Fig. 4

16.7

# *Christianity not Mysterious:*

OR, A

# TREATISE

Shewing,

That there is nothing in the GOSPEL Contrary to

# REASON,

Nor Above it:

And that no Christian Doctrine can be properly call'd

A MYSTERY.



By *JOHN TOLAND.*

*To which is Added,*

An Apology for Mr. *Toland*, in relation to the Parliament of *Ireland's* ordering this Book to be burnt.

*We need not desire a better Evidence that any Man is in the wrong, than to hear him declare against Reason, and thereby to acknowledg that Reason is against him.* Arch-bishop Tillotson.

*London*, Printed in the Year 1702.

# THE PREFACE.

I Believe all Men will readily allow, that none should speak with more Freedom and Assurance than he that defends or illustrates the Truth. But if we credit the History of former Time, or duly consider what passes in the present, we shall find none more backward to speak their Minds in publick than such as have Right on their side. Indeed the Goodness of their Cause and Design should fortify 'em, one would think, against all the Attacks of their Enemies: Nor are there wanting frequent Examples of Persons, who with unshaken Constancy suffer'd the

*most disgraceful and violent things for love of the Truth. Yet if we make a just Computation, and take in the Primitive Martyrs with the Prophets and Apostles themselves, the profess'd Defenders of Truth, only for Truth's sake, will be found to be a small handful with respect to the numerous Partizans of Error.*

*And such is the deplorable Condition of our Age, that a Man dares not openly and directly own what he thinks of Divine Matters, tho it be never so true and beneficial, if it but very slightly differs from what is received by any Party, or that is establish'd by Law; but he is either forced to keep perpetual Silence, or to propose his Sentiments to the World, by way of Paradox, under a borrow'd or fictitious Name. To mention the least part of the Inconveniences they expose themselves to, who*

*have*

*have the Courage to act more aboveboard, is too melancholy a Theme, and visible enough to be lamented by all that are truly generous and vertuous.*

*The Pravity of most Mens Dispositions, and the Ambition of particular Persons makes this Matter seem less strange in Politick and Secular Affairs; and yet a Man may not only make new Discoveries and Improvements in Law or Physick, and in the other Arts and Sciences impunibly, but also for so doing be deservedly encourag'd and rewarded. But wonderful! That the sacred Name of* Religion *which sounds nothing but Sanctity, Peace, and Integrity, should be so universally abus'd to patronize Ambition, Impiety, and Contention! And that what is our highest Interest perfectly to understand, should (for Reasons afterwards to be laid open) both be main-*

*tain'd to be obscure, and very industriously made so! Nay, it is come to this, that Truth meets no where with stronger Opposition, than from many of those that raise the loudest Cry about it, and would be taken for no less than the only Dispensers of the Favours and Oracles of Heaven. If any has the Firmness to touch the minutest thing that brings them Gain or Credit, he's presently pursu'd with the Hue and Cry of Heresy: And, if he values their Censures, compell'd to make honourable Amends; or if he proves contumacious, he falls a Sacrifice, at least in his Reputation, to their implacable Hatred.*

*Nor is he like, we may be sure, to receive fairer Quarter from the declar'd Antagonists of Religion, whose Principles, as they trample upon all Equity and Truth, so they oblige 'em to hate and molest the strenuous Asser-*

*tors of these and all other Vertues. But of such depressing Considerations enough! Notwithstanding which, I have ventur'd to publish this Discourse, designing thereby to rectify, as much as I'm able, the narrow bigotted Tenets of the One, and the most impious Maxims of the Other.*

*No Atheist or Infidel of any kind can justly be angry with me for measuring Swords with them, and attacking them only with the Weapons they prescribe me. The true Christian can no more be offended, when he finds me imploy Reason, not to enervate or perplex, but to confirm and elucidate Revelation; unless he is apprehensive I should render it too clear to my self, or too familiar to others, which are Absurdities no Body will own. I hope to make it appear, that the Use of Reason is not so dangerous in Religion as it is commonly*

*represented, and that too by such as mightily extol it, when it seems to favour 'em, yet vouchsafe it not a hearing when it makes against them, but oppose its own Authority to it self. These are high Privileges indeed, and the surest Means of having always the better of the Dispute that could possibly be devis'd.*

*That the mistaken Unbeliever may not say I serve a Hypothesis in the Defence of my Faith, like some who first imagine or receive an Opinion, and then study Proofs to establish it, I solemnly declare the thing is much otherwise; and that I hold nothing as an Article of my Religion, but what the highest Evidence forc'd me to embrace. For being educated, from my Cradle, in the grossest Superstition and Idolatry, God was pleas'd to make my own Reason, and such as made use of theirs, the happy Instruments*

*of*

*of my Conversion. Thus I have been very early accustom'd to Examination and Enquiry, and taught not to captivate my Understanding, no more than my Senses to any Man or Society whatsoever. Now the best Method, I think, of communicating to others the Truth, is that by which a Man has learnt it himself.*

*That the well-meaning Christian may not suspect, as it falls out very ordinarily, that I aim at more than I declare, and cunningly disguise some bad Principles under the fair Pretence of defending the true Religion; I assure him that I write with all the Sincerity and Simplicity imaginable, being as thoroughly convinc'd of what I maintain, as I can be of any thing. If any good Man should after this Protestation persist to think hard of me, it must needs proceed from violent Prepossessions: for*

*very*

*very few can be found that are not deeply engag'd in some of one sort or another, for which a due Allowance must be made. How fond are we all apt to be of what we learn'd in our Youth, as the Sight or Remembrance of the Places where we past that agreeable Time, does strangely affect us! A Mother is more charm'd with the lisping half-form'd Words of her pratling Infant, than with the best Language, and most solid Discourses. That any Upstart, but of Yesterday, should pretend to overthrow what cost the Antients so much Time and Breath to establish, and themselves so great Pains and Charges to learn, is of hard Digestion to some. And when others are but pray'd to explain their Terms, which commonly signify nothing, or what they must be asham'd to own that would never be thought in an Error, they are uneasy, as an extravagant*

*Mer-*

*Merchant to examine his Accompts; and 'tis well if they can restrain their Passions. Not only a few Men, but oftentimes whole Societies, whilst they consider Things but very superficially, set such a Value upon certain Sounds, as if they were the real Essence of all Religion. To question or reject any of these, tho never so false and inconvenient, is dangerous Heterodoxy: And yet, as I hinted now, they either signify nothing, or have been invented by some leading Men to make plain things obscure, and not seldom to cover their own Ignorance. What is unpardonable, the holy Scripture is put to the Torture to countenance this Scholastick Jargon, and all the metaphysical Chimeras of its Authors. But the weakness of the greatest part of these Prejudices is so notorious, that to mention them is sufficient Confutation: Nor shall*

*I be otherwise mov'd with any thing of this Nature, than a prudent Man would be at the Declamations of such as have recourse to Railing when Reason fails them.*

*As for those Gentlemen who suggest that the Credulity of Popery has frighted me to an unwarrantable Distance from it; I have nothing to say for their Satisfaction, but that I don't envy them the cheap and commodious* Mean *they boast of, while I think Truth and Error to be the two Extreams. Religion is not to be modell'd according to our Fancies, nor to be judg'd of as it relates to our private Designs; else there would be full as many Creeds as Persons: But how little soever our Notions agree, and let our worldly Conveniences be what they will, Religion is always the same, like God its Author,* with whom there is no

Va-

Variableness, nor Shadow of changing.

*If any should ask me whether I have so good an Opinion of my own Abilities, as to imagine that I can prove a rational Account may be given of all those jarring Doctrines, ambiguous Terms, and puzling Distinctions which have for so many Centuries sufficiently exercis'd the Learn'd of all sorts: I answer, that I don't pretend (as the Title-Page can testify) that we are able to explain the Terms or Doctrines or this or that Age, Council, or Nation, (most of which are impervious Mysteries with a witness) but the Terms and Doctrines of the Gospel. They are not the Articles of the East or West, Orthodox or Arian, Protestant or Papist, consider'd as such, that I trouble my self about, but those of Jesus Christ and his Apostles. And in managing*

*cerning the following Performance, I don't expect any Deference should be paid me by the World, that spares no body; much less am I desirous of Abettors out of Singularity: but rather if the Reasons I offer be not cogent, I shall take in good part a modest and pertinent Animadversion. And if I am not so happy in rendring things perspicuous to others, as they seem to my self, yet I have fairly aim'd at it, and spoke what I think to be Truth without Fear or Favour; wherefore my good Intentions will need no other Apology.*

*Some Passages in the first Section or preliminary Dissertations of Reason, which, in the former Edition, I suspected would prove a little obscure to ordinary Readers, are now rendr'd more familiar: And tho I then declar'd that the understanding of those Passages of no Consequence to any*

*that*

*that would reason fairly, being only inserted to prevent the foreseen Wranglings of certain Men, who study rather to protract and perplex than to terminate a Controversy; yet I could not but readily comply at this time with the Desires of those, who wish'd 'em more clearly express'd, tho it should cost me a few Words more, whereof I shall always be as sparing as I can. I have likewise every where else endeavour'd to speak very intelligibly, and am not without hope that my Assertions do carry their own Light along with them. I have in many Places made explanatory Repetitions of difficult Words, by synonymous Terms of a more general and known Use. This Labour, I grant, is of no Benefit to Philosophers, but it is of considerable Advantage to the Vulgar, which I'm far from neglecting, like those who in every Preface*

*tell us they neither court nor care for them. I wonder how any can speak at this rate, especially of those whose very Business it is to serve the Vulgar, and spare them the Labour of long and painful Study, which their ordinary Occupations will not allow them. Lay-men pay for the Books and Maintenance of Churchmen for this very end: but I'm afraid some of the latter will no more believe this, than that Magistrates too are made for the People.*

*Nor can any from this Office of the Clergy infer, that the Vulgar are implicitly to receive their Arbitrary Dictates, no more than I am to make over my Reason to him I employ to read, transcribe, or collect for me. The Learn'd will not, contrary to the Experience of their own Taste, take the Brewer's or the Baker's Word for the Goodness of Bread or Drink, tho*

*ignorant*

*ignorant of their Craft. And why may not the Vulgar likewise be Judges of the true Sense of Things, tho they understand nothing of the Tongues from whence they are translated for their Use? Truth is always and every where the same; and an unintelligible or absurd Proposition is to be never the more respected for being antient or strange, for being originally written in Latin, Greek, or Hebrew. Besides, a Divinity only intelligible to such as live by it, is, in humane Language, a Trade; and I see not how they can be angry at the Name, that are so passionately in love with the Thing. But of this in due place.*

*The Poor, who are not suppos'd to understand Philosophical Systems, soon apprehended the Difference between the plain convincing Instructions of Christ, and the intricate ineffectual Declamations of the Scribes. For*

*the Jewish Rabbies, divided at that time into Stoick, Platonick, and Pythagorean Sects, &c. did by a mad Liberty of Allegory, accommodate the Scriptures to the wild Speculations of their several Masters. They made the People, who comprehended nothing of their Cabalistick Observations, believe 'em to be all profound Mysteries; and so taught 'em Subjection to Heathenish Rites, whilst they set the Law of God at nought by their Traditions. No wonder then if the disinterested common sort, and the more ingenuous among the Rulers, did reject these nonsensical Superstitions, tho impudently father'd upon* Moses, *for a Religion suted to the Capacities of all, delineated, and foretold by their own Prophets.*

*I wish no Application of this could be made, in the following Discourse, to the Case of any Christians; much less*

*less to the purer and better sort. Whoever considers with what Eagerness and Rigour some Men press Obedience to their own Constitutions and Discipline, (conniving in the mean while at all Nonconformity to the Divine Law) how strictly they enjoin the Observation of unreasonable, unscriptural Ceremonies, and the Belief of those unfathomable Explanations of what they stiffly hold themselves to be incomprehensible; I say, who considers all this, is vehemently tempted to suspect they drive a more selfish Design than that of instructing the ignorant, or converting the Sinner. That any should be hated, despis'd, and molested; nay, sometimes be charitably burn'd and damn'd, for rejecting those Fooleries superadded, and in many Cases substituted to the most blessed, pure, and practicable Religion that Men could wish or*

*enjoy, is Matter of Astonishment and Grief to such as prefer the Precepts of God to the Inventions of Men, the plain Paths of Reason to the insuperable Labyrinths of the Fathers, and true Christian Liberty to Diabolical and Antichristian Tyranny.*

*But the common Method of teaching and supporting this Mystery of Iniquity is still more intolerable. How many voluminous Systems, infinitely more difficult than the Scripture, must be read with great Attention by him that would be Master of the present Theology? What a prodigious Number of barbarous Words, (mysterious no doubt) what tedious and immethodical Directions, what ridiculous and discrepant Interpretations must you patiently learn and observe, before you can begin to understand a Professor of that Faculty? The last and easiest part of your Labour will be, to*

*find*

*find his Sentiments in the* Bible, *tho the holy Penmen never thought of them, and you never read that sacred Book since you were a School-Boy. But a Distrust of your own Reason, a blind Veneration for those that liv'd before you, and a firm Resolution of adhering to all the Expositions of your Party, will do any thing. Believe only, as a sure Foundation for all your Allegories, that the Words of Scripture, tho never so equivocal and ambiguous without the Context, may signify every where whatever they can signify: And if this be not enough, believe that every Truth is a true Sense of every Passage of Scripture; that is, that any thing may be made of every thing: And you'll not only find all the New Testament in the Old, and all the Old in the New; but, I promise you, there's no Explication, tho never so*

*violent, tho never so contradictory or perplex'd, but you may as easily establish as admit.*

*But I will not repeat what I have expresly written of this Matter in an Epistolary Dissertation, now lying by me, entituled,* Systems of Divinity exploded. *In the following Discourse, which is the first of three, and wherein I prove my Subject in general, the Divinity of the New Testament is taken for granted; so that it regards only Christians immediately, and others but remotely, who are pray'd to weigh my Arguments by the said Supposition. In the next Discourse, equally concerning Christians and others, I attempt a particular and rational Explanation of the reputed* Mysteries *of the Gospel. And in the third, I demonstrate the Verity of Divine Revelation against* Atheists, *and all Enemies of reveal'd Religion.*

This

*This seems to me to be the best Method; for the Order of Nature is in your Systems of Divinity quite inverted. They prove the Authority and Perfection, before they teach the Contents of Scripture; whereas the first is in great measure known by the last. How can any be sure that the Scripture contains all things necessary to Salvation, till he first reads it over? Nay, how can he conclude it to be Scripture, or the Word of God, till he exactly studies it, to speak now of no other Means he must use? This Confusion then I have carefully avoided; for I prove first, that the true Religion must necessarily be reasonable and intelligible. Next I shew, that these requisite Conditions are found in Christianity. But seeing a Man of good Parts and Knowledg may easily frame a clear and coherent System, I demonstrate, Thirdly, that the Chris-*

*that most glorious one of being a* Christian.

*A Word or two more I must add in answer to the Malice or Mistake of some, who will needs have it that I'm a declar'd Enemy to all Churchmen, and consequently (say they) to all Religion, because I make 'em the sole Contrivers of those inconceivable or mysterious Doctrines, which I also maintain are as advantageous to themselves, as they are prejudicial to the Laity. Indeed there are those, who, easily overlooking all Contempt of the true Religion, are very ready to treat 'em as pernicious Heretick, or unsufferable Atheists, that shew the least Dislike of what are acknowledg'd Additions to Christianity, whatever Convenience or Necessity may be pretended for their Establishment. If any such understand by Religion the mysterious Part of it, then truly it*

*will*

*tion of any Sect in the World that is justly or unjustly hated by others. This would be a poor Consideration indeed! but it is my settl'd Judgment, that the thing is unlawful in it self to a good Christian. Leaving others nevertheless their Liberty in this Point, it must, at least, be granted inconvenient: for if you go under the Name of a* Lutheran, *for instance, tho you agree with those of your Communion but in the main Articles, yet their Adversaries will not fail, upon occasion, to charge you with those other Matters wherein you dissent. And should you then declare your Judgment, the rest of the* Lutherans *will not only be much offended, but be apt also to call your Sincerity in question about every thing besides; which is the known Temper of most Sects. The only religious Title therefore that I shall ever own, for my part, is*

*that*

*in their Opinions for these Practices, so I see no better Reason they have to be angry with any Body for writing against them that are, than a good Prince can pretend for punishing the Historian of a Tyrant's Vices, only because the Tyrant had been likewise a Prince.*

*To all corrupt Clergy-men therefore, who make a meer Trade of Religion, and build an unjust Authority upon the abus'd Consciences of the Laity, I'm a profest Adversary; as I hope every good and wise Man already is, or will be. But as I shall always remain a hearty Friend to pure and genuine Religion, so I shall preserve the highest Veneration for the sincere Teachers thereof, than whom there is not a more useful Order of Men, and without whom there could not be any happy Society or well constituted Government in this World, to speak*

*nothing*

*nothing of their Relation to the World to come, nor of the double Esteem which they deserve for keeping Proof against the general Infection of their Profession. But I have no Apprehensions from the sincere; and if the designing Party discover their Concern by their Displeasure, it may well serve for a Mark to distinguish them, but will not be thought an Injury by me.*

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## ERRATA.

PAg. 20. l. antepen. f. *any* read *an*. P. 122. l. 9. r. *last Chapter*. P. 136. l. ult. r. *paris*. P. 166. l. 22. r. *Decrees*.

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The

# The CONTENTS.



CHRIS-

# CHRISTIANITY *not Mysterious*, &c.

## *The State of the Question.*

N° 1. THERE is nothing that Men make a greater Noise about, in our Time especially, than what they generally profess least of all to understand. It may be easily concluded, I mean *the Mysteries of the Christian Religion.* The *Divines*, whose peculiar Province it is to explain them to others, almost unanimously own their Ignorance concerning them. They gravely tell us, *we must adore what we cannot comprehend:* And yet some of 'em press their dubious Comments upon the rest of Mankind with more Assurance and Heat, than could be tolerably justifi'd, tho we should grant them to be absolutely infallible.

The worst on't is, they are not all of a Mind. If you be *Orthodox* to those, you are a *Heretick* to these. He that sides with a Party is adjudg'd to Hell by the Rest; and if he declares for none, he receives no milder Sentence from all.

2. Some of 'em say the *Mysteries of the Gospel* are to be understood only in the Sense of the *Antient Fathers*. But that is so multifarious, and inconsistent with it self, as to make it impossible for any Body to believe so many Contradictions at once. They themselves did caution their Readers from leaning upon their Authority, without the Evidence of *Reason*: And thought as little of becoming a Rule of Faith to their Posterity, as we do to ours. Moreover, as all the *Fathers* were not Authors, so we cannot properly be said to have their genuine Sense. The Works of those that have written are wonderfully corrupted and adulterated, or not entirely extant: And if they were, their Meaning is much more obscure, and subject to Controversy, than that of the *Scripture*.

3. Others

3. Others tell us we must be of the Mind of some *particular Doctors*, pronounc'd Orthodox by the Authority of the *Church*. But as we are not a whit satisfy'd with any Authority of that Nature, so we see these same *particular Doctors* could no more agree than the whole Herd of the *Fathers*; but tragically declaim'd against one another's Practices and Errors: That they were as injudicious, violent, and factious as other Men: That they were for the greatest part very credulous and superstitious in Religion, as well as pitifully ignorant and superficial in the minutest Punctilios of Literature. In a word, that they were of the same Nature and Make with our selves; and that we know of no Privilege above us bestow'd upon them by Heaven, except Priority of Birth, if that be one, as it's likely few will allow.

4. Some give a decisive Voice in the Unravelling of *Mysteries*, and the Interpretation of *Scripture*, to a *General Council*; and others to *one Man* whom they hold to be the Head of the *Church* Universal upon Earth, and the infallible Judg of all Controversies. But we

do not think such *Councils* possible, nor (if they were) to be of more Weight than the *Fathers*; for they consist of such, and others as obnoxious altogether to Mistakes and Passions: And besides, we cannot have Recourse, as to a standing Rule, for the Solution of our Difficulties, to a wonder by God's Mercy now more rarely seen than the secular Games of old. As for the *one Judg of all Controversies*, we suppose none but such as are strongly prepossess'd by Interest or Education can in good earnest digest those chimerical supreme Headships, and Monsters of Infallibility. We read no where in the *Bible* of such delegate Judges appointed by *Christ* to supply his Office: And *Reason* manifestly proclaims them frontless Usurpers. Nor is their Power finally distinguish'd from that of *Councils* to this Hour, by the miserable Admirers of both.

5. They come nearest the thing who affirm, that we are to keep to what the *Scriptures* determine about these Matters: and there is nothing more true, if rightly understood. But ordinarily 'tis an equivocal Way of speak-

speaking, and nothing less than the proper Meaning of it is intended by many of those that use it: For they make the *Scriptures* speak either according to some spurious *Philosophy*, or they conform them right or wrong to the bulky Systems and Formularies of their several Communions.

6. Some will have us always believe *what the literal Sense imports*, with little or no Consideration for *Reason*, which they reject as not fit to be employ'd about the reveal'd Part of Religion. Others assert, that we may use *Reason* as the Instrument, but not the Rule of our Belief. The first contend, some *Mysteries* may be, or at least seem to be *contrary to Reason*, and yet be receiv'd by Faith. The second, that no *Mystery* is contrary to *Reason*, but that all are *above* it. Both of 'em from different Principles agree, that several Doctrines of the *New Testament* belong no farther to the Enquiries of *Reason* than to prove 'em divinely reveal'd, and that they are properly *Mysteries* still.

7. On the contrary, we hold that *Reason* is the only Foundation of all Certitude; and that nothing reveal'd, whether as to its *Manner* or *Existence*, is more exempted from its Disquisitions, than the ordinary Phenomena of Nature. Wherefore, we likewise maintain, according to the Title of this Discourse, that *there is nothing in the Gospel contrary to Reason, nor above it; and that no Christian Doctrine can be properly call'd a Mystery.*

SEC-

# SECTION I.

## *Of* REASON.

1. THE State of the Question being thus fairly laid, our next business is to proceed to the Proof thereof. But as the distinct and brief Explanation of the Terms is of indispensable use in discussing all Controversies; so an easy and natural Method is not less pleasing than profitable. It happily falls out that the Terms of the present Question are dispos'd according to the Order I design to observe; which is, First, to shew what is meant by *Reason*, and its Propertys: Then to prove there's no Doctrine of the Gospel contrary to *Reason*: After that, to evince that neither is there any of them above *Reason*; and by consequence, that none is a *Mystery*.

## CHAP. I.

### *What* REASON *is not.*

2. TO begin with the first, *viz. Reason.* It appears to me very odd, that Men should need Definitions and Explanations of that whereby they define and explain all other things: Or that they cannot agree about what they all pretend, in some measure at least, to possess; and is the only Privilege they claim over Brutes and Inanimates. But we find by Experience, that the word *Reason* is become as equivocal and ambiguous as any other; though all that are not tickl'd with the Vanity of Singularity, or Itch of Dispute, are at bottom agreed about the Thing. I'll handle it here with what Brevity I can.

3. They are mistaken who take the *Soul, abstractedly consider'd,* for *Reason:* For as the general Idea of Gold is not a Guinea, but a piece determin'd to a particular Stamp and Value; so not the Soul it self, but the Soul acting in a certain

certain and peculiar Manner, is *Reason.* Ch. 1.
They err likewise, who affirm *Reason* to be *that Order, Report, or Relation which is naturally between all things:* For not this, but the Thoughts which the Soul forms of things according to it, may properly claim that Title. They speed no better who call *their own Inclinations*, or the *Authority of others*, by that Name. But it will better appear what it is from the following Considerations.

4. Every one experiences in himself a Power or Faculty of forming various Ideas or Perceptions of Things: Of affirming or denying, according as he sees them to agree or disagree: And so of loving and desiring what seems good unto him; and of hating and avoiding what he thinks evil. The right Use of all these Faculties is what we call Common Sense, or *Reason* in general. But the bare Act of receiving Ideas into the Mind, whether *by the Intromission of the Senses*, as Colours, Figures, Sounds, Smells, *&c.* or whether those Ideas be *the simple Operations of the Soul* about what it thus gets from without, as meer *Consciousness* for

Sect. I. for Example, *Knowing*, *Affirming*, or *Denying*, without any farther Considerations: This bare Act, I say, of receiving such Ideas into the Mind, is not strictly *Reason*, because the Soul herein is purely passive. When a proper Object is conveniently presented to the Eye, Ear, or any other Sense rightly dispos'd, it necessarily makes those Impressions which the Mind at the same time cannot refuse to lodg. And we find it can as little forbear being conscious of its own Thoughts or Operations concerning this Object: Thus when my Eyes are sound and open, as at this time, I have not only an Idea of the Picture that is before me, but I likewise know, I perceive, and affirm that I see it, I consider it, it pleases me, I wish it were mine. And thus I form, or rather after this manner I have first form'd, the Ideas of *Knowing*, *Perceiving*, *Affirming*, *Denying*, *Considering*, *Willing*, *Desiring*, and the Ideas of all the other Operations of the Mind, which are thus occasion'd by the Antecedent Impressions of sensible Objects.

5. By

5. By the word IDEA which I make so much use of here, and shall more frequently in the following Discourse, I understand *the immediate Object of the Mind when it thinks*, or *any Thought that the Mind imploys about any thing*, whether such a Thought be the *Image* or Representation of a Body, as is the Idea of a *Tree*; or whether it be some *Sensation* occasion'd by any Body, such as are the Ideas of *Cold* and *Heat*, of *Smells* and *Tastes*; or whether, lastly, it be a *meerly intellectual* or *abstracted Thought*, such as are the Ideas of *God* and *created Spirits*, of *Arguing*, of *Suspension*, of *Thinking* in general, or the like. Ch. 2.

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## CHAP. II.

### *Wherein* REASON *consists.*

6. BUT altho these simple and distinct Ideas, thus laid up in the great Repository of the Understanding, be not, as was observ'd, what we call strictly *Reason*, yet they are the sole Matter and Foundation of all our

Sect. I. our *Reasoning*: For the Mind does upon occasion compare them together, compound them into complex Ideas, and enlarge, contract, or separate them, as it discovers their Circumstances capable or not. So that all our Knowledg is, in effect, nothing else but *the Perception of the Agreement or Disagreement of our Ideas in a greater or lesser Number, wherein soever this Agreement or Disagreement may consist.* And because this Perception is immediate or mediate, our Knowledg is twofold.

7. First, *When the Mind, without the Assistance of any other Idea, immediately perceives the Agreement or Disagreement of two or more Ideas, as that Two and Two is Four, that Red is not Blew; it cannot be call'd Reason, tho it be the highest Degree of Evidence:* For here's no need of Discourse or Probation, *Self-evidence* excluding all manner of Doubt and Darkness. Propositions so clear of themselves as to want no Proofs, their Terms being once understood, are commonly known by the Names of *Axioms* and *Maxims.* And it is visible that their Number is indefinite, and not confin'd only to two

or

or three abstracted Propositions made (as all *Axioms* are) from the Observation of particular Instances; as, that *the Whole is greater than any Part*, that *Nothing can have no Properties.* Ch. 2.

