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REFLEXIONS

ON AN

Anonymous Pamphlet,

Entituled, a DISCOURSE OF

FREE THINKING.

By WILLIAM WHISTON, M.A.

— *Pudet hac opprobria nobis
Et dici potuisse, & non potuisse refelli.*

The Second Edition.

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REFLEXIONS

ON A

DISCOURSE

OF

FREE THINKING.

TH O' I cannot but be a hearty Friend to fair Examination and careful Enquiries in all Cases, and especially in the most important Concern of all Mankind, Religion; and tho' I cannot but have the highest Disgust and Dissatisfaction with all those pious Frauds, superstitious Impositions, and gross Forgeries, which have been frequently put upon Mankind; tho' in consequence of all this, I cannot be uneasy to be esteemed in some sense, a *Free Thinker* my self; and tho' this Pamphlet be commonly so worded, as to seem rather meant against Heathen Idolatry, Popish Superstition, real Priestcraft, and Tyranny over Conscience

ence, than against Christianity it self, with it's sacred Books; yet do I perceive there are every where such ill Characters given of the Clergy or Christian Priesthood in general, and such oblique Reproaches cast upon reveal'd Religion; such a visible Slight put upon the whole Jewish Nation, and the Mosaick Law; such a plain Disregard of the great Foundation of Religion, the Immortality of the Soul; and such Insinuations visibly tending to render the sacred Books, both Jewish and Christian, contemptible and uncertain; that 'tis very fit and reasonable to make some Reply to it. And since I am fully my self persuaded of the Truth of the Christian Religion, and of the Authority of the Holy Scriptures; and this upon a through Examination; and equally satisfied, that what is here said in derogation to them, is not only weak and foreign, and ill grounded, but commonly the result of the very same inaccuracy, partiality, and false reasoning, if not direct prevarication also, which is so violently here complained of in others; I think it not improper for me, to make a few *Reflexions* upon this Pamphlet, and to endeavour to prevent some part at least of that Mischief, which it is otherwise capable of doing with the unthinking and prejudic'd part of Mankind: I say with the *unthinking and prejudic'd part of Mankind*, only: for I am in no Concern for the truly Sober, the Learned, and Judicious; who I am sure will make deeper Enquiries and solidier Reflexions ere they make such Conclusions, about matters of such mighty Consequence. And then because I am my self several times mention'd therein; because I am not engag'd in any modern Party, and no ways byass'd by any modern Authorities; because I have

long

long made reveal'd Religion the matter of my Studies, and have therein light on several Observations not commonly known, which will be of great Advantage in the present Case; because I shall not, I hope, be suspected of Prevarication and Priestcraft, on account of my present Conduct and Circumstances, no way rendering me obnoxious to such a Censure, I do the more willingly undertake this Trouble.

Now the Reflexions I would make upon this Pamphlet are these:

(1.) That 'tis all to no valuable purpose and serves to no good End: It neither promotes Men's Happiness in this, nor in another World: It tends to no real Amendment of what is amiss in the Church; nor proposes the least means of healing it's Breaches, or recovering it's Purity; nor would introduce any better Religion instead of the Christian: It seems rather to look on the Abuses, and Vices, and Disorders of Churchmen, as matter for Sport, Censure, and Amusement. Accordingly the Author freely owns, that he † *wrote purely to comply with a Friends Request, without the least Hopes of doing any good.* A Declaration not very agreeable to the Temper of a good Man; who is not generally willing to do what he shall judge will turn to no account in the World.

(2.) That the main part of the Book proves what will not be deny'd, at least by such as the Author expects will chiefly read it; I mean that Men must one way or other *Examine* things, and act upon the Evidence that arises from such Examination. This the Author may be sure will be agreed to by

me, and by all that have any Degree of Honesty and Impartiality : Nay we shall agree that if the King of * *Siam* should, as he puts the Case, send his Priests or *Talapoins*, in order to our Conversion to his Religion, they ought to be civilly treated and fairly heard : nor would the Christian Religion be in the least in danger if all other Pagan or Turkish Missionaries were alike heard, and reasoned with on that Occasion. Nay indeed Examination in a full and through manner, is what I take to be the great Duty of this Author in particular, and the slightness it here appears to have been done with, I take to be his great Fault, and the grand Occasion of my present Reflexions. It being impossible that a Person who had made a fair and full Examination into the most important Concerns of Religion, could ever persuade himself to write about it, in such a vain, loose, trifling, and ludicrous manner as is here done ; and as indeed is commonly done, by the present Enemies of Christianity. All Men have a right to be heard, when they talk seriously, soberly, gravely, and with an honest Mind: but no Man has a right to trifle, or be knowingly impertinent ; and least of all in the Business of Religion. I wish therefore that all the Unbelievers were openly allow'd and invited, to produce their real Arguments, substantial Objections, and considerable Doubts, without Molestation ; as being persuaded they are capable of satisfactory Answers and Solutions : but I cannot think they or any body are to jest, to banter, or to be ridiculous about it : which method yet is the main Strength of their Cause ; whereby they make the deepest Impression on the unthinking and unserious, that

HONORABLE (7)
is on the greatest part of Mankind. However, all this general arguing for *free thinking* or *fair examination*, which takes up above half the Pamphlet, signifies not much here, because the proper Rules and Measures of such *Thinking* or *Examination*, and the Nature and Character of compleat Evidence, where alone the Difficulty of the Case lies, is left wholly untouch'd and undetermin'd by this Author. This makes the whole look very awkward and unprofitable. Suppose a Merchant should discourse at large to his Friend, how much it behoves him to be a Gainer by Trading, and not a Loser; without the least Direction how he may deal to Advantage: such an Harangue would, I doubt, be of little use to him. Nor is the Method here taken, of much greater Advantage to the Instruction of Mankind.

(3.) We find here a great number of Passages, that are of little real Consequence at all in themselves, but seem rather put in for shew, and out of Humour, and Merriment, and Reproach than for any more useful Purposes. Such is that Reflexion on my Lord of * *Worcester's* Exposition of *Daniel's* Week having been in the Press above Ten Years: Which Exposition however I own I have formerly read, as far as it was then printed, and this with so great Pleasure and Satisfaction, that I am exceeding sorry any stoppage should have been made to its entire Publication: the short Result of which yet I have long since given the World upon † another Occasion. And I venture to say, the Evidence arising thence to the Truth of the Christian Religion, does much more encrease, than all the Exceptions made against it by

* pag. 11. † Harmonys of the Gospel, p. 198 199.

this and like Pamphlets, can weaken its Authority, with the impartial and judicious part of Mankind. * Such are the imposing or wicked Tricks of the Pawawers in *America*; † the idle Story of the Flames descending into the Holy Sepulchre on Easter Eve, with the flying of the Holy Ghost in the Shape of a Dove over the Cupola of its Church: || Such is the Tale of the three Pictures of St. *George*, and the Blessed Virgin, and another Saint's belaboring the Backs of those that carry them: † Such is that of the Liquefaction of St. *Januarius's* Blood at *Nap'es*, and that of the Candle at *Arras*, brought from Heaven by the Virgin *Mary*; a hundred more of which this Author might have added out of the Legends, but which have no Relation to Christianity; any farther, than they are the Shame and Disgrace of those several Churches, which support or tolerate the same Delusions, contrary to the whole Tenor and Nature of the pure and original Gospel of Christ. Such is that vehement Wish, for sending several of our * Divines as Missionaries beyond Sea, whose Names are written with Dashes also, after the scandalous way of the News Papers of this Age: Such is the Introduction of Mr. *Carrol* and Mr. *Turner* and others, with the solemn Title of *Reverend*, so often repeated as if it were done by way of Banter: Such are several weak and unguarded Passages, pick'd out of many otherwise valuable Authors: as if this Writer had read them, only to weed the most injudicious things he could find in them: particularly about the Mystery of the Scripture, the Trinity, Lay-baptism, Usury, Contradictions in Religion, Concealing the

* pag. 20. † pag. 21. || pag. 22. † pag. 23. * pag. 43.
Truth;

Truth, Names of Reproach, and *Friendship*; concerning which last, 'tis amazing how Bishop *Taylor* should talk so weakly, as if the New Testament had no mention of it: when that *Love of the Brethren*, of which the Gospel is so full, was an higher Affection than any other Friendship whatsoever. * Such is the Answer of the New Jersey Proprietor, of that Island's having neither *Lawyers*, *Physitians*, nor *Priests*; and the Gentleman's Admiration of it's Happiness thereupon. † Such is *Julian's* Satyrical Sarcasm on *Constantine*; † The pretended Dream about *Origen's* Damnation; and the † idle Tale about *Synesius's* Note for Money in another World, and the like. If this Writer expects any particular Reply to such humourson and ridiculous things, pick'd out rather for Shew and Merriment, than for Argument, he will certainly be disappointed.

