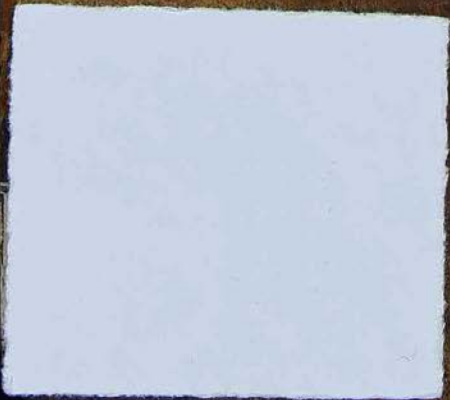


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This is the first
of my printed Sermons



VI
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1808

John Toland

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.**

The Second Edition Enlarg'd.

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 for Sam. Buckley at the Dolphin
over against St. Dunstons Church in
Fleetstreet. **MDCXCVI.**

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



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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 receiv'd by any Party, or that is establish'd by Law; but he is either forc'd 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
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have the Courage to act more above-board, 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 maintain'd

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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 Assertors

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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 employ 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
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of my Conversion. Thus, I have been very early accusom'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

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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 lisp'ing half-form'd Words of her prattling 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-

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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 Extrems. 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

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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 puzzling 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 of 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 myself about, but those of Jesus Christ and his Apostles. And in manag-

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ing this Argument, with every other good Action, I don't merely rely upon my own poor Attainments, but also upon the Grace of God, who, I hope, will enable me to vindicate his reveal'd Will from the most unjust Imputations of Contradiction and Obscurity.

I may probably differ in many things from Persons deservedly eminent for their Learning, and Piety; but that ought to be no Advantage against me if Truth is evidently for me. Since Religion is calculated for reasonable Creatures, 'tis Conviction and not Authority that should bear Weight with them. A wise and good Man will judg of the Merits of a Cause consider'd only in it self, without any regard to Times, Places, or Persons. No Numbers, no Examples, no Interests can ever bias his solid Judgment, or corrupt his Integrity. He knows no Difference between

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tween Popish Infallibility, and being oblig'd blindly to acquiesce in the Decisions of fallible Protestants. And for my own part, as I would have none by false or unfair Consequences make me say what I never thought of; so I would not be told I contradict any thing but Scripture or Reason, which, I'm sure, agree very well together. Nor can it appear strange that I should insist upon these Terms, since I most readily submit my self to them, and give all the World the same Right over me. I am not therefore to be put out of Countenance by venerable Names, and pompous Citations, that have no Value but such as an ugly Rust and Colour give antient Coins. God alone, and such as are inspir'd by him, can prescribe Injunctions relating to the World to come, whilst human Powers regulate the Affairs of this. Now, to speak more particularly concerning

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 Dissertation 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 was 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
a tell

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

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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 Cabalistical 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

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ess 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,

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,

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

But I will not repeat what I have expressly written of this Matter in an Epistolary Dissertation, now lying by me, entitul'd, *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.

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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 Knowledge may easily frame a clear and coherent System, I demonstrate, Thirdly, that the
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Christian Religion was not form'd after such a manner, but was divinely reveal'd from Heaven. These three Subjects I handle in as many Books; whereof, as I said before, the following Discourse is the first.

Before I finish, I must take notice of those Gentlemen who love to call Names in Religion: for what are all Party-Distinctions, but, according to them, so many sorts of Hereticks, or Schismatics, or worse? But I assure them, that 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. I have as much Right to have others call'd after my Name, as they to give me a Denomination, and that is no Right at all. I say not this to prevent being invidiously represented, according to a very common Artifice, under the No-
tion

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

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 Church-men, 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 Hereticks, 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

will be no hard matter to prove me as little favourable to this Religion, as I'm far from making any Apologies for my self to the Professors of it.

As for charging Church-men with being the Authors and Introducers of the Christian Mysteries, they must be my Enemies for telling the Truth, who are displeas'd at it: for there is no matter of Fact more evident from every Page both of the Civil, and Ecclesiastick Histories. Nor had the Laity ever any hand in that Business, otherwise than as confirming by Legal Sanctions what they were first persuaded to by the preaching of their Priests; as they do now sometimes, at their Sollicitation, imprison excommunicated, and prosecute erroneous Persons, after the Excommunication is first pronounc'd, and the Heresy decreed or declar'd by the Clergy. Now as all Church-men are not
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agreed

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.

ERRATA.

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CHRISTIANITY not
Mysterious, &c.

The State of the Question.

N^o 1. **T**HERE 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 justify'd, tho we should grant them to be absolutely infallible.

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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

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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

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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-

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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 Communion.

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.*

S E C.

SECTION I.

Of R E A S O N.

I. **T**HE 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 Properties: 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*.

B 4 CHAP.

C H A P. I.

What REASON is not.

2. **T**O 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 speak 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 Ch. 2. 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 employs 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.*

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 Knowledge is, in effect, nothing else but the Perception of the Agreement or Disagreement of our Ideas in a greater or lesser Number, whereinssoever this Agreement or Disagreement may consist. And because this Perception is immediate or mediate, our Knowledge 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 Blue; 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 Ch. 2. (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*.

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 applies 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 *Dis-*

agreement

Ch. 2. 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*.

CHAP.

C H A P. III.

Of the Means of INFORMATION.

10. **B**UT 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 Perswasion*: 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 Knowledge, without necessarily commanding our Assent*. By *the Ground of Perswasion*, 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^o 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

all our Knowledge; nor can we possibly have Ideas any other way without new Organs or Faculties. Ch. 3.

11. *Authority*, abusively so call'd, as if all its Informations were to be receiv'd without Examen, is either *Humane* or *Divine*: *Humane Authority* is call'd also *Moral Certitude*; as when I believe an intelligible Relation made by my Friend, because I have no Reason to suspect his Veracity, nor he any Interest to deceive me. Thus *all possible Matters of Fact, duly attested by co-evous Persons as known to them, and successively related by others of different Times, Nations, or Interests, who could neither be impos'd upon themselves, nor be justly suspected of combining together to deceive others, ought to be receiv'd by us for as certain and indubitable as if we had seen them with our own Eyes, or heard them with our own Ears*. By this means it is, I believe there was such a City as *Carthage*, such a Reformer as *Luther*, and that there is such a Kingdom as *Poland*. When all these Rules concur in any Matter of Fact, I take it then for *Demonstration*, which is nothing else but *Irresistible Evidence from*
C
proper

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 Knowledge but by some of these four means, *viz. The Experience of the Senses, the Experience of the Mind, Humane and Divine Revelation.*

C H A P. IV.

