

3279
SOME
PASSAGES

OF THE
Life and Death

Of the Right Honourable

JOHN

Earl of *ROCHESTER*,
Who died the 26th of *July*, 1680.

Written by his own Direction on his Death-Bed,
By *Gilbert Burnet*, D. D.

LONDON,

Printed for *Richard Chiswel*, at the
Rose and Crown in *St. Pauls Church-*
Yard. 1680.



R. White sculp.

*The R^{gt} Hon^{ble} John
Baron Wilmot
England, & Viscount
in Ireland. Born. 4th 1648*



*Earle of Rochester
of Alderbury in
Wilmot of Atholue
Died. 26. July. 1680.*

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THE
PREFACE.

THE Celebrating the Praises of the Dead, is an Argument so worn out by long and frequent use; and now become so nauseous, by the flattery that usually attends it, that it is no wonder if Funeral Orations, or Panegiricks, are more considered for the Elegancy of Style, and sineness of Wit, than for the Authority they carry with them as to the truth of matters of Fact. And yet I am not hereby deterred from meddling with this kind of Argument, nor from

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handling it with all the plainness I can: delivering only what I my self heard and saw, without any borrowed Ornament. I do easily foresee how many will be engaged for the support of their Impious Maxims and Immoral Practices, to disparage what I am to write. Others will censure it, because it comes from one of my Profession, too many supposing us to be induced, to frame such Discourses for carrying on what they are pleased to call Our Trade. Some will think I dress it up too artificially, and others, that I present it too plain and naked.

But being resolved to govern my self by the exact Rules of Truth; I shall be less concerned in the Censures I may fall under. It may seem liable to great Ex-ception,

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ception, that I should disclose so many things, that were discovered to me, if not under the Seat of Confession, yet under the confidence of Friendship; But this Noble Lord himself not only released me from all obligation of this kind, when I waited on him in his last Sickness, a few days before he died, but gave it me in Charge not to spare him in any thing which I thought might be of use to the Living; and was not ill pleased to be laid open, as well in the worst as in the best and last part of his life, being so sincere in his Repentance, that he was not unwilling to take shame to himself, by suffering his Faults to be exposed for the benefit of others.

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*I write with one great disadvantage, that I cannot reach his chief Design, without mentioning some of his Faults: But I have touched them as tenderly as the Occasion would bear: and I am sure with much more softness than he desired, or would have consented unto, had I told him how I intended to manage this part. I have related nothing with personal reflections on any others, concerned with him, wishing rather that they themselves reflecting on the sense he had of his former Disorders, may be thereby led to forsake their own; than that they should be any ways Reproach'd by what I write: and therefore though he used very few Reserves with me, as to his course of life, yet since others had a share in most parts of it, I shall relate
nothing*

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nothing but what more immediately concerned himself: and shall say no more of his faults, than is necessary to illustrate his Repentance.

*The Occasion that led me into so particular a knowledge of him, was an intimation given me by a Gentleman of his acquaintance, of his desire to see me. This was sometime in October, 1679. when he was slowly recovering out of a great Disease. He had understood that I often attended on one well known to him, that died the Summer before; He was also then entertaining himself in that low state of his health, with the first part of the History of the Reformation then newly come out, with which he seemed not ill pleased: and we had accidentally met in two
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or three places sometime before. These were the Motives that led him to call for my Company. After I had waited on him once or twice, he grew into that freedom with me, as to open to me all his thoughts, both of Religion and Morality: and to give me a full view of his past life: and seemed not uneasy at my frequent Visits. So till he went from London, which was in the beginning of April, I waited on him often. As soon as I heard how ill he was, and how much he was touched with the sense of his former life, I writ to him, and received from him an Answer, that, without my knowledge, was printed since his Death; from a Copy which one of his Servants conveyed to the Presse. In it there is so undeserved a Value
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put on me, that it had been very indecent for me to have published it: Yet that must be attributed to his Civility and way of breeding: and indeed he was particularly known to so few of the Clergy, that the good Opinion he had of me, is to be imputed only to his unacquaintance with others.

My end of Writing is so to discharge the last Commands this Lord left on me, as that it may be effectual to awaken those who run on to all the excesses of Riot; and that in the midst of those heats, which their Lusts and Passions raise in them, they may be a little wrought on by so great an Instance, of One who had run round the whole Circle of Luxury; and as So-
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lomon *says of himself*, Whatsoever his Eyes desired, he kept it not from them; and withheld his Heart from no Joy. But when he looked back on all that on which he had wasted his Time and Strength, he esteemed it Vanity and Vexation of Spirit: though he had both as much natural Wit, and as much acquired by Learning, and both as much improved with thinking and study, as perhaps any Libertine of the Age. Yet when he reflected on all his former Courses, even before his Mind was illuminated with better thoughts, he counted them madness and folly. But when the Powers of Religion came to operate on him, then he added a detestation to the Contempt
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he formerly had of them, suitable to what became a sincere Penitent, and expressed himself in so clear and so calm a manner, so sensible of his Failings towards his Maker and his Redeemer, that as it wrought not a little on those that were about him; So, I hope, the making it Publick may have a more general Influence, chiefly on those on whom his former Conversation might have had ill Effects.

I have endeavoured to give his Character as fully as I could take it: for I who saw him only in one light, in a sedate and quiet temper, when he was under a great decay of Strength and loss of Spirits, cannot give his Picture with that life and
advantage

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advantage that others may, who knew him when his Parts were more bright and lively: Yet the Composure he was then in, may perhaps be supposed to ballance any abatement of his usual Vigour which the declination of his Health brought him under. I have written this Discourse with as much Care, and have considered it as narrowly as I could. I am sure I have said nothing but Truth; I have done it slowly, and often used my second thoughts in it, not being so much concerned in the Censures might fall on my self, as Cautious that nothing should pass, that might obstruct my only design of writing, which is the doing what I can towards the reforming a loose and lewd Age. And if such a Signal Instance

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Instance concurring with all the Evidence that we have for our most holy Faith, has no effect on those who are running the same Course, it is much to be feared they are given up to a reprobate sense.

SOME

Errata.

P Age 15. line 14. for *too* read *to*, p. 27.
l. 16. 17. dele *had a Stage*, and p. 108.
l. 18. from r. upon.

(Corrected.)

SOME PASSAGES OF THE Life and Death OF JOHN Earl of Rochester.

John Wilmot Earl of Rochester
was born in *April*, Anno
Dom. 1648. his Father was
Henry Earl of Rochester, but best
known by the Title of the Lord
B Wilmot,

Wilmot, who bore so great a part in all the late Wars, that mention is often made of him in the History: And had the chief share in the Honour of the preservation of his Majesty that now Reigns, after *Worcester* Fight, and the Conveying him from Place to Place, till he happily escaped into *France*: But dying before the King's Return, he left his Son little other Inheritance, but the Honour and Title derived to him, with the pretensions such eminent Services gave him to the Kings favour: These were carefully managed by the great prudence and discretion of his Mother, a Daughter of that Noble and ancient Family of the *St. Johns* of *Wiltshire*, so that his Education was carried

carried on in all things suitably to his Quality.

When he was at School he was an extraordinary Proficient at his Book: and those shining parts which have since appeared with so much lustre; began then to shew themselves: He acquired the *Latin* to such perfection, that to his dying-day he retained a great relish of the fineness and Beauty of that Tongue: and was exactly versed in the incomparable Authors that writ about *Augustus's* time, whom he read often with that peculiar delight which the greatest Wits have ever found in those Studies.

When he went to the *University* the general Joy which over-ran the whole Nation upon his Majesties Restauration,

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but was not regulated with that Sobriety and Temperance, that became a serious gratitude to God for so great a Blessing, produced some of it's ill effects on him: He began to love these disorders too much; His Tutor was that Eminent and Pious Divine Dr. *Blanford*, afterwards promoted to the Sees of *Oxford* and *Worcester*: And under his Inspection, he was committed to the more immediate care of Mr. *Phineas Berry*, a Fellow of *Wadham-Colledge*, a very learned and good natured man; whom he afterwards ever used with much respect, and rewarded him as became a great man. But the humour of that time wrought so much on him, that he broke off the Course of his Studies; to which no means could

could ever effectually recall him; till when he was in *Italy* his Governor Dr. *Balfour* a learned and worthy man, now a Celebrated Physitian in *Scotland* his Native Country; drew him to read such Books, as were most likely to bring him back to love Learning and Study: and he often acknowledged to me, in particular three days before his Death, how much he was obliged to Love and Honour this his Governour, to whom he thought he owed more than to all the World, next after his Parents, for his great Fidelity and Care of him, while he was under his trust. But no part of it affected him more sensibly, than that he engaged him by many tricks (so he expressed it) to delight in

Books and reading ; So that ever after he took occasion in the Intervals of those woful Extravagancies that consumed most of his time to read much : and though the time was generally but indifferently employed, for the choice of the Subjects of his Studies was not always good , yet the habitual Love of Knowledge together with these fits of study , had much awakened his Understanding, and prepared him for better things, when his mind should be so far changed as to relish them.

He came from his Travels in the 18th Year of his Age, and appeared at Court with as great Advantages as most ever had. He was a Graceful and well shaped Person , tall and well
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made, if not a little too slender : He was exactly well bred, and what by a modest behaviour natural to him, what by a Civility become almost as natural, his Conversation was easie and obliging. He had a strange Vivacity of thought, and vigour of expression : His Wit had a subtilty and sublimity both, that were scarce imitable. His Style was clear and strong : When he used Figures they were very lively, and yet far enough out of the Common Road : he had made himself Master of the Ancient and Modern Wit, and of the Modern *French* and *Italian* as well as the *English*. He loved to talk and write of Speculative Matters, and did it with so fine a thread, that even those who hated the Subjects

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that his Fancy ran upon, yet could not but be charmed with his way of treating of them. *Boileau* among the *French*, and *Cowley* among the *English* Wits, were those he admired most. Sometimes other mens thoughts mixed with his Composures, but that flowed rather from the Impressions they made on him when he read them, by which they came to return upon him as his own thoughts; than that he servilely copied from any. For few men ever had a bolder flight of fancy, more steddily governed by Judgment than he had. No wonder a young man so made, and so improved was very acceptable in a Court.

Soon after his coming thither he laid hold on the first Occasion that offered to shew his readi-
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ness to hazard his life in the Defence and Service of his Country. In *Winter* 1665. he went with the Earl of *Sandwich* to Sea, when he was sent to lie for the *Dutch East-India Fleet*; and was in the *Revenge*, Commanded by Sir *Thomas Tiddiman*, when the Attack was made on the Port of *Bergen* in *Norway*, the *Dutch* Ships having got into that Port. It was as desperate an Attempt as ever was made: during the whole Action, the Earl of *Rochester* shewed as brave and as resolute a Courage as was possible: A Person of Honour told me he heard the Lord *Clifford*, who was in the same Ship, often magnifie his Courage at that time very highly. Nor did the Rigours of the Season, the
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hardness of the Voyage, and the extream danger he had been in, deter him from running the like on the very next Occasion; For the *Summer* following he went to Sea again, without communicating his design to his nearest Relations. He went aboard the Ship Commanded by Sir *Edward Spragge* the day before the great Sea-fight of that Year: Almost all the Volunteers that were in the same Ship were killed. Mr. *Middleton* (brother to Sir *Hugh Middleton*) was shot in his Arms. During the Action, Sir *Edward Spragge* not being satisfied with the behaviour of one of the Captains, could not easily find a Person that would chearfully venture through so much danger, to carry his Commands to that

Captain

Captain. This Lord offered himself to the Service; and went in a little Boat, through all the shot, and delivered his Message, and returned back to Sir *Edward*: which was much commended by all that saw it. He thought it necessary to begin his life with these Demonstrations of his Courage in an Element and way of fighting, which is acknowledged to be the greatest trial of clear and undaunted Valour.

