









THE
HISTORY
OF
Religion.

Written by
A Person of QUALITY.

*Que quidem Disquisitio, & ad Animi
Institutionem pulcherrima, & ad mo-
derandam Religionem necessaria. Cic.
de Nat. Deor. L. 1.*

L O N D O N,
Printed in the Year MDCXCIV.

T H E
P R E F A C E .

SINCE Prefaces are so much in fashion, I presume it will not be judged improper that I set one before this History of Religion ; to clear the Design of it, and prevent Misapprehensions.

Though the Title be the History of Religion, yet there is nothing contained in it of a Polemical or Controversial Nature ; no Dispute, or

Arguments upon any Controversy ; the World has been stuffed with too many (useless) Wranglings of that kind already.

*The Subject of the following Discourse, arises from Matter of Fact ; How Religion has (from the beginning) been managed by Priest-craft of the Heathens, to mislead the Vulgar and Prophane (as they are pleased to term them) into a Blind Implicit Obedience, to their Inspired and Divine Authority ; Teaching the Belief of many Gods, or Divine Powers, and Appointing so many various Ways of Superstitious Devotions : such as the Worshipping of Idols,
of*

of Pillars and Columns consecrated by them, Adoration of Sepulchres and Dead Men; all Artificially calculated and contrived so, as they found would most easily make Impression upon the Minds of Men. So also the Notions they taught concerning the other World, were made sutable to what is seen and familiar to us in this, that they might be more easy for Mens Digestion. By these Means the Priests made themselves, and their daily increasing Numbers, be thought absolutely useful to others. But yet to confirm, and preserve themselves in the Authority and Dominion they had gotten, they invented two great Assistances, **Mystery and Persecution**: by
Mystery,

Mystery, to prevent the Use of Understanding; and by Persecution, to punish any that should attempt to break out of the Brutal Pound, and use their Reason.

Essays. *Montaigne* says, That Persecution is a Trial full of Uncertainty and Danger; for what would not a Man say, what would not a Man do, to avoid intolerable Torments? *Etiam Innocentes cogit mentiri Dolor.* Many Nations, less barbarous than the Greeks or Romans that called them so, esteemed it cruel and horrible, to torment and pull Men in pieces for doubtful and questionable Faults. *He*
says

The Preface.

vii

says further, That Julian, called the Apostate, had experimented by the Cruelty of some Christians, that there is no Beast in the World so much to be feared by Man, as Man.

All these Practices of the Heathens I have endeavour'd, and I believe very plainly, to make appear, that they are retained and followed to this day, in what is called the Church of Rome. Where resembling Priest-craft, under pretence of humbling and guiding the Understandings of the Vulgar and Unlearned, hath usurp'd a Power over both Faith and Conscience: they have made it a terrible Thing for Men to trust them.

themselves, or their own Reason, in any thing relating to Religion; 'tis with them, an equal Crime for the Prophane Vulgar (as the Heathens also called them) not to submit their Understandings to God, and their Priests. Not considering, that no Dictates of any Superiours, or Learned Men, can engage a Man's Faith, without he has reason to believe, that God had taught what they prescribe; but, then not to believe, is not opposing the Humane, but the Divine Authority. So that in truth, the Business of submitting our Understandings to Humane Authority, is but a Chimerical Notion, and comes to nothing.

But

But being aware of this Reason, which is so obvious and plain, they clamour, like Demetrius and the Silversmiths, Great is the Church: which, if fairly examined, not any thing appears more unintelligible or ridiculous. I confess, some of our own Learned Men (with too much Imitation of the Roman Clamour) when they write with Presumption enough on some dark and difficult Points, insert a Submission to the Judgment and Correction of their Holy Mother the Church; when they themselves neither pretend to tell us, nor indeed know, when, or from whence this Infallible Judgment should come.

a

And

And until it does, they assume to themselves the dictating and prescribing Power ; and submit themselves to nothings less than that Great Nothing. For if any should pretend to shew it, or expect it, from Tradition, or Fathers, or Councils, or the Popes ; there is no one almost so meanly Learned, as not to know, how fallible and contradictory to one another, all these have been.

The Church of Christ is, no question, in Believers : the Household of Nymphas was called a Church, and many other Places and Families where Believers were. Much more must the Church of Christ consist

sist of Believers in general : in which diffusive Capacity, she cannot judge of particular Questions and Controversies, because of the Division into Sects and Parties. The Divisions among us into contrary Parties and Opinions, make it necessary, to judge of what we may call the Church, by the Doctrine ; not of the Doctrine, by the (pretended) Church.

To supply all possible Defects, they chiefly follow the Method and Pretence of Mystery ; as the surest Way to keep up their Authority : they frame most of their Articles upon dark Places ; affecting to make Religion become an

Art, and themselves the sole Masters of it. Plutarch tells us, that Alexander the Great wrote a Letter to Aristotle, complaining of him, that he had set forth his Books of Select Knowledg, to instruct others as well as himself : but Aristotle answer'd, that those Treatises, which were his Metaphysics, were indeed published, but so written as not to be expos'd to common Capacities : so that in effect, Alexander was indeed the only Person to whom he had yet communicated them. I suppose he had the like reason, to write out of the reach of common Capacity, that the Learned now a days have for their obscure
Writings,

Writings, and dark Gibberish ; even to keep the (Profane) Vulgar from daring to use their own Understandings, about Matters which they see to be so perplex'd and Intricate ; unless they will enter into their Society, and so become free of the Trade.

In my Opinion, it ought to beget Admiration, to see with what Boldness those that pretend to extraordinary Share in Learning and Divinity, write upon the most hidden and never to be determined Points : with what Confidence and furious Difference some have wrote of the Trinity, asserting their Opinions to be plain and easy, and (almost) demonstrable ;

while others, as Learned, call them ridiculous Absurdities, and Heresy. Nor has the sacred particular Providence escaped the impious Temerity of the Learned, wresting the Intention of it to their own corrupt private Interests; making it a Sanctifier of any successful Mischief or Murder, of any Side, of contrary Parties, and to patronize Mens worst Imperfections. I will not enlarge into a Dispute, but (if possible) make them blush; with a Character of Divine Providence, given them by a Hea-then Writer. The excellent Plutarch, in his Life of Pompey, by occasion of some Discourse of that Nature, says, Providence is a Point of Di-
vinity

The Preface.

xv

vinity belonging only to God,
and ought to be let alone to
act after its own Method.

Nothing has given a great
Blemish to the Christian Re-
ligion, than the Controversial
Writings of the Learned: those
Disputes have engaged Nations
in more Blood and War, than
the Ignorant or the Wicked
could ever have occasioned or
caused, either by their Mistakes
or their Improbability. The tri-
vial Subjects, and the doubtful
and uncertain, that have been
so sharply and definitively ar-
gued and contested, shew that
'tis Private Interest and Hu-
mour that has occasion'd and
maintained them; without any
respect to the Service of God,

or the Christian Religion, truly and undoubtedly so called. And when they have once drove one another into extreme Notions in Religion, the Errors on both sides become alike. Thus the Gnosticks held, that 'twas no matter how Men lived, so they believed aright: and the Encratites, who detested this Libertinism, said on the contrary, that 'tis not material what Men believe, so they live well. Yet by all this, we perceive that the Gospel of Christ, in despite of all these (affected and sought) Clouds and Darkness, will and does triumphantly extend its Light and Benign Influence, to the discerning and honest Part of Mankind; its Truth and Power appear the
more

more great and wonderful, by
the Opposition of the Falseness
and Weakness of Men.

I remember that Montaigne
tells a Story of one, who went
to Rome to see (as he had
persuaded himself) the Sanctity
of their Manners; but he found,
on the contrary, a great Dis-
soluteness in the Prelates and
People of that time; nothing
less than Rome the Holy:
but this settled him more firm-
ly in the Christian Religion;
considering how great the Force
and Divinity of it must be, that
could maintain its Credit and
Dignity amidst so much Cor-
ruption, and in so vicious hands.
The Consideration of this, ought
(in my Opinion) to induce those
that

Essays.

that are Guides and Teachers, to make our Way plain and easy, to follow the clear and uncontested Methods of the Gospel, to win and excite People chiefly to the Love of God, and to encourage rather than distract.

*If any one will but temperately consider it, he will with Horror perceive, what Persecution and Mischiefs have been caused by the Imposing Power, assumed by too many that call themselves the Followers of Christ: What Wars and Expence of Christian Blood have been occasioned by their passionate and violent Disputes, concerning dark and never to be decided Questions? Had their Teaching and Learning been applied only to
the*

the right Use of the Gospel-Methods, the World had enjoyed an undisturbed and (truly) Christian Peace; not been involved in unnatural Wars, and barbarous Persecutions.

*In short, I must publish it to the World, that I like such Sermons as Dr. Tillotson's, now Arch-bishop of Canterbury: where all are taught a plain and certain Way to Salvation; and with all the Charms of a calm and blessed Temper, and of pure Reason, are excited to the uncontroverted indubitable Duties of Religion. Where all are plainly shown, that the Means to obtain the eternal Place of happy Rest, are those (and no other) which also give Peace in
this*

The Preface.

this present Life: and where every one is encouraged and exhorted to learn, but withal to use his own Care and Reason in the working out his own Salvation. I will conclude this Preface therefore, with some Passages from that excellent Person, which relate to the above-mentioned Particulars.

He tells us, Serm. on Luke 9. 55, 56. that our Saviour came to discountenance all Fierceness, and Rage, and Cruelty of Man; to restrain that furious and unpeaceable Spirit, which is so troublesom to the World, and is the Cause of so many Mischiefs and Disorders in it. He came to introduce

duce a Religion which consults, not only the Eternal Salvation of Mens Souls ; but their temporal Peace and Security, their Comfort and Happiness in *this* World. For when Religion once comes to supplant Moral Righteousness, and to teach Men the absurdest things in the World, *to lie for Truth,* and *to kill for God's Sake* ; when it serves for no other Cause but to be a Bond of Conspiracy, to inflame the Tempers of Men to a greater Fierceness, and to set a keener Edg upon their Spirits, to make them ten times more the Children of Wrath and Cruelty, than they were by Nature : then
surely

surely it loses its Nature, and ceases to be Religion; for let a Man say worse of Infidelity and Atheism if he can.

SEYMON ON
1 Joh. 4. 1.

Whatever therefore the Inconveniences of Mens judging for themselves, may be; the Inconveniences are far less on that side, than a total and implicit Resignation to the Pretenders of being Infallible; no Man being able to know who *they* are. To try Doctrines, is to enquire into the Grounds and Reasons of them; which the better any Man understands, the more firmly he will be establish'd in the Truth, and be more resolute in the day of Trial, and the better able

ble to withstand the Assaults and Arts of cunning Adversaries : and on the contrary, that Man will soon be removed from his Stedfastness, who never examined the Reasons and Grounds of his Belief ; when it comes to the Trial, he that has but little to say for his Belief, will probably neither do, nor suffer much for it.



must be determined by Time or Accident: it seemed no less than ridiculous, not to believe some Power of an Infinite Nature, that was the Creator and Disposer of Beings; and agreeably to that Position of the Apostles, the World easily consented that *in Religion is no Shame.*

We have heard of some particular Men, that have been reputed Atheists; but never of any Country or Society of Men, that profess Atheism: we have notice of many very Ridiculous Opinions, that have possessed Nations; insomuch, that Atheism seems the only Folly that has never prevailed, with any general Credit; which may deservedly put one in mind of that Saying in Holy Scripture, *The Fool hath said in his*
Psal. 14. 1. *Heart, there is no God.*
Eccl. 53. 1.

This Folly needs not a Laborious or Artificial Confutation; the Demonstrations against it, are obvious and clear. That which seems most to stagger and confound Apprehension, is the endless Search of *something without a Beginning*; a Power derived from no Power, an Infinite
 and

and Eternal Omnipotency : but whoever thinks *this* too much to be believed of God, must (of necessity) believe as much of other things ; and while he thinks he does not believe a thing so incomprehensible, at the same time he believes it of *most* (if not *all* the) Objects in the World : so whilst an Eternal Existence or Being seems too hard to be believed of God, the same Difficulty must be believed of no God. For if there were not an Omnipotent and an Eternal Power, by which all things are made and disposed ; it follows (necessarily) that all things must have been without a Beginning : so that such a One must believe the World to be, what he cannot believe God is. And while he doubts of a Creator of all things, he must believe all things created themselves ; or were Eternal and Infinite without a Creation : the former of which, is to imagine not one God, but many ; the other supposes that Absurdity in Philosophy, *Ex Nihilo Aliquid*, or *Effects without* (not only a Com-

petent, but) *any Cause*. Or if he imagins a thing called Nature, the Cause of all things; he acknowledges a God, only under a borrowed name: for whatever was without a Beginning, the Cause and the Disposer of all things, is that Infinite Power and Wisdom. *Hermes* being ask'd what God was? answered well; the Maker of all things, an Eternal and most Wise Mind. *Diogenes* calls him, the Soul of the World. *Plato* says, God is a Mind, the Cause and Orderer of all things; and *Seneca*, that he is *Mens Universi*. When *Labientus* desired *Cato*, to consult the Oracle of *Jupiter Ammon*, in their (pre-

Ille Deo plenus, tacitâ
quem mente gerebat, effu-
dit dignas Adytis è
pectore Voces. Est ne
Dei sedes, nisi Terra &
Pontus, & Aer; & Cœ-
lum, & Virtus: superos
quid querimus ultra?
Jupiter est quocunq;
Vides, quocunq; mo-
veris.

sent) hard Condition: *Cato* answered, from a Breast more truly Inspired than any Oracle those Priests could give, by a Divine Way of Questioning, *What was the Throne and Seat of God, but the Earth, the Sea, the Air and Virtue*: What farther Inquiry therefore, saith he, ought to be made, when

when God is whatever is seen, or moves, or has a Being? Thus all several Names, Titles and Appellations must determine in an Infinite Power, which is the *Life* and *Disposer* of them: nor has any Person entertained a (*settled*) Opinion, that things disposed themselves, or that they gave themselves their own Life and Being; or that they were without a Beginning as now they are, without being the Effects of an Infinite Cause.