8. But, Secondly, *when the Mind cannot immediately perceive the Agreement or Disagreement of any Ideas, because they cannot be brought near enough together, and so compar'd, it applys one or more intermediate Ideas to discover it:* as, when by the successive Application of a Line to two distant Houses, I find how far they agree or disagree in Length, which I could not effect with my Eye. Thus from the Force of the Air, and the Room it takes up, I know it has Solidity and Extension; and that therefore it is as much a Body (tho I cannot see it) as Wood, or Stone, with which it agrees in the said Properties. Here *Solidity* and *Extension* are the Line by which I find *Air* and *Body* are equal, or that Air is a Body; because Solidity and Extension agree to both. We prove the least imaginable Particle of Matter divisible, by shewing all Bodies to be divisible; because every Particle of Matter is likewise

Sect. I. wise a Body: and after the like manner, is the *Mortality* of all living Bodies inferr'd from their *Divisibility*. This Method of Knowledg is properly call'd *Reason* or *Demonstration*, (as the former *Self-evidence* or *Intuition*); and it may be defin'd, *That Faculty of the Soul which discovers the Certainty of any thing dubious or obscure, by comparing it with something evidently known.*

9. From this Definition it is plain, that *the intermediate Idea can be no Proof where its Agreement with both the Ideas of the Question is not evident; and that if more than one Idea be necessary to make it appear, the same Evidence is requir'd in each of them.* For if the Connection of all the Parts of a *Demonstration* were not indubitable, we could never be certain of the Inference or Conclusion whereby we join the two Extreams: So tho *Self-evidence* excludes *Reason*, yet all *Demonstration* becomes at length *self-evident*. It is yet plainer, that *when we have no Notions or Ideas of a thing, we cannot reason about it at all; and where we have Ideas, if intermediate ones, to shew their constant and necessary Agreement or Disagree-*

*agreement, fail us, we can never go beyond* Probability. Tho we have an Idea of *inhabited*, and an Idea of the *Moon*, yet we have no intermediate Idea to shew such a necessary Connection between them, as to make us certainly conclude that *this Planet is inhabited*, however likely it may seem. Now, *since PROBABILITY is not KNOWLEDG, I banish all HYPOTHESES from my PHILOSOPHY*; because if I admit never so many, yet *my Knowledg is not a jot increas'd*: for no evident Connection appearing between my Ideas, I may possibly take the wrong side of the Question to be the right, which is equal to knowing nothing of the Matter. When I have arriv'd at *Knowledg*, I enjoy all the Satisfaction that attends it; where I have only *Probability*, there I suspend my Judgment, or, if it be worth the Pains, I search after Certainty.

Ch. 2.

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CHAP.

## CHAP. III.

### *Of the Means of INFORMATION.*

10. BUT besides these Properties of *Reason* which we have explain'd, we are yet most carefully to distinguish in it *the Means of Information*, from *the Ground of Persuasion*: for the Neglect of this easy distinction has thrown Men into infinite Mistakes, as I shall prove before I have done. *The Means of Information* I call *those Ways whereby any thing comes barely to our Knowledg, without necessarily commanding our Assent.* By *the Ground of Persuasion*, I understand *that Rule by which we judg of all Truth, and which irresistibly convinces the Mind.* The *Means of Information* are *EXPERIENCE* and *AUTHORITY*: *Experience* (as you may see N° 4.) is either external, which furnishes us with the Ideas of sensible Objects; or internal, which helps us to the Ideas of the Operations of our own Minds. This is the common Stock of all

our Knowledg; nor can we possi- Ch. 3.
y have Ideas any other way without
w Organs or Faculties.

11. *Authority*, abusively so call'd, if all its Informations were to be eiv'd without Examen, is either *umane* or *Divine*: *Humane Authority* call'd also *Moral Certitude*; as when elieve an intelligible Relation made my Friend, because I have no Rea- to suspect his Veracity, nor he any terest to deceive me. Thus *all possi- Matters of Fact, duly attested by co- ts Persons as known to them, and suc- ively related by others of different mes, Nations, or Interests, who could ther be impos'd upon themselves, nor justly suspected of combining together deceive others, ought to be receiv'd by for as certain and indubitable as if we d seen them with our own Eyes, or heard m with our own Ears.* By this means s, I believe there was such a City *Carthage*, such a Reformer as *Lu- r*, and that there is such a Kingdom *Poland*. When all these Rules con- in any Matter of Fact, I take it n for *Demonstration*, which is no- ng else but *Irresistible Evidence from*

Sect. I. *proper Proofs*: But where any of these Conditions are wanting, the thing is *uncertain*, or, at best, but *probable*, which, with me, are not very different.

12. The *Authority of God*, or *Divine Revelation*, is the Manifestation of Truth by Truth it self, to whom it is impossible to lie: Whereof at large in *Ch.* 2. of the following Section. Nothing in Nature can come to our Knowledg but by some of these four means, *viz. The Experience of the Senses, the Experience of the Mind, Humane* and *Divine Revelation.*

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## CHAP. IV.

### *Of the Ground of* PERSWASION.

13. NOW, as we are extreamly subject to Deception, we may, without some infallible Rule, often take a questionable Proposition for an *Axiom*, Old Wives Fables for *Moral Certitude*, and Humane Impostures for *Divine Revelation*. This infallible Rule, or Ground of all right *Persuasion*, is *Evidence*; and it consists in

in *the exact Conformity of our Ideas or Thoughts with their Objects, or the Things we think upon.* For as we have only Ideas in us, and not the Things themselves, 'tis by those we must form a Judgment of these. Ch. 4.

14. Ideas therefore being Representative Beings, their Evidence naturally consists in the Property they have of truly representing their Objects. Not that I think every Idea has a perfect Pattern to represent, as the Ideas of *Length* and *Motion* in my Mind are like the *Length* and *Motion* of the Pen I handle; for *some Ideas are but the Result of certain Powers in the Particles of Bodies to OCCASION particular Sensations in us*; as the *Sweetness* of Sugar and the *Cold* of Ice, are no more inherent in them than *Pain* in the Knife that cuts me, or *Sickness* in the Fruit that surfeits me. But tho such *occasional Ideas* have no Existence out of our Imagination, yet the Pleasure, Pain, and other Qualities they excite, shew us the Good or Harm their Subjects may do us; which renders the Knowledg of them as useful as that of the Properties which *really* exist in the

Sect. I. 16. But *God* the wise Creator of all, (ever to be nam'd and thought upon with Reverence) who has enabl'd us to perceive things, and form Judgments of them, has also endu'd us with the Power of *suspending our Judgments about whatever is uncertain, and of never assenting but to clear Perceptions.* He is so far from putting us upon any Necessity of erring, that as he has thus privileg'd us on the one hand with a Faculty of guarding our selves against Prepossession, or Precipitation, by *placing our Liberty only in what is indifferent, or dubious and obscure*; so he provides on the other hand, that we should discern and imbrace the Truth, by *taking it out of our Power to dissent from an evident Proposition.* We must necessarily believe, that *it is impossible the same thing should be and not be at once:* Nor can all the World perswade us to doubt of it. But we need not admit that there's no *Void* in Nature, or that the Earth absolves an annual Course about the Sun, till we get *Demonstrations* to that Effect.

17. If People *precipitate their Assent*, either *because they find the Search of Truth*

*Truth attended with more Difficulties than they are willing to run through*, or *because they would not seem to be ignorant of any thing*, this is their fault. Wherefore let us attribute all our false Notions to our own Anticipation and Inattention: Let us confess *our Destruction to be of our selves*; and cheerfully thank our kind Disposer, who has put us under a Law of bowing before the Light and Majesty of *Evidence*. And truly if we might doubt of any thing that is clear, or be deceiv'd by distinct Conceptions, there could be nothing certain: Neither Conscience, nor God himself, should be regarded: No Society or Government could subsist. But it is as true, that if we could not suspend our Assent to dubious or obscure Propositions, *Almighty Goodness* (which is impossible) *should be the real Cause of all our Errors*.



2 Pet. 2. 1.

18. If it should be ask'd, why Assent is deny'd to true Propositions, since *Evidence* necessarily requires it? I answer, *'tis because they are not made evident*: For Perspicuity and Obscurity are relative Terms, and what is either to me may be the quite contrary

Sect. I. the same, very many affirm, that tho the Doctrines of the latter cannot in themselves be contradictory to the Principles of the former, as proceeding both from God; yet, that according to our Conceptions of them, *they may seem directly to clash*: And that tho we cannot reconcile them by reason of our corrupt and limited Understandings; yet that from the Authority of *Divine Revelation*, we are bound to believe and acquiesce in them; or, as the *Fathers* taught 'em to speak, *to adore what we cannot comprehend.*

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## CHAP. I.

### *The Absurdity and Effects of admitting any real or seeming Contradictions in* RELIGION.

2. THIS famous and admirable Doctrine is the undoubted Source of all the *Absurdities* that ever were seriously vented among *Christians.* Without the Pretence of it, we should never hear of the *Transubstantiation*,

*tution*, and other ridiculous Fables of the Church of *Rome*; nor of any of the *Eastern Ordures*, almost all receiv'd into this *Western Sink*: Nor should we be ever banter'd with the *Lutheran Impanation*, or the *Ubiquity* it has produc'd, as one Monster ordinarily begets another. And tho the *Socinians* disown this Practice, I am mistaken if either they or the *Arians* can make their Notions of a *dignifi'd and Creature-God capable of Divine Worship*, appear more reasonable than the Extravagancies of other Sects touching the Article of the *Trinity*. Ch. I.

3. In short, this Doctrine is the known Refuge of some Men, when they are at a loss in explaining any Passage of the Word of God. Lest they should appear to others less knowing than they would be thought, they make nothing of fathering that upon the secret Counsels of the Almighty, or the Nature of the Thing, which is, it may be, the Effect of Inaccurate Reasoning, Unskilfulness in the Tongues, or Ignorance of History. But more commonly it is the Consequence of *early Impressions*, which they dare seldom

Sect. II. a Prayer deliver'd in an unknown Tongue can excite my Devotion: *If*
1 Cor. 14. 8, 9. *the Trumpet gives an uncertain Sound, who shall prepare himself to the Battel? And except Words easy to be understood be utter'd, how shall it be known what is spoken?* Syllables, tho never so well put together, if they have not Ideas
Ver. 9. fix'd to them, are but *Words spoken in the Air*; and cannot be the Ground of
Rom. 12. 1. a *reasonable Service*, or Worship.

5. If any should think to evade the Difficulty by saying, that the Ideas of certain Doctrines may be contrary indeed to common Notions, yet consistent with themselves, and I know not what supra-Intellectual Truths, he's but just where he was. But supposing a little that the thing were so; it still follows, that none can understand these Doctrines except their Perceptions be communicated to him in an extraordinary manner, as by new Powers and Organs. And then too, others cannot be edifi'd by what is discours'd of 'em, unless they enjoy the same Favour. So that if I would go preach the Gospel to the *Wild Indians*, I must expect the Ideas of my Words should be, I know

not

t how, infus'd into their Souls in Ch. 1.
der to apprehend me: and accor-
ng to this Hypothesis, they could no
ore, without a Miracle, understand
y Speech than the chirping of Birds;
d *if they knew not the Meaning of my* 1 Cor. 14.
*nice, I should* even *to them be a Barba-* 11.
*n*, notwithstanding *I spoke Mysteries* Ver. 2.
*the Spirit.* But what do they mean
r consisting with themselves, yet not
ith our common Notions? *Four* may
: call'd *Five* in Heaven; but so the
ame only is chang'd, the Thing re-
ains still the same. And since we can-
ot in this World know any thing but
y our common Notions, how shall we
: sure of this pretended Consistency
etween our present seeming Contra-
ctions, and the Theology of the
Vorld to come? for as 'tis by *Reason*
e arrive at the Certainty of God's
wn Existence, so we cannot other-
ise discern his *Revelations* but by their
onformity with our natural Notices
him, which is in so many words, to
gree with our common Notions.

6. The next thing I shall remark is,
hat those, who stick not to say *they*
*uld believe a downright Contradiction*

to

Sect. II. *to Reason, did they find it contain'd to the Scripture*, do justify all Absurdities whatsoever; and, by opposing one Light to another, undeniably make God the Author of all Incertitude. The very Supposition, that Reason might authorize one thing, and the Spirit of God another, throws us into inevitable *Scepticism*; for we shall be at a perpetual Uncertainty which to obey: Nay, we can never be sure which is which. For the Proof of the Divinity of *Scripture* depending upon Reason, if the clear Light of the one might be any way contradicted, how shall we be convinc'd of the Infallibility of the other? Reason may err in this Point as well as in any thing else; and we have no particular Promise it shall not, no more than the *Papists* that their Senses may not deceive them in every thing as well as in *Transubstantiation*. To say it bears witness to it self, is equally to establish the *Alcoran* or the *Poran*. And 'twere a notable Argument to tell a *Heathen*, that the *Church* has declar'd it, when all Societies will say as much for themselves, if we take their word for it. Besides,

it

t may be, he would ask whence the *Church* had Authority to decide this Matter? And if it should be answer'd rom the *Scripture*, a thousand to one ut he would divert himself with this Circle. You must believe that the *Scripture* is Divine, because the *Church* as so determin'd it, and the *Church* as this deciding Authority from the *Scripture*. 'Tis doubted if this Power f the *Church* can be prov'd from the 'assages alledg'd to that purpose; but he *Church* it self (a Party concern'd) ffirms it. Hey-day! are not these ternal Rounds very exquisite Inven- ons to giddy and entangle the Un- inking and the Weak?

Ch. 1.

7. But if we believe the *Scripture* be Divine, not upon its own bare ertion, but from a real Testimony sisting in the Evidence of the things tain'd therein; from undoubted cts, and not from Words and Let- ; what is this but to prove it by *on*? It has in it self, I grant, the ost Characters of *Divinity*: But *Reason* finds them out, examines and by its Principles approves dorances them sufficient; which

Sect. II. orderly begets in us an Acquiescence of *Faith* or Perswasion. Now if Particulars be thus severely sifted; if not only the Doctrine of *Christ* and his *Apostles* be consider'd, but also their Lives, Predictions, Miracles, and Deaths; surely all this Labour would be in vain, might we upon any account dispense with Contradictions. O! blessed and commodious System, that dischargest at one stroak those troublesome Remarks about History, Language, figurative and literal Senses, Scope of the Writer, Circumstances, and other Helps of Interpretation! We judg of a Man's Wisdom and Learning by his Actions, and his Discourses; but God, who we are assur'd

Acts 14.17. *has not left himself without a Witness*, must have no Privileges above the maddest Enthusiast, or the *Devil* himself, at this rate.

8. But a Veneration for the very Words of God will be pretended: This we are pleas'd with; for we know

Numb. 23. 19. *that God is not a Man that he should lie.* But the Question is not about the Words, but their Sense, which must be ever worthy of their Author, and there-

therefore according to the Genius of all Speech, figuratively interpreted, when occasion requires it. Otherwise, under pretence of *Faith in the Word of God*, the highest Follies and Blasphemies may be deduc'd from the Letter of *Scripture*; as, that God is subject to Passions, is the Author of Sin, that *Christ* is a Rock, was actually guilty of and defil'd with our Transgressions, that we are Worms or Sheep, and no Men. And if a Figure be admitted in these Passages, why not, I pray, in all Expressions of the like Nature, when there appears an equal Necessity for it? Ch. 1.

9. It may be demanded why I have so long insisted upon this Article, since that none expresly makes *Scripture* and *Reason* contradictory, was acknowledg'd before? But in the same place mention is made of some who hold, that *they may seem directly to clash*; and that tho we cannot reconcile them together, yet that we are bound to acquiesce in the Decisions of the former. A *seeming* Contradiction is to us as much as a *real* one; and our Respect for the *Scripture* does not require us to

Sect. II. grant any such in it; but rather to conclude, that we are ignorant of the right Meaning when a Difficulty occurs; and so *to suspend our Judgment concerning it, till with suitable Helps and Industry we discover the Truth.* As for acquiescing in what a Man understands not, or cannot reconcile to his Reason, they know best the fruits of it that practise it. For my part, I'm a Stranger to it, and cannot reconcile my self to such a Principle. On the contrary, I am pretty sure *he pretends in vain to convince the Judgment, who explains not the Nature of the Thing.* A Man may give his verbal Assent to he knows not what, out of *Fear, Superstition, Indifference, Interest,* and the like feeble and unfair Motives: but as long as he conceives not what he believes, he cannot sincerely acquiesce in it, and remains deprivʼd of all solid Satisfaction. He is constantly perplexʼd with Scruples not to be removʼd by his *implicite Faith*; and so is ready to be shaken, and *carryʼd away with every wind of Doctrine.* I will believe because I will believe, that is, *because I'm in the Humour so to do,* is the top of his Apology.

Ephes. 4. 14.

logy. Such are unreasonable Men, *walking after the Vanity of their Minds, having their Understandings darkn'd, being Strangers to the Life of God through the Ignorance that is in them, because of the Hardness of their Hearts.* But he that comprehends a thing, is as sure of it as if he were himself the Author. He can never be brought to suspect his Profession; and, if he be honest, will always render a pertinent account of it to others.

Ch. 1. Ephes. 4. 17, 18.

10. The natural Result of what has been said is, That to believe the Divinity of *Scripture*, or the Sense of any Passage thereof, without rational Proofs, and an evident Consistency, is a blameable Credulity, and a temerarious Opinion, ordinarily grounded upon an ignorant and wilful Disposition, but more generally maintain'd out of a gainful Prospect. For we frequently embrace certain Doctrines not from any convincing Evidence in them, but because they serve our Designs better than the Truth; and because other Contradictions we are not willing to quit, are better defended by their means.

## CHAP. II.

### *Of the Authority of REVELATION, as it regards this Controversy.*

11. AGainst all that we have been establishing in this Section, *the Authority of Revelation* will be alledg'd with great shew, as if without a Right of silencing or extinguishing REASON, it were altogether useless and impertinent. But if the Distinction I made in the precedent Section, N. 9. be well consider'd, the Weakness of the present Objection will quickly appear, and this Controversy be better understood hereafter. There I said REVELATION was not a necessitating Motive of Assent, but *a Mean of Information.* We should not confound the Way whereby we come to the knowledg of a thing, with the Grounds we have to believe it. A Man may inform me concerning a thousand Matters I never heard of before, and of which I should not as much as think if

I were not told; yet I believe nothing purely upon his word without *Evidence* in the things themselves. Not the bare Authority of him that speaks, but the clear Conception I form of what he says, is the *Ground of my Perswasion.* Ch. 2.

12. If the sincerest Person on Earth should assure me he saw a Cane without two ends, I neither should nor could believe him; because this Relation plainly contradicts the Idea of a Cane. But if he told me he saw a Staff that, being by chance laid in the Earth, did after some time put forth Sprigs and Branches, I could easily rely upon his Veracity; because this no way contradicts the Idea of a Staff, nor transcends Possibility.

13. I say *Possibility*; for *Omnipotency* it self can do no more. They impose upon themselves and others, who require Assent to things contradictory, because *God*, say they, *can do all things, and it were limiting of his Power to affirm the contrary.* Very good! we heartily believe God can do all things: But that meer NOTHING should be the Object of his Power, the very *Omnipotency* alledg'd will not permit us to

Sect. II. conceive. And that every *Contradiction*, which is a Synonym for *Impossibility*, is *pure nothing*, we have already sufficiently demonstrated. To say, for example, that *a thing is extended and not extended, is round and square at once*, is to say *nothing*; for these Ideas destroy one another, and cannot subsist together in the same Subject. But when we clearly perceive a perfect Agreement and Connection between the Terms of any Proposition, we then conclude it possible because intelligible: So I understand God may render immediately solid, what has been hitherto fluid; make present Beings cease to exist or change their Forms; and *call*
Rom. 4. 17. *those things that are not, as tho they were.* When we say then, *that nothing is impossible with God*, or that he can do all things, we mean whatever is possible in itself, however far above the Power of Creatures to effect.

14. Now, such is the Nature of a Matter of Fact, that tho it may be conceiv'd possible enough, yet he only can with Assurance assert its Existence who is himself the Author, or by some *Means of Information* comes first to

the certain knowledg of it. That there was such an Island as *Jamaica*, no *European* could ever reasonably deny: And yet that it was precisely situated in such a Latitude, was water'd with those Rivers, cloth'd with these Woods, bore this Grain, produc'd that Plant, no *English-man* before the Discovery of *America*, could positively affirm. Ch. 2.

15. Thus God is pleas'd to reveal to us in *Scripture* several wonderful Matters of Fact, as *the Creation of the World*, *the last Judgment*, and many other important Truths, which no Man left to himself could ever imagine, no more than any of my fellow-Creatures can be sure of my private Thoughts: *For who knoweth the things of a Man save the Spirit of a Man that is in him? even so the things of God knoweth none but the Spirit of God.* But as *secret things belong unto the Lord*; so *those things which are reveal'd, belong unto us and to our Children.* Yet, as we discours'd before, we do not receive them only because they are reveal'd: For *besides the infallible Testimony of the Revelation from all requisite Circumstances, we must* 1 Cor. 2. 11. Deut. 29. 29.

*see*

Sect. II *see in its Subject the indisputable Characters of DIVINE WISDOM and SOUND REASON*; which are the only Marks we have to distinguish the Oracles and Will of God, from the Impostures and Traditions of Men.

16. *Whoever reveals any thing*, that is, whoever tells us something we did not know before, *his Words must be intelligible, and the Matter possible.* This RULE holds good, let *God* or *Man* be the Revealer. If we count that Person a Fool who requires our Assent to what is manifestly incredible, how dare we blasphemously attribute to *the most perfect Being*, what is an acknowledg'd Defect in one of our selves? As for unintelligible Relations, we can no more believe them from the Revelation of God, than from that of Man; for the conceiv'd Ideas of things are the only Subjects of Believing, Denying, Approving, and every other Act of the Understanding: Therefore *all Matters reveal'd by God or Man, must be equally intelligible and possible*; so far both Revelations agree. But in this they differ, that tho the Revelation of Man should be thus qualif'd, yet *he may impose*

*impose upon me as to the Truth of the thing*; whereas what God is pleas'd to discover to me is not only clear to my Reason, (without which his Revelation could make me no wiser) but likewise *it is always true.* A Man, for Example, acquaints me that he has found a Treasure: This is plain and possible, but he may easily deceive me. God assures me, that he has form'd Man of Earth: This is not only possible to God, and to me very intelligible; but the thing is also most certain, *God not being capable to deceive me, as Man is.* We are then to expect the same degree of *Perspicuity* from God as from Man, tho more of *Certitude* from the first than the last. Ch. 2.

17. This Reason perswades, and the Scriptures expresly speak it. Those *Prophets* or *Dreamers* were to be ston'd to Death that should go about to seduce the People from the Worship of One God to * *Polytheism*, tho they should confirm their Doctrine *by Signs and Wonders.* And *tho a Prophet spoke in the Name of the Lord, yet if the thing* Deut. 13. 1, 2, 3.

*prophe-*

* The Service of many Gods.

Sect. II. *prophesi'd did not come to pass*, it was to be a rational Sign *he spoke presumptuously of himself, and not of God.* It was reveal'd to the Prophet *Jeremy* in Prison, that his Uncle's Son would sell his Field to him, *but he did not conclude it to be the Word of the Lord till his Kinsman actually came to strike the Bargain with him.* The Virgin *MARY*, tho of that Sex that's least Proof against Flattery and Superstition, did not implicitly believe *she should bear a Child that was to be call'd the Son of the most High, and of whose Kingdom there should be no end*, till the *Angel* gave her a satisfactory Answer to the strongest Objection that could be made: Nor did she then conclude (so unlike was she to her present Worshippers) it should unavoidably come to pass; but humbly acknowledging the Possibility, and her own Unworthiness, she quietly wish'd and expected the Event.

Deut. 18. 21, 22.

Jer. 32. 7, 8.

Luke 1. 34, 35.

Ver. 38.

18. In how many places are we exhorted *to beware of false Prophets* and *Teachers, Seducers* and *Deceivers*? We are not only *to prove or try all things*, and *to hold fast that which is best*, but also *to try the Spirits whether they be of God.*

Mat. 7. 14. 2 Tim. 3. 13. Tit. 1. 10. 1 Thess. 5. 21. 1 Joh. 4. 1.

*God.* But how shall we try? how shall we discern? Not *as the Horse and Mule which have no Understanding*, but *as circumspect and wise Men, judging what is said.* In a word, it was from clear and weighty Reasons, both as to Fact and Matter, and not by a blind Obedience, that the Men of God of old embrac'd his Revelations, which on the like Account we are willing to receive of their hands. I am not ignorant how some boast they are strongly persuaded *by the illuminating and efficacious Operation of the Holy Spirit*, and that they neither have nor approve other Reasons of their *FAITH*. But we shall endeavour in its proper place to undeceive them; for no Adversary, how absurd or trifling soever, ought to be superciliously disregarded by an unfeign'd Lover of Men and Truth. So far of REVELATION; only in making it a *Mean of Information*, I follow *Paul* himself, who tells the *Corinthians*, that *he cannot profit them except he speaks to them by* Revelation, *or by* Knowledg, *or by* Prophesying, *or by* Doctrine.

Ch. 2. Psal. 32.9. Eph. 5.15. 1 Cor. 10. 15.

1 Cor. 14.6.

CHAP.

## CHAP. III.

### *That by* CHRISTIANITY *was intended a Rational and Intelligible Religion; prov'd from the* Miracles, Method *and* Stile *of the New Testament.*

19. WHAT we discours'd of REASON before, and REVELATION now, being duly weigh'd, all the Doctrines and Precepts of the New Testament (if it be indeed Divine) must consequently agree with *Natural Reason*, and our own ordinary Ideas. This every considerate and wel-dispos'd Person will find by the careful perusal of it: And whoever undertakes this Task, will confess the Gospel *not to be hidden from us, nor afar off, but very nigh us, in our Mouths, and in our Hearts.* It affords the most illustrious Examples of close and perspicuous Ratiocination conceivable; which is incumbent on me in the

Deut. 30. 11, 14.

the Explication of its MYSTERIES, to demonstrate. And tho the Evidence of *Christ*'s Doctrine might claim the Approbation of the *Gentiles*, and its Conformity with the Types and Prophecies of the *Old Testament*, with all the Marks of the *MESSIAH* concurring in his Person, might justly challenge the Assent of his Countrymen; yet to leave no room for doubt, he proves his Authority and Gospel by such Works, and Miracles as the stiff-neck'd *Jews* themselves could not deny to be Divine. *Nicodemus* says to him, *No Man can do these Miracles which thou do'st, except God be with him.* Some of the Pharisees acknowledg'd *no Sinner could do such things.* And others, that *they exceeded the Power of the Devil.*

Ch. 3.

Joh. 3. 2.

Joh. 9. 16.

Joh. 10. 21.

20. JESUS himself appeals to his very Enemies, ready to Stone him for pretended Blasphemy, saying; *If I do not the Works of my Father, believe me not: But if I do, believe not me, believe the Works; that you may know, and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him:* That is, believe not rashly on me, and so give a Testimony to my Works; but search the *Scriptures*, which testify of the

Joh. 10. 37, 38.