(4.) There is here such an affected Use and Repetition of the word *Priest* upon all Occasions, and that, under all the odious Imputations possible, that no good Christian, especially no Bishop or Presbyter of the Christian Church, who are every one *Christian Priests*, but must be concern'd at it; as if the very Name or Office were criminal; and according to their famous Motto, *Priests of all Religions were the same*. Whereas *Priests*, among Christians, are properly no other than those sacred Officers, who are appointed by the Great High Priest *Jesus Christ*, to represent his Divine Priesthood here on Earth; to interpose between the Great God and sinful Men, in all the most important Offices of Religion; in Prayer, and Praise,

* pag. 108. † pag. 118. † pag. 102. † pag.

in the Oblation of the Gifts and Free-will Offerings of the People to God, especially in the most solemn Eucharistical Sacrifice of Commemoration ; in admitting Persons duly qualified into, and excluding open Sinners out of the Church ; in authoritatively blessing the People in the Name of God, and preaching his Word to them ; and in the like sacred Ministrations : not indeed with any Pretence to the least temporal Power, worldly Greatness, or secular Authority whatsoever : but yet with such a divine Commission from Christ, at least when they are elected and act according to his Laws, and not according to the Laws of Men, that the Publick Worship, the Celebration of Baptism, or of the Eucharist, with the Exercise of true Christian Discipline and Government, cannot duly and effectually be done without them. Accordingly I think it a great Honour, that I can still call my self a *Christian Priest* ; nor will a thousand such Reproachful Pamphlets as this make me at all ashamed of that Office or Appellation. Not that I will in the least justify or excuse any of that gross Ignorance, Folly, Prevarication, or Knavery, which in these latter Ages have too much prevail'd in the Church, and particularly in the Priests thereof ; as the Reader will see all along these Reflexions. Yet do I desire that the *Sacred Function* or Office it self may not be expos'd with those guilty Persons, that have too frequently been intrusted with it : Nor that the truly Learned, and Honest and Innocent, and Pious, and Charitable among the Bishops and Presbyters, (and God be thanked many such there are still left among them ; even, as I hope, in all the modern Churches,) may not be condemn'd with the rest. There have certainly been in
all

all Ages very many tyrannical Princes, unjust Judges, partial Magistrates, knavish Lawyers, careless and ignorant Physicians and cheating Trades-men: and yet will not any wise Man therefore fall a railing in general at all Princes, Judges, Magistrates, Lawyers, Physicians and Trades-men, and at their several Dignities and Employments. And I hope this Generation will live to see the *Christian Religion* and its *Priesthood* so reformed and restored to their original, pure, and undefiled State, that all their Enemies shall be ashamed of the least Attempts to reproach them. Nay I am willing to hope that some of these very Men, who now make it their Business to expose them both, shall be then so satisfied with their Excellency and Usefulness to Mankind, while all their temporal Power and Tyranny are gone, and they only and truly act by the Laws of the Gospel, as to resign themselves up so far to their spiritual Directions and Conduct, as to suffer themselves to be guided in the way of Salvation by them.

(5.) There is room for Suspicion that *Free-Thinking* is here often put for *Fair Examination*, for purpose, and with Design: as if all things were to be determin'd by *abstract Thoughts*, and *metaphysical Speculations*. And this is the more to be suspected, because many of late begin to talk against moral Evidence, ancient Testimonies, and matters of Fact, even in Points which can alone be known by those means; as if they were conscious that that Method of Enquiry were too laborious, and too much against their Designs to be relish'd by them. They had rather determine presently by *Free Thinking* whether *Moses* led the *Children of Israel* through the Red Sea; whether

gave the Law on Mount *Sinai*; and whether Christ rose from the Dead, or ascended to Heaven; than take the Pains to examine all the Testimonies and Monuments that relate to those Facts. They suppose it properer to snare you in a Paralogism about Necessity and Liberty, than appeal to the known Observations of all Men, and of themselves also, about the Freedom of human Actions; which yet is a Question only to be decided by such Observation; and which is thereby decided every Hour, to the Satisfaction of the Body of Mankind; I mean of all but a few that are puzzled with metaphysical Subtilties; those Cobwebs of Learning, and Foundations of Scepticism; and by the By, I own I cannot but esteem one that is moved with metaphysick Arguments against Fact, Experience, and Testimony about such Matters, to be just as wise, as he that is persuaded by the Difficulties in the Communication of Motion, to deny there is any such thing as Motion in the World: or as he that is moved by the seeming Absurdities, in the abstract Notions about *matter* it self, and its original to disbelieve the reality of its Existence; as Mr. *Berkely* in his *Principles of human Knowledge*, appears thence to have done. Nor have *Des Cartes*, Mr. *Serjeant*, Mr. *Carrol*, or others had much better Success in their parallel Speculations of that Nature. All which I observe the rather, to caution others from spending their Time and Thoughts on such vain Subtilties, and uncertain Amusements hereafter. But then, as to my present Reflexion, it is the more just and necessary here, because the whole of Revealed Religion is therein concern'd: It being as impossible to know by human Gueses, metaphysick Reasoning, or the *Free Thinking*, what

what particular Laws it pleas'd God at any time to give the Jews or Christians, without Recourse to the original Testimonies and Records thereto relating, as it is so to determin the Laws of *Numa*, or of the twelve Tables at *Rome*. Nor is it more possible for us, without History, to know what Miracles it has pleas'd God to work for the Confirmation of either than without it so to discover what Wars the King of *Babylon* or *Persia* made above two thousand Years ago. And indeed there is the more Reason for Caution against this Fallacy, because the main Fact on which Christianity is built, I mean the Resurrection of our Lord from the Dead, which has in so an unexceptionable a manner been lately demonstrated by *Mr. Ditton*, in order to the Conviction of these Unbelievers, is still wholly waved; and instead of any Reply to that excellent Discourse, an Answer to which would be much more to the Purpose than all the Amusements in this and the like Books, we are called to *Free-Thinking* only, as a sure Resolver of all Doubts and Difficulties whatsoever. If this be supposed too hard an Interpretation of the meaning of the Title and Language of this Book, I hope we shall be put off this way no more; but that *Mr. Ditton's* noble Undertaking will either be attempted to be answer'd, as to that most important matter of Fact, or we shall hear no more of *Free-Thinking* in opposition to Religion. For I venture to say, that as vain as some of these *Free Thinkers* may appear, and as conceited as they may be of the Power of their own Thoughts or Imaginations, yet are there none of them (in their Wits) so vain or conceited as to own the matters of Fact in the Bible, or indeed that One, that our Saviour did really

really rise from the Dead, to be true, and yet to deny, or even doubt of the Truth of Christianity.

(6.) We have here such a high Character of the Bible; * as a Collection of Tracts, given us at diverse Times by God himself; and that consequently every Thing therein mention'd, is handled with the utmost Degree of Exactness, that one would imagin the Author had a higher Opinion of the Inspiration and Divinity of all the parts of it, than some serious Christians themselves; tho' with what View and Intention this is said, the rest of the Pamphlet will hardly suffer us to doubt: It being obvious to argue, that if Books coming any Way from God, must be so exact and unexceptionable, since those contain'd in the Bible, do not seem to them to answer that Expectation in every thing, they cannot be suppos'd to come from Him, but must be Forgeries. Just thus do the Deists reason also in abundance of other Cases: as for Instance, about Christ's Appearances after his Resurrection: If Christ had really risen again, he would certainly have appear'd to the Sanhedrim, and Body of the Jewish Nation, as openly as he did before, to take away all Pretences to Infidelity in that matter: and by Consequence, since his own Followes confess that he appear'd † not unto all the People, but only unto some peculiar Men, as Witnesses chosen before of God, we are not to suppose that he did really rise at all. While all this sort of human reasoning, and these Devices of Men, are wholly opposite to the Counsel and Measures of the great God, declared every where in the sacred Books, and the oldest Records of our Religion; contrary to which Declaration, no one ought to pretend to justify

* pag. 10. † Act. X. † 1.

their divine Original and Authority. For* For judgment, or distinction of Men, did Christ certainly come into the World; that those honest Persons that saw, not, through want of Light, might see; and those wicked and conceited Persons that pretended most to see, might be made blind. Accordingly the whole Conduct of † Divine Revelation, has been all along suited to this grand Design of Providence. The Sacred Books themselves, have every where such Doubts and Difficulties in lesser Matters; the Secrets of the Providence of God, in the unequal Distributions of the good Things of this Life, and even of the outward Advantages of being his Peculiar Church and People, are so little therein opened to us, nay were so little known by the Prophets and sacred Writers themselves; so many occasional Histories and Passages are inserted, that make Room for Scruples in thoughtful Men; while yet at the same time the Histories themselves are written with that honest Simplicity and Integrity; without all Guile, Prejudice or Deceit: The Predictions are so plain and numerous, and have been in general so exactly accomplish'd all along; the Wonders and Miracles were so many, so visible, and left such lasting Impressions among Men; and the prophane ancient Memoirs, wherever they are of undoubted Authority, do for the main, so fully attest to the Truth of the Facts contained in these sacred Records, and the general Tenor and Drift of all is so evidently for the Support of Piety, Justice and Charity; for the encouraging of the Worship of the One Supreme God, and for the Observance of Virtue and the Laws of Nature; in short its Con-

* Joh. IX. 39. † See Chronology of the Old Testament p. 3—7. and Recognitions passim.

rents are so certain, so well attested by Fact and History, and yet so different from human, or contrary to the obvious Thoughts, and Notions, and Imaginations of mortal Men, that they are most exactly calculated for the foregoing Purposes of God, so visibly and frequently declar'd therein: *viz.* The Conviction, Edification, and Salvation of the Honest, Pious, and well Disposed; and the Stumbling and Fall of the Wicked, Profane, and Captious in all Ages. And by them God the Father has, as he intended, most evidently, *hid* the Mysteries of his Kingdom * *from the seemingly Wise and Prudent, and has only revealed them unto Babes, or the teachable and upright Enquirers into them.* Not do the sacred Scriptures ever pretend to a greater Degree of Inspiration, or of Divine Conduct about them, than was consistent with this *Grand Design of his Providence* thereto relating: and the Contents of the several Branches all along answer to that Degree of Inspiration and Divine Conduct, and to no other; as might be shewn more at large, if it were necessary, in this Place. Accordingly these sacred Books being still owned by the Good, the Honest, the Humble and the Sincere, that come to their perusal, not with an easy and credulous, but with a sober, honest, and impartial Mind, and with Prayer for the Divine Illumination by them; and being rejected or doubted of, chiefly by the Wicked, the Designing, the Proud, and the Captious; it appears that the Aim of Providence is still attained; and not only the Believers by receiving them, but the very Unbelievers themselves by rejecting them, are made Evidences of their Truth and Divine Original,

by † falling, and being ensnared, and taken in their own Craftiness, and Guile, and Wickedness, exactly according to the Declarations therein made to Mankind.

