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THE  
Christian Virtuoso :  
*IN TWO PARTS.*

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TOME I.

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THE  
Christian Mission  
SOCIETY

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1850

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T H E  
Christian Virtuoso :

S H E W I N G,

That by being addicted to *Experimental Philosophy*, a Man is rather Assisted, than Indisposed, to be a *Good Christian*.

The First Part.

By T. H. R. B. Fellow of the  
ROYAL SOCIETY.

To which are Subjoyn'd,

- I. A Discourse about the Distinction, that represents some Things as *Above Reason*, but not *Contrary to Reason*.
- II. The first Chapters of a Discourse, Entituled, *Greatness of Mind promoted by Christianity*.

By the same AUTHOR.

In the SAVOY:

Printed by Edw. Jones, for John Taylor at the Ship in St. Paul's Church-yard, 1690.

Christianity

THE HISTORY OF THE  
CHRISTIAN RELIGION  
FROM THE FIRST TO THE  
LAST CENTURY

BY THE REV. J. H. W.

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Printed by J. H. W.  
in the year 1800



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T H E

# P R E F A C E .

**W**HEN, many Years ago, I was induced to write something ~~about~~ the Subject of the following Treatise; I did it, partly to give some Satisfaction to a Friend, and partly to impose upon myself an Obligation, to consider the more attentively upon what Grounds it may be asserted, That there is no Inconsistence between a Man's being an Industrious Virtuoso, and a Good Christian. How little fond I was of troubling the Publick with a Discourse of this Nature, may be guessed by my having thrown it aside, among other neglected Papers, for several Years. And it had still continued in that Obscurity, if the, formerly unprevaleat, Desires of those that would have it appear in Publick, had not been enforced by an Observation or two, that I could not but make. For I could scarce avoid taking notice of the great and deplorable Growth of Irreligion, especially among those that aspired to pass for Wiss, and several of them too for Philoso-  
A phers,

## The Preface.

phers. And on the other side, it was Obvious, that divers Learned Men, as well as Others, partly upon the Score of their Abhorrence of these Infidels and Libertines, and partly upon that of a well-meaning, but ill-informed, Zeal, had brought many Good Men to think, that Religion and Philosophy were incompatible; both Parties contributing to the Vulgar Error, but with this difference, That the Libertines thought a Virtuoso ought not to be a Christian; and the Others, That he could not be a true One.

'Tis like, it may seem to some Readers, that I have too much enlarged the Notion of Experience, and too much insisted on the Proofs deducible from that Topick: But 'tis not improbable, that others may approve the Reasons, with which that ample Notion of Experience is, where it is propos'd, accompanied. And the Ingenious Person, I was chiefly to please, being a great Lover and Valuer of Experience, and of Arguments ground'd on it, the Desire of gratifying Him enticed me to say so much, that when I took up the Thoughts of making this Treatise publick, I found the Effects of my Complaisance so interwoven with the other Parts of the Discourse, that I could not make any Great Alteration, (for some I did make) without almost spoiling the Contexture of it.

I hope the Equitable Reader will not expect to find every Subject, of which I have occasion to discourse, fully Treated of: For I neither designed

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*signed nor pretended to write a Body of Natural Theology, nor a Demonstration of the Christian Religion; but thought it sufficient for me, to consider the Points I wrote of, as far forth as was Necessary, or very Conducive, to my Purpose. And therefore I thought myself, not only Warranted, but Obliged, (in point of Discretion) to decline the mention of several Arguments and Reflections, that would indeed have been very Proper, if my Design had been, to shew, why One should be a Christian; but Impertinent, to shew, that a Virtuoso, while such, may be a true Christian. But, as for this Reason, I omitted many Things, that would have Enrich'd or Adorn'd my Discourse; so I have endeavoured to make some Amends, both by suggesting some new Subjects, and by adding on those that have been already Treated of by others, divers Thoughts, into which I was led by the Attentive Consideration of the Subject itself; on which score, they may probably not have yet occur'd to the Reader, and may appear to him, either to be new, as to the Substance; or, if any of them be coincident with the more known Ones, to have something of peculiar, as to the way of Propounding, or of Applying, them. And, I confess, I was somewhat Encouraged to communicate my Thoughts on these Subjects, by considering, that (tho' it ought not to be so, yet) 'tis Notorious, that in the Age we live in, there are too many Persons*

## The Preface.

that are like to be found more indisposed to be Impress'd on by Arguments, in favour of Religion, from profess'd Divines, how worthy soever, than from such as I, who am a Layman, and have been look'd upon as no undiligent Cultivator of Experimental Philosophy. And that the Style might not be unsuitable to the Writer, and the Design; I thought fit, in my Arguments and Illustrations, both to employ Comparisons drawn from Telescopes, Microscopes, &c. and to make frequent use of Notions, Hypotheses, and Observations, in request among those, that are called The New philosophers. Which I the rather did; because some Experience has taught me, that such a Way of proposing and elucidating Things, is, either as most clear, or, upon the account of its Novelty, wont to be more acceptable, than any Other, to our Modern Virtuosi; whom thus to Gratify, is a good Step towards the Persuading of them. For 'tis easie to observe, that some Men are more accessible to Truth, and will be more prevail'd upon by it, when it is presented to them in One Dress, than when it appears in Another: As we daily see, that some Persons will be more easily prevail'd with to take a Medicine, and that it will have a more kindly Operation upon them, if it be exhibited in that Form and Consistence, that is best lik'd by the Patients; whereof some love to have the Ingredients, the Medicine is to consist of, offer'd  
them

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*them in a Liquid, others in a Soft, and others in a Dry, Form.*

Though I am wont, as well as inclinable to spare the present Age; and though my Censures of some reputed Virtuosi that live in it, are written with as harmless and friendly Designs, as was the seeming Rudeness of the Angel to St. Peter, when he struck him on the Side, and hastily roused him, but to awake him, to take off his Chains, and to free him from the Dangers that threatned him; yet I shall be more troubled than surprized, if I shall find the following Treatise disliked by divers Persons, that would pass for Virtuosi, and by some that really are so. For some Men, that have but superficial, tho' conspicuous, Wits, are not fitted to penetrate such Truths, as require a lasting and attentive Speculation; and divers, that want not Abilities, are so taken up by their Secular Affairs, and their Sensual Pleasures, that they neither have Disposition, nor will have Leisure, to discover those Truths, that require both an Attentive and Penetrating Mind. And more than of either of these sorts of Men there are, whom their Prejudices do so forestal, or their Interest bias, or their Appetites blind, or their Passions discompose, too much, to allow them a clear Discernment, and right Judgment, of Divine Things. Upon which, and other accounts, I shall not think it strange, if what I write shall make no great

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*Impression on Readers thus Qualified, whom to Convert, 'tis not enough to Convince them: Nor shall I be greatly discouraged, or think much the worse of my Arguments, if they do not make Profelytes of those, whom Sinister Considerations make such Resolved Adversaries to the Truth, that He alone, that can Preach from Heaven, is able to prevail upon them; and they must be Converted, almost as Saul the Persecutor was, by an extraordinary Light from Heaven, and a Power able to strike them to the Ground. But though I am not so little acquainted with the present Age, as to expect to plead for Religion with the Approbation of Atheists, or of Libertines, yet I shall not think my Pains altogether mispent, if what I have written, either Startle any Irreligious Reader so far, as to Engage him to consult abler Assertors of Christianity and Virtue, than I pretend to be; or else prove so happy, as to Confirm and Strengthen, by new Arguments and Motives, those that have heartily embraced the Christian Faith and Morals, though perhaps not upon the firmest Grounds. For it will be no small Satisfaction to me, if, though I cannot Convert the resolutely Irreligious, I shall at least furnish those that are not so, with Preservatives against them, and hinder their Impiety from being Contagious.*

*But*

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But I fear, that those that are Enemies, both to the Doctrines I propose, and to the Aims I pursue, will not be the only Persons that will find fault with the following Tract; since, perhaps, there will not be wanting some Ingenious Men, that expected, as well as desired, that I should never write but as a Naturalist, because they themselves esteem nothing, save the Laws and Phœnomena of Nature, to be Subjects worthy of a Philosophical Pen: As if, because Rational Spirits are Invisible and Immaterial Beings, all Disquisitions about them must be airy and uncertain Speculations, and, like their Objects, devoid of Solidity and Usefulness. But though among these Ingenious Men there are several, whose Expectations from me I am much more disposed to Gratify, than Disappoint; yet, on such an occasion as this, I must take the liberty to own, That I do not think the Corporeal World, nor the Present State of Things, the Only or the Principal Subjects, that an Inquisitive Man's Pen may be worthily employed about; and, That there are some Things that are grounded, neither upon Mechanical, nor upon Chymical, Notices or Experiments, that are yet far from deserving to be Neglected, and much less to be Despised, or so much as to be left Uncultivated, especially by such Writers, as being more concerned to act as Christians, than as Virtuosi, must also think, that sometimes they may usefully busy themselves



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*selves about the Study of Divine Things, as well as at other times employ their Thoughts about the Inspection of Natural Ones. There are some Objects, whose Nobleness is such, that, though we derive no Advantage from them, but the Contentment of knowing them, and that but very imperfectly too; yet our Virtuosi themselves justly think much Pains and Time, and, perhaps, Cost too, well spent in endeavouring to acquire some Conjectural Knowledge of them: As may be instanced in the Assiduous and Industrious Researches they have made about the remote Cælestial part of the World, especially the Stars and Comets that our Age has exposed to their Curiosity. For most of these, though they require chargeable Telescopes, and tedious, as well as unhealthy, Nocturnal Observations, are Objects, of which we can know very little with any Certainty, and which, for ought appears, we can make no useful Experiments with. Since therefore we so much prize a little Knowledge, of Things that are not only Corporeal, but Inanimate; methinks we should not undervalue the Studies of those Men, that aspire to the Knowledge of Incorporeal and Rational Beings, which are incomparably more Noble, than all the Stars in the World, which are, as far as we know, but Masses of Senseless and Stupid Matter. Since also the Virtuosi deservedly Applaud and Cherish the laborious Industry of Anatomists, in their*



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*their Enquiries into the Structure of dead, ghastly, and oftentimes unhealthfully as well as offensively Fætid, Bodies : Can it be an Employment improper for a Christian Virtuoso, or unworthy of him, to endeavour the Discovery of the Nature and Faculties of the Rational Mind; which is That, that Enobles its Mansion, and gives Man the Advantage he has of the Beasts that Perish?*

*I am content, that merely Natural Philosophy should often Employ my Thoughts, and my Pen; but I cannot consent it should Engross them, and hinder me from being Conuersant with Theological Subjects. And since, among my Friends, I have some, (and those not Inconsiderable for their Number, and much less for their Merit,) that press me to Treat of Religious Matters, as well as Others, that would have me addict myself to Cultivate Physical Ones; I, who think myself a Debtor to Both these sorts, am willing to endeavour to Gratify Both; and having already, on many Occasions, presented the later sort with large, as well as publick, Effects of my Complaisance for them, I hope, they will not think it strange, that I should now and then have Regard to the former sort, too; especially, since I had higher Motives, than Complaisance ought to be, to induce me to Treat sometimes of Things that might be grateful to those Friends, that are much so to Religious Composures.*

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I presume, it will be taken notice of, that, in the following Treatise, as well as in divers of my other Writings, especially about Subjects that are purely, or partly, Philosophical; I make frequent use of Similitudes, or Comparisons: And therefore I think myself here obliged to acknowledge, once for all, that I did it purposely. And my Reasons for this Practice, were, not only because fit Comparisons are wont to delight most Readers, and to make the Notions, they convey, better kept in Memory; whence the best Orators and Preachers have made great and successful use of Metaphors, Allegories, and other Resemblances; but I was induced to employ them chiefly for two other Reasons: 1. That though I freely confess, that Arbitrary Similitudes, and likewise Those that are Foreign to the Subject treated of, such as are most of the Vulgar Ones, that are usually borrowed from the Fictions of the Poets, and from the uncertain, and often ill-applied, Relations of Pliny, Ælian, and other too frequently Fabulous Writers, are scarce fit to be made use of but to Vulgar Readers, or Popular Auditories; yet Comparisons fitly chosen, and well applied, may, on many occasions, usefully serve to illustrate the Notions for whose sake they are brought, and, by placing them in a true Light, help Men to conceive them far better, than otherwise they would do. And, 2. Ap-  
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## The Preface.

posite Comparisons do not only give Light, but Strength, to the Passages they belong to, since they are not always bare Pictures and Resemblances, but a kind of Arguments; being oftentimes, if I may so call them, Analogous Instances, which do declare the Nature, or Way of Operating, of the Thing they relate to, and by that means do in a sort prove, that, as 'tis possible, so it is not improbable, that the Thing may be such as 'tis represented: And therefore, not only the Illustrious Verulam, though not more a Florid, than a Iudicious, Writer, has, much to the satisfaction of his Readers, frequently made use of Comparisons, in whose Choice, and Application, he was very happy; but that severe Philosopher Monsieur Des Cartes himself somewhere says, that he scarce thought, that he understood any thing in Physiques, but what he could declare by some apt Similitude; of which, in effect, he has many in his Writings; [As, where he compares the Particles of fresh Water, to little Eels; and the Corpuscles of Salt in the Sea-water, to little rigid Staves; and where, after the Stoicks, he compares the Sense of Objects by the intervention of Light, to the Sense that a blind Man hath of Stones, Mud, &c. by the intervention of his Staff.] To which I shall add, That proper Comparisons do the Imagination almost as much Service, as Microscopes do the Eye; for, as this Instrument gives

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*as a distinct view of divers minute Things, which our naked Eyes cannot well discern; because these Glasses represent them far more large, than by the bare Eye we judge them; so a skilfully chosen, and well applied, Comparison much helps the Imagination, by illustrating Things scarce discernible, so as to represent them by Things much more familiar and easy to be apprehended.*

*I confess, I might, on some Occasions, have spoken, not only more Positively, and Boldly; but, as to many Learned Readers, more Acceptably, if I would have discoursed altogether like a Cartesian, or as a Partizan of some other Modern Sect of Philosophizers. But, besides that, I am not minded to give myself up to any Sect, I thought it convenient, that a Discourse, designed to work on Persons of differing Persuasions about Philosophical Matters, should not declare itself dogmatically, or unreservedly, of a Party, but employ rather the Dictates of Reason, or Principles either granted, or little contested, than proceed upon the peculiar Principles of a distinct Party of Philosophizers.*

*If now and then I have insisted upon some particular Subjects, more than appears absolutely necessary, I did it, because that, though I wrote this Treatise chiefly for my Friends, yet I did not write it for them only; but*

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*was willing to lay hold on some of the Occasions that the Series of my Discourse offered me, to excite in myself those Dispositions that I endeavoured to produce in others: And, by insisting upon some Reflections, impress them more deeply upon my own Mind; especially when I was Treating of some Points, either so Important, or so Opposed, or Both, that they can scarce be too much inculcated.*

*The Name of the Person, to whom the following Papers were address'd, not being necessary to be made Publick; some Reasons made it thought convenient, that it should remain unmentioned.*

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# Postscript.

**T**O give an Account of the Prolixity, that some might otherwise censure, of the foregoing PREFACE, I must Advertise the Reader, That 'tis of an ancient Date, and that the First Part of the Treatise, that it belongs to, was already written, and 'twas then designed, that the Second Part should accompany it to the Press: On which score 'twas presumed, that, as the Particulars that make up the Preamble would not appear.

*pear Superfluous, in regard of the  
Variety of Subjects to be Trea-  
ted of ; So, its Length would  
scarce be found Disproportionate to  
the Bulk of the Whole designed  
Book.*

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**THE**

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T H E  
Christian Virtuoso :

S H E W I N G,

That by being addicted to  
*Experimental Philosophy*, a Man  
is rather assisted, than indispos-  
ed, to be a *Good Christian*.

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*The First Part.*

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S I R,

**I** Perceive by what you intimate,  
that your Friends, Dr. W. and  
Mr. N. think it very strange, that  
I, whom they are pleas'd to look  
upon as a diligent Cultivater of *Ex-  
perimental Philosophy*, should be a con-  
cern'd

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cern'd Embracer of the *Christian Religion*; tho' divers of its Articles are so far from being Objects of Sense, that they are thought to be above the Sphere of Reason. But, *tho'* I presume they may find many Objects of the like wonder, among those with whom I am compriz'd by them, under the name of the *New Virtuosi*; and among These, they may meet with divers persons more able than I, to ease them of their wonder; yet, since they are pleas'd by singling me out, as it were to challenge *me* to do it, I shall endeavour to make them think it at least less strange, That a great Esteem of Experience, and a high Veneration for Religion, should be compatible in the same person. Wherefore I shall not deny, that I am now and then busied in devising, and putting in practice, Tryals of several sorts, and making Reflections upon them: And I own too, that (about natural things) I have a great Reverence for Experience, in comparison of Authority. But withal, I  
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declare, that to embrace Christianity, I do not think I need to recede from the value and kindness I have for Experimental Philosophy, any thing near so far as your Friends seem to imagin. And I hope it will appear, that, If the Experimental way of Philosophising I am addicted to, have any things in it that indispose a man to assent to the Truth, and live according to the Laws, of the Christian Religion; those few things are more than countervail'd by the peculiar Advantages; that it affords a Man of a well-dispos'd mind, towards the being a good Christian.

I said, a man of a *well-dispos'd mind*; that is, one, that is both docile, and inclin'd to make pious applications of the Truths he discovers; because such a Qualification of Mind, I hope, God, through his Goodness, has vouchsaf'd me; and the occasion given by your friends to the following Discourse, relating peculiarly to *me*, a personal account of my Opinions; and reasons of them, ought to

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suffice.

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suffice. And 'twill be *ex abundantia*, (as they speak,) if my Discourse be found, as it often will be, to extend much farther. Which Reflection, I desire you would frequently have in your thoughts, to prevent mistaking the Design of the following Epistle.

I doubt not, but the Popular Prejudices, that I perceive your two Friends, among many other more devout than well-inform'd Persons, have entertain'd\*, will make them think, that what I have now deliver'd needs good proof, and perhaps better than it is capable of. And therefore I hope you will easily allow me the liberty, I am going to take, of briefly premissing some things, to clear the way for the principal Points, design'd to be discours'd of in this Letter.

I know you need not be told, that the Philosophy which is most in request among the modern *Virtuosi*, and which by some is call'd the *New*, by others the *Corpuscularian*, by others the *Real*, by others (tho' not so properly) the *Atomical*, and by others again  
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the *Cartesian*, or the *Mechanical*, *Philosophy*; is built upon two foundations, *Reason* and *Experience*. But it may not be impertinent to observe to you, that although the *Peripatetick*, and some other *Philosophies*, do also pretend to be grounded upon *Reason* and *Experience*; yet there is a great difference betwixt the use that is made of these two Principles, by the *School-Philosophers*, and by the *Virtuosi*. For *those*, in the framing of their System; make but little use of *Experience*; contenting themselves for the most part to employ but few and obvious Experiments, and vulgar Traditions, usually Uncertain, and oftentimes False; and superstructing almost their whole *Physicks* upon *Abstracted Reason*; by which, I mean, The rational Faculty endowed but with its own Congenit or Common Notions and *Idea's*, and with Popular Notices; that is, such as are common among men, especially those that are any thing Learned. But now, the *Virtuosi* I speak of, and by whom, in this whole

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Discourse, I mean those, that Understand and Cultivate Experimental Philosophy, make a much greater and better use of Experience in their Philosophical Researches. For they consult Experience both frequently and heedfully; and, not content with the *Phænomena* that Nature spontaneously affords them, they are solicitous, when they find it needful, to enlarge their Experience by Tryals purposely devis'd; and ever and anon Reflecting upon it, they are careful to Conform their Opinions to it; or, if there be just cause, Reform their Opinions by it. So that our *Virtuosi* have a peculiar Right to the distinguishing Title that is often given them, of *Experimental Philosophers*.

I can scarce doubt, but your Friends have more than once oblig'd you to take notice, of the Prophanè Discourses and Licentious Lives of some *Virtuosi*, that boast much of the Principles of the New Philosophy. And I deny not, but that, if the knowledge of Nature falls into the hands of  
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of a Resolved Atheist, or a Sensual Libertine, he may misemploy it to Oppugn the Grounds, or Discredit the Practice, of Religion. But it will fare much otherwise, if a deep insight into Nature be acquir'd by a man of Probity and Ingenuity, or at least free from Prejudices and Vices, that may indispose him to entertain and improve those Truths of Philosophy, that would naturally lead him to Sentiments of Religion. For, if a Person thus qualify'd in his Morals, and thereby dispos'd to make use of the knowledge of the Creatures to confirm his Belief, and encrease his Veneration, of the Creator, (and such a Person I here again advertise you, and desire you would not forget it, I suppose the *Virtuoso* this Paper is concern'd in, to be) shall make a great progress in Real Philosophy; I am perswaded, that Nature will be found very Loyal to her Author, and in stead of Alienating his Mind from making religious Acknowledgments, will furnish him with weighty and un-



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common Motives, to conclude such Sentiments to be highly rational and just. On which occasion, I must not pretermitt that judicious Observation of one of the first and greatest Experimental Philosophers of our Age, (*Sir Francis Bacon*) That God never wrought a Miracle to convince Atheists; because in his Visible Works he had plac'd enough to do it, if they were not wanting to themselves. The Reason he gives for which Remark, I shall confirm, by observing, that 'tis intimated in a passage of *St. Paul*, asserting both *that the invisible things of God are clearly seen from the Creation of the World*, as Tokens and Effects, (as I remember the Particle *ὡς* in the *Greek* doth elsewhere signify,) and that his Divinity and Eternal Power may be so well understood by the things that are made, that the Gentiles, who had but the Light of Nature to lead them to the acknowledgment of the true God, were Excuseless, for not being brought by that



that Guide to that Acknowledgment.

And indeed, the Experimental Philosophy giving us a more clear discovery, than Strangers to it have, of the divine Excellencies display'd in the Fabrick and Conduct of the Universe, and of the Creatures it consists of, very much indisposeth the mind, to ascribe such admirable Effects to so incompetent and pitiful a Cause as Blind Chance, or the tumultuous Jostlings of Atomical Portions of senseless Matter; and leads it directly to the acknowledgment and adoration of a most Intelligent, Powerful and Benign Author of things, to whom alone such excellent Productions may, with the greatest Congruity, be ascrib'd. And therefore, if any of the Cultivators of Real Philosophy pervert it to countenance Atheism, 'tis certainly the fault of the Persons, not the Doctrine; which is to be judg'd of by it's own natural Tendency, not by the ill Use that some bad Men may make of it; especially if the prevaricating Persons are but  
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pretenders to the Philosophy they misemploy; which Character will perhaps be found to belong to most, if not all, the Atheistical and Prophane Men, the Objection means. For most of these do as little understand the Mysteries of Nature, as believe those of Christianity; and of divers of them it may be truly said, that their Sensuality, and Lusts, and Passions, darken'd and seduc'd their Intellects: Their Immorality was the Original Cause of their Infidelity; nor were they led by Philosophy to Irreligion, but got and perverted some smattering of Philosophy, to countenance the Irreligious Principles, they brought with them to the Study of it.

But all this notwithstanding, I fear, if not foresee, that you will surmise, that the study of Natural Philosophy, how innocent soever it may be *in it self*, will, *in this Libertine City*, engage me to converse with many, who, tho' they pass for *Virtuosi*, are indeed Atheists; whose contagious Company must Endanger, if not Infect, me.