The World in general was ever so far from believing *no* God, that they were prone to believe *many* Gods; and from the Infancy of it, that Opinion grew, and increas'd with it. An Opinion much cherish'd by Priests, in all Ages; because their Dominion, Power and Riches encreas'd of Course, and in the Nature of the Thing, by the Multiplication of Divinities, or Objects of Adoration and Worship: and it seems indeed impossible, that without some Direction and Design, such various and phantastic Divinities and Opinions about them,

Rex Ani-
us, Rex i-
dem ho-
minum,
Pæcebiq;
sacerdos.

should enter into the Minds of Men, more ready for Impression, than Invention; and having once made an implicit Resignation of their Sense and Reason, they follow with even a zealous Submission those to whom they have resigned. Upon this Foundation, Priests raised themselves to Veneration, and to an Equality with Princes; mingling their Divine Interest with Earthly Ambition: and Kings themselves thought it an Addition to their Titles, to assume the Name of Priests. In *Suetonius* you may see with the Titles of *Roman Emperours*, that of *Priest* joined. Among the Egyptians, the Priests were next in Dignity to the Kings; and of Counsel to 'em, in all Business of importance: from among them he was chosen; or if out of the Souldiery, he was forthwith invested in the High-Priesthood, and instructed by the Priests in their Mysteries and Philosophy; which were delivered under the cover of Fables and Ænigmatical Expressions. And as I design in this Discourse,

course, to shew how the Priest-craft and Power have been continued to this time, by the same and like Methods and Practices; so I shall begin, with taking notice of their continuing in that Ambition, Dignity and Power, which is so evidently practis'd and known in the Church of *Rome*.

The Pope, the High-Priest there, has exceeded all his Priestly Predecessors, in pretending a Power above all Princes; even to the de-vesting them, at his Pleasure, of their Authority and Power over their own Subjects. This Paramount Sovereignty was derived from Infallibility; in virtue of both, 'twas easy for him to require Men to believe whatever was (any way) his Interest to invent; taking his Pattern from the Heathen Priests, as well in their Methods and Tricks of Devotion, as in their Ways of supporting and propagating what they taught, in all *Ages of Mystery and Persecution*. The Heathen Priests however seem more excusable in their Inventions than Christi-

ans that follow and imitate them. For the former had no Word of God, in a revealing Gospel, to direct and limit their Belief: so that they were at large, to teach and practise such things as they believed must make the most (to them) advantageous Impression on Men; as many Gods, and the lesser to be Mediators between the superior Gods and Men, the Adoration of their Images, giving Sanctity to Shrines and Pillars. But for Christians, who pretend to believe a revealing Gospel, to continue in those Heathenish Doctrines and Methods, seems to be continued by somewhat a greater degree of that Priest-craft, which had been so long practised with Success.

God himself declares, with Jealousy, this Aptness in Men to receive and believe in many Gods; and to worship strange and helpless things: in the First Commandment he says, *Thou shalt have no other Gods but ME*; and in the Second, *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven Image, or the Likeness of any thing*

thing that is in the Heavens above, or in the Earth beneath, or in the Water under the Earth. These large and comprehensive Words, forbidding every thing that was in Nature to be worshipped, shew plainly, that God saw and considered how ready Mankind was to be misguided under a Notion of Religion, into extravagant Worshipps. We hear very early of many Gods, which probably were Men Deified; as *Saturn*, *Jupiter*, *Mercury*, *Apollo*, *Neptune*, *Pluto*, *Bacchus*: and also of divers Female Deities. Mr. *Bochart* observes hereupon, that *Gen. 1. 1.* *Noah* and his three Sons were the same with *Saturn* and his Sons, *Jupiter*, *Neptune* and *Pluto*. He takes notice of several Appellations in Scripture, as *Vir Belli*, pro *Militate*; *Vir Brachii*, pro *Robusto*; *Vir Sanguinis*, pro *Homicida*: but that of *Noah* is, *Vir Terræ*, and is so taken by the Mythologists; as if he had married the *Earth*, or the Goddess *Tellus*; and the *Earth* were the same with *Rhea* the Wife of *Saturn*. *Noe cepit esse Vir* *Gen. 9. 20.*
Terræ,

Terræ, & plantavit Vincam: but to *Saturn* also the Antients ascribed Agriculture, and the planting of Vines. And as *Noah* was drunk with Wine; so the Feast of the *Saturnalia* was celebrated with Drunkenness. *Cham* was cursed for seeing his Father *Noah's* Nakedness: and the Poets affirm, that such a Law proceeded from *Saturn*, that none should escape unpunished, that saw any of the Gods naked. Therefore in the Hymns of *Callimachus*, when *Tiresias* was struck blind for seeing *Minerva* naked, the Goddess excuses it to his Mother, saying, She was not the Cause of taking away his Sight, but that it was a Law that came from *Saturn*. The Fable of the Punishment of *Actæon* for seeing *Diana* naked, relates also to this. *Saturn* and his Wife *Rhea* were said to come from the Ocean; as *Noah* did: and *Macrobius* says, that in the Medal of *Saturn*, there was a Ship on the one side, and his Head on the other: he cites also *Alexander Polyhistor*, that *Saturn* foretold the Flood;

Flood; which answers to *Noah's* being forewarned of it by God, and his taking on him thereupon to be a *Preacher of Righteousness* 2 Pet. 2.5. to that Generation. Mr. *Bochart* shows farther, that *Cham* or *Ham* was worshipp'd under the Name of *Jove*; the Egyptians calling him by the Name of *Jove Amoun* or *Hammon*: by the like manner of Comparifon, and by their various Appellations, he finds *Japhet* to be *Neptune*, *Canaan* to be *Mercury*, *Nimrod* to be *Bacchus*; of the Reasonableness and Probability of these Conjectures, any one may be satisfied, by reading that Learned Author.

I have set down these things, to show how early the Corruption of Deifying of Men, was: though at the same time, they acknowledged also a superiour Sort of *Demons*, who never were Men; as I shall show in the progress of this Discourse, together with the Reason why I insist on this Variety of Gods.

There

There were also *Household Gods*, called *Penates*; which were *Teraphim* or little Images. The Holy Scripture takes notice, that *Rachel* stole her Father's *Teraphim*; and in the Prophet 'tis said, the King of *Babel* consulted the *Teraphim*, and look'd into the *Liver*. These were so relied on for Blessings and Protections, that they were always carried about. When *Hector's* Ghost appeared to *Aeneas*, he remembers him of this piece of Devotion; commending to him the carrying these *Penates* (or *Household Gods*) with him, as Companions of his Fortune; *Suosq; tibi commendat Troja Penates, hos cape Fatorum comites*, Virgil. lib. 2. So also in his third Book, when *Aeneas* takes Shipping to fly from his destroyed Country, he takes care of the *Penates*, as a part of his Family; *Ferror exul in altum, cum sociis natoq; Penatibus & magnis Diis*. When *Jacob* fled from *Laban*, his Wife *Rachel* stole her Father's *Teraphim*, *Penates* or Images; and when *Laban* overtook them, he first expostulates

Gen. 31.

19.

Ezek. 21.

21.

stulates with *Jacob*, why he would use him so as to carry away his Daughters like Captives, and not suffer *him* their Father to take a kind Farewel : but then secondly and chiefly, that he had also stolen his Teraphim. *Rachel* in the mean time fate upon these Tera-
Gen. 31. 30.
 phim, to conceal them from her Father ; believing them to be useful for their Protection in their Travel to *Canaan*.

The strange Readiness and Inclination to worship Images, by those very Persons that made them, seems very unlikely to proceed from their own Opinion of their own Work. The excellent Reasons of the Prophet *Isaiab*, seem to demonstrate this : He says, “ The Work-
Isai. 44.
 “ men, if they were gathered to-
11. Et deinceps.
 “ gether, would be ashamed : The
 “ Smith with the Tongs both
 “ worketh it in the Coals, and
 “ fashioneth it with Hammers :
 “ —He is hungry, and his Strength
 “ fails ; he drinketh no Water,
 “ and is faint. The Carpenter
 “ stretcheth out his Rule, he mark-
 “ eth

“ eth it out with a Line, he fit-
 “ teth it with Planes : — He mak-
 “ eth it after the Figure of a Man,
 “ according to the Beauty of a
 “ Man, that it may remain in the
 “ House. He heweth down Ce-
 “ dars, he taketh the Cypress and
 “ the Oak ; he planteth an Ash,
 “ and the Rain nourishes it : then
 “ shall it be for a Man to burn,
 “ for he will take thereof and warm
 “ himself, and will also bake Bread ;
 “ of the Residue he will make a
 “ God, and worship it ; a Graven
 “ Image, and will fall down there-
 “ to. He burneth part thereof in the
 “ Fire, with part he eateth Flesh ;
 “ he also warms himself therewith :
 “ the Residue he maketh a God,
 “ worships it, prays unto it ; says
 “ to it, Deliver me, for thou art
 “ my God. Thus useles Gods are
 “ a Burden to the weary Beasts that
 “ carry them. They lavish Gold
 “ out of the Bag, and weigh Sil-
 “ ver out of the Ballance ; they
 “ hire a Goldsmith, and he maketh
 “ it a God : — but they cry to him,
 “ and he cannot answer, nor save
 “ out

Isai. 46. 1.

“ out of Trouble. But to all this, the Prophet adds, “ *Remember this,* “ *and shew your selves to be Men;* “ *bring things again to mind, O ye* “ *Transgressors.* These Words seem plainly to intimate, that the People who did these things, were *abused and misled by others*: and therefore 'tis, that he admonishes them *to shew themselves Men*, by using their own Consideration; and that they *should bring again to mind* what a ridiculous Fancy 'tis, that they could make a God who had that Power, which themselves (the Markers of him) wanted; or that there is so great a Difference in the same Piece of Wood, that one part is fit only to serve them in Household Offices, the other part is qualified to save them and their Families. Assuredly this Distinction arose not from the Imagination of the Artificer, that used the Wood or Silver; but from the Priests: who having gained an Opinion among Men of their Spiritual Power, pretended by their *Consecration* to make the Difference; and pronounced,

by

by their Divine Authority, that these were Gods.

There are many Authorities that make it clear, that 'twas not the People nor the Artisans, who first broached the Belief that their Images were Gods; but the Priests, who by virtue of their *Consecration* pretended to make the Images and Pillars *Sacred*, and fit to be filled with the Spirits of Dæmons.

In *Asclep.* *Hermes Trismegistus* says, their Forefathers had devised an Art to make Gods, and to call the Souls of Demons and Angels, and put them into those Images or Gods. *Jamblichus* calls these *Consecrated Idols*, *Images filled with Divine Spirits*: and again, *Animated Statues, filled with Spirit and Sense*. *Arnobius* sets down the Excuse of the Heathens; that they did not worship the Gold and Silver, or other Materials of which the Images were made: but they worshipp'd the Divine Spirits, that were brought to inhabit those Statues and Images. *Arnob. l. 6. ad Gentes; Eos in his colimus, eosq; veneramur, quos Dedicatio infert,*

Statuas
animatas,
tenfa &
Spiritu
plenas.

☉ *fabrilibus efficit habitare simulachris.* Which also extended to Pillars and Columns; as may be inferred from *Leviticus* 26. 1. *Ye shall make you no Idols nor Graven Image, neither rear you up a standing Image,* (the Margin for *standing Image* readeth *Pillar*) *to bow down unto it.* This same Method of Priest-Craft is continued in the Church of *Rome*: the *Romish Saints* and *Angels* answer to the *Demons* and *Heroes*, Deified by the *Heathen Priests*; and their *Idol of Bread*, *Divinity* infused into *Crosses*, *Images*, *Agnus Dei's* and *Relicks*, correspond to the *Pillars*, *Statues* and *Images* consecrated by *Pagan Priests*.

When *St. Paul*, at *Athens*, preached *Jesus Christ* risen from the dead; they took this for a Part of their *Doctrine of Demons*; which Word is expretly used in the *Original*. Our *Translation* saith, *Others said, He seemeth to be a Setter-forth of strange Gods*; but in the *Original* 'tis, of *strange Demons*. For hearing of one, who after his

C

Death

Death had Divine Honours and Worship given to him; they took it presently, according to their own Opinion, that he was proposed as a New Dæmon. And such Doctrines and Opinions as these, might probably be the Occasion that *St. Paul* afterwards writes expressly; *There is but one God, and one Mediator between God and Men, the Man Christ Jesus.* But this Admonition and Caution has not been at all prevalent with the Priests; it being a Limiting and Infringing their Jurisdiction and Interests: therefore with an *Obstante* to *Paul*, they continue the old Methods of Priest-Craft, multiplying upon all Occasions the Objects of Worship; a thing that serves to enlarge their Power, and increase their Interests and Wealth.

