Assurance, in embracing their new Principles, so were they further pleased and confirm'd together in the Belief of them, by applauded Trials, and Exercise of their own Wit the same way; especially, when the general *Disposition* of the Persons they convers'd with, made this Entertainment very agreeable, and very frequent. All this have several Atheists, upon their *Repentance*, acknowledg'd.

And that which strengthens the Argument drawn from hence, is, that those who have renounced their *Irreligious Principles*, and given this account of themselves, have been, some of them, Men of the *best natural Abilities*, and *greatest acquired Improvements*, of any that ever took the Party of *Atheism*; and their *Repentance* has been *free and voluntary*, and not extorted by any frightful Representations, or importunate Addresses, in the seasons of Fear and Weakness; it has begun from themselves, and been wholly owing to the over-ruling Impressions of a *Divine Power*, and not to *Human Persuasion*; and their Blindness and Pre-

Prejudices being, by this means, removed, the Arguments for Religion have prevailed upon them by their own Strength, as suggested to them by their own Reason, without receiving any Advantage from the Management and Art of others.

And this I think sufficient to shew, that *Atheism* proceeds from *strong Prejudices*, and *false, disproportioned Motives of judging*, and is not the result of *just Reasoning*, and *impartial Reflexion*.

I have now gone through the several Branches of my Discourse, which I proposed to my self in the beginning of it; and have finished the Proof I undertook of *general*, or, as 'tis commonly called, *natural Religion*.

All that I have further to add upon this Subject, at present, is, to give some account of the Notions of *Atheism*, and *Deism*; which Words we are forced to use sometimes promiscuously, and in a different Sense from the common acceptation, for want of a fit and proper Word to express a *Belief*, or *Profession* of *any such Opinions* which take away the
practical

practical Influence and Power of Religion.
 For which reason I think it convenient in this place, that I may remedy any Confusion or Mistake, which the Liberty I have taken in the use of these Terms may have occasioned, to set down distinctly what I look upon to be the *common Notions* of *Atheism* and *Deism*, and what *Ideas* I should chuse to affix these *Words* to.

By an *Atheist* is commonly meant such a one as will own *no Being* under the *Name* and *Title* of *God*. And he who does acknowledge such a Being, let his Conceptions of him be what they will, is reputed *no Atheist*. And, in *this Sense* of the *Word*, it may well be made a question, Whether there be any such thing as an *Atheist* in the *World*? For, 'tis hard to meet with a *Man* who has not *some Idea* in his *Mind*, which he will be content to allow the *Name* of *God* to; tho', upon Examination, perhaps it will be found to be nothing else but a confused *Notion* of *some vast Power*, *First Cause*, *Original Mover*, or *Immortal Being*, enjoying *Eternal Rest*, and *Quiet*.

Now,

Now, according to this Notion of *Atheism*, he who professes to *believe a God*, whatever *Nature, Characters and Attributes* he ascribes to him, and at the same time *Denies his Providence, or Government of Mankind* is called a *Deist*.

But, in such places where the Pretences of *Revelation* are acknowledged, and defended, he that is called a *Deist* is one who owns a *God*, and believes *some sort of Providence*, and *natural Obligations*, but denies *all manner of Revelation*; who confines his *Duty* to matters of *Civil Justice and Commerce*; makes these his chief *Principles, not to injure another, and to keep his Word*; grounds his Practice upon the *Reason and Interest of Societies*, and his *own present Advantage*, not *Obedience to God*, or a *future Prospect*; believes, *no future Life*, or only *such a one* as can have no great Influence upon a Man's Actions here. This is the *common Use* of these Words.

But, by an *Atheist*, I think, may properly, and justly be meant, not only he who *absolutely denies the Being of a God*; but whosoever says *there is no God that governs the World, and judgeth the Earth*;
there

there is *no God who hath appointed Laws and Rules for Men to act by*; there is *no God to whom Men are accountable for all their Actions, and by whom they shall be rewarded, or punished in a future State, according to their Behaviour here*; and, in general, whoever holds such an Opinion as exempts him from all Obligation of Duty to a Superiour Being, or cuts off the Expectation of Rewards and Punishments consequent thereupon.