He had so entirely laid down the Intemperance that was growing on him before his Travels, that at his Return he hated nothing more. But falling into Company that loved these Excesses, he was, though not without difficulty, and by many steps, brought back to it again.

again. And the natural heat of his fancy, being inflamed by Wine, made him so extravagantly pleasant, that many to be more diverted by that humor, studied to engage him deeper and deeper in Intemperance: which at length did so entirely subdue him; that, as he told me, for five years together he was continually Drunk: not all the while under the visible effect of it, but his blood was so inflamed, that he was not in all that time cool enough to be perfectly Master of himself. This led him to say and do many wild and unaccountable things: By this, he said, he had broke the firm constitution of his Health, that seemed so strong, that nothing was too hard for it; and he had suffered
so

so much in his Reputation, that he almost dispaired to recover it. There were two Principles in his natural temper, that being heighten'd by that heat carried him to great excesses: a violent love of Pleasure, and a disposition to extravagant Mirth. The one involved him in great sensuality: the other led him to many odd Adventures and Frolicks, in which he was oft in hazard of his life. The one being the same irregular appetite in his Mind, that the other was in his Body, which made him think nothing diverting that was not extravagant. And though in cold blood he was a generous and good natured man, yet he would go far in his heats, after any thing that might turn to a Jest or matter
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of Diversion: He said to me, He never improved his Interest at Court, to do a premeditate Mischief to other persons. Yet he laid out his Wit very freely in *Libels* and *Satyrs*, in which he had a peculiar Talent of mixing his Wit with his Malice, and fitting both with such apt words, that Men were tempted to be pleased with them: from thence his Composures came to be easily known, for few had such a way of tempering these together as he had; So that when any thing extraordinary that way came out, as a Child is fathered sometimes by its Resemblance, so was it laid at his Door as its Parent and Author.

These Exercises in the course of his life were not always
equally

equally pleasant to him; he had often sad Intervals and severe Reflections on them: and though then he had not these awakened in him from any deep Principle of Religion, yet the horror that Nature raised in him, especially in some Sicknesses, made him too easie to receive some ill Principles, which others endeavoured to possess him with; so that he was too soon brought to set himself too secure, and fortifie his Mind against that, by dispossessing it all he could of the belief or apprehensions of Religion. The Licentiousness of his temper, with the briskness of his Wit, disposed him to love the Conversation of those who divided their time between lewd Actions and irregular Mirth.

Mirth. And so he came to bend his Wit, and direct his Studies and Endeavours to support and strengthen these ill Principles both in himself and others.

An accident fell out after this, which confirmed him more in these Courses: when he went to Sea in the Year 1665, there happened to be in the same Ship with him Mr. *Mountague* and another Gentleman of Quality, these two, the former especially, seemed perswaded that they should never return into *England*. Mr. *Mountague* said, He was sure of it: the other was not so positive. The Earl of *Rochester*, and the last of these, entred into a formal Engagement, not without Ceremonies of Religion, that if
either

either of them died, he should appear, and give the other notice of the future State, if there was any. But Mr. *Mountague* would not enter into the Bond. When the day came that they thought to have taken the *Dutch-Fleet* in the Port of *Bergen*. Mr. *Mountague* though he had such a strong Prefage in his Mind of his approaching death, yet he generously staid all the while in the place of greatest danger: The other Gentleman signalized his Courage in a most undaunted manner, till near the end of the Action; when he fell on a sudden into such a trembling that he could scarce stand: and Mr. *Mountague* going to him to hold him up, as they were in each others Arms, a Can-
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non Ball killed him outright, and carried away Mr. *Mountague's* Belly, so that he died within an hour after. The Earl of *Rochester* told me that these presages they had in their minds made some impression on him, that there were separated Beings: and that the Soul either by a natural sagacity, or some secret Notice communicated to it, had a sort of Divination: But that Gentlemans never appearing was a great snare to him, during the rest of his life. Though when he told me this, he could not but acknowledge, it was an unreasonable thing for him, to think that Beings in another State were not under such Laws and Limits, that they could not command their own motions,

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but as the Supream Power should order them: and that one who had so corrupted the Natural Principles of Truth, as he had, had no reason to expect that such an extraordinary thing should be done for his Conviction.

He told me of another odd Prefage that one had of his approaching Death in the Lady *Warre*, his Mother in Laws house: The Chaplain had dream't that such a day he should die, but being by all the Family put out of the belief of it, he had almost forgot it: till the Evening before at Supper, there being Thirteen at Table; according to a fond conceit that one of these must soon die, One of the young Ladies pointed to him, that he was to

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die. He remembring his Dream fell into some disorder, and the Lady *Warre* reproving him for his Superstition, he said, He was confident he was to die before Morning, but he being in perfect health, it was not much minded. It was *Saturday-Night*, and he was to Preach next day. He went to his Chamber and fate up late, as appeared by the burning of his Candle, and he had been preparing his Notes for his Sermon, but was found dead in his Bed the next Morning: These things he said made him inclined to believe, the Soul was a substance distinct from matter: and this often returned into his thoughts. But that which perfected his perswasion about it, was, that in the Sicknes which

which brought him so near death before I first knew him, when his Spirits were so low and spent, that he could not move nor stir, and he did not think to live an hour; He said, His Reason and Judgment were so clear and strong, that from thence he was fully perswaded that Death was not the spending or dissolution of the Soul; but only the separation of it from matter. He had in that Sicknes great Remorses for his past Life, but he afterwards told me, They were rather general and dark Horrours, than any Convictions of sinning against God. He was sorry he had lived so as to waste his strength so soon, or that he had brought such an ill name upon himself, and had an Agony in

his Mind about it, which he knew not well how to express: But at such times, though he complied with his Friends in suffering Divines to be sent for, he said, He had no great mind to it: and that it was but a piece of his breeding, to desire them to pray by him, in which he joyned little himself.

As to the Supream Being, he had always some Impression of one: and professed often to me, That he had never known an entire *Atheist*, who fully believed there was no God. Yet when he explained his Notion of this Being, it amounted to no more than a vast power, that had none of the Attributes of Goodness or Justice, we ascribe to the Deity: These were his thoughts about Religion,

gion, as himself told me. For Morality, he freely own'd to me, that though he talked of it, as a fine thing, yet this was only because he thought it a decent way of speaking, and that as they went always in Cloaths, though in their Frolicks they would have chosen sometimes to have gone naked, if they had not feared the people: So though some of them found it necessary for humane life to talk of Morality, yet he confessed they cared not for it, further then the reputation of it was necessary for their credit, and affairs: of which he gave me many Instances, as their professing and swearing Friendship, where they hated mortally; their Oaths and Imprecations in their Addresses to Wo-

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men, which they intended never to make good; the pleasure they took in defaming innocent Persons, and spreading false Reports of some, perhaps in Revenge, because they could not engage them to comply with their ill Designs: The delight they had in making people quarrel; their unjust usage of their Creditors, and putting them off by any deceitful Promise they could invent, that might deliver them from present Importunity. So that in detestation of these Courses he would often break forth into such hard Expressions concerning himself as would be indecent for another to repeat.

Such had been his Principles and Practices in a Course of many years which had almost
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quite extinguish't the natural Propensities in him to Justice and Vertue: He would often go into the Country, and be for some months wholly employed in Study, or the Sallies of his Wit: Which he came to direct chiefly to *Satyre*. And this he often defended to me; by saying there were some people that could not be kept in Order, or admonished but in this way. I replied, That it might be granted that a grave way of *Satyre* was sometimes no improfitable way of Reproof. Yet they who used it only out of spite, and mixed Lyes with Truth, sparing nothing that might adorn their *Poems*, or gratifie their Revenge, could not excuse that way of Reproach, by which
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the Innocent often suffer: since the most malicious things, if wittily expressed, might stick to and blemish the best men in the World, and the malice of a Libel could hardly consist with the Charity of an Admonition. To this he answered, A man could not write with life, unless he were heated by Revenge: For to make a *Satyre* without Resentments, upon the cold Notions of *Phylosophy*, was as if a man would in cold blood, cut mens throats who had never offended him: And he said, The lyes in these Libels came often in as Ornaments that could not be spared without spoiling the beauty of the *Poem*.

For his other Studies, they were divided between the Comical

mical and witty Writings of the Ancients and Moderns, the *Roman* Authors, and Books of *Physick*: which the ill state of health he was fallen into, made more necessary to himself: and which qualif'd him for an odd adventure, which I shall but just mention. Being under an unlucky Accident, which obliged him to keep out of the way; He disguised himself, so that his nearest Friends could not have known him, and set up in *Tower-street* for an *Italian Mountebank*, where he ~~had~~ ~~a Stage, and~~ practised *Physick* for some Weeks not without success. In his later years, he read Books of History more. He took pleasure to disguise himself, as a *Porter*, or as a *Beggar*; sometimes to follow
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some mean Amours, which, for the variety of them, he affected; At other times, meerly for diversion, he would go about in odd shapes, in which he acted his part so naturally, that even those who were on the secret, and saw him in these shapes, could perceive nothing by which he might be discovered.

I have now made the Description of his former Life, and Principles, as fully as I thought necessary, to answer my End in Writing: And yet with those reserves, that I hope I have given no just cause of offence to any. I have said nothing but what I had from his own mouth, and have avoided the mentioning of the more particular Passages of his life,

life, of which he told me not a few: But since others were concerned in them, whose good only I design, I will say nothing that may either provoke or blemish them. It is their Reformation, and not their Disgrace, I desire: This tender consideration of others has made me suppress many remarkable and useful things, he told me: But finding that though I should name none, yet I must at least Relate such Circumstances, as would give too great Occasion for the *Reader* to conjecture concerning the Persons intended, right or wrong, either of which were inconvenient enough, I have chosen to pass them quite over. But I hope those that know how much they were engaged

engaged with him in his ill Courses, will be somewhat touched with this tenderness I express towards them: and be thereby the rather induced to reflect on their Ways, and to consider without prejudice or passion what sense this Noble Lord had of their case, when he came at last seriously to reflect upon his own.

I now turn to those parts of this *Narrative*, wherein I myself bore some share, and which I am to deliver upon the Observations I made, after a long and free Conversation with him for some months. I was not long in his Company, when he told me, He should treat me with more freedom than he had ever used to men of my Profession. He would conceal

ceal none of his Principles from me, but lay his thoughts open without any Disguise; nor would he do it to maintain Debate, or shew his Wit, but plainly tell me what stuck with him; and protested to me, That he was not so engaged to his old Maxims, as to resolve not to change, but that if he could be convinc'd, he would choose rather to be of another mind; He said, He would impartially Weigh what I should lay before him, and tell me freely when it did convince him, and when it did not. He expressed this disposition of mind to me in a manner so frank, that I could not but believe him, and be much taken with his way of Discourse: So we entred into almost all the parts of Natural
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and Revealed Religion, and of Morality. He seemed pleased, and in a great measure satisfied, with what I said upon many of these Heads: And though our freest Conversation was when we were alone, yet upon several Occasions, other persons were Witnesses to it. I understood from many hands that my Company was not distastful to him, and that the Subjects about which we talked most were not unacceptable: and he expressed himself often, not ill pleased with many things I said to him, and particularly when I visited him in his last Sickness, so that I hope it may not be altogether unprofitable to publish the substance of those matters about which We argued so freely, with our reasoning upon them:

them: And perhaps what had some effects on him, may be not altogether ineffectual upon others. I followed him with such Arguments as I saw were most likely to prevail with him: and my not urging other Reasons, proceeded not from any distrust I had of their force, but from the necessity of using those that were most proper for him. He was then in a low state of health, and seemed to be slowly recovering of a great Disease: He was in the Milk-Diet, and apt to fall into Hectical-Fits; any accident weakened him; so that he thought he could not live long; And when he went from *London*, he said, He believed he should never come to Town more. Yet during his being in Town

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he was so well, that he went often abroad, and had great Vivacity of Spirit. So that he was under no such decay, as either darkened or weakened his Understanding; Nor was he any way troubled with the Spleen, or Vapours, or under the power of Melancholy. What he was then, compared to what he had been formerly, I could not so well judge, who had seen him but twice before. Others have told me they perceived no difference in his parts. This I mention more particularly, that it may not be thought that Melancholy, or the want of Spirits, made him more inclined to receive any Impressions: for indeed I never discovered any such thing in him.