It would be almost infinite, to repeat the extravagant Honours and Opinions which the Fathers and other Ecclesiastical Writers ascribe unto, and aver concerning *Dead Men*. They call the Bodies of Saints, *Defences and Fortifications*

Chrysoft.
Hom. 70.

of

of Cities : they pretend, that these Carcasses defeat not only visible Enemies, but invisible Fiends, and Ambuscades of the Devil. The Martyrs are stiled *Guardians of Cities, Lieutenants of Places; Captains and Champions*, by whom they were protected; and Preventers of all Mischiefs from the Devil. In particular, *James Bishop of Nisibis* was, by Order of *Constantine*, buried *within* the Walls of the City; *that he might be a Bulwark and Defender thereto.* An Historian of these good Times, inveighing against the Emperor *Leo Isaurus*, for demolishing of Images, calls them. *Turres atq; munitiones religiosi cultus.*

The Deifying and Invocating of Saints, prevailed in the Christian World shortly after the Death of *Julian* the Apostate: and the Grounds of it were the invented Stories, and (Reports of) Wonders shewed upon those, who with Devotion approach'd the Shrines of Martyrs, and pray'd there to their Memories or Sepulchres. And 'tis

observable, that at first these Devotions were directed to *God*; and these *Places* were chose, only to excite Devotion by the Memory of those Sufferers for *Christ's* sake: but the Priests reduced that, to their own Use and Interest; and prevailed by their Craft and Power, that the Saints should be prayed to as Patrons and Mediators; just in the same manner, as the worshipping of Demons was introduced by Pretences of Miracles, of Signs and Wonders, which the Priests were always as ready to invent, as others to follow. But those evil Spirits insinuated themselves too into their own Statues and Images, and assisted the impious Devotion that they saw Mankind misled into; even that of Deifying the Dead, by erecting Statues to them, on a Pretence of Oracles, and miraculous Cures of Diseases.

Euseb.
Prap. E-
vang. c. 3.

Dale scrip-
illust. Brit.
c. 11.

One of our own Historians tells us, that about the Year 712, one *Egwin* of *Worcester* published in Writing, Revelations and Visions that he had seen; whereby he was enjoined,

injoined, that in his Diocess the Image of the Blessed Virgin should be worshipp'd by the People. This was ratified by Pope *Constantine*, who caused *Brithwald* the Archbishop to call a Council of the Clergy at *London*, to commend this Image-worship to the People.

In the second Council of *Nice* there was an excellent Cause found for worshipping of Images; a Tale of a certain Priest or Monk. This Monk used to worship an Image of the *Virgin Mary with Christ in her Arms*: the Monk had been long tempted by the Devil to Fornication; at last the ingenious Devil, under an Oath of Secrecy, told the Monk plainly, that he would never leave wearying him with lustful Desires, til he forsak worshipping of that Image. The Monk, notwithstanding his Oath of Secrecy, revealed this to an Abbot called *Theodore*: who first acquitted the Monk of his breach of Oath; and then added, that he had better frequent *bandy Houses*,

than forbear worshipping such an Image: a Ghostly Advice, that was not (perhaps) unacceptable to the Monk.

Thus was Religion corrupted, almost from the beginning, by Priest-Craft; and 'tis managed to this Day, in the Romish Church, by the same Arts and Methods: even a Pretence to such a Divine and Infallible Power, as can give Sanctity and Vertue to Stocks and Stones, by the Priestly Consecration; and may raise up Altars to a piece of Bread, transubstantiated into a God by their Diviner Power, so that they may pronounce of it, *This is your Saviour that redeemed you from Damnation.* I think 'tis not reasonable to believe, that the common People should fancy of themselves, that one of their Fellow-Creatures could make a God: and the Baker that baked the Bread would hardly of himself have imagined, that a piece of it should be his *Saviour.* No, these and all other the most idolatrous and fantastick Religions and Devotions were

were (first) taught, and (afterwards) enjoined by Priests.

When *Hezekiah* died, *Manasses* built Altars for *Baal*, and worshipp'd all the Host of Heaven. when *Josiah* destroyed all those High Places, he (cautiously and prudently) put down there the Attendance of the Idolatrous Priests. ^{2 Kings} 23. 5. But the Jews were a long time after charged with the Idolatrous Worship of *High-Places*, and to be Priests of *Trees* and *Proseucha's*, which were sacred Groves; and the Interpreters of *Moses's* Laws: They are the Words of *Juvenal*, *Nil præter Nubes & cæli Numen adorant*: and again, *Interpres legum Solymarum, magna sacerdos Arboris, ac summi fida internuntia cæli*, *Satyr. 6.* And in his third *Satyr* he complains, that the sacred Groves, where *Numa* used with the Goddess *Egeria*, were let to the Jews for *Proseucha's*: and *Philo Judæus*, in his Embassy to the Emperor *Caius*, thanks him for allowing the Jews their *Proseucha's*, where they assembled on their Sabbaths.

The Synagogues were within the Cities, and these Proseucha's without; it was in some such Place, that *Lydia* met *St. Paul*. *Solomon* made such High-Places, or Proseucha's, for *Ashoreth* the Abomination (or Idol) of the Zidonians, *Chemosh* of *Moab*, *Molech* of the Ammonites: and when *Josiah* destroyed these, as the only way to suppress the False Worship, he put down the Idolatrous Priests. Such a Place as a Proseucha, (which was a separate Place for Devotion) where the Images of their Gods were, *Virgil* describes; and makes the unhappy *Priam* choose it, as a most proper Place to die in; when he saw his Kingdom sinking (under Flames) to ruine: he was taught by his Priests to die in that Place, which they had made sacred; and among those Images, which they had made Gods. Not unlike to which, is the Devotion or Fancy that the Priests of *Rome* have put into Mens Heads, to die in the Habit of a Priest or Monk, when they are to be executed: as

Acts 16.
13, 14.

1 Kings
11, 5, 7.

2 Kings
23, 5.

if their very Habit carried with it some Divine Assistance; accordingly I remember, that the Brother of the *Portugal* Ambassador, who was beheaded on *Tower-hill*, died in the Habit of a Monk.

It always appeared to be the Craft of Priests, to multiply Gods and Places of Devotion, that their Numbers might not only be excusable, but necessary also, to attend such various Worships and Opinions: at *Jezebel's* Table did eat 450 of *Baal's* Priests, and 400 of the Prophets of *the Groves*; 2 Kings 18. 19. a goodly Company of Chaplains for one Princess. From the Asiatics and Egyptians to the Greeks, and from these latter to the Romans, descended many Names of Gods: *Homer* mingles them in all Humane Concerns, and makes them of Parties: and *Virgil* continuing the same Method, in the Seventh Book of his *Æneids*, makes *Juno* stirring up the Aid of Hell against the Trojans. Nor did the Partiality and Passions they were made subject to, hinder the Veneration of them:

nor

nor yet their being represented as subject to Lust, Revenge and Mischief, lessen their Veneration as Gods; though guilty of those very Crimes which the Priests owned they would punish in Men. But the credulous Minds of submitting Men received easily the Impressions, that those sought to make upon 'em, whose only Design and End was, to bring things as near as could be, to their own Interests, Inclinations and Fancies: and who therefore taught, that the Management of Affairs belonging to the other World, very much resembled the Ways and Methods of this. What is yet more gross, the Egyptians were instructed to honour with Devotion, the most contemptible things, for some Profit that was received by them, or to appease them from doing Mischief: the

Quis nescit, Voluisti
 Bythinice, qualia de-
 mens Aegyptus porten-
 ta colat? — Crocodi-
 lion adorat. Illa pavet
 sacrorum Serpentibus I-
 bim: Effigies sacri ni-
 ter aurea Cercopitheci,
 dimi-

Latin Poet describes their
Wild Devotions, in ado-
 ring Crocodiles, Serpents,
 Golden Monkeys, Fishes,
 Dogs, and even Onions
 and Leeks; whereupon

he

He deservedly exclaims, *O holy Nations! who have Gods growing in their Gardens.* All these Follies were of the same Prescription, and from the same Cause, and Authors: the Priests always watching the ready Inclination of the People, to believe something that came easily to their Imaginations; and what else they were most apt to be perswaded to, they presently enlarged their Devotions, and thereby their own Interests and Dominion.

It may now be proper to shew the several Distinctions of Gods and Divine Power, and the Uses of them: whereby it will further appear, how the Priest-Craft contrived Notions and Opinions, to engage People to submit implicitly to their Directions; and finding them most apt to believe such things, and in such Ways and Methods, as had some resemblance to *this* World, they set forth the En-

joyments

dimidio. Neque enim
 rant ubi Me...
 de, uti v... The
 certain...
 parti...
 hic p...
 hic oppid...
 venerantur. — For
 rum ac exp...
 rellis vio
 lare, aut...
 mori
 u: O sancta
 quibus hac nascuntur in
 hertis Numina! *Juv.*
Sat. 15.

joyments and Punishments of the *other* World, futable to their Apprehensions and Affections in *this*: through all Ages, the fame fort of Priest-Craft has continued, and descends even to ours; as I doubt not but will evidently appear by the following Descriptions and Comparisons. The first Thing to be considered is, the Distinctions they made of Divine Powers; and the severall Uses of them, which they framed futable to the common Method of Affairs, here in this World; where all Suits and Applications that are made to Kings and Princes, are done by great Men and Patrons, or Friends, as Mediators between the inferiour sort of Men, and those superiour Powers. After this Model they composed their Method of Devotion, under the Names of Heroes, and (sometimes) of Demons; which (I say) is still continued, or however imitated in the Church of *Rome*, under the Names of Saints and Angels.

Demons in the Theology of the Gentiles, were reckoned of, as an inf-

inferiour sort of Divine Powers : the Antiquity of this is derived as far as *Zoroaster* ; and 'twas held, that these were constituted between the superiour Gods and Men, to mediate, and to reconcile them ; the Superiour Cœlestial Gods, being supposed so august and pure, as not to be prophaned or approached with the immediate Care of earthly things ; therefore these more inferiour Divine Powers were to be engaged between the superiour Gods and Men. *Plato* says, Demons were Messengers and Reporters between Gods and Men ; and again, from Men to Gods ; of Prayers and Devotions from Men, and the Return of Rewards from the Gods : And *Apuleius* delivers the same Doctrine, giving the Reason of it, that it was not agreeable to the Majesty of the Cœlestial Gods, to take such Cares upon themselves.

Plat. de Detect. Orac.

Plat. Symp

Neque enim pro Majestate Deorum Cœlestium fuerit, ista curare. De Dem. Plat.

There were too a sort of Demons, that were only Deified Men ; as I have observed before from *Boschartus* : this was as early as *Noah*.

To which I may now add, that *Baal*, or *Bell*, was the first King of *Babel*; but after his Death deified and reputed a God; whence came the Names of *Baalims* or *Lords*, all one with *Demons*: and their Rites, which were Cuttings and Lancings, (which were *Funerat* Rites) were used in their Ceremonies and Devotions. *Hesiod* says, that when the happy Men of the first Golden Age departed from this Life, *Jupiter* promoted them to be *Demons*, that is, Patrons of Mortal Men: but *Plato* would have all those that died valiantly in the Field, to be declared *Demons*; and that *the Oracles* should be consulted, how they should be buried and honoured: he would have their Sepulchres also to be worshipp'd as the Sepulchres of *Demons*; and that all who excelled in Vertue should be so treated. This Method too the Romish Priests have continued; but keep the Power of *the Oracle* in themselves, namely to pronounce what Honours shall be done to departed Saints: the

Opinion

1 Kings
18. 28.

Vino de
Rep.

Opinion and Doctrine of *Plato* for deifying Men that died valiantly in the Field, was very exactly followed in the deifying the Duke of *Benfort*, who was killed in the Fight against the Turks at *Candy*; there was no other Cause to make him a Saint, or one of *Plato's* Demons, but for *Plato's* Reason, Dying bravely in the Field. Even *Eusebius* Præp. F. vang. mentions it with a seeming Approbation, that it was the harmless Practice of Christians to honour the Memory of Martyrs, by assembling at their Sepulchres; to show, saith he, to the Gentiles that we also honour Men that have excelled in Vertue. *Hermes Trimegistus* says, that *Esculapius*, *Osyris*, and his Grandfather *Hermes*, were worshipp'd for Demons in his time; the Egyptians generally worshipp'd them, and call'd them *Sancta Animalia*; but divers Learned Men are of Opinion, that the Egyptian *Scraps*, whose Idol had a *Buffel* on his Head, was *Joseph*; in remembrance of the Preservation of *Egypt* by him, when he first laid up, and

and afterwards distributed the *Corn* of the seven abounding Years.

Cicero gives an exact Description

Divos & eos qui cœlestes semper habiti, & illos quos in cœlum merita vocaverint.

Est & superius aliud augustiusque Dæmonum genus; qui semper a corporis compedibus & nexibus liberi, certis potestatibus carentur. Ex hac sublimiori Dæmonum copia, autumat *Plato*, singulis hominibus in vitâ agenda Testes & Custodes singulos dari. *Plut. de Diss. Orac.*

tion of the Demons and Heroes; or such as were always Gods, and such as their Merits had made so. *Plutarch* tells us, that besides Men deified, there was another sort of Demons who never were in Earthly Bodies; a Diviner sort never subject to the Confinement of Bodies: and these sublimer De-

mons were the chief Guardians of Men and their Actions; these differ'd in Degree from Heroes. This is continued among the Romanists, in their Saints and Angels: and this Notion of worshipping Angels gave perhaps occasion to that Advice by *St. Paul*, *Let no Man beguile you through Humility, and a Worshipping of Angels*, Col. 2. 18. *Gregory of Tours*, who wrote long since, treating of the Miracles of the Martyrs, frames
many

many fabulous Stories to advance Saint-worship: and there is another Author equally fit to be credited, *Simeon Metaphrastes*, who makes St. *Katherine* at her Martyrdom, pray to God to grant *those* their Requests, that *through her* called upon his holy Name: but in a higher Strain he makes St. *Margaret* pray, that whosoever should for the Lord's sake worship the Tabernacle of her Body, or should build an Oratory to her, and there offer spiritual Oblations and Prayers, and shall ask Salvation and Mercy *through her*, that the Lord would grant them plenty of all good things. Agreeably to all this, *Theophanes* greatly complains of it, that the Emperor *Leo Isaurus* erred (high he) not only in opposing the Adoration of Images, but the Intercession also of *the Mother of God*, and of all the Saints: and the Historians of that *Kidney*, no less blame the Emperor *Constantinus Copronymus* for the same irreverent Error: for he punish'd those that made Prayers to *the Mother of God* and the holy

D

Saints,

Saints, through whom all Help is conveyed to us : and in the 2d Council of Nice, the Council of Constanti-
nople was condemned for being against Saint and Image-worship ; which was then established, and for which the Bishops of Rome had appeared with great Zeal.