(7.) We have here and || elsewhere, abundance of Instances, taken from late Writers, of Passion, and Party, and Knavery, and Forgery, and insisted on in such a manner, as if they were to be imputed to Christianity, and its proper Clergy, and genuine Members: whereas they are all later than the pure and primitive State of Christianity; and are no other than the Effects of that spiritual Wickedness, Ecclesiastical Tyranny, and Antichristian Prevarication, which took place in, and after the Days of *Constantine* and *Athanasius*; which was frequently foretold in the sacred Scriptures; and which alter'd the Nature of our Religion, the Laws of the Gospel, the Constitution of the Clergy, and the entire Exercise of Christian Discipline: the doleful Effects of which sad State, good Men do so much deplore at this Day; and the Consequence whereof has been the endangering the very Belief of the Gospel it self in the World. However, all this is not one Syllable to the Purpose of our Unbelievers in the Way of Reason and Argument, but the Contrary. For, give me leave to ask, Has there been abundance of Passion, and Party, and Faction in the Church, since it was incorporated with the State, and seculariz'd thereby? Has the Antichristian Church, and others that retain too much of her Principles and Practices, used cunning Tricks, and knavish Methods of imposing on their Followers and Vassals? Have they made use of pious Frauds, gross Inter-

† Isa. VIII. 15. || Priestcraft in Perfection.

polations, notorious Corruptions, and manifest Forgeries to support their wicked Designs? Has the Clergy thereby been very often wrong educated, wrong elected, ty'd down by Subscriptions, and affrighted generally by temporal Disadvantages from examining, and preaching, and practising many Christian Truths and Duties? Has the true Authority and Power of the Bishops and Clergy been thereby turn'd from the effectual Exercise of Christian Discipline, and the Reformation of the manners of the Ministers and People committed to their Care, to a temporal sort of Tyranny, in making Articles of Faith or Communion, and Laws or Rules of their own, and then procuring the Sanction of the temporal Power for their Execution; and so to the erecting a spiritual Inquisition in the Church? Have the original serious Exhortations of the Gospel from the Pulpit often degenerated into party Harangues, and political Sermons? Have the old sober Apologies for Christianity, and the plain and affecting Books of ancient Piety and Devotion, been turned frequently into little Disputes and angry Invectives of one Party of Christians against another? Is the honest open Simplicity, Truth, and Sincerity of the first Followers of Christ almost lost among the Prudence and Politicks of our new Christians? Is the known Brevity and Plainness of the original Creeds, Doctrines, and Articles of Faith, almost swallowed up in the unintelligible Mysteries, absurd Notions, and disputable Forms of these later corrupt Ages of the Church? And is the main Pursuit of the Leaders of Parties of late, bent so much to the present World, and temporal Regards, that that *Heaven* which the original Embracers of the Gospel mainly sought for,

for, seems almost out of their View ; any farther I mean than as the recommending it to others may help those that recommend it to some Advantage in this World ? Are these the visible and notorious Effects of that vast Change of things, which *Constantine* and *Athanasius* first introduc'd into the Church, and which have gradually spread over Christendom, without any effectual or general Reformation to this Day ? And shall not all the Good and Honest thereupon esteem, and honour, that *prior* and better State of genuine Christianity ? that pure, and holy, and religious, and heavenly Settlement which Christ and his Apostles left to his Church ? that I mean which now appears most plainly in the Constitutions of the Apostles, in the sacred Scriptures of the New Testament, and in the Books, and Practice of the ancient Christians ? Shall not we have a just Indignation against those modern Corruptions, notorious Corruptions, every where now in the Church, both sullyng and disgracing our common Christianity ? And shall not we shew our Love for the † *pure and undefiled Religion* of our Lord and Saviour, by our going into all prudent and proper Methods for the Restoration of the same among us ? This certainly is the only just Inference from these Premises ; and not to take a Handle from the Wickedness of this Antichristian State of things at present, to make it still worse, by introducing open Impiety and Infidelity, and thereby to take away all Hopes of any better times in this, or of any future Happiness in the other World. Yet I cannot but here say with our Blessed Lord, that tho' || *It was necessary that these*

† Jam I. 27. || Matt. XVIII. 6, 7.

Offences should come, yet, *Who unto those men*, whether Governors or Governed, whether Clergy or Laity, whether Papists or Protestants, whether Churchmen or Dissenters, *by whom they come* : Good were it for them that a Millstone had been hanged about their Neck, and they had been drowned in the Depth of the Sea, rather than they should have given such Occasions to the Enemies of Christ to blaspheme. However as to the Cause itself, I venture to promise, that when the Deists shall shew me that the primitive State of Christianity was like the present in these matters, I will turn Deist also ; and to foretel that when that primitive State is in earnest reviv'd among us, which I hope will be in not very many Years time, all such Pamphlets as these will signify nothing, as to the Christians, but only turn to the Reproach of their Authors and Abettors for ever.

(8.) Many things are here taken for granted on the Foot of *Free Thinking*, that require another kind of *Examination*, and which upon such *Examination* will appear to be quite otherwise. Thus it is here asserted, † *that the most Ancient Fathers of the Church absurdly suppos'd God to be Material* : which I take to be intirely false. Nay indeed 'tis very probable *Tertullian*, by that *Corporeity* of God which he speaks of, meant no more than the Reality and *Substantiality* of his Nature, in Opposition to a meer virtual Being or Presence. The like I might say as to the || *Unlawfulness of Self-defence in any Case whatsoever* ; and that *Second Marriages were esteem'd a kind of Adultery* ; which last he can only have from such a rigid Heretick as the same *Tertullian* : while in the Laity they were freely

† pag. 13. || pag. 14.

permitted, without Imputation: nay while even third Marriages were not directly forbidden to the same Persons. Nor am I sensible that there was then any proper Law for the Laity against Usury in general; tho' after the Council of Nice, that and abundance of such new Burthens were laid upon Christians by the Church, without any original Authority or Direction in the Gospel. Thus it is affirm'd that † *the whole Affair of Oracles among the Pagans, was nothing else but the Artifice of Priests, to impose on the Senses of the People; and accordingly the Author gives you such an Account of their Caverns, and Holes, and Echoes, and Noises, and Machines, as if he had seen many of them, and had been let into the intire Secret: while the Author is conscious that what he here says, is not only destitute of, but entirely contrary to the original Testimonies and Authorities; and is properly owing to his own and his Friends peculiar manner of Free Thinking: which Argument I take to be of not much more Value, in this and the like Cases, than are the Dreams of Men, against their waking Observations. And the same is to be said, as to the || Appearances of invisible Beings or Demons, with the Business of Witchcraft. In all which Cases, those that judge by the Evidence of Fact and Testimony, may easily be of another Opinion. And for my self, tho' I fear many innocent Persons may have been unjustly condemned, and the Testimony of those under Distraction or dæmoniackal Possession, which is either no Evidence at all, or at best no more than dæmoniackal, has been too easily allow'd for Conviction; and tho' I believe Cheat, and Imposition, and Mi-*

stake are very often found in, or mixed with
 such Accounts, both among Heathens, Jews,
 and Christians, yet do I fully believe all has not
 been Cheat and Imposture; but that, according
 to the undoubted Declarations of the Scripture,
 and the general Consent of all Nations and Ages,
 Invisible Powers, both good and bad, have fre-
 quently been permitted to interpose in the Affairs
 of Mankind; altho' the Nature of the Divine Con-
 duct already observ'd, would by no means allow of
 bringing those matters, any more than others, to
 a perfectly undeniable Demonstration. And to
 pass over this Author's idle Observation, that
 † *the Devil is entirely banish'd the United Provinces*, of
 which he knows no more than others; and his
 Reflexion upon several Reverend Divines, who
 he says || *are well skill'd in the Prophets and Revelati-
 ons, and soon expect the second Coming of our Blessed
 Saviour*; while he is yet endeavouring to *take
 away Faith from the Earth*; which when it shall be
 almost gone, we shall have a farther Sign of the
 approach of that Advent of our Blessed Saviour:
 as he says himself, * *When the Son of Man cometh
 shall he find Faith on the Earth?* To pass by also his
 Erratum or Dele, † *If a Man be under an Obligation
 to listen to any Revelation at all*; which some suspect
 was inserted to make the Passage more remarka-
 ble, It is here v. hinted, that the Difference
 of the Hebrew and Septuagint Copies of the Bi-
 ble, is a mighty weakning to Christianity: while
 yet 'tis not certain that in the first Century there
 was any such Difference at all between them;
 nor indeed very often of mighty Consequence
 thereto, which of their present different Chrono-

† Pag. 28. || pag. 30. * Luk. XVIII. 8. † pag. 46. † pag. 54.
 logies

logies or Readings we follow. In reality I think the Causes of the present Differences between those Copies, are not yet sufficiently discover'd, and several Observations necessary thereto, have been hitherto omitted by the Learned. Only so far I venture to give my own Thoughts, that those Differences were not, generally speaking, original; nay that they were not so in the Days of *Philo* and *Josephus*; that the then agreeing Copies were truly quoted in the first Ages of the Gospel; that the Occasions of the present Differences seem generally owing to the scattered State of the Jews after the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, and before the Days of *Origen*; and that the more we can recover of the Hebrew or Samaritan Text and Greek Copies, as they were in the first Century, in these disagreeing Places, the less Difficulties shall we have upon us, and the more exact will the Citations of Christ, his Apostles and the first Christians appear to be. But then as to the unpublish'd || Samaritan Chronology, as disagreeing with the Hebrew Accounts, I venture to say the Christian Church will be in no Fear of it's open Appearance in the World. All such spurious Pieces rather still tending to the Honour of the genuine Scriptures; and only supplying injudicious Writers with Matter for the Amusement of the ignorant and unlearned Readers; after which they immediately come to nothing.