Of the Ground of PERSWASION.

13. **N**OW, as we are extremely 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 *Perswasion*, is *Evidence*; and it consists

in the exact Conformity of our Ideas or *Ch. 4.* 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.

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 Knowledge of them as useful as that of the Properties which really exist in the Things

Sect. I. Things themselves. Without the *Heat* and *Light* of Fire, what should its *Figure* and *Quantity* serve for? And what sets a Price upon Amber-greece, but the *Perfume*? The Reason then why I believe the Idea of a Rose to be evident, is the true Representation it gives me of that Flower. I know it is true, because the Rose must contain all the Properties which its Idea exhibits, either *really*, as the Bulk and Form, or *occasionally*, as the Colour, Taste and Smell. And I cannot doubt of this, because the Properties must belong to the exemplary Cause, or to Nothing, or be the Figments of my own Brain: But *Nothing can have no Properties*; and *I cannot make one single Idea at my Pleasure*, nor *avoid receiving Ideas when Objects work on my Senses*: Therefore I conclude the Properties of the Rose are not the Creatures of my Fancy, but belong to the exemplary Cause, that is, the Object.

15. The Evidence of *the Ideas of the Operations of the Mind*, is infallible as that of our own *Being*; and if by any *Impossibility* we should call the latter in question, 'twould but serve to give

us

us the greater Assurance of it: For besides the unavoidable Supposition of our Existence in this very Proposition, *I doubt if I am*; so it is clear, that whatever doubts must needs be as much something as what affirms, and this something I call *my self*. Let us now but strictly require this *Evidence* in all the Agreements and Disagreements of our Ideas in things meerly speculative, and as far as we can in Matters of common Practice, (for these must of necessity sometimes admit *Probability* to supply the Defect of *Demonstration*); and we may without a lazy Reliance upon *Authority*, or a sceptical *Progress to Infinity*, successfully trace the Truth, and bring it to view the Light from those subterraneous Caverns where it is suppos'd to lie conceal'd. It is impossible for us to err as long as we take *Evidence* for our Guide; and we never mistake, but when we wander from it by abusing our *Liberty*, in *denying that of any thing which belongs to it*, or *attributing to it what we do not see in its Idea*. This is the primary and universal Origin of all our *Errors*.

C 3

16. But

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 embrace 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 Ch. 4. *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 cheer-² *fully* 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.*

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. to another. If Things be deliver'd in
 Words not understood by the Hearer,
 nor demonstrated to agree with other
 Truths already very clear, or now so
 made to him, he cannot conceive 'em.
 Likewise if the Order of Nature
 and due Simplicity be not observ'd,
 he cannot see them evidently true or
 false; and so suspends his Judgment,
 (if no Affection sways him) where
 another, it may be, receives perfect Sa-
 tisfaction. Hence it is that we fre-
 quently, with Indignation and Won-
 der, attribute that to the Stupidity and
 Obstinacy of others, which is the Fruit
 of our own confus'd Ratiocination, for
 want of having thoroughly digested our
 Thoughts; or by affecting ambiguous
 Expressions, and using such as the o-
 ther has no Ideas to at all, or different
 ones from ours.

SECT.

SECT. II.

*That the Doctrines of the
 Gospel are not contrary
 to Reason.*

I. **A**fter having said so much of
Reason, I need not operose-
 ly shew what it is to be con-
 trary to it; for I take it to be very in-
 telligible from the precedent Section,
 that *what is evidently repugnant to clear
 and distinct Ideas, or to our common No-
 tions, is contrary to Reason*: I go on
 therefore to prove, that *the Doctrines
 of the Gospel*, if it be the Word of
 God, *cannot be so*. But if it be ob-
 jected, that very few maintain they
 are: I reply, that no *Christian* I know
 of now (for we shall not disturb the
 Ashes of the Dead) expressly says
Reason and the *Gospel* are contrary to
 one another. But, which returns to
 the

Se^ct. II. 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.*

CHAP. I.

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

2. **T**HIS 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*,

tiation, and other ridiculous Fables of Ch. 1. 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*.

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. Left 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. dom afterwards correct by more free
 and riper Thoughts: So *desiring to be*
 1 Tim. 1. 7. *Teachers of the Law, and understanding*
neither what they say, nor those things
which they affirm, they obtrude upon us

Mat. 15. 9. *for Doctrines the Commandments of Men.*

And truly well they may; for if we once admit this Principle, I know not what we can deny that is told us in the Name of the Lord. This Doctrine, I must remark it too, does highly concern us of the *Laitie*; for however it came to be first establish'd, the *Clergy* (always excepting such as deserve it) have not been since wanting to themselves, but improv'd it so far as not only to make the plainest, but the most trifling things in the World *mysterious*, that we might constantly depend upon them for the Explication. And nevertheless, they must not, if they could, explain them to us, without ruining their own Design, let them never so fairly pretend it. But, overlooking all Observations proper for this Place, let us enter upon the immediate Examen of the Opinion it self.

4. The first thing I shall insist upon is, that if any Doctrine of the *New Testa-*

Testament be contrary to Reason, we Ch. 1.
 have no manner of Idea, of it. To
 say, for instance, that a Ball is white
 and black at once, is to say just nothing;
 for these Colours are so incompatible
 in the same Subject, as to exclude all
 Possibility of a real positive Idea or
 Conception. So to say, as the *Papists*,
 that *Children dying before Baptism are*
damn'd without Pain, signifies nothing
 at all: For if they be intelligent Crea-
 tures in the other World, to be eter-
 nally excluded God's Prefence, and
 the Society of the Blessed, must prove
 ineffable Torment to them: But if
 they think they have no Understand-
 ing, then they are not capable of
 Damnation in their Sense; and so they
 should not say they are in *Limbo-*
Dungeon, but that either they had no
 Souls, or were annihilated; which
 (had it been true, as they can never
 shew) would be reasonable enough,
 and easily conceiv'd. Now if we have
 no Ideas of a thing, it is certainly but
 lost Labour for us to trouble our selves
 about it: For what I don't conceive,
 can no more give me right Notions of
 God, or influence my Actions, than