I cannot here properly omit an Observation, that the Invocation of Saints and Image-worship were brought in by the increase of Priests in Monkery. For about the Year of our Lord 370, the Invocation of Saints began to be publickly introduced into Churches ; at the very same time when by Basil, Gregory Nyssen, and Nazianzen, the Practice and Profession of Monastical Life were brought (out of Egypt and Syria) into Greece. When the Empress Theodora design'd to restore Image-worship, she acquainted those in Authority with her Design, and then sent for the chiefest of the Monks, and propos'd to them the restoring the Worship of Images : She found them very ready for the purpose ; and thereupon called a
Synod,

Synod, where the Idolatry was again erected, 120 Years after it had been suppress'd by *Leo Isaurus*.

Having touch'd upon the Craft of Priests, to frame the Worship and Scheme of Religion futable to what the People in some measure knew and understood in things of *this* World; we must also take notice, that they contrived the Joys and Punishments of the *other* so as should be most agreeable to their Fancies and Apprehensions about what they saw *here*. And as they found their Craft successful, in making some Powers their Mediators in the Court of Heaven, as was usual in Courts below; and made also Deities of such Persons, whose Courage or Vertue deserved well here, or of the Publick: so also they framed the manner of Sacrificing and Sacrifices, as such a Description of the other World, as was most easy to Fancy and Imagination. In their Sacrifices they taught such and such Offerings were to be made, as somewhat resembled the

Powers they sacrificed to: and had not this been an Invention, very probable and likely, to entice and lead Men, especially the Vulgar, they would never have thought of such Methods and Distinctions.

Cic. de
Nat. Deor.

Tempest was consecrated for a God among the Romans; and as Storms and foul Weather was *dark* and *dull*, so the gentle Gales of *Zephyrus* made the Weather *bright* and *cheerful*: therefore they taught, that black Cattel were to be sacrificed to the former, and white to the other; as resembling their dark and bright Natures. When *Dido* implored *Juno*, in the Concerns of her Love and Passion, she poured Wine between the Horns of a *snowy* Heifer; representing by the *Whiteness* of her Sacrifice, that she implored a *gentle* Compassion. A Bull was sacrificed to *Neptune*, because his Noise and Violence seem'd to represent a troubled Ocean. And when *Aeneas* desired the Assistance of the Sybil, to descend to *the dark* Infernal World, she proposes in the first place a proper Sacrifice of *black*

Nigram
hiemi pec-
udem, Zephyris
foelicibus
Albam.

Virgil. l. 3.

Ipsa tenens
dextra patrem
pulcherrima
Dido, candentis
vaccae media
inter cornua fundit.

l. 4.

Cattel

Cattel to be offered; representing to the Mind thereby an Image of those black Mansions.

Duc ni-
gras pecu-
des, ea pri-
ma piac-
ula sunt.
Item, l. 6.

Nor did they only fashion these Matters, so as that they might be easy to the Minds and Fancies of Men; but they modell'd also the other World, suitably to such a taking and prevailing Method: they made the Enjoyments of their *Elysium*, or Paradise, suitable to what they most affected in this World; whatever inclined their Affections *here*, their Enjoyments *there* were to be of that nature, and to be made perfect by being made subject to no Disturbance or Alteration. For Infants that were not arrived to *Choice* or *Inclination*, there was a separate Place, fill'd with their innocent Mourning; an Opinion that has also prevailed with some Christians: the warlike *Heroes* exercised there *Eternal Musters*, driving their Chariots in large Plains; and others in such Exercises and Divertisements, as they were inclined to in their Life; Lovers in separated Groves, and the Poets in such Fields

Eadem
sequitur
Tellure re-
positos.
Vergil. l. 6.

Vagitus &
ingens, in-
fantiumq;
animæ
flentes in
limine pri-
mo. *l. 6.*

as had been the Subjects of their Songs. On the other side, the Punishments *there* were made suitable to the Crimes committed *here*: the wickedly *Ambitious* were thrown into *the lower* part of Hell; the *Luxurious* punish'd with tempting *Feasts*, with-held from them by watching *Furies*: restless and unquiet Minds that denied Peace to others, were chastised with perpetual Rolling of Stones, which pressed to return with their Weight upon them. The Doctrine about these Matters in general, was, that the Punishments and Torments were suitable to the Offences committed

Ergo exercentur pœnis, veterumq; malorum supplicia expectant. Aliæ panduntur inanes, suspensæ ad ventos: aliis sub gurgite vasto infectum eluitur scelus, aut exuritur igne. Quisq; suos patimur manes, exinde per amplum mittimur Elysium, & pauci lata arva tenemus. *Virg. l. 6.*

here: and a direct Purgatory was described; where some were purged or cleansed, by hanging in the Air exposed to the Winds; some were wash'd in vast Whirlpools, some refined by Fire; and after the proper time of Purgation,

all were released, and sent to the happy Fields of *Elysium*, their Heaven.

Nothing

Nothing can be more plain, than that the Priest-craft has continued such a Purgatory to this Day. *Mahomet's* Paradise was framed after this manner; the greatest and wickedest Sinners are to pass over a Bridg with heavy Sacks, and by their Weight to be thrown off and press'd into Hell; the lesser fall only into a Purgatory, from whence they are to be released, and finally received into Paradise: but those that merited a happy Place, shall be bless'd with the Company of fair Virgins; who have large Eyes, and perpetually flourish in a Bloom of Youth and Beauty; while Boys of Divine Figures, like so many Ganymeds, shall attend with always renewing Feasts. The Purgatory of the Romanists, is distinguished into divers Apartments; there is a Place for Children, another for the Holy Fathers that died before the Ascension of our Blessed Saviour: there are Lakes of Fire for such as have been *long*, or *profligately* wicked; and Flowry Fields and shining Garments for such as

have indeed been good, but wanted some degree of the due and required Perfection: thus is Purgatory described by Cardinal *Bellarmino*, *de Purgat. l. 2. cap. 6. & cap. 14.*

Thus has the Craft of those that taught Religion, drawn the easy Minds of Men to believe in such things as had a Resemblance to things of this World: and having by these Ways involved Men in Submission to what they taught, they then enlarged into Opinions and Doctrines more difficult, nay absurd and impossible. Though the World from the beginning very readily, and with the greatest Reason, consented to such a thing as Religion; yet there could not be on the one hand, such an *Artificial* Scheme of some parts of it, and on the other such *various* and *strange* Opinions about what Gods we must believe in, or in the Exercise of our Devotion to those Higher Powers, but by the Contrivance of the Priests. 'Twas impossible that the People (or as we are now called, the Laity) should busy themselves

selves about, or should be capable to invent such Names of Gods; such particular Applications of their Powers; such Methods and Ways of Devotion; such Distinction of Sacrifices: and least of all is it probable, that they should be the Inventors of sacrificing themselves; that is, of sacrificing their own Persons, or the Persons of their Children. *Agamemnon*, to change the contrary Wind, vowed to *Diana*, the fairest; which fell out to be his own Daughter *Iphigenia*: I suppose he did not design the Cruelty upon his own Daughter; but *Chalcas* the Priest, first suggested the Making, and then the Performance of his Vow. In the War of *Thebes*, *Mænechas* the Son of *Creon* vowed himself to *Mars*; the *Decii* devoted themselves to the Infernal Gods; *Marius*, in the Cimbrian War, sacrificed his Daughter *Calphurnia*; *Curtius* shot himself into a Gulf, being first made ready by the Priests, and girt *Cinctu Gabino*: the Saxons were so perswaded by their Priests, that many of them were even ambitious

bitious of being sacrificed. Who doubts, that all these Deaths (or Murders) are solely owing to the Doctrine and Institution of Priests?

The Pronefs of Mankind to believe, by degrees gave Encouragement and Opportunity to those that pretended to separate themselves wholly to the Service of the Gods; and by that Shew of a nearer Attendance and Understanding of them, they intit'led themselves to teach and to prescribe such Rules and Ways of Religion towards the heavenly Powers, as they found might be useful to enlarge their own Power and Interest. And the more various and intricate they contrived the Methods and Rules of Devotion and Worship, so much the more there would be need of their Interpretations and Directions, and also of their Numbers. Things most ridiculous and improbable, nay impossible, were sometimes most proper for them to pronounce and teach: for what is *rational* carries its own Weight; and they could derive no Authority to

them-

themselves by such a Method of Religion. But things that are *sublime*, above the reach of *servile Reason*, things that Reason cannot understand or justify, if believed, must be an entire Submission to the sacred Authority of these Divinely inspired Persons, that are the *Teachers* of others: to this purpose they ever taught, that no Belief can or ought to be hard to an Active Faith; the Difficulty not being in the things we are taught to believe, but in the Perverseness or Imbecillity of the Persons who want Faith to believe. I wish, that among the most *Reformed* Christians these Methods of Priest-craft were not so much, and violently pursued; the Impositions to believe and profess unnecessary, and even extravagant things, where neither Reason will justify it, nor does Religion require it.

Having thus laid open, how Religion was from the beginning managed by Priest-craft, and always framed and modelled to support
their

their Interests and Power, prevailing by degrees on the Minds of Men; it will be proper to examine in due place, whether 'tis probable that the Priests themselves believ'd what they taught: but first I will (briefly) show, how the same Priestcraft continues apparently in the Romish Church to this day.

The Pagan Doctrines of Demons and Heroes, are revived in that of Angels and Saints; Saints are *Canoniz'd* (or, as their Writers speak, *Beatified*) as formerly the Heroes were *Deified*: and as I instanced before, the Duke *de Beufort* dying valiantly in the Field, became one of *Plato's* Heroes, and one of the Church's Saints. And as the Heroes and Demons were made Mediators with the superior Gods, so it continues still, the Names of *Heroes* and *Demons* being only changed into *Saints* and *Angels*: every private Christian is directed to choose him a particular Patron in Heaven, that may intercede for him with God. Their very Sepulchres are as much revered
as

as formerly; their Relicks are kept with a sacred Veneration: and Prayers are made to them as *Mediators*, notwithstanding St. Paul's Declaration before cited, *There is but one God, and one Mediator between God and Men, even the Man Jesus Christ.* The Reverence and Adoration paid to Images, is by some endeavoured to be extenuated; by pretending, that Images are only used as venerable Memorials, to excite others to the Imitation of the Holiness of the Saints, represented by those Images: this Pretence was also formerly used, in that Particular; and also for the Ceremonies used at Sepulchres, which I mentioned before; because the Priests perceived, that it look'd too gross to pay Devotion to *senseless* things. But when they had obtained the Power of an Implicit Obedience to their Directions, they durst not to injoin the Veneration of the Images themselves. Whoever has been in the Countries under the Dominion of the Church
of

of *Rome*, has seen this: I believe no such Person will deny the Adoration paid by the Romanists, to the Image of the *Virgin Mary*. I knew a Person of Quality that was at *Bruxels*, when the Image of the *Virgin Mary* was carried a little way out of Town; the Priests attending it, and the People paying Adoration to it: and when it came to the Place where it was to be fix'd, the Priests had contriv'd a Device to make the Image bow to the People; so that one of the Company was over-joy'd to see how gracious the Blessed *Virgin* in her Image had been to them. In *Padua*, where the Body of *St. Anthony* lies, the People crowd to kiss the Stones, and rub their Beads against them: The now Bishop of *Sarum* says, in the Account he gives of that Place, that in the little Chappel of *St. Anthony* these Words are written, *Exaudit quos non audit & ipse Deus*; they have reason to rub Beads, and pay an extraordinary Devotion, to a Saint
more

more ready to hear than God himself is. A Person of Quality that gives an Account of his Travels through *France* and *Italy*, was present when they took down the Jaw-bone of *St. Anthony* and his Tongue in a *Christaline-Glass*; which being set a-while on the Altar, *first* the Priests and all the Assistants paid their Devotions to it, *then* it was carried in Procession; and after that Ceremony was over, 'twas full Employment for two Priests of the Cloyster, to rub against it the Beads that were handed to them by the People. In the Lady of *Lauretta's* Chapel, they kiss the Walls, lick the Stones, and rub their Beads against them. In the Church of *St. John Lateran* is the *Scala Sancta*, or the Stairs on which our Saviour went up to the Judgment-Hall; they are of white Marble: on one of them 'tis believed some of our Saviour's Blood drop'd, after his Scourging. But the Person of Quality that writes his (Ingeni-

ous and Candid) Remarks, says; He could perceive no such Stains, though the Roman Catholicks pretended that they saw 'em very plainly. He discoursed with Cardinal *Howard*, how these Stairs were preserved, and brought thither? The Cardinal freely confess'd, they were not the true Stairs on which our Saviour went up to the Judgment-Hall; and that the Error was not discovered, till some time after they were fixed there: but the People being settled in an Opinion, that these were the true Stairs; it was not, he said, thought advisable to undeceive them, their Devotion being however very commendable.