Having

Having thus opened the way to the Heads of our Discourse, I shall next mention them. The three chief things We talked about, were *Morality*, *Natural Religion* and *Revealed Religion*, *Christianity* in particular. For *Morality*, he confessed, He saw the necessity of it, both for the Government of the World, and for the preservation of Health, Life and Friendship: and was very much ashamed of his former Practices, rather because he had made himself a Beast, and had brought pain and sickness on his Body, and had suffered much in his Reputation, than from any deep sense of a Supreme being, or another State: But so far this went with him, that he resolved firmly to change the Course of

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his Life; which he thought he should effect by the study of *Philosophy*, and had not a few no less solid than pleasant Notions concerning the folly and madness of Vice: but he confessed he had no remorse for his past Actions, as Offences against God, but only as Injuries to himself and to Mankind.

Upon this Subject I shewed him the Defects of *Philosophy*, for reforming the World: That it was a matter of Speculation, which but few either had the leisure, or the capacity to enquire into. But the Principle that must reform Mankind, must be obvious to every Mans Understanding. That *Philosophy* in matters of Morality, beyond the great lines of our Duty, had no very certain fixed Rule,

Rule, but in the lesser Offices and Instances of our Duty went much by the Fancies of Men, and Customs of Nations; and consequently could not have Authority enough to bear down the Propensities of Nature, Appetite or Passion: For which I instanced in these two Points; The *One* was, About that *Maxim* of the *Stoicks*, to extirpate all sort of Passion and concern for any thing. That, take it by one hand, seemed desirable, because if it could be accomplish'd, it would make all the accidents of life easie; but I think it cannot, because Nature after all our striving against it, will still return to it self: Yet on the other hand it dissolved the Bonds of Nature and Friendship, and slackened Industry

dustry which will move but dully, without an inward heat: And if it delivered a man from many Troubles, it deprived him of the chief pleasures of Life, which rise from Friendship. The *other* was concerning the restraint of pleasure, how far that was to go. Upon this he told me the two *Maxims* of his *Morality* then were, that he should do nothing to the hurt of any other, or that might prejudice his own health: And he thought that all pleasure, when it did not interfere with these, was to be indulged as the gratification of our natural Appetites. It seemed unreasonable to imagine these were put into a man only to be restrained, or curbed to such a narrowness: This he applied to the free

free use of Wine and Women.

To this I answered, That if Appetites being Natural, was an Argument for the indulging them, then the revengeful might as well alledge it for Murder, and the Covetous for stealing; whose Appetites are no less keen on those Objects; and yet it is acknowledg'd that these Appetites ought to be curb'd. If the difference is urged from the Injury that another Person receives, the Injury is as great, if a Mans Wife is defiled, or his Daughter corrupted: and it is impossible for a man to let his Appetites loose to Vagrant Lusts, and not to transgress in these particulars: So there was no curing the Disorders, that must rise from

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thence, but by regulating these Appetites: And why should we not as well think that God intended our brutish and sensual Appetites should be governed by our Reason, as that the fierceness of Beasts should be managed and tamed, by the Wisdom, and for the use of Man? So that it is no real absurdity to grant that Appetites were put into Men, on purpose to exercise their Reason in the Restraint and Government of them: which to be able to do, Ministers a higher and more lasting pleasure to a Man, than to give them their full scope and range. And if other Rules of *Philosophy* be observed, such as the avoiding those Objects that stir Passion; Nothing raises higher Passions than ungovern'd

vern'd Lust, nothing darkens the Understanding, and depresses a mans mind more, nor is any thing managed with more frequent Returns of other Immoralities, such as Oaths and Imprecations which are only intended to compass what is desired: The expence that is necessary to maintain these Irregularities makes a man false in his other dealings. All this he freely confessed was true, Upon which I urged, that if it was reasonable for a man to regulate his Appetite in things which he knew were hurtful to him; Was it not as reasonable for God to prescribe a Regulating of those Appetites, whose unrestrained Course did produce such mischievous effects. That it could not be denied, but

but doing to others what we would have others do unto us, was a just Rule: Those men then that knew how extream sensible they themselves would be of the dishonour of their Families in the case of their Wives or Daughters, must needs condemn themselves, for doing that which they could not bear from another: And if the peace of Mankind, and the entire satisfaction of our whole life, ought to be one of the chief measures of our Actions, then let all the World judge, Whether a Man that confines his Appetite, and lives contented at home, is not much happier, than those that let their Desires run after forbidden Objects. The thing being granted to be better in it self, than the question falls

falls between the restraint of Appetite in some Instances, and the freedom of a mans thoughts, the soundness of his health, his application to Affairs, with the easiness of his whole life. Whether the one is not to be done before the other? As to the difficulty of such a restraint, though it is not easie to be done, when a man allows himself many liberties, in which it is not possible to stop; Yet those who avoid the Occasions that may kindle these impure Flames, and keep themselves well employed, find the Victory and Dominion over them no such impossible, or hard matter, as may seem at first view. So that though the *Philosophy* and *Morality* of this Point were plain; Yet there is
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not strength enough in that Principle to subdue Nature, and Appetite. Upon this I urged, that *Morality* could not be a strong thing, unless a man were determined by a Law within himself: for if he only measured himself by Decency, or the Laws of the Land, this would teach him only to use such caution in his ill Practices, that they should not break out too visibly: but would never carry him to an inward and universal probity: That Virtue was of so complicated a Nature, that unless a man came entirely within its discipline, he could not adhere stedfastly to any one Precept: for Vices are often made necessary supports to one another. That this cannot be done, either steddily, or with any satisfaction,

faction, unless the Mind does inwardly comply with, and delight in the Dictates of Virtue. And that could not be effected, except a mans nature were internally regenerated, and changed by a higher Principle: Till that came about, corrupt Nature would be strong, and *Philosophy* but feeble: especially when it strugled with such Appetites or Passions as were much kindled, or deeply rooted in the Constitution of ones Body. This, he said, sounded to him like *Enthusiasme*, or *Canting*: He had no notion of it, and so could not understand it: He comprehended the Dictates of *Reason* and *Philosophy*, in which as the Mind became much conversant, there would soon follow as he believed, a greater easiness

easiness in obeying its precepts : I told him on the other hand, that all his Speculations of *Philosophy* would not serve him in any stead, to the reforming of his Nature and Life, till he applied himself to God for inward assistances. It was certain, that the Impressions made in his Reason governed him, as they were lively presented to him : but these are so apt to slip out of our Memory, and we so apt 'to turn our thoughts from them, and at some times the contrary Impressions are so strong, that let a man set up a reasoning in his Mind against them, he finds that Celebrated saying of the Poet,

Video

*Video meliora proboq; deteriora,
sequor.*

*I see what is better and approve
it : but follow what is worse.*

to be all that *Philosophy* will amount to. Whereas those who upon such Occasions apply themselves to God, by earnest Prayer, feel a disengagement from such Impressions, and themselves endued with a power to resist them. So that those bonds which formerly held them, fall off.

This he said must be the effect of a heat in Nature : it was only the strong diversion of the thoughts, that gave the seeming Victory, and he did not doubt but if one could turn

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to a *Problem* in *Euclid*, or to Write a Copy of Verses, it would have the same effect. To this I answered, That if such Methods did only divert the thoughts, there might be some force in what he said: but if they not only drove out such Inclinations, but begat Impressions contrary to them, and brought men into a new disposition and habit of mind; then he must confess there was somewhat more than a diversion, in these changes, which were brought on our minds by true Devotion. I added, that Reason and Experience were the things that determined our persuasions: that Experience without Reason may be thought the delusion of our Fancy, so Reason without Experience

perience had not so convincing an Operation: But these two meeting together, must needs give a man all the satisfaction he can desire. He could not say, It was unreasonable to believe that the Supreme Being might make some thoughts stir in our Minds with more or less force, as it pleased: Especially the force of these motions, being, for most part, according to the Impression that was made on our Brains: which that power that directed the whole frame of Nature, could make grow deeper as it pleased. It was also reasonable to suppose God a Being of such goodness that he would give his assistance to such as desired it: For though he might upon some greater Occasions in an

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extraordinary manner turn some peoples minds; Yet since he had endued Man with a faculty of Reason, it is fit that men should employ that, as far as they could; and beg his assistance: which certainly they can do. All this seemed reasonable, and at least probable. Now good men who felt upon their frequent Applications to God in prayer, a freedom from those ill Impressions, that formerly subdued them, an inward love to Vertue and true Goodness, an easiness and delight in all the parts of Holiness, which was fed and cherished in them by a seriousness in Prayer, and did languish as that went off, had as real a perception of an inward strength in their Minds, that did rise and fall with true

Devo-

Devotion, as they perceived the strength of their Bodies increased or abated, according as they had or wanted good nourishment.

After many Discourses upon this Subject, he still continued to think all was the effect of Fancy: He said, That he understood nothing of it, but acknowledged that he thought they were very happy whose Fancies were under the power of such Impressions; since they had somewhat on which their thoughts rested and centred: But when I saw him in his last Sickness, he then told me, He had another sense of what we had talked concerning prayer and inward assistances.

This Subject led us to discourse of God, and of the

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Notion of Religion in general. He believed there was a Supreme Being: He could not think the World was made by chance, and the regular Course of Nature seemed to demonstrate the Eternal Power of its Author. This, he said, he could never shake off; but when he came to explain his Notion of the Deity, he said, He looked on it as a vast Power that wrought every thing by the necessity of its Nature: and thought that God had none of those Affections of Love or Hatred, which breed perturbation in us, and by consequence he could not see that there was to be either reward or punishment. He thought our Conceptions of God were so low, that we had better not
think

think much of him: And to love God seemed to him a presumptuous thing, and the heat of fanciful men. Therefore he believed there should be no other Religious Worship, but a general Celebration of that Being, in some short Hymn: All the other parts of Worship he esteemed the Inventions of Priests, to make the World believe they had a Secret of Incensing and Appeasing God as they pleased. In a word, he was neither persuaded that there was a special Providence about humane Affairs; Nor that Prayers were of much use, since that was to look on God as a weak Being, that would be overcome with Importunities. And for the state after death, though he thought the Soul

did not dissolve at death; Yet he doubted much of Rewards or Punishments: the one he thought too high for us to attain, by our slight Services; and the other was too extream to be inflicted for Sin. This was the substance of his Speculations about God and Religion.

I told him his Notion of God was so low, that the Supreme Being seemed to be nothing but Nature. For if that being had no freedom, nor choice of its own Actions, nor operated by Wisdom or Goodness, all those Reasons which lead him to acknowledge a God, were contrary to this Conceit; for if the Order of the Universe perswaded him to think there was a God, He must at the same time

time conceive him to be both Wise and Good, as well as powerful, since these all appear'd equally in the Creation: though his Wisdom and Goodness had ways of exerting themselves, that were far beyond our Notions or Measures. If God was Wise and Good, he would naturally love, and be pleased with those that resembled him in these Perfections, and dislike those that were opposite to him. Every Rational Being naturally loves it self, and is delighted in others like it self, and is averse from what is not so. Truth is a Rational Nature acting in conformity to it self in all things, and Goodness is an Inclination to promote the happiness of other Beings: So Truth and

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Goodness were the essential perfections of every reasonable Being, and certainly most eminently in the Deity: nor does his Mercy or Love raise Passion or Perturbation in Him; for we feel that to be a weakness in our selves, which indeed only flows from our want of power, or skill to do what we wish or desire: It is also reasonable to believe God would assist the Endeavours of the Good, with some helps suitable to their Nature. And that it could not be imagined, that those who imitated him, should not be specially favoured by him: and therefore since this did not appear in this State, it was most reasonable to think it should be in another, where the Rewards shall

shall be an admission to a more perfect State of Conformity to God, with the felicity that follows it, and the Punishments should be a total exclusion from him, with all the horreur and darkness that must follow that. These seemed to be the natural Results of such several Courses of life, as well as the Effects of Divine Justice, Rewarding or punishing. For since he believed the Soul had a distinct subsistence, separated from the Body; Upon its dissolution there was no reason to think it passed into a State of utter Oblivion, of what it had been in formerly: but that as the reflections on the good or evil it had done, must raise joy or horreur in it; So those good or ill Dispositions accompany-
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ing the departed Souls, they must either rise up to a higher Perfection, or sink to a more depraved, and miserable State. In this life variety of Affairs and objects do much cool and divert our Minds; and are on the one hand often great temptations to the good, and give the bad some ease in their trouble; but in a State wherein the Soul shall be separated from sensible things, and employed in a more quick and sublime way of Operation, this must very much exalt the Joys and Improvements of the good, and as much heighten the horror and rage of the Wicked. So that it seemed a vain thing to pretend to believe a Supream Being, that is Wise and Good as well as great, and not to think

think a discrimination will be made between the Good and Bad, which, it is manifest, is not fully done in this life.