Sect. II. a Prayer deliver'd in an unknown
 ~~~~~ Tongue can excite my Devotion: If  
 1 Cor. 14. *the Trumpet gives an uncertain Sound,*  
 8, 9. *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 in-  
 deed to common Notions, yet consi-  
 stent 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 extraor-  
 dinary 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

not how, infus'd into their Souls in Ch. 1.  
 order to apprehend me: and accord- ~~~~~  
 ing to this Hypothesis, they could no  
 more, without a Miracle, understand  
 my Speech than the chirping of Birds;  
 and if they knew not the Meaning of my  
 Voice, I should even to them be a Barba- 1 Cor. 14.  
 rian, notwithstanding I spoke Mysteries 11.  
 in the Spirit. Ver. 2.  
 But what do they mean  
 by consisting with themselves, yet not  
 with our common Notions? *Four* may  
 be call'd *Five* in Heaven; but so the  
 Name only is chang'd, the Thing re-  
 mains still the same. And since we can-  
 not in this World know any thing but  
 by our common Notions, how shall we  
 be sure of this pretended Consistency  
 between our present seeming Contradictions,  
 and the Theology of the  
 World to come? For as 'tis by Reason  
 we arrive at the Certainty of God's  
 own Existence, so we cannot other-  
 wise discern his Revelations but by their  
 Conformity with our natural Notices  
 of him, which is in so many words, to  
 agree with our common Notions.

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

Sect. II. *to Reason, did they find it contain'd in 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 o-
 bey: Nay, we can never be sure which
 is which. For the Proof of the Di-
 vinity 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 *Transubstantia-*
tion. To say it bears witness to it self,
 is equally to establish the *Alcoran* or
 the *Poran*. And 'twere a notable Ar-
 gument to tell a *Heathen*, that the
Church has declar'd it, when all So-
 cieties will say as much for themselves,
 if we take their word for it. Besides,
 it

it may be, he would ask whence the *Ch. I.*
Church had Authority to decide this ~~~~~
 Matter? And if it should be answer'd
 from the *Scripture*, a thousand to one
 but he would divert himself with this
 Circle. You must believe that the
Scripture is Divine, because the *Church*
 has so determin'd it, and the *Church*
 has this deciding Authority from the
Scripture. 'Tis doubted if this Power
 of the *Church* can be prov'd from the
 Passages alledg'd to that purpose; but
 the *Church* it self (a Party concern'd)
 affirms it. Hey-day! are not these
 eternal Rounds very exquisite Inven-
 tions to giddy and entangle the Un-
 thinking and the Weak?

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

D

order-

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

Num. 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 Ch. I. 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?

9. It may be demanded why I have so long insisted upon this Article, since that none expressly makes *Scripture* and *Reason* contradictory, was acknowledged 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

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grant

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 depriv'd of all solid Satisfaction. He is constantly perplex'd with Scruples not to be remov'd by his *implicite Faith*; and so is ready to be shaken, and carry'd 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, Ch. 1. walking after the Vanity of their Minds, having their Understandings darken'd, being Strangers to the Life of God through the Ignorance that is in them, because of the Hardness of their Hearts. Ephes. 4. 17, 18. 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.

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.

C H A P. II.

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

II. **A**gainst 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

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I were not told; yet I believe nothing Ch. 2. 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*.

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

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con-

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 it self, 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

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.

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 1 Cor. 2. 11.
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* Deut. 29.
belong unto the Lord; so *those things* 29.

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*

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 Impositions 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 qualifi'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.

17. This Reason perswades, and the Scriptures expressly speak it. Those *Prophets or Dreamers* were to be ston'd Deut. 13. 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

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 *Prifon*, 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.

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.*

Deut. 18.
21, 22.

Jer. 32.7,8

Luke 1.
34, 35.

Ver. 38.

Mar. 7. 14.

2 Tim. 3.

Tit. 1. 10.

1 Theſſ. 5.

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 perſwaded 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 Knowledge, or by Propheſying, or by Doctrine.*

Ch. 2.

Pſal. 32.9.

Eph. 5.15:

1 Cor. 10.

15.

1 Cor. 14.6.

C H A P. III.

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

19. **W**HAT 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 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*. 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, Ch. 3. 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, Joh. 3. 2. *No Man can do these Miracles which thou do'st, except God be with him*. Some of the Pharisees acknowledg'd *no Sinner* Joh. 9. 16. *could do such things*. And others, that *they exceeded the Power of the Devil*. 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

Sect. II. the *Messiah*; consider the Works I do, whether they be such as become God, and are attributed to him: If they be, then conclude and believe that I am he, &c. In effect, several of the People said, *that Christ when he should come could do no greater Wonders*; and many of the Jews believ'd, when they saw the Miracles which he did.

Joh. 7. 31. *that Christ when he should come could do no greater Wonders*; and many of the Jews believ'd, when they saw the Miracles which he did.

Joh. 2. 23. *of the Jews believ'd, when they saw the Miracles which he did.*

Heb. 2. 3, 4. 21. *How shall we escape, says the Apostle, if we neglect so great a Salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirm'd unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness with divers Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own Will? Those who heard Christ, the Author of our Religion, speak, and saw the Wonders which he wrought, renounce all the hidden things of Dishonesty, all Craftiness and deceitful handling of the Word of God: And that they manifest nothing but Truth, they commend themselves to every Man's Conscience, that is, they appeal to every Man's Reason, in the Sight of God. Peter exhorts Christians to be ready always to give an Answer to every one that asks them a Reason of their Hope. Now to what purpose*

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.

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 unprejudic'd Person shall use those Means, will find them notorious Deceivers, or much deceiv'd themselves, who maintain the *New Testament* is written without any Order or certain Scope, but just as Matters came into the *Apostles* Heads, whether transported with Enthusiastick Fits, (as some will have it) or, according to others,