The same Divine Infusion that Pagan Priests pretended to bring into Pillars and Columns, the Roman Priests now imitate in Crosses, set up not only in Places of Devotion, but (as the Heathen Pillars were) in common High-ways: but the Roman Priests have enlarged the Priest-craft of pretending

to a Power of Consecration, or a Divine Infusion, by their Consecrating such an innumerable Multitude of Puppets, *Agnus Dei's*, and such like Trifles. And the Idolatry of Bread-worship is much more impudent, than any of the Gentile Idolatries: the Gentile Priests pretended indeed, that they brought the Demons into Images and Columns; but they never had the gross Confidence, to own that they could Transubstantiate their Images into Demons: but it seems, Priest-craft was not yet enough refined; therefore not satisfied with the Power of such a Consecration as might infuse some Influence into a Piece of Bread, they brought the People to believe they could make the Bread to be God. As formerly it was their Endeavour, by pretended Miracles, to enlarge the Opinion of their Divine Power; so in these latter Days they have exceeded in such Devices. I need not trouble the Reader or my self, with raking into their Kennels of

Legends, and other Fabulous Histories; but I cannot omit their strange and wild Endeavours to prove, how certainly they can make a God of a *Wafer* or other little Piece of Bread, not by the Authority or Testimony of Men, but of Beasts. There is a Book, whose Title sets forth this incomparable Impudence; 'tis called, *The School of the Eucharist, establish'd by the Miraculous Adoration paid to it by Beasts, Birds, and Insects*. I need not repeat many of the Particulars, of the Impossible Follies there related; but I cannot omit one very remarkable Tale in that famous Book, among many others almost as ridiculous. The Tale is of one *St. Malo*, who being upon the Sea on Easter-day, prayed God to afford him the Means to celebrate the Mass, and to those that accompanied him to hear it; these are his Words: And one would wonder what kind of Vessel they were in, that did not afford them room for that, as well

well as contain them. But in this Distress, the Book says, a little Island appeared in the midst of the Sea; and they went down into it (it should seem the Island was lower than the Vessel they were in) to the number of 180 Persons: they set up an Altar, St. *Malo* said Mass, and gave the Communion to a great number; after which retiring to their Ship (now 'tis confess'd 'twas a Ship, and yet not big enough to say Mass in it) they perceived this Island, or rather the Fish, sunk to the bottom: 'twas strange they should be upon the Back of a Whale so long, and yet not find the Difference between a Fish and an Island. Many of these Impudences are published in that Book, by *Allowance*: but if we must believe, that the Priest can make a God, nothing that follows after that, or is told with it, can seem to be a Wonder.

Another Part of modern Priest-craft is Purgatory, an Imitation directly drawn from the *Hades* and *Elyſium* of the Gentiles; but now improved into Gain, by perſwading People, that their Friends and Relations could be ſooner or later prayed out of Purgatory, as the Price they gave for ſuch Prayers was more or leſs: I have known this to be true, in a particular Accident; and Money haſtned that Prayers might begin, and no time be loſt to free the Perſon from Pain.

I have endeavoured to ſhew, in ſeveral Particulars or Inſtances, that the Priest-craft has continued to be the ſame: but there are two very important Examples of it, that yet remain to be treated of, *Mystery* and *Perſecution*; two very neceſſary Points to preſerve an implicit and intire Submission to Priests, and to their Opinions. By *Mystery*, they keep Men from
uſing

using their Understandings; and by *Persecution*, force the Rebellious, Conceited, and Over-weaning to believe, or however profess as the Priest teaches.

The word *Mystery* partly declares its own Nature, it (ordinarily) imports a *Divine Secret*; and was always used to keep the Vulgar and *Profane*, so called, from the Knowledge of, and from examining and inquiring into Religion. This was the Use of *Mystery*, in the Theology of the Gentiles; *Mystery* was the secret and extravagant Worship of the False Gods: for nothing was to be revealed, but to those that were *initiated* into their Worship and Ceremonies, but to be kept secret from the Vulgar, commonly called the *Profane*; without which Distinction, or Nick-naming, it would have seem'd unreasonable to keep them from participating the Religious *Mysteries*; but the *Profane* were not permitted so

E 3 much

much as to ask a Question about those Matters. To this purpose, in *Egypt*, in the Temple of *Isis*, was placed *Harpocrates* the God of Silence, with his Finger on his Lips; as it were to teach, that the Mysteries and Secrets of Religion are not to be divulged. In very deed, the Heathens sheltered all Abuses imposed on the Credulity of the People, and all the Passions and Enormities of their Gods, under the Vail of *Mystery*: and this was thought so necessary, that there were Rewards and Punishments appointed, to keep the Priests themselves in a strict Observance of Religious Secresy. In

Hinc mater cultrix Cybele, Coribantiaq; ara, Idaumq; Nemus, hinc Fida
Silentia sacris. *Virg. l. 3.*

Ex Cretâ ille mos in Phrygiam pervenit, ut summo Silentio celebrarentur magnæ Matris Mysteria: quæ his sacris Initiatis tam fideliter teguntur, ut nefas putent ea Profanis violare.

Crete the Mysteries of *Cybele* Mother of the Gods, were preserved in a most sacred Silence; and from thence this Silence was brought into *Phrygia*: the Mysteries of the Great Mother, when celebrated

by the *Initiated*, were to be concealed

led so faithfully, that it was reckoned to be down-right Wickedness to discover them to the *Profane*.

Horace, who had other-ways so much Wit and Learning, was yet so overcome by this Trick of Priest-craft, that he seems fully satisfied a faithful Silence should be rewarded: and he declares, that though he was in the

Est & Fideli tuta
Silentio merces; vi-
tabo, qui Cereris sa-
crum vulgarit arca-
næ, sub iisdem sit
Trabibus, fragilemq;
mecum solvat Phate-
lum.

same House and Ship, he would avoid the Man that had revealed the Mysteries of *Ceres*. He was perswaded the House would fall upon his Head, and the Vessel sink with him, o're-loaded with the Weight of the *Profane*. Some of the Philosophers have themselves been guilty of affecting Mysteries; thus *Pythagoras* charged his Disciples to keep their Thoughts dark and unexplained, lest they should be understood by the People. And when we first find Philosophy taught by *Plato* and *Aristotle*; for before we have but dark Accounts of it; we find, especially in *Plato*,

and sometimes in *Aristotle*, very Mysterious Notions: which afterwards gained the Character and Esteem of Learned and Divine Dogmes; though indeed they were only hard Words, to puzzle Reason and Good-sense. But the Priests, both Heathen and Christian, having been instructed by the Experience of all Ages, that Mysterious and Unintelligible Things made great Impressions on the Minds of Men; they have not failed to keep up the Method, of *making* (as *Grotius* speaks) *an Art of Religion*.

Cato, that had not the Assistance of the Gospel, yet judged right of these Mysteries, practised by Priests to support and enlarge their Power and Interest; for when *Labienus* press'd him to consult the Priests of the Oracle of *Jupiter-Ammon*, in the Desert of *Africa*, to be by them instructed what to do; *Cato* despised such an Inquiry: *As if*, saith he, *I were still!*

still to learn, that Vertue is not to be depress'd by any Force, nor enlarged by any Success; this I know, and Aminon cannot more persuade me of it. Every Man's Soul possesses enough of Divine Infusion, and without the Help of Oracles, may know that all things are govern'd by a Providence of God: we need not be told by Oracles, what from our Birth is known by all. Has God, think you, chose a barren Part of the World, where his Divine Will shall be taught by a few; and is Truth concealed in these Heaps of Sand? A Commentator on these Words, cites Cicero very properly, who says, that *an Oracle is the Divine Will declared in the Mouth of Man*: And what Priest can pretend to find more Divinity in himself than Cato; who not only knew all that could be told him of the Difference between Good and Evil, Vertue and Vice, but in all Con-
ditions

An nocent vis ulla
Eono; — Laudan-
daque velle, ut fa-
tis, & nunquam nec-
cessu crescat hone-
stum? scimus, & hoc
nobis non altius in-
feret Ammon. Nil
facimus non sponte
Dei, nec vocibus ullis
Numen eget; Dixit-
que semel Nascenti-
bus Author, quic-
quid scire licet; ste-
riles nec legit are-
nas, ut caneret Pau-
cis, merisque hoc
pulvere Verum.
Lucan. l. 8.

ditions was an unshaken Observer of all that which he knew must be pleasing to God?

It is Matter of Astonishment, that the Humour and Affectation of *Mystery* should continue, when Religion and Faith were so wholly altered by the coming of our Saviour; who came with Design to redeem us from the Darkeness of that Condition we were in by the strange and puzzling Methods of Religious Ceremonies and Mysteries, and of various Rites of Sacrificing, good for nothing but to confound and distract the Minds of Men. For there was almost nothing proposed to be believed or done, that was plain to be understood; but all was to be believed by a Faith in others: many Gods or Objects of Worship, various Ways of Worship, extended even to an infinite Number of confused Particulars; and all without any *plain* or *direct* Precepts of Vertue, or Moral Duties to be performed towards

towards one another. Through such Darkneſs the Light of our Saviour broke; ſent by God to diſpel the deplorable Night, in which the World was involved: and yet they would continue Mankind in Darkneſs, though they profeſs to be *his* Prieſts that brought the Light; not being able to part with that Myſterious Obſcurity, which ſo long preſerved the Prieſtly Intereſt and Power, no not for the Clearneſs and ſincere Plainneſs of *him* whoſe Followers they ought to be.

Such as are Aſſerters of Myſtery, chooſe rather to ſearch into ſome dark Places of St. *John's* Goſpel or St. *Paul's* Epiſtles, to 2Pet.3.16. fetch out from thence a *Wonderful* Divinity, than to attend to the general, the plain, and eaſily intelligible Current of the Goſpels and Epiſtles. But when St. *Paul* ſays, *Let a Man ſo account of us,* 1Cor.4.1. *as Miniſters of Chriſt, and Stewards of the Myſteries of God:* by this proper

proper Appellation or Title, he plainly expresses *the Dispensation of a Mystery now revealed*, though formerly kept secret; which Mystery (all confess) was the Salvation of Mankind, or of all Nations, not of the Jews only. Now if the Mystery continue, how could the Apostles be *Stewards* in Dispensing a Revealed Treasure? it were strange to call a Man a *Dispensing Steward*, who had received nothing to lay out. When the Scripture teaches Mystery, 'tis not to continue Darkness and Difficulty; but to clear it. When St. Paul

1 Cor. 15. says, *I will shew you a Mystery*;
 51. which was, that *at the Resurrection we shall all be changed*; which before was certainly a Mystery, but being declared, became (not a Mystery, but) a Revelation: Here certainly he calls the Gospel *the Revelation of a Mystery*; and so too, in these Words at Rom. 16. 26. *The Revelation of a Mystery, which was kept secret since the World began*: the Words are expressly (and
 con-

confessedly) spoken of the Gospel and Preaching of Jesus Christ. Like to which is also the Declaration of the same Apostle, *Ephes. 1. 9.* *Having made known to us the Mystery of his Will, according to his good Pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself.* — *And now ye know,* ^{2 Thess.} *what with-holdeth, that he might be* ^{2o. 5.} *revealed in his time; for the Mystery of Iniquity doth already work.* If any one ask, whether a Mystery be not Mystery while 'tis so called? he may receive a very familiar Answer; that a Secret told to a Friend, is called a Secret, though when 'tis told it continues no longer to be a Secret: as 'tis said in Scripture *the Blind see;* ^{Mat. 11. 5.} they are called Blind after they have received their Sight: and when our Saviour had healed some Lepers, yet they are called Lepers though freed from their Leprosy.

'Tis most clear, that Mystery and dark Notions vented in hard Words, are not studied or maintained

tained for the sake of Religion; but for the Priests particular Interest and Power: and Dr. *Sherlock* says well, that nothing can be a greater Injury to the Christian Religion it self, than to render it obscure and difficult. The Mystery-mongers must be very imposing, to seek to make the very modestest Man mistrust his Sufficiency to inquire into Religious Truth: if that were so, it could not be justly required of any but the Learned and Wise, to be of any Perswasion about controverted Points; but the Gospel does in no manner seem to be particularly directed to them; rather on the contrary, the Father of Heaven

Matth. 11. and Earth has *hid these things*
²⁵ *from the Wise and Prudent, and*
has revealed them unto Babes. Where
 1 Cor. 1. 20 *is the Scribe, where is the Disputer*
of this World? The Gospel professes Plainness, and uses no hard Words; every where directing us to apply our selves to search and examine: which thing, if it
 were

were too hard, or to no purpose, were a Mock-Invitation and Direction of the sacred Word. St. Paul recommends *this* to the Thes-^{1 Thess.} salonians; and gives Preference to^{5. 21.} the Jews of *Berea* as *more noble*,^{Acts 17. 11} because they search'd the Scripture daily, whether the things which he taught were true. Thus to a Free Inquirer he gives the Character of Noble; which the Priests will by no means allow; as if the Person himself, whose Salvation depends upon it, were an *unconcerned* Party. But without question, every Man is obliged to work out his *own* Salvation with Fear and Trembling; and therefore sincerely to use all possible Means for his best Satisfaction; for at the last Day, 'twill be no Excuse to be deceived by another: a Man must be his own Expositor, Minister, Bishop, and Council; for these will not bear *his* Punishment, he must bear it himself. Those Powers and Authorities given to others, was the
Cause

Cause of making and multiplying Creeds and Rules of Faith; which ever were modelled according to the present Interests and Animosities of prevailing Parties: in very deed, Creeds were *the spiritual Revenges of Dissenting Parties upon one another.*

'Tis observable, that the whole Aim of our Saviour in the Gospel, is to use a Clearness of Direction for Practice. When he speaks in Parables, 'tis to make Things familiar to those, whose Apprehensions more readily conceive and retain what is express'd by Similitudes; because they are acquainted with them in common Practice: such is the Parable of the *Seed*, thrown into barren Ground; the *Tares* among the *Corn*, and many others, used in that easy and familiar Manner to make every thing descend into the meanest Capacity, and be retained by the shortest Memories. In all his Expressions in that admirable Ser-

MON

mon on the Mount, there are no *hard* Words or *dark* Doctrines ; it being his blessed Will to give Light to all, not to reserve or keep any thing dark or veiled : 'twas private Design, Interest and Faction, that invented *hard* Words, *puzzling* Expressions, or *unintelligible* Notions and Doctrines ; had such a Method been conducing to Salvation, he that was the Redeemer would not have omitted any thing necessary to the Redemption.