Sect. II. for lack of good Sense and a liberal Education. I think I may justly say, that they are Strangers to true Method, who complain of this Confusion and Disorder. But the Proof of the Case depends not upon Generalities: Tho, whenever it is prov'd, I will not promise that every one shall find a Justification of the *particular Method* he was taught, or he has chosen, to follow. *To defend any PARTY is not my business, but to discover the TRUTH.*

23. The Facility of the GOSPEL is not confin'd only to Method; for the Stile is also most easy, most natural, and in the common Dialect of those to whom it was immediately consign'd. Should any preach in *Xenophon*'s strain to the present *Greeks*, or in correct *English* to the Country-People in *Scotland*, 'twould cost them much more Time and Pains to learn the very Words, than the Knowledg of the Things denoted by them. Of old, as well as in our time, the *Jews* understood *Hebrew* worse than the Tongues of those Regions where they dwelt. No Pretences therefore can be

purpose serv'd all these Miracles, all these Appeals, if no Regard was to be had of Mens Understandings? if the Doctrines of *Christ* were incomprehensible, contradictory; or were we oblig'd to believe reveal'd Nonsense? Now if these Miracles be true, *Christianity* must consequently be intelligible; and if false, (which our Adversaries will not grant) they can be then no Arguments against us. Ch. 3.

22. But to insist no longer upon such Passages, all Men will own the Verity I defend, if they read the sacred Writings with that Equity and Attention that is due to meer Humane Works: Nor is there any different Rule to be follow'd in the Interpretation of *Scripture* from what is common to all other Books. Whatever prejudic'd Person shall use those Means, will find them notorious Deceivers, or much deceiv'd themselves, to maintain the *New Testament* is written without any Order or certain Rule, but just as Matters came into the *Apostles* Heads, whether transported with Enthusiastick Fits, (as some have it) or, according to others,

Sect. II. it upon Distance of Time, and the want of more Books in the same Tongue, than to attribute it to the Nature of the thing, or the Ignorance of the Author, who might be easily understood by his Country-men and Contemporaries. But no Truth is to be establish'd, nor Falshood confuted from such Passages, no more than any can certainly divine his Fortune from the sound of *Bow-bell.*

24. If any object, that the *Gospel* is penn'd with little or no Ornament, that there are no choice of Words, nor studi'd Expressions in it; the Accusation is true, and the Apostles themselves acknowledg it: nor is there a more palpable Demonstration of their having design'd to be understood by all. *I came not to you*, says *Paul*, *with Excellency of Speech, or Wisdom, declaring unto you the Testimony of God. My Speech and my Preaching was not with enticing Words of Humane Wisdom, but in Demonstration*, or Conviction *of the Spirit* or Mind, *and in Power* or Efficacy. This he speaks in reference to the *Philosophers* and *Orators* of those Times, whose Elocution, 'tis confess'd, was

1 Cor. 2. 1.

Ver. 4.

was curious, and Periods elaborate, apt to excite the Admiration of the Hearers, but not to satisfy their Reasons; charming indeed their Senses whilst in the *Theatre*, or the *Temple*, but making them neither the better at home, nor the wiser abroad. Ch. 3.

25. These Men, as well as many of their *modern Successors*, were fond enough of their own ridiculous Systems, *to count the things of God Foolishness*, because they did not agree with their precarious and sensual Notions; because every Sentence was not wrapp'd up in *Mystery*, and garnish'd with a Figure: not considering that only false or trivial Matters need the Assistance of alluring Harangues to perplex or amuse. But they were Enemies and Strangers to the Simplicity of Truth. *All their Study*, as we took notice, *lay in tickling the Passions of the People at their Pleasure with bombast Eloquence, and apish Gesticulations.* They boasted their Talent of perswading for or against any thing. And as he was esteem'd the best *Orator* that made the worst Cause appear the most equitable before the Judges, so he was the 1 Cor. 2. 14.

Sect. II. best *Philosopher* that could get the wildest Paradox to pass for Demonstration. They were only concern'd about their own Glory and Gain, which they could not otherwise support, but (according to an Artifice that never fails, and therefore ever practis'd) by *imposing upon the People with their Authority and Sophistry*, and *under pretence of instructing, dexterously detaining them in the grossest Ignorance.*

26. But the Scope of the *Apostles* was very different: Piety towards God, and the Peace of Mankind, was their Gain, and *Christ* and his *Gospel* their Glory; they came not magnifying nor exalting themselves; not imposing but declaring their Doctrine: they did not confound and mislead, but convince the Mind; they were employ'd to dispel Ignorance, to eradicate Superstition, to propagate Truth, and Reformation of Manners; *to preach Deliverance to Captives, (i. e.)* the Enjoyment of Christian Liberty to the Slaves of the Levitical, and Pagan Priesthoods; and to declare Salvation to repenting Sinners.

Luk. 4. 18.

27. I

27. I shall add here some of the Characters which *David* gives of the Law and Word of God, that we may admit nothing as the Will of Heaven but what is agreeable to them: *The Law of the Lord*, says he, *is perfect, converting the Soul. The Testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the Simple. The Statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the Heart. The Commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightning the Eyes. The Fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever. The Judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. I have more Understanding than all my Teachers, for thy Testimonies are my Meditation. I understand more than the Antients, because I keep thy Precepts. Thy Word is a Lamp unto my Feet, and a Light unto my Path.* The *New Testament* is so full of this Language, and the Contents of it are every where so conformable to it, that I shall refer the Reader to the particular Discussion of the Whole in the *second Discourse*. But I must remark in the mean time that not a Syllable of this Language is true, if any Contradictions *seeming* or *real* be admitted in Scripture. As much

Ch. 3.

Sect. II. may be said of *Mysteries*; but we shall talk of that by and by.

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## CHAP. IV.

### Objections *answer'd, drawn from the* Pravity *of* Humane *REASON.*

28. THere remains one Objection yet, upon which some lay a mighty Stress, tho it's like to do them little Service. Granting, say they, the GOSPEL to be as reasonable as you pretend, yet *corrupt and deprav'd Reason can neither discern nor receive Divine Verities.* Ay, but that proves not Divine Verities to be contrary to *sound Reason.* But they maintain that *no Man's Reason is sound.* Wherefore I hope so to state this Question, as to cut off all Occasion of Dispute from judicious and peaceable Men. *Reason* taken for the Principle of Discourse in us, or more particularly for *that Faculty every one has of judging of his Ideas*

*Ideas according to their Agreement or Disagreement, and so of loving what seems good unto him, and hating what he thinks evil:* *Reason*, I say, in this Sense is whole and entire in every one whose Organs are not accidentally indispos'd. 'Tis from it that we are accounted Men; and we could neither inform others, nor receive Improvement our selves, any more than *Brutes*, without it. Ch. 4.

29. But if by *Reason* be understood a constant right Use of these Faculties, *viz. If a Man never judges but according to clear Perceptions, desires nothing but what is truly good for him, nor avoids but what is certainly evil:* Then, I confess, it is extreamly *corrupt*. We are too prone to frame wrong Conceptions, and as erroneous Judgments of things. We generally covet what flatters our Senses, without distinguishing noxious from innocent Pleasures; and our Hatred is as partial. We gratify our Bodies so much as to meditate little, and think very grosly of spiritual, or abstracted Matters. We are apt to indulge our inclinations, which we term *to follow Nature:* so 1 Cor. 2. 14.

that

Sect. II. that the † *natural Man*, that is, he that gives the swing to his Appetites, counts Divine Things mere Folly, calls *Religion* a feverish Dream of superstitious Heads, or a politick Trick invented by States-men to aw the credulous Vulgar. For as *they that walk after the Flesh mind the things thereof*, so *their carnal Wisdom is Enmity against God.*

Rom. 8. 5, 7.

Heb. 12. 1. *Sin easily besets us. There is a Law in our Members* or Body, *warring against the Law of our Minds* or Reason. And *when we would do Good, Evil is present with us.*

Rom. 7. 23.

Ver. 21.

If thus we become stupid and unfit for earthly Speculations, *how shall we believe when we are told of Heavenly things?*

Joh. 3 12.

30. But these Disorders are so far from being *Reason*, that nothing can be more directly contrary to it. We lie under no necessary Fate of sinning. There is no Defect in our Understandings but those of our own Creation, that is to say, *vicious Habits easily contracted, but difficultly reform'd.* 'Tis just with us as with the Drunkard, whose

† Ψυχικὸς *constantly signifies the* animal, *and never the* natural *State of Man. It should be in this Place translated* sensual, *as it is very rightly*, Jam. 3. 15. *and* Jude, v. 19.

whose *I cannot give over Drinking* is a deliberate *I will not*. For upon a Wager, or for a Reward, he can forbear his Cups a Day, a Month, a Year, according as the Consideration of the Value or Certainty of the expected Gain do's influence him. *Let no Man therefore say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for as God cannot be tempted to Evil, so neither tempteth he any Man: But every Man is tempted when he is drawn away, and entic'd of his own Lust.* Ch. 4. Jam. 1.13, 14.

31. Supposing a natural Impotency to reason well, we could no more be liable to Condemnation for not keeping the Commands of God, than those to whom the Gospel was never revealed for not believing on *Christ: For how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?* Rom. 10. 14. Were our reasoning Faculties imperfect, or we not capable to employ them rightly, there could be no Possibility of our understanding one another in Millions of things, where the stock of our Ideas should prove unavoidably unequal, or our Capacities different.

Sect. II. different. But 'tis the Perfection of our *Reason* and *Liberty* that makes us deserve Rewards and Punishments. We are perswaded that *all our Thoughts are entirely free, we can expend the Force of Words, compare Ideas, distinguish clear from obscure Conceptions, suspend our Judgments about Uncertainties, and yield only to Evidence.* In a word, the Deliberations we use about our Designs, and the choice to which we determine our selves at last, do prove us the free Disposers of all our Actions. Now what is *sound Reason* except this be it? Doubtless it is. And no *Evangelical*, or other knowable Truth can prove insuperable, or monstrous to him that uses it after this manner. But when we abuse it against it self, and enslave it to our debauch'd Imaginations, it is averse from all Good. We are so habituated, I confess, to precarious and hasty Conclusions, that without great Constancy and Exercise we cannot recover our innate Freedom, *nor do well, having accustom'd our selves so much to Evil.* But tho 'tis said in *Scripture*, that *we will neither know nor understand*; 'tis there also said, that we

Jer. 13. 23.

may

may *amend our Ways, turn from our Iniquity*, and *choose Life*. Encouragements are propos'd to such as do so. We can, upon serious Reflections, see our Faults, and find that what we held most unreasonable, did only appear so from *superficial Disquisitions*, or *want of necessary Helps*; from *Deference to Authority*, and *Principles taken upon Trust*; from *irregular Inclinations* and *Self-interest*, or *the Hatred of a Party*. Ch. 4.

32. But notwithstanding all this some are at a world of Pains to rob themselves (if they could) of their *Liberty* or *Freewill*, the noblest and most useful of all our Faculties, the only thing we can properly call ours, and the only thing that neither Power nor Fortune can take from us. Under whatever Vail these Men endeavour to hide their Folly, yet they are engag'd in it by extreme *Pride* and *Self-love*: For, *not willing to own their Ignorance and Miscarriages, (which proceed from Passion, Sloth, or Inconsideration) they would remove all the Blame from their Will, and charge it upon a natural Impotency not in their Power to cure.* Thus they ingeniously cheat themselves, and

chuse

Sect. II. chuse rather to be rank'd in the same Condition with Brutes or Machines, than be oblig'd to acknowledg their humane Frailties, and to mend.

33. Since therefore the Perfection or Soundness of our Reason is so evident to our selves, and so plainly contain'd in *Scripture*, however wrested by some ignorant Persons, *we should labour to acquire Knowledg with more confident Hopes of Success.* Why should we entertain such mean and unbecoming Thoughts, as if Truth, like the Almighty, dwelt in Light inaccessible, and not to be discover'd by the Sons of Men? Things are always the same, how different soever the Conceptions of Men about them may be; and what another did not, I may happily find out. That nothing escap'd the Sight of former Ages is a Tale to be told where one Person only speaks, and no Body present must contradict him. The Slips and Errors which are taken notice of in the World every Day, serve only to put us in mind that many able Men did not examine the Truth with that Order and Application they should or might have done.

There

There are a thousand things in our Power to know, of which, through Prejudice or Neglect, we may be, and frequently remain ignorant all our Lives; and innumerable Difficulties may be made by imagining MYSTERIES where there are none, or by conceiving too discouraging and unjust an Opinion of our own Abilities: whereas, by a Parity of Reason, we may hope to outdo all that outdid others before us, as Posterity may exceed both. *'Tis no Presumption* therefore *for us to endeavour setting things in a better Light*; as to know what we are able to perform is not *Pride*, but foolishly to presume none else can equal us, when we are all upon the same Level: *For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not receiv'd it?* Have we not all the same sure and certain Promises of Light and Assistance from above, as well as the Privilege of Reason in common? *If any lack Wisdom, let him ask it of God, who gives to all Men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.*

Ch. 4.

1 Cor. 4. 7.

Jam. 1. 5.

34. To

Sect. II. 34. To conclude, let no Body think to be excus'd by this imaginary *Corruption*, but learn from the *Scripture*, our infallible Oracle, that the *Gospel*, if it be the Word of God, is only contrary to the Opinions and Wishes of
2 Pet. 3.3. lewd Men, *that love to walk after their own Lusts; of those that speak Evil of the things which they understand not, and*
Jude, v. 10. *debauch themselves in what they know in common with Brutes. It is hid to them*
2 Cor. 4. 3, 4. *whose Minds are blinded by the God of this World*; and to those who live by the Ignorance and simple Credulity of their Brethren. To be brief, It is contrary to the false Reasoning of all that will not know what it is to reflect or consider; but it is not above the Possibility of their *Reason* when they shall better improve their Faculties. The Creation of the World was against the System of *Aristotle*, the Immortality of the Soul against the Hypothesis of *Epicurus*, and the || Liberty of

|| *How the absolute Liberty we experience in our selves, is consistent with God's Omnipotency and our Dependance on him, shall in due Place be consider'd.*

: the Will was impugned by many Ch. 4.
ıtient *Philosophers.* But is this to be
*ntrary to Reason?* Have not these
ſen been quite baffl'd by as very
*leathens* as themselves? And are not
ıeir other Errors since detected and
:ploded by most of the Learned?
ɛſides, they wanted a principal *mean*
' *Information*, viz. *REVELATION.*

F SECT.

# SECT. III.

## *That there is nothing MYSTERIOUS, or ABOVE Reason in the GOSPEL.*

1. WE come at length to enquire *whether any Doctrine of the GOSPEL be ABOVE, tho not contrary to REASON.* This Expression is taken in a twofold Signification. First, It denotes a thing intelligible of it self, but so cover'd by figurative Words, Types and Ceremonies, that *Reason* cannot penetrate the Vail, nor see what is under it till it be remov'd. Secondly, It is made to signify a thing of its own Nature inconceivable, and not to be judg'd of by our ordinary Faculties and Ideas, tho it be never so clearly revealed. In both these Senses *to be above*

*above Reason* is the same thing with MYSTERY; and, in effect, they are convertible Terms in *Divinity*. Ch. I.

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## CHAP. I.

### *The History and Signification of MYSTERY in the Writings of the GENTILES.*

2. WHAT is meant by *REASON* we have already largely discours'd; but to understand aright what the word *MYSTERY* imports, we must trace the Original of it as far back as the Theology of the antient *Gentiles*, whereof it was a considerable Term. *Those Nations, who* (as *Paul* elegantly describes them) *professing themselves wise, became Fools; who chang'd the Glory of the incorruptible God into the Image and Likeness of corruptible Man, of Birds, of Beasts, and creeping things; who turn'd the Truth of God into a Lie, and worship'd the Creature as well as* (and sometimes more than) *the Creator*: Those Nations, I Rom. 1. 22,23,25.

Sect. 3. say, asham'd or afraid to exhibit their *Religion* naked to the view of all indifferently, disguis'd it with various Ceremonies, Sacrifices, Plays, *&c.* making the superstitious People believe that admirable things were adumbrated by these Externals. The *Priests*, but very rarely, and then obscurely, taught in publick, pretending the Injunctions of their *Divinities* to the contrary, lest their Secrets, forsooth, should be expos'd to the Profanation of the Ignorant, or Violation of the Impious. They perform'd the highest Acts of their Worship, consisting of ridiculous, obscene, or inhumane Rites, in the inmost Recesses of *Temples* or *Groves* consecrated for that purpose: And it was inexpiable Sacrilege for any to *enter these but such as had a special Mark and Privilege, or as much as to ask Questions about what pass'd in them. All the Excluded were for that Reason stil'd *the PROFANE*, as those not in Orders with us *the LAITY*.

3. But

* ——Procul, O procul este Profani!
Conclamat vates, totoq; absistite luco. *Virg. l. 6. Æneid. v.* 259. Callimach. Hymn. in Apol. *v.* 2. Ἐκὰς ἐκὰς ὅσοις ΑΝΤΕΟΝ.

3. But the cunning *Priests*, who knew how to turn every thing to their own Advantage, thought fit to *initiate* or instruct certain Persons in the Meaning of their Rites. They gave out that such as died *uninitiated** wallow'd in infernal Mire, whilst the Purifi'd and *Initiated* dwelt with the Gods; which as well increas'd their Veneration for, as a Desire of enjoying, so great a Happiness. The *Initiated*, after some Years Preparation to make them value what cost so much Time and Patience, were devoutly sworn † never to discover what they saw or heard under Pain of ‖ Death, tho they might discourse of them amongst themselves, lest too

Ch. 1.

F 3 great

*Ὃς ἀμύητος καὶ ἀτέλεστος εἰς ἅδου ἀφίκηται, ἐν βορβόρῳ κείσεται· Ὁ δὲ κεκαθαρμένος τε καὶ τετελεσμένος, ἐκεῖσε ἀφικόμενος, μετὰ θεῶν οἰκήσει. Plat. in Phædon. pag. 69. Edit. *Paris.* 1578. Τελεταῖς οἱ μετεχόντες, ὡς ἐπὶ τὸν τῆς τοῦ βίου τελευτῆς, καὶ τὸν σύμπαντος αἰῶνος, ἡδίους τὰς ἐλπίδας ἔχουσι. Isocrat. in Panegyr. Initiaq; ut appellantur, ita re vera principia vitæ cognovimus: neq; solum cum lætitia vivendi rationem accepimus, sed etiam cum spe meliore moriendi. *Cic. l. 2. de Leg. c.* 14.

† Quis Ceres ritus audet vulgare Profanis?
Magnaque Threicio sacra reperta Samo? *Ovid. l. 2. de Arte Amand. v.* 601. Ὦ κακῶς ἐξορκαπάμενοι τὰ μυστήρια, ὃ τὰ ἄφαντα φήναντες. Aristid.

‖ Νόμος, τὸν ἐξειπόντα τὰ μυστήρια θανεῖν. Solipater in Divis. Quæst.

Sect. 3. great a Constraint should tempt them to blab the Secret. And so religiously they kept this Oath, that some of them, after their Conversion to *Christianity*, could hardly be brought to declare what pass'd at their *Initiation* in *Gentilism*. The *Athenians* thought no Torments exquisite enough to punish * *Diagoras* the Philosopher, for divulging their *Mysteries*; and not content to brand him with *Atheism* for laughing at their Weakness, they promis'd a Talent as a Reward to any that should kill him. 'Twas Death to say *Adonis* was a Man; some suffer'd upon that account: And many were torn in pieces at the † *Mysteries* of *Ceres*, and the ‖ *Orgies* of *Bacchus*, for their unadvis'd Curiosity.

4. Cre-

* Ἢν ἀποκτείνῃ τις ὑμῶν Διαγόραν τὸν μήλιον, λαμβάνειν τάλαντον. Aristophanes in Avibus; etiam Suidas in voce.

† Acarnanes duo Juvenes per Initiorum dies non Initiari Templum Cereris, imprudentes Religionis, cum cætera turba ingressi sunt. Facilè eos Sermo prodidit, absurdè quædam percunctantes: Deductiq; ad Antistites Templi, cùm palam esset per errorem ingressos, tanquam ob inauditum scelus interfecti sunt. *Livius, lib.* 31. *cap.* 14.

‖ *Witness the Story of* Pentheus, *which afforded the Subject of a Tragedy to* Euripides.

4. Credible Authors report, that the *Priests* confess'd to the *Initiated* how these Mystick Representations were instituted at first in Commemoration of some remarkable Accidents, or to the Honour of some great Persons that oblig'd the World by their Vertues and useful Inventions to pay them such Acknowledgments. But let this be as it will, *Myein* in their Systems signify'd *to initiate*: *Myesis*, *Initiation*: *Mystes*, a Name afterwards given the *Priests*, denoted the Person *to be initiated*, who was call'd an * *Epopt* when admitted; and *Mystery* the *Doctrine in which* he *was initiated*. As there were several † Degrees, so there were different sorts of *Mysteries*. The most famous were the *Samothracian*, the *Eleusinian*, the *Egyptian*, and those of *Bacchus*, commonly known by the name of ‖ *Orgies*; tho

Ch. 1.

Μυεῖν.

Μύησις.

Μύστης.

Μυστήριον.

F 4

* Οἱ τὰ μυστήρια παραλαμβάνοντες, λέγονται ἐν ἀρχῇ μόνον μύσται· μετὰ ἐνιαυτὸν δὲ ἐπόπται καὶ ἔφοροι. Scholiast. in Aristophanis Ranas.

† Ἔστι τὰ μικρὰ [μυστήρια] ὥσπερ παρασκευὴ καὶ προγύμνασις τῶν μεγάλων. Schol. in Plut. Aristophan. Act. 4. Sc. 2.

‖ Pars obscura cavis celebrabant Orgia cistis,
Orgia quæ frustra cupiunt audire Profani.
*Cat. Epigram.* 64. *v.* 260.

Sect. 3. tho the word is sometimes put for any of the former.

5. From what has been said it is clear, that they understood by *Mystery* in those Days *a thing intelligible of it self, but so vail'd by others, that it could not be known without special Revelation.* I need not add, that in all the *Greek* and *Roman* Authors it is constantly put as a very vulgar Expression, for any thing sacred or profane that is design'd-ly kept secret, or acoidentally obscure. And this is the common Acceptation of it still: for when we cannot see clearly into a Business, we say it is a *Mystery* to us; and that an obscure or perplex'd Discourse is very *mysterious*. *Mysteries* of State, Sciences and Trades run all in the same Notion.

6. But many not denying what is so plain, yet being strongly inclin'd out of Ignorance or Passion to maintain what was first introduc'd by the Craft or Superstition of their Fore-fathers, will have some *Christian Doctrines* to be still *mysterious* in the second Sense of the Word, that is, *inconceivable in themselves, however clearly reveal'd.* They think

think a long Prescription will argue it Folly in any to appear against them, and indeed Custom has made it dangerous. But, slighting so mean Considerations, if I can demonstrate that in the New Testament *Mystery* is always us'd in the first Sense of the Word, or that of the *Gentiles*, *viz.* for *things naturally very intelligible, but so cover'd by figurative Words or Rites, that Reason could not discover them without special Revelation*; and that the Vail is actually taken away; then it will manifestly follow that the Doctrines so reveal'd cannot now be properly call'd *Mysteries*. Ch. 1.

7. This is what I hope to perform in the Sequel of this Section, to the entire Satisfaction of those sincere Christians more concern'd for the Truth than the old or gainful Opinion. Yet I must first remove out of my way certain *common places of cavilling*, with which, not only the raw Beginners of the most implicite Constitution raise a great Dust upon all occasions, tho *not able to speak of anything pertinently when jostled out of the beaten Road*; but truly their venerable Teachers are not asham'd sometimes to play at this small

Game,

Sect. 3. Game, which, they know, rather amuses the Prejudic'd of their own side, than edifies the Adversaries of any sort. I wish there were more even of a well-meaning Zeal without Knowledg, than of Art or Cunning in this Conduct.

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## CHAP. II.

*That nothing ought to be call'd a* MYSTERY, *because we have not an adequate Idea of all its* Properties, *nor any at all of its* Essence.

8. I Shall discuss this Point with all the Perspicuity I am able. And, first, I affirm, *That nothing can be said to be a Mystery, because we have not an adequate Idea of it, or a distinct View of all its Properties at once; for then every thing would be a Mystery.* The Knowledg of finite Creatures is gradually progressive, as Objects are presented to the Understanding. *Adam* did

did not know so much in the twentieth Ch. 2.
as in the hundredth Year of his Age; and *Jesus Christ* is expressly recorded to have *encreas'd in Wisdom as well as in Stature.* Luk. 2.52. We are said to know a thousand things, nor can we doubt of it; yet we never have a full Conception of whatever belongs to them. I understand nothing better than this *Table* upon which I am now writing: I conceive it divisible into Parts beyond all Imagination; but shall I say it is *above my Reason* because I cannot count these Parts, nor distinctly perceive their Quantity and Figures? I am convinc'd that *Plants* have a regular Contexture, and a multitude of Vessels, many of them equivalent or analogous to those of *Animals*, whereby they receive a Juice from the Earth, and prepare it, changing some into their own Substance, and evacuating the excrementitious Parts. But I do not clearly comprehend how all these Operations are perform'd, tho I know very well what is meant by a *Tree.*

9. The Reason is, because *knowing nothing of Bodies but their Properties, God has wisely provided we should understand*

Sect. 3. *stand no more of these than are useful and necessary for us*; which is all our present Condition needs. Thus our Eyes are not given us to see all Quantities, nor perhaps any thing as it is in it self, but as it bears some Relation to us. What is too minute, as it escapes our Sight, so it can neither harm nor benefit us: and we have a better View of Bodies the nearer we approach them, because then they become more convenient or inconvenient; but as we remove farther off, we lose their Sight with their Influence. I'm perswaded there's no Motion which does not excite some Sound in Ears dispos'd to be affected with proportionable Degrees of Force from the Air; and, it may be, the small Animals concern'd can hear the Steps of the *Spider*, as we do those of Men and Cattel. From these and Millions of other Instances, it is manifest, that we have little Certainty of any thing but as it is noxious or beneficial to us.

10. Rightly speaking then, we are accounted to *comprehend* any thing when its chief Properties and their several Uses are known to us: for

* *to comprehend* in all correct Authors Ch. 2.
is nothing else but *to know*; and as *of what is not knowable we can have no Idea, so it is nothing to us.* It is improper therefore to say a thing is above our Reason, because we know no more of it than concerns us, and ridiculous to supersede our Disquisitions about it upon that score. What should we think of a Man that would stifly maintain *Water* to be above his Reason, and that he would never enquire into its Nature, nor employ it in his House or Grounds, because he knows not how many Particles go to a Drop; whether the Air passes through it, is incorporated with it, or neither? This is for all the World as if I would not go because I cannot fly. Now seeing *the Denominations of things are borrow'd from their known Properties*, and that *no Properties are knowable but what concern us, or serve to discover such as do*, we cannot be accountable for comprehending no other, nor justly requir'd more

* Ἐγὼ δ' οὔτ' ἄλλο τι καταλεπτὸν οἶμαι σημαίνειν ὅδε τὸ γνωστὸν, οὔτ' ἄλλο τι καταλαμβάνειν τὸ βεβαίως γιγνώσκειν. Γαλην. περὶ αἱρ. διδασκαλ.

Sect. 3. more by reasonable Men, much less by the all-wise *DEITY*.