(9.) We have here *Superstition* and *Religion* perpetually confounded; nay, *Timor Deorum* is rendered * *The Fear of God*, and is made the Definition of *Superstition*. Somewhat like this might pass for tolerable under Paganism, when *Religio*

|| *ibid.* * pag 132.

commonly signified *Heathen Superstition*, and when they had no other but a superstitious Form of Worship among them ; but 'tis intolerable under Christianity, when Religion is us'd in a nobler Sense, and when its original Settlements, still extant in the Apostolical Constitutions, and the Scripture, are so far from unmanly, servile, or over-run with little useless Ceremonies, which is the known Character of Superstition, that 'tis for certain the most just, rational, pious and regular Method of an holy Life, of divine Worship, of a righteous, charitable, and humble Behaviour, of a regular Discipline, and of an heavenly Conversation that ever was upon God's Earth ; and that without any Terrors or affrightful Threats upon any, but the obstinately Wicked and Incurable. In truth, I look upon a Life led according to those Rules, to be the most noble, most useful, and most pleasant that a rational Creature is capable of in this World ; and that it affords such solid Foundations of Consolation under all the Troubles of this Life, and even under Persecution and Death it self, that no other Method of Religion, or if you will Irreligion, can compare with it: since it self is the highest and best Institution of *Religion* ; and *Irreligion*, besides its other Miseries, can never afford any Assurance or Security against a future Judgment, and the Punishments of another World ; and so by Consequence must always leave Room for Fear, and Horrour, and Despair at present ; as well as expose Men, if Religion be true, to the dreadful Vengeance of divine Justice hereafter. For tho' I do not perceive that God has threatned to preserve the Lives or State of the Wicked or Unbelievers in Torment to all Eternity ; yet has he certainly assur'd us, their Misery shall be

too severe and too lasting to be undergone, or even thought of without Horror, Agony and Amazement. And what wise Man would run the least Risque of all this, only to avoid the ** living soberly, righteously and godly*, or according to the most excellent Laws of the Gospel, *in this present World?* and that in Hopes of a blessed Reward in the Kingdom of Heaven? And O that this Writer and all of us *may Consider this, and shew ourselves Men!* and with wise Solomon, whom our Author himself puts among his *Free Thinkers*, resolve to † *Fear God, and keep his Commandments; because therein consist's the whole Happiness of Man:* considering that *God will bring every Work into Judgment, with every secret Thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*

But to return; As to || real Superstition, Magick Terrors and Rites, Omens, Enchantments, Astrological Predictions, &c. this Author cannot but know they are entirely forbidden by our Holy Religion; and so no way to be charg'd upon it: as indeed he does own that all the † Ceremonies or vain Divinations in the Heathen Temples, were intirely discountenanc'd by the ancient Christians; tho' he ought to confess it was not because they believ'd them nothing but Cheats of the Priests; as he here intimates; but because they look'd on them, as what their very Baptism taught them to abhor, when they *Renounced Satan, and his Works, and his Pomps, and his Worshipps, and his Angels, and his Inventions, and all things that are under him:* the delivering Men from the Tyranny of which wicked Spirits, was look'd on then as one principal Advantage of the Advent

* Tit. II. 12. † Eccles. XII. 13, 14. ‡ pag. 35, &c.
 † pag. 20. . Constitut. lib. VII. cap. 41, & pag. 379, 380.

of our Blessed Saviour. Nor indeed am I yet satisfied, that all the spurious Miracles so current under * *Athanasianism* and *Popery*, and of which our Author makes such Advantage, were meer Cheats; but suspect that there have frequently been Dæmoniacal Operations and Illusions intermixed with them: and that from the very Days of *Anthony* the Monk, to our own Age. But this only by the By.

(10.) We have || here broad Hints, that Men need have *no Fear of any future Misery or Evil at the Hands of God*; and that *Misery in the next World, is a thing of which men are incapable of having any convincing Evidence*; and so they need not be afraid of future Punishment for their Sins; let the Convictions of their own Consciences tell them never so freely they justly deserve it; or let the Revelations of God be never so plain and so well attested, thereto relating. I cannot here, amidst my Wonder at this Authors Boldness, but commend his Way of Management; I mean when he takes care to know all this *a priori* from *Free Thinking*, and so saves himself the Labour of farther Demonstration. And I think him a very fit Person to comfort and encourage our Thieves and Cutthroats, under all their Fears and Terrors, lest publick Justice should overtake them at last. For to be sure he can easily tell them that, ' There is
' no occasion for any uneasy Fears, or any me-
' lancholy Apprehensions of Laws, and Pu-
' nishments, Judges, and Juries, Condemnati-
' ons, and Executions. That indeed there has
' been much Talk of such Things, and several
' have pretended to have read, and heard, and seen
' and felt the Effects of them; Yet he can prove

there is no Foundation for any Supposals of that Nature, because it is easy to prove *à priori*, and by *Free Thinking* that it must be all false, and inconsistent with the Queens Justice, Clemency, Goodness, and Affection to her Subjects; with many more demonstrative Arguments of the like Nature that he could use in that Case. Only I fear that such an Harangue as this, would rather make the Orator pass for one Distracted, than afford the least Jot of Comfort to the guilty Offenders. Which is also very much the Case in the Parallel before us. But then if he means all this, not only for the Ease of the Offenders, but for the Benefit and Advantage of human Life in general, I shall beg Leave to address my self to him in the excellent Words of *Peter*, out of the *Recognitions* upon occasion of those that then took away the Hopes and Fears of another World; and to desire he will please to consider seriously of them. Now you assert, says he to *Simon Magus*, that the Soul is mortal, that Men may not, in Hope of future Happiness, live well and justly. For certainly if Men despair of future Happiness, what will be the Consequence, but that Mercy will be cut off, and Men will indulge themselves in Luxury and Pleasures, whence 'tis certain all Injustice does arise? Yet while you introduce a Doctrine of so great Impiety into this miserable Life of Mortal Men, you call your self a pious Person, and me an impious one; because, as I suppose, I put a Restraint upon Men, by the Hope of future Happiness, from taking up Arms and fighting with one another; from disturbing and subverting every

thing; and undertaking all Enterprizes that Lust
 can dictate to them. And what a State of Life
 must that be, which you would introduce? That
 Men may beat and be beaten; that they may be
 in a Rage with one another; and full of Confusi-
 on, and live in perpetual Fear: for it cannot be
 avoided, but those that bring Mischiefs on others,
 must themselves expect to be treated in the like
 manner. Don't you perceive now that you are a
 Leader of Disturbance, and not of Peace, of In-
 quity, not of Equity? And afterward: * What
 good have the Philosophers done to human Life,
 by saying that God is never angry at Men? I
 suppose only this, to teach them that no Body
 need be at all afraid of any Vengeance, or Day of
 Judgment; and thereby to loose the Reins intire-
 ly to Sinners. Or what Advantage have they
 brought to Mankind, who have said there is no
 God, and that all things happen by Chance and
 accidentally? Is not this the Consequence there-
 of, that Men that hear such Doctrine, and sup-
 pose there is no Judge, none that exercises any
 Providence in the World, will fear no Body, but
 will be carried headlong into all Wickedness,
 which either Rage, or Covetousness, or Lust
 can dictate to them? For even those that say no-
 thing can be done but according to the Scheme
 of Nativity, have not much improved human
 Life: since the Consequence is, that every one,
 by ascribing the Cause of his Sin to his Geniture,
 satisfies himself that he is innocent in his wicked
 Practices; while instead of washing away his
 Crime by Repentance, he doubles his Guilt by
 ascribing it to Fatality.

(11.) We have * here a large Account of the Difference of Opinions among Priests, Christian as well as Heathen; and many notable Examples produc'd, and Passages inserted, which the Author thinks proves it undeniably. But now, tho' this be very true in the vulgar Sense, wherein Papists, Protestants, Lutherans, Calvinists, the Followers of general Councils, of *Athanasius*, *Austin*, *Cranmer*, or *Cartwright*, are called *Christians*; Yet in a strict Sense it is utterly false. For As he that follows *Athanasius* is an *Athanasian*; he that subscribes to the Council of *Nice* is a *Nicean*; he that is guided by the Council of *Constantinople* is a *Constantinopolitan*; he that believes the Council of *Ephesus* is an *Ephesian*; and he that depends on the Council of *Chalcedon* is a *Chalcedonian*. So is he and only he that follows *Christ* and his Apostles, properly speaking, a *Christian*. Now I venture to affirm, upon the Credit of a frequent and careful Perusal of all the genuine Remains of original Christianity, that there is no Foundation for this Imputation upon it; particularly in those very Points, which our Author instances in for the Proof of this Assertion. And I wish all that call themselves Christians at present, would consider well of this matter; and laying aside the Notions of their several Parties and Churches, would with one Consent resolve to return to *Primitive Christianity*; which they would then find all of a Piece, easy to be discover'd, and a certain Foundation of their Unity, Peace and Agreement. This would be the most effectual Confutation, not only of the present Author, but of all the Unbelievers for ever: till which time 'tis easy to see