I design to examine, whether any particular Points controverted in Religion, if they had never been mentioned or thought of, had been a Prejudice to the serving of God, and following the full Directions of the Gospel : But first it may be proper, considering the strange and wild Fancies and Opinions that have been taught and exercised as Parts of Religion,

ligion, to examine (as I propounded sometime before) whether probably *the Priests* themselves did or could believe those most ridiculous things, which they themselves taught and imposed? Though 'tis no Wonder that *the People* should be perswaded to believe such Variety of Extravagancies: for, as I have shown, Men have ever had a Proness rather to believe than to examine; and all Religions are alike easily taught and nurs'd up, from Infancy; and every one is equally fierce, for that in which he has been educated. Hence comes the strange Zeal of the poor Indians, to lay down to be crush'd to Death under the heavy Wheels that carry a Virgin representing their Goddess *Amidio*; and of others of them, that stretch out an Arm in Devotion towards Heaven so long, that they are never able to draw it back; and thereupon presume that they

they are sufficiently sanctified. Some Turks have also been so zealous, that after having seen the *Alchoran* they have put out their Eyes; that they might never more see a Profane Sight: while Christians wonder at these Extravagancies, they perhaps yield to others as much Detestation or Scorn, for some of their ridiculous and impossible Doctrines, and superstitious Parts of their Devotion. When the *Morocco* Ambassador attended King *Charles* the Second at *Newmarket*; the King observing the large Sleeves they wore, ask'd *Lucas*, one of the chief of the Ambassador's Retinue, How they could believe that the Moon should come into a Sleeve; which they said they wore so large for that Use? *Lucas* answered him, with another Question; How Christians could believe, that our Lady's Chappel at *Lauretta* flew thorow the Air 200

Miles, and pitched it self where it now stands? This *Lucas* had been a great Traveller; he had been at *Lauretta*, as well as at *Mecha* where *Mahomet's* Sepulchre is: I believe there are equal Causes for the Miracles at both Places. Thus all Religions are equally easy to be imbibed from the first Milk; and other-ways, it were impossible the World should continue in such different, divided, and absurd Faiths: but we see plainly, that Generations continue in the same Opinions about Religion, as well as in the same Natural Descents; as if one were as natural as the other. 'Tis true, that by the Help and Light of the Gospel some have broken these Fetters, and step'd into the Freedom of Reason: but then the Priests always apply themselves, to their last and best Argument, *Persecution*; to prevent the Increase of reasonable and honest Men.

The

The Heathens were more to be excused, who continued in blind Obedience to their Priests; for they had nothing to guide and direct them, but what their Priests invented from time to time: but Christians have a Revealing Gospel, plain and easy enough to direct to the Doctrines, Means and Ways of Salvation, and to redeem People from dark and blind Obedience; by the clear Discovery there made of the *Being* and *Unity* of God, and the as clear Precept of *Catholick Love and Charity*; thus laying an evident and certain Foundation of Eternal Happiness, on what is equally *rational* and *intelligible*. He that has redeemed us from *Mystery* and *Sin*, has insisted chiefly on the plain and decent Methods of Justice, performed to one another: and in his Rule of Prayer, he makes the Forgiveness we implore from

God, to depend on a Covenant of doing the same to *others* that we desire of *him*; *Forgive us our Trespases, as we forgive them that trespass against us.* In our Saviour's Sermon on the Mount, all those excellent Rules are delivered, after a most explicit and plain Manner: *there* we find no Footsteps, nor the least Rise given, for such Mysterious Fancies and Opinions, as the Priests teach and injoin in the Church of *Rome*: all such Doctrines and Impositions arose from nothing but Priest-craft, to support and to enlarge their Interests and Power. If they practised only as true Disciples of Christ, and taught after his plain and blessed Manner and Method; they would then exercise themselves wholly in a sincere and plain Example of Life, and make such an Example the Scope and End of their Teaching, and there-
by

by infuse *the Power of Religion* into the Minds and Hearts of Men. But instead of this, they each and impose *the Power of themselves* : and their dark and disputable Points cannot be necessary, no nor fitable to the Ends of the Gospel ; there being nothing there prescribed to breed Perplexities, or to alter and transfer its own *Rule and Power*, to the *Interpretations and Power* of Men. *Mystery* therefore is used only as a Means to this Perswasion, that Power and Knowledg is in the Priests ; and *Persecution* is the heavy Rod, to awe and terrify Men from questioning their Doctrine.

But though Education shows us, that Men may be bred up to, and may be taught all Religions alike ; and it may be in part excused by the Ignorance of the People, occasio-

ned by the Multiplicity of Cares and Business: yet there is not the same Cause or Apology for Priests, to continue in their old Elusions and Deceits. The People are generally forbid to reason and examine; they must submit to the Presence of Divine Authority with an Implicit Obedience; but the Priests that have any Abilities, and who withal may consider, must know the Folly and Falshood of what they teach; they cannot believe things to be true, which they themselves invent. The Priests of *Baal* seemed to believe themselves, when they ventur'd upon a Trial of Skill with *Elijah*; calling upon their God for Assistance, with clamorous Ceremonies and Slashing themselves: but it was a *forc'd Put* upon them; they were obliged to play the Tricks belonging to their Way of Devotion, and probably they hoped that *Eli-*
jab

jab could do as little as they, and so the Difference would be compounded in a Drawn Battel. Nor could they of *Bel* more believe what they taught; they could not think, their God devoured the vast Provisions got ready for him, when they themselves eat it up. Did the Priests believe the Oracles, which they themselves invented; or that they could find future Events in the Entrails of Beasts, or by the Flight or Pecking of Birds, or by a Divination by such a Statue in the High-way, or by Thunder on the Left-hand, or any such like? Do the Priests of the Church of *Rome* believe the Miracles, invented by themselves? do they not know, that the abused Purchaser has nothing for his Money, when he buys Indulgences; and as little, when Money is got together with all Expedition (which I have known) that Prayers
may

may be begun to hasten a Soul out of Purgatory? Are they not aware that the Virtue pretended to be given, by their Consecration, to an *Agnus Dei*, a Cross, an Image, the Clouts of Infants, is nothing but a Pretence? When they make an indifferent Man a Divine Saint, are they ignorant of the Cheat they put upon the World?

But from this Digression, let us return to conclude the Point of Mystery; how useful it has been thought by Priest-craft to enlarge their Interests and Power: we may see this, in a short Account of *Aristotle's* Philosophy; which at first was most fiercely and angrily exploded, but afterwards received with highest Veneration, so soon as ever 'twas perceived to be useful to maintain *Mystery*. In the 13th Age, as the French write, the Works of *Aristotle* were brought into
France,

France, and for sometime taught in the Universities; but after a little time, his Writings were publickly burnt, and Excommunication threatned against any that should teach out of them. His *Metaphysicks* were condemned by an Assembly of Bishops at *Paris*; and six Years after the Cardinal of *St. Estienne* (sent by Pope *Innocent*) forbad the Professor of the University of *Paris* to read *the Physicks* of that Philosopher: Which afterwards also were condemned by a Bull of Pope *Gregory* the Ninth. One *Simon* a Professor, and *Dinart* a Master of Arts, were often accused of Heresy, for being Esteemers of *Aristotle's* Opinions and Writings. *Mezeray* says, That in the Year 1209, one *Almeric* a Priest, beginning to preach some Novelties, had been forced to recant; for which he died of Grief. Several, after his Death, followed his Opinions, and were

were condemned to be burnt : and he being condemned by the Council of *Paris*, his Body was taken up, and his Ashes thrown upon a *Dunghil*. And because 'twas believed, that the Books of *Aristotle*, lately brought from *Constantinople*, had filled their Heads with these Heretical Subtilties, the same Council forbids the Reading or Keeping them under Pain of Excommunication.

But during this Disgrace, there arose in *Aristotle's* Defence three famous Divines, to whom St. *John Damascen* had opened the way, having abridged divers of *Aristotle's* Works ; which had assisted him to put in order his great Body of Divinity, *the Four Books of Orthodox Faith* : afterwards others improved this, and took as it were a Plan of Divinity from *Aristotle's* Philosophy.

Now

Now the Tide turned as fast the other way; for in the Year 1366, two Cardinals, Commissioners from *Urban* the Fifth, came to establish the Doctrine of *Aristotle* in *France*; where it was ordered, that none should proceed *Masters of Arts* that were not examined upon his *Logick*, *Physicks*, *Metaphysicks*, and *Books of the Soul*: it was further enjoined to study *Aristotle* carefully, so to restore the Reputation of the University.

Pope *Nicholas* the Fifth, a great Advancer of Learning, commanded a new Translation of *Aristotle* into Latin, for the Use of the Divines of the Romish Church.

Pope *John*, who Canoniz'd *Thomas Aquinas*, increased the Reputation of *Aristotle*, from whom that great Doctor has drawn his Principles, and the Grounds

Grounds of his Arguments; that now *Aristotle's* Writings became the Fundamental Laws of Philosophy and the New Divinity.

In the Fourteenth Age grew the hot Contention between the *Thomists* and *Scotists*, or the Disciples of *Thomas* and *Scotus*, about subtile Nothings, or (as *Mezeray* speaks) brangling Cobweb-controversies; these were pursued with Passion, according to Interest or Inclination, or by Ingagement of Parties: and Disputes were so multiplied, that a *Venetian* Writer pretends to reckon up *Twelve thousand Volumes* published in that Age about the Philosophy of *Aristotle*; whose Reputation now so far increased, and was so establish'd in the University of *Paris*, that *Ramus* (who had found out some Observations to diminish the Credit of *Aristotle*) was by the other Professors in that University condemned in the Year 1543, as

cast,

rash, ignorant, and impudent, in daring to write against *Aristotle*; and an Order was made, that none should teach any other Philosophy. Such a Religious Veneration was now raised for *Aristotle*, though formerly condemned, that Dissenting from him grew to be *Heresy*: and in the Massacre at *Paris*, *Ramus* was murdered with as much Zeal and Fury as the Calvinists themselves.

The Credit of *Aristotle's* Writings, as being fit to support the dark *Mysteries* and Opinions of the Church, so much increased, that in the Year 1611, the Doctors of *Paris* made a Rule that all Professors should teach the Philosophy of *Aristotle*. And in the Year 1624, a Request for some particular Theses to be proposed against the Doctrine of *Aristotle*, was denied: and again, *Anno* 1629, the Parliament there made an Arrest against some Chymists,
upon

upon the Information of the *Sorbonists*, that the Principles of *Aristotle* could not be written against, or lessened, without prejudicing the received Divinity of the Schools.

'Tis no wonder if the Fathers and Sages of the Three first Ages, were not quick enough to understand a sort of Mysterious Darkness which they had no use for; the things not being then found out that it was to be applied to: but when the Occasion was ready for it, the puzzling parts of *Aristotle's* Philosophy being found useful, and among all his dark Subtilties none more convenient than that of Metaphysical or Abstracted *Essences*, which were *Beings no where in being*, they were applied to support *Transubstantiation*; where there *appears* a Substance that must not be believed to be there, and another must be believed there which is not *perceived*.

Nothing

Nothing can be a clearer Evidence than this violent Change, how desirous they were to lay hold of every thing that was helpful to preserve *Myself*, and thereby to reduce the Power and Use of Religion to themselves, and to enlarge their worldly Interest and Wealth. They could apprehend that following the plain Method of the Gospel, in a humble Example and zealous Persuasion, ascribing *all* Honour and Power to God and *none* to themselves, would hardly make a great Purchase of Interest and Honours to themselves: there would not have needed a Statute of Mortmain here in *the Land*, to prevent (possibly *all*, at the least) *most* of the Land to be given to what they call the Church, that is, the Priests.

The last and most cruel Contrivance of Priest-craft to suppress Liberty, is *Persecution*: A

preserve their Power, by the Destruction and Oppression of others. And as in all the Particulars of Priest-craft, before treated of, they have differed from the Methods of the Gospel; so in none so much as their being absolutely contrary to the Proposition of our Saviour's coming, *not to destroy but to save*, and to *do to others as we would be done to our selves*. 'Tis a strange Way of performing those just and blessed Rules, to destroy and persecute others; for most certainly cruel and bloody Persecutors would not be willing to suffer the Torments and Severities they impose: Hatred, Violence and Cruelty, are the Methods of *their* proceeding, while our Saviour has made the Doctrines of Love, Meekness and Charity, the Ingredients of *his* Gospel, and the Characters for *his* Disciples to be known by. The Christian Religion, that brought Light to the World, began thus with Clearness,

John 13.
34, 35.

ness, Meekness, Love and Charity; winning Men to their Salvations by such wise and peaceable Ways, that if Heaven and Eternal Happiness had not been added as our farther Reward, yet the before-said Duties and Principles exactly practised, contribute to preserve every one in *Health* both of Body and Mind, and to the safe Enjoyment of undisturbed Property.