11. The most compendious Method therefore to acquire sure and useful Knowledg, is *not to trouble our selves nor others with what is useless, were it known; or what is impossible to be known at all.* Since I easily perceive the good or bad Effects of Rain upon the Earth, what should I be the better did I comprehend its Generation in the Clouds? for after all I could make no Rain at my Pleasure, nor prevent its falling at any time. A probable *Hypothesis* will not give Satisfaction in such Cases: The Hands, for Example, of two Clock-Dials may have the same external Motion, tho the Disposition of the latent Springs which produce it should be very different. And to affirm this or that to be the way, will not do, unless you can demonstrate that no other possible Way remains. Nay, should you hit upon the real Manner, you can never be sure of it; because the Evidence of Matters of Fact solely depends upon Testimony: And it follows not that *such a thing is so, because it may be so.*

12. The

12. The Application of this Discourse to my Subject admits of no Difficulty; and it is, first, That *no Christian Doctrine, no more than any ordinary Piece of Nature, can be reputed a Mystery, because we have not an adequate or compleat Idea of whatever belongs to it.* Secondly, That *what is reveal'd in Religion, as it is most useful and necessary, so it must and may be as easily comprehended, and found as consistent with our common Notions, as what we know of Wood or Stone, of Air, of Water, or the like.* And, Thirdly, That *when we do as familiarly explain such Doctrines, as what is known of natural things,* (which I pretend we can) *we may then be as properly said to comprehend the one as the other.* Ch. 2.

13. They trifle then exceedingly, and discover a mighty Scarcity of better Arguments, who defend their *Mysteries* by this pitiful Shift of drawing Inferences from what is unknown to what is known, or of insisting upon adequate Ideas; except they will agree, as some do, to call every Spire of Grass, Sitting and Standing, Fish or Flesh, profound *Mysteries.* And if out of a pertinacious or worse

Sect. 3. worse Humour they will be still fooling, and call these things *Mysteries*, I'm willing to admit as many as they please in *Religion*, if they will allow me likewise to make mine as intelligible to others as these are to me.

14. But to finish this Point, I conclude, that neither GOD himself, nor any of his Attributes, are *Mysteries* to us for want of an adequate Idea: No, not *Eternity*. The *Mysterious Wits* do never more expose themselves than when they treat of *Eternity* in particular. Then they think themselves in their impregnable Fortress, and strangely insult over those dull Creatures that cannot find a thing where it is not. For if any Bounds (as Beginning or End) could be assign'd to *Eternity*, it ceases immediately to be what it should; and you frame only a finite, or rather *a negative Idea*, which is the Nature of all Limitation. Nor can it be said, that therefore *Eternity is above Reason* in this Respect, or that it is any Defect in us not to exhaust its Idea; for what greater Perfection can be ascrib'd to *Reason* than to know precisely the Nature of things? And does

does not all its Errors lie in attributing those Properties to a thing which it has not, or taking any away that it contains? *Eternity* therefore is no more above Reason *because it cannot be imagin'd*, than a Circle, *because it may*; for in both Cases *Reason* performs its Part according to the different Natures of the Objects, whereof the one is essentially imaginable, the other not. Ch. 2.

15. Now it appears that the pretended *Mysteriousness* of *Eternity* do's not consist in the want of an adequate Notion, which is all that we consider in it at present. The Difficulties rais'd from its Duration, as, that *Succession seems to make it finite*, and that *all things must exist together if it be instantaneous*, I despair not of solving very easily; and rendring *Infinity* also (which is inseparable from it, or rather a different Consideration of the same thing) as little *mysterious* as that *three and two make five*. But this falls naturally into my *second Discourse*, where I give a particular Explication of the *Christian* Tenets, according to the general Principles I am establishing in this.

Sect. 3. 16. As we know not all the Properties of things, so we can never conceive the *Essence* of any Substance in the World. To avoid Ambiguity, I distinguish, after an excellent modern Philosopher, the *Nominal* from the *Real Essence* of a thing. *The nominal Essence is a Collection of those Properties or Modes which we principally observe in any thing, and to which we give one common Denomination or Name.* Thus *the nominal Essence* of the *Sun* is a bright, hot, and round Body, at a certain Distance from us, and that has a constant regular Motion. Whoever hears the word *Sun* pronounc'd, this is the Idea he has of it. He may conceive more of its Properties, or not all these; but it is still a Collection of Modes or Properties that makes his Idea. So the *Nominal Essence* of *Honey* consists in its Colour, Taste, and other known Attributes.

17. But *the real Essence is that intrinsick Constitution of a thing which is the Ground or Support of all its Properties, and from which they naturally flow or result.* Now tho we are persuaded that the Modes of things must have

have such a Subject to exist in, (for they cannot subsist alone) yet we are absolutely ignorant of what it is. We conceive nothing more distinctly than the mention'd Properties of the Sun, and those whereby Plants, Fruits, Metals, *&c.* are known to us; but we have no manner of Notion of the several Foundations of these Properties, tho we are very sure in the mean time, that some such thing must necessarily be. The observable Qualities therefore of things is all that we understand by their Names, for which Reason they are call'd their *Nominal Essence.* Ch. 2.

18. It follows now very plainly, that *nothing can be said to be a Mystery, because we are ignorant of its real Essence, since it is not more knowable in one thing than in another, and is never conceiv'd or included in the Ideas we have of things, or the Names we give 'em.* I had not much insisted upon this Point, were it not for the so often repeated Sophistry of some that rather merit the Encomiums of great READERS than great REASONERS. When they would have the most palpable

Sect. 3. Absurdities and Contradictions go down with others, or make them place Religion in Words that signify nothing, or what they are not able to explain, then they wisely tell them, that they are ignorant of many things, especially the *Essence* of their own Souls; and that therefore they must not always deny what they cannot conceive. But this is not all; for when they would (instead of confuting them) make those pass for ridiculous or arrogant Pretenders, who maintain that *only intelligible and possible things are the Subject of Belief*, they industriously represent them as presuming to define the *Essence* of God with that of created Spirits. And after they have sufficiently aggravated this Presumption of their own coining, they conclude, that if the Contexture of the smallest Pebble is not to be accounted for, then they should not insist upon such rigorous Terms of Believing, but sometimes be content to submit their Reason to their Teachers, and the Determinations of the Church.

19. Who perceives not the Weakness and Slight of this Reasoning? We

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'e certainly know as much of the *)UL* as we do of any thing else, not more. We form the clearest onceptions of Thinking, Knowing, nagining, Willing, Hoping, Lov-g, and the like Operations of the ind. But we are Strangers to the *bject* wherein these Operations exist. ı are we to that upon which the oundness, Softness, Colour and aste of the Grape depend. There is thing more evident than the Modes Properties of *BODY*, as to be ex-nded, solid, divisible, smooth, rough, ft, hard, *&c.* But we know as lit-: of the internal Constitution, which the Support of these sensible Quali-s, as we do of that wherein the perations of the *SOUL* reside. ıd, as the great Man I just now ention'd observes, *we may as well deny : Existence of* Body, *because we have t an Idea of its real Essence, as call : Being of the* Soul *in question for the ne Reason.* The Idea of the *Soul* en is every whit as clear and distinct that of the *Body*; and had there en (as there is not) any Difference, e *Soul* must have carri'd the Advan-

Sect. 3. tage; because its Properties are more immediately known to us, and are the Light whereby we discover all things besides.

20. As for *GOD*, we comprehend nothing better than his Attributes. We know not, it's true, the Nature of that eternal *Subject* or *Essence* wherein Infinite Goodness, Love, Knowledg, Power and Wisdom co-exist; but we are not better acquainted with the *real Essence* of any of his Creatures. As by the Idea and Name of *GOD* we understand his known Attributes and Properties, so we understand those of all things else by theirs; and we conceive the one as clearly as we do the other. I remark'd in the Beginning of this Chapter, that we knew nothing of things, but such of their Properties as were *necessary* and *useful*. We may say the same of *God*; for every Act of our Religion is directed by the Consideration of some of his Attributes, without ever thinking of his *Essence*. Our Love to him is kindled by his Goodness, and our Thankfulness by his Mercy; our Obedience is regulated by his Justice; and our Hopes

Hopes are confirm'd by his Wisdom and Power. Ch. 2.

21. I think I may now warrantably conclude, that nothing is a *Mystery*, because we know not its *Essence*, since it appears that it is neither knowable in it self, nor ever thought of by us: So that the *Divine Being* himself cannot with more reason be accounted *mysterious* in this Respect than the most contemptible of his Creatures. Nor am I very much concern'd that these *Essences* escape my Knowledg: for I am fix'd in the Opinion, that *what Infinite Goodness has not been pleas'd to reveal to us, we are either sufficiently capable to discover our selves, or need not understand it at all.* I hope now it is very manifest that *Mysteries in Religion* are but ill argued from the pretended *Mysteries of Nature*; and that such as endeavour to support the former by the latter, have either a design to impose upon others, or that they have never themselves duely consider'd of this Matter.

## CHAP. III.

### *The Signification of the Word* MYSTERY *in the New Testament, and the Writings of the most antient Christians.*

22. HAving so dispatch'd these *adequate Ideas*, and, I know not what, *real Essences*, we come now to the main Point upon which the whole Controversy chiefly depends. For the Question being, *whether or no Christianity is mysterious*, it ought to be naturally decided by the *New Testament*, wherein the *Christian Faith* is originally contain'd. I heartily desire to put the Case upon this Issue, I appeal to this Tribunal: For did I not infinitely prefer the Truth I learn from these sacred Records to all other Considerations, I should never assert that *there are no Mysteries in Christianity*. The *Scriptures* have engag'd me in this Error, if it be one; and I will sooner be reputed Heterodox with these only on

on my side, than to pass for Orthodox with the whole World, and have them against me. Ch. 3.

23. Now by searching the *Scriptures* I find some of the Evangelick Doctrines call'd *Mysteries*, in a more general, or in a more particular Sense. They are more generally so call'd with respect to all Mankind: for being certain Matters of Fact only known to God, and lodg'd in his Decree, or such Events as were quite lost and forgot in the World, it was impossible for any Person, tho never so wise or learned, to discover them; for *the things of God knoweth none but the Spirit of God*, as none can find out the secret Thoughts of Man till he tells them himself. Such Revelations then of God in the *New Testament* are call'd *Mysteries*, not from any present Inconceiveableness or Obscurity, but with respect to what they were before this *Revelation*, as that is call'd our Task which we long since perform'd. 1 Cor. 2. 11.

24. If any should question this, let him hear the Apostle *Paul* declare for himself and his Fellow-Labourers in the Gospel; *We speak*, says he, *the Wisdom*

Sect. 3. Account which *Cebes* the *Theban* gives us of the Matter in his most excellent *Portraiture of humane Life*. He feigns * *Imposture* sitting in a Throne at the Gate of Life, in the Shape of a most beautiful Lady, holding a Cup in her Hand: She obligingly presents it to all that are on their Journey to this World, and these as civilly accept it; but the Draught proves *Ignorance* and *Error*, whence proceed all the Disorders and Misery of their Lives.

26. This Point was a great *Mystery* to these honest Philosophers, who had only Fancy to guide them, and could not pretend to Instructions from the *Mind of God*; but the thing is now no *Mystery* to us *that have the Mind of Christ*. We know that *Adam* the first Man became also the first Sinner, and Mortal; and that so the whole Race propagated from him could be naturally no better than he was: *By one Man Sin enter'd into the World, and Death by Sin.*

1 Cor. 2. 16.

Rom. 5. 12.

27. But

* Ὁρᾷς, εἶπ, ὦδε τὴν πύλην θεόνον τινὰ κείμενον—ἐφ' ἣ κάθηται γυνὴ πεπλασμένη τῷ τρόπῳ, καὶ πυθυνὴ φαινομένη, &c. Cebet. Tab. p. 11. Ed. Amst. 1689.

27. But some Doctrines of the Gospel are more particularly call'd *Mysteries*, because they were hid from God's peculiar People under the *Mosaick* Oeconomy; not that they knew nothing concerning them, for *the Law had a Shadow of good things to come*; but they were not clearly and fully reveal'd till the *New Testament* Times, being vail'd before by various Typical Representations, Ceremonies, and figurative Expressions. *Christ* tells his Disciples, *Many Prophets and Kings have desir'd to see those things which you see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them.* *Paul* says, *we use great PLAINNESS of Speech, and not as* Moses *who put a VAIL over his Face:* And then expresly adds, that *this VAIL is taken away in Christ*, which could not be truly affirm'd, were the things reveal'd still inconceiveable; for *I know no Difference between not hearing of a thing at all, and not comprehending it when you do.* In another Place *Paul* has these remarkable Words; *The Preaching of Jesus Christ according to the REVELATION*

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Heb. 10. 1.

Luke 10. 24.

2 Cor. 3. 12, 13.

Ver. 14.

Rom. 16. 25, 26.

*of*

Sect. 3. *of the MYSTERY which was kept secret since the World began; but now is made MANIFEST, and by the Scriptures of the Prophets, according to the Commandment of the everlasting God, MADE KNOWN to all Nations for the Obedience of Faith.*

28. These Passages alone sufficiently prove the Assertions contain'd in N° 6 and 7 of this Section, *viz.* First, *that the Mysteries of the Gospel were certain things in their own Nature intelligible enough, but call'd* Mysteries *by reason of the Vail under which they were formerly hid.* Secondly, that *under the Gospel this Vail is wholly remov'd.* From which, Thirdly, follows the promis'd Conclusion, that *such Doctrines cannot now properly deserve the Name of* Mysteries.

29. It is observable, that the hottest Sticklers for the *Fathers* do cite their Authority only where they think it makes for them, and slight or suppress it when not favourable to their Cause. Lest it should be maliciously insinuated, that I serve the *Holy Scriptures* after the same manner, I shall here transcribe all the Passages of the

*New*

*New Testament* where the word *Mystery* occurs, that a Man running may read with Conviction what I defend. The whole may be commodiously reduc'd to these Heads. First, *Mystery* is read for the *Gospel* or the *Christian* Religion in general, as it was a future Dispensation totally hid from the *Gentiles*, and but very imperfectly known to the *Jews*: Secondly, Some particular Doctrines occasionally reveal'd by the *Apostles* are said to be *manifested Mysteries*, that is, unfolded Secrets. And, Thirdly, *Mystery* is put for any thing vail'd under Parables or Enigmatical Forms of Speech. Of all these in Order.



30. *Mystery* is read for the *Gospel* or Christianity in general in the following Passages: *Rom.* 16. 25, 26. *The Preaching of Jesus Christ according to the* Revelation *of the MYSTERY which was kept secret since the World began; but now is made* manifest, *and by the Writings of the Prophets, according to the Commandment of the everlasting God,* made known *to all Nations for the Obedience of Faith.* Now, in what Sense could this *Mystery* be said

to

Sect. 3. to be reveal'd, this Secret to be made manifest, to be made known to all Nations by the preaching of the *Apostles*, if it remain'd still incomprehensible? A mighty Favour indeed! to bless the World with a parcel of unintelligible Notions or Expressions, when it was already overstock'd with the *Acroatick* Discourses of *Aristotle*, with the *Esoterick* Doctrines of *Pythagoras*, and the *Mysterious* Jargon of the other Sects of Philosophers; for they all made high Pretences to some rare and wonderful Secrets not communicable to every one of the Learned, and never to any of the Vulgar. By this means the obsequious Disciples apologiz'd for all that was found contradictory, incoherent, dubious, or incomprehensible in the Works of their several Masters. To any that complain'd of Inconsistency or Obscurity, they presently answer'd, O, Sir, the *Philosopher* said it, and you ought therefore to believe it: He knew his own Meaning well enough, tho he car'd not, it may be, that all others should do it too: So the Occasions of your Scruples, Sir, are only seeming, and not real. But the *Christian*

*stian Religion* has no need of such miserable Shifts and Artifices, there being nothing in it *above* or *contrary* to the strictest *Reason:* And such as are of another Mind may as well justify the idle Dreams of the *Philosophers*, the Impieties and Fables of the *Alcoran*, or any thing as well as *Christianity*. The second Passage is in 1 *Cor.* 2.7. the Words were but just now read, and need not here be repeated. The third Passage is in 1 *Cor.* 4. 1. *Let a Man so account of us as the Ministers of Christ, and the Stewards* or Dispensers *of the MYSTERIES of God*; that is, the Preachers of those Doctrines which God was pleased to reveal. The fourth Passage is in *Ephes.* 6. 9. *Praying—for me, that Utterance may be given unto me that I may open my Mouth boldly, to make known the MYSTERY of the Gospel.* Parallel to this is the fifth Passage in *Col.* 4. 3, 4. *Praying also for us, that God would open unto us a Door of Utterance to speak the MYSTERY of Christ—that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak.* The Clearness of these Words admits of no Comment. The sixth Passage is in *Col.* 2. 2. *That*

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Sect. 3. *their Hearts might be comforted being knit together in Love, and unto all the Riches of the full Assurance of Understanding, to the Knowledg of the MYSTERY of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.* Here is evidently meant the Revelation of the Gospel-State: for whatever right Conceptions the Jews might have of the *Father*, they had not that full Knowledg of *Christ* and his Doctrines, which are the inestimable Privileges we now enjoy. The seventh Passage is in 1 *Tim.* 3. 8, 9. *Likewise must the Deacons be grave, not double-tongu'd, not given to much Wine, nor greedy of filthy Lucre, holding the MYSTERY of the Faith in a pure Conscience*; that is, living to what they believe. The eighth and last Passage relating to this Head is in 1 *Tim.* 3. 16. *And without Controversy great is the MYSTERY of Godliness: God was manifest in the Flesh, justify'd in the Spirit, seen of Angels, preach'd unto the Gentiles, believ'd on in the World, receiv'd up into Glory.* I will not now insist upon the various Readings of these Words, nor critically determine which is spurious or genuine. All Parties (how

(how much soever they differ about their Sense) agree that the Gradations of the Verse are Gospel-Revelations; so that the *Mystery of Godliness* cannot be restrain'd to any one, but is common to them all: It refers not to the Nature of any of them in particular, but to the Revelation of 'em all in general. And it must be granted, without any Dispute, that the gracious Manifestation of *Christ* and his *Gospel* is not only to us wonderfully stupendous and surprizing, but that it was likewise a very great *Mystery* to all preceding the *New Testament Dispensation.* From these Passages it appears, that the *Gospel* and the following Expressions are synonimous, *viz.* The *Mystery of the Faith*, the *Mystery of God* and *Christ*, the *Mystery of Godliness*, and the *Mystery of the Gospel.* No Doctrine then of the *Gospel* is still a *Mystery* (for *the Apostles conceal'd nothing from us that was useful, and have acquainted us with the whole Counsel of God:*) but 'tis the *Gospel* it self that was heretofore indeed a *Mystery*, and cannot now after it is fully reveal'd, properly deserve that Appellation.

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Acts 20. 20, 27.

Sect. 3. 31. We design in the second place to shew, that *certain Matters occasionally reveal'd by the Apostles, were only Mysterious before that Revelation.* The *Jews*, who scarce allow'd other Nations to be Men, thought of nothing less than that the time should ever come wherein those Nations might be *reconcil'd to God*, and be made *Coheirs* and *Partakers* with them of the same Privileges. This was nevertheless resolv'd upon in the Divine Decree, and to the *Jews* was a *Mystery*, but ceases so to continue after the Revelation of it to *Paul*, who, in his Epistles, has openly declar'd it to all the World. The first Passage we shall alledg to that purpose is in *Eph.*3.1—6,9. *If you have heard of the Dispensation of the Grace of God which is given me to you-ward, how that by Revelation he made known unto me the MYSTERY (as I wrote before in few Words, whereby, when you read, you may understand my Knowledg in the MYSTERY of Christ). which in other Ages was not made known unto the Sons of Men, as 'tis now reveal'd unto us, his holy Apostles and Prophets, by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be Fellow-heirs,*

Rom.11.15.

*heirs, and of the same Body, and Partakers of his Promise in Christ by the Gospel— and to make all Men see what is the Fellowship of the MYSTERY, which from the Beginning of the World hath been hid in God.* The second Passage is in *Rom.* 11. 25. *For I would not, Brethren, that you should be ignorant of this MYSTERY, that Blindness in part is happen'd to* Israel *until the Fulness of the Gentiles be come in.* The third Passage is in *Col.* 1. 25, 26, 27.——*The Church, whereof I am made a Minister according to the Dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the Word of God, even the MYSTERY which hath been hid from Ages and Generations, but now is made manifest to his Saints: to whom God would make known what are the Riches of the Glory of this MYSTERY among the Gentiles.* The fourth Passage is in *Eph.* 1. 9, 10. *Having made known unto us the MYSTERY of his Will, according to his good Pleasure which he hath purpos'd in himself, that in the Dispensation of the Fulness of times, he might gather together into one all things in Christ.* These Places require no Explication, for the Sense of them all

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Sect. 3. *one be revealed.* These are all the Passages relating to the second Head.

32. *Mystery* is, Thirdly, put for any thing vail'd under Parables or Enigmatical Expressions in these parallel Places following. The first is in *Mat.* 13.10, 11. *The Disciples came and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in Parables? He answer'd and said unto them, Because it is given to you to know the MYSTERIES of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not given.* The second Passage is in *Mark* 4. 11. *And Jesus said to his Disciples, Unto you is given to know the MYSTERY of the Kingdom of God; but unto them that are without, all these things are done in Parables.* The same Words are repeated in *Luk.*8.10. And it is most evident from all of 'em, that those things which *Christ* spoke in Parables were not in themselves incomprehensible, but *mysterious* to them only to whom they were not unfolded, *that* (as it is there said) *hearing they might not understand.* It is now the most ordinary Practice in the World for such as would not be understood by every one, to agree upon a way of speaking peculiar to themselves.

selves. Nor is there any thing more easy than the Explication which *Christ* gave of these Parables at the Request of his Disciples. Ch. 3.

33. There are but two Passages only left, and *Mystery* in them has no reference to any thing in particular, but it is put for all secret things in its utmost Latitude or Acceptation. The first Place is in 1 *Cor.* 13. 2. *And tho I have the Gift of Prophecy, and understand all MYSTERIES and all Knowledg; and tho I have all Faith so that I could remove Mountains, and have no Charity, I am nothing.* The second, parallel to this, is in 1 *Cor.* 14. 2. *He that speaketh in an unknown Tongue, speaketh not unto Men but unto God; for no Man understandeth him, however in the Spirit he speaketh MYSTERIES*; that is, what is intelligible enough to him, are Secrets to such as understand not his Language.

34. Having so particularly alledg'd all the Passages where there is mention made of *Mysteries* in the *New Testament*, if any should wonder why I have omitted those in the *Revelation*, to such I reply, that the *Revelation* cannot

Sect. 3. cannot be properly look'd upon as a Part of the *Gospel*; for there are no new Doctrines deliver'd in it. Far from being a Rule of Faith or Manners, it is not as much as an Explanation of any Point in our Religion. The true Subject of that Book or *Vision* is a Prophetical History of the External State of the Church in its various and interchangeable Periods of Prosperity or Adversity. But that I may not fall under the least Suspicion of dealing unfairly, I shall subjoin the few Texts of the *Revelation* wherein the word *Mystery* is contain'd. The first is in *Rev.* 1. 20. *The MYSTERY of the seven Stars which thou saweſt in my right Hand, and the seven Golden Candlesticks:* Well, what is the *Mystery* or Secret of these Stars and Candlesticks? *The seven Stars are the Angels of the seven Churches; and the seven Candlesticks, which thou saweſt, are the seven Churches*, namely, of *Asia*. Another Passage is in *chap.* 17. 5, 7. *And upon her Forehead was a Name wtitten, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT*, &c. *And the Angel said,— I will tell thee the MYSTERY of the Woman.*

*Woman.* This he performs too in the following Verses, which you may consult. Nor is it undeserving our particular Notice, that *Mystery* is here made the distinguishing Mark of the false or *Antichristian* Church. *Mystery is a Name written on her Forehead*; that is, all her Religion consists in *Mystery*, she openly owns, she enjoins the Belief of *Mysteries*. And, no doubt on't, *as far as any Church allows of Mysteries, so far it is ANTICHRISTIAN*, and may with a great deal of Justice, tho little Honour, claim Kindred with the *scarlet Whore*. The only remaining Text is in *chap*, 10. 5, 6, 7. *And the Angel which I saw stand upon the Sea and upon the Earth, lifted up his Hand to Heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created Heaven and the things that therein are, and the Earth and the things that therein are, and the Sea and the things which are therein, that there should be Time no longer; but that in the Days of the Voice of the seventh Angel, when he shall begin to sound, the MYSTERY of God should be finish'd*: that is, that all the things figuratively deliver'd in this Prophecy concerning the *Gospel* (which

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[illegible] we have above [illegible] the [illegible] with the Author of God) [illegible] and [illegible] and [illegible]

[illegible] is all [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] Nor

36. Nor can a more favourable Opinion be harbour'd of those, who, instead of Submission to the Dictates of *Scripture* and *Reason*, straight have Recourse to such Persons as they specially follow or admire, and are ready to receive or refuse an Opinion, as these shall please to direct them. Pray, Doctor, says one of his Parishioners, what think you of such a Book? it seems to make things plain. Ah! dear Sir, answers the Doctor, it is a very bad Book; he's a dangerous Man that wrote it; he's for believing nothing but what agrees with his own purblind, proud and carnal *Reason*. *P.* Say you so, Doctor? then I'm resolv'd to read no more of it, for I heard you often *preach against Human Reason*; I'm sorry, truly, it should unhappily fall into my Hands, but I'll take care that none of our Family set their Eyes upon't. *D.* You'll do very well, Sir: besides, this Book is still worse than I told you, for it destroys a great many Points which we teach; and should this Doctrine take, (which God forbid) most of the good Books you have at home, and which cost you no less Pains



to

Sect. 3. to read than Money to purchase, would signify not a Straw, and serve only for Waste-Paper to put under Pies, or for other mean Uses. *P.* Bless me, good Doctor, I pray God forgive me reading such a vile Treatise; he's an abominable Man that could write it; but what? my Books worth nothing, say you? Dr. *H*'s Sermons, and Mr. *C*'s Discourses Waste-Paper? I'll never believe it, let who will say the contrary; Lord, why don't you excommunicate the Author and seize upon his Books? *D.* Ay, Sir, Time was,—but now it seems a Man may *believe according to his own Sense*, and not *as the Church directs*; there's *a Toleration* establish'd, you know. *P.* That *Toleration*, Doctor, will—. *D.* Whist, Sir, say no more of it; I am as much concern'd as you can be; but it is not safe nor expedient at this time of day to find Faults.

37. There are others far from this Simplicity, but as firmly resolv'd to stand fast by their old Systems. When they tell us of *Mysteries* we must believe them, and there's no Remedy for it. It is not the Force of Reasoning that

that makes these for *Mysteries*, but some by-Interest; and they'll be sure to applaud and defend any Author that writes in favour of their Cause, whether he supports it with *Reason* or not. But I'm not half so angry with these Men as with a sort of People that will not be at the Pains of examining any thing, lest they should become more clear-sighted or better inform'd, and so be tempted to take up a new Road. Such Persons must needs be very indifferent indeed, or they make Religion come into their Scutcheons. Ch. 3.

38. The mention of Scutcheons naturally puts me in mind of those who are little mov'd with any Reasons, when *the Judgment of the Primitive Church* comes in competition. The *Fathers* (as they love to speak) are to them the best Interpreters of the Words of *Scripture*; "And what "those honest Men, says a very in-"genious * Person, could not make "good themselves by sufficient Rea-"sons, is now prov'd by their sole "Authority. If the Fathers foresaw "this

* M. de Fontenelle, dans son *Histoire des Oracles*.