For *Atheism* is to be considered as a *Vice*, and not a *meer Error in Speculation*. And therefore, he who denies *Providence*, *Natural Law*, or a *Future State*, is as much an *Atheist* as he who denies *God's Being*: For, it's all one, with respect to Practice, to say *there is no God*, as to say *there's no Obedience due to him, or no Punishment for Disobedience, if there be*: It is likewise all one to deny *divine Punishment directly*, and to deny the *Immortality of the Soul*, or the *Scriptures*, in the Sense of those who at present deny these things: For they who say the *Soul dies with the Body*, think hereby to prove, that *God cannot punish*; and they who deny the *Scriptures* do it, in order to shew that he *will not punish*, that is, *in another Life*;

Life; and, as to the *present*, they perceive that those who are stiled *Wicked* fare as well, and have as large a Portion of the good things of this World, as their *Righteous Brethren*. The *End* and *Design* then of all these Opinions is the same; namely, to establish a *Liberty for every Man to live as he pleases, and to do whatsoever is right in his own Eyes*; and what is this, but to say, *there is no God in the World*.

This is the Notion I have of an *Atheist*; and accordingly I have applied the word *indifferently*, as I had occasion, to any Persons who denied any of the Principles of Religion which I have endeavour'd to establish: And the word *Deist* is to be taken in the same Sense with that of *Atheist*, every where, but where we are particularly discoursing about the *Being of God*, as distinguished from the other Parts of Religion.

But, in opposition to the Character which I have now given of an *Atheist*, by a *Deist* is to be meant, one who acknowledges all the Principles of Religion here maintained: who thinks he is obliged to inform himself truly of his whole Duty

to

to God, and to live up to the highest and purest Rules of *Morality* that he can form to himself, by the Assistance of his own Reason, and the united Lights of other Men who looks upon all the *moral*, or *practical* Part of the *Scriptures* as very useful and instructive, and consequently what ought to be read and valued as *Tully* and *Aristotle* are, upon the same Subject: but does not believe any such thing as *Revelation*, or assent to any of those *peculiar matters of Fact*, or *Doctrines*, which are wholly grounded upon *that extraordinary way of Conveyance*, and are not level to his Reason, or discoverable by it.

And, if a *Deist* be such a one as I have described, it would be as just a matter of Enquiry, whether there be any Persons to whom this Title belongs, as whether there be any real *Atheists* in the World. For my part, I will not positively say there is no such thing as a *true Deist*, in that sense which I have now given of the word, because, I believe, there hardly ever was any Opinion known among Men, which some body did not espouse; but this, I think, I may venture to affirm, that it would be the most difficult thing imaginable to find a Man in a *Christi-*
stian

stian Countrey, who was acquainted with the Books of *Holy Scripture*, and the *common Proofs* of *Christianity*; who was fully persuaded of the Truth of *all the Principles* of *Natural Religion* here laid down, and who seriously endeavoured to conform his Life to the *Moral Rules*, and *Precepts of the Gospel*, and yet who denied *Revelation*, and all those particular Truths which stand distinguished by the Name of *Revealed Religion*: such a Man as this, I believe, is hard to be met with. For it is not *Prophecies*, or *Miracles*, or *Mysteries*, which puzzle the *Faith* of those who now go under the Name of *Deists*; but a *plain and full Discovery* of a *future State* of *Rewards* and *Punishments*. This is the shocking repugnant Doctrine, in comparison of which, the *Trinity*, and *Incarnation* are easie Notions, and very reconcileable to their Reason.

Upon this account it is, that I have mentioned *Deists* as *Enemies* of *Natural Religion*, and so properly coming within my Subject, and not as *meer Opposers* of *Revelation*, which belongs to another Argument.