The Impostor *Mahomet* pretended he was sent from God to convert the World, and brought in his Religion with Destruction and Fierceness of Rage; yet we see that now in a few Ages, that persecuting Madness is softened: it seems now too cruel for their Natures as Men, and contrary also to their Interests; so that now paying that small Tribute to the State which is agreed on, the Christians enjoy the Use of their Religion, and Freedom of Trade and Commerce under a

quiet and peaceable Protection. On the other side, the Christian Religion that was begun to be taught with so much Gentleness, Love and Charity, grew to be changed into Fury, Hatred, Malice and Persecution: and though they justly complained under the Persecution of the Heathen Emperors, especially *Dioclesian*, *Maximin*, and *Julian*; yet they were no sooner freed from those Miseries, but they practised upon others all the Mischiefs and Crimes which themselves had suffered, and had inveighed against; and Revenge, and its ready Instrument *Persecution*, grew to be their *Gospel-Methods*: that which before they called Fury and Rage, when used by themselves, must be called Zeal and Devotion.

The first Cause of this Severity that began famously among the Christians, was from *Athanasius* and *Arius*; and the Council

cil of *Nice* it self shewed a Spirit of Contention rather than of Peace and Charity : *Constantine* was forced to burn the Records of their Quarrels and Animositie, to set their Faces towards any prospect of Spiritual Good. The War of Persecution began under the wrangling Names of *Homo-ousians* and *Homoi-ousians* : and no sooner was Great *Constantine* dead, but the Arians influenced his Son *Constantius* to retaliate upon the *Homo-ousians*, by returning Persecution for Persecution. If the *Homo-ousians* had made a Creed at *Nice*, the *Homoi-ousians* in return fitted them with another at *Ariminum* and *Seleucia* ; adding to them the *Christian Retaliations* of Anathema's, Banishments, Imprisonments, Deprivations, Confiscations, Executions, Burnings of Books, and the rest. From this *Creed-making* came Persecutions, almost equal to those of the Heathen Emperors ; which were so

much the more ugly, because it was still one Part of the Christian Church that vexed the other: *Zozomen* reckons up nine of these Creeds, made in a few Years. The *Ecclesiastical War* being begun, Creeds were as the *Arms* and *Ammunition* with which to carry it on; they served also as *Declarations*, and *Causes* of the War: and as Power and Opportunity gave leave, they pursued one another with these both *Means* and *Incentives* to Revenge. *Hilary* Bishop of *Poitiers*, describes *this*, saying, We decree every Year of the Lord a New Creed concerning God, nay every Change of the Moon our Faith is alter'd; we repent of those Decrees, and we defend those that repent of them: He concludes with saying that the Christians were torn to pieces by themselves. *Gregory Nazianzen* was so full of Detestation at these Quarrels of Christians, that at last he resolved never more

more to come into an Assembly of Bishops ; because, saith he, I have never seen a good and happy End of any Council ; but Mischiefs are rather increased than remedied by them, their obstinate Contentions and Ambitions are infinite.

At last Heresy came to be the greatest Crime, and Hereticks (so called) were fore-doomed to *Eternal* Fire ; and in the mean time to undergo the more temperate ones here. It grew to be a Vice of Christianity, who should be most zealous in Extirpation of Hereticks, and to preserve the Honour of the Church, by cruel and bloody Means : The famous *St. Dominick* was the most (wickedly) zealous in this Tragical Task, and from his Order chiefly the Inquisitors have been chosen ever since : one of his Successors issued Process for an hundred Thousand, whereof six Thousand were burnt in a few Years.

Pope *Leo* the Tenth, with the Approbation of the Council of *Lateran*, decreed a severe Prosecution of the Hereticks; but at the same time a slight Punishment was ordered against such as Blasphemed God, or the Lord Christ: an Offence immediately against God was not to them of so dangerous a Nature, as that which they call Heresy; because Heresy is contrary to *their* Dignity and Power. And yet they would not seem to be Men of Blood; but, with a miserable Elevation, make the Magistrate their Stirrup-Dog, and loo him on to seize and execute the Prey, as they direct him. But 'tis very lamentable, that not only in former Ages those that have suffer'd under, and complained of Persecution, when by Alteration of Fortune the Power hath fallen into their own Hands, they have added all *that* which before they condemn'd: but even still in our Days, every Party that has groan-

ed

ed under such Sufferings, when they are arrived at Power, use the same Severities which formerly they inveighed against.

Persecution is commonly taken to rise from the Impatience of Men to endure Contradiction ; but if Difference arose only from Disputes, where there is no concern of Interest or Ambition, Men would not unite to make Laws to destroy or punish, or endeavour by such Means to compel others to believe as themselves believe. The love of worldly Power and Interest was the cause of Persecution : the Sects of Philosophers that had great Differences, and taught various Philosophies, never thought it worth the Combination of a prevailing Opinion or Party, to persecute the others ; because no Interest or Power could be the Produce of such a Method. *Plato's* and *Aristotle's* Successors taught in *Athens*, and had their Sects and Fol-

Followers ; but it never became worth Persecution on either side : but when *Aristotle's* Philosophy became useful for Priest-craft, where Power and Interest were designed, then it grew fit to be mingled with the Causes of Persecution. Persecution therefore began from the insatiate Desire of Secular Power and Interest, to preserve that Dominion over Souls and Estates, which *Mystery* brought the Priesthood into : for when, by their subtil and dark Impositions, they had subjected Men to an implicit Belief *of*, and Subjection *to*, their Divine and infallible Inspiration and Authority, they then found it necessary to fortify and preserve that Interest by Persecution ; and thereby to prevent the Examination of the unnecessary Follies and Cheats imposed, by comparing them with the naked Truth and Plainness of the Gospel ; to secure their Subjects from deserting them, or declaring against them,

them, they take care that Ecclesiastical Dragoons be prepared (not to Convert, but) Destroy them.

There cannot be any who are for Persecution so dull, as to believe *it* the Means for what they (would seem to) intend it, the Conversion of the Erroneous. For in Persecution there is no rational Perswasion, in the Torments, or other Punishments: that which can move an Alteration of Opinion, is Reason and Argument, gently and friendly proposed; Error must be shown by Argument, not by Power or Barbarities. If that were the true Way, which *the Infallible* follow, then if a Man is known to differ in a *particular* Opinion, he should be converted by breaking a Limb for that Opinion; and so another Limb for another such (Dissenting) Opinion, and not by Arguments, till the Sum total of his Heresies grew big enough

nough for the Fire: but then it would appear also, that what they pretend is for Conversion, in very deed is only for Destruction; and the Service and Punishment is wholly for themselves, not the Persons punished. If a Man sees Light, or any other Object, could Punishment make him not believe what he sees? Torments perhaps may make him *say*, that he does not see what he does, or any thing else, from the Force of his prevailing Misery: so perhaps Persecution, in its various and skilful Inventions of several Punishments and Torments, may force the wretched Sufferers *verbally* to renounce their respective Faiths and Opinions, though they be not at all alter'd in their Belief; which Victory is indeed a Service to the Priests Power, but none to God, or the Suffering Person. If a Man should say Prayers for a show in this World, and yet not believe in the God he prays to, but only designs

designs to keep himself from Trouble and Disturbance; would not such Prayers be (bantring) Sins? Is there not the same Reason, that those who persecute, and by Torments or Fears *force* suffering Wretches to declare against their own Consciences, should be esteemed and judged guilty of the Sin which their Cruelty caused? or is there perhaps any greater Sin, than to sin against a Man's own Conscience? Should any one force a Man to murder himself; would not such a one be guilty of the Murder? Dorn not the Law make the Accessory equally guilty with the Principal? By the same reason, those that are guilty of the Violence or Terror, are guilty of the (unconscionable, and therefore impious) Renunciations that were caused by such Terror or Violence. Persecution can be no Argument to Perswade, nor Destruction the Way to Conversion; and to force any to *sin* against

gainst their Consciences, is no Rule of Christianity. The late *unexampled* Persecution in *France* has, by strange invented Ways of several Torments and Vexations, forc'd many to renounce (verbally) their Opinions and Consciences; a Sin which God hates: it's true, Men should undergo all Sufferings for their Consciences; but if Torments prevail over the Weakness of a distracted Sufferer, those that inflict the Cruelty are certainly the cause of what God hates, and their Rewards will be accordingly. Persecution therefore can be used out of no respect to the Service of God; but is a Defiance of him, and only a Service to Priest-craft and Priests, who like other Plunderers preserve ill-got Goods by Force. The Prescriptions of the Gospel are of another nature; even to be gentle in all things, and to have Charity for those that offend: St. *John's* Epistles, whose Subject-matter is only

ly Love, would be a Cheat rather than a true Gospel-direction, if such a thing as Persecution could be approved in the Gospel-state. If Love could spring from loss of Estates, Torments, and Death; if the Advice and Gospel-command of *Catholick Love* were not made perfectly ridiculous, by the contrary Command of Persecution and Hatred, we might allow of the Priestly Expedient of Persecution: but 'twill be impossible to perswade those that suffer, that their Persecutors do not hate them, and as impossible to love such Persecutors any better than they love their Sufferings themselves. But *Wo be to them by whom the Offence comes*: what Condemnation must it carry with it, that those who pretend to be Teachers of the Gospel, instead of the Ways of Love, search after those of Blood, and instead of Gentleness, pursue with Fury; and that too for as little reason, as if they went about to punish those

those that differ from them in *Taste*; for Opinion is no more to be help'd than a Man's *Relish*; 'twere as reasonable to punish any one for a vitiated *Palat*, as for thinking what he must think.

'Tis not reasonable to believe that God, who knows our Infirmities, will punish *Error*; which is no Sin, because it comes not from the Will and Intention: One Man may be weaker than another, and *both* may mistake more or less, according to the Difference of their Capacities; but neither of them is thereby guilty, because the Mistakes and Opinions proceed from their Innocence, which is to say, their Weakness and Ignorance. There have been very warm and fierce Disputes upon Subject-matters that could have had no good effect, if the Decision had been according to the Desires and Fancies of either of the contending Parties;

Parties; and yet neither of them is to be charged with Heresy: in the Dispute concerning Free-will, one Party denies it, believing that such Denial magnifies *the Grace of God*; the other affirms it, because he believes it engages Men in *pious Endeavours*; therefore absolutely to determine the Question, in direct favour of either Party, would not be useful.

St. *Paul* reckons Heresy among *the Works of the Flesh*; indeed 'tis in Holy Scripture every where reckoned among *practical Impieties*: Matter of Fact, in direct Sins, can only be ascertain'd to be Heresy; if a Man does not mix a Vice with his Opinion, and that his Life accordingly is not led in unjust Practices, his Error in Opinion cannot be a Crime, nor any Foundation of a Punishment. If we seriously consider the ill and unjustifiable Grounds of such a Persecution, the Here-
H sy

ly will appear to be on the other side, the Persecutors will be the Hereticks: for those who practise Uncharitableness and Cruelty, commit that *Heresy of the Flesh*; directly contrary to what our Saviour taught, and founded the Christian Religion upon, even Meekness, Charity and Mercy. But as *St. Paul* says, *He that was born after the Flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit*: Even so it is now, and so it ever will be, while Self-interest and Love of Dominion, are allowed to make the Want of Mercy, the Means to support and propagate Religion: and such ill-gotten Power must encrease the Cruelty and Pride of Men, and consequently new and more large Inventions of Massacres and other Persecutions; and yet (sure) themselves cannot but think it ridiculous, that a Religion, whose Institution is so humane and merciful, should be propagated by Cruelty and Inhumanity.

humanity. St. Paul says, *the Servants of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all Men, in Meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them Repentance, to the Acknowledgment of the Truth.* Here Persecution is forbid, though against those that oppose the known Truth, which needed Repentance; they are directed to proceed by Meekness and Instructions: sure then the Persecutors that strive to be *ungentle*, and use Cruelty instead of *Meekness*, and Death and Tortures instead of *Instruction*, must be the true Hereticks.

'Tis very observeable, that for *real Heresies of the Flesh* there are no Inquisitions set up, nor any particular Persecutions; not for Drunkenness, or Whoredom, or other Vices: they increase as much, by Temptation and Example, as those sort of Vices can; and yet were never made Objects

of the (pretended) pious Zeal, or of any Persecution. Against such Heresies, they follow more the Apostle's Rule, endeavouring to convert by Instruction and Perswasion; but towards the Heresies that are properly *against themselves*, they proceed by another Method, by the Rule of their own Passions, not by the Directions of Christianity. *The Reason is*, Heresy against true Morality does not shake their Design of Power and Interest; but Heresy against their Rules of Faith, which they would have superiour to Scripture, is an *Abnegation of their Authority*. The Endeavour to find out Truth should not be reckoned an Offence; it should rather tend to unite than divide, and raise Tenderness sooner than Persecution. God's Service is the *pretended Cause of Persecution*; but without suffering it to be fairly examined, whether the Difference consists in Matters truly necessary

lary to Salvation. Which again evidences, that the Persecution is not for the Cause of God, or the Good of the Persecuted, but of the Persecutors. 'Tis sure a most Melancholy Prospect of Persecution, that all the Particulars in which those differ who profess the Name of Christ, are in themselves of no consequence, in respect to Salvation: for if it be temperately considered, there is not one Particular that if it had never been controverted, or so much as thought of, had been at all a Prejudice to our following the true and the plain Rules of Christianity; nor can the Belief or Dis-belief of any of those disputed Particulars, be reputed any Part of the Necessary Faith. Suppose, that the Devotion paid to Saints, Angels, Images and Relicks, Prayers for the Dead, Consecration of *Agnus Dei's*, Blessing of Clouts, Indulgences and Pardons made Mercenary, had

never been thought of, where would the Want of them appear, if we followed the acknowledged Rules and Precepts of the Gospel? Does any of these concern the *doing as we would be done to*; or would they contribute to *Mutual Love and Forbearance of one another*? In relation to *Faith and good Works*, they could neither be *Instrumental* nor *Exciting*; and had they been material, they would have found some place among the Precepts and Institutions delivered by our Saviour, in his Sermon on the Mount; where no Part necessary to Christian Conduct can be believed to be omitted. So that these invented Particulars by Priestcraft, are only to create a Faith in them, not in Christ or his Gospel; where every thing that is necessary, is also plain and clear; but these consist of Darkness, to involve Deceived Mankind in a Blind and Implicit Obedience.