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Seēt.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 Knowledge 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

be drawn from the Obscurity of the *Ch. 3.* Language in favour of the *irrational Hypothesis*: for all Men are suppos'd to understand the daily Use of their Mother-Tongue; whereas the Stile of the Learned is unintelligible to the Vulgar. And the plainest Authors that write as they speak, without the Disguise of pompous Elegance, have ever been accounted the best by all good Judges. It is a visible Effect of Providence that we have in our Hands the Monuments of the *Old Testament*, which in the *New* are always suppos'd, quoted, or alluded to. Nor is that all, for the *Jewish* Service and Customs continue to this day. If this had been true of the *Greeks* and *Romans*, we should be furnish'd with those Helps to understand aright many unknown Particulars of their Religion, which make us Rulers and Teachers in *Israel*. Besides, we have the *Talmud*, and other Works of the *Rabbins*, which, however otherwise useless, give us no small Light into the antient Rites and Language. And if after all we should be at a loss about the Meaning of any Expression, we ought rather to charge

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, Ch. 3. 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.

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,* 1 Cor. 2. 14. 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

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 shall add here some of the *Ch. 3.* 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*

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

C H A P. IV.

Objections answer'd, drawn from the Pravity of Humane REA- SON.

28. **T**Here 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 Ch. 4. 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.

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 extremely 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 grossly 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 awe the credulous Vulgar. For as they that walk after the

Rom. 8. *Flesh mind the things thereof, so their carnal Wisdom is Enmity against God.*

Heb. 12. 1. *Sin easily besets us. There is a Law in our*

Rom. 7. 23. *Members or Body, warring against the Law of our Minds or Reason. And when*

Ver. 21. *we would do Good, Evil is present with us. If thus we become stupid and unfit for earthly Speculations, how shall we believe*

Joh. 3. 12. *when we are told of heavenly things?*

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

† *Porcine* 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 Ch. 4. 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.

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 believ'd? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? 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.

Se^ct. 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 accusom'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 may

Jer. 13. 23.

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

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 Knowledge 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.

34. To

Sect. II. 34. To conclude, let no Body think
 to be excus'd by this imaginary Cor-
 ruption, but learn from the *Scripture*,
 our infallible Oracle, that the *Gospel*,
 if it be the Word of God, is only con-
 trary 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. whose Minds are blinded by the God of
 3. 4. 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 re-
 flect or consider; but it is not above
 the Possibility of their Reason when
 they shall better improve their Facul-
 ties. The Creation of the World was
 against the System of *Aristotle*, the Im-
 mortality of the Soul against the Hy-
 pothesis of *Epicurus*, and the || Liberty
 of*

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

of the Will was impugn'd by many Ch. 4.
 ancient *Philosophers*. But is this to be
 contrary to Reason? Have not these
 Men been quite baffl'd by as very
Heathens as themselves? And are not
 their other Errors since detected and
 exploded by most of the Learned?
 Besides, they wanted a principal mean
 of Information, viz. REVELATION.

F SECT.

SECT. III.

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

1. **W**E 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 reveal'd. In both these Senses *to be above*

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

CHAP. I.

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

2. **W**HAT 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. I. 22, 23, 25.
F 2 say,

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 luce. Virg. l. 6.
Æneid. v. 259. Callimach. Hymn. in Apol. v. 2.
Ἐκείνους ἐκείνους ὄντας Ἀλλήτῳ.

3. But the cunning Priests, who Ch. 1. 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

F 3

great

* Ὅς ἀμύητος ἢ ἀτέλεστος εἰς ἀδὲ ἀόκητος, ἐν βορβόρῳ κείσεται. Ὁ δὲ κηρυτταμένῳ τε ἢ τετελεσμένῳ, ἐπιείσοι ἀοικόμενῳ, μετὰ θεῶν οἰκίησι. Plat. in Phædon. pag. 69. Edit. Paris. 1578. Τελετῆς οἱ μετεχόντες, ὡς τὴν τῆς βίης τελευτῆς, ἢ τὴν συμπύκνῳ αἰώνῳ, ἡδύς τὰς ἐκπίδους ἔχουσι. Isocrat. in Panegyri. Initiatq; 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 Cereris ritus audeat vulgare Profanis?
Magnaque Threicio sacra reperta Samos? Ovid. l. 2. de Arte Amand. v. 601. Ὁ κακῶς ἐξεργασάμενος τὰ μυστήρια, δὲ τὰ ἀφαντὰ φηναύτης. Aristid.
‡ Νόμος, ἃ ἐξαιπὸντα τὰ μυστήρια τεδιδόται. 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-

* Ἦν ἀποκτείνῃ περὶ ἑμὸν Διαρῶσαν τὸν μύθον, λαμβάνειν τάλαντον. Aristophanes in *Avisibus*; etiam Suidas in voce.

† *Acarmanes* duo *Juvenes* per *Initiorum* dies non *Initiati* *Templum* *Cereris*, imprudentes *Religionis*, cum *cætera* turba *ingressi* sunt. *Facile* *eps* *Sermo* *prodidit*, *absurdè* *quædam* *percunctantes*: *Deductiq;* ad *Antistites* *Templi*, *quum* *palam* *esset* *per* *errorem* *in-* *gressos*, *tanquam* *ob* *infandum* *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 *Ch. 1.* *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*;

Μυειν.

Μυησις.

Μύστης.

Μυστήριον.

F 4

tho

* Ὅτι τὰ μυστήρια παραλαμβάνοντες, λέγονται ἐν ἀρχῇ μὴ μύσαι μετὰ ἐνιαυτὸν ὃ ἐπόπται ἢ ἑφοροί. Scholiast. in *Aristophanis* *Ranas*.

† Ἔστι τὸ μικρὰ [μυστήρια] ὡσπερ περὶ Ἰδαίου καὶ περὶ ἄλλων τῶν μεγάλων. Schol. in *Plut.* *Aristophan.* *Aët.* *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 veil'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'dly kept secret, or accidentally 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 Ch. 1.
 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*.

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 implicate Constitution raise a great Dust upon all Occasions, tho not able to speak of any thing pertinently when jostl'd 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 Knowledge, than of Art or Cunning in this Conduct.

CHAPTER 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 Knowledge 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 *increas'd in Wisdom as well as in Stature.* 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

* 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 stily 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

* Εγώ δ' ἔτ' ἄλλο τι καταλεπτόν ἦν γαίμαι σημαίνει
 ἄρα τὸ γνωστὸν, ἔτ' ἄλλο τι καταλαμβάνεται τὸ
 βεβαίως γινώσκων. Γαλήν' περὶ αἰετ. 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 Knowledge, 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.*

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 Fortrefs, 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

Ch. 2. 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.