Sect. 3. "this, adds the same Author, they "were not to be blam'd for sparing "themselves the Labour of reasoning "more exactly than we find they "commonly did. That Truth and Falshood should be determin'd by a Majority of Voices, or certain Periods of Time, seems to me to be the most ridiculous of all Follies.

39. But if *Antiquity* can in good earnest add any worth to an Opinion, I think I need not fear to stand to its Decision: "For if we consider the "Duration of the World, (says another celebrated * Writer) as we do "that of Man's Life, consisting of "Infancy, Youth, Manhood, and old "Age; then certainly such as liv'd "before us were the Children or the "Youth, and we are the true Antients "of the World. And if Experience "(continues he) be the most considerable Advantage which grown "Persons have over the younger sort, "then, questionless, the Experience "of such as come last into the World "must

* Monsieur Perrault dans ses *Parallelles des Anciens & des Modernes.*

"must be incomparably greater than Ch. 3.
"of those that were born long before
"them: for the last Comers enjoy not
"only all the Stock of their Predeces-
"sors, but to it have likewise added
"their own Observations. These
Thoughts are no less ingenious than
they are just and solid. But if *Antiquity* be understood in the vulgar
Sense, I have no Reason to despair
however; for my Assertion too will
become antient to Posterity, and so be
in a condition to support it self by
this commodious Privilege of Prescription.

40. Yet seeing I am not likely to
live till that time, it cannot be amiss
to make it appear that these same *Fathers*, who have the good luck to be
at once both the Young and the Old of
the World, are on my side. 'Tis not
out of any Deference to their Judgments, I confess, that I take these
Pains. I have freely declar'd what
Value I set upon their Authority in the
Beginning of this Book: but my Design is to shew the Disingenuity of
those, who pretending the highest Veneration for the Writings of the *Fa-*

Sect. 3. *thers*, never fail to decline their Sentence when it sutes not with their Humour or Interest.

41. *Clemens Alexandrinus* has every where the same Notion of *Mystery* that I have, that the *Gentiles* had, and which I have prov'd to be that of the *Gospel*. In the 5*th* Book of his *Stromatas*, which merits the Perusal of all that are curious to understand the Nature of the *Jewish* and Heathen *Mysteries*; in that Book, I say, he puts the Matter out of all Doubt, and quotes several of those Texts of Scripture, which I have already alledg'd to this purpose. Nay he tells us, that the *Christian Discipline was call'd* * *Illumination, because it brought hidden things to light, the Master (CHRIST) alone removing the Cover of the Ark*, that is, the *Mosaick* Vail. He adds in expres Words, † that those things which were

* Διὰ τοῦτο φωτισμὸς ἡ μαθητεία κέκληται, ἡ τὰ κεκρυμμένα φανερώσασα, ἀποκαλυπτομένου μόνου τοῦ Δεσπότου τὸ πῶμα τῆς κιβωτοῦ. Pag. 578. edit. Col. 1688.

† Ἀλλὰ τοῦ τὰ μυούμενα τὰ ἀπόκρυφα ἄχρι τοῦ Ἀγγέλου, καὶ τὸν ἀνοῖξαι παρεδόθη τὰ ἐν τῇ κιβωτῷ παρελόμενον ἀποκεκαλυμμένα δὲ ἐν τῇ πλαγίᾳ Διαθήκῃ, ἐν τοῖς ἱερατικοῖς τοῖς ἀγίοις. Idem ibid. pag. 576.

ere mysterious and obscure in the Ch. 3.
ld Testament are made plain in the
ew.

42. Every one knows how the Pri-
itive *Christians*, in a ridiculous imita-
on of the Jews, turn'd all the Scrip-
re into Allegory; accommodating the
operties of those Animals mention'd
the *Old Testament* to Events that
ppened under the *New*. They took
e same Liberty principally with
len, where they could discover
e least Resemblance between their
ames, Actions, or State of Life;
d carry'd this Fancy at length to
umbers, Letters, Places, and what
t. That which in the *Old Testament*
erefore did, according to them, re-
esent any thing in the *New*, they
ll'd the *Type* or *Mystery* of it. Thus
*TYPE*, *SYMBOL*, *PARABLE*,
*SHADOW*, *FIGURE*, *SIGN*
d *MYSTERY*, signify all the same
ing in *Justin Martyr*. This Father
firms in his Dialogue with *Tryphon*
e *Jew*, that the Name of *Joshua*
as a *Mystery* representing the Name
*sus*; and that the holding up of *Mo-* Exod. 17.
11.

Sect. 3. *ses*'s Hands during the Battel with the *Amalekites* in *Rephidim*, was a *Type* or *Mystery* of *Christ's Cross*, whereby he overcame Death, as the *Israëlites* there did their Enemies: and then he adds the following Remark; * *This is to be consider'd*, says he, *concerning those two holy Men and Prophets of God, that neither of them was able in his single Person to carry both MYSTERIES, I mean the Type of his Cross, and that of being call'd by his Name.* In the same Dialogue he calls the Predictions of the Prophets † *SYMBOLS, PARABLES* and *MYSTERIES*, explain'd by the succeeding Prophets.

43. When *Tertullian* in his Apology justifies the Christians from those inhu-

* Ἦν δὲ καὶ τοῦτο ἐπ' ἀμφοτέρων τῶν ἁγίων ἀνδρῶν ἐκείνων καὶ προφητῶν τοῦ θεοῦ, νοῆσαι γεγενημένον ὅτι ἀμφότερα τὰ μυστήρια εἰς αὐτῶν βαστάσαι οὐκ ἦν δυνατὸς λέγω δὲ τὸν τύπον τοῦ σταυροῦ, καὶ τὸν τύπον τῆς ὀνόματος ὁπικλήσεως. Pag. 338. edit. Col. 1686.

† Εἰ μή τι τοῦτο οὐκ ὁπίσωθε, ὦ φίλοι, ὅτι πολλοὺς λόγους τοῦς ἀπαγγελλομένους καὶ ἐν παραβολαις ἢ μυστηρίοις ἢ ἐν συμβόλοις λόγων λελεγμένους, οἱ μετ' ἐκείνους τοὺς εἰπόντας καὶ πεφήκαντας γενόμενοι προφῆται ἐξηγήσαντο. Pag. 294.

inhumane Practices whereof their E- Ch. 3.
nemies most unjustly accus'd 'em, he
cries, * 'We are beset, we are disco-
'ver'd every day; —— But if we
'keep always hid, how are those
'things known which we are said to
'commit? Nay, who could make
'them known? Such as are guilty!
'Not so, surely: for all *Mysteries*
'are of Course under an Oath of Se-
'crecy. The *Samothracian*, the *Eleu-*
'*sinian Mysteries* are conceal'd; how
'much rather such as being discover'd
'would now provoke the Justice of
'Men, and might expect to meet
'with that of God hereafter? They
are secret Practices, you see, and not
incomprehensible Doctrines which this
Father counted *Mysteries*.

44. *Origen* makes the Encampments
of the *Israelites* in their Journey to the



* Quotidiè obsidemur, quotidiè prodimur. — Si semper latemus, quando proditum est quod admittimus? Immo à quibus prodi potuit? Ab ipsis reis! Non utique; cùm vel ex forma omnibus Mysteriis silentii fides debeatur, Samothracia & Eleusinia reticentur; quanto magis talia quæ prodita interim etiam Humanam animadversionem provocabunt, dum Divina servatur? *Pag.* 8. *edit. Paris.* 1675.

Sect. 3. Promis'd Land to be * *Symbols* or *Mysteries* describing the way to such as shall travel towards Heaven, or heavenly things. I need not add what he says of the Writings of the *Prophets*, of the Vision of *Ezekiel*, or the *Apocalypse* in particular: for he is universally confess'd to have brought this Mystick or Allegorical Method of interpreting Scripture to its Perfection, and to have furnish'd Matter to all that trod the same Path after him; an Honour, in my Opinion, not to be envy'd him. But he was so far from thinking any Doctrine of our Religion a *Mystery* in the present Sense of the Word, that he expresly affirms them † *to agree all with* COMMON NOTIONS, and *to commend themselves to the Assent of every well-dispos'd Hearer.*

45. The

* Εἰ δὲ δύναται διὰ συμβόλων καὶ τὴν ὁδὸν δεδηλωμένην τῶν βουλομένων ὅδε τὰ θεῖα μανθάνειν ἀναγνώστου τοῦ βεβηγεγραμμένης Ἀεριδμᾶς Μωϋσέως, καὶ ζητήσατο τὸν ἀνάμενον [αὐτὸν] μυσταγωγῆσαι ὅτι τὰ τῆς παρεμβολῶν τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ ἀνεγεγραμμένα. Lib. 6. contra Cels. pag. 291. edit. Cantab. 1677.

† Ὅρα δὲ οἱ μὴ τὰ τῆς πίστεως ἡμῶν ταῖς ΚΟΙΝΑΙΣ ΕΝΝΟΙΑΙΣ ἀρχῆθεν συναγορεύοντα, μετατίθησι τὸς ἐυγνώμονας ἀκούοντας τῶν λεγομένων. Lib. 3. contra Cels. pag. 135.

45. The other *Fathers* of the three first Centuries have exactly the same Notions of *Mystery*: And should they in this Matter happen to contradict in one Place what they establish'd in another, (as they ordinarily do in most things) it would only serve *to exclude them from being a true Rule to others that were none to themselves.* But what is no small Prejudice in our Favour, seeing we have to do with Men so apt to forget, they keep very constant to this Point: so that I may justly hope by this time the Cause of *Incomprehensible and Inconceivable Mysteries in Religion* should be readily given up by all that sincerely respect *FATHERS, SCRIPTURE, or REASON.* Ch. 3.

## CHAP. IV.

### Objections *brought from particular Texts of* SCRIPTURE, *and from the Nature of* FAITH *answer'd.*

46. SOME Men are so fond of *Mysteries*, and it seems they find their Account in it, that they are ready to hazard any thing sooner than part with them. In the mean time, whether they know it or not, they lay nothing less than their Religion at stake by this Conduct; for it is an ugly Sign when People profess that what they believe is above the Examination of Reason, and will suffer it by no means to come into question: *It argues in themselves a Distrust of their Cause; and others conclude, that what dares not abide the Trial of Reason, must needs it self be unreasonable at Bottom.*

47. Notwithstanding these Consequences are so obvious, they harden them-

themselves against them, and are not Ch. 4.
ashamed to bring even *Scripture* to countenance their Assertion. You shall hear nothing more frequently in their Mouths than these Words of the Apostle, *Beware lest any Man spoil* Col. 2. 8.
*you by* PHILOSOPHY *and vain Deceit, after the Tradition of Men, after the Rudiments of the World, and not after Christ.* Ridiculous! as if Reason and Truth were Vanity and Craft! By *Philosophy* is not here understood *sound Reason*, (as all Interpreters agree) but the Systems of *Plato*, of *Aristotle*, of *Epicurus*, of the *Academicks*, &c. many of whose Principles are directly repugnant to common Sense and good Morals. *Sophistry* was never more in vogue than in the Days of *Paul*; and several out of these Sects imbracing *Christianity*, found the way to mix with it their old Opinions, which they were loth to quit for good and all. The Apostle therefore had weighty grounds to warn his Converts not to confound the Inventions of Men with the Doctrine of God. It appears nevertheless that this good Advice was to little Purpose, for you'll find

Sect. 3. find the grossest Mistakes and Whimsies of the *Fathers* to have been occasion'd by the several Systems of *Philosophy* they read before their Conversion, and which they afterwards foolishly endeavour'd to reconcile with *Christianity*, to the entire Ruine almost of the latter, as we shall shew in the following Chapter.

48. But as no particular *Hypothesis* whatsoever has a Right to set up for a Standard of Reason to all Mankind, much less may *vain Philosophy* or *Sophistry* claim this Privilege: and so far am I from aiming at any such thing, that it is the very Practice I oppose in this Book. When some have advanc'd the Metaphysical Nonsense of doting *Philosophers* into Articles of Faith, they raise a loud Clamour against *Reason*, before whose Evidence and Light their empty Shadows must disappear. For as in *Philosophy* so in *Religion* every Sect has its peculiar Extravagancies, and the *INCOMPREHENSIBLE MYSTERIES* of the latter do perfectly answer the *OCCULT QUALITIES* of the former. They were both calculated at first

first for the same Ends, *viz. to stop the Mouths of such as demand a Reason where none can be given, and to keep as many in Ignorance as Interest shall think convenient.* But God forbid that I should impute the like nefarious Designs to all that contend for *Mysteries* now, Thousands whereof I know to be the best meaning Men in the Universe. This *sophistical* or *corrupt Philosophy* is elsewhere in the *New Testament* stil'd the *Wisdom of this World*, to which the *Greeks* were as much bigotted, as the *Jews* were infatuated with a Fancy that nothing could be true but what was miraculously prov'd so: *The Jews require a Sign, and the Greeks seek after Wisdom.* But this boasted Wisdom was then *Foolishness with God*, and so it is now with considering Men.

Ch. 4.

1 Cor. 3. 19.

1 Cor. 1. 22.

49. A Passage out of the Epistle to the *Romans* is cited likewise to prove Humane *Reason* not a capable Judg of what is divinely reveal'd. The Words are, *The Carnal Mind is Enmity against God; for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be.* But if these Words be spoken of *Reason*, there can be nothing more false; because *Reason* do's

Rom. 8. 7.

Sect. 3. do's and ought to subject it self to the Divine Law: yet this Submission argues no Imperfection in *Reason*, as our Obedience to just Laws cannot be said to destroy our Liberty. *Reason* must first understand the Law of God, and then comply with it; for a Man can no more deserve Punishment for not observing such Laws as are unintelligible, than for not performing what was never enjoin'd him. The *carnal Mind* then in this Place is not *Reason*, but the carnal Desires of lewd and wicked Men; whose Practices, as they are contrary to the reveal'd Law of God, so they are to that of sound *Reason* too.

50. What has been discours'd of pretended Wisdom and sensual Minds, may be easily appli'd to another Passage where it is said, that *the Weapons of our Warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong Holds, casting down Imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth it self against the Knowledg of God, and bringing into Captivity every Thought to the Obedience of Christ.* It is plain from the Words as well as the Scope of the whole,

2 Cor. 10. 4, 5.

whole, that these are the Thoughts and Imaginations of foolish and profane Men, and should be captivated or reform'd by *Reason* as well as *Scripture*; as, in effect, they often are: for such Persons not ordinarily allowing of Argument from *Scripture*, are first perswaded by *Reason*, and after that they receive the *Scripture*. But can *Reason* cast down or destroy it self? No; but it reduces those vain and impious Sophisms which borrow its Name to cover or authorize the Disorders they occasion. Ch. 4.

51. It would be extremely tedious to go one by one over all the Texts which ignorant or perverse Men alledg against that Use of Reason in Religion which I particularly establish. Any single Passage to my purpose should, one would think, give sufficient Satisfaction to all *Christian* Lovers of Truth: for the Word of God must be every where uniform and self-consistent. But I have quoted several in the second Chapter of the second Section, to speak nothing of what I perform'd in the foregoing Chapter of the present Section. Yet

because

Sect. 3. because this Reasoning might be retorted, and to leave no plausible Pretences to Cavillers or Deceivers, I have punctually answer'd the strongest Objections I have observ'd in the most celebrated Pieces of *Divinity*; I say *which I have observ'd*, for I should read the *Gospel* a Million of Times over before the Vulgar Notion of *Mystery* could ever enter into my Head, or any Passage in that Book could suggest to me that the Sense of it was above Reason or Enquiry. Nor do I find my self yet inclin'd to envy those who entertain other Thoughts of it, when all the while they openly acknowledg it to be a Divine Revelation. But seeing the most material Difficulty made to me by a Friend, is, that my Opinion destroys the Nature of *FAITH*, I shall with all the Brevity I can deliver my Sentiments concerning this Subject.

52. I will spend no time upon the ordinary Divisions of *Faith* into Historical, Temporary, or Justifying, Lively or Dead, Weak or Strong, because most of these are not so much *Faith* it self, as different Effects thereof.

of. The word imports *Belief* or *Persuasion*, as when we give Credit to any thing which is told us by God or Man; whence *Faith* is properly divided into *Human* and *Divine*. Again, *Divine Faith* is either when God speaks to us immediately himself, or when we acquiesce in the Words or Writings of those to whom we believe he has spoken. All *Faith* now in the World is of this last sort, and by consequence entirely built upon *Ratiocination*. For we must first be convinc'd that those Writings are theirs whose Names they bear, we then examine the outward State and Actions of those Persons, and lastly understand what is contain'd in their Works; otherwise we cannot determine whether they be worthy of God or not, much less firmly believe them. 

53. To be confident of any thing without conceiving it, is no real *Faith* or Persuasion, but a rash Presumption, and an obstinate Prejudice, rather becoming Enthusiasts or Impostors than the taught of God, who has no Interest to delude his Creatures, nor wants Ability to inform them rightly. I prov'd

Sect. 3. prov'd before, (*Sect* 2. *Chap.* 2.) that the Difference between *Human* and *Divine Revelations* did not consist in degrees of Perspicuity, but in Certitude. So many Circumstances frequently concur in History as render it equal to Intuition: Thus I can as soon deny my own Being as the Murder of *Cicero*, or the Story of *William the Conqueror*; yet this happens only sometimes: But God speaks always Truth and Certainty.

54. Now since by *Revelation* Men are not endu'd with any new Faculties, it follows that God should lose his end in speaking to them, if what he said did not agree with their common Notions. Could that Person justly value himself upon being wiser than his Neighbours, who having infallible Assurance that something call'd *Blictri* had a Being in Nature, in the mean time knew not what this *Blictri* was? And seeing the Case stands really thus, all *Faith* or Perswasion must necessarily consist of two Parts, *Knowledg* and *Assent*. 'Tis the last indeed that constitutes the formal Act of *Faith*, but not without the Evidence of the first: And this

this is the true Account we have of it all over the *New Testament*. There we read that *without Faith it is impossible to please God*; but *he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* So the firm Perswasion of a pious Man that his Requests will be granted, is grounded upon his knowledg of the Being, Goodness, and Power of God. It was reckon'd no Crime not to believe in *Christ* before he was reveal'd; *for how could they believe in him of whom they had not heard?* But with what better Reason could any be condemn'd for not believing what he said, if they might not understand it? for, as far as I can see, these Cases are parallel. *Faith* is likewise said *to come by hearing*; but without Understanding 'tis plain this Hearing would signify nothing, Words and their Ideas being reciprocal in all Languages.

Ch. 4.

Heb. 11. 6.

Rom. 10. 14.

Ver. 17.

55. The Author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews* do's not define *FAITH* a Prejudice, Opinion, or Conjecture, but Conviction or Demonstration: *Faith*, says he, *is the confident Expectation of things hop'd for, and the Demonstration*

Heb. 11. 1.

Sect. 3. *of things not seen.* These last Words, *things not seen*, signify not (as some would have it) things incomprehensible or unintelligible, but past or future Matters of Fact, as the Creation of the World, and the Resurrection of the Dead, or the Belief of some things invisible to our corporeal Eyes, tho intelligible enough to the Eyes of our Understanding. This appears by all the Examples subjoin'd to that Definition. Besides, there can be proporly no *Faith* of things seen or present, for then 'tis Self-evidence, and not Ratiocination: *Hope that is seen is not Hope, for what a Man sees why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for what we see not, then do we with Patience wait for it.* So the Patriarchs *receiv'd not the Promises, but saw them afar off, and were perswaded of them.*

Rom. 8. 24, 25.

Heb. 11. 13.

56. Without conceiving *Faith* after this manner, how could *Christ* be term'd *the Light of the World, the Light of the Gentiles?* How could Believers be said *to have the Spirit of Wisdom,* and to have *the Eyes of their Hearts enlightn'd?* For the Light of the Heart or Understanding is the Knowledg of things;

Joh. 8. 12. & 9. 5. Act. 13. 47.

Eph. 1. 17. Ver. 18.

things; and as this Knowledg is more or less, so the Mind is proportionably illuminated. *Be not unwise*, says the Apostle, *but understanding what the Will of the Lord is.* And in another place he exhorts Men never to act in dubious Matters till they are *fully perswaded in their own Minds* Ch. 4. Eph. 5. 17. Rom. 14. 5.

57. But to all this will be objected that remarkable Instance of *Abraham*'s Faith, who was ready to sacrifice his only Son, notwithstanding God had promis'd that Kings should descend of him, and his Seed be numerous as the Stars of Heaven, or the Sand upon the Sea shore. Did *Abraham* blindly obey then, without reconciling the apparent Contradiction between God's present Command and his former Promises? Far from it: for 'tis expressly recorded, that *he that had receiv'd the Promises offer'd up his only begotten, of whom it was said, that in* Isaac *shall thy Seed be bless'd:* * *Reasoning that God was able to raise him again from the Dead, from whence also he had receiv'd him in a Figure.* He rightly concluded that Heb. 11. 17, 18, 19.



* So Λογισάμενος should be translated.

Sect. 3. God was able to revive *Isaac* by a Miracle, as he was miraculously born, accordi[illegible] to another Promise, after his Parents were past having Children, and so *as good as dead:* therefore it is elsewhere written of *Abraham*, that *being not weak in Faith, he consider'd not his own Body now dead, when he was about an hundred Years old, neither yet the Deadness of* Sarah's *Womb; nor stagger'd at God's Promise through Unbelief; but being strong in Faith he gave Glory to God, and was fully perswaded that what he had promis'd he was able also to perform.*

Ver. 12.

Rom. 4. 19,20,21.

58. Now what is there in all this, but very strict Reasoning from Experience, from the Possibility of the thing, and from the Power, Justice, and Immutability of him that promis'd it? Nor can any Man shew me in all the *New Testament* another Signification of *Faith* but a most firm Perswasion built upon substantial Reasons. In this Sense all *Christianity* is not seldom stil'd *the Faith*; as now we usually say that we are of this or that PERSWASION, meaning the Profession of some Religion. But surely nothing

nothing can better *root* and *establish* our Perswasion than a thorow Examination and Trial of what we believe; whereas the Weakness and Instability of our *Faith* proceed from want of sufficient Reasons for it, whereupon Incredulity always follows; then fails Obedience, which is the constant Sign and Fruit of genuine *Faith*; and hence spring all the Irregularities of Mens Lives. *He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his Commandments, is a Liar*—For *he that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk as he walk'd.* Nor can it possibly fall out otherwise, but that he who believes without understanding must *be tost and carri'd about with every Wind of Doctrine, by the Slight and Cunning of Men ready to deceive.*

Ch. 4.

1 John 2. 4, 6.

Eph. 4. 14.

59. Tho the Authority of the New Testament be so clear in this Matter, yet I shall further confirm it by the following Observations. First, *if Faith were not a Perswasion resulting from the previous Knowledg and Comprehension of the thing believ'd, there could be no Degrees nor Differences in it*; for these are evident Tokens that Men know more

Sect. 3. or less of a thing, as they have Desires or Opportunities to learn it. But that there are such Degrees appears by the *Scripture*, where those that have only an imperfect and perfunctory Knowledg of Religion are compar'd
1 Cor. 3. 2. to *Infants* who feed only upon Milk; but they who arrive at a more full and accurate Certainty are liken'd to
Heb. 5. 12, 13, 14. *grown Men* that can digest stronger Food.

60. My next Observation is, That *the Subject of Faith must be intelligible to all, since the Belief thereof is commanded under no less a Penalty than*
Mark 16. 16. *Damnation*: He that believeth not, shall be damn'd. But shall any be damn'd for the Non-performance of Impossibilities? Obligations to believe do therefore suppose a Possibility to understand. I shew'd before that *Contradiction* and *Nothing* were convertible Terms; and I may now say as much of *Mystery* in the Theological Sense: for, to speak freely, *Contradiction* and *Mystery* are but two emphatick ways of saying Nothing. *Contradiction* expresses Nothing by a couple of Ideas that destroy one another, and

and *Mystery* expresses Nothing by Words that have no Ideas at all. Ch. 4.

61. The third Observation shall be, That *if any part of Scripture were unintelligible, it could never be rightly translated*, except the Sound of the Words, and not their Sense, be look'd upon as the Revelation of God. Terms can by no means be understood, unless the things they denote be understood also. I may well understand Things without their Names, but never Names without knowing their Subjects. And, in good earnest, to what sort of Assurance can any Man pretend, that he has made a right Version of what he openly professes not to conceive? It cannot be imagin'd how much the Notion of *Mystery* contributes to the Obscurity of *Scripture* in most Translations. When an able Linguist meets with a difficult Passage, he presently takes it for a *Mystery*, and concludes it is to no purpose to be at more Pains about what is in it self inexplicable. But an uncapable Translator lays his own blundering Nonsense, and all the *mysterious* Fruits of his Ignorance to God Almighty's Charge. These are

Sect. 3. the Wretches who plentifully furnish the *Atheistical* and *Profane* with all the Matter of their Objections against *Scripture*. But I hope in Time we may see a Remedy to these Disorders.

62. The fourth Observation is, That *except Faith signifies an intelligible Persuasion, we cannot give others a Reason of our Hope*, as *Peter* directs us. To say that what we believe is the Word of God, will be to no end, except we prove it to be so by Reason; and I need not add, that if we may not examine and understand our *Faith*, every Man will be oblig'd implicitely to continue of that Religion wherein he is first educated. Suppose a *Siamese* * *Talapoin* should tell a *Christian* Preacher that † *Sommonocodom* forbad the Goodness of his Religion to be tri'd by the Light of Reason; how could the *Christian* confute him, if he likewise should maintain that certain Points of Christianity were above Reason? The Question would not be then, whe-

1 Pet. 3. 15.

* *Or Priest.*
† *The God of the Siameses.*

whether *Mysteries* might be allow'd in the true Religion, but who had more Right to institute them, *Christ* or *Sommonocodom?* Ch. 4.

63. My last Observation shall be, That *either the Apostles could not write more intelligibly of the reputed Mysteries, or they would not.* If they would not, then 'tis no longer our Fault if we neither understand nor believe them, for *nothing* cannot be the Object of Belief: And if they could not write more clearly themselves (which our Adversaries will not suppose) they were so much the less to expect Credit from others.

64. But 'tis affirm'd, that GOD *has a Right to require the Assent of his Creatures to what they cannot comprehend:* and questionless, he may command whatever is just and reasonable, for to act Tyrannically do's only become the *Devil.* But I demand to what end should God require us to believe what we cannot understand? *To exercise,* some say, *our Diligence.* But this at first sight looks ridiculous, as if the plain Duties of the *Gospel,* and our necessary Occupations, were not sufficient

to

Sect. 3. to employ all our time. But how exercise our Diligence? Is it possible for us to understand those *Mysteries* at last, or not? If it be, then all I contend for is gain'd; for I never pretended that the *Gospel* could be understood without due Pains and Application, no more than any other Book. But if it be impossible after all to understand them, this is such a piece of Folly and Impertinence as no sober Man would be guilty of, to puzzle Peoples Heads with what they could never conceive, to exhort to, and command the Study of them; and all this to keep 'em from Idleness, when they can scarce find leisure enough for what is on all hands granted to be intelligible.

65. Others say that *GOD has enjoin'd the belief of MYSTERIES to make us more humble.* But how? By letting us see the small Extent of our Knowledg. But this extraordinary Method is quite needless, for Experience acquaints us with that every day; and I have spent a whole Chapter in the second Section of this Book, to prove that we have not an adequate Idea of all the Properties, and no Idea of

of the real Essence of any Substance in the World. It had been a much better Answer, that God would thus abridg our Speculations, to gain us the more time for the practice of what we understand. But many *cover a Multitude of Sins* by their Noise and Heat on the behalf of such foolish, and unprofitable Speculations. Ch. 4.