As for the Government of the World, if We believe the Supream Power made it, there is no reason to think he does not govern it: For all that we can fancy against it, is the distraction which that Infinite Variety of Second Causes, and the care of their Concernments, must give to the first, if it inspects them all. But as among men, those of weaker Capacities are wholly taken up with some one thing, whereas those of more enlarged powers can, without distraction, have many things within their care, as the Eye can at one view receive a great Variety of Objects, in that narrow Compass, without

without confusion; So if we conceive the Divine Understanding to be as far above ours, as his Power of creating and framing the whole Universe, is above our limited activity; We will no more think the Government of the World a distraction to him: and if we have once overcome this prejudice, We shall be ready to acknowledge a Providence directing all Affairs; a care well becoming the Great Creator.

As for Worshipping Him, if we imagine Our Worship is a thing that adds to his happiness, or gives him such a fond Pleasure as weak people have to hear themselves commended; or that our repeated Addresses do overcome Him through our meer Importunity, We have

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certainly very unworthy thoughts of him. The true ends of Worship come within another consideration: which is this, A man is never entirely Reformed, till a new Principle governs his thoughts: Nothing makes that Principle so strong, as deep and frequent Meditations of God; whose Nature though it be far above our Comprehension, yet his Goodness and Wisdom are such Perfections as fall within our Imagination: And he that thinks often of God, and considers him as governing the World, and as ever observing all his Actions, will feel a very sensible effect of such Meditations, as they grow more lively and frequent with him; so the end of Religious Worship either publick
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or private, is to make the Apprehensions of God, have a deeper root and a stronger influence on us. The frequent returns of these are necessary: Lest if we allow of too long intervals between them, these Impressions may grow feeble, and other Suggestions may come in their room: And the Returns of Prayer are not to be considered as Favours extorted by meer Importunity, but as Rewards conferred on men so well disposed, and prepared for them: according to the Promises that God has made, for answering our Prayers: thereby to engage and nourish a devout temper in us, which is the chief root of all true Holiness and Vertue.

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It is true we cannot have suitable Notions of the Divine Essence; as indeed we have no just *Idea* of any Essence whatsoever: Since we commonly consider all things, either by their outward Figure, or by their Effects: and from thence make Inferences what their Nature must be. So though we cannot frame any perfect Image in our Minds of the Divinity, Yet we may from the Discoveries God has made of Himself, form such Conceptions of Him, as may possess our Minds with great Reverence for Him, and beget in us such a Love of those Perfections as to engage us to imitate them. For when we say we love God; the meaning is, We love that Being that is Holy,

Holy, Just, Good, Wise; and infinitely perfect: And loving these Attributes in that Object, will certainly carry us to desire them in our selves. For what ever We love in another, We naturally, according to the degree of our love, endeavour to resemble it. In sum, the Loving and Worshipping God, though they are just and reasonable returns and expressions of the sense we have of his Goodness to us; Yet they are exacted of us not only as a Tribute to God, but as a mean to beget in us a Conformity to his Nature, which is the chief end of pure and undefiled Religion.

If some Men, have at several times, found out Inventions to Corrupt this, and cheat the
World;

World; It is nothing but what occurs in every sort of Employment, to which men betake themselves. *Mountebanks* Corrupt Physick; *Petty-Foggers* have entangled the matters of Property, and all Professions have been vitiated by the Knaveries of a number of their Calling.

With all these Discourses he was not equally satisfied: He seemed convinced that the Impressions of God being much in Mens minds, would be a powerful means to reform the World: and did not seem determined against Providence; But for the next State, he thought it more likely that the Soul began anew, and that her sense of what she had done in this Body, lying in the figures
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that are made in the Brain, as soon as she dislodged, all these perished, and that the Soul went into some other State to begin a new Course. But I said on this Head, That this was at best a conjecture, raised in him by his fancy: for he could give no reason to prove it true; Nor was all the remembrance our Souls had of past things seated in some material figures lodged in the Brain: Though it could not be denied but a great deal of it lay in the Brain. That we have many abstracted Notions and *Idea's* of immaterial things which depends not on bodily Figures: Some Sins, such as Falshood, and ill Nature were seated in the Mind, as Lust and Appetite were in the Body: And as the whole Body

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was the Receptacle of the Soul, and the Eyes and Ears were the Organs of Seeing and Hearing, so was the Brain the Seat of Memory: Yet the power and faculty of Memory, as well as of Seeing and Hearing, lay in the Mind: and so it was no unconceivable thing that either the Soul by its own strength, or by the means of some subtiler Organs, which might be fitted for it in another state, should still remember as well as think. But indeed We know so little of the Nature of our Souls, that it is a vain thing for us to raise an *Hypothesis* out of the conjectures We have about it, or to reject one, because of some difficulties that occur to us; since it is as hard to understand how we remember things now,

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as how We shall do it in another State; only we are sure we do it now, and so we shall be then, when we do it.

When I pressed him with the secret Joys that a good Man felt, particularly as he drew near Death, and the Horrors of ill men especially at that time; He was willing to ascribe it to the Impressions they had from their Education: But he often confessed, that whether the business of Religion was true or not, he thought those who had the persuasions of it, and lived so that they had quiet in their Consciences, and believed God governed the World, and acquiesced in his Providence, and had the hope of an endless blessedness in another State, the happiest men

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in the World: And said, He would give all that he was Master of, to be under those Perswasions, and to have the Supports and Joys that must needs flow from them. I told him the main Root of all Corruptions in Mens Principles was their ill life; Which as it darkened their Minds, and disabled them from discerning better things; so it made it necessary for them to seek out such Opinions as might give them ease from those Clamours, that would otherwise have been raised within them: He did not deny but that after the doing of some things he felt great and severe Challenges within himself; But he said, He felt not these after some others which I would perhaps call far greater

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Sins, than those that affected him more sensibly : This I said, might flow from the Disorders he had cast himself into, which had corrupted his judgment, and vitiated his taste of things ; and by his long continuance in, and frequent repeating of some Immoralities, he had made them so familiar to him, that they were become as it were natural : And then it was no wonder if he had not so exact a sense of what was Good or Evil ; as a Feaverish man cannot judge of Tastes.

He did acknowledge the whole Systeme of Religion, if believed, was a greater foundation of quiet than any other thing whatsoever : for all the quiet he had in his mind, was, that he could not think so good
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a Being as the Deity would make him miserable. I asked if when by the ill course of his life he had brought so many Diseases on his Body, he could blame God for it : or expect that he should deliver him from them by a Miracle. He confessed there was no reason for that : I then urged, that if Sin should cast the mind by a natural Effect, into endless Horrors and Agonies, which being seated in a Being not subject to Death, must last for ever, unless some Miraculous Power interposed, could he accuse God for that which was the effect of his own choice and ill life.

He said, They were happy that believed : for it was not in every mans power.

And upon this we discoursed
F 4 long

long about *Revealed Religion*. He said, He did not understand that business of Inspiration; He believed the Pen-men of the Scriptures had heats and honesty, and so writ: but could not comprehend how God should reveal his Secrets to Mankind. Why was not Man made a Creature more disposed for Religion, and better Illuminated? He could not apprehend how there should be any corruption in the Nature of Man, or a Lapse derived from *Adam*. Gods communicating his Mind to one Man, was the putting it in his power to cheat the World: For Prophecies and Miracles, the World had been always full of strange Stories; for the boldness and cunning of Contrivers meeting with the
Simplicity

Simplicity and Credulity of the People, things were easily received; and being once received passed down without contradiction. The Incoherences of Style in the Scriptures, the odd Transitions, the seeming Contradictions, chiefly about the Order of time, the Cruelties enjoined the *Israelites* in destroying the *Canaanites*, Circumcision, and many other Rites of the *Jewish* Worship; seemed to him insutable to the Divine Nature: And the first three Chapters of *Genesis*, he thought could not be true, unless they were Parables. This was the substance of what he Excepted to *Revealed Religion* in general, and to the *Old Testament* in particular.

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I answerd to all this, that believing a thing upon the testimony of another, in other matters where there was no reason to suspect the testimony, chiefly where it was confirmed by other Circumstances, was not only a reasonable thing, but it was the hinge on which all the Government and Justice in the World depended: Since all Courts of Justice proceed upon the Evidence given by Witnesses; for the use of Writings is but a thing more lately brought into the World. So then if the credibility of the thing, the innocence and disinterestedness of the Witnesses, the number of them, and the publickest Confirmations that could possibly be given, do concur to perswade us of any matter of
Fact,

Fact, it is a vain thing to say, because it is possible for so many men to agree in a Lye, that therefore these have done it. In all other things a man gives his assent when the credibility is strong on the one side, and there appears nothing on the other side to ballance it. So such numbers agreeing in their Testimony to these Miracles; for instance of our Saviours calling *Lazarus* out of the Grave the fourth day after he was buried, and his own rising again after he was certainly dead; If there had been never so many Impositions in the World, no man can with any reasonable colour pretend this was one. We find both by the *Jewish* and *Roman* Writers that lived in that time, that our Saviour was Crucified:
and

and that all his Disciples and Followers believed certainly that he rose again. They believed this upon the Testimony of the Apostles, and of many hundreds who saw it, and died confirming it: They went about to perswade the World of it, with great Zeal, though they knew they were to get nothing by it, but Reproach and Sufferings: and by many wonders which they wrought they confirmed their Testimony. Now to avoid all this, by saying it is possible this might be a Contrivance, and to give no presumption to make it so much as probable, that it was so, is in plain *English* to say, *We are resolved let the Evidence be what it will, We will not believe it.*

He said, If a man says he cannot

not believe, what help is there? for he was not master of his own Belief, and believing was at highest but a probable Opinion. To this I Answered, That if a man will let a wanton conceit possess his fancy against these things, and never consider the Evidence for Religion on the other hand, but reject it upon a slight view of it, he ought not to say he cannot, but he will not believe: and while a man lives an ill course of life, he is not fitly qualified to examine the matter aright. Let him grow calm and vertuous, and upon due application examine things fairly, and then let him pronounce according to his Conscience, if to take it at its lowest, the Reasons on the one hand are not much stronger than

than they are on the other. For I found he was so possessed with the general conceit that a mixture of Knaves and Fools had made all extraordinary things be easily believed, that it carried him away to determine the matter, without so much as looking on the Historical Evidence for the truth of *Christianity*, which he had not enquired into, but had bent all his Wit and Study to the support of the other side. As for that, that believing is at best but an Opinion; if the Evidence be but probable, it is so: but if it be such that it cannot be questioned, it grows as certain as knowledge: For we are no less certain that there is a great Town called *Constantinople*, the Seat of the *Ottoman* Empire, than

than that there is another called *London*. We as little doubt that Queen *Elizabeth* once Reigned, as that King *Charles* now Reigns in *England*. So that believing may be as certain, and as little subject to doubting as seeing or knowing.