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 *intrinsic 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 perswaded that the Modes of things must have

have such a Subject to exist in, (for Ch. 2. 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*.

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
G 2 Absur-

Sect. 3. *W* Aburdities 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

We certainly know as much of the *SOUL* as we do of any thing else, *Ch. 2.*
W if not more. We form the clearest Conceptions of Thinking, Knowing, Imagining, Willing, Hoping, Loving, and the like Operations of the Mind. But we are Strangers to the *Subject* wherein these Operations exist. So are we to that upon which the Roundness, Softness, Colour, and Taste of a Grape depend. There is nothing more evident than the Modes or Properties of *BODY*, as to be extended, solid, divisible, smooth, rough, soft, hard, &c. But we know as little of the internal Constitution, which is the Support of these sensible Qualities, as we do of that wherein the Operations of the *SOUL* reside. And, as the great Man I just now mention'd observes, *we may as well deny the Existence of Body, because we have not an Idea of its real Essence, as call the Being of the Soul in question for the same Reason.* The Idea of the *Soul* then is every whit as clear and distinct as that of the *Body*; and had there been (as there is not) any Difference, the *Soul* must have carri'd the Advantage,
G 3

Sect. 3. *w* 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, Knowledge, 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 *Ch. 2.*
and Power. *w*

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 Knowledge: 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 argu'd 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.

C H A P. III.

The Signification of the Word MYSTERY in the New Testament, and the Writings of the most ancient Christians.

22. **H**AVING 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 Ch. 3. with the whole World, and have them against me.

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 Inconceivableness 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.

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. *Wisdom of God hid in a MYSTERY, which God ordain'd before the World for our Glory, which none of the Princes of the World knew, &c.* And, to shew that this Divine Wisdom was a Mystery for want of revealing Information, he presently subjoins, *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither have entred into the Heart of Man the things which God hath prepar'd for them that love him; but God hath reveal'd them to us by his Spirit.* The most perspicacious *Philosophers* were not able to foretel the Coming of *Christ*, to discover the *Resurrection* of the Body, nor any other Matter of Fact that is deliver'd in the Gospel: And if they happen'd now and then to say something like the Truth, they did but divine at best, and could never be certain of their Opinion. It is a most delightful thing to consider what Pains the enquiring *Heathens* were often at to give a Reason for what depended not in the least upon any Principles in their *Philosophy*, but was an historical Fact communicable by God alone, or such as had undoubted Memoirs concerning it. Of this I think it not amiss to add the following Example.

25.

25. The same Experience that taught the *Gentiles* their mortal Condition, acquainted them also with the Frailty of their Natures, and the numberless Calamities constantly attending them. They could not perswade themselves that the Species of Man came in such deplorable Circumstances out of the Hands of an infinitely good and merciful Deity; and so were inclin'd to impute all to the Wickedness of adult Persons, till they perceiv'd that Death and Misfortune did not spare innocent Children more than Robbers and Pirates. At last they imagin'd a *pre-existent State*, wherein the Soul acting separately like Angels, might have contracted some extraordinary Guilt, and so for Punishment be thrust into the Body, which they sometimes compar'd to a Prison, but oftner to a * Grave. This was likewise the Origin of *Transmigration*, tho in process of Time the Sins of this World became as much concern'd in that Opinion as those of the other. But nothing is more ingenious than the

Ac-

* As if *Σώμα* had been a Corruption of *Σῆμα*.

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

* Ὁμοίως ἔπειτα τὴν πύλιν θρόνον πνέ καί-
μενον—ἐφ' ἧ καίθηται γυνὴ πεπλασισμένη τῶ ἡθεί, καὶ πν-
δαυὴ φαινομένη, &c. *Cebet. Tab. p. 11. Ed. Amst. 1689.*

27. But some Doctrines of the Go-
spel are more particularly call'd *Myste-
ries*, because they were hid from God's
peculiar People under the *Mosaick Oe-
conomy*; 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 Representa-
tions, Ceremonies, and figurative Ex-
pressions*. *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 expressly adds,
that *this VAIL* is taken away in
Christ, which could not be truly af-
firm'd, were the things reveal'd still
inconceivable; 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 remarka-
ble Words; *The Preaching of Jesus*
Christ according to the REVELATION

Ch. 3.

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^o 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. Left 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* Ch. 3. 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 *Eso-terick* 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 *Chri-*
stian

stian Religion has no need of such mi-
 Ch. 3.
 ferable Shifts and Artifices, there be-
 ing 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 *Alco-*
ran, or any thing as well as *Christia-*
nity. 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 pleas'd 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*
 H their

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 Knowledge 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 Knowledge 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 Ch. 3. 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 synonymous, *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.

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 re-
 Rom. 11. 15. *concil'd to God, and be made Cohēirs 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 it is now reveal'd unto us, his holy Apostles and Prophets, by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be Fellow-heirs,*

heirs, and of the same Body, and Partakers Ch. 3. *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

Sect. 3. is, that *the Secret of the Vocation of the Gentiles is in the Gospel made known, manifested and declar'd; and therefore remains no longer a Mystery.* The next thing under the Designation of a *Mystery* in the above-mention'd Sense is one Circumstance of the *Resurrection*. The *Apostle* having no less clearly and solidly than largely reason'd upon this Subject, (1 Cor. 15.) obviates an Objection or Scruple that might be rais'd about the State of such as should be found alive on the Earth at the last day. *Behold, says he, ver. 51, 52. I shew you a MYSTERY, I impart a Secret to you; we shall not all sleep, or die, but we shall all be chang'd in a Moment, in the twinkling of an Eye; — the Dead shall rise, and we shall be chang'd.* It is not the Doctrine of the *Resurrection* then, you see, that is here call'd a *Mystery*, but only this particular Circumstance of it, *viz.* that the Living shall at the Sound of the last Trumpet put off their Flesh and Blood, or their Mortality, without Dying, and be in an Instant render'd incorruptible and immortal, as well as those that shall revive. In the fifth Chapter to the Ephe-