This

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This obliges me to tell you, that tho' I have no reason to take it at all unkindly, that you are jealous of me on the score of being Solicitous for my Safety; yet I hope my Danger is not so great as you may apprehend it. For *First*, I must own to you, that I do not think there are so many Speculative Atheists, as Men are wont to imagin. And tho' my Conversation has been pretty free and general among Naturalists, yet I have met with so few true Atheists, that I am very apt to think, that Men's want of due Information, or their uncharitable Zeal, has made them mistake or misrepresent many for Denyers of God, that are thought such, chiefly because they take uncommon Methods in studying his Works, and have other Sentiments of them, than those of vulgar Philosophers. And in the *next* place I must tell you, that having, through the goodness of God, chosen my Religion, not Inconsiderately, but upon mature Deliberation; I do not find those *Virtues*, you call Atheists,

ists, such formidable Adversaries, as those that are afraid to hear them, do, by that Apprehension, appear to think them. And indeed, I have observ'd the Physical Arguments of the Atheists to be but very few, and those far enough from being Unanswerable. And as for the very chief of them, *tho'* they are wont to puzzle such as are not vers'd in nice Speculations, because they represent the assertion of a Deity, as a Doctrine encumber'd with inextricable Difficulties; *yet* I do not think the Objections solidly grounded, since the same Difficulties, or others not inferior, may be urg'd against those Hypotheses and Principles, that the Deniers of God do or must admit. And indeed, most of the perplexing Difficulties the Atheists lay so much stress on, do not proceed from any Absurdity contained in the Tenent of the Theists, but from the Nature of things; that is, partly from the Dimness and other Imperfections of our Human Understandings, and partly from the Abstruse Nature, that,

to such Pounded Intellects, all Objects must appear to have, in whose Conception Infinity is involv'd; whether that Object be God, or Atoms, or Duration, or some other thing that is uncausable. For, however we may flatter our selves, I fear we shall find, upon strict and impartial Tryal, that finite Understandings are not able clearly to resolve such Difficulties, as exact a clear comprehension of what is really Infinite.

But to persue this Discourse, would lead us too far. And 'tis more fit, after so much has been said concerning not only the Design of this Tract, but the New Philosophy, the *Virtuosi*, and my self; to proceed to those more Particular things, that directly tend to the main Scope of our Epistle.

The first advantage, that our Experimental Philosopher, as such, hath towards being a Christian, is, that his course of Studies conduceth much, to settle in his Mind a firm Belief of the *Existence*, and divers of the chief Attributes, of *God*: Which Belief,  
is,

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is, in the order of things, the first Principle of that Natural Religion, which it self is pre-required to Reveal'd Religion in general, and consequently to That in particular, which is embrac'd by Christians.

That the consideration of the Vastness, Beauty, and Regular Motions, of the heavenly Bodies; the excellent Structure of Animals and Plants; besides a multitude of other *Phænomena* of Nature, and the Subserviency of most of these to Man; may justly induce him, as a Rational Creature, to Conclude, That this vast, beautiful, orderly, and (in a word) many ways admirable System of things, that we call the *World*, was fram'd by an Author supremely Powerful, Wise, and Good, can scarce be deny'd by an intelligent and unprejudic'd Considerer. And this is strongly confirm'd by Experience, which witnesseth, that in almost all Ages and Countries, the generality of Philosophers, and contemplative Men, were persuaded of the Existence

ence of a Deity, by the consideration of the *Phænomena* of the Universe; whose Fabrick and Conduct they rationally concluded could not be deservedly ascrib'd, either to blind Chance, or to any other Cause than a *Divine Being*.

But, *tho'* it be true, that God *hath not left himself without witness*, even to perfunctory Considerers; by stamping upon divers of the more Obvious Parts of his Workmanship, such conspicuous Impressions of his Attributes, that a moderate degree of Understanding, and Attention, may suffice to make Men acknowledg his Being; Yet, I scruple not to think, That Assent very much inferior to the Belief, that the same Objects are fitted to produce in an Heedful and Intelligent Contemplator of them: For the Works of God are so worthy of their Author, that, besides the Impresses of his Wisdom, and Goodness, that are left as it were upon their Surfaces; there are a great many more curious and excellent Tokens, and Effects, of  
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Divine Artifice, in the hidden and innermost Recesses of them; and these are not to be discovered by the perfunctory looks of Oscitant or Unskilful Beholders; but Require, as well, as Deserve, the most attentive and prying Inspection of inquisitive and well-instructed Considerers. And sometimes in one Creature, there may be I know not how many admirable things, that escape a vulgar Eye, and yet may be clearly discern'd by That of a true Naturalist; who brings with him, besides a more than common Curiosity and Attention, a competent knowledge of Anatomy, Opticks, Cosmography, Mechanicks, and Chymistry. But treating elsewhere purposely of this Subject, it may here suffice to say, that God has couch'd so many things in his Visible Works, that the clearer Light a Man has, the more he may discover of their Unobvious Exquisite-ness, and the more clearly and distinctly he may discern those Qualities that lye more Obvious. And the more wonderful things he  
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discovers in the Works of Nature, the more auxiliary Proofs he meets with to establish and enforce the Argument, drawn from the Universe and its Parts, to evince *That there is a God*: Which is a Proposition of that vast weight and importance, that it ought to endear every thing to us, that is able to Confirm it, and Afford us new Motives to acknowledge and adore the Divine Author of things.

In reference to this matter, we may confidently say, that the Experimental Philosophy has a great advantage of the Scholastick. For in the Peripatetick Schools, where things are wont to be ascrib'd to certain Substantial Forms, and Real Qualities; (the former of which are acknowledg'd to be very abstruse and mysterious things, and the later are many of them confessedly occult;) the accounts of Nature's Works may be easily given in a few words, that are general enough to be applicable to almost all Occasions. But these uninstrucive Terms do neither oblige, nor conduct, a man

to deeper searches into the Structure of Things, nor the manner of being Produc'd, and of Operating upon one another. And consequently, are very insufficient to disclose the exquisite Wisdom, which the Omniscient Maker has express'd in the peculiar Fabricks of Bodies, and the skilfully regulated Motions of them, or of their constituent Parts: From the discernment of which things, nevertheless, it is, that there is, by way of result, produc'd in the mind of an Intelligent Contemplator, a strong Conviction of the Being of a Divine Opificer, and a just acknowledgment of his admirable Wisdom. To be told, that an Eye is the Organ of Sight, and that this is perform'd by that Faculty of the Mind, which from its Function is call'd *Visive*; will give a Man but a sorry account of the Instruments and Manner of Vision itself, or of the Knowledge of that Opificer, who, as the

*Psal.* 94. 9. Scripture speaks, *form'd the Eye.* And he that  
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can take up with this easy Theory of Vision, will not think it necessary to take the pains to dissect the Eyes of Animals, nor study the Books of Mathematicians, to understand Vision; and accordingly, will have but mean thoughts of the Contrivance of the Organ, and the Skill of the Artificer, in comparison of the Idea's that will be suggested of both of them, to him that, being profoundly skill'd in Anatomy and Opticks, by Their help takes asunder the several Coats, Humours, and Muscles, of which, that exquisite Dioptrical Instrument consists: And having separately consider'd the Figure, Size, Consistence, Texture, Diaphaneity, or Opacity, Situation, and Connexions, of each of them, and their Coaptation in the whole Eye, shall discover, by the help of the Laws of Opticks, how admirably this little Organ is fitted, to Receive the incident Beams of Light, and Dispose them in the best manner possible, for compleating the lively Representation of the almost infinitely various Objects of Sight. 'Tis

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'Tis easie for Men to say in general Terms, that *the World is wisely fram'd*; but I doubt it often happens, that Men confess, that the Creatures are wisely made, rather because upon other grounds they believe God to be a wise Agent, than because so slight an account as the School Philosophy gives of particular Creatures, convinces them of any Divine Wisdom in the Creator. And *tho'* I am willing to grant, that some Impressions of God's Wisdom are so conspicuous, that (as I lately intimated) even a Superficial Philosopher may thence infer, that the Author of such Works must be *a wise Agent*; yet, *how wise* an Agent he has in those Works express'd himself to be, none but an Experimental Philosopher can well discern. And 'tis not by a slight Survey, but by a diligent and skilful Scrutiny, of the Works of God, that a Man must be, by a Rational and Affective Conviction, engag'd to acknowledge with the Prophet, that the Author of Nature is *Wonderful*

*in Counsel, and Excellent in Working, Isa. xxviii. 29.*

II. After the Existence of the Deity, the next grand Principle of Natural Religion, is, the *Immortality of the Rational Soul*; whose genuine consequence is, the Belief and Expectation of a Future and Everlasting State. For this important Truth, divers Arguments may be alledg'd, that may persuade a sober and well-disposed Man to embrace it: But to convince a learned Adversary, the strongest Argument, that the Light of Nature supplies us with, seems to be that which is afforded by the Real Philosophy. For this teacheth us to form true and distinct Notions of the Body, and the Mind; and thereby manifests so great a difference in their Essential Attributes, that the same thing cannot be both. This it makes out more distinctly, by enumerating several Faculties and Functions of the Rational Soul; such as, *To Understand*, and that so, as to form Conceptions of Abstracted things, of Universals, of

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Immaterial Spirits, and even of that infinitely Perfect One, God himself: And also, to Conceive, and Demonstrate, that there are Incommensurable Lines, and Surd Numbers; to make Ratiocinations, and both cogent and concatenated Inferences, about these things; to express their intellectual Notions, *pro re natâ*, by words or Instituted Signs, to other Men; to exercise Free-will about many things; and to make Reflections on its own Acts, both of Intellect and Will. For these and the like Prerogatives, that are peculiar to the Human Mind, and superior to any thing that belongs to the Outward Senses, or to the Imagination it self, manifest, that the Rational Soul is a Being of an higher Order, than Corporeal; and consequently, that the Seat of these Spiritual Faculties, and the Source of these Operations, is a Substance, that being in its own nature distinct from the Body, is not naturally subject to Dye or Perish with it.

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And in reference to this Truth, our *Virtuoso* hath an advantage of a mere School-Philosopher. For being acquainted with the true and real Causes of Putrefaction, and other Physical kinds of Corruption; and thereby discerning, that the things that destroy Bodies, are the Avolation, or other Recess, of some necessary Parts, and such a depraving Transposition of the component Portions of Matter, as is altogether incongruous to the Structure and Mechanical Modification, that is essential to a Body of that *Species*, or kind, it belongs to: Our Naturalist, I say, knowing this, plainly perceives, that these causes of destruction can have no place in the Rational Soul; which being an Immaterial Spirit, and consequently a Substance not really divisible, can have no Parts expell'd or transpos'd, and so being exempted from the Physical Causes of Corruption that destroy Bodies, she ought to last always. And being a Rational Creature, endow'd with internal Principles of Acting, as ap-

appears in Free-will, she ought to live for ever, unless it please God to annihilate her; which we have no reason to suppose he will do. But on the other side, the Modern Peripateticks (for I question whether *Aristotle* himself were of the same opinion) maintain Substantial Forms, by some of them, styl'd *Semi-substantia*, to which in Apes, Elephants, and others, that pass for ingenious Animals, they ascribe some such Faculties and Functions, as seem to differ but gradually from those of the Rational Soul; and (how innocent soever I grant their Intentions to be) their Doctrine tends much to Enervate, if not quite to Disable; the chief Physical way of Probation, whence the Immortality of Man's Mind is justly infer'd. For since according to the Peripateticks, substantial Forms, are, as they speak, educ'd out of the Power or Potentiality of the Matter; and do so depend upon it, not only as to Action, but as to Being, that they cannot at all subsist without it: But when the



particular Body (as an Herb, a Stone, or a Bird,) is destroy'd, they perish with it; or, (as some of them scarce intelligibly express the same thing) *fall back into the bosom of the matter*: I think they give great advantage to Atheists, and Cavillers, to impugn the Minds Immortality.

For if to an Ape, or other Brute Animal, there belongs a Being more noble than Matter, that can actuate and inform it, and make it self the Architect of its own Mansion, tho' so admirable as that of an Ape, or an Elephant; if this Being can in the Body it hath fram'd, perform all the Functions of a vegetable Soul; and besides those, See, Hear, Taste, Smell, Imagin, Infer, Remember, Love, Hate, Fear, Hope, Expect, &c. and yet be a mortal thing, and perish with the Body: 'Twill not be difficult for those Enemies of Religion, who are willing to think the Soul Mortal, because their brutish Lives make them wish she were, to fancy, that human Minds are but a somewhat more  
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Noble, but not for that less Mortal, kind of Substantial Forms; as amongst Sensitive Souls themselves, which they acknowledge to be equally Mortal, there is a great disparity in Degrees, that of a Monky, for instance, being very far superior to that of an Oyster.

III. The third main Principle of Un-reveal'd Religion, and consequently of Reveal'd, (which presupposes Natural Religion, as it's foundation) is a Belief of the Divine Providence. And in this grand Article, as well as in the two foregoing, a Man may be much Confirm'd by Experimental Philosophy; both as it affords him positive Inducements to acknowledge the Article; and as it shews the great Improbability of the two main Grounds, on one or other of which, (for they are not well consistent) is founded the denial of God's Providence.

A *Virtuoso*, that by manifold and curious Experiments searches deep into the Nature of things, has great and peculiar Advantages, to discover  
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and observe the excellent Fabrick of the World, as 'tis an immense Aggregate of the several Creatures that compose it; and to take notice in its particular Parts, especially those that are Animated, of such exquisite Contrivances, and such admirable Coordinations, and Subordinations, in reference to each other, as lie hid from those Beholders that are not both Attentive and Skilful. When our *Virtuoso* contemplates the Vastness, scarce conceivable Swiftness, and yet constant Regularity, of the various Motions, of the Sun, Moon, and other Celestial Lights: When he considers *how* the Magnetism of the Earth makes its Poles constantly look the same way, notwithstanding the Motions of its fluid *Vortex*; *how* by daily turning about its own Center in four and twenty hours, it receives as much Light, and benefit from the Sun, and all the glorious Constellations of the Firmament, as if *they*, with all the vast heavenly Region they belong to, mov'd about *it* in the same time; *how*  
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by its Situation among them, it enjoys the regular Vicissitudes of Day and Night, Summer and Winter, &c. *how* the several Parts of the Sublunary World are mutually subservient to one another, and most of them (one way or other) Serviceable to Man; *how* excellently the Bodies of Animals are Contriv'd; *what* various and congruous provision is made for differing Animals, that they may subsist as long as they should, according to the Institution of Nature, by furnishing them, according to their respective Natures, *some* with Strength to take their Food by force, *others* with Industry to procure it by Subtilty; *some* with Arms, as Horns, Hoofs, Scales, Tusks, Poysons, Stings, &c. to Defend themselves, and Offend their Enemies; *some* with Wings or swiftness to fly from Dangers; *some* with Foresight to prevent them; *some* with Craft, and perhaps strange Fetches of it, to Elude them; *how* being distinguish'd into two Sexes, each of these is furnish'd with apposite Organs, for the  
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propagation of the *Species*, and with skill and kindness to nourish and train up their young ones, till they can shift for themselves; *how* admirable, and indeed astonishing, a process is gone through in the formation of the *Fœtus*, especially of a Human one; *how* divers Animals are endowed with strange Instincts, whose Effects sometimes seem much to surpass those of Reason it self; tho' they are super-added to the Mechanical Structure of the Animal, and argue a respect to things very remote from it, either in time, place, or both, and perhaps also to the Grand Fabrick or System of the World, and the general Oeconomy of Nature. When, as I was saying, a Philosopher duly reflects on these things, and many others of the like import, he will think it highly rational to infer from them these three Conclusions.

First, That a Machine so Immense, so Beautiful, so well contriv'd, and, in a word, so Admirable, as the World, cannot have been the effect of mere  
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Chance, or the Tumultuous Jostlings and Fortuitous Concourse of Atoms, but must have been produc'd by a Cause, exceedingly Powerful, Wise, and Beneficent.

Secondly, That this most Potent Author, and (if I may so speak) Opificer of the World, hath not Abandon'd a Masterpiece so worthy of him, but does still Maintain and Preserve it; so regulating the stupendiously swift Motions of the great Globes, and other vast Masses of the Mundane Matter, that they do not, by any notable Irregularity, disorder the grand System of the Universe, and reduce it to a kind of *Chaos*, or confus'd State of shuffl'd and deprav'd things.

Thirdly, That *as* it is not above the Ability of the Divine Author of things, though a single Being, to Preserve and Govern all his Visible Works, how great and numerous soever; *so* he thinks it not Below his Dignity and Majesty, to extend his Care and Beneficence to particular Bodies, and even to the meanest Creatures;

tures; providing not only for the Nourishment, but for the Propagation, of Spiders and Ants themselves. And indeed, since the Truth of this Assertion, *That God governs the World he has made*, would appear (if it did not by other Proofs) by the Constancy, and Regularity, and astonishingly rapid Motions of the vast Cœlestial Bodies, and by the long Trains of as Admirable, as Necessary, Artifices, that are employ'd to the Propagation of various sorts of Animals, (whether Viviparous, or Oviparous;) I see not why it should be deny'd, that God's Providence may reach to his particular Works here below, especially to the noblest of them, *Man*; since most of those Learned Men that deny this, as derogatory to God's Majesty and Happiness, acknowledge, that at the first *Creation*, or (if they dislike that term) *Formation* of things; the great Author of them must not only have extended his Care, to the grand System of the Universe in general, but allow'd it to descend so low, as to

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contrive all the Minute, and various Parts, (and even the most homely ones) not only of Greater and (reputedly) more perfect Animals, as Elephants, Whales, and Men; but such Small and Abject Ones, as Flies, Ants, Fleas, &c. Which being manifestly propagated by Eggs laid by the Female, cannot reasonably be thought the off-spring of Putrefaction. Whence I gather, as from matter of fact, that to be concern'd for the welfare, even of particular Animals; as it is agreeable to God's All-pervading Wisdom, and exuberant Beneficence; so (whatever Men's Vanity may make them surmise) it is not truly derogatory to his adorable Greatness and Majesty.

And on this occasion, I shall add, that *since* Man is the noblest of God's visible Works; *since* very many of them seem made for his Use; *since*, even as an Animal, he is (as the Psalmist truly speaks) *wonderfully made*, and *curiously*, or artificially *wrought*; and *since* God has both given him a

*Psalm* 138.

14, 15.



Rational Mind, and endow'd it with an Intellect, whereby he can Contemplate the Works of Nature, and by them acquire a Conviction of the Existence, and divers Attributes, of their supremely perfect Author; *since* God hath planted Notions and Principles in the Mind of Man, fit to make him sensible, that he ought to Adore God, as the most Perfect of Beings, the Supreme Lord and Governor of the World, the Author of his own Nature, and all his Enjoyments: *Since* all this, I say, is so, Natural Reason dictates to him, that he ought to express the Sentiments he has for this Divine Being, by Veneration of his Excellencies; by Gratitude for his Benefits; by Humiliation, in view of his Greatness, and Majesty; by an Awe of his Justice; by Reliance on his Power, and Goodness, when he duly endeavours to serve and please him; and, in short, by those several Acts of Natural Religion, that Reason shews to be Suitable, and therefore Due to those several Divine At-  
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tributes of his, which it has led us to the knowledge of.

And here I shall take leave to add, that, from the *Cartesian* Principles, (which you know are embrac'd, by a great part of the Modern *Virtuosi*) I think, I may draw a double Argument for Divine Providence.

For *first*, according to the *Cartesians*, all Local Motion (which is, under God, the grand Principle of all Actions among things Corporeal) is Adventitious to Matter; and was at first produc'd in it, and is still every moment Continu'd and Preserv'd immediately by God: Whence may be inferr'd, that he Concurs to the Actions of each particular Agent, (as they are Physical;) and consequently, that his Providence reaches to all and every one of them.

And *secondly*, the same *Cartesians* believe the Rational Soul to be an Immaterial Substance, really distinct and separable from the Body. Whence I infer, that the Divine Providence extends to every particular Man; since

since when ever an *Embryo*, or little Human Body form'd in the Womb, is, by being duly Organiz'd, fitted to receive a Rational Mind, God is pleas'd to Create one, and Unite it with that Body. In which Transaction, there seems to me a necessity of a direct and particular intervention of the Divine Power; since I understand not, by what Physical Charm or Spell an Immaterial Substance can be allur'd into this or that Particular *Embryo*, of many that are at the same time fitted to receive a Human Soul; nor by what merely Mechanical Ty, or Band, an Immaterial Substance can be so durably (perhaps for 80 or 100 Years) joyn'd and united with a Corporeal, in which it finds no Parts, that it has Organs to take hold of, and to which it can furnish no Parts to be fasten'd upon by them. Nor do I better conceive, how a mere Body can produce Pain, Pleasure, &c. by its own mere Action, or rather Endeavour to act, on an Immaterial Spirit. Nor will the force of

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all that has been said for God's Special Providence, be eluded, by saying, with some Deists, that after the first formation of the Universe, all things are brought to pass by the Settled Laws of Nature. For tho' this be confidently, and not without colour, pretended; yet, I confess, it does not satisfy me. For, beside the insuperable difficulty there is, to give an Account of the first formation of things, which many (especially *Aristotelian*) Deists will not ascribe to God; and besides that the Laws of Motion, without which the present State and Course of things could not be maintain'd, did not necessarily spring from the Nature of Matter, but depended upon the Will of the Divine Author of things: Besides this, I say, I look upon a Law, as a Moral, not a Physical, Cause, as being indeed but a Notional thing, according to which, an intelligent and free Agent is bound to regulate its Actions. But inanimate Bodies are utterly incapable of Understanding what a Law is, or what  
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it enjoyns, or when they act conformably or unconformably to it; and therefore the Actions of Inanimate Bodies, which cannot incite or moderate their own Actions, are produc'd by real Power, not by Laws; tho' the Agents, if Intelligent, may Regulate the Exertions of their Power by settled Rules.

*IV.* I have taken notice of two other Accounts, upon which the Experimental Knowledge of God's Works, may, in a well-dispos'd Mind, conduce to establish the Belief of his Providence; and therefore, tho' I shall not dwell long upon them, I must not altogether pretermit them.