they will get Ground, and will triumph over us, without a Possibility of any other effectual Stop or Confutation. Only I must say farther, that several Passages here alledg'd from *A. B. King*, *Bp. Taylor*, *Mr. Braddock*, *Dr. Sherlock*, *Dr. South*, *Dr. Wallis*, *Mr. Nye*, *Dr. Gastrell*, *Bp. Aylmer*, *Mr. Seller*, *Bp. Sanderson*, and *Bp. Parker* are such as stand in great need of an Apology, if they are capable of it. But since I am alone concern'd in vindicating the Christian Religion, which is no way interested in the Rashness of any modern Churches or Persons about such matters, I shall leave their Vindication to such as are better qualified and dispos'd to spend their time in those matters. I need not now insist on this Author's next * Head, *viz.* the Contradictions to Reason and to one another, which some have own'd as to the Doctrines they receiv'd; since this affects not the Christian Faith it self, wherein no such Contradictions appear, but the late Notions and Hypotheses of some modern Parties among us only; nor will the rash Sayings of *Dr. Sacheverel*, *Bp. Beveridge*, and *Dr. South*, which are all that are alledg'd in this Place as absurd, at all affect the Religion of our Saviour; till it can be made appear, that *that* is also justly chargeable with such Inconsistency and Contradiction; which I think these Authors, can never prove it to be. Nor need I in the next place, add much as to what is said, that by the Acknowledgment of *|| Dr. Grabe* and *Dr. Hickes* there are still Abuses, and Defects, and false Doctrines in our Church; since my own Opinion is so well known already on the same Side; and that as to several

of the very same Points also that are here mention'd in particular. Nor can any Body so much as seriously pretend, that we have any real Church-Discipline at all. In the next † Place we have Examples of the Priests professing they will not tell the Truth, but reproaching those that do so. Now I shall be so far from justifying any of the Passages here quoted from Dr. *Atterbury*, the Bp. of *Worcester*, and Dr. *Edwards* of *Oxford*, or that of A. B. *Cranmer* himself, if it were meant as he supposes, that I look on them as shameful and intolerable. We have then another sad Instance of the Priests Conduct, *viz.* || The branding those they dislike, with the odious Names of *Socinian*, *Deist* or *Atheist*, without any just Occasion. Now that this has been very unjustly done sometimes, is too plain to be deny'd. Only let the Guilty answer for themselves, and let the Innocent not be condemn'd with them. Nor is this a Fault peculiar to Priests, but common to all the violent Parties, as such, one against another. But as for that heavy Charge in particular of the very Learned Dr. *Hickes* upon the great and good A. B. *Tillotson*, that *He was the gravest Atheist that ever was*, I would fain disbelieve the Truth of it: And it being only a Quotation in a nameless Pamphlet, suppos'd to be his, from another written by a Person of quite different Principles before, there seems to be Room for it: otherwise it must stand as an amazing Monument of the heat of Party, and the strange Violence which *Oppression* sometimes drives the greatest Men to; I mean to represent that excellent Person as an *Atheist*, whose whole Life and Labours were spent in vindicating Religion both natural and reveal'd, with the

greatest Success; and endeavouring so to represent and reform them from Mistakes and Perversion, that they might be universally receiv'd by Mankind. Nor do such as these well consider what Ends they serve, when they unwarily stigmatize such Men as the Archbishop, Mr. *Lock*, &c. with the Names of *Socinian*, *Deist* or *Atheist*; It being certainly not the way to support the Credit of Religion, or of any of its Doctrines in the World, to have it thought that the most considering, fair, and judicious Persons are dissatisfied or Unbelievers; and such Suspicions proving generally, upon Enquiry, intirely contrary to Truth, and built on no Foundation in the World. I heartily wish the Religious Men of all Parties would make that good Use of this Caution, to take care to give no more Occasion for Complaint on this Head. We have here a little after, † several Instances of the Priests Use of pious Frauds, in translating and publishing Books. Now as to this, no other Answer need be return'd by me, but this, that the old Christians before *Athanasius* abhor'd all such Practices; and that all Priests or others, that knowingly do any such thing, are themselves to be had in the utmost Detestation by all Men; especially by all Christians; whose very Religion had originally the Name of *Truth* given to it, as intirely depending on Truth and Sincerity in all its Affairs; in distinction from the wicked Heresies of those Ages, which were supported by Lies, Corruptions, Interpolations, and Forgery: so that by consequence all such late Churches, and Parties, and Factions, which are found to support themselves by the same wicked Arts, are so far, plainly Antichristian.

† pag. 91. &c.

(12.) We have here also all Pretence of God's Revelations to the Jews expos'd, as † *making him talk to all Mankind from Corners*; * *making him have Favorite Nations and People, without any Consideration of Merit*: and we have withal great Contempt shew'd of that Nation, as an || *illiterate, barbarous, and ridiculous People*; and, in the wild and profane Language of Dr. South, *such as God seems to have espous'd to himself upon the very same Account that Socrates did Xantippe, only for her extreme ill Conditions*. Now as to God's talking to the Jews, as from a Corner, 'tis in some Sense notoriously false. His Wonders for them in Egypt, at the Red-Sea, and in Palestine were open, and publick; and famous, over no small part of the then inhabited World: they seem on the contrary, design'd as standing † *Monuments of the divine Power and Providence, in fulfilling his Promises to the Obedient, and executing his Threatnings on the Disobedient*; even before the rest of the World, and to many Generations. And accordingly all Nations were permitted or invited to become Profelytes, to embrace the Worship, and put themselves under the Protection of the One true God; and this without laying any necessary Obligation upon them, as to all the Jewish Ceremonial Observances. Nor was that Nation a *Favorite*, as to eternal Rewards or Punishments, more than others; but only intrusted with peculiar Talents and Opportunities, and preserv'd in good Measure, from the overspreading Idolatry and endless Superstition of the neighbour Nations, till the coming of their Messias: for all which

† pag. 38. * pag. 39. II 157. † See Constituc. lib VIII. cap. 12. pag. 402.

they were proportionably accountable to God: and their Abuse of those Mercies, and at last their murdering their Messias, have reduc'd them to be the most miserable of all Nations, till they again repent, in order to their future Recovery and Restoration: that so, at last they and all People may find that in reality † *God is no Respector of Persons; but that in every Nation he that feareth him, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted with him:* Nay it appears probable to me, that how stubborn and stiffnecked a People soever they were of old, yet were they not worse, nor more wicked, nor more ignorant, than the rest of the Nations, which were then their Neighbour, in the World, such as the *Egyptians, the Canaanites, the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Chaldeans,* and those others, of whom Mention is made in the sacred History: There being little of that more agreeable Sort of Vertue and Learning then in the World, which the Grecian Philosophy and Politeness afterwards introduc'd, and which spread themselves among the Jewish Nation also, and prepar'd the way for the times of the Messias, both among Jews and Gentiles. However, I fear one great Reason of all this Spite to the Jews is, because their Sacred Books have been receiv'd by the Christians, and do mainly support our Religion: and that the Remains of that Nation, scatter'd over the World, together with all their ancient Records, do give such undeniable Attestation to those Sacred Writings, as makes it impossible for the Deists to attack them by Evidence and Testimonies, and reduces them to the Necessity of opposing to plain Fact, to undoubted Evidence, to certain

† Act. X. 35.

Miracles, and to notorious Instances of divine Providence, done in open Face of Mankind, meer *Free Thinking*, or rather downright *groundless Imagination*.

(12.) We have † here and more largely || elsewhere, such Assertions about the *Canon of Scripture*, and the Uncertainty of the sacred Books of our Religion; and all this confirmed by such Quotations out of some Modern Learned Men among us also, that many considering Persons are startled at it. Now my Answer in this Case shall be very short and very plain; *viz.* That all these strange Assertions are false, and groundless, and unsupported by all original Antiquity; that nothing but the laying aside the Apostolical Constitutions, with it's Catalogue of Sacred Books, and Quotations from them; and particularly the Rejection of it's 85th Apostolical Canon, could ever have reduc'd so plain a Case to so great an Uncertainty. For the *Canonical Books of Scripture*, both of the Old and New Testament, originally meant nothing but the Books enumerated in that 85th Canon, all which were still esteem'd Genuine and Sacred, and were all, but the Constitutions, accordingly read in the publick Assemblies of Christians, and called by the solemn Name of *Scripture*: as were also the rest of the Books written after the making of that Canon, by any of the Apostles, or their original Companions and Attendants, such as *Barnabas*, *Hermas*, *Ignatius*, and *Poly carp*, and by no others. I mention the *Constitutions of the Apostles*, as certainly *Canonical*; since they are in all the known Copies of that original Canon; and I desire this Author, who

† pag. 54. 55. || Mr. Toland's Amyntor,

seems to wonder that the *Abyssinian* Christians receive them; to shew me any one Copy where they are wanting; or indeed to name me any one truly Primitive Christian Church, that was govern'd by any other Rules of Faith, and Discipline, and Worship, and Government, than those contain'd in them. For as to those many other doubtful or spurious Pieces, which are reckon'd up here and elsewhere, there is no Pretence for their being in the *Canon*; or that they were called *Scripture*, or cited as of compleat Authority, or indeed read in the publick Assemblies of Christians in the first Ages: which alone were the Characters of Books most properly *Divine* or *Sacred* among them. Nay most of the Books in these Catalogues were the Product of the old Hereticks; and so had in Detestation by all Christians. But I have had Occasion to examine this matter elsewhere, whither I must here refer the Reader; and to which Proof I must desire a through Answer before this *Uncertainty of the Canon of Scriptures*, so much insisted on of late, is any more mention'd on these Occasions.

(14.) Some things are here set down as fundamental Branches of Christianity, in order, as 'tis to be fear'd, to expose it, while the Author could hardly believe them to be any Parts of original Christianity at all, but must know, or at least suspect they came into the Church in later Ages. Thus in one Place we have it asserted, that † *The most Fundamental Doctrine of the whole Christian Religion, is the Doctrine of the ever Blessed Trinity*, which he elsewhere explains, as implying ∴ *Christ to be God and*

|| Essay on the Constitutions, Chap. I. Lem. 6. † pag. 61.