Ephesians, ver. 31, 32. we learn that Ch. 3. the mutual Love and Conjunction of Man and Wife is a Type of that indissoluble Union which is between *Christ* and his *Church*. This was questionless a *great Mystery* before we were told it, but now there is nothing more intelligible than the Foundation of that Resemblance or Figure. The Kingdom of *Antichrist* in opposition to the Gospel or Kingdom of *Christ* is also call'd a *Mystery*, because it was a secret Design carry'd on insensibly and by degrees: but at length, all Obstacles being remov'd or surmounted, it appears bare-fac'd to the Light, and (as it was divinely fore-told) ceases to continue a *Mystery*. Let no Man deceive you by any means, says Paul to the Thessalonians, (2 Thess. 2. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.) for that Day shall not come except there be a falling away or Apostacy first; and that Man of Sin be reveal'd, the Son of Perdition, &c. And now you know what withholdeth, that he might not be reveal'd in his time; for the MYSTERY of Iniquity doth already work, only he who now hindreth, will hinder till he be taken out of the way, and then shall that wicked

Sect. 3. *one be reveal'd.* 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.

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

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 Knowledge; 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 written, 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*

Sect. 3. (which was shewn above to signify the same with the *Mystery of God*) should have their final Accomplishment, and so end with this Globe and all therein contain'd.

35. I appeal now to all equitable Persons, whether it be not evident to any that can read, that *Mystery in the whole New Testament is never put for any thing inconceivable in it self, or not to be judg'd of by our ordinary Notions and Faculties, however clearly reveal'd*: And whether, on the contrary, it do's not always signify *some things naturally intelligible enough; but either so veil'd by figurative Words and Rites, or so lodg'd in God's sole Knowledg and Decree, that they could not be discover'd without special Revelation*. Whoever retains any real Veneration for the *Scripture*, and sincerely believes it to be the Word of God, must be ever concluded by its Authority, and render himself, in spight of all Prejudices, to its Evidence. He that says the *Gospel* is his only Rule of Faith, and yet believes any thing not warranted by it, he is an arrant Hypocrite, and do's but sily banter all the World.

36. 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 *Humane 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 Ch. 3. 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.

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 ingenious * Person, could not make good themselves by sufficient Reasons, 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 ri-
 " diculous 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 ano-
 " ther 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 confi-
 " derable 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 *Parallèles 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 Predecef-
 " fors, but to it have likewise added
 " their own Observations. These
 Thoughts are no less ingenious than
 they are just and solid. But if *An-
 tiquity* 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 Prescrip-
 tion.

40. Yet seeing I am not likely to
 live till that time, it cannot be amiss
 to make it appear that these same *Fa-
 thers*, 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 Judg-
 ments, 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 De-
 sign is to shew the Disingenuity of
 those, who pretending the highest Ve-
 neration for the Writings of the *Fa-
 thers,*

Sect. 3. *thers*, never fail to decline their Sentence when it futes 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 5th Book of his *Stromates*, 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 exprefs Words, † that those things which were

* Διὰ τῆς φωτισμοῦ ἢ μαθητείας κέκληται, ἢ τα κηρυμμένα φανερωσασα, ἀποκαλύψαντες ὁ μόνον τῆς διδασκαλίας τὸ πῶμα τὸ κρυπτό. Pag. 578. edit. Col. 1688.

† Ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ μυστήρια τὰ ἀπκηρυμμένα ἀχει τῆς Ἀποστόλων, καὶ ἑαυτῶν παρεδόδεντα ὡς ἀπὸ τῶ κρείς παρελήφασιν ἀπκηρυμμένα δὲ ἐν τῇ παλαιᾷ διαθήκῃ, ἀ νῦν ἐφανερωθῆναι πῶς ἀγίοις. Idem ibid. pag. 576.

were mysterious and obscure in the Old Testament are made plain in the New. Ch. 3.

42. Every one knows how the Primitive *Christians*, in a ridiculous imitation of the *Jews*, turn'd all the Scripture into Allegory; accommodating the Properties of those Animals mention'd in the *Old Testament* to Events that happen'd under the *New*. They took the same Liberty principally with Men, where they could discover the least Resemblance between their Names, Actions, or State of Life; and carry'd this Fancy at length to Numbers, Letters, Places, and what not. That which in the *Old Testament* therefore did, according to them, represent any thing in the *New*, they call'd the *Type* or *Mystery* of it. Thus *TYPE*, *SYMBOL*, *PARABLE*, *SHADOW*, *FIGURE*, *SIGN* and *MYSTERY*, signify all the same thing in *Justin Martyr*. This Father affirms in his Dialogue with *Tryphon the Jew*, that the Name of *Josbua* was a *Mystery* representing the Name *Jesus*; and that the holding up of *Mo-* Exod. 17.
ses's 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 *Israelites* 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 τὸ ἐπ' ἀμφοτέρων τῶν ἁγίων ἀνδρῶν ἐμάνων καὶ προσηπτῶν τῶ θεῷ, νοήσαι γενημένον· ὅτι ἀμφοτέρω τῶ μυστήριον ἐς αὐτὸν βασίσει ἐκ ἧν δυνατὸς λέγει δὲ τὸν τύπον τῶ σταυροῦ, καὶ τὸν τύπον τῶ ὀνόματος ἐπιλήσας. Pag. 338. edit. Col. 1686.

† Εἰ μὴ ἢ τὸ ἐκ ὁμοιοῦτος, ἢ φίλοι, ὅτι πολλὰς λόγους τῶ ἀπεκαλυμμένως καὶ ἐν ὁμοιοῦτος ἢ μυστήριαις ἢ ἐν συμβόλοις ἔργων λελεγεμένως, οἱ μετ' ἐκείνων τῶς εἰπόντας ἢ περὶ ζαντας γινόμενοι προφήται ἐξηγήσαντο. Pag. 294.

inhumane Practices whereof their Enemies most unjustly accus'd 'em, he cries, * 'We are beset, we are discover'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 Secrecy. The *Samothracian*, the *Eleusinian 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

I 3

Pro-

* Quotidiè obsidemur, quotidiè prodimur; — Si semper latemus, quando proditum est quod admittimus? Immo à quibus prodi potuit? Ab ipsis reis! Non utique; cum vel ex forma omnibus Mysteriorum 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 expressly 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 δεδιδακτοῦν ἢ ὀφεισόντων ὅτι τὰ δεῖα μαθεῖν ἀναγνώτο τὰς ὁπρὸς γεγραμμένους Ἀειδήεις Μωυσεως, καὶ ζῆτισατο τὸν δυνάμενον [αὐτὸν] μεταγωγῆσαι ὅτι τὰ ἢ παρεμβολῶν ἢ ὁδῶν Ἰσραὴλ ἀνάγγεγραμμένα. Lib. 6. contra Cell. pag. 291. edit. Cantab. 1677.

† Οὐδεὶς δὲ εἰ μὴ τὰ ἢ πίστεως ἢ ἡμῶν ταῖς ΚΟΙΝΑΙΣ ΕΝΝΟΙΑΙΣ ἀρχὴθεν συναρθεύοντα, μετατίθησι τὰς ἐγγαρμόνας ἀκούοντας ἢ κεραιδῶν. Lib. 3. contra Cell. pag. 135.

45. The other Fathers of the three Ch. 3. 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.

C H A P. IV.

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

46. **S**OME 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.
asham'd 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 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 Whim-
 ~~~~~sies of the *Fathers* to have been occa-  
 sion'd by the several Systems of *Philos-*  
*ophy* they read before their Conver-  
 sion, and which they afterwards foo-  
 lishly 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 *So-*  
*phistry* 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 a-  
 gainst *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 INCOM-  
 PREHENSIBLE MYSTERIES  
 of the latter do perfectly answer the  
 OCCULT QUALITIES of the for-  
 mer. They were both calculated at  
 first