First then, when our *Virtuoso* sees how many, and how various, and oftentimes how strange, and how admirable Structures, Instincts, and other Artifices, the wise Opificer hath furnish'd, even Brutes and Plants withal, *to purchase and assimilate their Food, to defend or otherwise secure themselves from hostile things, and (to be short) to maintain their Lives, and*

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propagate their *Species* ; it will very much conduce to persuade him, that so Wise an Agent, who has at Command so many differing and excellent Methods and Tools, to accomplish what he designs; and does oftentimes actually employ them, for the preservation and welfare of Beasts, and even of Plants, can never want Means to compass his most wise and just Ends, in relation to Mankind ; being able, by ways that we should never dream of, to execute his Menaces, and fulfil his Promises. But of these rare Structures, Instincts, and other Methods, and, if I may so style some of them with Reverence, Stratagems and Fetches of Divine Skill, that God is pleas'd to employ in the conduct of the visible World, especially Animals, I have already elsewhere purposely discours'd, and therefore shall now proceed, and observe, in the second place, That, when we duly consider the very differing ends, to which many of God's particular Works, especially those that are Animated,

mated, seem design'd, in reference both to their own Welfare, and the Utility of Man; and with how much *Wisdom*, and, I had almost said, *Care*, the glorious Creator has been pleas'd to supply them with means admirably fit for the attainment of these respective ends; we cannot but think it highly probable, That so Wise, and so Benign a Being, has not left his noblest visible Creature, *Man*, unfurnish'd with means to procure his own Welfare, and obtain his true End, if he be not culpably wanting to himself. And *since* Man is endowed with Reason, which may convince him, (of what neither a Plant, nor Brute Animal is capable of knowing, namely) that God is both his Maker, and his continual Benefactor; *since* his Reason likewise teacheth him, That upon both those accounts, besides others, God may justly expect and require Worship and Obedience from him; *since* also the same Rational Faculty may persuade him, That it may well become the Majesty and Wisdom of

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God, as the Sovereign Rector of the World, to give a Law to Man, who is a Rational Creature, capable of Understanding and Obeying it, and thereby Glorifying the Author of it; *since*, (farthermore) finding in his own Mind (if it be not deprav'd by Vice, or Lufts) a Principle that dictates to him, That he owes a Veneration, and other suitable Sentiments, to the Divinely Excellent Author of his Being, and his continual and munificent Benefactor; *since*, on these scores, his Conscience will convince him of his Obligation to all the Essential Duties of natural Religion; and *since*, lastly, his Reason may convince him, That his Soul is Immortal, and is therefore Capable, as well as Desirous, to be everlastingly Happy, after it has left the Body; he must in reason be strongly inclin'd to wish for a Supernatural Discovery of what God would have him Believe and Do. And therefore if, being thus prepared, he shall be very credibly informed, That God hath actually been pleas'd to

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Discover, by Supernatural Revelation, (what, by Reason, without it, he can either not at all, or but rovingly, guesses at) what kind of Worship and Obedience will be most acceptable to him; and to encourage Man to both these, by explicate Promises of that Felicity, that Man, without them, can but faintly hope for, he would be ready then thankfully to acknowledge, That this way of proceeding befits the transcendent Goodness of God, without derogating from his Majesty and Wisdom. And by these and the like Reflections, whereof some were formerly intimated, a Philosopher, that takes notice of the wonderful Providence, that God descends to exercise for the welfare of Inferiour and Irrational Creatures, will have an advantage above Men not vers'd in the works and course of Nature, to believe, upon the Historical and other Proofs that Christianity offers, That God has actually vouchsafed to Man, his noblest, and only rational visible  
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Creature, an explicate and positive Law, enforc'd by Threatning severe Penalties to the Stubborn Transgressors; and Promising, to the sincere Obeyers, Rewards suitable to his own Greatness and Goodness. And thus the Consideration of God's Providence, in the conduct of things corporeal, may prove, to a well dispos'd Contemplator, a Bridge, whereon he may pass from Natural to Reveal'd Religion.

I have been the more particular and express, in what I have said about Divine Providence, because I did not find other Writers had made it needless for me to do so: And I dwelt the longer upon the Existence of the Deity, and the Immortality of the Soul, that I might let you see, That I did not speak Groundlessly or Rashly, but that I had consider'd what I said, when I asserted, That the Experimental Philosophy might afford *a well dispos'd Mind* considerable Helps to Natural Religion. I find my self therefore now at Liberty to proceed

proceed to farther Considerations, and represent to you, That

V. Another thing, that disposes an Experimentarian Philosopher to embrace Religion, is, That his *Genius* and Course of Studies accustoms him to value and delight in abstracted Truths; by which Term, I here mean such Truths, as do not at all, or do but very little, gratifie Mens Ambition, Sensuality, or other Inferiour Passions and Appetites. For, whereas the Generality of those that are averse from Religion are enclin'd to be so, upon This account, (among Others) That they have a Contempt or Undervaluation of all Truths, that do not gratifie their Passions or Interests; He that is addicted to Knowledge Experimental, is accustom'd both to Pursue, Esteem, and Relish many Truths, that do not delight his Senses, or gratifie his Passions, or his Interests, but only entertain his Understanding with that Manly and Spiritual Satisfaction, that is naturally afforded

forded it by the attainment of Clear and Noble Truths, which are its genuine Objects and Delights. And tho' I grant, that the Discoveries made by the help of Physical or Mechanical Experiments, are not, for the most part, of Kin to Religion; yet, besides that some of them do manifestly conduce to Establish or Illustrate Natural Theology, which is that, (as, tho' noted already, deserves to be Inculcated) which Reveal'd Religion, and consequently that of Christians, must be Founded on, or must Suppose: Besides this, I say, we may argue *à fortiori*, That he, that is accustomed to prize Truths of an Inferior kind, because they are Truths, will be much more dispos'd to value Divine Truths, which are of a much higher and nobler Order, and of an Inestimable and Eternal Advantage.

VI. There is another thing, that is too pertinent to the main Scope of this Discourie to be here pretermitted: and it is, That both the Temper of Mind, that makes a Man most pro-  
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per to be a *Virtuoso*, and the Way of Philosophising, he chiefly employ's, conduce much to give him a sufficient, and yet well grounded and duly limited, Docility; which is a great Disposition to the Entertainment of Reveal'd Religion. In the Vulgar and Superficial Philosophy, wherein a Man is allowed to think, that he has done his part well enough, when he has ascrib'd things to a Substantial Form, or to Nature, or to some Real Quality, whether Manifest or Occult, without proving that there are such Causes, or intelligibly declaring, How they produce the *Phænomena*, or Effects referr'd to them; in this Philosophy, I say, 'tis easie for a Man to have a great Opinion of his own Knowledge, and be puffed up by it. But a *Virtuoso*, that cannot satisfy Himself, nor dares pretend to satisfy Others, till he can, by *Hypotheses* that may be understood and prov'd, declare intelligibly the *manner* of the Operation of the Causes he assigns, will often find it so Difficult a Task

to do so, that he will easily discern, that he needs further Information, and therefore ought to seek for it where 'tis the most likely to be had; and not only to Admit, but Welcome it, if he finds it. Besides, the Litigious Philosophy of the Schools seldom furnishes its Disciples with better than Dialectical or Probable Arguments, which are not proper, either fully to satisfy the Person that employs them, or leave his Adversary without any Answer, Plausible at least, if not full as Probable as the Objection; upon which account, men that have more Wit than sincere Love of Truth, will be able to dispute speciously enough, as long as they have a mind to do so. And as such slippery Arguments are not able to Convince even Him that employs them, if he be a Man of Judgment; so, if he deals with a witty Adversary, they will leave him able to Elude any Arguments of the like nature, with which he shall be press'd. And in effect we see, That in the Aristotelian Philosophy there  
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are divers Questions, such as, *whether* the Elements retain their distinct Nature in a mixt Body? *whether* the Cælestial Orbs are mov'd by Intelligences? to omit many others, which are as it were *stated Questions*; and as they have been disputed from age to age, are like to continue Questions for many more, if that Philosophy shall last so long. But a *Virtuoso*, that is wont in his Reasonings to attend to the Principles of Mathematicks, and sound Philosophy, and to the clear Testimonies of Sense, or well verifi'd Experiments, acquires a Habit of discerning the Cogency of an Argument, or way of Probation; and easily discerns, That Dialectical Subtilties, and School Tricks, cannot shift off its force, but finds more Satisfaction in Embracing a Demonstrated Truth, than in the vain Glory of Disputing subtilly against it.

VII. Another thing that may dispose a studious Searcher of Truth, (not by Speculations only, but ) by Experiments, for Theology, is, that his  
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Inquisitiveness, and Course of Studies, makes him both Willing and Fit to search out and discover Deep and *Unobvious Truths*. I have with trouble observ'd, That the greater part of the Libertines we have among us, being Men of *Pilate's* humor, ( who, when he had scornfully ask'd *what is truth?* would not stay for an Answer ) do, with great Fastidiousness, decline the Study of all Truths that require a Serious and Setled application of Mind. These Men are, for the most part, a sort of Superficial and Desultory Wits, that go no further than the Outside of things, without penetrating into the Recesses of them; and being easily tir'd with contemplating *one*, pass quickly to *another*; the Consideration whereof they, with the same Lightness, forsake. And upon this account, among others, it is, that this sort of Men, tho' often much applauded by others, because the Most are but Superficial, as well as They, do almost as seldom make good Philosophers, as good Christians. For  
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tho' all the good Arguments, that may be brought to evince the Truth of Natural (and Reveal'd) Religion, be not Abstruse; yet *some of the chief ones*, especially those that prove the Existence and Special Providence of God, and the Souls Immortality, are, if not of a Metaphysical, yet at least of a Philosophical, nature; and will scarce be clearly understood, and duely relish'd, but by a Person capable of, and somewhat accusom'd to, Attentive and Lasting Speculations, (as in another Paper has been more fully declar'd.) But now,

*About some Causes of Atheism.*

a Man addicted to prosecute Discoveries of Truths, not only by Serious Meditation, but by intricate and laborious Experiments, will not easily be deterr'd from effectually prosecuting his End, by the Troublesomness or Difficulties that attend the clearing of those Notions, and Matters of Fact, whereon Solid Arguments for Natural, or Reveal'd, Religion, are founded; how remote soever those Truths

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may

may be from vulgar Apprehensions. In short, whereas a Superficial Wit, such as is frequently found in Libertins, and often helps to make them such, may be compar'd to an *ordinary Swimmer*, who can reach but such things as float upon the Water; an Experimental Philosopher may be compar'd to a *skilful Diver*, that cannot only fetch those things that lye upon the Surface of the Sea, but make his way to the very Bottom of it; and thence fetch up Pearls, Corals, and other precious things, that in those Depths lye conceal'd from other men's Sight and Reach.

We have already seen, that Experimental Philosophy is, in its own nature, friendly to *Religion in general*.

Wherefore I shall now add, That the Reverence I pay Experience, especially as it gives both Grounds and Hints to rational Notions and Conclusions, does not a little conduce to the Assent I give to the Truth of *the Christian Religion in particular*.

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This excellent Religion is recommended to well disposed Minds, by a greater Number of Prerogatives, and other Arguments, than it were proper for me to insist on in this Discourse: And yet my Design engages me to consider a few of them somewhat particularly.

I. And first, I shall observe, That, whereas the three grand Arguments, that conjointly evince the Truth of the Christian Religion in general, and (at least in my opinion) *the Excellency of the Doctrine, which makes it worthy to have proceeded from God; the Testimony of the Divine Miracles, that were wrought to commend it; the great Effects, produc'd in the World by it.* Two of these three Arguments (for the first is of a more Speculative nature) are bottom'd upon *matters of fact*, and consequently are likely to be the most prevalent upon those that have a great Veneration for Experience, and are *duly dispos'd to frame such pious Reflections, as it warrants and leads them*

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*to make.* This last Clause I add, because, *though* I have formerly more than Intimated something of the like Import, *yet* 'tis so necessary to my Design that you should take special notice of it, that I must not here omit to advertise you, That, when, in this Discourse, I speak of an Experimental Philosopher, or Virtuoso; I do not mean, either, on this hand, a Libertine, tho' Ingenious; or a Sensualist, though Curious; or, on that hand, a mere Empirick, or some vulgar Chymist, that looks upon nothing as Experimental, wherein Chymistry, Mechanicks, &c. are not employ'd; and who too often makes Experiments, without making Reflection on them, as having it more in his aim to Produce Effects, than to Discover Truths. But the Person I here mean, is such a one, as by attentively looking about him, gathers Experience, not from his own Tryals alone, but from divers other *matters of fact*, which he heedfully observes, though he had no share in the effecting them; and  
on

on which he is dispos'd to make such Reflections, as may (unforcedly) be apply'd to confirm and encrease in him the Sentiments of *Natural Religion*, and facilitate his Submission and Adherence to the *Christian Religion*.

An Experimental Philosopher, thus dispos'd, will, with the Divine Assistance, (which he will be careful to Implore) find pregnant Motives to the Belief of Christianity, in the two last of the three Arguments of its Truth, that I lately propos'd. That which is drawn from the Effects of this Religion in the World, as it is last nam'd, so I shall defer the Consideration of it, till I have treated of the other; namely the Testimony of Divine Miracles, whose Difficulty makes it requisite for us to consider it the more Attentively, and distinctly declare the Grounds, upon which Experience may be esteemed a good Topick on the present occasion. For the clearing of this matter, I shall represent to you, That the word *Experience* may admit of divers Senses,

whereof one is far more comprehensive than another; and likewise of several Divisions and Distributions. For, besides its more restrained acceptation, it is sometimes set in contra-distinction to *Reason*, so as to comprehend, not only those *Phænomena* that Nature or Art exhibits to our Outward Senses, but those things that we perceive to pass Within our selves; and all those ways of Information, whereby we attain any Knowledge that we do not owe to abstracted *Reason*. So that, without stretching the Word to the utmost Extent of which 'tis capable, and to which it has been enlarg'd; it may be look'd upon as so comprehensive a Term, that I think it may be of some importance to my present design, and perhaps to Theology it self, to propose to you a Distribution of Experience, that will not, I hope, be found useless to clear the Extent of that Term. I shall then take the freedom to enlarge the Signification of the Word beyond its commonest Limits, and divide it, for distinctions sake,

sake, into *Immediate* and *Vicarious* Experience; or rather somewhat less Compendiously, but perhaps more Commodiously, into *Personal, Historical, and Supernatural*, (which may be also styl'd *Theological*:) referring the First of the three Members of this distribution to *Immediate Experience*, and the two others, to *Vicarious*.

I call that *Personal Experience*, which a Man acquires immediately by himself, and accrews to him by his own Sensations, or the exercise of his Faculties, without the Intervention of any external Testimony. 'Tis by this Experience that we know, that the Sun is bright; Fire, hot; Snow, cold, and white; that upon the want of Aliments we feel Hunger; that we *hope* for future Goods; that we *love* what we judge *good*, and *hate* what we think *evil*; and discern that there is a great Difference between a Triangle and a Circle, and can distinguish them by it.

By *Historical Experience*, I mean that, which tho' it were personal in

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Some Other man, is but by his Relation or Testimony, whether immediately or mediately, conveyed to us: 'Tis by this that we know, that there were such Men as *Julius Cæsar*, and *William the Conqueror*, and that *Joseph* knew that *Pharaoh* had a Dream, which the *Ægyptian* wise Men could not expound.

By *Theological Experience*, I mean that, by which we know what, supposing there is some Divine Revelation, God is pleas'd to relate or declare concerning Himself, his Attributes, his Actions, his Will, or his Purposes; whether *immediately*, (or without the Intervention of Man) as he sometimes did to *Job* and *Moses*, and Constantly to Christ our Saviour: Or by the *Intervention* of Angels, Prophets, Apostles, or Inspir'd Persons; as he did to the Israelites, and the Primitive Christian Church; and does still to us, by those written Testimonies we call the *Scriptures*.

By



By *Personal Experience*, we know that there are Stars in Heaven; by *Historical Experience*, we know that there was a new Star seen by *Tycho* and other Astronomers, in *Cassiopea*, in the Year 1572. and by *Theological Experience* we know, that the Stars were made on the Fourth Day of the Creation.

By this you may see, That I do not in this Discourse take *Experience* in the strictest sense of all, but in a greater latitude, for the knowledge we have of any matter of Fact, which, without owing it to Ratiocination, either we acquire by the Immediate Testimony of our Own Senses and other Faculties, or accreus to us by the Communicated Testimony of Others. And I make the less scruple to take this Liberty, because I observe, that, even in common Acceptation, the word *Experience* is not always meant of that which is *Immediate*, but is often taken in a latitude. As when we say, that Experience teaches us, who perhaps were never  
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out of *England*, that the *Torrid Zone* is Habitable, and Inhabited; and persuades learned men, that never had opportunity to make nice *Cœlestial Observations*, that Stars may be Generated and Perish, or at least begin to Appear, and then Disappear, in the *Cœlestial Region* of the World. And on this kind of *Historical Experience*, consisting of the *Personal Observations* of *Hippocrates*, *Galen*, and other Physicians, transmitted to us, a great part of the *Practice of Physick* is founded. And the most *Rational Physicians* reckon upon, as matters of fact, not only what other Physicians have left upon Record, but divers Present things, which themselves can know but by the Relation of their Patients; as, that a Man has a particular *Antipathy* to such a thing, which the Doctor perhaps judges fit for him to use; or that a Woman with Child longs for this or that determinate thing. And Physicians reduce these and the like matters of fact to *Experience*, as to one of the

two Columns of Physick, distinguished from *Reason*.

Since then Learned Men, as well as common Use, confine not the application of the word *Experience* to that which is *Personal*, but employ it in a far greater latitude; I see not, why that, which I call *Theological Experience*, may not be admitted; since the Revelations that God makes concerning what he has Done, or purposes to Do, are but Testimonies of things, most of them matters of Fact, and all of them such, as, so far forth as they are merely Revelations, cannot be known by Reasoning, but by Testimony: Whose being Divine, and relating to Theological Subjects, does not alter its Nature, tho' it give it a peculiar and supereminent Authority.

Having premis'd and clear'd the propos'd Distribution of *Experience*, it will now be seasonable to consider, how it may be apply'd to the Matters of Fact, that recommend the Credibility of the Christian Religion; and

on this occasion, I shall distinctly offer you my Thoughts, in the two following Propositions.

Prop. I. *We ought to believe divers things upon the information of Experience, (whether Immediate, or Vicarious) which, without that information, we should judge unfit to be believ'd; or antecedently to it, did actually judge contrary to Reason.*

This Proposition may be understood, either of Persons, or of Things, and will hold true, as to both.

And *first*, as to *Persons*; if your own Observation of what occurs among Mankind do not satisfy you, that we are oblig'd, after sufficient Tryal, frequently to alter the Opinions, which upon probable Reasons we had before entertain'd, of the Fidelity, or Prudence, or Justice, or Chastity; &c. of this or that Person; I shall refer you to the Records of History, or appeal to the Tribunals of Judges. For both in the one, and  
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at the other, you will find but too many Instances and Proofs from matters of Fact, that Persons look'd on, even by Intelligent Men, as Honest, Virtuous, and perhaps Holy too, have prov'd guilty of Falseness to their Friends, Perfidiousness to their Princes, Disloyalty to their Husbands or Wives, Injustice to their Neighbours, Sacrilege, Perjury, or other Impieties to their God: And in the Courts of Justice, you will find a great part of the Time employ'd to Detect and Punish, *not only* Civil Transgressions, as Thefts, Cheats, Forgery, False-witness, Adultery, and the like heinous Crimes, perpetrated by those, that, before they were thoroughly sifted, pass'd for Honest; *but* you will find Sins against Nature, such as Sodomy, and other unnatural Lusts, the Murders of Parents by their Children, and Innocent Children by their Parents, nay, Self-murder too; tho' this be a Crime, which cannot be acted without a violation of what seems the most Universal and Radicated Law of Na-

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Nature, (and is acknowledg'd so by wicked Men) *Self-preservation*. But it will not be necessary more solicitously to prove, that we ought, upon the Testimony of Experience, to change the Opinions we thought we had rationally taken up of Persons; and therefore I shall now proceed to make good the Proposition, in the Sense I chiefly intended, which is, as it relates to *Things*.

If Experience did not both Inform and Certify us, Who would believe, that a light black Powder should be able, being duly manag'd, to throw down Stone-Walls, and blow up whole Castles and Rocks themselves, and do those other Stupendous things, that we see actually perform'd by *Gun powder*, made use of in Ordnance, and in Mines? Who would think, that two or three grains of *Opium*, should so stupify a large Human Body, as to force a Sleep, and oftentimes even without That, suspend the sharpest Torments, in the Cholick, Gout, and other the most painful  
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Diseases, and that in Patients of quite different Ages, Sexes, and Constitutions; in whom also the Diseases are produc'd by Differing, or even by Contrary, Causes? Who would believe, that the Poyson adhering to the Tooth of a Mad Dog, tho' perhaps so little as to be scarce discernable by Sense, should be able, after the slight Hurt is quite heal'd, to continue in the warm, and still perspirable, Body of the bitten person, not only for some Days or Months, but sometimes for very many Years? And after, having lurk'd all that while, without giving any trouble to the Patient, should on a sudden pervert the whole Oeconomy of his Body, and put him into a Madness like that of the Dog that bit him, discovering it self by that, as Admirable as Fatal, Symptom of *Hydrophobia*?

But, besides a multitude of Instances that may be given of Truths, that, were it not for *Experience*, we should refuse to believe; because the small Strength of such Agents, seems altogether

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gether disproportionate to the Effects ascrib'd to them: Many other Instances might be alleg'd, wherein we assent to Experience, even when its Informations seem contrary to Reason, and that which, perhaps, we did actually and without scruple take to be True.

Since Gravity is the Principle, that determines Falling Bodies to move towards the Center of the Earth; it seems very rational to believe, with the Generality of Philosophers, that therein follow *Aristotle*; That, in proportion as one Body is more heavy than another, so it shall fall to the ground faster than the other. Whence it has been, especially by some of the Peripatetick School, inferr'd, that of two Homogeneous Bodies, whereof one does, for Example, weigh ten pounds, and the other but one pound; The former being let fall from the same height, and at the same time, with the latter, will reach the ground ten times sooner.

But



But notwithstanding this plausible Ratiocination, Experience shews us, (and I have purposely try'd it) that (at least in moderate heights, such as those of our Towers, and other Elevated Buildings) Bodies of very unequal weight, let fall together, will reach the Ground at the same time; or so near it, that 'tis not easy to perceive any difference in the Velocity of their Descent.

'Tis generally taken for granted by Naturalists; as well as others, that Strong and Loud Noises, as they are heard much farther off than Fainter Sounds, so, if the Sonorous Bodies be equally distant from the Ear, the very Strong Sound will arrive much sooner at it, than the other; and yet by the Experiments of the Moderns about the Velocity of Sounds, (in making divers of which, I have endeavour'd to be accurate) it appears, that Weaker Sounds are (at least as to Sense) transmitted through the Air as swiftly as Stronger ones. And indeed, 'tis often observ'd, that when

Cannons and Muskets are discharg'd together, the Noises of both arrive also together at the Ear; which would not be, if the Sound of a Cannon were any thing near as much Swifter, as 'tis Louder, than that of a Musket.

It seems irrational to conceive, that a Smaller and Weaker *Loadstone*, may draw away a piece of Steel from a Larger and Stronger; and yet Experience (which both others and I have made) evinces, that in some cases, this Paradox is a Truth.

It has generally, by Philosophers as well as other Men, been look'd upon as manifest, and consonant to Reason, that Cold condenses Water more or less, according as the degree of the Cold is; and (consequently) that *Ice* is Water reduc'd into a lesser Volume. But 'tis plain, by Experiments carefully made, (some of which I have elsewhere publish'd) that by Glaciation, Water is rather Expanded; or at least, that Ice takes up more room, than the Water did before

fore it was Congeal'd. And of this sort of Instances, where we believe, upon the Authority of Experience, things that are contrary to what we should otherwise judge to be a Dictate or Conclusion of Reason; I could add many, if I thought it as needful in this place, as in some other Papers, where I have given them already.

*An Essay of  
Improbable  
Truths.*

And now it will be seasonable to put you in mind, that in one part of the Proposition, hitherto discours'd of, it appears, That I design'd to extend the force of the Arguments, grounded upon Experience, to that which is not Immediate, but Vicarious; that is, not personally *our own*, but *communicated* by others; provided it be competently Attested, and duly Convey'd to Us.