*Man, and God's Son, and the same numerical Being with that God whose Son he was, and yet personally distinct from *him. And afterward, The Doctrine of Original Sin, or that Men are now lyable to be damned for Adam's Sin, is the Foundation of the whole Christian Religion.* I dare appeal to the Author's Conscience, whether he believes what he here says to be true; and to the Readers whether, if he does not, these are not, plain Instances of that Prevarication and Insincerity, which he so vehemently complains of in the Clergy and the Church. My own Opinions in these Cases are so well known to the contrary, that I need add nothing farther to declare them upon this Occasion.

(15.) We have † here and elsewhere a great noise made with the various readings of the New Testament in Dr. *Mills*, above 30000 in number; and a Quotation from Dr. *Whitby*, how doubtful they must render the Text it self. Now as to this, all I need say here is, that those various Readings are so far from hurting the Text, or weakening its Authority in general, that they give mighty light to it; shew how it has been in constant Use and Reputation; are a grand Hedge and Security about it; shew us sometimes the real original Writing of the Apostles in disputable Points; and are undeniable Attestations to the main current and coherence of our common Copies. It being evident that out of those 30000 there is scarce Fifty that do considerably alter the Sense of the Places; and of them scarce Ten that do so in any Points of great Difficulty and Importance. So that to speak my Mind plainly, whenever I find such a Noise made in this case, I shrewdly suspect

either gross Ignorance as to those various Readings themselves, and the proper Nature and Use of them; or great Passion, Prejudice and want of Judgment; and on the contrary cannot but wish that the various Readings of the Hebrew Copies of the Old Testament had been preserv'd as well as those of the New; being very secure that thence great Light would often have arisen to many Texts, which no Commentator can now unfold to us upon any certain Foundation. I pass over that idle Tale and miserable Translation about the † *Correction of the Holy Gospels under Anastasius, as written by Idiot Evangelists*. For this Author cannot be so weak as to think any of our Copies of the Gospels are such as have been so corrected, if ever any such foolish Thing, in the way of Forgery, was attempted by any Body; I say in the way of *Forgery* only; or as intending any Diminution or Suppression of the original Gospels themselves thereby. Otherwise many honest Paraphrases; and some useful Versions do endeavour to express more easily, and in a politer Stile, what the Sacred Writers speak, in a plainer and more unartful Language: Whether || *Tatian's* Design in his Paraphrase on Paul's Epistles, wherein he is said to have amended the Construction of the Apostles Language, were of the former or of the latter sort, 'tis hard now to determine, since the Book is lost; as it is also to do so in the present Case, for want of any Remains of this pretended Paraphrase or Correction before us under *Anastasius*, if ever such a thing was then really put in Practice: of which yet the intire Silence of all other Historians about it leaves great room to doubt. But this Translation

† pag. 90. || Euseb. Hist. Eccl. Lib. IV. cap. 29.

of *ab idiotis Evangelistis*, by *Idiot* instead of *plain and unartful Evangelists* deserves rather the Rod of a Schoolmaster, than the Reflexion of a Scholar upon it. If a Clergy-Man had been guilty of so great Weakness or Prevarication, call it which you please, as this Translation, which yet is not the only one of this Nature in this Pamphlet, he would hardly have escaped the Lash of this Writer, or of his Brethren, upon a proper Occasion.

(16) What is here said, * ‘ as if the Streets of London are full of Common Whores, who are in effect publickly tolerated in their Wickedness; and the Whore-mongers free from all Punishment, and almost from Censure; and as if few or no Complaints are made of this Wickedness, either from the Pulpit or the Press; I take to be entirely false. Certainly our Author has heard, at least of one *Society for the Reformation of Manners*, with the annual Sermons and the Books belonging to them. However if things be still so very bad among us, notwithstanding the constant Diligence of that Body, that such Men as this Author and † *Dr. Swift* are forc’d to cry out for Discipline and Reformation; nay that even the Author of the *Examiner* cannot bear the Insults that are made upon Religion and the Clergy in this very Pamphlet, but endeavours to confute it, and to support Christianity; I hope all really good Men, will not be any more discourag’d in their Attempts for such Restoration of Discipline, and an intire Reformation; and that I my self also shall be allowed, without Offence, to contribute what I can to this Amendment of things amiss, and to the Revival of Primitive Christiani-

* pag. 116. † *Swift's Project for Reformation of Manners.*

ty among us. I heartily wish that all such Men as these were in earnest: For if they were but in any degree so, neither Morality nor Christianity could possibly be at that low Ebb among us, which sad Experience teaches us they really are.

(17.) We have || here such a Catalogue of *Free-Thinkers* put together, as is very odd and whimsical, very unfair and disagreeable; they are these, *Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, Plutarch, Varro, Cato the Censor, Cicero, Cato of Utica, Seneca, Solomon, The Prophets, Josephus, Origen, Minutius Felix, Synesius, The Lord Bacon, Mr. Hobbes, and A. B. Tillotson*; besides One and Twenty more that are only nam'd. Certainly so many Persons of so very different Characters, have not commonly been rank'd together. Tho' how it comes to pass that the † *Divine Virgil*, and some more such *Divine Heathen Poets* do not appear among them, I do not understand. Now if this Author by a *Free Thinker* means only a great and good Man, that does his utmost to oppose the Prejudices and Superstitions, the Vices, and Errors, and Corruptions of the Times he lives in; this is a very imperfect Catalogue: but if he means *Free Thinkers* in Opposition to the Embracers of true Religion, which consists in the Love and Fear of God, the Dependence on his Providence, the Hopes of his Rewards, and the Dread of his Punishments in this and the other World, and the Prosecution of Holiness and Vertue, as a Law deriv'd from the Blessed Author of all their Enjoyments, and in order to approve themselves to him, as he seems to do, he must leave out the greatest Part of even these, nay must place not a

few of them among the principal Promoters of Religion; and content himself with *Epicurus* of Old, and Mr. *Hobbes* of late; or with two or three more out of these Forty at the utmost. What is here chiefly remarkable is his claiming || *Cicero* for a *Free Thinker*, in his irreligious Sense of the Words, contrary to the main Tenor of his Writings, whatever this Author pretends; a few of which Passages I shall here transcribe for his Vindication. 'O Blessed Day, says his †*Cato*, when
 ' I shall go to that great Assembly and Company
 ' of Divine Souls! and shall get away from this
 ' Rout and Disagreeable Mixture of People here!
 ' For I shall not only go to those Men whom I
 ' spake of before, but also to my *Cato*, one of the
 ' best and most pious Men that ever was born;
 ' and whose Body was committed to the Funeral
 ' Pile by me; whereas mine ought to have been so
 ' by him. While his Soul did not desert me, but
 ' look'd back upon me, and so no doubt departed
 ' into those Places, whither he saw I my self was
 ' to come hereafter. And presently, under the
 ' same Person's Name. ' But if I be in an Error
 ' in believing that the Souls of Men are Immor-
 ' tal, 'tis a very agreeable Error: nor shall I be
 ' willing to have it ever extorted from me while
 ' I live. However, if when I am dead I shall have
 ' no more Perception, as some small Philosophers
 ' suppose, [not *Cicero* himself certainly,] I
 ' dont fear being laugh'd at for this Error, by those
 ' dead Philosophers. Which Passages, with man-
 ' ny other in *Tully's* Writings, do indeed intimate
 ' no small Degree of Uncertainty about it, in
 ' such Men as *Cato* and *Cicero*; but yet they plainly
 ' imply that their real, nay darling Opinion was for
 ' its Immortality. But that *Solomon* and the Prophets

 || pag. 135. &c. † De Senectute.

should be brought into the Rank of these *Free Thinkers*, because the former introduces and confutes an Irreligious Speaker, and the latter reproves the Jews for their Formality in their outward Observances, without any Regard to inward Purity, Piety, and Obedience, and sadly complains of the Corruption of the Prophets and Priests among them at that time; is still more awkward, profane, and ridiculous. And it were but to expose ones self to the Laughter of this Author and his Friends, to go about operously to vindicate either of them; since themselves cannot certainly be serious in the Imputations they lay upon them. Only I must Note, that what is here said under the Pretence of † *Vindicating Solomon for his want of Knowledge, as to the Immortality of the Soul*, seems to me all built on a Mistake. That Immortality which was properly a new reveal'd under Christianity being the immediate Immortality, or State of the Soul after Death in Joy or Torment, previous to the last Judgment, and the general Resurrection; which indeed either was not, at least was not reveal'd under the Old Testament: while in all Ages it was known and confess'd that Men were to rise again, and be judged at the last Day; and then were to enter into Joy or Torment accordingly: which was the grand Principle of Religion all along; till the Idolatry and Wickedness of later Ages, soil'd or eras'd those original Notions in part out of the Souls of Men, as I have had Occasion || elsewhere to observe. Nor does it appear, that *Josephus* disbeliev'd himself those Sacred Records he so admirably vindicated against *Apion*, as

† pag. 152. 153. || Sermon and Eff. pag 86, &c.

this Author would intimate; but that he only endeavour'd to shew a sort of seemingly fair Indifferency and Compliance with the Greeks and Romans in his Accounts, in order to the procuring their better Reception among them; which Method, how little soever I may approve of it my self, yet has been so common among not a few great Men on many Occasions, that I shall not here offer to expose it; much less draw thence such Conclusions as this Author does.