first for the same Ends, *viz. to stop the* Ch. 4.  
*Mouths of such as demand a Reason where*  
*none can be given, and to keep as many*  
*in Ignorance as Interest shall think con-*  
*venient.* But God forbid that I should  
 impute the like nefarious Designs to all  
 that contend for *Mysteries* now, Thou-  
 sands whereof I know to be the best  
 meaning Men in the Universe. This  
*sophistical* or *corrupt Philosophy* is else-  
 where 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.

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* Rom. 8. 7.  
*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

I Cor. 3.  
19.

I Cor. 1.  
22.

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 Knowledge 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.

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 re-  
 torted, and to leave no plausible Pre-  
 tentences to Cavillers or Deceivers, I have  
 punctually answer'd the strongest Ob-  
 jections 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 be-  
 fore 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 ac-  
 knowledg it to be a Divine Revelation.  
 But seeing the most material Difficul-  
 ty made to me by a Friend, is, that  
 my Opinion destroys the Nature of  
 FAITH, I shall with all the Brevi-  
 ty I can deliver my Sentiments con-  
 cerning this Subject.

52. I will spend no time upon the  
 ordinary Divisions of *Faith* into Hi-  
 storical, Temporary, or Justifying,  
 Lively or Dead, Weak or Strong, be-  
 cause most of these are not so much  
*Faith* it self, as different Effects there-  
 of.

of. The word imports *Belief* or *Per-* Ch. 4.  
*swasion*, 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 ac-  
 quiesce 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 de-  
 termine 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 *Perswasion*, but a rash Presumption,  
 and an obstinate Prejudice, rather be-  
 coming Enthusiasts or Impostors than  
 the taught of God, who has no Inte-  
 rest 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, *Knowledge* 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 Ch. 4. 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 knowledge 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.

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*  
K of

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 properly 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 persuaded of them.

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;

Rom. 8. 24.

25. *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.*

Heb. 11. 13. *it.* So the Patriarchs receiv'd not the Promises, but saw them afar off, and were persuaded of them.

Joh. 8. 12.  
& 9. 5.  
Acts 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 persuaded 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, whom it was said, that in *Isaac* shall thy Seed be blessed; \* 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.

K 2

God

\* So λογισμῶν should be translated.

Sect. 3. God was able to revive *Isaac* by a Miracle, as he was miraculously born, according 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* Ch. 4. 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,* <sup>1 John 2. 4, 6.</sup> *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.* 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 Knowledge of Religion are compar'd to *Infants* who feed only upon Milk; but they who arrive at a more full and accurate Certainty are liken'd to *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 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 implicitly 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, whether

\* 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 Knowledge. 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 Ch. 4. 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.

66. From all these Observations, and what went before, it evidently follows that *Faith* is so far from being an implicate 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 *Knowledge*. I answer, that if *Knowledge* 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 *Knowledge* be meant understanding what is believ'd, then I stand by it that *Faith* is *Knowledge*: 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*  
 Joh. 4. 42. *am perswaded by the Lord Jesus that*
 Rom. 14. *there is nothing unclean of it self. You*
 14. *know that your Labour is not in vain in*
 1 Cor. 15. *the Lord.*
 58.

67. Others will say that this Notion of *Faith* makes *Revelation* useles. 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 Ch. 4.
 within every Man that cometh into this ~~~~~
 World.

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 suited 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*; Mark 12. because, no doubt, they understood 37. 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

Sect. 3. *s*istent with their Condition in this 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 Liberty.

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 prophesied 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 reveal'd.

C H A P. V.

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

70. **W**hen 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 something 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.

L

72. No

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 *Miracle*

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 VVorship, 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* mention'd 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.

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 receive

Sect. 3. receive equal Confirmation with Divine Revelation, *Miracles* being perform'd in favour of both. Nay, the Wonders 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 Wonders 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 Ch. 5. of the People, who so industriously cherish it.

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 Witnesses 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 Ch. 6. *Miracles* would be to make 'em no *Miracles*, which shews the Weakness, and Impertinence of this Objection.

CHAP. VI.

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

78. **T**HE End of the LAW being Rom. 10. 4. Righteousness, JESUS CHRIST came not to destroy, but to fulfil Mat. 5. 17. 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 di-
 † 4 vers

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 profelyted 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 accustom'd 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-

rantable Compliances, till at length Ch. 6. 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 Aversaries 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*.

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

* *Φεικτά, ἀπόρητα 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 Magistrate

strate did openly countenance the *Christian Religion*. Multitudes then profess'd themselves of the Emperor's Perswasion, 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 perswaded, which was a while after the Case of these *Heathens*.

83. 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 reconcil'd 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 *Mysterics*. And I shall endeavour so to do it, as to make it evident they

* ——— Non discolor ulli
Ante aras cultus; velantur corpora lino,
Et Pelusiaco præfulget flamine 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.
Ἐθὼς ἢ ἀυτέρισσι πᾶσα λευκή, καὶ πῖλον ἐπὶ τῆ κε-
φαλῆ ἔχουσι. *Lucian. de Deæ Syriæ Sacerdotibus.*
Linigeri fugiunt Calvi, fistrataq; Turba. *Martial.*
l. 12. Ep. 25.

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

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 *Myseis, Teleioseis, Teleiotika, Epopteiai, &c.* They both look'd upon *Initiation* as a kind of *deifying*. And they both stil'd their Priests *Mystagogue, Mystes, Hieroteles, &c.*

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

* Sacerdos stipatum me religiosa cohorte deducit
ad proximas balneas, & prius sueto lavacro traditum,
præfatus Deum veniam, purissimè circummorans ab-
luit. *Apul.*

Hæc sanctè ut poscas, Tiberino in gurgite mergis
Manè caput bis terque, & noctem Flumine purgas.

Perf. Sat. 2. v. 15.

Ter caput irrorat, ter tollit in æthera palmis.

Ovid. Fast. l. 4. v. 315.

† Τὸ σύνθημα Ἐλευσινίων μυστικῶν Ἐνήγευστα
ἔπιον καὶ κωκῶνα, &c. *Clem. Alex. pag. 13. Arnob. lib. 5.*

|| Vos quoque abesse procul jubeo, discedite ab aris,
Quæc tuit hesternæ gaudia nocte Venus. *Tibul. l. 2.*
Eleg. 1. v. 11.

Castæ placent superis, pura cum veste venite,
Et manibus pueris sumite fontis aquam. *Tibul.*
ibid. v. 13.

Se^{ct}. 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

* Omne nefas, omnemque mali purgamina causam
Credebant nostri tollere posse fenes.

Ovid. Fast. l. 2. v. 35.

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

† Μυστήρια τὰς θυελάς κλείσαντες ὀπιτελόμεν, καὶ τὰς ἀμύητους εἰργάζομεν. *Homil. in Matth.*

|| Μυστηρίων τὰ σέμνα σιωπῇ διακρίσσειν.