There will need but a little Reflection on what is judg'd reasonable, and freely practis'd, by Philosophers themselves, to Justify this Proposition. For how many Conclusions have the

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Modern Naturalists admitted, tho' not only Abstracted Reason never led Men to make them, but plausible Arguments, and the Notions and Axioms of the most generally receiv'd Philosophy, were repugnant to them. Thus, That in Heaven it self there should be Generations and Corruptions, was not only Unobserv'd before the time of *Aristotle*, (who thence argues the Incorruptibility of Cœlestial Bodies) but is Contradicted by his Arguments; and yet both many others, and I, have seen great Spots (perhaps bigger than *England*, or than *Europe* it self) Generated and Dissipated on or near the Surface of the Sun; and several of the Modern Philosophers and Astronomers, having never had the good fortune to see any of these, (which indeed of late years have but rarely appear'd) must take these *Phænomena* upon the Credit of those that have observ'd them. And much more must they do so, who, in spite of the Vulgar Philosophy, which made all Comets Sublunary,  
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believe, there were Cœlestial, and perhaps Firmamentary, Comets. For, that they were above the Concave of the Moon's Orb, we must believe upon the affirmation of those that observ'd them, which very few have done themselves. And the height of the famous Comet, or Disappearing Star, in *Cassiopea*, in the Year 1572. whereon so much stress is laid by our Philosophers and Mathematicians, is admitted and urg'd, chiefly upon the belief they have, not only of *Tycho's* Veracity, but his Skill in observing the Motions and *Phænomena* of that Cœlestial Light, and particularly its having no *Parallax*.

In short, the great Architect of Experimental History, Sir *Francis Bacon*, when he divides it but into three parts, assigns the second of them to what he calls *Præter-Generations*; such as Monsters, Prodigies, and other things; which being (as to Us) but Casualties, all those that happen'd in other Times and Places than we have liv'd in, (and those will be confess'd

to be incomparably more than any of us has personally observ'd) we must take upon the Credit of others. And yet These, (vicarious Experiments) by Suggesting new Instances of Nature's Power, and uncommon ways of Working; and by Overthrowing, or Limiting, received Rules and Traditions, afford us a considerable and instructive part of Natural History, without which, it would not be either so Sound, or so Compleat.

*Prop. II.* After what has been hitherto discours'd, it may be, I hope, both seasonable and warrantable to advance to, and assert, our Second Proposition; *viz.* That we ought to have a great and particular regard to those things that are recommended to our Belief, by what we have reduc'd to Real, tho' Supernatural, Experience.

For, I. 'Tis manifest, that the most rational Men scruple not to believe, upon competent Testimony, many things, whose Truth did no way appear

pear to them by the consideration of the nature of the Things themselves; nay, tho' what is thus believ'd upon Testimony be so Strange, and, setting aside that Testimony, would seem so Irrational, that antecedently to that Testimony, the things at last admitted as Truths, were actually rejected as Errors, or judg'd altogether unfit to be Believ'd. And I must here desire you to consider, that the Points wherein Experience over-rules that, which, before it superven'd, was judg'd to be most agreeable to Reason, concern things merely Natural or Civil, whereof Human Reason is held to be a proper Judge: Whereas many of the Points recommended by Supernatural Experience, concern things of a Superior Order; *many* of which are not to be Adaquately estimated by the same Rules with things merely Corporeal or Civil; and *some* of which, as the Essence and manner of Existence, and some peculiar Attributes, of the Infinite God, involve or require such a knowledge of what



is Infinite, as much passes the reach of our limited Intellects.

But this is not all. For, 2. You may consider in the next place, that, whereas 'tis as Justly as Generally granted, that the better qualify'd a Witness is, in the capacity of a Witness, the Stronger Assent his Testimony deserves; we ought of all the things that can be recommended to us by Testimony, to receive those with the highest degree of Assent, that are taught us by God, by the intervention of those Persons, that appear to have been Commission'd by Him to declare his Mind to Men. For the two grand Requisites of a Witness, being the *knowledge* he has of the things he delivers, and his *faithfulness* in truly delivering what he knows; all Human Testimony must on these accounts be inferior to Divine Testimony: Since this (later) is warranted both by the Veracity of God, (which is generally acknowledg'd by those that believe his Existence) and by his boundless Knowledge; which makes  
it



it as impossible he should be Deceiv'd himself, as the other does, that he should Deceive us. And, because that, for the delivery of the Divine Testimony we are speaking of, it has oftentimes pleas'd God, who is a most Free, as well as a most Wise, Agent, to make use of Unpromising Persons as his Instruments; I shall not on this occasion altogether overlook this Circumstance, That an Experimental Philosopher *so* often encreases his Knowledge of Natural things, by what He learns from the Observations and Practises, even of Mean, and perhaps of Illiterate, Persons, (such as Shepherds, Plowmen, Smiths, Fowlers, &c.) because they are conversant with the Works of Nature; *that* He is not only Willing to admit, but often Curious to seek for Informations from them, and therefore is not like to find much repugnancy in receiving the Doctrines of Reveal'd Religion, such as Christianity, if the Teachers of it were honest Men, and had opportunity to know the Truth of the Things they de-

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deliver, tho' they were Fishermen, Tentmakers, or some other Mean Profession.

And indeed, (to enlarge a little upon a Subject that, I fear, has scarce been consider'd) such a person as our *Virtuoso*, will, with both great Willingness, and no less Advantage, Exercise himself in perusing, with great Attention, and much Regard, the Writings of the Apostles, Evangelists, and Ancient Prophets; notwithstanding any Meanness of their First Condition, or of their Secular Employments. And in these Sacred Writings, He will *not only* readily suffer himself to be instructed in these Grand and Catholick Articles of Religion, which, because of their Necessity or very great Usefulness, are to be met with in many places, and in variety of Expressions, by honest and duly dispos'd Readers: *But* He will, in stead of Disclaiming such Tutors, both Expect, and carefully Strive, to Improve his Knowledge of Divine Things in general, even by those Hints,

Hints, and Incidental Passages, that a careless or ordinary Reader would Overlook, or not expect any thing from. For, *as* the Fæcundity of the Scriptures is not wont to be enough discern'd, when the Sacred Writers transiently touch upon, or glance at, a great many Subjects, that they do not expressly handle, and that therefore are not vulgarly taken notice of; *so* the Docility we have ascrib'd to our *Virtuoso*, will make him repose a great deal of Trust in the Testimony of Inspir'd Persons, such as Christ and his Apostles, about Things of all sorts, either usually taken notice of or not, that relate to Objects of a Supernatural Order; especially if among these, God himself, and his Purposes, be compriz'd, since divers of those things are *not knowable without Revelation*, and others are *best known by it*. And to be allow'd to ground a Belief about such things, on the Relations and other Testimonies of those that were in the Scripture-Phrase, *Eye Witnesses and Ministers of* Luke 1. 2.  
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the things they speak of, will by our *Virtuoso* be justly reputed such an advantage, in order to the Knowledge of things Divine, as the consulting with Navigators and Travellers to *America*, is, to him that is curious to learn the State of that New-world. For an ordinary Sea-man or Traveller, that had the opportunity with *Columbus* to sail along the several Coasts of it, and pass up and down thorow the Country, was able at his return to Inform Men of an hundred things, that they should never have learn'd by *Aristotle's* Philosophy, or *Ptolomy's* Geography; and might not only Acquaint them with divers particulars, consonant to the Opinions which their formerly receiv'd Physicks and Cosmography did suggest, but also Rectify divers Erroneous Presumptions and Mistakes, which till then they thought very agreeable to the Dictates of those Sciences, and so to Reason. And, as one, that had a candid and knowing Friend intimate with *Columbus*, might better rely

on His Informations about many particulars of the Natural History of those Parts, than on those of an hundred School-Philosophers, that knew but what they learned from *Aristotle*, *Pliny*, *Ælian*, and the like ancient Naturalists; so, and much more, may we rely on the Accounts given us of Theological Things, by the Apostles, and constant Attendants of him that lay in the *Bosom of God his Father*, and Commis- *John I. 18.*  
sion'd them to declare to the World *the Whole Conn-* *Act. XX. 27.*  
*sel of God*, as far as 'twas necessary for Man to know.

We know, that Fuller Tryals are allow'd, among Ingenious Men, to rectify the Informations of the more Imperfect Ones; and therefore I shall add, that, tho' the Innate Notions and Sentiments, that Nature gives us of the Attributes and Mind of God, be highly to be priz'd; yet the Informations that Theological Experience affords of those Abstruse things, is far more Excellent and Compleat.  
For

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For methinks, those great  
1 Cor. II. 10. *Depths of God* may be  
compar'd to the *Depths*  
of the Ocean. And we know, that  
in the Sea; there are some Abyffes so  
deep, that the Seaman's Sounding-  
Lines have never been able to reach to  
the bottom of them; and where they  
are not Unfathomable, all we are wont  
to do by our Soundings, is, to fetch  
from the bottom some little Gravel, or  
Mud, or Shells; or some such thing,  
that sticks to the tallow'd end of the  
Plummet, and gives us but a very im-  
perfect account of the Bottom, even  
of the Shallower Parts of the Sea:  
But if a Skilful Diver be employ'd,  
he will not only tell us, whether the  
Bottom be Muddy, Gravelly, or  
Sandy; but will be able to give us a  
kind of Topography of that Subma-  
rine Land, and acquaint us with  
many Surprizing Particulars, that we  
should never otherwise have Disco-  
ver'd, or perchance so much as  
Dream'd of. And peradventure it  
may be no *Hyperbole* to say, that the  
In-



Informations of a Plummert, which reaches not to Some Depths, and brings but a very slender account of Soils that lye in Any, are not more short of those of a Diver, than the Informations Philosophy gives us of some Divine things, are of those compleater Ones that may be had from the Holy Scriptures. And when I remember, how many Opinions about the Submarine Parts, that I, among many other Men, thought Probable, I found cause to Change, upon the Conversation I had with a famous Diver, that sometimes, by the help of an Engine, stay'd several hours at the bottom of the Sea; I find the less Reluctancy, to suffer Opinions about Divine Matters, that before seem'd probable to me, to be Rectifi'd by the fuller Discoveries made of those things by the Preachers of the Gospel.

You may find some things applicable to the Confirmation of what has been newly deliver'd, in an Essay, (which you may see when you please)  
that

that considers the Bounds and Use of Experience in Natural Philosophy. Wherefore remembring, that, before this late Excursion; I was speaking of Miracles, I shall now resume the Subject, and proceed to tell you, that I have the more insisted upon the Miracles that may be pleaded to recommend the Christian Religion, because I thought, that an Argument grounded on Them is little less than Absolutely Necessary, to Evince, that any Religion that Men believe to be Supernaturally Reveal'd, and consequently that the Christian, does really proceed from God.

For, tho' the Excellency of the Christian Doctrine, and other concurrent Motives, may justly persuade me, that 'tis *worthy* and *likely* to be given by God; yet that *de facto* this Doctrine comes from Him by way of Supernatural Revelation, I can scarce be sufficiently Ascertained, but by the Miracles wrought by Christ and his Disciples, to Evince, that the Doctrine they Preach'd, as Commission'd  
by



by God to do so, was indeed His, being, as such, own'd by Him. But these Miracles having been wrought (when 'twas most fit and needful they should be wrought) in the first Ages of the Church; We, that live at so great a distance from them, can have no knowledge of them by our Own Senses, or Immediate Observation; but must Believe them upon the account of the formerly mention'd Historical or *Vicarious Experience*, which is afforded us by the duly transmitted Testimony of those, that were themselves (to speak once more in an Evangelist's phrase) *Luke I. 2.*

*Eye-Witnesses and Ministers* of the things they relate. And since we scruple not to believe such strange Prodigies, as Celestial Comets, Vanishing and Reappearing Stars, Islands founded by Subterranean Fires in the Sea, Darkenings of the Sun for many months together, Earthquakes reaching above a thousand miles in length, and the like amazing Anomalies of Nature, upon the credit of Human

Histories; I see not, why *that* Vicarious Experience should not more be trusted, which has divers peculiar and concurrent Circumstances to confirm it, and particularly the Death that most of the first Promulgators cheerfully Suffer'd to Attest the Truth of it, and the Success and Spreading of the Doctrine authoriz'd by those Miracles, and receiv'd chiefly upon their account. To which things, some perhaps would add, that 'tis less incredible, that the *Author of Nature* should, for most weighty purposes, make stupendous Alterations of the course of Nature; than that *Nature her self*, for no such end, should by such Prodigies, as are newly mention'd, as it were, throw her self out of her own Course.

Miracles being so necessary to the establishment of Reveal'd Religion in general, it may be look'd upon as a farther Disposition in our *Virtuoso* to receive the Christian Religion, that the Philosophy, he cultivates, does much conduce to enable him to judge  
aright

aright of those strange things, that are by many Propos'd as Miracles, and Believ'd to be so.

For *first*, the knowledge he has of the Various, and sometimes very Wonderful, Operations of some Natural things, especially when they are skilfully improv'd, and dexterously apply'd by Art, particularly Mathematicks, Mechanicks, and Chymistry, will qualify him to distinguish, between things that are only *strange* and *surprizing*, and those that are truly *miraculous*: So that he will not mistake the Effects of Natural Magick, for those of a Divine Power. And by this well-instructed Wariness, he will be able to discover the Subtil Cheats and Collusions of Impostors; by which, not only Multitudes of all Religions, especially Heathen, but even Learned Men of most Religions, for want of an insight into real Philosophy, have formerly been, or are at this day, deluded, and drawn into Idolatrous, Superstitious, or otherwise Erroneous, Tenents or Practices.

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And on the other side, the knowledge our *Virtuoso* may have of what cannot be justly expected or pretended from the Mechanical Powers of Matter, will enable him to discern, that divers things are not produceable by Them, without the intervention of an Intelligent Superior Power; on which score he will frankly acknowledge, and heartily believe, divers Effects to be truly Miraculous, that may be plausibly enough ascrib'd to other Causes in the Vulgar Philosophy; where Men are taught and wont to attribute Stupendous unaccountable Effects to Sympathy, Antipathy, *Fuga vacui*, Substantial Forms, and especially to a certain Being presum'd to be almost Infinitely Potent and Wise, which they call *Nature*: For This is represented as a kind of Goddess, whose Power may be little less than boundless; as I remember *Galen* himself compares it to that of God, and saith, that He could not do such a thing, because Nature cannot; and Censures *Moses* for speaking as if he were

were of another Mind. The whole Passage is so weighty, that I thought fit to direct you to it in the Margent, tho', to comply with my haste, I forbear to transcribe and descant upon so prolix a One, and add to it divers other Passages that I have met with in famous Authors; who, for want of knowing the true Extent of the Powers of Matter and Motion, left to themselves in the Ordinary Course of things, Ascribe to Natural Causes, as they call them, such Effects as are beyond their reach, unless they be Elevated by Agents of a Superior Order.

*Gal. de Usu  
part. Lib. AT.  
Cap. XIV.*

I know it may be objected, that the hitherto-mention'd Dispositions, that Experimental Knowledge may give a Man, to Admit the Histories of the Miracles recorded in the Gospel; and likewise to Expect, that God will be able to perform the Promises and Menaces that are in his name deliver'd there, may be countervail'd by this, That those, who are so much acquainted

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with the Mysteries of Nature, and her various and strange ways of Working, as a *Virtuoso* may well be, may by that Knowledge be strongly tempted to think, that those surprising things that other Men call Miracles, are but Effects of Her Power; the Extent of which, is not easily discern'd by ordinary Men, nor safely defin'd by Philosophers themselves. But this Objection being plausible enough, to make me think it deserv'd to be seriously consider'd, I took an occasion that was once offer'd me, to examine the validity of it in a Paper by it self: And this being at your command, I shall refer you to it. And I hope, that in the mean time it may suffice to say, That to make it reasonable to judge this or that particular Performance, a Supernatural One, it is not at all necessary, that it surpass the whole Power of Nature, that is, of Physical Agents; provided, it surpass the power of that Cause, or that complex of Causes, from which, the Effect must in reason,

if

if it be purely Natural or Physical, be suppos'd to have proceeded. As for instance, That a Fisherman or two should speak other Languages than their own, does not at all exceed the power of Nature, if they employ'd a competent time in learning them. But that a great number of Fishermen, and other Illiterate Persons, should all on a sudden become Linguists, and in an hour's time be able to speak intelligibly to a great number and variety of Nations in their respective Languages, as the New Testament relates, that the Apostles and their Companions did on the day of *See Acts II.* Pentecost: That gift of Tongues, I say, was an Ability, which in those circumstances of Place, Time, and Persons, wherein 'twas exercis'd, may justly be concluded to have been Supernatural or Miraculous.

I fear you will think, I have dwelt too long upon the Argument for Christianity, drawn from that sort of matters of Fact we call Miracles; tho'

the uncommon way that my Design led me to represent them in, would not permit me to make it out in few words. Wherefore I shall now pass on to another Argument, in favour of the same Religion, that is afforded by Experience, being drawn from the strangely successful Propagation, and the happy Effects of Christianity, in the World. But having formerly had occasion to display this Argument in a separate Paper, which you may command a Sight of, if I shall not have time to annex a Transcript of it to the later Sheets of this *First Part* of the present Essay, I will refer you for more ample Proof to That Writing, and content my self in this place briefly to touch some of the Heads, and subjoyn a Reflection or two that you will not meet with in that Paper.

'Tis a notorious Matter of Fact, that in less than half an Age, the Christian Religion was spread over a great part of the then known World; insomuch, that in a few Years after it  
be-



began to be preach'd, the Apostle of the Gentiles could tell the *Romans* with Joy, that *their* Faith (*i. e.* profession of the Gospel) was *spoken of throughout the whole Rom. I. 3. World.* And in the Second Century, *Tertullian*, and other famous Writers, shew, that the Gospel had already numerous Profelytes, in a great number of different Kingdoms and Provinces. But I forbear to mention, what he and others have magnificently said of the Success of the Gospel, because I had rather refer you to the plain Narratives made of it by *Eusebius*, *Socrates Scholasticus*, and other grave Authors; being of opinion, that mere Historians may give to a Philosophical Reader, a more Advantageous *Idea* of the Efficacy of that excellent Doctrine, than eloquent Orators, as such, can do. This wonderful quick progress of this Religion being ascertain'd to our *Virtuoso*, by a Thing he is so much sway'd by, as Experience; it does not a little dispose him to Believe the

Truth

Truth of so prevalent a Religion: For, *If* he considers the Persons that first promulgated it, They were but half a score of Illiterate Fishermen, and a few Tent-makers & other Tradesmen. *If* he considers the Means that were employ'd to Propagate this Doctrine, he finds, that they had neither Arms, nor External Power, to Compel Men to receive it; nor Riches, Honours, or Preferments, to Bribe or Allure them to it; nor were they Men of Philosophical Subtilty, to intrap or entangle the Minds of their Auditors. Nor did they make use of the pompous Ornaments of Rhetorick, and fetches of Oratory, to inveagle or entice Men; but treated of the most Sublime and abstruse Matters, in a most Plain and unaffected Style, as became Lovers and Teachers of Truth. *If* he considers the nature of the Doctrine, that in little time obtain'd so many Profelytes, he will find, that, instead of being suited to the Natural Apprehensions, or the Receiv'd Opinions, of Men; and instead of gratifying

fyng their corrupt Affections, or complying with so much as their Innocentest Interests; it prescrib'd such Mortifications, and such great strictness of Life, and high degrees of Virtue, as no Legislator had ever dar'd to impose upon his Subjects, nay, nor any Philosopher on his Disciples. And this Doctrine was propos'd in such a way, and was accompany'd with Predictions of such Hardships and Persecutions, that should in those times be the portion of its sincere Professors, as if the Law-giver had design'd rather to Fright Men from his Doctrine, than Allure them to it; since they could not believe what he said, and foretold, to be true, without believing, that they should be made great Sufferers by that Belief. If our *Virtuoso* considers the Opposition made to the Progress of the Gospel, he will find cause to wonder, that it could ever be surmounted. For the Heathens, which made by far the greatest part of the World, were deeply engag'd in Polytheism, Idolatry,

latry, Magical Rites and Superstitions, and almost all kind of Crimes, and some of these were shameless Debaucheries, which oftentimes made a part of their Worship. And the Jews were by the corrupt Leaven of the Pharisees, and the impious Errors of the Sadduces, and the General Mistakes of the Nation about the Person, Office, and Kingdom, of the *Messias*; and by their dotage upon their vain Traditions, and numerous Superstitions, grounded upon them: The Gentiles, I say, and the Jews, who were those that were to be Converted, were, on these and other accounts, highly Indispos'd to be made Profelytes. Especially when they could not own themselves to be such, without exposing their Persons to be hated and despised, their Possessions to be confiscated, their Bodies to be imprison'd and tormented, and oftentimes their Lives to be, in as Ignominious as Cruel ways, destroy'd. And whilst the Secular Magistrates made them suffer all these Mischiefs, the Venerated

ted Priests, the Subtil Philosophers, and the Eloquent Orators, persuaded the World; that they Deserv'd yet more than they Endur'd; and employ'd all their Learning and Wit to make the Religion Odious and Ridiculous, as well as the Embracers of it Miserable: Accusing the Martyrs, and other Christians, of no less than Atheism, Incest, and the inhuman shedding and drinking the innocent Blood of Infants. These and the like Matters of Fact when our *Virtuoso* reflects on, and considers by what unpromising Means, (as far as they were but Secular) such seemingly insurmountable Difficulties were conquer'd; He cannot but by this Historical Experience be inclin'd to think, that Effects, so disproportionate to the Visible Means, could not be brought to pass without the peculiar Assistance and extraordinary Blessing of God: By whom those successful Preachers averr'd themselves to be Commissionated. For, that the Supernatural help, the Christian Doctrine appears  
to

to have had, was Divine, not Diabolical, will seem evident to our *Virtuoso*. from the Nature, Tendency, and Effects, of the Doctrine it self; which expressly teacheth, *that* there is but one God; *that* He alone is to be Worshipp'd, and not Idols, nor any of the Heathen *Demons* or Deities; *that* the Devils are Wicked, Apostate, Malicious, and Miserable Creatures, that are Hated of God, and do extremely Hate Mankind; and *that* those Vices, as well as Rites of Worship that they have establish'd in the World, were Abominable to God, and would be by degrees Destroy'd by him: As in effect they soon began to be in many places of the World, where the Worshippers of Christ cast the Devil out of His Temples, out of Men's Veneration, & oftentimes out of their Bodies too.

One Circumstance there is of the Propagation of the Gospel, which, tho' it may seem more Extrinsiccal than those hitherto mention'd, is yet too considerable to be here pretermitted; since

since it is this, That the Quick Spreading and Success of the Christian Doctrine in the World, was Foretold both by the Prophets of the Old Testament, and the Author and promulgators of the New. For it being notorious, that there have been divers Errors and Superstitions, that have with too much Celerity been spread far and wide in the World; either by mere Accidents, (as they were reputed) that were very friendly to them, or by the Industry and Artifices of Men: This, I say, being so, it ought to be no small Satisfaction to Equitable Judges, that the Quick Progress, and Notable Effects, of the Christian Religion, were Foretold, partly by the Ancient Prophets, and partly by the *Messias* and his Apostles. For by these accomplish'd Predictions it may appear, that the wonderful Success of the Gospel was not an Effect of Chance, but was long before determin'd by Divine Providence, as a Work fit to be Dear to God, and to be accomplish'd in a

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wonderful way by his Peculiar Assistance, (as will by and by be somewhat more fully declar'd.) That the Triumphs of the Gospel were Foretold by several of the Old Prophets, may appear by their yet Extant Writings; some of which are alleg'd to that purpose, by those Writers of the New Testament, that were endow'd with the same Prophetick Spirit. And if you please to consider the Passages

*Gen.* 49. 11.

*Isa.* 2. 2.

*Psalms* 2. 8.