And now I shall address my self, by way of Conclusion, to two Sorts of Persons, I mean to the *Deists*, with this their Defender, so far as he owns that Character; and to my Brethren the *Clergy* themselves, from whose suppos'd Disorders or ill Management, this and the like Authors, take almost all their Occasions and Arguments against Religion. And as to the former sort, the *Deists*, I beg of them to consider how unfairly and unjustly they argue in all such cases; when from the late supposed or real corruptions, prevarications, and tyranny of the Clergy they are willing Men should conclude the falsity or uncertainty of Christianity it self. What consequence is there in this? The Clergy, since temporal Power and Preferments have been annexed to their Order, have been thereby tempted frequently to abuse them, to grow careless, and uncharitable, and proud, and hypocritical; therefore Christ was an Impostor, his Apostles Deceivers, and all the first Bishops and Pastors, who had none of them any temporal Power, or worldly Preferments to tempt them, were as bad; they were in the same manner careless, and uncharitable, and proud, and hypocritical also; how does it follow that because Dr. South, Dr. Atterbury, Dr. Swift,

Dr. *Sacheverel*, or other such like noted Clergy-Men of late, have said or done such things as either really are, or are by the Deists suppos'd to be weak, foolish, knavish, or tyrannical, that therefore *Peter*, and *Paul*, and *John*, are not to be believ'd in their delivery of the Christian Doctrines and Constitutions? Suppose the Council of *Trent*, nay our own Convocations, and the Councils of *Nice*, *Constantinople*, *Ephesus*, or *Chalcedon* themselves have determin'd very rashly and unwarrantably about many Mysteries or Doctrines of Christianity, and laid needless or unjust burdens on the Consciences of Men, is it thence evident that the plain and intelligible Doctrines, and most equitable Duties of the Gospel are unreasonable? Or is it therefore plain that the Canon of Scripture is really it self uncertain, because the Modern Writers have of late been so unacquainted with the original State of that matter as to suffer some Party-Prejudices to supersede the Primitive Testimonies about it? Are not our present Copies of the Bible, so far as they are attested to by the best MSS, and ancient Versions, and Quotations, to be depended on, because some Hereticks have been able to corrupt a few places, in some later Copies, Versions, and Quotations; but which commonly appear by the former to be no better than Corruptions? Is it a clear Case, that because it is now undeniable that the Heretick † *Athanasius* was guilty of a Notorious Forgery in one of the most sacred Points of Christianity, that therefore the old Christians, who always had such Hereticks and such Practices in the utmost Abhorrence, were Knaves also? Nay are the

† See *Athanasius* Convicted of Forgery,

Writers of the first, second, and third Centuries to be discarded, because some otherwise very considerable Persons, such as Bp. *Llboyd*, Bp. *Parker*, Bp. *Beveridge*, Bp. *Taylor*, Bp. *Sanderfon*, Dr. *Whitby*, Dr. *Sherlock*, Dr. *Wallis*, Dr. *Gastrel*, Dr. *Hicks*, Dr. *Edwards* and Mr. *Seller*, have sometimes fallen into unjustifiable Notions and Language in their late Writings? how do the pious Frauds in the Translating and publishing of the Scriptures, and other Authors, by the several Leaders and Promoters of the Modern Parties and Sects, in and since the Days of *Athanasius*, affect the Sincerity, Honesty, and Integrity of the Primitive Christians? While the want of the like earlier examples is a plain sign that there is not the same evidence against them; nay when the like pious Frauds, Omissions, or Interpolations were the known and distinguishing Characters of the *Old Hereticks*, which were the direct Opposites to the true *Christians*. Does it follow that because there has been a long Antichristian State of the Church, which was evidently foretold both in the Old and New Testament, and without the coming of which State those Predictions could not have been true, that therefore the Scripture Prophecies are false or uncertain? Or are we therefore to reject the Bible because it has oftentimes been disbeliev'd by those whose Vices and sensual Lusts have hindred them from receiving it: or by those who came to its Perusal with proud, partial, and wicked Dispositions and Designs, which it every where foretels would hinder men's belief of it? Are these indeed the Arguings of our Modern exact Reasoners, shrewd Writers, and *Free Thinkers*? of those that find fault with the Christians for their weak inferences, and Inaccurate Deductions?

and

and these the Premises from which Unbelief, Deism, or Atheism are to be the Conclusions? These may indeed dispose all reasonable and cautious Persons to dislike the latter State of the Church, and to look back to the first times of the Gospel: they ought to make all honest and impartial Men careful how they engage themselves deep in any Modern Party, or in general justify any of the present Churches: Nay they must make it the Duty of all that really believe the Christian Religion, to wish for and endeavour the Restoration of Primitive Purity, Sincerity, and Piety among us but no farther. And I dare appeal to the *Deists* themselves, whether they are not sensible of the Weakness of this their reasoning? and whether they are not thereupon self condemned on account of the same? And indeed this their prevarication, and breach of the known Rules of Morality, and Dictates of the Law of Nature, which yet they so peculiarly seem to magnify, is what I most fear as to their condemnation at the great day: *viz.* least † *they have loved darkness rather than light, because their Deeds are evil*; least they have broken through the Light of Nature, the Rules of unbiass'd Reason, and the Checks of their own Consciences, in order to their Rejection of Reveal'd Religion, and to get clear of Christianity. Some of them are plainly vicious and profligate Persons, that cannot bear the Restraints of Religion, nor its severe threatenings; and so are oblig'd, out of meer necessity, to take refuge in Scepticism and Infidelity. Others of them, whose Tempers, or Prudence, or natural Conscience, and Probity do not suffer them to

† John, iii. 19.

run into those excesses of riot, but prompt them to seek a more easy, innocent, and leis dangerous Happiness, even in this World, do not yet seem to me to come to the Examination of the Scriptures, with honest and humble Minds ; with a ready obedience to the Laws of Nature ; with a Resolution to yield to proper evidence of Fact and Testimony, in such matters as are alone to be determin'd by it ; with a desire of real instruction and improvement ; with a design to believe what shall appear Reveal'd by God, and to practice what shall appear to be Pleasing to him ; and with hearty Prayers to his Divine Majesty for his direction, Illumination and Blessing : (All which are known Branches of Natural Religion.) Nay such Pamphlets as this shew that they rather read the Bible and other good Books with a formed design of spying Faults, finding Flaws, of starting Objections, and putting to us Questions continually ; that is, they examin in such a manner as the Divine Conduct and Justice has thereupon declar'd them incapable and unworthy of real Advantage and Satisfaction by the same. I here beg leave to make use of the remarkable Words of *Peter*, as they are set down in the Recognitions, that most excellent System of Christian Philosophy ; and to recommend them to these Men's serious Consideration. ' If, says he, of
 ' † *Simon Magus*, I once know that he is a Man of
 ' Probity, and unblamable in those Points of
 ' Duty wherein there can be no doubt but they
 ' are good ; that is if he be sober, if he be merciful,
 ' if he be just, if he be meek, and humane ;
 ' which no one can doubt to be vertuous and

 † Lib. II §. 4.

' good things; then it will in all probability be rea-
 ' sonable to expect that to him that hath these ex-
 ' cellent Vertues, that which is wanting to his faith
 ' and Knowledge will be confer'd; and that, where-
 ' in his Life, which is so commendable in the rest,
 ' shall still appear blamable, it may be amended.
 ' But if he be involv'd and polluted in Sins; those
 ' I mean which are notoriously such; I must
 ' not then declare plainly to him the least part of
 ' the conceal'd recondite Branches of divine
 ' Knowledge; but rather with great Boldness deal
 ' with him that he must leave off his Sins, and
 ' amend his vitious Actions. And a little after :
 † ' To the End that Unbelievers may be distin-
 ' guish'd from Believers; and the Pious from the
 ' Impious, the Evil one has Permission to make
 ' use of his Arts; whereby every one's Affections
 ' toward their proper Parent may be tried. And
 a little lower: || ' If we spend this short time of
 ' Life in idle and unprofitable Questions, we shall
 ' certainly go to God empty, and destitute of
 ' good Works. ---- ' To those who are well dis-
 ' posed, God is manifested by those Works of Na-
 ' turè which he has made; and is attested to by
 ' his own Creatures. Since therefore there
 ' ought to be no Doubt concerning the Existence
 ' of God, we are only to enquire about *his Right-*
 ' *eousness*, and *his Kingdom*. But if our minds
 ' have an inclination to put us on the Enquiry a-
 ' bout secret and hidden matters, before we en-
 ' quire after the Works of Righteousness, we
 ' ought to give an account to our selves of this
 ' procedure. For if we live well, and are thought
 ' worthy to obtain Salvation, we shall go to

God chaste and pure, and be filled with the Holy Ghost, and shall know all such secret and hidden things, without any cavilling or Question, which at the present, tho' any one should spend the intire time of his Life in the Enquiry, he will be so far from finding them out, that he will bring himself into greater Errors; because he aims to arrive at the Haven of Life, without walking in the Way of Life. I conclude this Exhortation to the Deists, with the Words of their *Free Thinkers Solomon and Ezekiel*; † *Rejoyce, O young Man, in thy Youth; and let thy Heart cheer thee in the Days of thy Youth; and walk in the ways of thy Heart, and in the sight of thine Eyes: but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into Judgment.* || *Say unto them, As I live saith the Lord God, I have no Pleasure in the Death of the Wicked, but that the Wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, Turn ye from your evil ways: for why will ye die, O House of Israel?*

And now for my Brethren of the Clergy, I must beg leave to speak as freely to them as I have done to the Deists: And after all that I have said in these Reflexions, in vindication of true Religion, and genuine Christianity; in Defence of the Church of Christ, and it's Ministers, and in Opposition to the weak Attempts of this Writer; I must own that the main Foundation of this and the like Pamphlets, is the corrupt State of the Church, and the unchristian Behaviour of too many of the leading Clergy in these later Ages; their suppos'd Ambition, Pride, Tyrannical Management, Refusal of Examination and Reformation, Imposition of uncertain Articles, Mysteries, Terms of Art, and Laws of their