(*) Ἀγνωσία σεμνότητος ὀπιτελῶν, καὶ νυκτὶ διὰ τὰ πνεύματα τὰ μυστήρια. *De providen. Sect. 2.*

why should that deserve Blame in others, 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 extremely 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 *Heathens* 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.* Ἴσταν τοὶ μεμυημένοι τὸ λεγόμενον. *Chrysostom. in Genes. in Homil. 27. & alibi passim.*

† Θυελάς ὀπιτελεῖτε βεβήλοις. *Orpheus, Lucianus, &c.*

|| Ὅσοι κατηχόμενοι προσέλθετε, ἔξω περπατήσατε ὅσοι ἀμύητοι.

Sect. 3. pose, * Now when catechising is rehears'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

* "Οτε πίνυν κατήχους λέγεται, εάν σὲ κατηχόμενος ἐξετάσῃ τὴν ἐρησιαν οἱ διδάσκοντες, μηδὲν λέγει τῷ ἔξω. Μυστήριον γὰρ σοι παραδίδουεν, καὶ ἐλπιδὴ μελλόντος αἰῶνος. Τήρησον τὸ μυστήριον τῷ μιδαποδοτῇ μὴ ποτὲ σοι πῆς εἶπῃ, τί βλάπτῃ, εάν καὶ γὰρ μαθῶ; Καὶ οἱ νοσῶντες τὸν οἶνον ζητῶσιν. Ἀλλὰ εάν ἀκρίτως εὐδοῖ φρενήτην ἐργάζεται, καὶ οὐ κακὰ γίνεται, καὶ οὐ νοσῶν ἀπόλλυται, καὶ ὁ ἰατρός διαβάλλεται. Οὕτως ὁ κατηχόμενος, εάν ἀκρίως παρὰ πῆς, καὶ ὁ κατηχόμενος φρενιπῶ· ἐκ διδε γὰρ τὴν πικρὴν, καὶ ἐλέγχει τὸ πρᾶγμα, καὶ ἐκρυκτικρίζει τὸ λεγόμενον; καὶ ὁ πῆς ὡς προδοτὴς κατακρίνεται· ἦδη δὲ σὺ μεθορίω σήκεις, βλέπε μοι μὴ ἐκλαθήσῃς, ἐχ' ὅπ' ἐκ ἀξία λαλιᾶς τὰ λεγόμενα, ἀλλὰ ὅπ' ἡ ἀκρὴ ἀναξία τὰ δέξασθαι ἥς ποτὲ καὶ σὺ κατηχόμενος, οὐ δ' ἠγοράσῃ σοι τὰ προκείμενα· ἴταν τῇ πῆρα λάβῃς τὸ ὕψωμα τῆς διδασκομένου, τότε ἀν' ἡγάσῃ ὅπ' ἀνάξιοι οἱ κατηχόμενοι τῆς Ἀκοῆς. Cyril. Hieroiol. præfit. in Catech. ed. t. Paris. 1631.

Ch. 6. 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.

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 Eopts. M Among

* Ἐν ταῖς ἱερόσις ἠγνώσκειν αἱ παρθενοὶ καὶ παρθενοὶ εἰπάδῃ ταύταις αἰσθητότεραι, μετὰ ταύτας οὐαίσι, καὶ ὅπ' ταύταις μυσταῖς, ἐν τέλει δ' ἑποπτεῖται 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 *Proclausis*. 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*. Thirdly, for three Years more they might hear and see, but not mix with the Congregation: this Period was call'd *Hypoptosis*. Fourthly, they might stand with the People, but not receive the Sacraments: this was their *Systasis*. And, Fifthly, they were admitted to Communion, which was call'd *Methexis*. The new Converts likewise, under Preparation to participate of the Mysteries, were stil'd *Catechumens*; then *competent*; and, lastly, *Epopts*, *perfect*, or *Believers*: which are the very Degrees in Name and Quality, to which *Pythagoras* oblig'd his Disciples.

Πρόκλαυσις.

Ακρόασις.

ὑπόπτωσις.

Σύστασις.

Μέθεξις.

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

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

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

M 2

never

* Denique ut a Baptismate ingrediar, aquam adturi ibidem, sed & aliquanto prius in ecclesia sub Antistitis manu, contestamur nos renunciare Diabolo, & pompæ, & angelis ejus. Dehinc ter mergitamur, amplius aliquid respondentem 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 perungimur benedicta Unctiōne, &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, Exufflations, 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-fulls of Earth, with other vulgar Observations among Christians; but also *Lights, Feasts* or *Holy-days, Consecrations, Images*, worshipping towards the || *East, Altars,*

* Ο δὲ μωμένος τὸ ἵμάτιον, ὃ εὐρέει ἐν τῇ μνήσῃ ἐδέποτε ἀποδύσει μέγεις ἐν τελείῃ ἀφανισθῆναι ἀρρῶν. Scholiast. in Plur. 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:

Quamquam 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 perlue rore manus. *Ovid.*

Fab. l. 4. v. 777. Ο δὲ Νυδὸς ἰσέει μὲν ἐς ἡέλιον ἀνι-
οῦτα. *Lucian. pag. 674. Edit. Amst. 1687.*

tars, Musick, Dedications of Churches, Ch. 6. 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.

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 † *Autho-*

M 3

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

Sect. 3. Authority 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 *Subdeacons*, *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 Splendor 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.

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 *Baptiz'd*, 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

Ch. 6.
vast multitudes of the latter quickly render'd all secret Rites almost impossible, so to preserve the *Mystery*, things were purposely made downright unintelligible, or very perplex'd. In this Point our pretended *Christians* outdid all the *Mysteries* of the *Heathens*; for the Honour of these might be destroy'd by Discovery, or the babbling Tongue of any initiated Person: But the new *Mysteries* were thus securely plac'd above the Reach of all Sense and Reason. Nay, so jealous were the CLERGY of their own Order, lest any of 'em should irreligiously unfold those sublime Mysteries to the profanely inquisitive LAITY, that they thought fit to put it as much out of the Power of the Holy Tribe it self, as out of ours, to understand them; and so it continues, in a great measure, to 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

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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 perswaded that they have a right to do it;) yet the Duties I owe *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

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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 *Irenaeus* and *Epiphanius*, it is many times instead of a Reproach the greatest Honour imaginable.

Some

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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 *Scepticks*,

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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, where-ever I have Ability or Opportunity, to expose it in its true Colours, without rendring my Labour ineffectual, by weakly mincing or softning of any thing.

~~20. 738~~

FINIS.

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