*Mal.* 1. 11.

cited in the Margent, you will easily grant, that those Ancient Inspir'd Writers foresaw, that in the days of the *Messias*, there should

be a great and notable Conversion of of the Gentiles of several Nations, to the Worship of the only true God of *Israel*: And *tho'* God did not think fit, that those Predictions, extant in the Gospel, should be so conspicuous and pompously set forth, that speak of the Conversion that should be made, not only of the Heathen World, but (of a more Refractory portion of Mankind) a great part of the Jewish Na-



Nation, to the Christian Doctrine; yet there are divers Passages in the New Testament, that are Real, tho' some of them Unheeded, Prophecies of the wonderful Progress of the Gospel, and the large Extent of the Kingdom of the *Messias*. Thus Christ foretold, that his twelve Apostles should be his Witnesses, not only in *Judaea* and *Samaria*, but to the uttermost parts of the Earth. And, according to the most probable Explanation of that Text, in the 24th of *St. Matthew's Gospel*, which is usually refer'd to the end of the World, but seems rather to respect the Destruction of Jerusalem; there is a Prediction, that before *the End*, (of the Jewish Polity, as well as the Mosaical Oeconomy) *the Gospel of the Kingdom* (of the *Messias*) should be preach'd or proclaim'd in the whole World, (in that Sense of the term *World* that was then much in use, and was employ'd by the Evan-

*Mat. XXIV. 14.*

πᾶσι τῶν ἐθνῶν  
κηρύξεται.

*Luke II. 1.*

gelist *Luke* to signify the *Roman World* or *Empire*.) To which may be added, that ten or twelve Fishermen (called the *Apostles*) were sent to Convert all Nations to the Worship of a Crucify'd Person; which would have been a strange Commission to be given such Men at that time, if their Master, who sent them, had not Foreseen the Success, as well as Known the Truth, of the Doctrine he sent them to Preach. The quick Diffusion of the Christian Faith, and the swift Growth of the Christian Church from despicable Beginnings, to a Greatness very Disproportionate to them, are more than intimated, by what Christ says of the Leaven hid in a great quantity of Meal; and of the Mustard Seed that quickly grows (in the hot and fertile Country of *Judea*) to a wonderful Bigness and Height; since these Passages, that perfunctory Readers look on but as mere Parables, were really Prophecies, that quickly began to be manifestly Fulfill'd. And it may bring no  
small

small Authority to the Predictions of the New Testament, that when divers of them were made, there appear'd no Likelihood that they should ever be made good. When a Poor Virgin, that was betroth'd to a Carpenter, confidently pronounces, that *all Ages should call her Blessed*; what probability was there, that what she said, should ever come to pass? And when another Private Woman, then living in a Village, had it foretold her, that *Mat. 26. 13.* a censur'd Action of hers should be reported through the whole World, to her great Praise; what sober Man, that were not a Prophet, would venture to lose his Credit, by making such a Promise? And therefore, since we see such unlikely Predictions actually Accomplish'd, it may well convince an unbyas'd Man, that the Authors of them, as well as the ancient *Seers*, were really endow'd with a truly Prophetick Spirit; and that the Events by That Foretold,

were not Effects of Chance or Policy, but of Divine Providence.

I thought it not improper, to make the mention of these *Predictions* follow so close the Discourse of the Miracles, because true Prophecies of Unlikely Events, fulfill'd by Unlikely Means, are *supernatural* Things; and, as such, (especially their Author and Design consider'd) may properly enough be reckon'd among *Miracles*. And I may add, that these have a peculiar advantage above most other Miracles, on the score of their Duration: Since the manifest Proofs of the Predictions continue still, and are as visible as the Extent of the Christian Religion; and some of them are still more and more accomplish'd, by the Conversions made of multitudes of Infidels, in several vast Regions of *America*, (to name no other Countries.) So that if we may call some Miracles *transient* ones, such as the Turning Water into Wine at a Wedding-feast in *Galilee*; and the Darkening of the Sun, when the Moon was Full, at the Crucifixion  
of

of Christ: Accomplish'd Predictions may be styl'd *permanent* ones; and their difference may be set forth by the differing States of the Mosaick *Manna*: For, tho' both that which fell daily (except on the Sabbath) in the Wilderness, and that which was laid up in a pot before the Testimony, were Supernatural Productions; yet, whereas a portion of the Former outlasted not two or three days, That kept in the pot was preserv'd many Ages, and continu'd to be (as it was foretold it should) a Visible Miracle.

*Exod. XVI.*  
14, 21, 26, 33.

There is another Reason, why the wonderful Propagation of the Gospel should be annex'd to the Argument drawn from Miracles, in favour of the Christian Religion. For the Preachers of it, both Pretended and Appeal'd to Miracles, as Proofs of the Truth of their Doctrine: And if we consider the great Disadvantages they lay under, and the powerful Opposition of all sorts that they met with

and surmounted; it cannot reasonably be thought, that such Unlikely Men should so Succesfully preach so Uninviting a Doctrine, unless it were confirm'd by Conspicuous Miracles. Or at least, if so uneasy and persecuted a Religion was propagated without Miracles, that Propagation it self (as one of the Fathers well observes) may justly pass for a Miracle; and be no less fit than another, to Confirm the Religion so admirably Propagated.

The past Discourse has, I hope, manifested, that a *Virtuoso* has some Helps, that other Men, generally speaking, have not, to make him judiciously approve the Arguments for the Truth of the Christian Religion, that are grounded on the Miracles wrought in its favour, and the wonderful Success of it in the World. But, because a Reveal'd Religion, how true soever it be, can scarce be prov'd but by Moral Demonstrations; and because for this reason, it is not always sufficient, that the Arguments be good in their kind, but there are  
some

some Qualifications requir'd in the Minds of them that are to be Convinc'd by them; I shall now add, that Experimental Philosophy does also Dispose the Minds of its Cultivaters to receive due Impressions from such Proofs, as Miracles do, as well as other Topicks, afford the Christian Religion.

Another thing then that qualifies an Experimentarian for the reception of a Reveal'd Religion, and so of Christianity, is, that an Accustomance of endeavouring to give Clear Explanations of the *Phænomena* of Nature, and discover the weakness of those Solutions that Superficial Wits are wont to make and acquiesce in, does insensibly work in him a great and ingenuous *Modesty* of Mind. And on the score of this *Intellectual*, as well as *Moral*, Virtue, not only he will be very inclinable, both to Desire and Admit further Information, about things which he perceives to be Dark or Abstruse; but he will be very unapt to take, for the adæquate Stan-

dard of Truth, a thing so Imperfectly inform'd, and Narrowly limited, as his mere or abstracted Reason; (as I think I have elsewhere intimated, that One may call That, which is furnish'd only with its own, either Congenite, or very easily and very early Acquir'd, Notions and *Idea's*, and with Popular Notices.) And *tho'* a vulgar Philosopher, that allows himself to refer the Obscurest things in Nature to Substantial Forms, Real Qualities, Sympathy, Antipathy, and some few other Terms, which, to be employ'd by him, Need not, and perhaps for their darkness Cannot, be clearly Understood; and by which he pretends to explain all things in Nature; and may indeed explicate one thing as well as another: *Tho'* (I say) such a Titular Philosopher may presume, that he understands every thing; and may be easily tempted to think, *that* he must not hope, nor desire to learn from less able Men than his first Teachers; and *that*, That cannot be *true*, or be *done*, which agrees not with his *Philosophy*;



*losophy*; yet a Sober and Experienc'd Naturalist, that knows what Difficulties remain, yet unsurmounted, in the presumedly clear Conception and Explications even of things Corporeal, will not, by a lazy or arrogant presumption, that his knowledge about things Supernatural is already sufficient, be induc'd to Reject, or to Neglect, any Information that may encrease it.

And this frame of Mind is a very happy one, for a Student in Reveal'd Theology, where Cautiousness is not more Necessary for the avoiding of Errors, than Docility is Advantageous for the Learning of Truth: Since the knowledge and goodness of the Divine Teacher is such, that a Scholar, to improve his Intellect, needs but bring a Mind fitted to receive the genuine Informations, that are most liberally offer'd, (in the Scripture) and will never deceive Him, that employs, together with fervent Prayers, a due Care not to mistake the Meaning of them.

An assiduous Conversation with the exquisitely Fram'd, and admirably Manag'd, Works of God, brings a Skilful Considerer of them to discover from time to time, *so* many things to be Feazable, or to be True, which, whilst he argu'd but upon grounds of incompetently Inform'd Reason, he judg'd False or Unpracticable; *that* little by little he acquires a Habit of receiving some sorts of Opinions, and especially those that seem unfriendly to Religion, but as Probationers, with a disposition to Reform or Discard them upon further Information. And This, *as* he is resolv'd to Submit to, in case he meets with it, *so* he is dispos'd to Receive, if not to Expect it, by having often found himself oblig'd, upon subsequent Information, to mend or lay aside his former Opinions, tho' very agreeable to the best Light he had to judge by, when he entertain'd them. As, tho' it seems a visible Truth, that the *Discus* of *Venus* is, in all respects to the Sun, totally Luminous; yet when the Telescope

lescope discovers her to have her Full and her Wane, like the Moon, he will believe this further Observation, against the first made with his Naked Eyes.

And indeed, I have sometimes doubted, whether to be vers'd in Mathematicks, and other Demonstrative parts of Philosophy, bring a greater advantage to the Mind, by Accustoming and Assisting it to Examine Strictly Things propos'd for Truths, and to Evince Strongly the Truths a Man knows, to Others; than by Fitting him to Discern the force of a good Argument, and Submit willingly to Truths clearly evinc'd, how little soever he may have expected to find such Conclusions true. 'Twill not be difficult to apply these Reflections to our present purpose; since there are several passages in the Scripture that sufficiently declare, both *that* Multitudes persist in a Criminal Infidelity, out of an overweaning Conceit of their own Knowledge, and a readiness to be sway'd rather

rather by strong Prejudices, than by the strongest Arguments that would remove them; and, *that* Docility is a very happy disposition to the Entertainment of Reveal'd Religion: In reference to which, this Qualification will be the more easily found in our *Virtuoso*; because, whereas the things, about which he has been accustom'd to be sensible of his Ignorance, or desire further Instruction, are within the Sphere of Nature, and the Jurisdiction of Philosophy; many of the things that Reveal'd Religion declares, (such as are the Decrees, the Purposes, the Promises, &c. of God, and his most peculiar manner of Existing and Operating) are things so Sublime and Abstruse, that they may well be look'd upon as of an higher Order than merely Physical Ones, and cannot be Satisfactorily reach'd by the mere Light of Nature. 'Tis true, that our Philosopher, because he is so, will examine more strictly, than Ordinary Men are Wont or Able to do, the Proofs brought for this or that  
pro-

propos'd Revelation. But that is no disadvantage to a Supernatural Religion, such as the Christian; if it be, as we now suppose it to be, *True*; and the real Truth about Religion it self, does not require Credulity, but only Docility. And perhaps this matter may be illustrated, by comparing what happens to a Philosopher in the Examen of Opinions, and to a Chymist in that of Metals. For if a Piece of Coin, that Men would have pass for true Gold, be offer'd to an Ordinary Man, and to a Skilful Refiner; *tho'* the later will examine it more strictly, and not acquiesce in the Stamp, the Colour, the Sound, and other Obvious Marks, that may satisfy a Shopkeeper, or a Merchant; *yet* when he has try'd it by the Severe ways of Examining, such as the Touchstone, the Cupel, *Aqua-fortis*, &c. and finds it to hold good in those Proofs, he will readily and frankly acknowledge, that 'tis true Gold, and will be more thorowly Convinc'd of it, than the other Person;

son; whose want of Skill will make him still apt to retain a Distrust, and render him indeed more easy to be Persuaded, but more difficult to be fully Satisfy'd. On the like account; *tho'* our *Virtuoso* will examine with more Strictness and Skill, than Ordinary Men are able, Miracles, Prophecies, or other Proofs, said to be Supernatural, that are alledg'd to Evince a Reveal'd Religion; *yet* if the certain and genuine Characters of Truth appear in it, He will be more thorowly Convinc'd of it than a less Skilful Man, whose want of good *Criteria*, (or Touchstones) and Sound Judgment, will incline him to be Diffident, and to be still afraid of having been Impos'd on.

I expect, in the mean time, that you should here Object against what has been said in the later Leaves of the past Discourse, that it hath *degraded* the Human Intellect, by ascribing so much to Experience, Natural or Supernatural, that it has left nothing for Reason to do, unless servilely to  
 Obey. But

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But, tho' this Objection be plausible, yet the Answer to it will not be very difficult, if the Matter it self be duly consider'd, and Reason be brought to act, even on this occasion, not as an Interested Party, but an Un-biass'd Judge.

For we have already shewn, that Rational Philosophers scruple not to Alter or Renounce the Opinions, that Specious Reasons had Suggested to them, when once they either find those Opinions Contradicted by Experience, or meet with other Opinions more Conformable to Experience. And *Aristotle* himself, tho' he be accus'd to have, perhaps the first of all the Ancient Naturalists, perverted *Physicks*, by wresting them to a compliance with Logical and Metaphysical Fancies; yet even He confesses, not only that in the Science of Nature, Reason ought to comport with the *Phænomena*, and the *Phænomena* with Reason; but that to adhere to plausible Ratiocinations, with the neglect of Sensible Observations,

is a Weakness, or Disease, (*ἀρρωστία*) of Mind. I will not here mention what I say in another Paper, by way of attempt to settle the Bounds of Reason and Experience, in reference to Natural Philosophy; but it may concern our present Argument, to employ a few Lines in this place, towards the further clearing the lately propos'd Objection. We may observe then, that, whether or no it be True, which is taught by *Aristotle*, and commonly receiv'd in the Schools; that the Understanding is like Blank Paper; and that it receives no Knowledge, but what has been convey'd to it through the Senses: Whether, I say, this be or be not admitted, 'tis plain, that the Notions which are either Congenite with the Understanding, or so easily and early Acquir'd by it, that divers Philosophers think them Innate, are but very few, in comparison of those that are requisite to Judge aright, about any one of a multitude of things, that occur, either in Natural



Philosophy, or Theology. For in the Divine Nature, Power, Wisdom, and other Attributes, there is a Facundity that has produc'd a World of Contrivances, Laws, and other things, that exceedingly surpass both the Number and Variety; that the dim and limited Intellect of Man could reach to, by framing and compounding *Idea's*, without the assistance of the Patterns, afforded by the Works and Declarations of God.

On the account of the same Prerogative of the Divine Knowledge, it must frequently happen, that the Notions and Opinions, Men take up, of the Works and Mind of God, upon the mere Suggestions of the Abstracted Reason, (if I may so call it) newly spoken of, must not only be almost always very *deficient*, but will be oftentimes very *erroneous*. Of which, we see evident proofs in many of the Opinions of the Old Philosophers, who, tho' Men of strong Natural parts, were misled by what they mis-

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took for Reason, to maintain such things about the Works and the Author of Nature, as We, who, by the favour of Experience and Revelation, stand in a much clearer Light, know to be False, and often justly think utterly Extravagant.

The Importance of the Subject lately spoken of, and its being too little Consider'd, may make it deserve to be Inculcated; and therefore I shall subjoyn on this occasion, that That which I have lately call'd *Abstracted Reason*, is but a narrow Thing, and reaches but to a very small share of the Multitude of Things knowable, whether Human or Divine, that may be obtain'd by the help of further Experience, and Supernatural Revelation. This Reason, furnish'd with no other Notices than it can supply it self with, is so narrow and deceitful a Thing, that He that seeks for Knowledge only within Himself, shall be sure to be quite Ignorant of far the greatest part of Things, and will scarce escape  
being

being Mistaken about a good part of Those he thinks he knows.

But, notwithstanding what has been hitherto said, I am far from intending to deny Reason any of its just Prerogatives. For I shew in another Paper, that Experience is but an Assistant to Reason, since it doth indeed supply Informations to the Understanding; but the Understanding remains still the Judge, and has the Power or Right, to Examine and make use of the Testimonies that are presented to it. The Outward Senses are but the Instruments of the Soul, which Hears by the intervention of the Ear, and in respect of which, the Eye it self is but a more Immediate Optical Tube; and the Sense does but Perceive Objects, not Judge of them. Nor do the more wary among the Philosophers, trust their Eye, to Teach them the Nature of the visible Object; but only employ it to Perceive the *Phænomena* it exhibits, and the Changes that happen to it self by the action of it. And whereas 'tis

confess'd, that the Sensories may deceive us, if the Requisites of Sensation be wanting; as when a Square Tower appears Round at a great distance, and a Straight Stick half in the Water, appears Crooked, because of the double *Medium*; 'tis the part of Reason, not Sense, to Judge, whether none of the Requisites of Sensation be wanting; which (give me leave to add) oftentimes requires, not only Reason, but Philosophy; and then also 'tis the part of Reason to Judge, what Conclusions may, and what cannot, be safely grounded on the Informations of the Senses, and the Testimony of Experience. So that when 'tis said, that Experience Corrects Reason, 'tis somewhat an improper way of Speaking; since 'tis Reason it self, that, upon the Information of Experience, Corrects the Judgments she had made before.

And this (borrow'd from the fore-mention'd Paper, because 'twas never Publish'd) prompts me to illustrate the Use of Reason, by comparing her

to an able Judge, who comes to Hear and Decide Causes in a strange Country. For the General Notions he brings with him, and the Dictates of Justice and Equity, can give him but a very short and imperfect Knowledge of many things, that are requisite to frame a right Judgment, about the Cases that are first brought before him; and before he has heard the Witnesses, he may be very apt to fall into Prejudicate Opinions of things, (whether Persons or Causes) But when an Authentick and sufficient Testimony has clear'd Things to him, he then pronounces, according to the Light of Reason, he is Master of; to which, the Witnesses did but give Information, tho' That subsequent Information may have oblig'd him, to lay aside some Prejudicate Opinions he had entertain'd before he receiv'd it. And what is said of *Natural Experience*, in reference to the Understanding, may, with due alteration, be apply'd to *Supernatural Revelation*: For here also the Understanding

standing is to Examine, whether the Testimony be indeed Divine; and, whether a Divine Testimony ought to be (as It will easily perceive it should) Believ'd, in what it clearly Teaches; to omit other Uses of Reason, (about Theological Matters) which belong not to this place; where it may suffice to have shewn, that Reason is not Degraded from the Dignity that belongs to her, of Perceiving and Judging; tho' she be Obliged by her own Dictates, to take in all the Assistance she can, from Experience, whether Natural, or Supernatural; and by the fuller Accounts of things she receives from those Informations, to Rectify, if need be, her former and less mature Judgments.

In short, Those that cry up Abstracted Reason, as if it were Self-sufficient, exalt it in *Words*; but we that Address Reason to Physical and Theological Experience, and direct it how to Consult them, and take its Informations from them, exalt it in *Effect*; and Reason is much less usefully

fully

fully serv'd, by the former sort of Men, than by the later; since whilst *those* do but *flatter* it, *these* take the right way to *improve* it.

I hope you will not imagine, that I have, in the foregoing part of this Letter, said all that I could say pertinently. For, being mindful of the Brevity becoming an Epistolary Discourse, I omitted several Arguments, that would have challeng'd their places in a just Treatise; and have but Touch'd upon most of those I have mention'd; tho' Reasonings of this kind are usually like Tapestry, which loses much by being look'd on whilst the Hangings are Folded up, which should be display'd to their full Dimensions.

But having offer'd you *some* things, which perhaps you have not met with elsewhere; and having, tho' but transiently, *touch'd* upon the Grounds of divers other considerable Arguments; I hope that your Learning and Sagacity, will both Supply what you will discern to have been Omitted, and  
En-

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Enforce what has been but Intimated; and then I shall not despair, that what I have said may suffice to persuade you, that *Experimental Philosophy* may greatly Assist a well-dispos'd Mind, to yield an Hearty and Operative Assent to the Principles of Religion. I am,

S I R,

Your most &c.

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*The End of the First Part.*

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# REFLECTIONS

U P O N A

## Theological Distinction.

*According to which, 'tis said,*

That some ARTICLES of  
*FAITH* are *Above Reason,*  
but not *Against Reason.*

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*In a Letter to a Friend.*

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*In the SAVOY:*

Printed by *Edw. Jones*, for *John Taylor* at the *Ship* in *St. Paul's Church-yard.* M D C X C.

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## Advertisement.

**A**fter the Author had begun the Second Part of his Christian Virtuoso, and made some Progress in it, which he designed to continue till he had Compleated it; he was obliged to leave the Country, where he enjoyed some Leisure, and to remove to London; where Sickness, and Business, and a Multitude of Visits he could not avoid receiving, did so distract him, that these Remora's, added to the Fertility of the Subjects that remained to be Treated of, which he found much greater than he was at first aware of, made him lay aside the Materials he had prepared for the Second Part, to a fitter Opportunity, and comply with the Occa-  
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sions he had, to publish some Tracts that required more haste. And'tis for the like Reasons, that having at present some other Essays of a quite differing Nature in the Press, he is obliged to postpone his resuming and finishing the Second Part of the Christian Virtuoso (which will require more Sheets than the former) for some longer time; tho' yet to Comply with the Solicitations of the Printer, he consents both to let the First Part come abroad, and (to make the Book of a more decent size) add to it, by way of Substitution, a Discourse that is of Affinity enough to the other, upon the account of some of the Points it handles, and more upon that of its Scope; and that will not be Ill received, if it have the good fortune to find the Publick as kind to it, as Private Perusers have been.

*For my Learned Friend Mr. H. O.*

SIR,

I Can neither admire nor blame the Curiosity you express, to receive some Satisfaction about the important Distinction that is made use of, in defence of some Mysteries of the Christian Religion; namely, that *they are indeed above Reason, but not against Reason.* For though divers Learned Men have, especially of late, employed it; yet I perceive you and your Friends *N. N.* think, that they have not done it so clearly, as *both* to prevent the Exceptions of Infidels, or render them more groundless; *and* at least, to obviate the Surmises of those others, who have been persuaded to look upon this Distinction, but as a fine Evasion, whereby to elude some Objections that cannot otherwise be

answered. And indeed, as far as I can discern by the Authors wherein I have met with it, (for I pretend not to judge of any others,) there are *divers* that employ this Distinction, *few* that have attempted to explain it, (and that I fear, not sufficiently) and *none* that has taken care to justify it.

II. In order to the removal of the Difficulties that you take notice of, I shall endeavour to do these Two things: 1. To declare in what sense I think our Distinction is to be understood. And, 2. To prove that it is not an Arbitrary or Illusory Distinction, but grounded upon the Nature of Things.

Though I do not desire to impose my Sentiments on any Man, much less on You; yet because I, as well as others, have had some occasions to make use of the Distinction we are considering; I think myself obliged, before I go any further, to acquaint you in what sense I understand it.

III. By

III. By such things then in Theology, as may be said to be *above Reason*, I conceive such Notions and Propositions, as mere Reason, that is, Reason unassisted by supernatural Revelation, would never have discover'd to us: Whether those things be to our finite Capacities, clearly comprehensible or not. And by things *contrary to Reason*, I understand such Conceptions and Propositions, as are not only undiscoverable by mere Reason, but also, when we understand them, do evidently and truly appear to be repugnant to some Principle, or to some Conclusion, of Right Reason.