And now, having pointed out who they are that are particularly concerned in the foregoing Discourse, it might be expected that I should address my self to them to embrace those Principles of Religion which I have there proved, and to bestow some serious Thoughts about the Danger of their Unbelief; but I am too well acquainted with their Character to trouble them with any Advice of this nature: If they are not *convinced*, and bore down by *Arguments*, I am sure they will never yield to *Persuasion*; neither indeed is it proper to go about to persuade Men to *believe*; they only are to be applied to in this manner, who are satisfied of the Truth of what you would persuade them to, but want sufficient Motives and Incitements to *practise*.

I shall therefore shut up this whole Discourse with my earnest Prayers to God, that he would be pleased to incline and dispose those who are doubtful, and wavering in the Concerning Points of Religion, to weigh and consider well the Proof it stands upon, before they venture to withdraw themselves from under the Influence and Government of it; that he

he would defend the Innocent, and such as are unacquainted with the Ways of Irreligion, from the false Suggestions, and Insinuations of Unbelievers; that he would convince the Careless and indifferent of the absolute Necessity of having some Religion; and that he would be further pleased to enable those, who are already convinced of this Truth, to stop the Mouths of Gain-sayers, by a steady and uniform Practice of their Duty, every way answerable to their Knowledge, and Profession.

F I N I S.

T H E

Certainty and Necessity

O F

Religion in General, &c.

The Contents.

I ntroduction shewing the design of the Discourse, and the Method in which it is Prosecuted. Page 1	Page 1
<i>An account of the Nature of Man, so far as concerns Religion.</i>	P. 9
<i>Of the Nature of God.</i>	P. 14
<i>Of the Relation there is betwixt God and Man.</i>	p. 16
<i>A direct proof of the Being of God.</i>	p. 17
<i>Considered as</i> } <i>Possible,</i>	p. 18
<i>Probable,</i>	p. 24
<i>Certain.</i>	p. 37
<i>The certainty of God's Existence proved, Indirectly and Negatively, by shewing that none of those Suppositions which exclude the Being of God can be true.</i>	P. 52
<i>Matter alone considered at rest could not be Eternal, and in time produce the Present Frame of the World.</i>	P. 55
<i>'Tis impossible to account for the Production of the World,</i>	

The Contents.

- World, by the Atheist's Hypothesis of moving Atoms.* p. 57
- 'Tis absurd to suppose that the *World has Existed Eternally, under the same Form we now behold it, without a God.* p. 61
- The Eternal Coexistence of Matter and Mind, improbable.* p. 69
- Supposing it probable, neither *Matter alone, nor Matter and Motion, nor the present Constitution of things could have been Eternal Independently of God.* p. 75
- The Original of all things from God, further evinced from General Reflections.* p. 78
- A positive and direct Proof of Religion drawn from the Natures of God and Man, and the Relations there are betwixt them.* p. 89
- Of the Nature and Ground of Obligation, together with the Right and Power of Obliging.* ib.
- That Man is obliged to order his Life according to the Will of God, is proved ;* p. 104
- From the Natural Judgments we make concerning our Actions.* p. 107
- From the End and Design of God in making us, which appears by several Tokens and Indications.* p. 120
- In the Frame and Disposition of our Mind, and in the Oeconomy and Constitution of Humane Society.* ib. p. 128
- From the Nature of Religion it self, a regular practice of which conduces to the greatest Happiness we are capable of in this Life.* p. 132
- And from the certainty of a Future State which is proved.* p. 141
- From*

The Contents.