† Eccles. XI. 9. || Ezek. XXXIII. 11.

own, their great Neglect of Christian Discipline, their engaging the Temporal Power for their own Support, and for the crushing their Adversaries, and their preaching too often Party Sermons and Political Notions, in compliance to their Supporters, whether of the Court or Country, instead of the serious and spiritual Doctrines and Laws of Jesus Christ; their heaping up Plurality of Livings, without taking sufficient Care of any of them; advancing their own secular Power and Grandeur, without a due Regard to the Conversion, Instruction, Edification, and Salvation of Souls; their railing against and Persecuting their Christian Brethren, who in smaller Matters happen to differ from them, instead of *restoring them in the Spirit of Meekness*, and considering calmly whether they have not sometimes Truth and Justice on their Side. These and the like Vices, enlarg'd upon in this Pamphlet before us, are commonly suppos'd to be among the Clergy, especially the Governing part of them; I mean not only in the Popish Churches, but in those of the Protestants also; especially where they happen to be supported by the State, and can make use of legal Methods for their own Purposes; as in *England, Scotland, Ireland, Holland, Germany*, and almost every where in these Western Parts of *Christendom*. And give me leave to say, these are Vices of so hainous a Nature; so pernicious to Mankind; so reproachful among the Laity; so unworthy of our Holy Profession, both as Christians and Clergy-men; and give such a fatal Handle to the Deists, Atheists, and Libertines to *Abhor the Offerings of the Lord*; to *blaspheme the Name of Christ*; to suspect all Religion to be a Cheat; and even to be believ'd to be so, by many of the Clergy

gy themselves; and they afford them such perpetual Matter for Repröach and Obloquy, Scandal and Calumny against the whole Order; that no Care can be too great to avoid, not only the Vices themselves, but the very Suspicions of them. I mention only some of the *Governing part* as chiefly obnoxious: Not that the Inferior Clergy are to be suppos'd wholly blameless in these Matters; but that they have comparatively small Opportunities and Temptations, and have it not equally in their Power, were they never so dispos'd, to do much for a Reformation; nay are in many Cases rather the Sufferers under the common Oppression than Actors; as being themselves pen'd up by Articles, Subscriptions, and Canons; and unable to get their own Consciences free from the Snares they are under, without hazarding their very Subsistence, and seeing themselves and their Families reduc'd to Beggary: which, in an Age so little dispos'd for Self-denial and Persecution as this, must needs be a very terrible Consideration to them. Now this being too like the State of the Clergy, and these the Vices which the Laity, especially those inclin'd to Infidelity, think they observe, and cannot but abhor in them, and which are plainly the principal Handles and Occasions for Infidelity it self, I cannot but beg of all my Brethren, by the Bowels of Christ, by the Regards of the Gospel, and the Future Hopes of Christians; as ever they desire to *give up their Accounts with Joy, when the Chief Shepherd shall appear*; nay as they fear the *Terrors of the Lord*; as they will avoid the Lashes of their own Consciences here and hereafter; as they will not be charg'd with the growing Atheism, Deism, and Infidelity of this Age, and so have both their

own and the Souls of multitudes of others requir'd at their Hands at the great Day; that they will Consider seriously of these matters, and, so far as the Crimes are true, endeavour to amend them. That in particular they will no longer oppose free enquiries, fair examination, and a suitable correction of what is amiss: this procedure of theirs being so warmly and justly complain'd of by many, and so utterly unjustifiable in it self; more so in any Christian; still more so in any Minister of the Gospel; and most of all so in any Protestant Minister; since all cannot but know that the Christian Religion, especially as at all Reformed, is entirely founded on such free Enquiries, fair Examination, and suitable Correction of the errors or faults crept at any time into the Church. That they will also, upon any of their Enquiries and Examination, openly and freely own their Sentiments, and Speak and Act accordingly: The contrary procedure whereto, or their artfully concealing, disguising, or directly denying what they cannot but inwardly know to be the truth, being at this day, I fear, a sin too common among several of the more Learned and Judicious of the Clergy, and a sin which when it is discovered by the Laity, as it is sometimes, is justly esteem'd by them a gross instance of Insincerity and Prevarication; and affords them a notorious Handle against all the Clergy, and that Religion which they Preach. That they will also Endeavour to treat their Adversaries; I do not mean only those of other Religious Sects, but even the Deists themselves, with Fairness and Candor, with Argument and Reason, with Kindness and Humanity; and shew that they are so far from desiring they may be persecuted, or made any way more miserable, that tis
their

their real love and to, and concern for their happiness here and hereafter that is the Motive to their plain dealing with them. It being evident that this bitter Spirit of Violence and Persecution does chiefly irritate the Passions of Men against Persuasion, and prevents the good Effects of all Endeavours for their Advantage and Conversion. That they will not look on the Protection of the Queen and Law, the Vote of an House of Parliament; or of their own Body in Convocation, their present Legal Power and Authority, no nor on the as great or perhaps greater Vices of their Enemies, to be sufficient for their own justification: That they will reflect how some of their late Management, tho' perhaps encourag'd by the Court, justified or excused in State Papers, and Triumphantly manag'd above board, have exceeding weakn'd their real esteem, interest, and reputation every where, and brought down still more and more Reproaches upon them: That they will observe how such like Proceedings at the beginning of the Reformation sunk the Popish Clergy, and expos'd them to the utmost contempt and hatred of the Nation: while they comply'd with †Bp. *Gardiner* for Persecution against the more wise and Christian Advise of Cardinal *Pool* for some Reformation: and that they will particularly consider the Sacredness and Duties of their Holy Function; the Dignity and Nature of their Office; the great dependence Religion it self has on their Character and Behaviour; the Solemnity of their Ordination, and the great Obligations they then took upon themselves; and what a noble and high degree of all vertues the Apostles

† Bp. *Byner*'s Abridgment of Hist. Reform. Book. III. p. 270.

do ever suppose and expect in Christian Clergy-Men, as the only Foundation of their Esteem, Honour, and Maintenance in this World; and of their Happiness in the next. Say not that this Advice comes from an *Heretick*, as in Modern improper Language you may be dispos'd to call me; but remember, whoever is the Giver of it, the Advice is certainly good and right: and that if you will not hearken to it now, it will be a witness against you in that day *when God shall judge the the Secrets of Mens hearts*, and shall especially require an account of *our Stewardship*. I conclude with the Affecting words of the Prophet *Ezekiel*, as set down and applied to the Clergy of the Christian Church in the *Apostolical Constitutions* Lib. II. cap. 18. and I earnestly beseech God we may all take warning from them; least they also rise up to all our Condemnation hereafter. *Wo unto the Shepherds of Israel, for they have fed themselves; the Shepherds feed not the Sheep, but themselves. Ye eat the Milk, and are cloath'd with the Wool, ye slay the Strong, ye do not feed the Sheep. The Weak have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with Force and Insult have ye ruled over them; and they were scattered, because there was no Shepherd; and they became Meat to all the Beasts of the Forest.*

Note. That the Facts and Citations are here generally taken for granted, as they stand in this Pamphlet, because my Reasoning did not oblige me to any farther Enquiry about them; but this without supposing them to be really so. For by what Tryals I or some others have made, they seem so inaccurate, mistaken, or disguis'd, that they ought not to be at all depended on, without a farther more fair and nice Examination:

Jan. 29. 1712.

WILLIAM WHISTON.

POSTSCRIPT.

SINCE Mr. Lock is here and every where esteem'd an eminent *Free-Thinker*; and that not seldom in the irreligious sense of the Words; nay has been very often esteem'd no better than a *Deist*; I shall here, by way of Vindication of his Memory, and in Hopes that his Authority may make some Impression on all of us, and particularly on the real irreligious *Free Thinkers* themselves, produce unquestionable Evidence of his fixed and last Sentiments about such Matters, from his own Words in two Letters to two of his intimate Friends; the Former of which was written and sent before, and the Latter written before, but order'd to be sent not till after, his Death; both which I have leave to publish upon this Occasion. The concluding Words of the Former are these,

I wish you all manner of Prosperity in this World, and the Everlasting Happiness of the World to come, God send us a happy Meeting in the Resurrection of the Just. Adieu.

Those of the Latter are these.

May you live Long and Happy in the Enjoyment of Health, Freedom, Content, and all those Blessings which Providence has bestowed on you, and your Vertue intitles you to. I know you lov'd me living, and will Preserve my Memory now I am dead. All the use to be made of it is, that this World is a Scene of Vanity, that soon passes away, and affords no solid Satisfaction but the Consciousness of doing well, and the Hopes of another Life. This is what I can say by Experience, and what you will find when you come to make up your Account. Adieu. I leave my best Wishes with you,

J. Lock.

The Expressions in both are so sensible, serious and Christian; and come from a Person of such great Sagacity, Integrity, and Freedom, as make them exceeding Remarkable. The Language of the latter is also so agreeable to that of the *Apostolical Constitutions* lib. VII. cap. 33. that I cannot but add the Passage here also by way of Conclusion, and for the Readers serious Consideration.

Thou hast demonstrated to every Man by implanted Knowledge, and natural Judgment, and the Admonitions of the Law, How the Possession of Riches is not everlasting; the Ornament of Beauty is not perpetual; Our Strength and Force are easily dissolv'd; and that all is Vapour and Vanity; and that only the good Conscience of Faith unfeign'd passes through the midst of the Heavens; and returning with Truth, takes hold of the right Hand of the Joy which is to come.

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