IV. To illustrate this Matter a little, I shall propound to you a Comparison drawn from that Sense, which is allow'd to have the greatest Cognation with the Understanding, which I presume you will readily guess to be the Sight. Suppose then, that on a deep Sea, a Diver should bid you tell him, What you can see there; That which you

would answer, would be, that you can see into a Sea-green Liquor, to the depth of some Yards, and no further: So that if he should farther ask you, Whether you see what lies at the Bottom of the Sea, you would return him a Negative Answer. If afterwards the Diver letting himself down to the Bottom, should thence bring up and shew you Oysters or Muscles with Pearls in them; you would easily acknowledge, both that they lay beyond the reach of your Sight, and consequently argued an Imperfection in it; tho' but such an Imperfection, as is not Personal but Common to you with other Men, and that the Pearls have the genuin Colour and Lustre, that naturally belongs to such Gems. But if this Diver should pretend, that each of these Pearls he shews you, is as large as a Tennis-Ball, or some of them bigger than the Shells they were inclos'd in, and that they are not round but cubical, and their colour not White or Orient, but Black



or Scarlet; you would doubtless judge what he asserts, to be not only (or not so properly,) undiscernable by your Eyes, but contrary to the Informations of them, and therefore would deny what he affirms. Because, that to admit it, would not only argue your Sight to be Imperfect, but False and Delusory; tho' the Organ be rightly qualified, and duly applied to its proper Objects.

V. This Illustration may give you some superficial Notion of the Difference betwixt a thing's being *above Reason*, and its being *contrary to it*. But this may better appear, if we consider the Matter more distinctly. And to offer something in order to this, I shall beg leave to say, that, in my Opinion, the things that may be said to be *above Reason*, are not all of One sort, but may be distinguish'd into Two kinds, differing enough from each other.

VI. For it seems to me, that there are some Things, that Reason by its own Light cannot *Discover*; and others,

others, that, when propos'd, it cannot *Comprehend*.

VII. And First, there are divers Truths in the Christian Religion, that Reason left to itself, would never have been able to find out, nor perhaps to have so much as dream'd of: Such as are most of Those that depend upon the Free Will and Ordination of God, as, That the World was made in six Days, That Christ should be Born of a Virgin, and That in his Person there should be united Two such infinitely distant Natures as the Divine and Human; and That the Bodies of Good Men shall be rais'd from Death, and so advantageously chang'd, that the Glorified Persons shall be like, or equal to, the Angels.

VIII. Of this kind of Theological Truths, you will easily believe, that 'twere not difficult for me to offer divers other Instances; and indeed there are many Truths, and more I think than we are wont to imagine, that we want *Mediums*, or Instruments

ments to discover, tho', if they were duly propos'd, they would be intelligible to us : As, for my part, when by looking on the Starry Heaven, first with my naked Eyes, and then with Telescopes of differing Lengths, I did not only discry more and more Stars, according to the Goodness of the Instruments I imployed, but discover'd great Inducements to think, that there are in those inestimably remote Regions, many Celestial Lights, that only the Want of more reaching Telescopes conceal from our Sight.

IX. And thus much I presume you will close with the more easily, because it disagrees not with the Sentiments of some few ( for I dare say not, many ) Orthodox Divines. But I must take leave to add, that besides these mysterious Truths, that are too remote, and hidden, to be *Detected* by Human Reason; there is another sort of Things, that may be said to be *above Reason*.

X. For

X: For there are divers Truths delivered by Revelation, (contained in the Holy Scriptures,) that not only would never have been found out by mere natural Reason; but are so abstruse; that when they are proposed as clearly, as proper and unambiguous Expressions can propose them in; they do nevertheless surpass our dim and bounded Reason, on one or other of those Three accounts that are mentioned in a Dialogue *about things transcending Reason*; namely either, as not clearly *conceivable* by our Understanding, such as the Infiniteness and Perfections of the Divine Nature; or *inexplicable* by us, such as the Manner, how God can create a rational Soul; or how, this being an immaterial Substance, it can act upon a Human Body, and be acted on by it; (which Instance I rather chose, than the Creation of Matter, because it may be more easily proved) or *else asymmetric*, or unsovable; that is, such, as we see not how to reconcile with  
 other

other Things, which also manifestly are, or are by us acknowledged to be, true ; such as are the Divine Pre-science of future Contingents, and the Liberty that belongs to Man's Will, at least in divers Cases.

XI. It will not perhaps be improper to observe, on this occasion, that, as of Things that are said to be above Reason, there are more kinds than one ; so there may be a Difference in the Degrees, or, at least, the Discernableness, of their Abstruseness.

XII. For *some things* appear to surpass, or distress, our Understandings, almost as soon as they are propos'd, at least, before they are attentively look'd into. As, what is said to be Infinite, either in Extent or Number. But there are *other things*, the Notions whereof, as they first arise from the things considered in gross, and as it were indefinitely, are such, as do not choque or perplex our Understandings ; and are so far intelligible, that they may be usefully employ'd in ordinary Discourse. But when we  
come

come to make a deep Inspection into these, and prosecute to the uttermost the successive Inferences that may be drawn from them ; we reason our selves into Inextricable Difficulties, if not flat Repugnancies too. And to shew you, that I do not say this *gratis* ; be pleas'd to consider with me, that, we usually discourse of *Place*, of *Time*, and of *Motion* ; and have certain general indeterminate Conceptions, of each of these ; by the help of which, we understand one another, when we speak of them ; Thô, if we will look thorowly into them, and attentively consider all the Difficulties, that may be discover'd by such an Inspection ; we shall find our Reason oppress'd by the Number and Greatness of the Difficulties, into which we shall argue ourselves ; or, at least, may be argued by others ; thô these Men, who do make such shrewd Objections against the Hypothesis, we embrace, will hardly be able themselves to pitch on any, that will not allow us to  
 repay

repay them in the same coin.

XIII. What has been newly said, may, I hope, assist us to clear a Difficulty, or Scruple, (about the Distinction we treat of,) which since it sprung up in my own Mind, may very probably occur also to your Thoughts; namely, That if any Theological Proposition be granted to surpass our Reason; we cannot pretend to believe it, without discovering, that we do not sufficiently consider what we say: Since we pretend to exercise an act of the Understanding, in embracing somewhat that we do not understand, nor have a Notion of.

XIV. But on this occasion we may justly have recourse to a Distinction, like That I have lately intimated. For, in divers cases, the Notions, Men have of some Things, may be different enough, since the one is more obvious and superficial, and the other more Philosophical or accurate. And of these Two differing kinds of Conceptions, I have already offer'd  
some



some Instances in the very differing Notions, Men have of Place and Time: Which, tho' familiar Objects, I elsewhere shew to be each of them of so abstruse a Nature, that I do not wonder to find *Aristotle* himself complaining of the Difficulty that there is to give a clear, and unexceptionable, Notion of *Place*; nor to find so acute a Wit as *St. Austin*, ingenuously confessing his Disability to explicate the Nature of *Time*.

XV. And what is said of the great Intricacies, that incumber a deep Scrutiny into these familiar Objects of Discourse, will hold, as to the Divisibility of Quantity; as to Local Motion; and as to some other Primary things; whose Abstruseness is not inferior in Degree, tho' differing as to the Kinds of things, wherein it consists.

XVI. By such Instances as these, it may appear, that without talking as Parrots, (as your Friends would intimate, that those that use our Distinctions must do;) or as irrational Men,



Men ; we may speak of some Things that we acknowledge to be on some account or other above our Reason; since the Notions we may have of those Things, however dim and imperfect; may yet be of use, and may be in some measure intelligible; tho' the Things they relate to, may, in another respect, be said to transcend our Understanding; because an attentive Considerer may perceive, that something belongs to them, that is not clearly comprehensible, or does otherwise surpass our Reason (at least in our present State.)

XVII. Having dispatch'd the Objection, that requir'd this Digression: I shall now step again into the Way, and proceed in it by telling you, that any *one* apposite Instance may suffice to clear the former part of the Expression that is employ'd, when 'tis said that a Mystery, or other Article of Faith, is *above* Reason, but not *contrary* to it: For if there be so much as *one* Truth, which is acknowledg'd to be such, and yet

not to be clearly and distinctly comprehensible, it cannot justly be pretended, that to make use of the Distinction we are treating of, is to say something, that is not intelligible, or is absurd. And it will further justify the Expression quarrelled at, if we can make it appear, that it is neither Impertinent or Arbitrary, but grounded on the Nature of Things. And this I shall endeavour to do, by shewing, that though I admit Two sorts of Things, which may be said to be *above Reason*, yet there is no necessity, that either of them must (always) be *contrary to Reason*.

XVIII. As for the first sort of Things said to surpass Reason, I see not, but that Men may *be unable*, without the Assistance of a more knowing Instructor, to discover some Truths; and yet *be able*, when These are revealed or discovered to them by that Instructor, both to understand the disclosed Propositions by their own Rational Faculty, and approve them for True, and fit to be embraced.

ced. The Intellect of Man being such a bounded Faculty as it is, and naturally furnished with no greater a stock or share of Knowledge, than it is able by its own Endeavours to give itself, or acquire; 'twould be a great Unhappiness to Mankind, if we were obliged to reject, as repugnant to Reason, whatever we cannot discover by our own natural Light; and consequently, to deny our selves the great Benefits we may receive from the Communications of any higher and more discerning Intellect. An Instance to my present purpose may be found among Rational Souls themselves, though universally granted to be all of the same Nature. For, thô a Person but superficially acquainted (for Example) with Geometry, would never have discovered by his own Light, that *the Diameter of a Square is incommensurable to the Side*; yet when a skilful Mathematician devoutly declares, and by a Series of Demonstrations proves, that noble Theorem; the Disciple by his now

instructed Reason will be able, both to understand it, and to assent to it: Infomuch, that *Plato* said, that *he was rather a Beast than a Man that would deny it.*

XIX. Other Instances may be alledged to exemplify the Truth newly mentioned. And indeed, there is not so much as a strong Presumption, that a Proposition or Notion is therefore repugnant to Reason, because it is not discoverable by It; since it is altogether extrinsecal and accidental to the Truth or Falsity of a Proposition, that we never heard of It before; or that we could never have found It out by our own Endeavours; but must have had the Knowledge of It imparted to us by another. But then this Disability to find out a thing by our own *Search*, doth not hinder us from being able by our own *Reason*, both to understand it when duly proposed, and to discern it to be agreeable to the Dictates of right Reason. To induce you to assent to the later part of this Observation, I shall add, that

that these Intellectual Assistances may oftentimes not only *enlighten*, but *gratify*, the Mind, by giving it such Informations, as both *agree with* its former maimed or imperfect Notices, and *compleat* them. When, for example, an antique Medal, half consumed with Rust, is shewed to an unskilful Person, though a Scholar; he will not by his own Endeavours be able to read the whole Inscription, whereof we suppose some parts to be obliterated by Time or Rust; or to discover the Meaning of it. But when a knowing Medalist becomes his Instructor, he may then know some (much defaced) Letters, that were illegible to him before, and both understand the Sense of the Inscription, and approve it as genuine and suitable to the Things, whereto it ought to be congruous. And because divers Philosophical Wits are apt, as well as you, to be startled at the name of *Mystery*, and suspect, that because it implies something abstruse, there lyes hid some Illusion

under that obscure Term: I shall venture to add, that agreeably to our Doctrine we may observe, that divers things that relate to the Old Testament, are in the New called Mysteries, because they were *so* under the Mosaick Dispensation; tho' they cease to be *so*, now that the Apostles have explained them to the World. As the calling of the Gentiles into the Church of God, is by

their Apostle, called a  
*Coloss. I. 26. Mystery; because, to use*  
*Eph. III. 3, 5, 6. his Phrase, it had been hid*  
*from Ages and Generati-*

*ons: Though he adds, But now 'tis*  
*made manifest to his Saints. And the*  
 same Writer tells the *Corinthians*, that

he *shows them a Mystery,*  
*1 Corinth. XV. which he immediately*  
*v. 51, 52. explains, by foretelling,*  
 that *all pious Believers*

*shall not dye, because that those that*  
*shall be found alive at the coming of*  
*Christ, shall not sleep, but be changed;*  
 as the other *Dead shall be raised in-*  
*corruptible. Which surprising Do-*  
 ctrine,

ctrine, though because it could not be discovered by the Light of Nature, nor of the Writings of the *Old Testament*, he calls a Mystery; yet it is no more so to us, now that he hath so expressly foretold it, and therefore declared it.

XX. Other Instances I content myself to point at in the Margin, that I may pass on to confirm the Observation I formerly intimated; that divers things which the Scripture teaches beyond what was known, or (in probability) are discoverable by natural Light, are so far from being *against Reason*, by being (in the sense declared) *above it*; that these Discoveries ought much to recommend the Scripture to a rational Mind; because they do not only Agree with the doubtful or imperfect Notions we already had of things, but Improve them, if not Compleat them. Nay, I shall venture to add, that these Intellectual Aids may not seldom help us to discern, That some

See *Mat. XIII.*  
*II.*  
*Ephes. V. 31.*

Things, which not only *are* above Reason, but at first sight *seem to be* against it ; are really reconcileable to Reason, improved by the new Helps, afforded it by Revelation. To illustrate this by a Philosophical Instance, when *Gallileo* first made his Discoveries with the Telescope, and said, That there were Planets that moved about *Jupiter* ; He said something , that other Astronomers could not discern to be True, but nothing that they could prove to be False. And even when some Revelations are thought not only to *transcend Reason*, but to *clash with it* ; it is to be considered, Whether such Doctrins are really repugnant to any absolute Catholick Rule of Reason, or only to something, which so far depends upon the Measure of acquired Information we then enjoy, that, though we judge it to be Irrational, yet we are not sure, that the Thing, this Judgment is grounded on, is clearly and fully enough known to us. As, to resume the former Example, when *Gallileo*,

or



or some of his Disciples, affirmed *Venus* to be sometimes Horned like the Moon; tho' this Assertion were repugnant to the unanimous Doctrine of Astronomers, who thought their Opinion very well grounded, on no less a Testimony than That of their own Eyes; yet in effect the Proof was incompetent, because their unassisted Eyes could not afford them sufficient Information about this case. And so, when *Gallileo* spoke of Hills and Valleys, and Shadows, in the Moon, they were not straight to reject what he taught, but to have, if not a kind of implicit Faith, yet a great Disposition to believe what he delivered, as upon his own Knowledge, about the Figure and Number of the Planets. For they knew, that he had, and had already successfully made use of, a Way of discovering Cœlestial Objects, that they were not Masters of; nor therefore competent Judges of all the Things, though they might well be of many, that he affirmed to be discoverable by it. And  
 though

though they could not see in the Moon what he observed, (Valleys, Mountains, and the Shadows of these) yet they might justly suspect, that the Difference of the *Idea* that they framed of that Planet, and that which he proposed, might well proceed from the Imperfection of their unaided Sight; especially considering, that what he said, of the differing Constitution of what is there analogous to Sea and Land, did rather Correct and Improve, than absolutely Overthrow, their former Notices. For he allowed the Spots they saw, to be darker Parts of the Moon, and gave Causes of that Darkness; which their bare Eyes could not have led them to any such Knowledge of. And the Non-appearance of the Mountainous Parts of the Moon in that form to the naked Eye, might well be imputed to the great Distance betwixt them and us, since at a far less Distance square Towers appear round, &c.

XXI. It now remains, that I say something, that may both make some Application of the Form of Speech hitherto discoursed of, and afford a Confirmation of the Grounds whereon, I think, it may be justified. This I am the rather induced to do, because I expect it will be objected, that he that acknowledges, that the Thing he would have us believe, transcends our Reason, has a Mind to deceive us, and procures for himself a fair opportunity to delude us, by employing an Arbitrary Distinction, which he may apply as he pleases.

XXII. But to speak first a word or two to this last Clause; I acknowledge, that such a Distinction is capable enough of being misapplied: And I am apt to think, that, by some School-Divines, and others, it has been so. But, since there are other Distinctions that are generally and justly received by Learned Men, and even by Philosophers themselves, without having any Immunity from being capable to be perverted; I  
know

know not, why the Distinction, we are considering, should not be treated as favourably as they. And however, the Question at present is not, *whether* our Distinction may possibly be misapplied by rash or imposing Men; but *whether* it be grounded on the Nature of Things. To come then to the Thing it self, I consider, that for an Opinion to be *above Reason*, in the sense formerly assigned, is somewhat, that (as was noted in reference to the first sort of Things, that surpass it) is Extrinsic and Accidental to its being True or False. For to be *above our Reason*, is not an Absolute thing, but a Respective one, importing a Relation to the Measure of Knowledge, that belongs to the Human Understanding, such as 'tis said to transcend: And therefore it may not be *above Reason*, in reference to a more enlightned Intellect; such as *in probability* may be found in Rational Beings of an higher Order, such as are the Angels; and, without peradventure, is to be found in God: Whom,

Whom, when we conceive to be a Being Infinitely perfect, we must ascribe to him a perfect Understanding, and boundless Knowledge. This being supposed, it ought not to be denied, that a Superior Intellect may both comprehend several Things that we cannot; and discern such of them to be congruous to the fixt and eternal *Idea's* of Truth, and consequently agreeable to one another, as dim-sighted Mortals are apt to suspect, or to think, to be separately False; or, when collated, Inconsistent with one another. But to lanch into this Speculation, would lead me farther than I have time to go. And therefore I shall content my self to offer you one Argument, to prove, That of Things that may be said to be *above Reason*, in the Sense formerly explained, it is no way impossible, that even such an one should be true, as is obnoxious to Objections not directly answerable. For I consider, that of Things *above Reason*, there may be some which are really *contradictory* to one  
anc-

another, and yet each of them is maintainable by such Arguments, as very Learned and Subtle Men do both Acquiesce in, and Enforce, by loading the Embracers of the opposite Opinion, with Objections they cannot directly answer.

**XXIII.** This I take to be manifest, in the case of the Controversy about the endless Divisibility of *Quantity*; as, suppose, of a straight Line. For many eminent Mathematicians, and a greater number of Naturalists, and in particular almost all the Epicureans, and other Atomists, stily maintain the Negative. The Affirmative is nevertheless asserted, and thought to be Mathematically demonstrated, by *Aristotle* in a peculiar Tract; and both by His School, and by several excellent Geometricians besides. And yet in reality, the Assertions of these Two contending Parties are truly Contradictory; since, of necessity a straight Line proposed must be, at least mentally, divisible, into Parts that are them-

themselves still further divisible ; or, it must not be so, and the Subdivisions must at length come to a stop. And therefore one of the opposite Opinions must be true. And 'tis plain to those, that have, with competent Skill and Attention, impartially examined this Controversy, that the side that is pitched upon, whichsoever it be, is liable to be exposed to such Difficulties, and other Objections, as are not clearly answerable; but confound and oppress the Reason of those that strive to defend it.

XXIV. I have, Sir, the more largely discoursed of the foregoing Distinction ; not only, because I did not find my self to have been prevented by others ; but, because I look upon the explaining and justifying of it to be of Importance, not alone to the Defence of some Mysteries of the Christian Religion, but (what perhaps may have escaped your Observation) of some important Articles of Natural Theology it self. For though Natural Religion taught di-

vers Heathen Philosophers, such Truths as these, *viz.* The Production of the Rational Soul or Mind, which is an Immaterial Substance; the Formation of the World out of the Universal Matter, though this Action required, that an Incorporeal Substance gave Motion to a Body; *that* God knows Men's Thoughts and Intentions, how carefully soever they strive to hide them; and *that* God foreknows the Events of the free Actions of such Men, as are not to be born these many Ages; though, I say, these, and some other Sublime, Truths, were by divers Men embraced before the Gospel began to be Preached; yet when I attentively consider, how hard it is to conceive the *Modus* of these Things, and explain how some of them can be performed; and also, how some of the Divine Attributes, as Eternity, Immenity, Omnipresence, and some others, belong to God; and how some Actions, as the Moving of Bodies, and the Creation of Human Minds;



Minds, with all their Noble Faculties, are Exercis'd by Him: When I consider such Things, I say, I acknowledge, that, to my apprehension, there are some Doctrines allowed to have been discovered by the mere Light of Nature, that are liable to such Objections from Physical Principles, and the settled order of Things corporeal; as, if they be urged home, will bring those that are Ingenuous to acknowledge, that their Intellects are but dim and imperfect, and indeed disproportionate to the sublimest and most mysterious Truths; and that they cannot perfectly comprehend them, and answer all the Difficulties that incumber them; though they find themselves obliged to admit them, because of the weighty Positive Reasons, that recommend those Heteroclite Truths to their Assent.

XXV. If you should now tell me, that, after all I have said, 'tis plain, that the question'd Distinction, if it were granted, might be of very

bad consequence; as affording shelter to any Unintelligible Stuff, that some bold Enthusiast, or conceited Philosophizer, may obtrude under the Venerable Title of a *Mystery*, above the Jurisdiction of Reason; and, that though the Distinction were admitted, it would not be a good Proof of any disputed Article of the Christian Religion: If, I say, this shall be objected, I shall answer, (what in part is intimated already) That I do not deny, but that our Distinction is liable to be ill employed, but that this is no other Blemish than what is common with it to divers other Distinctions, that are without scruple Admitted, because they are useful; and not Rejected, because they have not the Privilege, that they can never be misapplied: And therefore, both in reference to those Distinctions, and to That we have been Treating of, it becomes Men to stand upon their Guard, and strictly examine, how far the Notion, or Doctrine, proposed as a *Mystery*,  
does

does require, and is entituled to, the benefit of this Distinction. I shall also readily grant the greatest part of the second Member of your Objection. For I think it were great Weakness in a Christian, to urge our Distinction as a positive Proof: Since, tho' it be Extrinsecal to an abstruse Notion, to be, or not to be, *above Reason*; (as was just now noted to another purpose,) yet, generally speaking, that Abstruseness is less fit to bring credit to a Conception, or a Doctrine, than 'tis to make it to be distrusted. Nor are Christians such fond Discourfers, as to pretend, That such an Article of Religion ought to be believed, Because 'tis *above Reason*, as if that were a proof of its Truth; but only, that if it be otherwise well proved, it ought to be believed, Notwithstanding its being *above Reason*.

XXVI. And this I shall represent in favour of those that believe these abstruse Articles, that are clear-

ly revealed in the Scripture, upon the Authority of the Divine Revealer; (who never deceives Others, nor can be Himself deceived,) that *since*, as we have lately shewn by the contradictory Opinions about the Divisibility of Quantity, some Doctrines must be true, whose Difficulties do not appear to be surmountable by our dim Reason; and *since* the Perfectness of God's Knowledge permits us not to doubt, but that He certainly knows which of the two Contending Opinions is the True; and can declare so much to Men: It would not be a sure ground of rejecting a Revealed Article, to alledge, that 'tis encumber'd with confounding Difficulties, and lyable to many and weighty Objections.

XXVII. And, (to add somewhat that may help to defend some Truths of Natural, and others of Revealed, Religion) That a thing may be rationally assented to, upon  
clear

clear positive Evidence, though we cannot directly answer the Objections, that a Speculative and Subtle Wit may devise against it; is a Truth, which, as important as it is to Religion in general, and the Christian Religion in particular, I think one may sufficiently manifest by this one Instance, That, because we can walk up and down, and so remove our Bodies from Place to Place, by this one Argument, I say, we are justly satisfied, that there is Local Motion in the World, notwithstanding all the Specious and Subtle Arguments, that *Zeno* and his Followers have employed to impugne that Truth: Against which, they have alleged such Difficulties, as have not only puzzled and perplexed, but (for ought yet appears) *nonplus'd* the Antient Philosophers, and, I doubt, those Moderns too, that have attempted to give clear Solutions of them.