- From the defect of a General and Regular Practice of Religion here :* p. 142
- And from the General Wants, Necessities and Imperfections of our present Nature.* p. 145
- From all which Considerations it appears, that 'tis more for our Happiness to live Religiously than otherwise, and therefore we are obliged to live so.* p. 151
- The Certainty, and Necessity of Religion further shewn, from the pernicious effects of all kind of Irreligion, with respect to the Happiness of Mankind.* p. 153
- The absurdity and folly of all the Grounds and Pretences of Irreligion, and whatever is alledged in defence of it.* p. 185
- Irreligion not capable of any direct proof.* p. 186
- The usual Ways and Methods of defending it Improper and Insufficient.* p. 190
- Ridiculing Religion proves nothing against it.* p. 191
- Requiring a more certain and Mathematical proof of it unreasonable.* p. 192
- Schemes and Hypotheses to account for the present state of things, without God and Religion, absurd and inconsistent.* p. 195
- The chief and most common Objections against Religion answered, viz.* p. 204
- Mysteries, seeming Inconsistencies, and Absurdities in Scripture.* p. 205
- Extravagant Notions, and Pernicious Doctrines, maintained under the name of Religion.* p. 206
- Variety of Opinions among the Professors of the same Religion.* p. 207
- Foolish*

The Contents.

- Foolish and Ridiculous Arguments urged in defence of it.* p. 209
- Scandalous Lives of great Pretenders to Piety and Virtue.* ib.
- Religion the effect of Fear and Education* p. 213
- Religion a politick Contrivance.* p. 214
- The Absurdity and Folly of Irreligious Principles, and Practices demonstrated, from General Reflections upon the different Grounds, and Foundations which Religion and Irreligion stands upon; and the different Conduct of those who act under the Influence of the one and the other.* p. 216
- Irreligion further exposed from the Causes and Reasons that induce Men to take up Atheistical and Prophane Opinions.* p. 230
- The chief Causes of Atheism shewn to be these two; The Fear of an after-reckoning for a wicked Life, and the Vanity of appearing greater or wiser than other Men.* p. 233
- The Doctrines of Irreligion the sole result of Prejudice, and not deliberate Reasoning more plainly made out;* p. 242
- From the Character and Capacities of the Atheists, ib.*
- From the manner and Process of their Infidelity.* p. 245
- And from the Confession of several Atheists themselves.* p. 249
- An account of the Notions of Atheism and Deism, and how they are to be distinguished.* p. 251

ERRATA.

Page 6. line 9. read *reform'd?* p. 33. l. 20. r. *believe a God*, p. 47. l. 16. d. *is*. p. 51. l. 27. r. *possibly*. p. 68. l. 23. for *Cause* r. *exist*. p. 70. l. 4. r. *Perception, and Will*; p. 71. l. 21. for *any* r. *and* p. 80. l. 22. for *can* r. *could*. p. 109. l. 4. d. *to*. p. 148. l. 23. r. *of greater*. p. 181 l. 5. r. *Attainment*. Id. p. 183. l. last. p. 224 l. 6. for *there* r. *their*. p. 233 last line r. ? p. 249 l. 24. r. *the* p. 256 l. 5. r. *Men*.