Ano-

Another of their abstruse Inventions is *Purgatory*, wholly the Subject-matter of Power and Profit; as if it were possible there could be a separate Confined Place, where the Punishment or Purgation should be *more* or *less*, as the Price is: as if Heaven were to be bribed, according to *their* lesser or greater Lucre. If Men must believe in their Redeemer, and living according to his Example, may thereby obtain Salvation, to what purpose could that Invention be, unless for the Interest and Power of the Priests that invented it? For if it never had been thought of, what Prejudice could it have been to the Christian Religion, whose Rules are perfect and effectual without it, and which affords no (tolerable) Intimation of such a Place? They may as rationally affirm, that all the Rules of the Gospel followed in a good Life, shall yet not be a-

vailable to Salvation, without the Belief of Purgatory ; so that one Point of Salvation is wholly forgot by him that *saved* ; as pretend, that after a Life of Contempt or Neglect of the Gospel Precepts ; a Man, for all that, may be ransomed, by Money given to the Priest, from the Place of Punishment ; so near to Blasphemy, does this extravagant Opinion reach. Be sure Purgatory is not of so antient date, but that there were Christians long before all mention made of it ; who were (questionless) in a State of Salvation without the Help of that Fancy, and others are so now without the Belief of it : the Faith of it is useless, to any Person or Thing, but only to the Priests, to compleat their Catalogue of Mysteries, and to increase their Profit and Authority.

The most famous of their dark Particulars, to which they pretend

tend to be directed by the Gospel, is the *Real Presence*: where the Priest can Transubstantiate, without being himself Transubstantiated; which is ridiculous enough. For all its seeming Importance, 'tis of the same nature with the Particulars before-mentioned; and if it had never been thought of, could in no ways have been prejudicial to the Christian Religion. For suppose any one should eat of the very Body and Flesh of our Saviour, would that particular Food have been the Food of Salvation, without Belief in him that died for us? 'Tis impossible that any can affirm it would; for if it were so, and that Priests can make Bread, or a Wafer, to be Christ's Flesh, the Eating of it must of Consequence procure Salvation without the Help of Faith and good Works: but if by Faith in his Death for us, Love and Charity, and following the Example of his Life, we must

must be saved; of what use can it be to determine, whether the Sacrament be the Real Body, yea or no? Since the Real Substance would not be effectual by it self, of what concern can it be whether it be in the Sacrament or no? And this Opinion too was not of so long standing, but that Christians, who before this Invention believed in Christ, and followed his Example, were certainly in a State of Salvation: and if that be granted, it shows that it can be of no concern if the Question about it had never been raised; for if the thing proposed to be believed, was in it self separately of no Force or Efficacy, to what purpose is the Enquiry whether it be really in the Sacrament or no? If it had effectual Power separately, and meerly by virtue of the Substance, then it must operate on an *Infidel* that eats it, as well as on a *Believer*: but if Faith
in

in him that died for us, be the *Foundation* of our Salvation, and we *build* upon it in following his Example and Precepts, then Salvation cannot depend upon this, Whether the Celebration of the Memorial of our Saviour's last Supper be *this* or *that* Substance. Should any believe truly in Christ, and in our Redemption by his Death, and endeavour to follow his blessed Rules and Example; and yet never consider further of the Celebration of the Lord's Supper, but only as a *Memorial*, that as often as we come thither, we do it in remembrance of his Suffering for us; would *this* be ineffectual, without determining in Opinion at that time, what sort of Substance we receive? If so, then if the Person that takes it guesses wrong, all his *Faith* in Christ, and all his Endeavours of a *good Life*, are in vain and of none effect. So that upon a controverted Point, which seems ridiculous

culous to common Sense, Salvation must depend; and the Mistake of a dark and controverted Point shall defeat all the Effects of a strict following the plain and blessed Rules of the Gospel; which most certainly contains all things necessary to Salvation. And if this particular Question, What Substance it was that is administered in the Sacrament, had been so very necessary to Salvation, our Saviour would certainly have deliver'd it in a plain Instruction and Precept, to guide our Faith in a Particular on which Salvation depended, and with the same Plainness too, that he uses through the whole Course of the Gospel: but the Gospel only directs Faith in him, with Love, Justice, and Charity to one another; of which, it directly says, that the Reward shall be Eternal Salvation.

St. *Paul* sets down very directly and plainly the necessary
Parts

Parts of Faith, and comprises all in a very short Creed; "This is the Word of Faith, *faith he*, Rom. 10. 2, 3.
" which we preach, that if thou
" shalt confess with thy Mouth
" the Lord Jesus, and believe in
" thy Heart that God raised him
" from the dead, thou shalt be
" saved. This Doctrine of St. *Paul* must either deceive us, or else there is nothing of real necessity besides this, and the apparent and immediate Consequences of it, to be believed by us as Christians. But the Priests having endeavoured to throw every plain Way into a Wilderness, and to bring Darkness upon Light; it follows, suitably to that Design, that they propose themselves as Guides, and no Man to use his own Conduct and Reason. But if such Imposers, that design Power and Wealth by their dark and unnecessary Doctrines, could secure us that we should not answer to God for our selves, then to follow
such

such Guides as could and would be accountable for what their Followers have submitted to, on their bare Authority, and to serve them, would be reasonable: but since a Blind and Brutish Submission to any, will be no Excuse to them who had a plain Rule given 'em by God, it behoves every Man to take care that his Guide does not mislead him; and then 'tis the same thing to follow his *own* Reason, and be his *own* Guide; and sure every one may be better trusted to himself than to another. Yet if by their undertaking to be Guides, they would exclude the Use of Reason in Religion, why do they themselves propound Arguments, why is Scripture sometimes cited, Councils and Fathers quoted, Tradition trump't up? If we must not use our Reason, and judg of those Arguments, 'twere fair Dealing to decree their Propositions Magisterially.

But

But they say, the Unlearned are not fit to judg. This is true indeed ; that is, of the things which they have made too hard even for themselves to judg of, and to agree about : but we are capable to judg of the Plainness of the Gospel, which only is necessary to our Salvation. Their new dark Writings and Doctrines are not decidable among themselves : and 'tis very impertinent to make it an Argument, that because unlearned Men are not able to judg of the confused dark Notions of these that call themselves the Learned, which Notions these Learned Men seldom understand alike ; therefore the Unlearned are to be debarred from using their Reason in what is *plain* to be understood, such as the plain Gospel of Jesus Christ is ; which is and ought to be their only Concern. Do the Learned by their own Agreement encourage others to depend

depend upon them, as unerring Guides? how can we be satisfied with their Differences, or find out Truth in their abstruse Cavilings? for are not the Guides themselves grown into different Sects, supported by Custom, Education, Interest and Prepossession, more than by Reason? Do they not continue in a resolved Opinion, by only being of the same *Religious Club*? This is the ridiculous Cause why *all* the Dominicans are always of one Opinion, in the Points of Predestination and the Immaculate Conception; and the Franciscans are as universally of the contrary. It were, in my Opinion, as reasonable that all the *Johns* should be of one Sect and Opinion, and the *Richards* of another; pursuing still what is affirmed by those of their Name, without examining the Nature or Reason of the Opinion: as that the Institution of a *Founder* of the Order; suppose of Dominicans or Fran-

Franciscans, should as much influence all particular Persons of the Order, as much as an Opinion which is taught by Reason. So also from the admired *Thomas* and *Scotus*, came the *Thomists* and *Scotists*; as if there might be an Imposition of Opinions, from the meer Names of some particular Persons of the same either *Order* or *School*. An unlearned Man would receive but small Satisfaction in such Guides; and the Choice of them would be as little rational and intelligible to him, as the Gibberish of their School-Divinity is. Such a Possession in Mens Minds as we are now speaking of, appeared some time in the Disciples of our Saviour: for though he spoke plainly of his going to *Jerusalem*, and being put to Death there; yet (saith the Text) *they understood not* Mirk 1. *these Sayings*: Of which, the 32, 33. Reason was, because they were before-hand possess'd with the
I Tradi-

Traditions and Doctrines of the Pharisees, and most other Learned Men of their Nation, that they were to have a Glorious, a Conquering, and Triumphant Messias; so that no clear Expressions to the contrary, could have weight with them, or be regarded by them: which shows how little Men use their own Reasons, or make use even of common Sense, when once they are thorowly prepossessed by a contrary Institution or Impression from others, or the early Authority of their assuming Guides.

The high Imposers the Priests, or others under the name of the Church, cannot pretend to lay the Foundation of Faith; which is already laid in the Gospel: they may teach and excite to the Practice of the Foundations laid in the Gospel; but they may as justifiably offer to lay the Foundation of Faith in *Generals*, as in *Particulars*, especially in such

such as are dark, and have the Appearance of New : to inlarge Faith is the same, as originally to lay the Foundation of it. But they take care that the Particulars which they impose, should be stamp'd with a *Scripture-Mark*, either true or false; that they may not seem to arrogate to themselves to be Legislators.

From the two great Springs, *Athanasius* and *Arius*, the Church overflowed with Divisions, and the insolent Value of Opinions began. *Athanasius*, in his Creed, calls what he there sets down, the Catholick Faith; which yet received a *contrary* Censure from two very great Councils; that of *Milan* consisting of 300 Bishops, and that of *Ariminum* consisting of 550: but the Practice, on both sides, of imposing their Opinions with a Scripture-Mark or Character, was begot and increas'd by the passionate Desire and Design of Power and Interest.

We have even at this present, an unlucky Instance of the strange Differences among Learned Men. Dr. *Sherlock* writes a Book in answer to certain Brief Notes on the Creed of *Athanasius*: He says, his Undertaking is to vindicate the *Athanasian* Creed, and the Doctrine of a Trinity in Unity; which (he says) he has now made as clear and easy, as the Notion of one God. But another, and a very Learned Person too, in his *Animadversions* upon that Book of Dr. *Sherlock*, calls the Explication of the Trinity advanced in Dr. *Sherlock's* Book, a *silly*, a *contradictory*, and an *heretical* Notion; wholly of *his own Invention*, and a *Stab to the Heart* of the Doctrine of the Church of *England*: he charges another Book of Dr. *Sherlock's*, being a *Discourse of the Knowledge of Christ*, with *vile* and *scandalous Reflections* upon God's Justice; and says moreover, that it may deserve to pass for a *Blasphemous*

phemous Libel. I suppose it would hardly happen to the Unlearned, or the Laity, if they should search after the Knowledge of God and Christ in the Scriptures only, to be overseen in wider Differences either from one another, or from the Truth, than these are. What Measures or Opinions then, can the Unlearned take from their (disputing) Leaders? Guides that cannot forbear to impose Faith in dark and unnecessary Points, and yet rate their Imaginations at the Value of Holy Scripture, even while they disagree among themselves in the very Points which they would injoin others to believe. But it has long been the Custom of Learned Men to be saying something; to dispute and talk, and from thence to impose: St. *Austin* ingenuously confesses this, in these Words, *Lib. de Trin. 5. c. 7.*
“ When Men ask, what is meant
“ by *the Three*, all Humane Speech
“ wants Power to express it: yet
“ we

“ we have ventur’d to say Three
 “ *Persons*; not that it should be
 “ said, but that we may not be
 “ wholly silent. In very deed, *in*
all Ages the Learned have thought
 it incumbent upon them to say
 something upon every thing; and
 upon dark and unnecessary Noti-
 ons, to found a Power over others:
 which would never have been
 built upon the plain, and indispu-
 table, Rules of the Gospel.

I say not this to lessen the Ne-
 cessity and Use of Teachers and
 Guides in Religion: the Know-
 ledg of Religion is not born with
 us, nor infused into us; and there-
 fore is to be learned. And of
 consequence, Respect and Credit
 ought to be given to our Teachers
 and Instructors. The Unlearned
 must of Necessity, in some things
 place a Confidence in those, whose
 proper Employment and Learning
 qualifies, and assists them to make
 a true Translation of the Holy
 Scriptures. This just Credit and
 Respect

Respect ought to be given to such Teachers as apply themselves strictly to pursue the Methods of the Gospel; yet without supposing them to be infallible, or making an absolute Resignation of our Reason and Judgment. Suppose a Man chooses one, that has the Reputation of an Able Counsellor and Learned in the Law, to settle an Estate or Purchase; and uses such Counsellor out of that just Opinion of the Knowledg he has in the Law, which he (deservedly) reckons is much above his own Skill in the Laws; must he therefore be debarred, or neglect, to use his own Care and Reason in examining the Particulars of the Writings and Settlements? wherein, though there may be many things, Points of Law beyond his Knowledg, yet there must be also many Particulars of a plain and obvious Nature, wherein any Mistake or Contradiction may be easily judged of by the concerned Party. And is it not as just and reasonable

sonable to believe that Men should be allowed the same use of their Care and Reason, in the Purchase of an Eternal Estate?

I shall conclude with this plain Assertion, That the Imposing Humour of those who usurp more to themselves than belongs to Teachers, and their Quarrels and Disputes upon dark and unnecessary Notions, is an assuming what belongs to God, and a taking away what belongs to Men. By such Power assumed to themselves, they rob God of his Glory, the World of Peace, and Men of Love and Charity: whereas if they had only endeavour'd to instruct and persuade according to the plain and genuine Methods of the Gospel, Teaching as they were taught by that; the *Glory* had been to God on high, *Peace* had flourish'd in the World, and Men had abounded in *Good-will* to one another.

F I N I S,