XXVIII. If now, Sir, we look back upon what hath hitherto been discoursed, I hope you will allow me to gather thence the Conclusion I aim at, which is, that There is no necessity, that every Notion or Proposition that may be found deliver'd in the Holy Scriptures, that surpasses *our Reason*, must therefore be *contradictory to it*: And that, in case the Christian Religion be True, and it's Mysteries or other Articles divinely Revealed; 'tis not enough, for the Confutation of any of them, to reject the Expression, *that 'tis above Reason, but not contrary to it*; as if it involved an unintelligible or groundless Distinction: For thô This will not evince the Truth of a Mystery, since That must be Establish'd upon its proper Grounds and Arguments; yet it will keep it from being Therefore Absurd or False, because it transcends our Reason: Since to do so, may belong almost indifferently to a Chymical Notion, and a Mysterial Truth,

Truth. And if the Expression be employed to justify any thing, that, tho' styl'd a Mystery, is but a pretended One ; the Error will lye, not in the Groundlesness of the Distinction, but the Erroneousness of the Application. I am,

S I R,

*Your most &c.*

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F I N I S.

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Greatness of Mind,  
PROMOTED BY  
CHRISTIANITY.

---

*In a LETTER to a Friend.*

---

*The First Part.*

---

L O N D O N ,

Printed by *Edward Jones*, for *John Taylor* at the *Ship* in *St. Paul's Church-yard*. M D C X C I.

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*To my honoured Friend Sir R. M.*

S I R,

**I** Do not wonder, that a great Soul, like yours, should enquire, What aspect Religion, and particularly that of Christians, has upon *Greatness of Mind*: But, I confess, I somewhat marvel, that you should be put upon the Enquiry, by the Suggestions of such a Libertine as Mr. N. N.'s confidently pretending, that his Atheistical and Sensual Principles are much more friendly, than the Doctrines of Christianity, to a noble Frame of Mind. Wherefore I dare not permit the Sense I have of my own Weakness, how great and just soever, to keep me from presenting you with my Thoughts; and the rather, because I presume you are not indisposed to receive a Satisfaction in this Point, since you seem to expect

it from a Pen that is no better than mine; which, you well know, must not be, on this occasion, assisted by the Arguments and Ornaments, that the fine Sentences of the Fathers, and other Divines and Humanists, might afford to a Person that were at leisure, and furnished with a Library. Yet I shall not much, either excuse, or deplore, my being so ill accommodated for the Task you impose upon me; because as you seem to desire but my own Thoughts, so I know not, whether common Place-books would afford me any great Assistance on so uncommon a Theme; and, I confess, that, when the Matter will bear it, I, as well as you, do less care for Authorities, especially taken from Discourses, designed rather to Persuade than Prove, in comparison of those Arguments, that are suggested by a due Consideration of the Nature of the Thing. But yet, I presume, you will readily give me leave to do that frequently enough, which your Friend, perhaps, will call Preaching. For be-

besides that, your Desires, and my Haste, confine me to the Bible and my own Thoughts; the frequent Citation of Texts of Holy Scripture is exacted by the Nature of the Question I am to handle: it being necessary, for the evincing of the Doctrines of Christianity, not to be inconsistent with *Greatness of Mind*, that we *as* well consider, What those Doctrines are, which sure will be best declared by the Scriptural Texts that contain them, *as* What are the Attributes of *Greatness of Mind*.

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## CHAP. I.

**T**O proceed then with some Method, as well as much Brevity, I conceive, it will be no unfit Way to come to a Resolution in our Inquiry, if I *First* set down and enumerate the chiefest Things, that, in the estimation of Intelligent Men, do, as if they were so many Ingredients, make up what we call *Magnanimity* or *Greatness of Mind*, That not being a single Starr, but a Constellation of elevated and radiant Qualities; and *then* shew, that Religion, especially That of the Christians, is, at least, *consistent with* each of these, if it do not also *promote* it. But in this Enumeration, thô I shall, *ex abundanti*, take in some Qualities, that are not Essential to *Greatness of Mind*, but rather Accessions to it; yet I shall not scrupulously distinguish those Things that are necessary to compleat it, and Those that are partly some of them  
Signs,

Signs, and some of them Effects of it; hoping from your Equity, that these additional Things will be thought to make full amends, if, through Haste or Mistake, I should chance to have omitted any Property, that you may judge to belong to the true Notion of Generosity.

I shall, in the following Discourse, take it for granted, ( and I hope I need not tell you, that I do so ) that as we think not Mafons, but Jewelers, fit to judge of the Genuineness and Value of precious Stones; so you will allow me to take the Notion and Measures of *Greatness of Mind*, not from the Opinions of the Injudicious Vulgar, but the Judicious Estimates of Reason, improv'd by Philosophy, and enlightn'd by Natural Theology.

I know, the undiscerning Multitude, whose Judgment seems rather lodg'd in the Eye than in the Brain, when they hear Men name *Greatness of Mind*, are apt to fancy Something, that, like the Coronation of a King, is attended with Pomp and Splendor,

and a numerous Train of Gazers, and the loud Acclamations of the People. And, at least, when mention is made of an Heroick Soul, they imagine, that it cannot be but in a great Commander, like a *Roman* Emperor, or a *Tartarian* General, that leads and defeats Armies, and desolates whole Countries, and leaves them Peopled only with Carcasses. But Reason and Religion, that look on Human things with Eyes untroubled by those pompous Outsides that dazle the Vulgar, can easily see a vast Difference betwixt *Greatness of Fortune* and *Greatness of Mind*. And not only Christianity teaches, that God, who is no *Προσωπώπιος* Respector of Persons, *Acts* 10 and 34 2 *Sam.* 14. and 14. *Sees not Persons as Man sees them*; and that a thing that is sublime amongst Men, may be an *Abomination to Him*: But Philosophers themselves can easily distinguish betwixt that real *Greatness*, that truly belongs to the Man, and that Theatrical one, that Fortune may have an-

next



next to his Condition. And, *tho* they pay a peculiar Honor and Respect to great Virtue in Sovereigns, rather than in Subjects, because in the former, 'tis more diffusively beneficial, and cannot last without resisting stronger Temptations; *yet*, they do not think, that a great Empire always either finds, or makes, a great Soul. And if Dignities, how high soever, be attain'd by mean Submissions, or weak Actions, they think this extrinsecal Greatness can no more make a mean Soul *Great*, than high Stilts can make a Dwarf a proper Man. Perhaps, they look upon Many, who, for making a great Bustle and Noise in the World, are, by themselves, and the shallow Vulgar, thought great Spirits, but as Gnats, that are in themselves small and worthless Creatures, and are really considerable for Nothing, save the Noise and the Stings wherewith they are able to disturb Mens Rest. That lucky Monarch, that overcame so great a Part of the then known World, and conquer'd

Countrys

Countrys, faster than one would have thought he could have travell'd over them, has this Character given of his stupendious Exploits, by the *Roman* Historian, that all he had done, was, *That he durst well despise despicable things.* And in a Poet of the same Nation, this is his **Elogy,**

*Felix Terrarum Prædo non utile mundo,  
Editus Exemplum.*

And if such Persons as They, had so little Respect for so great a Monarch, that was a lawful Sovereign; what Liberty, think you, do Philosophers allow themselves, who so little value the Favourites of Fortune, for their being so that even such as those prosperous Usurpers, *Phocas,* &c. that her Fondness, and the Applause of a Multitude, (as blind, perhaps, as She is painted) have seated in the Throne; Philosophers, in their Thoughts, do as well doom to a Scaffold, as Religion does to Hell. And certainly, *True Greatness of Mind* must

must be something that both Resides  
 in the Soul, and is Perfective of it ;  
 neither of which Properties belong  
 to any thing that Fortune can bestow ;  
 and all that outward *Greatness* can  
 do, is not to make a Soul Great, but  
 to afford one that is, the opportunity  
 of shewing itself to be so. And all  
 these Submissions and Respects that  
 Custom, or Fear, or Interest make  
 Men pay to those, whom, only their  
 Titles, or their Places, or their Power  
 makes Great ones, do as little argue  
 or increase the real worth of those en-  
 vied Persons, as the standing for more  
 than formerly in an account, turns  
 a Brass Counter into Silver or Gold.  
 And as no less skill in Arithmetick  
 is requir'd, to Multiply, &c. a thou-  
 sand Farthings than a thousand Gui-  
 nea's, tho' one of the latter, be worth  
 almost a thousand of the former ; so  
 the ordering or disposing of all things  
 according to the best Rules, and af-  
 ter the best manner they are capable  
 of, may argue no less *Greatness of*  
*Mind* in a private Man, than is ex-  
 ercis'd

exercis'd by a Great Monarch, in those  
 Actions that attract the Eyes, and bu-  
 lie the Tongues, of Nations. And as it  
 usually speaks a Man a better Artist  
 to make a Pocket-Watch, than a  
 great Town-Clock, all the Advan-  
 tage the later has of the former, con-  
 sisting in the Greatness of the Mat-  
 ter that is wrought, and not that of  
 the Skill, that is display'd: So it  
 sometimes happens, that those Pro-  
 ductions of Virtue argue a greater  
 Soul, that make, by far, a lesser Shew  
 and Noise. And you may remem-  
 ber, not only, that *Socrates*, not-  
 withstanding his private, and even  
 necessitous, Condition, was by the  
 Oracle preferr'd to all the *Grecians*,  
 when *Greece* was the Theatre of ge-  
 nerous Minds: But, that a far truer  
 Oracle than That of *Delphos*, pro-  
 nounc'd the poor Widows Mind,  
 and Circumstances, to have made  
 her Mite a greater Liberality, than  
 all that the Rich Man  
 had bestow'd upon the  
 Corban. And it is the  
 Sentence

*Matt. XII. 43.*

Sentence of no worse a Judge than *Salomon*. Prov. XVI. 32.

Let us not then from the mean Notions of the Vulgar, and the fond Opinions of common Souls, take our Estimates of so sublime and extraordinary a Quality, as *Greatness of Mind*. For many Things, to which they give not only their Approbation, but their Applause, are, and ought to be, as little esteem'd, if they be condemn'd by the Wise, as a piece of Brass Money, that has long past current among the People, ought to be thought good Gold, when Refiners and Say-masters have declar'd it counterfeit. And if you ask me, What Notion then of *Greatness of Mind*, I am willing to allow, I shall freely tell you, that, in my apprehension, the Man that has a *Great Mind*, is he that uses his utmost moral Diligence to find out what are the best Things he can do, and then, without being deterr'd by Dangers, or discourag'd by Difficulties, does resolutely and steadily pursue them as far as his Ability

lity and Opportunities will serve ;  
and This out of an Internal Principle of Love to God and Man, and with a sincere Aim, to Glorify the one, and Benefit the other.

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## C H A P. II.

**B**UT, before I descend to Particulars, it will not be amiss to take notice of one Consideration, that may, in general, make it probable, That the Christian Religion is rather favourable, than opposite, to true Magnanimity. That this Argument may make somewhat the more Impression, I shall, thô very briefly, observe that the Aspects, both of the Author, the Rules, the Aims, or Scopes, and the Rewards of Virtue, as 'tis recommended by Christianity, have a great and direct tendency to Elevate it, and make it Heroick,

And

And *first*, the prime Author of the Doctrine of the Gospel being GOD himself, who both knows Man perfectly, and is mentioned in Scripture as a *φιλόανθρωπος*, or Lover of Mankind; 'tis but *Tir. III. 4* reasonable to suppose, that the Doctrines and Laws he caused to be solemnly delivered to Mankind, and confirmed by Miracles, and whose System is, in the *Apocalypse*, honoured with the Title of *The Revel. XIV. & Everlasting Gospel, (i.e.)* not to be succeeded by a more perfect Institution, as the Mosaick Law was by That; should be fitted to beget and advance solid and sublime Virtue, and be more, than any other Institution, Perfective of Human Nature.

*Next*, the Rules, and (if there be any such) the Counsels of the Christian Religion require, and tend to, extraordinary degrees of Virtue: The Divine Legislator, being able to look into the Hearts of Men, makes his  
**Laws**

Laws reach Those, and Those principally, too. The *loving GOD with all our Hearts, with all our Minds, &c. and our Neighbour as our selves*, as comprehensive as those two grand Principles of Virtue are, is by our Saviour made the Summary of the Moral Law, and adopted into the Gospel; the *cleansing ourselves from all Filthiness, both of Flesh and Spirit*; and the *abstaining from all kind, or appearance, of Evil*, are the Negative Parts of the Christians Duty; and for the Positive Parts, we are plainly told, That *unless our Righteousness exceed that boasted one of the Scribes and Pharisees, we shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*. We are urged to *grow in Grace, to add to our Faith, Virtue, and to That, a whole Train of* excellent Qualities. And, for fear any such thing should be thought to be purposely omitted, because left unmentioned, this general Exhortation

2 Cor. VII. 1.  
1 Theff. V. 22.

Matth. V. 20.

2 Pet. III. 18.  
I. 5.



tion is given us; *Finally,*  
*my Brethren, whatsoever* Phil. IV. 8.  
*things are true, &c.* But

there is yet a more aspiring Path of  
 Virtue trac'd us out in the Gospel,  
 where it proposes to us the Example  
 of Christ, as One, whose Steps we  
 are to tread in: For not only that  
 Divine Person never com-  
 mitted any Sin, neither was 1 Pet. II. 22.  
 Guile found in his Mouth;

but the Supreme and Omniscient  
 Judge, God Himselfe, Declared, by a  
 Voice from Heaven, his full Approba-  
 tion both of his Person and his Do-  
 ctrine, when he said, *This*

*is my beloved Son, in whom* Mat. XVII. 5.  
*I am well pleased, hear he*

*him.* And his Sinless Life, which  
 was a Living Law, did not only sur-  
 pass the Examples, but even the Pre-  
 cepts and the Idea's too, of the Hea-  
 then Moralists and Philosophers, as  
 may be elsewhere shewn. And the  
 becoming a serious Disciple of so  
 Perfect and Divine a Teacher, does  
 itself so engage a Man to renounce

his former Vices, that  
*Rom. XIII. 14.* when *St. Paul* had dis-  
 suaded his *Romans* from  
 divers other Vices, instead of exhort-  
 ing them to the contrary Virtues in  
 particular, he only desires them, in  
 general, to put on the Lord *Jesus*  
*Christ*, as a comprehensive Duty,  
 which contain'd in it all the Virtues,  
 he declin'd to enumerate.

*Thirdly*, but tho' he calls us to high  
 Degrees of Virtue, yet he does not  
 to Unattainable ones. For, tho' Phi-  
 losophy wisely forbore, tho' not al-  
 ways to commend, yet to injoin,  
 things disproportionate to Human  
 Infirmities; yet, he may well be al-  
 low'd to engage us to more than Hu-  
 man Virtues, that by his Divine As-  
 sistances, if they be duly sought, is  
 always ready to enable us to acquire  
 and practise Them. Of

*John I. 16.* his *Fulness*, says *St. John*,  
*We have all received, and*

*Grace for Grace*; (i. e.) either Graces  
 answerable to His, as the Faculties of  
 a Child's Mind, are to Those of a  
 Perfect

Perfect Man; or, *Grace upon Graces* (i. e.) an Accumulation of Graces heaped upon one another; which may keep you from wondring, that *St. Paul* should dare to say,

*That he could do all things* *Phil. IV. 13.*

*thorow Christ that strength-  
ned him.* And where his Invitations

meet with an honest and a willing Mind, his Commands do not only Chaulk out the Way, but Give Strength to walk in it; and he usually, does by his Spirit, such a kind of Work, as he sometimes did miracu-  
lously by his Power,

when he at once bid, *Matt. 9. 6.*

and enabled, a Paraly-  
tick Person that wanted Strength to

stir from his Bed, to rise and walk.

And when, having commanded *St.*

*Peter to walk to him upon*

*the Sea, he enabled him se-* *Mat. XIV. 29.*

*curely to tread upon the*

*Waves*; thereby Approving and Re-  
warding the excellent Notion that  
Disciple had, That the Command  
of *Christ* was a sufficient Cause to

put him upon Action thô a Miracle were requisite to carry him thro' with it.

*Fourthly*, The Rewards propos'd to Virtue and Piety, by the *Christian Religion*, do exceedingly tend to animate and heighten Them; whether we consider the Recompences the Gospel propounds in this Life, or those that it promises in the Next. The great present Rewards of Virtue, are, you know, the Approbation of Good Men, and the Applause of a Man's own Conscience. The First of these is as well attainable by Christian Hero's, as by any other; for Virtue loses neither its Worth, nor Amiability, by being Baptiz'd; and thô in some Times and Places lesser Degrees of it may be disregarded, or traduc'd, yet, generally speaking, the greater Degrees of it will either invite, or extort, Mens Esteem. Among the *Roman* Persecutors, the exemplary Lives and Constancy of the Primitive Christians, brought it to be Proverbially said,

said, *That such a Man was a good Man, saying that he was a Christian;* and, *Soci Christiani mortis contemptores,* was usually in Heathen's Mouths. There are divers Qualities, and those more priz'd by the Christian, than any other, Institution, that have in them so much of Native Loveliness that *St. Paul* might justly say of them, *That he that exercises himself in them, is, generally speaking, both* Rom. XIV. 18. *acceptable to God, and approv'd by Men.* Nor did those Virtues that recommended the Great *Constantine*, whilst he was a Gentile, lose their Lustre, or the Veneration they procured him, when he turn'd Christian, and practis'd them with higher Aims, than that of satisfying Himself, and pleasing his People.

And as for the Reward of a good Conscience, which was able to make *Heracles* undergo all his Labors; and made all the other Hero's of the Gentile World; I think, it will not be

doubted, but that this inward Recompence is received, not only without any Defalcations, but with great Improvements, by him, whose Virtues flow from Religion. For, to him the Applauses of Conscience may well be more acceptable than all the various sorts of Musick, that Solemniz'd the Dedication  
*Dan. III. 7.* of *N. buchadnezar's* Golden Image, since in him Conscience does not, as in mere Natural Men, act only the Part of a Domestick Judge, but That of a Delegate from God himself; and its Absolutions are less welcome, as they are Approbations of Reason, than as they are the Pledges of Gods Acceptance, and of that higher Reward that will be consequent to it in the Life to come.

For these Joys, that are plac'd on the other side of the Grave, are much the Noblest part of the Recompence of Virtue, and proportionable Incitements to the Practice of it; and yet, on the account of future Rewards,

wards, the Christian has much greater Motives to Heroick Virtue, than the Heathen Moralift, or Philosopher. For, the poſthume State of Man is ſo dim and uncertain, that we find even the greateſt Men, among the Heathens, ſpeak very doubtfully, and not without Iſs and Ands, of a future State, and much more of a future Happineſs, as may be inſtanc'd in *Socrates*, *Cyrus*, *Seneca*, and many others; ſo that they rather ſeem'd to have Wiſh'd, or Hop'd, than Believ'd, their future Felicity: And, I fear, that many of them, finding that happy State deſcrib'd chiefly by the Poets, reckon'd it among Poetick Fictions. And thoſe, that did, though but waveringly, expect Recompences in the Life to Come, had but poor and mean Idea's ſuggeſted to them of it; the Hopes they were entertain'd with, being of Fortunate Iſlands and the Elyſian Fields, which are not ſo Tranſcendent as to make a diffident Man very forward to quit the Gar-

dens of *Epicurus*, that he has here in Possession, upon the doubtful hopes of other Gardens in *Elysium*. Whereas, to excite the Christian to an Heroick Degree of Virtue, he is not allow'd to Hope, but Comanded to be intirely Confident of passing out of this World into a Place, to which the Poets *Elysium* is much more Inferior, than the Possession of a Garden is to That of an Empire. To attempt the Description of that Cœlestial Happiness, would be, contrary to my Inclination, to launch out into a Common Place; and were a Work, that if my Hastē did not, my Disability would, dissuade me from: And therefore, *though* it be a State made up of the Confluence of all sort of Things rationally Desirable; *yet*, having only said in general of all the other Goods that it comprizes, that the Scripture tells us, *That Eye has not Seen, nor Ear Heard, nor the Heart of Man Conceiv'd, what God has laid up for them that*

*Fear*

1 Cor. II. 9.



*Fear him*: I shall particularly take notice only of those Parts of this Inestimable Reward, that may peculiarly concern my present purpose, by being the chief Things that Heroick Souls are wont to Aspire too; a Good Name, Honour, and Dignity.

To have a Good Name for Good Actions, cannot but be a very desirable Thing, the Applause of Wise and Good Men, being a loud Eccho from without, that, by repeating it, confirms the Approbation given by the Conscience within. But though to do Virtuous and Worthy Actions be the best and likeliest way of acquiring a Good Name, yet 'tis not a certain one: For, such is the Ignorance, the Malice, or the Enmity of a great many, that no Man is sure to escape being Mis-represented, or Traduc'd; as, we see, that the Sublimity, the Brightness, and the regular Courses of the Stars themselves, could not hinder wanton Poets, or fanciful Astronomers, from giving those Luminous Constellations the Names not only

cf

of the Nobler Beasts, as the Lyon, the Eagle, and the Whale; but even of Animals that lie under an ill Name, as the Dog, the Goat, and the Scorpion. And though it be true, that oftentimes Innocency long Clouded, does, like Lightning, break out at last; yet oftentimes too, that happens not till Malice and Envy are Dead, because the maligned Person is so; by which means he does not Live to know he is justified; and many, if not all, of those mis-inform'd Men are Dead and gone for whose good Opinion he was chiefly concern'd. But *though* the Christian may, as well as any other, be Traduc'd by Calumny, which often serves good Men, (as the Heathen Persecuters did the Martyrs, when they expos'd them to the Peoples view, cloath'd in the Skins of Beasts, to make them hideous and hateful;) *yet* he is justly cheared by the Assurance he has, that there will come a Time when oppress'd and disfigur'd Innocency shall shine forth and triumph,

umph, and his good Name, as well as his Body, shall have a Glorious Resurrection, even in the Sight of his Accusers and Enemies, and of all those whom their Slanders did either prevail with, or startle. For at that great and general Assize, to which there shall be a far greater Confluence, than the *Afsyrian* Monarch drew to *Dan. III.* the Plains of *Babylon*, the Heroick Disciples of the Apostles will be able to say, upon happier terms than the Apostles themselves did *1 Cor. IV. 9.* here below, that they are made a *Spectacle to God, to Angels and to Men.* And in that Illustrious Assembly, of the *First Born, whose Names are written in* *Heb. XII. 2, 3.* *Heaven,* being present, the Men, not only of all Nations, but of all Ages too, the Vizards shall be as well taken off, as the Masques; and the formerly traduc'd Saints, being welcom'd with the Title of *God*

*Mat. XXV. 21.* *Good and Faithful Ser-*  
*vants,* shall solemnly be  
 acquitted by the Sentence, not of a  
 Fallible, or partial, Judge, but of an  
 Infinite and Supreme  
*Jer. XVII. 10.* *One, That searches the*  
*Hearts and Reins, and*  
*cannot be Deceiv'd or Brib'd;* and, to  
 be sure, that the injur'd Saint shall  
 come off with Honour enough, he  
 shall then be Absolv'd by being  
 Crown'd.

This Celestial Crown compre-  
 hending, in the Scripture Dialect, both  
 the remaining Parts of the Christi-  
 ans Reward, Honour and Dignity,  
 or Glory, and Preferment; it will  
 be pertinent to mention some Advan-  
 tages that give it an high Preference  
 about the Crowns of Monarchs here  
 below.

And First, Earthly Crowns may  
 sometimes be the Fruits and Recomp-  
 pences of Worth and Virtue, but  
 are not at all the proofs of them.  
 They are usually the Gifts of Na-  
 ture, and, not unfrequently, of For-  
 tune ;

tune; and History gives us cause to wish, they were more seldom the Acquits of Crimes. But the Celestial Crowns proclaim, thô not the Merit, the Worth of them that receive them, being never adjudg'd but to Such, whom previous Graces and Virtues have fitted and qualified for *the Inheritance of the Saints in Light.* Col. I. 12.