There are two sorts of believing. Divine matters; the one is wrought in us by our comparing all the evidences of matter of Fact, for the confirmation of *Revealed Religion*; with the Prophecies in the Scripture; where things were punctually predicted, some Ages before their completion; not in dark and doubtful words, uttered like Oracles, which might bend to any Event: But in plain terms, as the foretelling that *Cyrus* by name should send the

the *Jews* back from the Captivity, after the fixed period of seventy years: The History of the *Syrian* and *Egyptian* Kings so punctually foretold by *Daniel*, and the Prediction of the destruction of *Jerusalem*, with many Circumstances relating to it, made by our *Saviour*; joyning these to the excellent Rule and Design of the Scripture in matters of *Morality*, it is at least as reasonable to believe this as any thing else in the World. Yet such a believing as this, is only a general perswasion in the Mind, which has not that effect, till a man applying himself to the Directions set down in the Scriptures (which upon such Evidence cannot be denied, to be as reasonable, as for a man to follow the Prescriptions of a

learned

learned Physitian, and when the Rules are both good and easie, to submit to them for the recovering of his health) and by following these, finds a power entering within him, that frees him from the slavery of his Appetites and Passions, that exalts his Mind above the accidents of life, and spreads an inward purity in his Heart, from which a serene and calm Joy arises within him: And good men by the efficacy these Methods have upon them, and from the returns of their prayers, and other endeavours, grow assured that these things are true, and answerable to the Promises they find registred in Scripture. All this, he said, might be fancy: But to this I answered, That as it were un-

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reasonable to tell a man that is abroad, and knows he is awake, that perhaps he is in a dream, and in his Bed, and only thinks he is abroad, or that as some go about in their sleep, so he may be asleep still; So good and religious men know, though others may be abused, by their fancies, that they are under no such deception: and find they are neither hot nor *Enthusiastical*, but under the power of calm and clear Principles. All this he said he did not understand, and that it was to assert or beg the thing in Question, which he could not comprehend.

As for the possibility of Revelation, it was a vain thing to deny it: For as God gives us the sense of seeing material

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Objects by our Eyes, and opened in some a capacity of apprehending high and sublime things, of which other men seemed utterly incapable: So it was a weak assertion that God cannot awaken a power in some mens Minds, to apprehend and know some things, in such a manner that others are not capable of it. This is not half so incredible to us as sight is to a blind man, who yet may be convinced there is a strange power of seeing that governs men, of which he finds himself deprived. As for the capacity put into such mens hands to deceive the World, We are at the same time to consider, that besides the probity of their tempers, it cannot be thought but God can so forcibly

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bly bind up a man in some things, that it should not be in his power to deliver them otherwise then as he gives him in Commission: besides the Confirmation of Miracles are a divine Credential to warrant such persons in what they deliver to the World: which cannot be imagined can be joyned to a Lye, since this were to put the Omnipotence of God, to attest that which no honest man will do. For the business of the Fall of Man, and other things of which we cannot perhaps give our selves a perfect account: We who cannot fathom the Secrets of the Council of God, do very unreasonably to take on us to reject an excellent Systeme of good and holy Rules, because we cannot
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fatisfie our selves about some difficulties in them. Common Experience tells us, There is a great disorder in our Natures, which is not easily rectified: All *Philosophers* were sensible of it, and every man that designs to govern himself by Reason, feels the struggle between it and nature: So that it is plain, there is a Lapse of the high powers of the Soul.

But why, said he, could not this be rectified, by some plain Rules given; but men must come and shew a trick to persuade the World they speak to them in the Name of God? I Answered, That Religion being a design to recover and save Mankind, was to be so opened as to awaken and work upon all sorts of people: and generally

rally men of a simplicity of Mind, were those that were the fittest Objects for God to shew his favour to; Therefore it was necessary that Messengers sent from Heaven should appear with such allarming Evidences, as might awaken the World, and prepare them by some astonishing Signs, to listen to the Doctrine they were to deliver. *Philosophy*, that was only a matter of fine Speculation, had few Votaries: And as there was no Authority in it to bind the World to believe its Dictates, so they were only received by some of nobler and refined Natures, who could apply themselves to, and delight in such Notions. But true Religion was to be built on a Foundation, that should carry more weight

weight on it, and to have such Convictions, as might not only reach those who were already disposed to receive them, but rouse up such as without great and sensible excitation would have otherwise slept on in their ill Courses.

Upon this and some such Occasions, I told him, I saw the ill use he made of his Wit, by which he flurred the gravest things with a slight dash of his Fancy: and the pleasure he found in such wanton Expressions, as calling the doing of Miracles, *the shewing of a trick*, did really keep him from examining them, with that care which such things required.

For the *Old Testament*, We are so remote from that time, We have so little knowledge

of the Language in which it was writ, have so imperfect an account of the History of those Ages, know nothing of their Customs, Forms of Speech, and the several Periods they might have, by which they reckoned their time, that it is rather a wonder We should understand so much of it, than that many passages in it should be so dark to us. The chief use it has to us *Christians*, is, that from Writings which the *Jews* acknowledge to be divinely inspired, it is manifest the *Messias* was promised before the destruction of their Temple: which being done long ago; and these Prophecies agreeing to our Saviour, and to no other, Here is a great Confirmation given to the Gospel. But
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though many things in these Books could not be understood by us, who live above 3000 years after the chief of them were written, it is no such extraordinary matter.

For that of the Destruction of the *Canaanites* by the *Israelites*, It is to be considered, that if God had sent a Plague among them all, that could not have been found fault with. If then God had a Right to take away their Lives, without Injustice or Cruelty, he had a Right to appoint others to do it, as well to execute it by a more immediate way: And the taking away people by the Sword, is a much gentler way of dying, than to be smitten with a Plague or a Famine. And for the Children that were Inno-
cent

cent of their Fathers faults, God could in another State make that up to them. So all the difficulty is, Why were the *Israelites* commanded to execute a thing of such Barbarity? But this will not seem so hard, if we consider that this was to be no Precedent, for future times: since they did not do it but upon special Warrant and Commission from Heaven, evidenc'd to all the World by such mighty Miracles as did plainly shew, That they were particularly design'd by God to be the Executioners of his Justice. And God by imploying them in so severe a Service, intended to possess them with great horreur of Idolatry, which was punished in so extream a manner.

For

For the Rites of their Religion, We can ill judge of them, Except We perfectly understood the Idolatries round about them: To which we find they were much inclined: So they were to be bent by other Rites to an extream aversion from them: And yet by the pomp of many of their Ceremonies and Sacrifices, great Indulgences were given to a people naturally fond of a visible splendor in Religious Worship. In all which, if we cannot descend to such satisfactory Answers in every particular, as a curious man would desire, it is no wonder. The long interval of time, and other accidents, have worn out those things which were necessary to give us a clearer light into the meaning

of

of them. And for the story of the Creation, how far some things in it may be Parabolical, and how far Historical, has been much disputed: there is nothing in it that may not be historically true. For if it be acknowledged that Spirits can form Voices in the Air, for which we have as good Authority as for any thing in History; Then it is no wonder that *Eve* being so lately created, might be deceived, and think a *Serpent* spake to her, when the Evil Spirit framed the Voice.

But in all these things I told him he was in the wrong way, when he examined the business of Religion, by some dark parts of Scripture: Therefore I desired him to consider the whole Contexture of the
Christian

Christian Religion, the Rules it gives, and the Methods it prescribes. Nothing can conduce more to the peace, order and happiness of the World, than to be governed by its Rules. Nothing is more for the Interests of every man in particular: The Rules of Sobriety, Temperance and Moderation, were the best Preservers of life, and which was perhaps more, of Health. Humility, Contempt of the Vanities of the World, and the being well employed, raised a mans Mind to a freedom from the Follies and Temptations that haunted the greatest part. Nothing was so Generous and Great as to supply the Necessities of the Poor, and to forgive Injuries: Nothing raised and maintained
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a mans Reputation so much, as to be exactly just, and merciful; Kind, Charitable and Compassionate: Nothing opened the powers of a mans Soul so much as a calm Temper, a serene Mind, free of Passion and Disorder: Nothing made Societies, Families, and Neighbourhoods so happy, as when these Rules which the Gospel prescribes, took place, *Of doing as we would have others do to us, and loving our Neighbours as our selves.*

The *Christian Worship* was also plain and simple; suitable to so pure a Doctrine. The Ceremonies of it were few and significant, as the admission to it by a washing with Water, and the Memorial of our Saviour's Death in *Bread and Wine*; The Motives in it to perswade to
this

this Purity, were strong: That God sees us, and will Judge us for all our Actions: That we shall be for ever happy or miserable, as we pass our Lives here: The Example of our Saviour's Life, and the great expressions of his Love in Dying for us, are mighty Engagements to Obey and Imitate him. The plain way of Expression used by our Saviour and his Apostles, shews there was no Artifice, where there was so much Simplicity used: There were no Secrets kept only among the Priests, but every thing was open to all *Christians*: The Rewards of Holiness are not entirely put over to another State, but good men are specially blest with peace in their Consciences, great Joy in
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the Confidence they have of the Love of God, and of seeing Him for ever: And often a signal Course of Blessings follows them in their whole Lives: But if at other times Calamities fell on them, these were so much mitigated by the Patience they were taught, and the inward Assistances, with which they were furnished, that even those Crosses were converted to Blessings.

I desired he would lay all these things together, and see what he could except to them, to make him think this was a Contrivance. Interest appears in all Humane contrivances: Our Saviour plainly had none; He avoided Applause, withdrew Himself from the Offers of a Crown: He submitted to
Poverty

Poverty and Reproach, and much Contradiction in his Life, and to a most ignominious and painful Death. His Apostles had none neither, They did not pretend either to Power or Wealth; But delivered a Doctrine that must needs condemn them, if they ever made such use of it: They declared their Commission fully without reserves till other times: They Recorded their own Weakness: Some of them wrought with their own hands; and when they received the Charities of their Converts, it was not so much to supply their own Necessities, as to distribute to others: They knew they were to suffer much for giving their Testimonies, to what they had seen and heard: In which so many in a thing so
H visible,

visible, as Christ's Resurrection and Ascension, and the Effusion of the Holy Ghost which He had promised, could not be deceived: And they gave such publick Confirmations of it by the Wonders they themselves wrought, that great multitudes were converted to a Doctrine, which, besides the opposition it gave to Lust and Passion, was born down and Persecuted for 300 years: and yet its force was such, that it not only weathered out all those Storms, but even grew and spread vastly under them. *Pliny* about threescore years after, found their Numbers great and their Lives Innocent: and even *Lucian* amidst all his Raillery, gives a high Testimony to their Charity and Contempt of Life, and the other

other Vertues of the *Christians*; which is likewise more than once done by Malice it self, *Julian* the Apostate.

If a man will lay all this in one Ballance, and compare with it the few Exceptions brought to it, he will soon find how strong the one, and how slight the other are. Therefore it was an improper way, to begin at some Cavils about some Passages in the *New Testament*, or the *Old*, and from thence to prepossess one's Mind against the whole. The right method had been first to consider the whole matter, and from so general a view to descend to more particular Enquiries: whereas they suffered their Minds to be forestalled with Prejudices; so that they never examined the matter impartially. H 2 To

To the greatest part of this he seemed to assent, only he excepted to the belief of Mysteries in the *Christian Religion*; which he thought no man could do, since it is not in a mans power to believe that which he cannot comprehend: and of which He can have no Notion. The believing Mysteries, he said, made way for all the Juglings of Priests, for they getting the people under them in that Point, set out to them what they pleased; and giving it a hard Name, and calling it a *Mystery*, The people were tamed, and easily believed it. The restraining a man from the use of Women, Except one in the way of Marriage, and denying the remedy of Divorce, he thought unreasonable Impositions

sitions on the Freedom of Mankind: And the business of the Clergy, and their Maintenance, with the belief of some Authority and Power conveyed in their Orders, lookt, as he thought, like a piece of Contrivance: And why, said he, must a man tell me, I cannot be saved, unless I believe things against my Reason, and then that I must pay him for telling me of them? These were all the Exceptions which at any time I heard from him to *Christianity*. To which I made these Answers.