66. From all these Observations, and what went before, it evidently follows that *Faith* is so far from being an implicite Assent to any thing above Reason, that this Notion directly contradicts the Ends of Religion, the Nature of Man, and the Goodness and Wisdom of God. But at this rate, some will be apt to say, *Faith* is no longer *Faith* but *Knowledg*. I answer, that if *Knowledg* be taken for a present and immediate View of things, I have no where affirm'd any thing like it, but the contrary in many Places. But if by *Knowledg* be meant understanding what is believ'd, then I stand by it that *Faith* is *Knowledg*: I have all along maintain'd it, and the very Words are promiscuously us'd for one another in the *Gospel*. *We know*, i. e. we

Sect. 3. we believe, *that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the World. I know, and am perswaded by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of it self. You know that your Labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

Joh. 4. 42. Rom. 14. 14. 1 Cor. 15. 58.

67. Others will say that this Notion of *Faith* makes *Revelation* useless. But, pray, how so? for the Question is not, whether we could discover all the Objects of our *Faith* by Ratiocination: I have prov'd on the contrary, that no Matter of Fact can be known without *Revelation*. But I assert, that what is once reveal'd we must as well understand as any other Matter in the World, *Revelation* being only of use to inform us whilst the Evidence of its Subject perswades us. Then, reply they, *Reason* is of more Dignity than *Revelation*. I answer, Just as much as a *Greek Grammar* is superiour to the *New Testament*; for we make use of *Grammar* to understand the Language, and of *Reason* to comprehend the Sense of that Book. But in a word, I see no need of Comparisons in this Case, for *Reason* is not less from God than *Revelation*; 'tis the Candle, the

the Guide, the Judg he has lodg'd within every Man that cometh into this World. Ch. 4.

68. Lastly, It may be objected, That the Poor and Illiterate cannot have such a *Faith* as I maintain. Truly if this can be made out, it may pass for a greater *Mystery* than any System of *Divinity* in *Christendom* can afford: for what can seem more strange and wonderful, than that the common People will sooner believe what is unintelligible, incomprehensible, and above their Reasons, than what is easy, plain, and suted to their Capacities? But the Vulgar are more oblig'd to *Christ*, who had a better Opinion of them than these Men; for he preach'd his *Gospel* to them in a special manner; and they, on the other hand, *heard him gladly*; because, no doubt, they understood his Instructions better than the *mysterious* Lectures of their *Priests* and *Scribes*. The uncorrupted Doctrines of *Christianity* are not above their Reach or Comprehension, but the Gibberish of your *Divinity Schools* they understand not. It is to them *the Language of the Beast*, and is inconsistent Mark 12. 37.

Sect. 3. sistent with their Condition in his World, when their very Teachers must serve above an Apprenticeship to master it, before they begin the Study of the *Bible*. How slowly must the *Gospel* have mov'd at the Beginning, if such as were call'd to preach it had been oblig'd to qualify themselves after this manner! and no wonder that it has such little Effects now upon Mens Lives, after it is so miserably deform'd and almost ruin'd by those unintelligible and extravagant Terms, Notions, and Rites of *Pagan* or *Jewish* Original.

69. Thus I have distinctly answer'd the several Objections made to me, and I shall add no more on this Subject of *Faith*, when I have consider'd a Passage in the first Epistle to *Peter*, where it is written, that the *Angels* desire to see into certain things; yet those things are not inconceivable *Mysteries*, but the Coming of *Christ* and *the Gospel-state of Salvation*, which were divinely foretold to the *Jews*, and concerning which they carefully reason'd then; tho, now those things are fulfill'd, we are not permitted that Liber-

ty.

ty. *Receiving the end of your Faith*, Ch. 4.
says Peter, *the Salvation of your Souls*; *of which Salvation the Prophets have enquir'd and diligently search'd, who prophesi'd of the Grace that should come unto you; searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ, which was in them did signify, when it testify'd before-hand the Sufferings of Christ, and the Glory that should follow: Unto whom it was reveal'd, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preach'd unto you by the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven, which things the Angels desire to look into.* Now here's no great *Mystery* in all this, that the *Angels*, who being finite Creatures, can know nothing but by Experience, Ratiocination, or Revelation, should be as curious as the *Jews*, to penetrate into those future Events of such Importance, and so very obscurely revealed.

1 Pet. 1. 9—12.

CHAP.

## CHAP. V.

### Objections, *drawn from the Consideration of MIRACLES, answer'd.*

70. WHen all other shifts prove ineffectual, the Partizans of *MYSTERY* fly to *MIRACLES* as their last Refuge: but this is too weak a Place to make any long Resistance, and we doubt not of beating 'em quickly thence with Ease and Safety. But seeing, for the most part, the State of this Controversy is never distinctly laid, I shall first endeavour to give a clear Notion of the Nature of *Miracles*, and then leave it to be consider'd whether I have much reason to apprehend any Danger from this Objection. *A MIRACLE* then *is some action exceeding all humane Power, and which the Laws of NATURE cannot perform by their ordinary Operations.*

71. Now

71. Now whatever is contrary to *Reason* can be no *Miracle*, for it has been sufficiently prov'd already, that *Contradiction* is only another word for *Impossible* or *Nothing*. The *miraculous* Action therefore must be some thing in it self intelligible and possible, tho the manner of doing it be extraordinary. So for a Man to walk safe in the midst of Fire is conceivable, and possible too, should any thing capable of repelling the Heat and Flames surround him: but when such a Security is not provided by Art or Chance, but is the immediate Effect of supernatural Power, then it makes a *Miracle*. An able *Physician* do's sometimes restore Sight to the Blind; and a Hand or Foot must dry up, when the Circulation of the Blood and Humours is too much excluded from it: but if without the ordinary Time and Applications those Members be cur'd in an Instant, at the Command or Desire of any Person, such an Action is truly *miraculous*, as well as the sudden Restoration of a sick Body to Health, which Art or Nature must spend a great deal of Time and Pains upon.

Sect. 3. 72. No *Miracle* then is contrary to Reason, for the Action must be intelligible, and the Performance of it appear most easy to the Author of *Nature*, who may command all its Principles at his Pleasure. Therefore all those *Miracles* are fictitious, wherein there occur any Contradictions, as that *Christ* was born without opening any Passage out of the *Virgin*'s Body; that a Head spoke some Days after it was sever'd from the Body, and the Tongue cut out; with Multitudes of this kind that may be met with among the *Papists*, the *Jews*, the *Bramins*, the *Mahometans*, and in all Places where the Credulity of the People makes 'em a Merchandize to their Priests.

73. Let us next consider, that God is not so prodigal of *Miracles*, as to work any at random. The Order of Nature is not alter'd, stopp'd, or forwarded, unless for some weighty Design becoming the Divine Wisdom and Majesty. And, indeed, we learn from *Scripture* and *Reason*, that no *Miracle* is ever wrought without some special and important End, which is either appointed by those for whom the Mira-

cle

cle is made, or intended and declar'd by him that works it. If the *Apostles* had barely cur'd the blind, the deaf, the lame, the diseas'd, this would certainly procure 'em an extraordinary Esteem; and in some Places too Divine Worship, as it happen'd to *Paul* and *Barnabas* at *Lystra*, when they had cur'd a born Cripple without any farther Circumstance; but this was only a Means to gain the Attention of these Idolaters to the Doctrine they were about to preach in their City. Nor is there any *Miracle* mentioned in the *New Testament*, but what serv'd to confirm the Authority of those that wrought it, to procure Attention to the Doctrines of the *Gospel*, or for the like wise and reasonable Purposes.

Ch. 5.

Acts 14. 11, &c.

74. By this Rule the celebrated Feats of *Goblins* and *Fairies*, of *Witches*, of *Conjurers*, and all the *Heathen Prodigies*, must be accounted fictitious, idle, and superstitious Fables; for in all these there appears no End deserving a Change in *Nature*. Besides, they evidently contradict our Idea of God, and quite subvert his Providence. Diabolical Delusions would hereby re-

Sect. 3. ceive equal Confirmation with Divine Revelation, *Miracles* being perform'd in favour of both. Nay, the VVonders of the *Devil* and his Agents would infinitely exceed in Number and Quality those of God, and his Servants: which Assertion must hold true, were no Stories believ'd but the best attested in every County of *England*, to speak nothing of more credulous Nations; for it is very observable, that the more ignorant and barbarous any People remain, you shall find 'em most abound with Tales of this nature, and stand in far greater Aw of *Satan* than *Jehovah*. In a word, the *Heathens*, after this rate, would be rivetted in their *Idolatry*, and the ugliest Hag or most beggarly Astrologer equalize the Prophets and Apostles. But why should good Reasons be spent in Confutation of mere Fictions? for I challenge any Person whatsoever to produce one Instance of these lying VVonders that contains all the true Characters of Historical Evidence; and withal I dare engage as soon to prove the Goodness of the *Alcoran* as of the *Gospel*, if the Belief of any *Miracles*, except Divine ones, be granted me. But they must draw some Advan-

Advantage from the superstitious Fear of the People; who so industriously cherish it. Ch. 5.

75. After what has been already observ'd, I need not add, that all *Miracles* secretly perform'd, or among that Party only to whose Profit and Advantage the Belief of them turns, must be rejected as counterfeit and false; for as such cannot bear the Test of moral Certitude, so they contradict the very Design of Miracles, which are always wrought in favour of the Unbelieving. But the *Papists* alone must be the VVitnesses of their own *Miracles*, and never the *Hereticks* they would convert by them: nor is their Practice less ridiculous in confirming one Miracle by another, as that of *Transubstantiation* by several more.

76. From all this laid together, it follows, that nothing contrary to Reason, whether you consider the Action or Design, is *miraculous*. But there's a good old Distinction that serves all turns: Tho *Miracles* are not contrary to Reason, says one, yet they are surely above it. In what Sense pray? Which is above Reason, the Thing, or the Manner of it? If it be answer'd, the

Sect. 3. last, I suppose the Objector thinks I mean by *Miracle* some Philosophical Experiment, or some *Phenomenon* that surprizes only by its Rarity. Could I tell how a *Miracle* was wrought, I believe I might do as much my self; but what may be said to have been this or that way perform'd, is no *Miracle* at all. It suffices therefore, that the Truth of the Action be demonstrated, and the Possibility of it, to any *Being* able to govern Nature by instantaneously extracting, mollifying, mixing, infusing, consolidating, *&c.* and this, it may be, by the Ministry of thousands at once; for Miracles are produc'd according to the Laws of Nature, tho above its ordinary Operations, which are therefore supernaturally assisted.

77. But finally, it will be said, that in *the State of the Question*, at the beginning of my Book, I maintain'd the Manner as well as the Thing was explicable. But of what? of *Miracles?* No surely; but of those *Doctrines* in Confirmation whereof the *Miracles* are wrought. This I stand by still, and may add, I hope, that I have clearly prov'd

prov'd it too: But to say as much of *Miracles* would be to make 'em no *Miracles*, which shews the Weakness, and Impertinence of this Objection. Ch. 6.

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## CHAP. VI.

### *When, why, and by whom were* MYSTERIES *brought into Christianity.*

78. THE *End of the* LAW *being Righteousness,* JESUS CHRIST *came not to destroy but to fulfil it:* for he fully and clearly preach'd the purest Morals, he taught that reasonable Worship, and those just Conceptions of Heaven and Heavenly Things, which were more obscurely signifi'd or design'd by the Legal Observations. So having stripp'd the Truth of all those external Types and Ceremonies which made it difficult before, he render'd it easy and obvious to the meanest Capacities. His Disciples and Followers kept to this Simplicity for some considerable time, tho very early divers Rom. 10. 4. Mat. 5. 17.

Sect. 3. vers Abuses began to get footing amongst them. The converted *Jews*, who continu'd mighty fond of their *Levitical* Rites and Feasts, would willingly retain them, and be Christians too. Thus what at the beginning was but only tolerated in weaker Brethren, became afterwards a part of *Christianity* it self, under the Pretence of *Apostolick* Prescription or Tradition.

79. But this was nothing compar'd to the Injury done to Religion by the *Gentiles*; who, as they were proselyted in greater Numbers than the *Jews*, so the Abuses they introduc'd were of more dangerous and universal Influence. They were not a little scandaliz'd at the plain Dress of the *Gospel*, with the wonderful Facility of the Doctrines it contain'd, having been accustomed all their Lives to the pompous Worship and secret *Mysteries* of Deities without Number. The *Christians* on the other hand were careful to remove all Obstacles lying in the way of the *Gentiles*. They thought the most effectual way of gaining them over to their side was by compounding the Matter, which led them to unwar-

ranta-

vantable Compliances, till at length they likewise set up for *Mysteries*. Yet not having the least Precedent for any Ceremonies from the *Gospel*; excepting *Baptism* and the *Supper*, they strangely disguis'd and transform'd these by adding to them the Pagan Mystick Rites. They administr'd them with the strictest Secrecy; and, to be inferiour to their Adversaries in no Circumstance, they permitted none to assist at them, but such as were antecedently prepar'd or *initiated*. And to inspire their *Catechumens* with most ardent Desires of Participation, they gave out that what was so industriously hid were **tremendous* and *unutterable Mysteries*. Ch. 6.

80. Thus left *Simplicity*, the noblest Ornament of the Truth, should expose it to the Contempt of Unbelievers, *Christianity* was put upon an equal Level with the *Mysteries* of *Ceres*, or the *Orgies* of *Bacchus*. Foolish and mistaken Care! as if the most impious Superstitions could be sanctifi'd by the Name of *Christ*. But *such is always the Fruit of* prudential *and* condescending

*Terms*

* Φεικτὰ, ἀπόῤῥητα μυστήρια.

Sect. 3. *Terms of Conversion in* RELIGION, *whereby the* Number *and not the* Sincerity *of Professors is mainly intended.*

81. When once the *Philosophers* thought it their Interest to turn *Christians*, Matters grew every Day worse and worse; for they not only retain'd the Air, the Genius, and sometimes the Garb of their several Sects, but most of their erroneous Opinions too. And while they pretended to imploy their *Philosophy* in Defence of *Christianity*, they so confounded them together, that what before was plain to every one, did now become intelligible only to the Learned, who made it still less evident by their litigious Disputes, and vain Subtilties. We must not forget that the *Philosophers* were for making no meaner a Figure among the *Christians* than they did formerly among the *Heathens*; but this was what they could not possibly effect, without rendring every thing abstruse by Terms or otherwise, and so making themselves sole Masters of the Interpretation.

82. These Abuses became almost incurable, when the supreme Magi-

strate

strate did openly countenance the *Christian* Religion. Multitudes then professd themselves of the Emperor's Persuasion, only *to make their Court, and mend their Fortunes by it*, or *to preserve those Places and Preferments whereof they were already possess'd*. These continu'd *Pagans* in their Hearts; and it may be easily imagin'd that they carri'd all their old Prejudices along with them into a Religion which they purely embrac'd out of Politick Considerations: And so it constantly happens, when the Conscience is forc'd and not persuaded, which was a while after the Case of these *Heathens*. 

§ 3. The zealous Emperors erected stately Churches, and converted the Heathen Temples, Sanctuaries, Fanes or Chappels, to the Use of *Christians*, after a previous Expiation, and placing the Sign of the *Cross* in them to assure their Possession to *Christ*. All their Endowments, with the Benefices of the *Priests*, *Flamens*, *Augurs*, and the whole sacred Tribe, were appropriated to the *Christian Clergy*. Nay, their

Sect. 3. their very Habits, * as *white Linen Stoles*, *Mitres*, and the like, were retain'd to bring those, as was pretended, to an imperceptible Change, who could not be reconciled to the *Christian* Simplicity and Poverty. But indeed the Design at bottom was to introduce the Riches, Pomp, and Dignities of the *Clergy* which immediately succeeded.

84. Things being in this Condition, and the Rites of *Baptism* and the *Supper* being very sensibly augmented, it will not be amiss before I pass further to lay down a short Parallel of the antient Heathen and new-coin'd Christian *Mysteries*. And I shall endeavour so to do it, as to make it evident they

* ——— Non discolor illi
Ante aras cultus; velantur corpora lino,
Et Pelusiaco præfulget stamine vertex. *Sil. Ital. lib.* 3. *v.* 23.

Alba decet Cererem vestis; Cerealibus albam
Sumite ——— *Ovid. Fast. l.* 4. *v.* 619.

Color autem Albus præcipuè decorus Deo est, tum in cæteris, tum maxime in Textili. *Cic. l.* 2. *de Leg. cap.* 18.

Ἐσθῆτα δὲ εὐυτέοτοι πᾶσι λευκὴ, καὶ πᾶλαι ὅτι τῇ καθαρότητι ἔχουσι. Lucian. de Deæ Syriæ Sacerdotibus.

Linigeri fugiunt Calvi, sistrataq; Turba. *Martial. l.* 12. *Ep.* 29.

they were one in Nature, however different in their Subjects. Ch. 6.

85. *First*, Their Terms were exactly the same without any Alteration: They both made use of the words *initiating* and *perfecting*. They both call'd their *MYSTERIES Myeseis, Teleioseis, Teleiotika, Epopteiai*, &c. They both look'd upon *Initiation* as a kind of *deifying*. And they both stil'd their Priests *Mystagogue, Mystes, Hierotelestes*, &c.

Μυεῖσθαι, Τελεῖσθαι. Μύησεις, Τελειώσεις Τελειωτικὰ. Ἐποπτεῖαι. Θέωσις. Ἱεροτελεστής.

86. *Secondly*, The Preparatives to their Initiations were the same. The *Gentiles* us'd several * Washings and *Lustrations*; they † fasted, and ‖ abstain'd

Καθαρμοὶ.

* Sacerdos stipatum me religiosa cohorte deducit ad proximas balneas, & priùs sueto lavacro traditum, præfatus Deûm veniam, purissimè circumrorans abluit. *Apul.*

Hæc sanctè ut poscas, Tiberino in gurgite mergis
Manè caput bis terque, & noctem Flumine purgas.
*Pers. Sat. 2. v. 15.*

Ter caput irrorat, ter tollit in æthera palmas.
*Ovid. Fast. l. 4. v. 315.*

† Τὸ σύνθημα Ἐλευσίνιον μυστικὸν Ἐνήστευσα· ἔπιον † κυκεῶνα, &c. Clem. Alex. pag. 13. Arnob. lib. 5.

‖ Vos quoque abesse procul jubeo, discedite ab aris,
Queis tulit hesterna gaudia nocte Venus. *Tibul. l. 2. Eleg. 1. v. 11.*

Casta placent superis, pura cum veste veniite,
Et manibus puris sumite fontis aquam. *Tibul. ibid. v. 13.*

Sect. 3. stain'd from Women before *Initiation*; tho the wiser sort did laugh at those who thought such Actions could * expiate Sin, or appease Heaven. But the *Fathers*, the admir'd *Fathers*, imitated them in all these things; and this was the Origin of Abstinence from certain kinds of Meat, of your mock Anniversary Fasts, and the Clerical Celibacy.

87. *Thirdly*, The *Christians* kept their *Mysteries* as secret as the *Heathens* did theirs. † *Chrysostom* says, *We shut the Doors when we celebrate our Mysteries, and exclude the uninitiated.* ‖ *Basil* of *Cesarea* assures us, *that the Esteem of Mysteries is preserv'd only by Silence.* And (*) *Synesius* says, that the *Gentile Mysteries were perform'd by Night, because their Veneration proceeds from Mens Ignorance about them.* But why

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* Omne nefas, omnemque mali purgamina causam
Credebant nostri tollere posse senex.
*Ovid. Fast. l. 2. v. 35*

Ah nimium faciles qui tristia crimina cædis,
Fluminea tolli posse putatis aqua! *Mem ib. v. 45.*

† Μυστήρια τὰς θύρας κλείομεν ἀπτελούμεν, καὶ τοὺς ἀμύητος ἀποκλείομεν. Homil. in Matth.

‖ Μυστήριον τὸ σιγᾶν σφόδρα δεφυλάττεται.

(*) Ἀγνοίᾳ σκοτόνης ἐπὶ τελετῶν, καὶ νυκτὸς διὰ τοῦτο τὰ μυστήρια. De providen. Sect. 2.

why should that deserve Blame in o- Ch. 6.
thers, good *Synesius*, which you allow in your own Party? or is it that the *Christians* have a better Right to *Mysteries* than the *Gentiles*?

88. *Fourthly*, The *Fathers* were extreamly cautious not to speak intelligibly of their *Mysteries* before Unbelievers, or the Catechumens; whence you frequently meet in their Writings with these or the like Expressions, * *The Initiated know, the Initiated understand what I say.* And as the *Heralds* did by Proclamation † drive away all the *Profane* from their *Mysteries*, so the Deacons of the Primitive Church cri'd aloud before the Celebration of *Baptism*, but chiefly of the *Supper*, ‖ *Go out all you Catechumens, walk out all that are not initiated*; or something to this Effect, for they often vari'd the Form. *Cyril* of *Jerusalem* has a very singular Passage to our purpose,

* Norunt initiati. *August.* in locis pluribus. Ἴσασι τοὶ μεμυημένοι τὸ λεγόμενον. Chrysostom. in Genes. in Homil. 27. & alibi passim.

† Ὀργεῶνες ἐκδιώκουσι βεβήλους. Orpheus, Lucianus, &c.

‖ Θύραι κατηχουμένων κλεῖσθαι, οἱ πιστοὶ τὸν ἑαυτῶν τόπον κρατοῦσι.

Sect. 3. pose, * *Now when catechising is ru hears'd, if a Catechumen should ask you what the Teachers said, tell it by no means to any that is not initiated: for we entrust you with a Mystery, and the hope of the Life to come. Keep this Mystery then to him that rewardeth: and if any should say unto you, What harm is it, if I also learn? Answer him, that so sick Persons desire Wine: But if it be given to any unseasonably, it makes him frantick, and so two Evils happen; both the sick Man is destroy'd, and the Physician is disparag'd. Thus if a Catechumen hears*

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* Ὅτε τοίνυν κατηχήσις λέγεται, ἐὰν σὺ κατηχούμενος ἐξετάσῃ τί ἐρήκασιν οἱ διδάσκοντες, μηδὲν λέγε τῷ ἀξίῳ· Μυστήριον γὰρ σοι παραδίδομεν, καὶ ἐλπίδα μελλόντων αἰώνων. Τήρησον τὸ μυστήριον τῷ μισθαποδότῃ· καὶ ποτέ σοι τις εἴπῃ, τί βλάπτει, ἐὰν κἀγὼ μάθω? Καὶ σὺ νουθέτει τὸν οὕτω ζητοῦντα. Ἀλλὰ ἐὰν ἀκαίρως δοθῇ φρενῆσαι, ἐργάζεται, καὶ δύο κακὰ γίνεται, καὶ ὁ νοσῶν ἀπόλλυται, καὶ ὁ ἰατρὸς διαβάλλεται. Οὕτως ὁ κατηχούμενος, ἐὰν ἀκούσῃ παρά τινος, καὶ ὁ κατηχούμενος φρενιτιᾷ· οὐ δι' ἃ γὰρ τί ἤκουσε, καὶ ἐλέγχει τὸ πρᾶγμα, καὶ ἐκμυκτηρίζει τὸ λεγόμενον; καὶ ὁ πιστὸς ὡς προδότης κατακρίνεται· ἢν δὲ σὺ μεθοδείᾳ τινὶ, βλέπε μὴ μὴ ἐπιτιμήσῃς, οὐχ ὅτι οὐ ἄξια λαλεῖς τὰ λεγόμενα, ἀλλὰ ὅτι ἡ ἀκαιρία ἀναξία τῆς δόξαδας ἧς ποτὲ καὶ σὺ κατηχούμενος, οὐ δηγκάμιμι καὶ τὰ προπέμματα· ὅταν τῇ πίστει λάβῃς τὸ ὕψωμα ἧς διδασκομένων, τότε οὐ γνώσῃ ἀναξίαν εἰς κατηχούμενον φῆς. Anti. Cyril. Hierosol. præfat. in Cateches. Edit. Paris. 1631.

*hears those things from any of the Faithful, he grows likewise frantick; for not understanding what he heard, he argues against the thing; and laughs at what is said: so the Believer that told it him is condemn'd as a Betrayer of Secrets. Now you being one of us, see that you blab out nothing: not that what we say are not worthy to be spoken, but that others are not worthy to hear them. When you were a Catechumen your self, we never told you what was propos'd. But when you have learnt by experience the Sublimity of those things which are taught, you will then be convinc'd that the Catechumens are unworthy to hear them.* Ch. 6.

89. *Fifthly*, The Steps and Degrees in both their Initiations are the same. The Heathens had * five Degrees necessary to Perfection. First, *common Purgation*; Secondly, *more private Purgation*; Thirdly, a *liberty of standing amongst the Initiated*; Fourthly, *Initiation*; and, Lastly, *the Right of seeing every thing*, or being *Epopts*.



* Ἐν τοῖς ἱερῶς ἀγῶνι τὸ μὲν ἐν πανδήμοι κάθαρσις, ἔπειτα δὲ τούτοις ἐν ἀποῤῥήτοις, μετὰ ταύτας ἀφέσεις, καὶ δὴ ταύτας μύησις, ἐν τέλει δ' ἐπόπτεια. Olympiodor.

Sect. 3. Among the *Christians* likewise there were five Steps by which their Penitents were re-admitted to Communion. First they were oblig'd to remain some Years separate from the Congregation lamenting their Sins, whence this Step was call'd *Proklausis*. Πρόκλαυσις. Secondly, they were remov'd nearer the People, where during three Years they might hear the Priests, tho not see them: this Step was therefore call'd *Acroasis*. Ἀκρόασις. Thirdly, for three Years more they might hear and see, but not mix with the Congregation: this Period was call'd *Hypoptosis*. Ὑπόπτωσις. Fourthly, they might stand with the People, but not receive the Sacraments: this was their *Systasis*. Σύστασις. And, Fifthly, they were admitted to Communion, which was call'd *Methexis*. Μέθεξις. The new Converts likewise, under Preparation to participate of the Mysteries, were stil'd *Catechumens*; then *competentes*; and, lastly, *Epopts*, *perfect*, or *Believers*: which are the very Degrees in Name and Quality, to which *Pythagoras* oblig'd his Disciples.

90. I could draw out this Parallel much larger, but here's enough to show

*how Christianity became mysterious*, and how so divine an Institution did, through the Craft and Ambition of *Priests* and *Philosophers*, degenerate into meer *Paganism*. Ch. 6.

91. *Mystery* prevail'd very little in the first Hundred or Century of Years after *Christ*; but in the second and third it began to establish it self by *Ceremonies*. To *Baptism* were then added the tasting of Milk and * Honey, † Anointing, the Sign of the Cross, a white Garment, *&c.* There was quickly after a farther Accession of Questions and Answers, of antecedent Fastings and Watchings, Kissing, and set times of Administration. After *Baptism* they did not ‖ wash for a whole Week, exactly answerable to the Superstition of the Gentiles, who never



* Denique ut a Baptismate ingrediar, aquam adituri ibidem, sed & aliquanto prius in ecclesia sub Antistitis manu, contestamur nos renunciare Diabolo, & pompæ, & angelis ejus. Dehinc ter mergitamur, amplius aliquid respondentes quam Dominus in Evangelio determinavit. Inde suscepti lactis & mellis concordiam prægustamus; ex eaque die Lavacro quotidiano per totam Hebdomadem abstinemus. *Tertullian.* pag. 102.