Besides, as an Earthly Crown may be acquir'd without Merit, so it may be possess'd without Happiness. And if Crimes be made Steps to a Throne, they prove so many Thorns to him that sits on it, who is there a more Illustrious, not a less tormented, Malefactor. The Sublimity of a Throne, as little as the Height of a Scaffold, keeping a Criminal Person from feeling the punishments inflicted on him there. As may appear by the instance of *Herod Agrippa*, Acts XII. 21. whose Throne, and glistening Habit, which *Josephus* takes notice of, thô they procur'd him,

him not only the Acclamations, but Adorations, of the dazled Multitude, could not protect him from the incens'd Justice of an higher King than he; so that whilst others treated him as a God, he found himself one of the most miserable of Men, and was fain to hasten from a Seat, which occasion'd, but could not protect, his Impiety. But a Cœlestial Crown, as it is graciously bestowed for the Supream Recompence of Virtue, and on that account may be called a *Crown of Righteousness*; so it always proves a Blessing, as inseparable from Happiness, as a Thing is from it self. The Crowns of this World, by the very advantage of being Hereditary, shew, that they cannot preserve the Possessors from Death. But the Crown, I speak of, is by the Divine Bestower of it, called, *A Crown of Life*; and of it, in respect of other Crowns, may be truly said, what *Solomon* said of Wisdom, in reference to other Goods,

Goods, That *the Excellency of it is, that it* Ecd. VII. 12.  
*gives Life to the owner*  
*thereof.* And though Earthly Crowns

be such Transitory Things, that we may observe, that even

the Four great Monar- Dan. II.  
 chies of the World were

by God represented to *Nebuchadnezar*, but as parts of a Dream, whereas the Kingdom promis'd to Christians, is called in the Scripture, *A*

*Kingdom that cannot be* Heb. XII. 28.  
*moved,* as the Believers

Crown is, in opposition to those fading Crowns of Lawrel, that adorn'd the Heads of the Roman Conquerors, called an *unwithering Crown of Glory:* 1 Pet V. 4.

As if the Lawrel plac'd on the Christians Head, could grow and flourish in the Wreath, better than it did on the Tree.

But all that I have yet said is Inferior to this last Prerogative of the Cœlestial Crown, that it does not only confer a relative Dignity or

Pre-

Preeminence, but an essential Worth and Excellency ; as if the Diamonds, which adorn'd that Crown, should impart their own Sparklingness, Transparency, and Incorruptibility, to the Person that wears it. The highest Preferments here below do raise a Man above others, without raising him above himself. By being at the top of a Ladder, a Man comes to an higher Station, but is not really taller than he was ; and a Vane, by being plac'd on the top of the highest Steeple, is not from Iron turn'd into Gold or Silver, but remains still of the same base Metal it was, and is but a Weather-Cock, and so the Sport of the Winds. But a Cœlestial Crown is always attended with a Personal Improvement, befitting so high a Dignity. The Heavenly Coronation has a Virtue like That of the Unction of *Saul*, who, upon his being made King, was enabled to *Prophecy, and was* 1 Sam. X. 6. *turn'd into an other Man.*

And the Resemblance holds in this



100, that Christ is said, to have made his Re- Rev. i. 6.  
 deemed ones, not only *Kings, but Priests to God and his Fa-  
 ther,* as if the Kingly Dignity were  
 not enough, unless the Sacred Cha-  
 racter of a Priestly Office were ad-  
 ded. Congruously to which, *St. Pe-  
 ter* calls *Christians,* in ge-  
 neral, a *Royal Priest-* 1 Pet. II. 9.  
*hood;* the Understanding, the Will, the Affections, are  
 all refin'd and elevated; and the ve-  
 ry Body itself is transformed into a  
 Spiritual Body. As if the Glorify'd  
 Soul did shine, with an undiminish'd  
 Splendor, through its happily chang'd  
 Mansion. And we may well suppose,  
 that this will be a Bright and Noble  
 Structure, if we remember, that the  
 Angels, who, in their Apparitions to  
 good Men, were wont to be very  
 careful not to frighten them, did yet  
 appear with a Majestick Splendor;  
 and that Angel that the  
 Apostles saw in our Sa- Mat. 28. 3.  
 viours Sepulchre is re-

presented, as a young Man cloathed  
*in a long white and shi-*  
*ning Garment.* And we  
 Luke XXIV. 4. are told by *st. Paul*, that,  
 in the future State,  
 Phil. III. 21. *our vile Bodies shall be*  
*transform'd into the*  
*likeness of his Glorious Body;* and  
 how Glorious it is in Heaven, we may  
 guess, by what it was at his Trans-  
 figuration here on Earth, during  
 which, the Scripture relates, *That*  
*his Face did shine as the*  
 Matt. XVII. 2. *Sun, and his Raiment*  
*was white as the Light.*  
 And of *Moses* and *Elias*, thô they  
 came to speak to him of his Death,  
 'tis added by *St. Luke*,  
 Luke IX. 31. *That they also appear'd*  
*in Glory.* And since  
 our Saviour has assured us, *That those*  
*shall be accounted worthy*  
 Matt. XXII. 30. *of that State,* shall be  
 like, or equal to the An-  
 gels; And that then the  
 Mat. 13. 43. *Righteous shall shine*  
*like the Sun in the King-*  
*dom*

dom of their Father, who knows, but that the Transfigur'd Soul and Body of some happy Saint may be as Glorious a Sight, as that which appear'd to *St. John* in the Apocalyps; when he saw an Angel standing in the Sun? If *Rev. XIX. 17.* it be said, that these are very bold *Hyperbolies*, I hope the Texts, I have mention'd, will keep them from seeming altogether groundless Conceits. And, when among other excellent Prerogatives, that our Saviour promises the persevering Believers, One is, *That he will give them Power over the Nations, and to Rule them with a Rod of Iron; and the Other, which may well be the last, is express'd in these words. To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my Throne, even as I evercame, and am set down with my Father in his Throne.* *Rev. II. 26, 27.* And thô I readily yield, that these Expressions are not to be

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strictly

strictly, and literally, taken; yet, when I consider the infinite Power, and Goodness, of God; and that, for ought we know, he may have numberless Dominions, and Setts of Governable Creatures, that we are yet strangers too; I think, God's Attributes, and Christ's Expressions, may warrant us to expect amazing things from him that is Able, and has Declar'd himself Willing, to do for us

*above what we can ask, or,*  
*Eph. 3. 20.* in our present State, so  
 much as *think*. And, at

least, that will be allow'd me, which I drive at in this Celebration of our future Happiness, that the Christian Religion, by proposing such inestimable Rewards, presents Believers with far higher Motives to Heroick Virtue, than Morality, or Philosophy, can afford other Men.

# Advertisement.

**T**He Author being desir'd to add yet something to the foregoing Discourses, to give the Book they make Parts of, a Thickness more proportionate to its Largeness; he did among other Papers of his, that he turn'd over in Compliance with that request, light upon an Epistolary Discourse, which by its very being unfinish'd, seem'd (by reason of its shortness) the more fit to serve the present turn. For this Tract having been drawn up in a Countrey, whence the Author was oblig'd to remove, before he had made any considerable Progress in his Work; he was easily induc'd to put it up in a Bundle of other Writings, which, like this, were laid aside till he should be at much leisure to compleat them. But upon the newly mention'd occasion, finding that among divers loose and lesser Memoirs, that had been thrown together

*In order to the design'd Treatise, there were 15 or 20 Pages at the beginning that were Coherent enough; he was content they should attend the Christian Virtuoso, because of the affinity of the things design'd in both the Papers; which being to recommend the Christian Religion to worthy Souls, 'twas congruous enough that a Discourse which shews, That the Christian Religion may very well consist with a Philosophick Genius; should be accompany'd by another that tends to manifest, That Greatness of Mind, which comprizes uncommon degrees of Virtue, is not only Consistent with Christianity, but may be highly Promoted by it. Those that reflect on this Aim, will not ('tis hop'd) think it strange, that the Style is a little Rais'd; since tho' the Subject be Theological, yet the Writer, (who was then many Years Younger than he now is) being a Person of Honour, and writing for a Noble Gentleman, who, like himself, was a Layman; 'twas thought not only Allowable but Fit, that the Style should not be altogether unsuitable*

*suitable to the Subject and to the Aim: which was to make Impressions on an Illustrious Person, not by dry Precepts, or Languid Discourses, but by exciting him to Heroick Virtue, by the Noblest Patterns and Ideas, and the most moving Incentives, he could propose.*

*And tho' the Discouragements lately mention'd, and since increas'd by the Authors not being able to find some of the principle Materials he had, in loose Sheets, provided for the following Discourse; oblige him to lay aside the thoughts of Compleating it; yet because 'tis very possible that some Elevated Soul may have a Mind to prosecute the design, or Cultivate so noble a Subject; he thought it not amiss (as little Samples of his Method or Way of Treating it) to Subjoyn to the greater Fragment, besides the Index of the Heads of Discourse, intended for the First Part, 5 or 6 Lesser Fragments that he lighted on, whilst he was seeking for some Papers belonging to the same Tract, that should have been, but were not, found in their Company.*

## C H A P. III.

First Frag-  
ment.

**T**O have high Aims and Noble Designs, is so Genuin a Mark, and Effect of Greatness of Mind, that there is not any more generally acknowledged ; insomuch that Ambition, tho' it be but a Depravation or a Counterfeit of this Heroick frame of Mind, does yet so dazzle the Eyes of the greater part of Men, as to pass for Magnanimity ; and Noble Attempts do ostentimes, even when they fail of Success, not miss of Esteem.

— *Magnis tamen excidit ausis,*

was meant for an *Encomium* by him that said it. And I remember that one of the Ancients reckons it among the Glories of that Great Captain, *Hannibal*, who long successfully disputed, with the Romans, the Empire of the World, that he resolved to

*Be-sege*



*Besiege* Rome, tho' he never prov'd able to lead his Army within the Sight of her Walls.

Now, as to have Elevated Aims is one of the chief Signs, and indeed Parts, of an Heroick temper of Mind; so, there are no men that seem to me to have Nobler and Sublimier Aims, than Those to which a true Christian is Encouraged; since he aspires to no less things than to *please and glorify God; to promote the Good of Mankind; to improve, as far as is possible, his Personal Excellencies in this Life; and to secure to himse'f for ever a glorious and happy Condition in the next.*

#### C H A P. I V.

**O**NE of the grand Difficulties, *Second Fragment.* that he, who would be highly Virtuous, must expect to surmount and Conquer, especially in such a Degenerous age, as ours, is the Temptation that is afforded by the Uni-

**Universality of vitious Customs and Examples.** I wish 'twere needless, solicitously to prove, either how great an Influence Examples, especially bad ones, have on the generality of Men; or how general bad Examples have been in most Ages, and in particular in That we live in. The Scandal given by bad Examples, tho' it be one of the most obvious Temptations, is none of the least dangerous. For Interest, Bashfulness, and that very Complaisance and Civility, that is so usually found in well-bred, or good-Natur'd, Persons, makes them very unwilling to offend or disoblige the Company they live with; and whom they have several Inducements rather to please and gratify by imitation and compliance, than tacitly to reproach by Nonconformity to their Sentiments, and Practices. And, in effect, we find, that many that could not be perverted by the Frowns and Threats of the Vitious, have been Debauch'd by their Company and Example.

Against

Against this powerful Temptation, Religion strongly arms it's Hero, both by Precepts and Precedents. *Thou shalt not follow a Multitude to do Evil*, was the Express Command of the Mosaic Law. *Say not thou a Confederacy to all, to whom this People shall say a Confederacy*, was the Command of God to his Prophet. Our Saviour makes it an Argument to dissuade his Disciples from an anxious Solicitude about Meat and Drink and Cloathing, that after all *these things the Gentiles* (which are by far the most numerous part of Mankind) *do seek*. And, upon the same ground, he endeavours in the same Divine Sermon upon the Mount to keep them from Vain Repetitions in Prayer. And, whereas it may seem an Immodesty to dare to dissent from others, that vastly surpass us in number; the Heroick Conqueror of *Canaan* speaks thus to the whole Body of the Victorious Jewish Nation, that they may choose to serve whom they thought fit, and worship either  
the

the Gods whom their Fathers served, or those Worshipp'd by the Neighbouring Nations, but as *for me and my House, we Will serve the Lord, Be you not conformed to this World,* says St. Paul. And another Apostle, speaking of himself and the true Christians of his time, scruples not to affirm it passionately and roundly, *We know* 1 John, 5. 9. *that we are of God, and the whole World lies in Wickedness.*

Nor does Religion furnish us with Precepts only, to disobey Custom, and Example, but with Precedents too, of which there are Three so illustrious, that I know not how to pass them by. The First is afforded by Lot, who lived in a place, that was grown so Proverbial for the Height of Wickedness, that to aggravate their Sins by the most Hyperbolical Comparison, we must liken them to themselves; and they were grown so wicked, that in a place where an admirable Plenty, and an unbounded Libertinisme could not but make them

them very populous, there could not be found half a Score of good Men, the generality of that cursed People being fallen so much not only from Virtue, but from common Honesty, that they did not restrain themselves so much, as to Human Vices. And yet, even the Sins of *sodom*, which cryed so loud as to reach Heaven, and bring down Fire and Brimstone from thence, disturbed *Lot's* Quiet, without destroying his Innocence, and an Apostle assures us, that, that *just Man was but vex'd with the filthy Conversation of the wicked*, not prevail'd with in the least to imitate it.

The Next Instance of a Religious Courage, inflexible to bad Examples, is afforded us by the three Friends of *Daniel*, who, at the great Solemnity of the Dedication of *Nebuchadnezzar's* Golden Image; when they had, besides that great and stern Monarchs Command, the Example not only of many Men but many Nations, and a more numerous Assembly of Persons,

considerable for Quality and Dignity, than the World ever saw before or since, singly opposed their Naked Constancy to the haughty Tyrants Menaces, and the prostrate World's Example. And yet these Men were Courtiers, bred among that supple sort of fine Creatures, that were as accustom'd to bow their Consciences, as their Knees, to their proud Master. They had not only Lives to lose, but the chief Dignities of the Province of *Babylon*, then the Queen of Nations. And they could not upon their refusal quit the stateliest Palace in the World, without immediately changing it for a burning Fiery Furnace.

The Last Instance I shall name, and the most illustrious that can be named, is, that I am supplied with by *Noah*, he lived in an Age, in which there were as many Hainous Sinners almost as there were Men, tho' Vice has generally had a *Benjamins* Portion, in the Distribution of Mankind betwixt It and Virtue; yet, *Methu-*  
*sala*

*Sala* excepted, the Inequality was grown such, as gave Vice rather a Monopoly than a Share of Men; or if a Distribution were to be admitted, 'twas such a one, as That made of *Saul* and his Army, when all the people were on one side, and only he and *Jonathan* on the other: 'Tis strange, that when the World was so recent, that many, that were then alive might remember and converse with one, that for two hundred Years liv'd contemporary with *Adam*, ( for so we may gather *Methusala* to have done ) Men should so soon forget all Sentiments of Piety. But yet in *Noah's* time, the World could not be compared to its present State, where thô it be Night in one place, 'tis Day in another; but to the state of *Tobu va Bohu*, or the first Chaos, where Darkness was over the face of the Universal Deep. For the Scripture tells us, *That all*

Gen. 6. 12. *Flesh had corrupted his way upon the Earth, that every Imagination of the thoughts of Mans*

*Mans Heart was only evil continually.*  
 And tho' *Noah's* Family were saved with him in the Ark, yet it may be doubted, whether that were a certain token of their being untoucht by the general Contagion. For that wonderful Vessel contain'd Beasts clean and unclean, harmless and rapacious, and in it were saved *Wolves* as well as *Lambs*, and *Vultures* as well as *Doves*. And where God gives the Reason, why he vouchsafed to receive *Noah* and his House into the Ark, he Expresses it thus; *For thee have I seen Righteous before me in this Generation*, without making mention of any of his Family. Nor, was the Wickedness of the Antediluvian World more Universal than it was Great; that Mungrel breed were guilty of Sins as Gigantic as Themselves. The Text says, *that the Earth was filled with Violence* through them; and those Impious Rebels against their Maker broke the Laws of Nature with an Insolence, that provoked him to break off the course  
 of



of Nature to punish them, since nothing less than an Universal Deluge of Water could place Limits to such an impetuous and over-flowing Impiety. But all these sinful Examples, how general soever, could not prevail on *Noah* so much as to keep him from giving One of a quite contrary Nature; the Scripture calls him an Herald or *Preacher of Righteousness*; and tho' it appears not, that he made any Converts, he persever'd in his rejected Admonitions for Sixscore years, a time long enough to have tired his Patience, especially since he did not any of his Hearers Obstinacy. And his Constancy rais'd him as much above the reach of their Temptations, as the Waters that punished their Sin rais'd his Ark above their drowned Mansions. And now go and compare with any Constancy of the following Times, where Virtue has always had some Party, tho' not a numerous one, this unequal'd Singularity of *Noah*, which God himself seems to have taken special

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notice

Gen. 7. 1. &amp;

notice of, not only by that Patriarchs wonderful Preservation, but by saying Emphatically, *Thee* have I seen Righteous before me in *this Generation*, which was so brutish and depraved, that I know not whether he were not obliged to live among worse Brutes before he finish'd the Ark than afterwards, when in it he was shut up with Lyons, Foxes, and Tygres.

Third Fragment.

Another Virtue, that belongs to a great Mind, is Constancy, or persevering Patience in Afflictions. This Quality hath so Noble an appearance, that when 'tis exercis'd even by Malefactors, it obtains our Esteem; and whilest we cannot so much as excuse their Actions, we cannot but commend the Manner of their suffering for them: Calmness of Mind, in the midst of outward Storms, being something that looks so handsomely, that Crimes and Gibbets cannot keep it from doing so; nor hinder those in whom 'tis found, from

from being both pitied and applauded.

That this part of Greatness of Mind is befriended by the Christian Religion, more than by any other Institution, will appear; if we consider, what it contributes to Constancy and Patience, under outward Pressures and Calamities, by *Precept*, by *Examples*, and by *Arguments*.

## C H A P. V.

**H**UMILITY is a Virtue, that, at Fourth Exag-  
ment. the first blush, seems so distant from Greatness of Mind, that some would think it improper to refer the Former to the Later, under any other Notion, than that of an Opposite. But, whatever may be thought of Humility, solitarily consider'd, yet, when we find it in Conjunction with those other Qualities, that contribute to make up Greatness of Mind, it adds to their Number; and,

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tho'

tho' it does not perhaps shine as bright as some of them, is as amiable as any; and imparts somewhat of its own Loveliness to all the rest. And you will not much wonder, that I place this Virtue among those that Constellate, if I may so speak, an Heroick Mind, if you consider, whence Humility may in such a Soul proceed, and what difficulties it may surmount. For if Wealth, Honour, and other outward Blessings exalt our *Hero's* Condition; to be Humble, in the midst of such Advantages, argues a Mind elevated above the Presents of Fortune, and speaks a Soul Great enough to undervalue those things that ordinary Souls admire; and which even men that pass for Great, make the Objects of their Ambition, and, when attain'd, of their Pride. And if our *Hero* be ennobled with great Virtues, or famous for great Actions; his Humility argues, that he has so rais'd an Idea of Virtue, and dares aspire to such a pitch of it, that he cannot rest satisfy'd with

with greater attainments, than Persons, but ordinarily Virtuouſ, aim at; and looks upon himſelf as oblig'd and born to an unwearied purſuit of Heroick and ſtill increaſing Degrees of Excellency. And if a laudable Practice, by being extremely difficult, is a Mark of a Great Soul, Humility muſt not be deny'd that Character; for This is a Virtue more difficult to Excellent, than to Ordinary, Souls. In other Caſes, a *Hero* is to contend but with his Vices, or his Paſſions, or his open Enemies; but to be Humble, he muſt overcome his Virtues too; and that, when they act unitedly as one Body: Since, tho' other Virtues naturally aſſiſt one another, they all conſpire to ruin Humility; which, having Pride to contend with, is to deal with ſo ſubtle an Adverſary, that ſometimes even by being foil'd he overcomes. And as the *Torpedo* poisons his Arm that wounds it; ſo ſometimes in the beſt Arguments we employ againſt Pride, the very ſtrength and ſeeming ſuc-

cess of them, tempts the Maker of them to be Proud; and I will not swear, that, at this very time, I exalt our *Hero's* Humility, without any Diminution of my Own.

To the attainment of an Eminent degree of this lovely both Vertue, and Grace, the Gospel conduces, by furnishing its Embracers with *Express Injunctions*; clear *Directions*; high *Rewards*, and other weighty Motives; and the Noblest *Paterns* and Perfectest Examples, that ever were, or can be, given.

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The Heads of the Discourse, Entitul'd  
*Greatness of Mind, befriended by  
Christianity.*

The Introduction.

1. **O**F the true Notion of Greatness of Mind.

*Fifth Fragment.*

2. *Of the Tendency, that the Christian Religion has to promote Greatness of Mind in general.*

3. *That Christianity gives Men noble Aims; such as the glory of God, the pleasing of Him, the general Good of Men, Personal Excellencies in this World, and Eternal Happiness in the next.*

*The Virtues or Qualifications, which, as so many constituent Parts, make up Greatness of Mind, and are peculiarly befriended by Christianity; are chiefly These,*

4. *Courage or Valour.*

5. *Constancy and Patience in Afflictions.*

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6. *Bounty*



6. *Bounty or Liberality.*
  7. *Forwardness to oblige.*
  8. *Readiness to forgive.*
  9. *A just and impartial Estimate of Riches, and other Things that Ordinary Men covet and admire.*
  10. *Humility.*
  11. *A Contempt of all that's base.*
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*The End of the First Part.*

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# Greatness of Mind,

PROMOTED BY

# CHRISTIANITY.

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## The Second Part.

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**T**HE former Discourse has, I sixth Fragment.  
hope, sufficiently manifested,  
That, of the several Virtues and No-  
ble Qualities that make up true *Great-*  
*ness of Mind*, there is not any that  
is not at least *consistent with* Christi-  
anity, and that most of them are emi-  
nently *promoted* by it. But I expect  
your

your *Philédonos* will pretend, that there are some Qualities required by our Religion, that directly and powerfully tend to debase the Mind they possess ; and hinder it from attaining, or even aspiring, to such great Things as it would reach to, if it were not detain'd or depress'd by Religion. Let us now therefore examin, Whether, notwithstanding, the Wings which we have shewn that Religion adds to the Mind, the Cloggs that it fastens to her, be heavy enough to disable her to raise her self above the pitch of Vulgar Souls ; and force her, instead of soaring aloft, to flutter about the Earth.

The chief Things, that, as far as I can learn, are alleged, either by *Philédonus*, or more considering Adversaries than he ; to shew Religion to be either quite Inconsistent with, or very Unfriendly to, *Greatness of Mind*, are these.—

*But, in regard that I find not the Answers that were drawn up to the Objections ; and 'tis not so convenient to let*

*let the Later appear unaccompany'd by the Former, 'tis thought the safest Way to leave them both at present unmentioned; and only take notice, that to the Last of the Six Objections, which, to deal candidly, were named and considered, these words were found subjoyned.*

And now, if it appear, that neither any nor all of these, have such an unfriendly Aspect on Greatness of Mind, as is pretended; and that at least the Impediments, they can bring, are much more than countervail'd by the Assistances that Religion affords Heroick Virtue; I hope it will appear, that Greatness of Mind is not incompatible with Christianity, but rather promoted by it.

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FINIS.

*[Faint, illegible text, possibly bleed-through from the reverse side of the page]*