For Mysteries it is plain there is in every thing somewhat that is unaccountable. How Animals or Men are formed in their Mothers bellies, how Seeds grow in the Earth, how the

Soul dwells in the Body, and acts and moves it ; How we retain the Figures of so many words or things in our Memories, and how we draw them out so easily and orderly in our Thoughts or Discourses ? How Sight and Hearing were so quick and distinct, how we move, and how Bodies were compounded and united ? These things if we follow them into all the Difficulties, that we may raise about them, will appear every whit as unaccountable as any Mystery of Religion : And a blind or deaf man would judge Sight or Hearing as incredible, as any Mystery may be judged by us : For our Reason is not equal to them. In the same rank, different degrees of Age or Capacity raise some far
above

above others : So that Children cannot fathome the Learning, nor weak persons the Counsels of more illuminated Minds : Therefore it was no wonder if we could not understand the Divine Essence : We cannot imagine how two such different Natures as a Soul and a Body should so unite together, and be mutually affected with one anothers Concerns, and how the Soul has one Principle of Reason, by which it acts Intellectually, and another of life by which it joyns to the Body and acts Vitally ; two Principles so widely differing both in their Nature and Operation, and yet united in one and the same Person. There might be as many hard Arguments brought against the possibility

of these things, which yet every one knows to be true, from Speculative Notions, as against the Mysteries mentioned in the Scriptures. As that of the *Trinity*, That in one Essence there are three different Principles of Operation, which, for want of terms fit to express them by, We call *Persons*, and are called in Scripture *The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, and that the Second of these did unite Himself in a most intimate manner with the Humane Nature of Jesus Christ: And that the Sufferings he underwent, were accepted of God as a Sacrifice for our Sins; Who thereupon conferred on Him a Power of granting Eternal Life to all that submit to the Terms on which He offers it; And that the
matter

matter of which our Bodies once consisted, which may be as justly called the Bodies we laid down at our Deaths, as these can be said to be the Bodies which we formerly lived in, being refined and made more spiritual, shall be reunited to our Souls, and become a fit Instrument for them in a more perfect Estate: And that God inwardly bends and moves our Wills, by such Impressions, as he can make on our Bodies and Minds.

These, which are the chief Mysteries of our Religion, are neither so unreasonable, that any other Objection lies against them, but this, that they agree not with our Common Notions, nor so unaccountable that somewhat like them, cannot
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be assigned in other things, which are believed really to be, though the manner of them cannot be apprehended: So this ought not to be any just Objection to the submission of our Reason to what we cannot so well conceive, provided our belief of it be well grounded. There have been too many Niceties brought in indeed, rather to darken than explain these: They have been defended by weak Arguments, and illustrated by Similies not always so very apt and pertinent. And new subtilties have been added, which have rather perplexed than cleared them. All this cannot be denied; the Opposition of *Hereticks* anciently, occasioned too much Curiosity among the *Fathers*:
Which

Which the *School-men* have wonderfully advanced of late times. But if Mysteries were received, rather in the simplicity in which they are delivered in the Scriptures, than according to the descantings of fanciful men upon them, they would not appear much more incredible, than some of the common Objects of sense and perception. And it is a needless fear that if some Mysteries are acknowledged, which are plainly mentioned in the *New Testament*, it will then be in the power of the Priests to add more at their pleasure. For it is an absurd Inference from our being bound to assent to some Truths about the Divine Essence, of which the manner is not understood, to argue that there-
fore

fore in an Object presented duly to our Senses; such as *Bread and Wine*, We should be bound to believe against their Testimony, that it is not what our Senses perceived it to be, but the whole *Flesh and Blood of Christ*; an entire Body being in every Crumb and drop of it. It is not indeed in a mans power to believe thus against his Sense and Reason, where the Object is proportioned to them, and fitly applied, and the Organs are under no indisposition or disorder. It is certain that no Mystery is to be admitted, but ^{from} ~~from~~ very clear and express Authorities from Scripture, which could not reasonably be understood in any other sense. And though a man cannot form an explicate
Notion

Notion of a Mystery, for then it would be no longer a Mystery, Yet in general he may believe a thing to be, though he cannot give himself a particular account of the way of it: or rather though he cannot Answer some Objections which lie against it. We know We believe many such in Humane matters, which are more within our reach: and it is very unreasonable to say, We may not do it in Divine things, which are much more above our Apprehensions.

For the severe Restraint of the use of Women, it is hard to deny that Priviledge to Jesus Christ as a Law-Giver, to lay such Restraints, as all inferiour Legislators do; who when they find the Liberties their Subjects

jects take, prove hurtful to them, set such Limits, and make such Regulations, as they judge necessary and expedient. It cannot be said but the Restraint of Appetite is necessary in some Instances: and if it is necessary in these, perhaps other Restraints are no less necessary, to fortifie and secure these. For if it be acknowledged that Men have a property in their Wives and Daughters, so that to defile the one, or corrupt the other, is an unjust and injurious thing; It is certain, that except a man carefully governs his Appetites, he will break through these Restraints: and therefore our Saviour knowing that nothing could so effectually deliver the World from the mischief of unrestrained Appetite, as such
a Con-

a Confinement, might very reasonably enjoin it. And in all such Cases We are to balance the Inconveniences on both hands, and where we find they are heaviest, We are to acknowledge the Equity of the Law. On the one hand there is no prejudice, but the restraint of Appetite; On the other, are the mischiefs of being given up to pleasure, of running inordinately into it, of breaking the quiet of our own Family at home, and of others abroad: the engaging into much Passion, the doing many false and impious things to compass what is desired, the Wast of mens Estates, time, and health. Now let any man judge, Whether the prejudices on this side, are not greater, than

than that single one of the other side, of being denied some pleasure? For *Polygamy*, it is but reasonable since Women are equally concern'd in the Laws of Marriage, that they should be considered as well as Men: But in a State of *Polygamy* they are under great misery and jealousy, and are indeed barbarously used. Man being also of a sociable Nature, Friendship and Converse were among the primitive Intentments of Marriage, in which as far as the man may excel the Wife in greatness of Mind, and height of Knowledge, the Wife someway makes that up with her Affection and tender Care: So that from both happily mixed, there arises a Harmony, which is to vertuous Minds
one

one of the greatest joys of life: But all this is gone in a state of *Polygamy*, which occasions perpetual Jarrings and Jealousies. And the Variety does but engage men to a freer Range of pleasure, which is not to be put in the Ballance with the far greater Mischiefs that must follow the other course. So that it is plain, Our Saviour considered the Nature of Man, what it could bear, and what was fit for it, when he so restrained us in these our Liberties. And for Divorce, a power to break that Bond would too much encourage married persons in the little quarrellings that may rise between them; If it were in their power to depart one from another. For when they know that cannot be, and
I that

that they must live and die together, it does naturally incline them to lay down their Resentments, and to endeavour to live as well together as they can. So the Law of the Gospel being a Law of Love, designed to engage *Christians* to mutual love; It was fit that all such Provisions should be made, as might advance and maintain it: and all such Liberties be taken away, as are apt to enkindle or foment strife. This might fall in some instances to be uneasy and hard enough, but Laws consider what falls out most commonly, and cannot provide for all particular Cases. The best Laws are in some Instances very great grievances. But the Advantages being balanced with the Inconveniences,

Mea-

Measures are to be taken accordingly. Upon this whole matter I said, That pleasure stood in opposition to other Considerations of great Weight, and so the decision was easy. And since our Saviour offers us so great Rewards, It is but reasonable He have a Priviledge of loading these Promises with such Conditions, as are not in themselves grateful to our natural Inclinations: For all that propose high Rewards, have thereby a right to exact difficult performances.

To this he said, We are sure the terms are difficult, but are not so sure of the Rewards. Upon this I told him, That we have the same assurance of the Rewards, that we have of the

other parts of *Christian Religion*. We have the Promises of God made to us by Christ confirmed by many Miracles: We have the Earnests of these in the quiet and peace which follows a good Conscience, and in the Resurrection of Him from the dead, who hath promised to raise us up. So that the Reward is sufficiently assured to us: And there is no reason it should be given to us, before the Conditions are performed, on which the Promises are made. It is but reasonable that we should trust God, and do our Duty, *In hopes of that eternal Life, which God who cannot lie, hath promised.* The Difficulties are not so great, as those which sometimes the commonest concerns
of

of Life bring upon us: The learning some Trades or Sciences, the governing our Health and Affairs, bring us often under as great straights. So that it ought to be no just prejudice, that there are some things in Religion that are uneasie, since this is rather the effect of our corrupt Natures, which are farther deprav'd by vicious habits, and can hardly turn to any new course of life, without some pain, than of the Dictates of *Christianity*, which are in themselves just and reasonable, and will be easie to us when renew'd, and in a good measure restor'd to our Primitive Integrity.

As for the Exceptions he had to the Maintenance of the Clergy, and the Authority to
I 3 which

which they pretended ; if they stretched their Designs too far, The Gospel did plainly reprove them for it : So that it was very suitable to that Church, which was so grossly faulty this way, to take the Scriptures out of the hands of the people, since they do so manifestly disclaim all such practices. The Priests of the true *Christian Religion* have no secrets among them, which the World must not know, but are only an Order of Men dedicated to God, to attend on Sacred things, who ought to be holy in a more peculiar manner, since they are to handle the things of God. It was necessary that such persons should have a due Esteem paid them, and a fit Maintenance appointed for them: That so they might

might be preserved from the Contempt that follows Poverty, and the Distractions which the providing against it might otherways involve them in : And as in the Order of the World, it was necessary for the support of Magistracy and Government, and for preserving its esteem, that some state be used (though it is a happiness when Great Men have Philosophical Minds, to despise the Pageantry of it.) So the plentiful supply of the Clergy, if well used and applied by them, will certainly turn to the Advantage of Religion. And if some men either through Ambition or Covetousness used indirect means, or servile Compliances to aspire to such Dignities, and being possessed of

I 4 them

them, applied their Wealth either to Luxury or Vain Pomp, or made great Fortunes out of it for their Families; these were personal failings in which the Doctrine of Christ was not concerned.

He upon that told me plainly, There was nothing that gave him, and many others, a more secret encouragement in their ill ways, than that those who pretended to believe, lived so that they could not be thought to be in earnest, when they said it: For he was sure *Religion* was either a meer Contrivance, or the most important thing that could be: So that if he once believed, he would set himself in great earnest to live suitably to it. The aspirings that he had observed at Court, of some
of

of the Clergy, with the servile ways they took to attain to Preferment, and the Animosities among those of several Parties, about trifles, made him often think they suspected the things were not true, which in their Sermons and Discourses they so earnestly recommended. Of this he had gathered many Instances; I knew some of them were Mistakes and Calumnies; Yet I could not deny but something of them might be too true: And I publish this the more freely, to put all that pretend to Religion, chiefly those that are dedicated to holy Functions, in mind of the great Obligation that lies on them to live suitably to their Profession: Since otherwise a great deal of the Irreligion

gion and Atheism that is among us, may too justly be charged on them: for wicked men are delighted out of measure when they discover ill things in them, and conclude from thence not only that they are Hypocrites, but that Religion it self is a cheat.

But I said to him upon this Head, that though no good man could continue in the practice of any known sin, yet such might, by the violence or surprize of a Temptation, to which they are liable as much as others, be of a sudden overcome to do an ill thing, to their great grief all their life after. And then it was a very unjust Inference, Upon some few failings, to conclude that such men do not believe themselves.

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But how bad soever many are, it cannot be denied but there are also many both of the Clergy and Laity, who give great and real Demonstrations of the power Religion has over them; in their Contempt of the World, the strictness of their Lives, their readiness to forgive Injuries, to relieve the Poor, and to do good on all Occasions: and yet even these may have their failings, either in such things wherein their Constitutions are weak, or their Temptations strong and sudden: And in all such cases We are to judge of men, rather by the course of their Lives, than by the Errors, that they through infirmity or surprize may have slipped into.

These

These were the chief Heads we discoursed on; and as far as I can remember, I have faithfully repeated the substance of our Arguments: I have not concealed the strongest things he said to me, but though I have not enlarged on all the Excursions of his Wit in setting them off, Yet I have given them their full strength, as he expressed them; and as far as I could recollect, have used his own words: So that I am afraid some may censure me for setting down these things so largely, which Impious Men may make an ill use of, and gather together to encourage and defend themselves in their Vices: But if they will compare them with the Answers made to them, and the sense
that

that so great and refined a Wit had of them afterwards, I hope they may through the blessing of God be not altogether ineffectual.