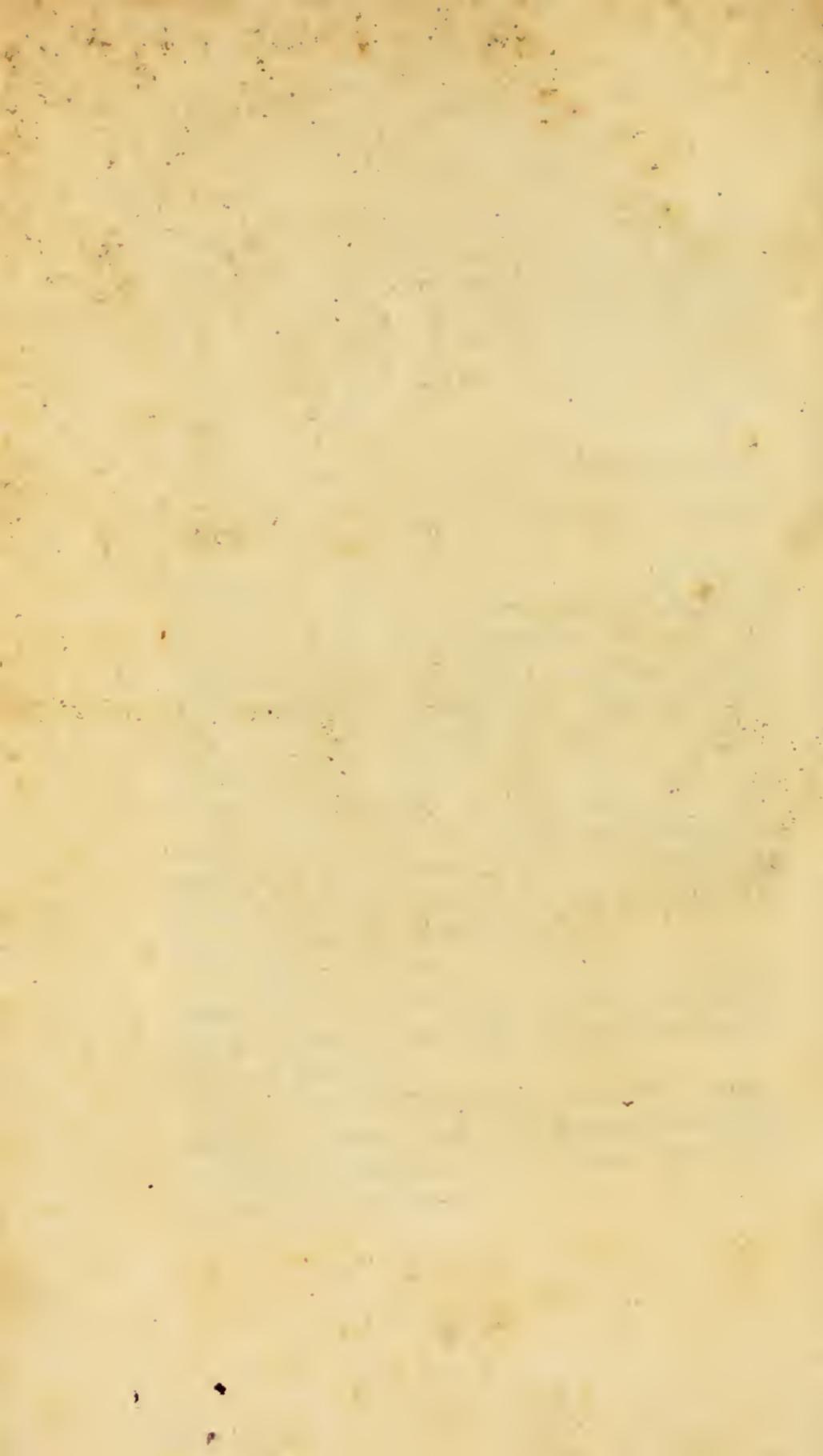
BOOKS Printed for Thomas Bennet.

P*Syche, Or Loves Mystery*, in 24 Canto's displaying the Intercourse betwixt Christ and the Soul, By *Joseph Beaumont*, D. D. Late King's Professor of Divinity, and Master of St. Peter's College, in Cambridge. The Second Edition, with Corrections throughout, and four new Canto's never before Printed.