† Egressi de Lavacro perunguimur benedicta Unctione, &c. *Id.* pag. 226.

‖ Tertul. in loco citato.

Sect. 3. never put off the * Garment in which they were *initiated* till it fell all to tatters. Next were added Injection of Salt and Wine into the Mouths of the Baptiz'd, and a second Unction, with Imposition of Hands. But in later times there was no end of Lights, Exorcisms, Exsufflations, and many other Extravagancies of Jewish, or Heathen Original. From this Source sprang not only the Belief of *Omens*, *Presages*, *Apparitions*, † the Custom of *Burying* with three shovel-fuls of Earth, with other vulgar Observations among Christians; but also *Lights*, *Feasts* or *Holy-days*, *Consecrations*, *Images*, worshipping towards the || *East*, *Altars*,

* Ὁ δὲ μυούμενος τὸ ἱμάτιον, ὃ ἐφόρει ἐν τῇ μυήσει, ἐπόποτε ἀπεδύετο μάχειρ. ἐν τέλει δ' φανερῶς διαῤῥύειν. Scholiast. in Plut. Aristophan.

† Priusquam in eos [scil. mortuos] injecta Gleba est, Locus ille, ubi crematum est corpus, nihil habet Religionis: Anglicè, *Before this Ceremony, 'tis not Hallow'd Ground.* Cic. l. 2. de Leg. cap. 22.

Archytas naufragus, prætereuntem exorans ne se insepultum relinquat, sic preces absolvit apud Horatium:

Quanquam festinas, non est mora longa: licebit,
Injecto TER pulvere, curras. *Lib.* 1. *Od.* 28. *v.* 35.

|| His Dea placanda est, hæc tu conversus ad ortum
Dic quater; & vivo perluc rore manus. *Ovid. Fast.* l. 4. v. 777. Ὁ δὲ Νοῦς ὁρᾷ μὲν ἐς πάλαι ἀπόντα. Lucian. pag. 674. Edit. Amst. 1687.

*turs*, *Musick*, *Dedications* of Churches, and in them distinct Places for the LAITY, (as they speak) and the CLERGY: for there is nothing like these in the Writings of the Apostles, but they are all plainly contain'd in the Books of the Gentiles, and was the Substance of their Worship. Ch. 6.

92. All the Rites of the *Supper*, too tedious to particularize, were introduc'd by degrees after the same manner. So by endeavouring to make the plainest things in the World appear *mysterious*, their very Nature and Use were absolutely perverted and destroy'd, and are not yet fully restor'd by the purest Reformations in *Christendom*. But we must not forget how *Tertullian* himself has acknowledg'd that for their frequent *Crossings* and other *Baptismal* Rites, for their scrupling to let any of the *Bread* and *Wine* fall to the Ground, or to receive them from any hand but the *Priest*'s, with the like Ceremonies, they had no colour of † Au-



* Harum & aliarum ejusmodi Disciplinarum, si legem expostules Scripturarum, nullam invenies; Traditio tibi prætenditur auctrix, Consuetudo confirmatrix, & Fides observatrix. *Pag.* 102.

Sect. 3. thority from the *Scriptures*, but only from *Custom* and *Tradition*.

93. Now their own Advantage being the Motive that put the Primitive *Clergy* upon reviving *Mystery*, they quickly erected themselves by its Assistance into a separate and politick Body, tho not so soon into their various Orders and Degrees. For in the two first Centuries we meet with no *Sub-Deacons*, *Readers*, or the like; much less with the Names or Dignities of *Popes*, *Cardinals*, *Patriarchs*, *Metropolitans*, *Archbishops*, *Primates*, *Suffragans*, *Archdeacons*, *Deans*, *Chancellors*, *Vicars*, or their numerous Dependants and Retinue. But in small time *Mystery* made way for those, and several other Usurpations upon Mankind, under pretence of *Labourers in the Lord's Vineyard*.

94. The Degrees or Constitutions concerning *Ceremonies* and *Discipline*, to encrease the Splendour of this new State, did strangely affect, stupify, and amaze the Minds of the ignorant People; and made them believe they were in good earnest Mediators between God and Men, that could fix

Sanc-

Sanctity to certain Times, Places, Persons, or Actions. They seem'd almost a different and more divine Species of Creatures, distinguishing themselves from other Men in their *Garb*, in their manner of living by *Tithes* and *Donations*, in their *separate Places* at Church, and several other ways. By this means the *Clergy* were able to do any thing; they engross'd at length the sole Right of interpreting *Scripture*, and with it claim'd *Infallibility*, to their Body. Ch. 6.

95. This is the true Origin and Progress of the *Christian Mysteries*; and we may observe how great a share of their Establishment is owing to *Ceremonies*. These never fail to take off the Mind from the Substance of *Religion*, and lead Men into dangerous Mistakes: for *Ceremonies* being easily observ'd, every one thinks himself religious enough that exactly performs them. But there is nothing so naturally opposite as *CEREMONY* and *CHRISTIANITY*. The latter discovers Religion naked to all the World, and the former delivers it under mystical Representations of a meerly arbitrary Signification.

Sect. 3. 96. It is visible then that *Ceremonies* perplex instead of explaining; but supposing they made things easier, then that would be the best Religion which had most of them, for they are generally, and may all be made, equally significative. A Candle put into the Hands of the *Baptized*, to denote the Light of the Gospel, is every whit as good a *Ceremony* as to make the Sign of the Cross upon their Fore-heads, in token of owning Christ for their Master and Saviour. Wine, Milk, and Honey signify spiritual Nourishment, Strength, and Gladness; as well as standing at the *Gospel* betokens our Readiness to hear or profess it.

97. In short, there's no degree of *Enthusiasm* higher than placing Religion in such Fooleries; nor any thing so base as by these fraudulent Arts to make the *Gospel* of no effect, unless as far as it serves a Party. But I shall have a better Occasion of exhausting the Subject of *Ceremonies* elsewhere, I treat of 'em here only as they made up the *Gentile Mysteries*, and were afterwards brought in to constitute those of the *Christians*. But as the

vast

ıft multitudes of the latter quickly ren- Ch. 6.
:r'd all secret Rites almost impossible,
) to preserve the *Mystery*, things were
ırposely made downright unintelligi-
le, or very perplex'd. In this Point
ır pretended *Christians* outdid all
ıe *Mysteries* of the *Heathens*; for the
[onour of these might be destroy'd
y Discovery, or the babling Tongue
'any initiated Person: But the new
*lysteries* were thus securely plac'd a-
ɔve the Reach of all Sense and
eason. Nay, so jealous were the
LERGY of their own Order, lest
ıy of 'em should irreligiously un-
ld those sublime Mysteries to the
:ofanely inquisitive LAITY, that
ıey thought fit to put it as much out
; the Power of the Holy Tribe it self,
; out of ours, to understand them;
ıd so it continues, in a great measure,
) this day.

The

# The CONCLUSION.

THUS I have endeavour'd to shew others, what I'm fully convinc'd of my self, that there is no *MYSTERY* in *CHRISTIANITY*, or the most perfect *Religion*; and that by Consequence nothing *contradictory* or *inconceivable*, however made an *Article of Faith*, can be contain'd in the *Gospel*, if it be really the Word of God: for I have hitherto argu'd only upon this Supposition, for the Reasons to be seen towards the end of the Preface.

Notwithstanding all Pretences that may be made to the contrary, it is evident that no particular *Instances* or *Doctrines* of any sort can serve for a proper Answer to this DISCOURSE; for, as long as the Reasons of it hold good, whatever *Instance* can be alledg'd must either be found not *mysterious*, or, if it prove a MY-

MYSTERY, not divinely *reveal'd*. There is no middle way, that I can see. When those Passages of *Scripture* I have cited for my Assertion, are either reconcil'd to such as any would bring against me, or prov'd not to be understood by me; when my Arguments against all *inconceivable Mysteries*, and the absurdity of God's *revealing* any such *Mysteries*, are confuted, 'tis time enough then for others to produce *Examples*, or for me to consider 'em. And tho by convincing People that *all the Parts of their* RELIGION *must not only be in themselves, but to them also must appear, sound and intelligible*, I might justly leave every one to discover to himself the Reasonableness or Unreasonableness of his Religion (which is no difficult Business, when once Men are persuaded that they have a right to do it;) yet the Duties I ow GOD and the World oblige me to proceed further according as I enjoy Health or Leisure, without limiting my self as to any time, that being a thing in no Man's Power to command at his Pleasure.

My

My next Task therefore is (God willing) to prove the Doctrines of the *New Testament* perspicuous, possible, and most worthy of God, as well as all calculated for the highest Benefits of Man. Some will not thank me, it's probable, for so useful an Undertaking; and others will make me a *Heretick* in grain for what I have perform'd already. But as it is Duty, and no Body's Applause, which is the Rule of my Actions; so, God knows, I no more value this cheap and ridiculous Nick-name of a *Heretick* than *Paul* did before me: for I acknowledg no *ORTHODOXY* but the *TRUTH*; and, I'm sure, where-ever the *TRUTH* is, there must be also the *CHURCH*, of God I mean, and not any Human Faction or Policy. Besides, the Imputation of *Heterodoxy* being now as liberal upon the slightest Occasions, out of Ignorance, Passion, or Malice, as in the days of *Ireneus* and *Epiphanius*, it is many times instead of a Reproach the greatest Honour imaginable.

Act. 24. 14.

Some

Some good Men may be apt to say, that, supposing my Opinion never so true, it may notwithstanding occasion much harm; because when People find themselves impos'd upon in any part of *Religion*, they are ready to call the whole in question. This Offence is plainly taken, not given; and my Design is nothing the less good, if ill-dispos'd Persons abuse it, as they frequently do *Learning*, *Reason*, *Scripture*, and the best things in the World. But it is visible to every one that they are the *Contradictions* and *Mysteries* unjustly charg'd upon *Religion*, which occasion so many to become *Deists* and *Atheists*. And it should be consider'd likewise that when any, not acquainted with it, are dazl'd by the sudden Splendor of the *Truth*, their Number is not comparable to theirs who see clearly by its Light. Because several turn'd *Libertines* and *Atheists* when PRIEST-CRAFT was laid so open at the *Reformation*, were *Luther*, *Calvin*, or *Zwinglius* to be blam'd for it? or which should weigh most with them, these few prejudic'd *Sceptics*,

*ticks*, or those thousands they converted from the Superstitions of *Rome*? I'm therefore for giving no Quarter to *ERROR* under any pretence; and will be sure, wherever I have Ability or Opportunity, to expose it in its true Colours, without rendring my Labour ineffectual, by weakly mineing or softning of any thing.

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*FINIS.*

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AN

# APOLOGY

FOR

# Mr. *TOLAND*,

n a LETTER from Himſelf to a Member of the Houſe of Commons in *Ireland*; written the day before his Book was reſolv'd to be burnt by the Committee of Religion.

To which is prefix'd a NARRATIVE containing the Occaſion of the ſaid LETTER.

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——————*Diis proximus Ille eſt*
*Quem* RATIO *non* IRA *movet*. Claudian.

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*LONDON*,
Printed in the Year MDCCII.

# A NARRATIVE

## *Containing the Occasion of the following* LETTER.

I Promise not to give any account at this time of the Controversy occasion'd by Mr. *Toland*'s Book, nor to enter into the Merits of the Cause on either side. His Adversaries seem not yet weary of writing against him; and when they have once done, it will be early enough then for him to reply, if he sees reason so to do: For it would be an endless labour to make *Answers* severally to so many as may concern themselves in this Dispute. My Design is only to shew what Treatment he receiv'd from some People in *Ireland*, as far as that may serve to set the *Letter* annex'd to this Narrative in its proper light. And I shall take care to insert nothing, but such notorious matters of Fact that no observing Person in *Dublin*, or I might say perhaps in the Kingdom, can pretend ignorance concerning them, or deny them to be true.

Mr. *Toland* was scarcely arriv'd in that Country, when he found himself warmly

attack'd from the *Pulpit*, which at the beginning could not but ſtartle the People, who till then were equal Strangers to him and his Book; yet they became in a little time ſo well accuſtom'd to this Subject, that it was as much expected of courſe as if it had been preſcrib'd in the Rubrick. This occaſion'd a Noble Lord to give it for a reaſon why he frequented not the Church as formerly, that inſtead of his Saviour JESUS CHRIST, one *John Toland* was all the diſcourſe there. But how unworthy a Member ſoever of the *Chriſtian Religion* Mr. *Toland* may be, he's ſtill ſo ſenſible of the Obedience he juſtly ows to its moſt Divine Precepts, that he dares not allow himſelf to make any returns in the ſame Dialect to what was liberally utter'd againſt him in that place. We read, an *Archangel* was not permitted to rail againſt the very *Devil*; and if Mr. *Toland* had not innumerable Paſſages of the *Goſpel* to reſtrain him, yet the Reverence all Men ow to their own Perſons join'd to the Rules of common Civility, would be powerful enough to keep him from beſtowing any indecent Expreſſions or Reflections upon his Oppoſers. Nor is he ſuch a Stranger to the former Ages or the preſent, as not to perceive that paſſionate or violent Proceedings never

Jude 9.

yet

yet gain'd Credit to a *Cause*; nor produc'd any other Effects upon the Enemies of it, but to make 'em abhor it the more.

But when this rough handling of him in the *Pulpit* (where he could not have word about) prov'd insignificant, the *Grand Jury* was sollicited to present him for a Book that was written and publish'd in *England*. And to gain the readier Compliance, the Presentment of the *Grand Jury* of *Middlesex* was printed in *Dublin* with an emphatical Title, and cry'd about the Streets. So Mr. *Toland* was accordingly presented there the last day of the Term in the Court of *King's Bench*, the *Jurors* not grounding their proceeding upon any particular Passages of his Book, which most of 'em never read, and those that did confess'd not to understand. Thus in the Reign of *Henry* VI. one * *John Stephens* was presented by a Jury in *Southwark*, as a Man, say they, *we know not what to make of him, and that hath Books we know not what they are.* In the mean time those of either Sex who had any intimacy with Mr. *Toland*, or that favour'd him with their familiar Conversation, were branded as his Proselytes, and Lists of their Names industriouf-

* Bacon's *Historical Discourse of the Government of* England, *Part* 2. *cap.* 17. *pag.* 161.

ly given about; altho those worthy Persons (for he always chose the best Company) had never discours'd him of Religion, nor had many of 'em then seen his Book. And so far was he himself from making his Opinions the Subject of his common Talk, that, notwithstanding repeated Provocations, he purposely declin'd speaking of 'em at all; which made his Adversaries (who slipt no handle of decrying him) insinuate that he was not the real Author of the Piece going under his Name. But if they were serious, and this was not another Artifice to make him own it, I would fain know what made them so angry with a Man whom they ought therefore to despise; For if there be any Poison (as I hope there is none) in that Book, the spreading of it in *Ireland* is wholly owing to the Management of those, who would be thought most to oppose it.

We must not forget that in a few days after the present *Lords Justices* of that Kingdom landed, the Recorder of *Dublin*, Mr. *Hancock*, presented Mr. *Toland* to their Excellencies after a very obliging manner; for in his Congratulatory Harangue in the name of his Corporation, whereof by the way he spoke not a word, he begg'd their *Lordships* would protect the CHURCH from

from all its Enemies, but particularly from the *Tolandists*, a Sect, I am sure, those Noble Persons ne'er heard of before. The late *Lords Justices*, the Earls of *Montrath* and *Drogheda*, were more neglected at least in the same Speech; tho all *Ireland* cannot without the blackest Ingratitude but acknowledge, that they never liv'd before under a more prudent, just, and peaceable Administration: For as they gave no occasions of Complaint in their Government, so were there no Murmurings against them but only of such, as, through a perpetual desire of Change, are always Enemies to their own and the Country's Happiness. Mr. *Toland* being thus made a *Heresiarch* in so publick a place, where all the Nobility and Gentry of the Kingdom then in Town were present, occasion'd every body to hunt for his Book which was very scarce; and his Enemies also took that Pretext of denominating all his Acquaintance *Tolandists*, how different soever they were from him or one another in their Sentiments.

From the *Pulpit*, from the *Jury*, and the *Court*, he must take his next turn at the *Press*, from whence there issu'd a Book said to be an Answer to him in particular, and to all others who set up *Reason* and *Evidence*

in opposition to *Revelation* and *Mysteries*. This imports that Mr. *Toland* made *Reason* and *Revelation* contradictory. But how well the Author of the said Book, Mr. *Peter Brown*, *senior Fellow of Trinity College near* Dublin, has prov'd this or the rest of his Undertaking, is referr'd to the impartial Reader's Judgment. If hard Language would do instead of strong Arguments, we might easily determine who had the better end of the Controversy; and if you believe Mr. *Brown* himself, he assures
Pag. 81. you that *if it can be shewn where one Link of his reasoning fails, he'll make it up again so firm, that it shall never be undone.* Indeed I don't believe Mr. *Toland* designs to give him any trouble of that kind, so that his *Reasons* are like to continue as good as ever they were. But Mr. *Brown*'s Book comes now under Consideration as it was one of the Machines invented to render Mr. *Toland* dangerous or odious. And this he does not only by endeavouring all
Pag. 79. along to prove him *a most inveterate Enemy to all Reveal'd Religion*; but he expressly solicits the Civil Magistrate to take a course with him, which looks not very generous in an *Answerer*, how much concern soever he may pretend for his Faith. In one place
Pag. 139. he says, *I have no more to do here but to deliver*

*liver him up into the hands of our Governors. We may confute his Errors, but 'tis they only can suppress his Insolence; we only can endeavor to heal those already infected, 'tis they alone can hinder the Infection from spreading further.* And afterwards he adds, *Here again I would deliver him into the hands of the Magistrate, not mov'd by any heat of Passion, but by such a* Zeal *as becomes every Christian to have for his Religion.* I am fully satisfy'd this *murdering Zeal* is not inspir'd by Genuin *Christianity*; and as for his want of Passion, the *Inquisitors* themselves shew as much seeming Reluctance against killing or maiming of those whom they procure to be condemn'd for *Hereticks*. At the very instant they deliver 'em over to the Secular Power, they address themselves to the Magistrate in these terms; *We most earnestly beseech you, my Lord Judg, that for the love of God, and from a sense of Piety and Mercy, as well as out of regard to our Entreaties, you would neither inflict the loss of Life or Limb upon this miserable Creature.** Tho at the same time, if the Judg should take

Pag. 144.

* Domine Judex, rogamus vos cum omni affectu quo possimus, ut amore Dei, pietatis & misericordiæ intuitu, & nostrorum interventu precaminum, misero huic nullum mortis vel mutilationis periculum inferatis.

the

the holy Fathers at their word, they would infallibly excommunicate him for his ready Obedience, whereof they are so fond in all cases but those of *Justice and Clemency*, which is the Motto of their Standard. Here we may observe how strangely Words of a good signification may be detorted to countenance very ill Actions. Thus to abuse a Man is in the Language of some term'd *Zeal*, and so it is to murder him in that of others; nor were the barbarous *Irish* wanting to sanctify their *Massacre* by that Name.

But lest the broaching of simple *Heresies* should not serve the turn, Mr. *Toland* must by all means be made the *Head of a Sect*, and of no ordinary one; for, if you credit Mr. *Brown*, he designs to be *as famous an Impostor as Mahomet*. To confirm this Character, which was well enough invented to amuse the People with vain Terrors, there was a ridiculous Story handed about, whether true or false God knows; for Mr. *Toland* remembers nothing of the matter. 'Tis said, in short, that about the fourteenth Year of his Age he gravely declar'd he would be the *Head of a Sect* e'er he was Thirty; and before he was forty he should make as great a stir in the Commonwealth as *Cromwel* ever did. *Risum teneatis*. Here's an old Prophecy found in a Bog with

Pag. 162.

with a witness, and which Mr. *Hancock* and Mr. *Brown* have labour'd to fulfil in part, that superstitious Folks might trepidly apprehend the event of the rest. Mr. *Brown* says, *The real design of this Man is plainly no other than what he* formerly declar'd, *and what he openly affects, to be the* Head *of a* Sect; and doubts not but *he has a great deal more to say, whenever this new* Sect *of his becomes so numerous that they shall outbrave the Laws, and labour for a publick Reformation of the Mysterious Doctrines of the Gospel.* Would any body believe this, did they not see it plainly own'd in Print? Nay he tells us that *he has trac'd* this Heresiarch *from the time he first gave out he would be* Head *of a* Sect *before he was thirty Years of Age, till he became an Author, and from thence to his coming into* Ireland *to spread his Heresies, and put his Design in execution.* I assure him he wants two Years still of Thirty, and if his *Disciples* (as they're call'd) take not other measures than he did to erect that same Sect in *Ireland*, St. *Patrick* may securely possess his Apostleship in that Kingdom till Doomsday, which is an Honour Mr. *Toland* does not envy him. I ought not by any means to forget here the Sagacity of a certain Gentleman, who wonder'd at his Impudence for presuming to set up

Pag. 164.

Pag. 166.

Pag. 121.

a *new Religion* in their Country, where he had not a foot of Land; which inclines me to believe he has met with better Records of the Apostles Possessions than Mr. *Toland* could in all his reading.

Well then, if all this won't do, what shall we make of him next? He must e'en be represented as dangerous to the Government; and truly so he's like to be if *Irish* Presages hold good, for their Prophecies were never worth a farthing. *How far*
Pag. 172. *Men in power*, says Mr. *Brown*, *according to their several Stations, are obliged to intermeddle in point of Conscience, I shall not now enquire. But sure I am in point of Policy it is become no less than necessary: for the Writers of this strain have given broad hints that they are as little friends to our Government, as our Religion. This Man can say that* MAGISTRATES are made for the PEOPLE, *and every one knows what Doctrines of* REBELLION *Men are wont to insinuate by this* SAYING. O! is it thereabouts then? Why truly, the Doctrine of *Passive Obedience* was exploded by this same *Saying*, which Mr. *Toland* acknowledges to be one fair Quotation. *James* the Second was justly abdicated according to this Saying, because he was an Enemy to the *People* for whom he

was

was made a *King*; and our most Glorious Hero *William* the Third, the Restorer of Universal Peace and Liberty, was invested with the Supreme Power by the honest *People* of *Great Britain*, for whose good he has indefatigably employ'd it ever since, in vindicating, settling, and enlarging their Civil and Religious Rights. Mr. *Brown* has been pleas'd to say that Mr. *Toland* was proud of running down three Kingdoms with one cross Question, which is, *How can a Man believe what he does not know?* and he that does so, knows not what he believes. Now I would gladly be resolv'd by him, for whom the *Magistrates* are made unless for the *People?* Were they made for themselves? or whether the *People* were made for the *Magistrates?* But he adds, *that this sort of Men deserve to be look'd to, that their numbers grow formidable*; and makes little doubt but *their design is at length to shew us, That all Dominion as well as Religion is founded in Reason.* Let him assure himself they will never begin to shew that, for they have clearly prov'd it long ago. What Dominion is not founded in Reason, must be doubtless unreasonable, and consequently Tyrannical. There was nothing more reasonable than for Men first to unite them-

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Pag. 172.

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that he was born there. So his Countrymen treated him in this respect like his Majesty's good Subjects of *Guernsey*; who, when they are in *France* are call'd English Rogues, and in *England* French Dogs.

The last Effort, except the charge of *Socinianism*, to blast him, was to make him pass for a rigid *Nonconformist*. Mr. *Toland* will never deny but the real Simplicity of the *Dissenters* Worship, and the seeming Equity of their Discipline (into which being so young he could not distinctly penetrate) did gain extraordinarily upon his Affections, just as he was newly deliver'd from the insupportable Yoke of the most Pompous and Tyrannical *Policy* that ever enslav'd Mankind under the name or shew of *Religion*. But when greater Experience and more Years had a little ripen'd his Judgment, he easily perceiv'd that the Differences were not so wide as to appear irreconcilable, or at least, that Men, who were sound *Protestants* on both sides, should barbarously cut one anothers Throats, or indeed give any disturbance to the Society about them. And as soon as he understood the late Heats and Animosities did not totally (if at all) proceed from a Concern for mere Religion, he allow'd himself a latitude in several things, that would

would have been matter of ſcruple to him before. His Travels increas'd, and the Study of Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory perfected this Diſpoſition, wherein he continues to this Hour: for, whatever his own Opinion of thoſe Differences be, yet he finds ſo eſſential an Agreement between the *French*, *Dutch*, *Engliſh*, *Scotiſh*, and other *Proteſtants*, that he's reſolv'd never to loſe the Benefit of an Inſtructive Diſcourſe in any of their Churches upon that ſcore; and it muſt be a Civil not a Religious Intereſt that can engage him againſt any of theſe Parties, not thinking all their private Notions wherein they diſagree worth endangering, much leſs ſubverting, the Publick Peace of a Nation. If this makes a Man a *Nonconformiſt*, then Mr. *Toland* is one unqueſtionably. And ſo he is, if he thinks the *Diſſenters* ought not to be moleſted in their Goods or Perſons, nor excluded from any of their Native Rights, becauſe they have a different Set of Thoughts from him or others, ſo long as none of their Principles are repugnant to good Government. He believes them likewiſe to be a true and conſiderable part of the *Proteſtant Religion* (for they have demonſtrated themſelves to be ſtanch *Patriots*) notwithſtanding any Error or Weak-

nesſ whereof they may be guilty in his Judgment. But this ſame reaſon will prove him as ſound a Member of the eſtabliſh'd Church of *England*; being perſwaded the narrow Sentiments of a few about *Communion* is not any profeſt Doctrin of that Church: nor would there be any Separation from it in this Realm, were all others of his mind. 'Tis viſible this Declaration is not made to curry Favour with one (as many do) while in their Hearts they are devoted to the other ſide. But Mr. *Toland*'s Opinion being frequently demanded as to this Point, he now delivers it once for all; for he will never condeſcend to court any body of Men with preference to all others, further than he ſees ground for it; and to this, as his ſettl'd Judgment, he's reſolv'd to adhere, tho it ſhould hazard the inevitable Ruin of his Fortune or Reputation with all Parties.

*Atheiſm* is now become ſo common an Accuſation in every Perſon's mouth, who is diſpleas'd at the Rudeneſs of others for not complimenting him with their Aſſent to his Opinions, that, altho in it ſelf it be the moſt atrocious and unnatural Crime whereof a reaſonable Creature can be guilty yet is it not otherwiſe minded than as a word of courſe which indicates a

world

world of Inconſiderateneſs and Rancor. When Mr. *Toland* us'd to be traduc'd in *Ireland* for *Deiſm* with many other Opinions, and his Friends demanded of his Accuſers where they made thoſe Diſcoveries in his Writings, the ready Anſwer always was, that truly they had never read the Book, and by the Grace of God never would; but that they receiv'd their Information from ſuch as were proper Judges of the thing. O how inſeparable is *Popery* from *Ignorance!* And what is the ſource of all *Popery* but *Implicit Belief* whereever it is found? As to what the Author of the Letter to a Convocation-man ſays of a Congregation *de propaganda Infidelitate*, no body needs be aſham'd of ſo good Company as the preſent Biſhop of *Saliſbury*, the late Archbiſhop of *Canterbury*, and the *Commons* of *England* themſelves, whom he not only libels with moſt falſe and vile Inſinuations, but even his Majeſty's own Perſon as a Prince of no Religion, which none that had any Religion durſt ſay of a King who is ſo great a Friend to it by his Patronage and Example. Mr. *Toland* was once writing an Anſwer to this Author; but he laid aſide his Papers when he underſtood that ſuch able Men had undertaken him, as the Reverend

Dr. *Wake*, and the Ingenious Author of the Letter to a Parliament Man.