The issue of all our Discourses was this, He told me, He saw Vice and Impiety were as contrary to Humane Society, as wild Beasts let loose would be; and therefore he firmly resolved to change the whole method of his Life: to become strictly just and true, to be Chast and Temperate, to forbear Swearing and Irreligious Discourse, to Worship and Pray to his Maker: And that though he was not arrived at a full perswasion of *Christianity*, he would never employ his Wit more to run it down, or to corrupt others.

Of

Of which I have since a further assurance, from a Person of Quality, who conversed much with him, the last year of his life; to whom he would often say, That he was happy, if he did believe, and that he would never endeavour to draw him from it.

To all this I Answered, That a Vertuous Life would be very uneasie to him, unless Vicious Inclinations were removed: It would otherwise be a perpetual constraint. Nor could it be effected without an inward Principle to change him: and that was only to be had by applying himself to God for it in frequent and earnest Prayers: And I was sure if his Mind were once cleared of these Disorders, and cured of those Distem-

Distempers, which Vice brought on it, so great an Understanding would soon see through all those flights of Wit, that do feed Atheism and Irreligion: which have a false glittering in them, that dazles some weak sighted Minds, who have not capacity enough to penetrate further than the Surfaces of things: and so they stick in these Toyls, which the strength of his Mind would soon break thorough, if it were once freed from those things that depressed and darkened it.

At this pass he was when he went from *London*, about the beginning of *April*: He had not been long in the Country when he thought he was so well, that being to go to his Estate in *Somersetshire* he rode thither

thither Post. This heat and violent motion did so inflame an Ulcer, that was in his Bladder, that it raised a very great pain in those parts : Yet he with much difficulty came back by Coach to the Lodge at *Woodstock-Park*. He was then wounded both in Body and Mind : He understood Physick and his own Constitution and Distemper so well, that he concluded he could hardly recover : For the Ulcer broke and vast quantities of purulent matter past with his Urine. But now the hand of God touched him, and as he told me, It was not only a general dark Melancholy over his Mind, such as he had formerly felt ; but a most penetrating cutting Sorrow. So that though in his
Body

Body he suffered extream pain, for some weeks, Yet the Agonies of his Mind sometimes swallowed up the sense of what he felt in his Body. He told me, and gave it me in charge, to tell it to one for whom he was much concern'd, that though there were nothing to come after this life, Yet all the Pleasures he had ever known in Sin, were not worth that torture he had felt in his Mind. He considered he had not only neglected and dishonoured, but had openly defied his Maker, and had drawn many others into the like Impieties : So that he looked on himself as one that was in great danger of being damn'd. He then set himself wholly to turn to God unfeignedly, and to do all that was
K possible

possible in that little remainder of his life which was before him, to redeem those great portions of it, that he had formerly so ill employed. The Minister that attended constantly on him, was that good and worthy man Mr. *Parsons*, his Mothers Chaplain, who hath since his death Preached, according to the Directions he received from him, his Funeral Sermon: in which there are so many remarkable Passages, that I shall refer my *Reader* to them, and will repeat none of them here, that I may not thereby lessen his desire to edifie himself by that excellent Discourse, which has given so great and so general a satisfaction to all good and judicious *Readers*. I shall speak cursorily of every thing,

thing, but that which I had immediately from himself: He was visited every Week of his sickness by his *Diocesan*, that truly Primitive Prelate, the Lord Bishop of *Oxford*; who though he lived six miles from him, yet looked on this as so important a piece of his Pastoral Care, that he went often to him; and treated him with that decent plainness and freedom which is so natural to him; and took care also that he might not on terms more easie than safe, be at peace with himself. Dr. *Marshall* the Learned and Worthy Rector of *Lincoln-Colledge* in *Oxford*, being the Minister of the Parish, was also frequently with him: and by these helps he was so directed and supported, that he might not on the

one hand satisfy himself with too superficial a Repentance, nor on the other hand be out of measure oppressed with a Sorrow without hope. As soon as I heard he was ill, but yet in such a condition that I might write to him, I wrote a Letter to the best purpose I could. He ordered one that was then with him, to assure me it was very welcome to him: but not satisfied with that, he sent me an Answer, which, as the Countess of Rochester his Mother told me, he dictated every word, and then signed it. I was once unwilling to have publish'd it, because of a Complement in it to my self, far above my merit, and not very well suiting with his Condition.

But

But the sense he expresses in it of the Change then wrought on him, hath upon second thoughts prevail'd with me to publish it, leaving out what concerns my self.

Woodstock-Park,
June 25. 1680. Oxfordshire.

My most Honour'd Dr. Burnett,

M*Y Spirits and Body decay so equally together, that I shall write You a Letter as weak as I am in person. I begin to value Church-men above all men in the World, &c. If God be yet pleas'd*

K 3 to

to spare me longer in this World, I hope in your Conversation to be exalted to that degree of Piety, that the World may see how much I abhor what I so long loved, and how much I glory in Repentance, and in Gods Service. Bestow your Prayers upon me, that God would spare me (if it be his good Will) to shew a true Repentance and Amendment of life for the time to come: Or else if the Lord pleaseth to put an end to my worldly being now, that He would mercifully accept of my Death-Bed Repentance, and perform that Promise

Promise that He hath been pleased to make, That at what time soever a Sinner doth Repent, He would receive him. Put up these Prayers, most dear Doctor, to Almighty God for your most Obedient and Languishing Servant.

Rochester.

K 4 He

He told me when I saw him, That he hoped I would come to him upon that general Insinuation of the desire he had of my Company ; and he was loth to write more plainly : not knowing whether I could easily spare so much time. I told him, That on the other hand, I looked on it as a presumption to come so far, when he was in such excellent hands, and though perhaps the freedom formerly between us, might have excused it with those to whom it was known ; yet it might have the appearance of so much Vanity, to such as were strangers to it ; So that till I received his Letter, I did not think it convenient to come to him : And then not hearing that there was any danger of a sudden change, I
delayed

delayed going to him till the Twentieth of July. At my coming to his House an accident fell out not worth mentioning, but that some have made a story of it. His Servant being a *French-man* carried up my Name wrong, so that he mistook it for another, who had sent to him, that he would undertake his Cure, and he being resolved not to meddle with him, did not care to see him : This mistake lasted some hours, with which I was the better contented, because he was not then in such a condition, that my being about him could have been of any use to him : for that Night was like to have been his last. He had a *Convulsion-Fit*, and raved ; but *Opiates* being given him, after some hours rest,

rest, his raving left him so entirely, that it never again returned to him.

I cannot easily express the Transport he was in, when he awoke and saw me by him: He brake out in the tenderest Expressions concerning my kindness in coming so far to see *such a One*, using terms of great abhorrence concerning himself, which I forbear to relate. He told me, as his strength served him at several snatches, for he was then so low, that he could not hold up discourse long at once, what sense he had of his past life; what sad apprehension for having so offended his Maker, and dishonoured his Redeemer: What Horrors he had gone through, and how much his Mind was turned to
call

call on God, and on his Crucified Saviour: So that he hoped he should obtain Mercy, for he believed he had sincerely repented; and had now a calm in his Mind after that storm that he had been in for some Weeks. He had strong Apprehensions and Perswasions of his admittance to Heaven: of which he spake once not without some extraordinary Emotion. It was indeed the only time that he spake with any great warmth to me: For his Spirits were then low, and so far spent, that though those about him told me, He had expressed formerly great fervor in his Devotions; Yet Nature was so much sunk, that these were in a great measure fallen off. But he made me pray
often

often with him; and spoke of his Conversion to God as a thing now grown up in him to a settled and calm serenity. He was very anxious to know my Opinion of a Death-Bed Repentance. I told him, That before I gave any Resolution in that, it would be convenient that I should be acquainted more particularly with the Circumstances and Progress of his Repentance.

Upon this he satisfied me in many particulars. He said, He was now perswaded both of the truth of *Christianity*, and of the power of inward Grace, of which he gave me this strange account. He said, Mr. *Parsons* in order to his Conviction, read to him the 53. Chapter of the Prophecie of *Isaiah*,

Isaiah, and compared *that* with the History of our Saviour's Passion, that he might there see a Prophecie concerning it, written many Ages before it was done; which the *Jews* that blasphemed Jesus Christ still kept in their hands, as a Book divinely inspired. He said to me, *That as he heard it read, he felt an inward force upon him, which did so enlighten his Mind, and convince him, that he could resist it no longer: For the words had an authority which did shoot like Raies or Beams in his Mind; So that he was not only convinced by the Reasonings he had about it, which satisfied his Understanding, but by a power which did so effectually constrain him, that he did ever after as firmly believe in his Saviour, as if he had seen him*

him in the Clouds. He had made it be read so often to him, that he had got it by heart: and went through a great part of it in Discourse with me, with a sort of heavenly Pleasure, giving me his Reflections on it. Some

Verf. 1.

few I remember, Who hath believed our Report? Here, he said, was foretold the Opposition the Gospel was to meet with from such

Verf. 2.

Wretches as he was. He hath no Form nor Comeliness, and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. On this he said, The meanness of his appearance and Person has made vain and foolish people disparage Him, because he came not in such a Fools-Coat as they delight in. What he said on the other parts I do not well remember; and indeed I was so affected with what

what he said then to me, that the general transport I was under during the whole Discourse, made me less capable to remember these Particulars, as I wish I had done.

He told me, That he had thereupon received the Sacrament with great satisfaction, and that was encreased by the pleasure he had in his Ladies receiving it with him: who had been for some years misled into the Communion of the Church of Rome, and he himself had been not a little Instrumental in procuring it, as he freely acknowledged. So that it was one of the joyfulest things that befel him in his Sickness, that he had seen that Mischief removed, in which he had so great a Hand: and during

during his whole Sickness, he expressed so much tenderness and true kindness to his Lady, that as it easily defaced the remembrance of every thing wherein he had been in fault formerly, so it drew from her the most passionate care and concern for him that was possible: which indeed deserves a higher Character than is decent to give of a Person yet alive. But I shall confine my Discourse to the Dead.

He told me, He had overcome all his Resentments to all the World; So that he bore ill will to no Person, nor hated any upon personal accounts. He had given a true state of his Debts, and had ordered to pay them all, as far as his Estate that was not settled, could go:
and

and was confident that if all that was owing to him were paid to his Executors, his Creditors would be all satisfied. He said, He found his Mind now possessed with another sense of things, than ever he had formerly: He did not repine under all his pain, and in one of the sharpest Fits he was under while I was with him; He said, *He did willingly submit*; and looking up to Heaven, said, *God's holy Will be done, I bless Him for all He does to me.* He professed he was contented either to die or live, as should please God: And though it was a foolish thing for a man to pretend to choose, Whether he would die or live, yet he wished rather to die. He knew he could never be so well, that life should be

L com-

comfortable to him. He was confident he should be happy if he died, but he feared if he lived he might Relapse: And then said he to me, *In what a condition shall I be, if I Relapse after all this?* But, he said, *he trusted in the Grace and Goodness of God, and was resolved to avoid all those Temptations, that Course of Life, and Company, that was likely to insnare him: and he desired to live on no other account, but that he might by the change of his Manners some way take off the high Scandal his former Behaviour had given.* All these things at several times I had from him, besides some Messages which very well became a dying Penitent to some of his former Friends, and a Charge to publish any thing
con-

concerning him, that might be a mean to reclaim others. *Praying God, that as his life had done much hurt, so his death might do some good.*

Having understood all these things from him, and being pressed to give him my Opinion plainly about his Eternal State; I told him, That though the Promises of the Gospel did all depend upon a real change of Heart and Life, as the indispensable condition upon which they were made; and that it was scarce possible to know certainly whether our Hearts are changed, unless it appeared in our lives; and the Repentance of most dying men, being like the howlings of condemned Prisoners for Pardon, which flowed from no sense of their
L. 2 Crimes.