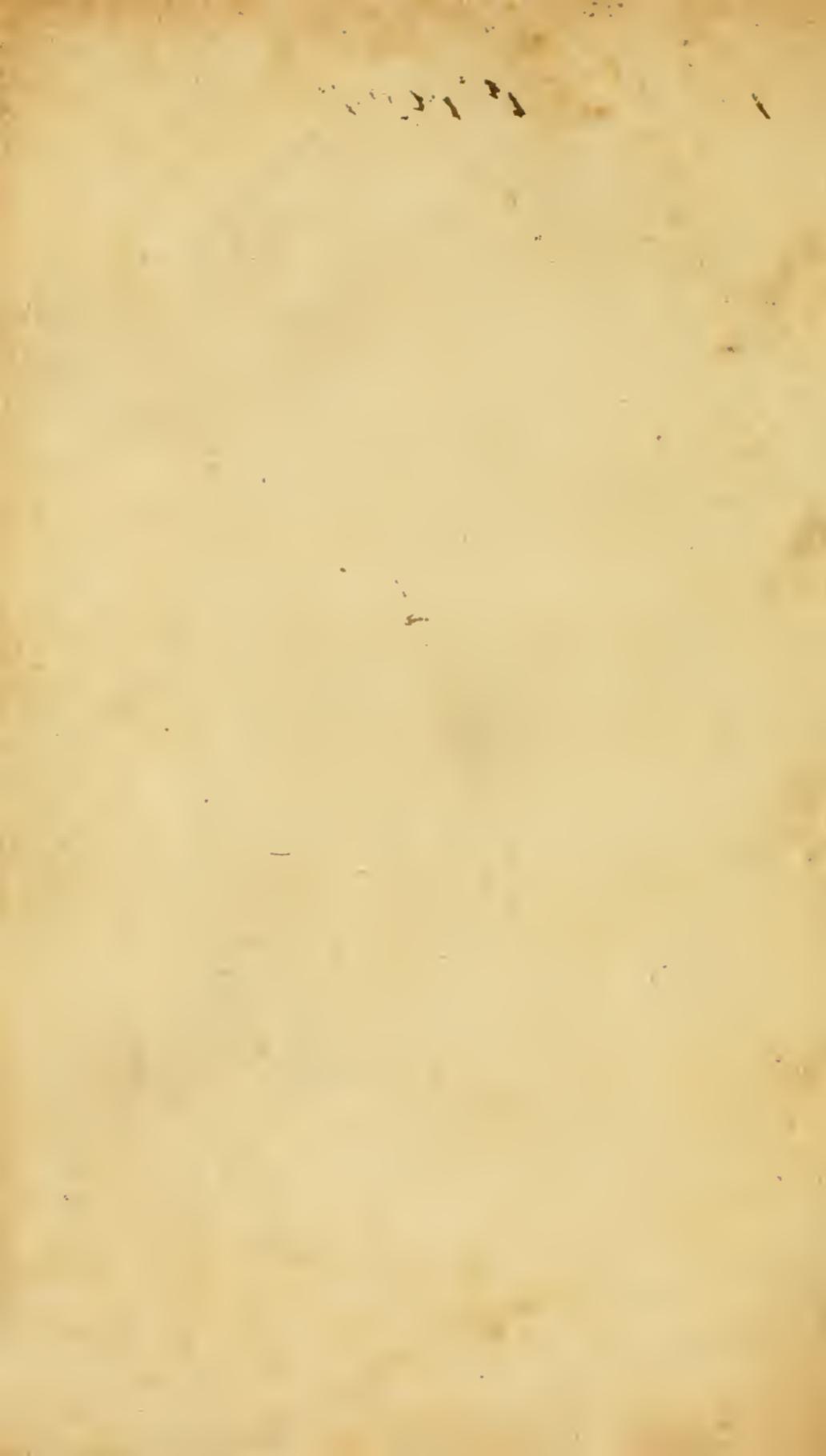
A Conference with a Theist, in Five Parts; Being a Defence of the Christian Religion, against the Objections of all sorts, which are advanced in opposition to it by the Unbelievers. By *William Nicholls*, D. D.

By the same Author. *A Treatise of Consolation to Parents for the death of Children*. Written upon the occasion of the Death of the Duke of Gloucester.

An Essay of Self-Murther, wherein is endeavoured to prove, that it is unlawful according to Natural Principles. By *J. Adams*, Rector of St. Alban, Woodstreet.







Pohn Partridge

7