But ſome People not being ſatisfy'd, it ſeems, with all that paſt, and thinking Mr. *Toland* ſhould never have enough on't, concluded at laſt to bring his Book before the *Parliament*. And therefore on Saturday the 14*th* day of *Auguſt*, it was mov'd in the *Committee of Religion*, that the Book entitul'd *Chriſtianity not Myſterious*, ſhould be brought before them, and accordingly it was order'd that the ſaid Book ſhould the Saturday following be brought into the *Committee*. That day the Committee ſat not; but the next Saturday, which was the 28*th* day of *Auguſt*, there met a very full *Committee*, wherein this buſineſs was a great while debated. Several Perſons eminent for their Birth, good Qualities or Fortunes, oppos'd the whole Proceeding, being of opinion it was neither proper nor convenient for them to meddle with a thing of that nature. But when this Point was without much Argument carri'd againſt them, they inſiſted that the Paſſages which gave Offence in the Book ſhould be read; ſo thoſe wonderful Objections were made which are clear'd in the *Letter* ſubjoin'd: and then the *Committee* was adjourn'd till the 4*th* of *September*. That day, after

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ſeveral Gentlemen had ſpoke to thoſe Objections, they urg'd at laſt, according to Mr. *Toland*'s own deſire, that he ſhould be call'd to anſwer in Perſon, to declare the Senſe of his Book, and his Deſign in writing it. But this favour being peremptorily deny'd, an *Honourable Member* went to the Bar, and offer'd a *Letter* to be read which he had receiv'd that Morning from Mr. *Toland*, containing what Satisfaction he intended to give the *Committee*, had they thought fit to let him ſpeak for himſelf. But this was likewiſe refus'd, and the *Committee* came immediately to thoſe Reſolutions, to which the Houſe agreed after ſome Debate, on Thurſday following being the 9*th* of *September*, viz. *That the Book entituled* Chriſtianity not Myſterious, *containing ſeveral Heretical Doctrines contrary to the Chriſtian Religion and the eſtabliſh'd Church of* Ireland, *be publickly burnt by the hands of the Common Hangman.* Likewiſe, *That the Author thereof* John Toland *be taken into the Cuſtody of the Serjeant at Arms*, (which he took care to prevent) *and be proſecuted by Mr. Attorney General, for writing and publiſhing the ſaid Book.* They order'd too, *that an Addreſs ſhould be made to the Lords Juſtices to give Directions that no more Copies of that Book be brought into the*

Votes of the H. of C. of *Ireland*.

*the Kingdom, and to prevent the selling of those already imported.* Their Sentence was executed on the Book the Saturday following, which was the 11*th* of *September*, before the *Parliament-House* Gate, and also in the open Street before the *Town-House*; the Sheriffs and all the Constables attending.

One very singular Passage we must not omit, which is, that the same day the Book was to be condemn'd there came abroad a printed Sheet, wherein, to terrify any body from appearing publickly for Mr. *Toland*, were contain'd the following words: *Now let those consider this*, says the Writer of that Paper, *whether within doors or without; and whether the Vindication, or even the excusing this Book or the Author, or the ridiculing or otherwise baffling the just Prosecution or Censure of it and him, be not truly the denying of our Saviour before Men; and whether such may not assuredly expect to be deny'd of him in the presence of his Father and the holy Angels, and all the World at the last day.* This strange Denunciation had no effect on those who all along appear'd in Mr. *Toland*'s behalf, tho much out-number'd by those of the contrary Opinion. In the *Committee* it was mov'd by one that Mr. *Toland* himself should be burnt, as by another

A Letter upon Mr. *Toland*'s Book to *J. C.* Esq; pag. 4.

ther that he ſhould be made to burn his Book with his own hands; and a third deſir'd it ſhould be done before the Door of the Houſe, that he might have the pleaſure of treading the Aſhes under his feet.

I forbear making any remarks here either upon the deſign of burning Books in general, or this in particular; nor will I ſhew, as well I might, how fruitleſs this ſort of proceeding has prov'd in all Ages, ſince the Cuſtom was firſt introduc'd by the *Popiſh Inquiſitors*, who perform'd that Execution on the Book when they could not ſeize the Author whom they had deſtin'd to the Flames. Neither will I inſiſt upon the great Stop and Diſcouragement which this Practice brings to all Learning and Diſcoveries; but, without further Digreſſion, I ſhall now leave the Reader to peruſe Mr. *Toland's Letter*, and to judg for himſelf whether it would have given him ſatisfaction, had he been a Member of the *Houſe of Commons*.

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## *Mr.* Toland's *Letter to a Member of the House of Commons in* Ireland, *&c.*

Dublin, *Septemb.* 3. 1697.

*SIR,*

When the *Christian Religion* is attack'd by Atheists and others, they constantly charge it with *Contradiction* or *Obscurity*; and Mr. *Toland*'s design in the Publication of his Book was to defend *Christianity* from such unjust Imputations, as he more than once declares in his Preface, and as he thinks it every Christian's Duty to do, according to his Ability or Opportunity. If we might judg of his Performance by his profest Intentions, we should conclude it to be extraordinary good; but we must on the other hand reckon it as bad, if, without further Examination, we regard the strange Outcries that are made against it both from the *Pulpit* and the *Press*. That a Man should be run down because it is the fashion, or by

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*Interested* Persons, and such as are influenc'd by 'em, is nothing strange; for one way or other the like happens every day: but that a Book should be condemn'd by wholesale, without assigning the particular Faults or Mistakes in it, and by many that never read it, is visibly unjust. What has contributed to make Mr. *Toland* (whom neither his Age, nor Fortune, nor Preferment renders formidable) the Object of so much Heat and Noise, and after what manner his Enemies of all sorts have treated him under a zealous pretence, he's like very speedily to inform such of the World as will please to concern themselves. But not considering the Honourable *House of Commons*, or your self in particular, among the number of his *Adversaries* but as his *Judges*, he thinks convenient to clear those few Points which are reported to afford matter of Exception to some in the *Committee of Religion*. But, before this be done, he desires that two or three Particulars may be a little consider'd.

Mr. *Toland*, in the first place, is of opinion it portends much Happiness to the Nation, that the *Commons* (who have all the right imaginable to it) should take the cognizance of such things into their own Hands. And tho his Book should, as it's

very probable, happen to fall under their Censure, yet his love to Mankind cannot but make him extremely pleas'd with the Consequences he foresees must necessarily follow from such an authentick Precedent in this Country, where it was most peculiarly wanting. Nor does he think it more reasonable for him to be angry at his private ill luck, than it would be for some to be out of love with *Parliaments* themselves (which is the best Constitution in the Universe) because they are *mistaken* sometimes, and that an Act is *repeal'd* in one Session which was establish'd in another; not considering that such an Inconvenience is infinitely overballanc'd by several excellent Laws, and by the Remedy that may likewise be had to this pretended Disorder from that very Court, upon better *Information* or *Temper*.

Secondly, Mr. *Toland* does not complain that he alone in the Kingdom is disturb'd for his Opinion, but is heartily glad that no more are troubl'd upon that account. For as he takes *Persecution* to be one of the chief Marks and Pillars of the *Antichristian Church*, so he looks upon an impartial *Liberty* of writing and speaking whatever is not destructive of *Civil Society*, to be the greatest advantage of any Coun-

try,

try, whether the Learning, or the Commerce, or the very Peace and Tranquillity thereof be consider'd. " Yet it cannot " but look mighty odly to indifferent Per- " sons, that all the *Dissenters* from the " Establish'd Church, that the *Papists* who " pervert Christianity it self, that several " declar'd *Socinian*, ay and *Jacobite* Pam- " phlets should escape the burning Zeal of " those, who so furiously prosecute one " young Man only for the suspected Con- " sequences of his Book, as if the very Be- " ing or Destruction of all *Religion* de- " pended upon the fate of him, or his " Writings.

*Left out in the Original Copy.*

Thirdly, As for the *Errors* commonly laid to Mr. *Toland*'s charge, they are so various and inconsistent with one another, that no Man of ordinary sense could possibly hold them all at a time; and being credited by his Enemies without book, he may with more Justice deny than they can affirm them. He's not therefore oblig'd to take notice of any thing but what is alledg'd in formal words, or plainly inferr'd from his Book. Indeed some Consequences an Author might not perceive, which should render him the more excusable; but Mr. *Toland* confesses he foresaw several Consequences of his Book, even to part of the

the Opposition with which it has met, tho not that (after the Pulpits, Presses, and Juries) the *Commons* of *Ireland* should likewise honour it with their Animadversion.

Now what is said to have been objected in the *Committee* is, First, That the very Title *CHRISTIANITY NOT MYSTERIOUS* is Heretical. Whether the Committee decrees, a new or declares an old *Heresy*, Mr. *Toland* neither knows nor is much concern'd to understand, being conscious to himself of neither. If the *Title* be made good in the Book, 'tis orthodox or sound enough; and if not, yet he's still to seek for the *Heresy* of it. " If it be an " old Opinion, others would gladly be " inform'd in which Century it was first " taught, who the Author of it might be, " or by what Council it was condemn'd: " and if it be a new Notion, they desire " likewise to know whether the *House of* " *Commons* alone can decree it *Heresy*, be- " ing yet perfect strangers to any such " Power claim'd by that Honourable Bo- " dy.

*Left out in the Original Copy.*

But 'tis affirm'd, that by his *Title* he rejects the *Mysteries* of the Gospel. If by *Mysteries* be meant the *Doctrines* themselves, he denies none of them; but that after Revelation they are not *mysterious* or obscure, he

he ſtill maintains for the Honour of *Chriſtianity*. A great many without doors very wiſely conclude that he believes not the Doctrines, becauſe he thinks they are *plain*, and therefore the more *credible*; for that's all he means by *not myſterious*. But ſome People, otherwiſe credulous enough, believe no body capable of rendring that clear and eaſy, which to themſelves ſeems difficult or inſuperable.

It was likewiſe objected, that he makes a doubt whether the *Scriptures* be of Divine Authority. That bare Expreſſion, *If the Goſpel be really the word of God*, imports no ſuch matter, but very frequently the contrary; as for example, *If the Goſpel be true, this frame of the World ſhall be diſſolv'd*; which is not to queſtion, but more emphatically to aſſert the truth of the Propoſition. But this, I confeſs, is nothing to the caſe before us. The words in the Concluſion of the Book are theſe, *Nothing contradictory or inconceivable, however made an Article of Faith, can be contain'd in the Goſpel, if it be really the Word of God: for I have hitherto argued only upon this Suppoſition, for the Reaſon to be ſeen towards the end of the Preface.* The ſenſe of the words then muſt be determin'd by that Reaſon; and the Paſſage referr'd to in the Preface is this, *viz.* Pag. 170.

*In*

Pref. p. 24. *In the following Discourse, which is the first of three, &c. the Divinity of the New Testament is taken for granted. In the next Discourse, &c. I attempt a particular and rational Explanation of the reputed Mysteries of the Gospel. And in the third, I demonstrate the Verity of Divine Revelation against Atheists and all Enemies of Reveal'd Religion.* Now is it not something strange that a Man should question what he takes for granted, and which the Method he follow'd would not permit him to prove before his time, that is, not form the Conclusion before the Premises? In one place he positively affirms

Pag. 33. the *Scriptures to contain the brightest Characters of Divinity.* But that the force of Calumny may evidently appear, let this other Passage of the same Book be consider'd:

Pag. 46. *What we discours'd of Reason before,* says he, *and Revelation now, being duly weigh'd, all the Doctrines and Precepts of the New Testament (if it be indeed Divine) must consequently agree with Natural Reason and our own ordinary Ideas. THIS every considerate and well dispos'd Person will find by the careful perusal of it; and whoever undertakes this Task will confess the Gospel not to be HIDDEN from us, nor afar off, but very nigh us, in our Mouths and in our HEARTS.* But this whole Chapter must have been transcrib'd,

were

were all that's to our purpose in it to be nicely quoted; for every word of it from N° 22. to the end, is a Justification of the Method and Stile of the *New Testament*. Yet lest any suspicion of Fallacy might remain where the Particle *IF* occurs, I demand what Declaration can be conceived in stronger terms than the following Passage; for you shall be troubl'd with no more, tho I might easily cite forty others relating to this Head. The words are,

*Whether or no Christianity is mysterious, ought to be naturally decided by the New Testament, wherein the Christian Faith is originally contain'd. I heartily desire to put the Case upon this Issue, I appeal to this Tribunal; for did I not infinitely prefer the Truth I learn from these sacred Records to all other Considerations, I should never assert that there are no Mysteries in Christianity. The Scriptures have engag'd me in this Error, if it be one; and I will sooner be reputed Heterodox with these only on my side, than to pass for Orthodox with the whole World, and have them against me.* Pag. 88.

It was likewise objected that Mr. *Toland* shew'd not a due Respect to CHRIST, because he always stiles him in his Book barely CHRIST, or at most only JESUS CHRIST.

CHRIST. If this be any Disrespect, the most Orthodox Divines are as guilty of it in their Writings; and the *Apostles* themselves speak of him without any additional Titles a great many times in the Gospel. 'Tis otherwise, I grant, when some special occasion requires them to be more express; and when Mr. *Toland* was declaring the Head of his Church, he says, *I am neither of* Paul, *nor of* Cephas, *nor of* Apollos, *but of the Lord JESUS CHRIST alone, who is the Author and Finisher of my Faith.* And here I cannot forbear admiring how Mr. *Toland* should be deem'd an *Arian* or *Socinian*, seeing, for ought appears in his Book, he may lay a better claim to any other Sect, except the *Papists*, than to them; for these three are the only Parties he opposes by name. But if his Religion is to be really discover'd by his Book, 'tis utterly impossible he should be either an *Arian* or *Socinian*. They both of 'em (from different Notions) believe JESUS CHRIST to be a meer Creature-God, which Mr. *Toland* does not; and, to mend one Absurdity by a greater, they join in paying their Deify'd Creature Divine Worship, which Mr. *Toland* judges impious and ridiculous. His own words are these; *Tho the Socinians disown this Practice* (of admitting

*Pref.* p. 26.

Pag. 27.

Con-

Contradictions in Religion) *I am mistaken if either they or the Arians can make their Notions of a Dignify'd and Creature-God capable of Divine Worship, appear more reasonable than the extravagancies of other Sects touching the Article of the Trinity*; such as the Whimsies of *EUTYCHES*, *GENTILIS*, and the rest. In short, Mr. *Toland* had no natural occasion to declare his Sentiments relating to CHRIST's Person, that and the other particular Doctrines of the Gospel being the Subject of the second and third Books he promises, and by which alone his Conformity or Dissent with the *Common Christianity* is to be discern'd. Nor had his Adversaries from the Press run into so many gross Mistakes, and been at the trouble of several no less unhappy than needless Conjectures, had they but Patience or Phlegm enough to attend the Publication of those Pieces.

It was objected also that he slighted the *Sacraments* (which is a term he never uses) by making them bare *Ceremonies*. That he cal'd 'em any where mere *Ceremonies* he absolutely denies, tho he now affirms with all Christians, that the Actions of *breaking Bread* and *washing with Water* are as much Ceremonial under the *New Testament*, as *Circumcision* or the *Passover* were under the

a Book he publish'd in another Country. His Errand hither, God knows, was neither to propagate nor receive any Doctrines, new or old; and as he was far from ever designing to fix his constant Residence here, so he thinks himself as liable to be disturb'd in any other place, whither his Curiosity or Business may lead him, as in this Kingdom; which is a way of proceeding hitherto unheard of in the World. I shall give you no further trouble when I have told you; that I resolve always to continue an unalterable Friend to *Liberty*, an Advocate for *Religion* without Superstition, a true Lover of my *Country*, and in particular, *Sir*, your most humble Servant,

*JOHN TOLAND.*

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THere was enough said in the preceding *Letter* concerning the *Socinianism* laid to Mr. *Toland*'s Charge, and I doubt very much whether now there be any *Socinians* in *England*; I am sure, no considerable Body of them: for the Theology of the *Unitarians*, who vulgarly pass un-

under that name, is very different from that of *Socinus*. But these *Unitarians* in one of their latest Prints disown any Service intended their Cause by Mr. *Toland's* Book; and all Sects, we know, are ready upon the least apparent Conformity to augment their own Numbers, especially with such as they seem to value for their Learning or other Qualifications. In *The Agreement of the Unitarians with the Catholick Church* occurs the following Paragraph.

" The (Bishop of *Worcester*'s) eighth and " tenth Chapters, are imployed in oppo- " sing, and, as he thinks, in exposing and " ridiculing some Interpretations of a few " Texts of Scripture by the *Unitarians*; " and attacking a few Paragraphs in Mr. " *Toland*'s Book, *Christianity not Mysteri-* " *ous*. I know not what it was to his " Lordship's purpose to fall upon Mr. *To-* " *land*'s Book. But if he would needs at- " tack the Book, he should have dealt " fairly. He should have discuss'd the " main Argument in it, and not carpt on- " ly at a few Passages; and those too so " mangl'd and deform'd by his Represen- " tation of them, that I dare to affirm " Mr. *Toland* does not know his own " Book in the Bishop's Representation of " it. I do not perceive, to speak truly, P. 54, 55.

" but that Book ſtill ſtands in its full
" ſtrength; if it has not alſo acquir'd a
" farther Reputation, by occaſion of this
" ſo unſucceſsful nibling at it. But ſup-
" poſe the *Biſhop* had diſarm'd the *Gentle-*
" *man, what is that to us? Do we offer this*
" *Book againſt the Trinity of the Realiſts?*
" *Was it written with Intention to ſerve us?*
" *Does it contain any of our Allegations from*
" *Reaſon, againſt the Trinity of* Philoponus,
" Joachim, *and* Gentilis? We deſire him
" to anſwer to the Reaſons in our own
" Books againſt the *Trinity* of the *Tritheiſts.*
" But to theſe he ſays not a word, but on-
" ly falls upon Mr. *Toland*'s Book; *in*
" *which, or for which we are not in the leaſt*
" *concern'd.* Nor do I think the Learned
" and Ingenious Author will hold him-
" ſelf to be intereſted to defend that *Chriſ-*
" *tianity not myſterious* with which his
" Lordſhip preſents us. So far that cele-
brated *Unitarian.*

A *good Temper* and *ſound Judgment* uſu-
ally go together, and if the abſence of the
former be no Demonſtration that the latter
is alſo wanting, yet queſtionleſs it creates
a very reaſonable ſuſpicion of it; for a bad
Cauſe is generally ſupported by Violence
and ill Arts, while Truth eſtabliſhes it ſelf
only by Lenity and Perſuaſion. This

is so certain, that when an undiscerning Person happens to be engag'd on the right side, and employs Force or Calumny in its defence, we always find he does it infinitely more harm than good. That such as receive Gain or Honour by any thing should oppose those who go about to destroy it, tho with design to introduce a better in the room of it, is no great wonder tho it be manifestly unjust. Thus the Silversmiths of *Ephesus* headed by *Demetrius* rais'd a mighty Tumult against the Apostle *Paul* for ruining their Trade, which was solely maintain'd by Lies and Impostures at the expence of the Peoples Credulity. The *Primitive Christians* were represented by the *Heathen Priests* as Atheistical, Rebellious, Incestuous, and in a word, polluted with all manner of Wickedness and Impiety; by which nefarious Artifices they procur'd those innocent Persons to be cruelly persecuted with Infamy, Confiscation, and Death it self in all its shapes. The *Waldenses*, *Wiccliffists*, *Hussites*, and the first *Reformers* were treated after the same manner by the Church of *Rome*; and when they could not seize their Persons, they never fail'd to load 'em with horrid, black, and monstrous Aspersions, that they might not be wanting to

prejudice 'em all manner of ways, as if this had been the very Method prescrib'd in the Gospel to reduce the Erroneous. Thus we read such accounts of *Luther* and *Calvin*'s Lives publish'd by the *Monks* of those Times, as paint 'em worse than Devils, and that make their Doctrine as different from what we know it to be, as the Historians were from telling Truth.

I am sorry to observe among us any Remains of that implacable and bitter Spirit, tho such as distinguish themselves by their eminent Vertues retain no tincture of so mean and base a Disposition. The Character which that most excellent Person the late *Archbishop* of *Canterbury* has left on Record of the *Socinians* (when he was strenuously arguing against their Opinions) ought to be a Model which no body should be asham'd to imitate. He did not think to lessen his own Reputation, or to hurt his Cause, when he frankly acknowledg'd them *to be a Pattern of the fair way of disputing, and debating matters of Religion without Heat and unseemly Reflections upon their Adversaries. They generally argue matters with that Temper and Gravity*, says he, *and with that freedom from Passion and Transport which becomes a serious and weighty Argument: and for the most part they reason*

*Four Serm. against the* Socin. *p.* 57, 58.

*on closely and clearly, with extraordinary guard and caution, with great dexterity and decency; and yet with smartness and subtlety enough, with a very gentle heat and few hard words: Vertues to be prais'd wherever they are found, yea even in an Enemy, and very worthy our Imitation.* Yet this great Man, who so candidly represents his Adversaries, was himself most scurrilously and unworthily handl'd by his own and the Enemies of the Government. And here I must do Justice to Dr. *Payne* lately deceas'd, who, as he tells the World in his Letter to the Bishop of *Rochester*, was desir'd by his Grace the present *Arch-bishop* of *Canterbury* to answer Mr. *Toland*; and why should not every body that thinks him in the wrong take the same liberty of writing against him, as he did to publish his thoughts before? Now if Mr. *Toland's* own Judgment ought to be receiv'd in this case, the Doctor has in his two Sermons said more against him than the Bishop of *Worcester*, Mr. *Norris*, the Anonymous *Latinian*, the Author of the Occasional Paper, Mr. *Beverly*, Mr. *Gailhard*, Mr. *Browne*, any other Answerer; and yet instead of treating him like a *Dominican Inquisitor*, he uses, with some little warmth, such Civil and Christian Language as shews his

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Metropolitan's Judgment and Moderation in pitching upon him, as well as his own Skill and Sincerity in the management of his Trust.

Dr. Payne's Serm. p. 65, &c.

"We must hold this *Mystery of Faith* (says Dr. *Payne*, speaking to his Auditory) with a *Christian good Temper*, and not lose that while we are contending for the other; nor let our Contentions grow so warm and intemperate, so fierce and cruel as to forget and violate the plain Morals of Christianity, while we are over earnestly disputing for the Faith of it; or perhaps *only for some false and mistaken, or at least some useless Opinions, and over-nice and subtle Controversies about it.* This has been the fault of those who have contended more for Victory than Truth, and more for their own Credit and Vain-glory than the Christian Faith; who tho they may be in the right, as 'tis ten to one that they are not (*for Truth seldom dwells with such a Spirit of Rage, and Pride, and Passion, but rather with a quite other Temper*) yet they greatly disserve the Cause they so unduly manage. And as they are never like to convince their Adversaries, so they give others just ground to suspect that

"they

" *they supply want of better Reason and*
" *stronger Arguments with weak and impo-*
" *tent Calumny, with undecent and unbe-*
" *coming Reflections.* This is as Criminal
" and as Unchristian as the *Error* or the
" *Heresy* they are so zealous against; and
" 'tis to be doubted *'tis rather a false Fire*
" *and a hypocritical Zeal, not for the Cause*
" *of God so much as their own*; and that
" *this is kindl'd not from the Altar, but some*
" *other place. and blown up by some private*
" PIQUE *and sinister Designs*, that thus
" blazes out to such an outrageous degree
" as to consume and destroy, not only
" *its Adversaries* if it were in its power,
" but even the most vital and substantial
" Parts of Christianity, even *Peace, Love,*
" and *Charity*; and contends for the *Chris-*
" *tian Faith* with such a most *Diabolical*
" and *Unchristian Temper.* This is very
" far from the Spirit of Christ and Christi-
" anity; and however precious the Faith
" be, yet the Apostle tells us, *if we had*
" *all Faith, and understood all Mysteries, and*
" *all Knowledg, yet without Charity we are*
" *nothing*, however great we may be in
" our own Thoughts. And such a Zeal
" of Sowrness and Bitterness, as *it is gene-*
" *rally without Knowledg, so it is always*
" *without Religion*; and tho it *hold the My-*
" *stery*

" *ſtery of Faith* (and do not rather per-
" vert and corrupt it) yet, to be ſure,
" this is not, according to the Apoſtle's
" Advice, *in a pure Conſcience.*

There needs no more to be added in this place but a ſincere acknowledgment from Mr. *Toland*, that (notwithſtanding any Prejudices he may be ſuppos'd to entertain againſt *Ireland*) he met there, and had the Honour to be acquainted with a great many worthy Gentlemen, who by their extraordinary Parts, Education, and Vertues, merit to be diſtinguiſh'd in any Country of the World. He knows ſeveral Men and Women (and doubtleſs there are or ſhould be more) who don't confine all Salvation to the narrow Limits of a *Sect*, nor miſtake the affected *Phraſes* of any Party for the only true *Chriſtianity*: who neither hate nor deſpiſe others for differing from them in *Opinion*, no more than in Features or Complexion; knowing that no body can believe as he pleaſes, and it were the higheſt Injuſtice to expect a Man ſhould profeſs with his Mouth what in his Heart he deteſts: Perſons who can live eaſily with all Men, as being of one Race, and fellow-Citizens of the ſame World; not denying any body the liberby of improving the Happineſs of the *Soci-*

*ety*

*ety* by his Invention, Learning, Induſtry, or Example: And who, in a word, are not willing to deprive themſelves of real and certain *Advantages* for the ſake of uncertain, conteſted, or uſeleſs *Speculations*; as if one that wants it ſhould reject the profer'd Service of an honeſt and able Accountant, becauſe he believes not a World in the Moon; or not allow an Ingenious Man's Converſation to be agreeable, for ridiculing the Fable of St. *Patrick's* Purgatory. As for the *Publick Peace*, which is pretended to be endanger'd by a TOLERATION, it has been diſturb'd or ſubverted in all Ages and Places of the World, not either by *Conſcientious* or *Enquiring* Men, but by thoſe who no leſs dogmatically than tyrannically *impoſe* upon their Underſtandings; and who, in ſpite of all their Diſguiſes, appear to be much more concern'd for SOVERAIGNTY than REFORMATION. 'Tis likewiſe clear as the Sun they were Mr. *Toland's* Enemies that made, or continue all the needleſs ſtir about his Book, and not his Friends, who only acted defenſively for the *Common Liberty* of Mankind, but not upon his private account. Nor does he (who, one would think, ſhould know it beſt) believe any Perſons in *Ireland* or elſewhere favour'd him

him a jot the more for writing that *Trea*
*tise*; and if they did, he was never yet in
form'd of this accessory Kindness either by
themselves, or others by their Deputation
neither does he make returns of Love or
Respect to any body living upon this mere
Consideration.

*Qui statuit aliquid, parte inaudita altera*
Æquum. *licet statuerit, haud* Æquus *est.*
Seneca.

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*FINIS.*