Crimes, but from the horreur of approaching Death; there was little reason to encourage any to hope much from such Sorrowings: Yet certainly if the Mind of a Sinner, even on a Death-Bed, be truly renewed and turned to God, so great is His Mercy, that He will receive him, even in that extremity. He said, *He was sure his Mind was entirely turned, and though Hor-
rour had given him his first awaking, yet that was now grown up into a settled Faith and Con-
version.*

There is but one prejudice lies against all this, to defeat the good Ends of Divine Providence by it upon others, as well as on himself: and that is that it was a part of his Disease, and that the lowness of
his

his Spirits made such an alteration in him, that he was not what he had formerly been: and this some have carried so far as to say, That he died mad: These Reports are raised by those who are unwilling that the last Thoughts or Words of a Person, every way so extraordinary, should have any effect either on themselves or others: And it is to be fear'd, that some may have so far scared their Consciences, and exceeded the common Measures of Sin and Infidelity, that neither this Testimony, nor one coming from the Dead, would signify much towards their Conviction. That this Lord was either mad or stupid, is a thing so notoriously untrue, that it is the greatest Impudence

for any that were about him, to Report it; and a very unreasonable Credulity in others to believe it. All the while I was with him, after he had slept out the disorders of the Fit he was in the first Night, he was not only without Ravings; but had a clearness in his Thoughts, in his Memory, in his reflections on Things and Persons, far beyond what I ever saw in a Person so low in his strength. He was not able to hold out long in Discourse, for his Spirits failed: but once for half an hour, and often for a quarter of an hour, after he awakened, he had a Vivacity in his Discourse that was extraordinary, and in such things like himself. He called often for his Children, his Son the now Earl of Rochester,

and

and his three Daughters, and spake to them with a sense and feeling that cannot be expressed in Writing. He called me once to look on them all, and said, *See how Good God has been to me, in giving me so many Blessings, and I have carried my self to Him like an ungracious and unthankful Dog.* He once talked a great deal to me of Publick Affairs, and of many Persons and things, with the same clearness of thought and expression, that he had ever done before. So that by no sign, but his Weakness of Body, and giving over Discourse so soon, could I perceive a difference between what his Parts formerly were, and what they were then.

And that wherein the presence of his Mind appeared

L 4 most,

most, was in the total change of an ill habit grown so much upon him, that he could hardly govern himself, when he was any ways heated, three Minutes without falling into it; I mean *Swearing*. He had acknowledged to me the former Winter, that he abhorred it as a base and indecent thing, and had set himself much to break it off: but he confessed that he was so over-power'd by that ill Custom, that he could not speak with any warmth, without repeated Oaths, which, upon any sort of provocation, came almost naturally from him: But in his last Remorses this did so sensibly affect him, that by a resolute and constant watchfulness, the habit of it was perfectly matter'd; So that
upon

upon the returns of pain which were very severe and frequent upon him, the last day I was with him; or upon such displeasures as people sick or in pain are apt to take of a sudden at those about them; On all these Occasions he never swore an Oath all the while I was there.

Once he was offended with the delay of one that he thought made not hast enough, with somewhat he called for, and said in a little heat, *That damned Fellow*: Soon after I told him, I was glad to find his Style so reformed, and that he had so entirely overcome that ill habit of Swearing; Only that word of calling any *damned*, which had returned upon him, was not decent. His Answer
was,

was, *Oh that Language of Fiends which was so familiar to me, hangs yet about me: Sure none has deserved more to be damned than I have done.* And after he had humbly asked God Pardon for it, he desired me to call the Person to him, that he might ask him forgiveness: but I told him that was needless, for he had said it of one that did not hear it, and so could not be offended by it.

In this disposition of Mind did he continue all the while I was with him, four days together; He was then brought so low that all hope of Recovery was gone. Much purulent matter came from him with his Urine, which he passed always with some pain; But one day with unexpressible torment:
Yet

Yet he bore it decently, without breaking out into Repinings, or impatient Complaints. He imagined he had a Stone in his Passage, but it being searched, none was found. The whole substance of his Body was drained by the Ulcer, and nothing was left but Skin and Bone: and by lying much on his Back, the parts there began to mortifie. But he had been formerly so low, that he seemed as much past all hopes of life as now; which made him one Morning after a full and sweet Nights rest procured by *Laudanum*, given him without his knowledge, to fancy it was an effort of Nature, and to begin to entertain some hopes of Recovery: For he said, He felt himself perfectly well, and that he

had nothing ailing him, but an extream weakness, which might go off in time: and then he entertained me with the Scheme he had laid down for the rest of his life, how retired, how strict, and how studious he intended to be: But this was soon over, for he quickly felt that it was only the effect of a good sleep, and that he was still in a very desperate state.

I thought to have left him on *Friday*, but not without some Passion, he desired me to stay that day: there appeared no symptome of present death; and a Worthy Physitian then with him, told me, That though he was so low that an accident might carry him away on a suddain; Yet without that, he thought he might live yet
some

some Weeks. So on *Saturday* at Four of the Clock in the Morning I left him, being the 24th of *July*. But I durst not take leave of him; for he had expressed so great an unwillingness to part with me the day before, that if I had not presently yielded to one days stay, it was like to have given him some trouble, therefore I thought it better to leave him without any Formality. Some hours after he asked for me, and when it was told him, I was gone, he seem'd to be troubled, and said, *Has my Friend left me, then I shall die shortly.* After that he spake but once or twice till he died: He lay much silent: Once they heard him praying very devoutly.
And

And on *Monday* about Two of the Clock in the Morning, he died, without any *Convulsion*, or so much as a groan.

T H E

THE CONCLUSION.

THus he lived, and thus he died in the Three and Thirtieth Year of his Age. Nature had fitted him for great things, and his Knowledge and Observation qualify'd him to have been one of the most extraordinary Men, not only of his Nation, but of the Age he lived in; And I do verily believe, that if God had thought fit to have continued him longer in the World, he had been the Wonder and Delight of all that knew him. But the infinitely Wise God knew better what was fit for him, and what the Age deserved. For men who have so cast off all

all sense of God and Religion, deserve not so signal a Blessing, as the Example and Conviction which the rest of his life might have given them. And I am apt to think that the Divine Goodness took pity on him, and seeing the sincerity of his Repentance, would try and venture him no more in Circumstances of Temptation, perhaps too hard for Humane Frailty. Now he is at rest, and I am very confident enjoys the Fruits of his late, but sincere Repentance. But such as live, and still go on in their Sins and Impieties, and will not be awakened neither by this, nor the other Allarms that are about their Ears, are, it seems, given up by God to a judicial Hardness and Impenitency.

Here

Here is a publick Instance of One who lived of their Side, but could not die of it: And though none of all our Libertines understood better than he, the secret Mysteries of Sin, had more studied every thing that could support a man in it, and had more resisted all external means of Conviction than he had done; Yet when the hand of God inwardly touched him, he could no longer *kick against those Pricks*, but *humbled himself under that Mighty Hand*, and as he used often to say in his Prayers, *He who had so often denied Him, found then no other Shelter, but his Mercies and Compassions.*

I have written this Account with all the tenderness and caution I could use, and in whatsoever

M I may

I may have failed, I have been strict in the truth of what I have related, remembering that of *Job*, *Will ye lie for God?* Religion has Strength and Evidence enough in it self, and needs no Support from Lyes, and made Stories. I do not pretend to have given the formal words that he said, though I have done that where I could remember them. But I have written this with the same Sincerity, that I would have done, had I known I had been to die immediately after I had finished it. I did not take Notes of our Discourses last Winter after we parted; so I may have perhaps in the setting out of my Answers to him, have enlarged on several things both more fully and more regularly,
than

than I could say them in such free Discourses as we had. I am not so sure of all I set down as said by me, as I am of all said by him to me. But yet the substance of the greatest part, even of that, is the same.

It remains that I humbly and earnestly beseech all that shall take this Book in their hands, that they will consider it entirely: and not wrest some parts to an ill intention. God, the Searcher of Hearts, knows with what Fidelity I have writ it: But if any will drink up only the Poison that may be in it, without taking also the Antidote here given to those ill Principles; or considering the sense that this great Person had of them, when he reflected

seriously on them ; and will rather confirm themselves in their ill ways, by the Scruples and Objections which I set down, than be edified by the other parts of it ; As I will look on it as a great Infelicity , that I should have said any thing that may strengthen them in their Impieties ; So the sincerity of my Intentions will, I doubt not, excuse me at his hands, to whom I offer up this small Service.

I have now performed, in the best manner I could, what was left on me by this Noble Lord, and have done with the part of an Historian. I shall in the next place say somewhat as a Divine. So extraordinary a Text does almost force a Sermon, though it is plain enough
it

it self, and speaks with so loud a Voice, that those who are not awakened by it , will perhaps consider nothing that I can say. If our Libertines will become so far sober as to examine their former Course of Life, with that disingagement and impartiality , which they must acknowledge a wise man ought to use in things of greatest Consequence, and ballance the Account of what they have got by their Debaucheries, with the Mischiefs they have brought on themselves and others by them, they will soon see what a mad Bargain they have made. Some Diversion , Mirth , and Pleasure is all they can promise themselves ; but to obtain this, how many Evils are they to suffer ? how have many wasted

M 3 their

their strength, brought many Diseases on their Bodies, and precipitated their Age in the pursuit of those things? and as they bring old Age early on themselves, so it becomes a miserable state of life to the greatest part of them; *Gouts, Stranguries*, and other Infirmities, being severe Reckonings for their past Follies; not to mention the more loathsome Diseases, with their no less loathsome and troublesome Cures, which they must often go through, who deliver themselves up to forbidden Pleasure. Many are disfigur'd beside, with the marks of their Intemperance and Lewdness, and which is yet sadder, an Infection is derived oftentimes on their Innocent, but unhappy Issue, who being descended

scended from so vitiated an Original, suffer for their Excesses. Their Fortunes are profusely wasted, both by their neglect of their Affairs, they being so buried in Vice, that they cannot employ either their Time or Spirits, so much exhausted by Intemperance, to consider them; and by that Prodigal Expence which their Luils put them upon. They suffer no less in their Credit, the chief mean to recover an intangled Estate; for that irregular Expence forceth them to so many mean shifts, makes them so often false to all their Promises and Resolutions, that they must needs feel how much they have lost, that which a Gentleman, and Men of ingenuous tempers do sometimes

prefer even to life it self, their Honour and Reputation. Nor do they suffer less in the Nobler powers of their Minds, which, by a long course of such dissolute Practices, come to sink and degenerate so far, that not a few, whose first Blossoms gave the most promising Hopes, have so wither'd, as to become incapable of great and generous Undertakings, and to be disabled to every thing, but to wallow like Swine in the filth of Sensuality, their Spirits being dissipated, and their Minds so nummed, as to be wholly unfit for business, and even indisposed to think.

That this dear price should be paid for a little wild Mirth, or gross and corporal Pleasure, is a thing of such unparalleled Folly,

Folly, that if there were not too many such Instances before us, it might seem incredible. To all this we must add the Horrors that their ill Actions raise in them, and the hard shifts they are put to to stave off these, either by being perpetually drunk or mad, or by an habitual disuse of thinking and reflecting on their Actions, and (if these Arts will not perfectly quiet them) by taking Sanctuary in such Atheistical Principles as may at least mitigate the sowness of their thoughts, though they cannot absolutely settle their Minds.

If the state of Mankind and Humane Societies are considered, what Mischiefs can be equal to those which follow these Courses.

Courses. Such Persons are a Plague where ever they come ; they can neither be trusted nor beloved, having cast off both Truth and Goodness, which procure Confidence and attract Love : they corrupt some by their ill Practices, and do irreparable Injuries to the rest ; they run great Hazards, and put themselves to much trouble, and all this to do what is in their power to make Damnation as sure to themselves as possibly they can. What Influence this has on the whole Nation is but too visible ; How the Bonds of Nature, Wedlock, and all other Relations are quite broken. Vertue is thought an Antick Piece of Formality, and Religion the effect of Cowardise or Knavery : These
are

are the Men that would Reform the World, by bringing it under a new System of Intellectual and Moral Principles, but bate them a few bold and lewd Jest, what have they ever done, or designed to do, to make them be remembred, except it be with detestation ? They are the Scorn of the present Age, and their Names must rot in the next. Here they have before them an Instance of one who was deeply corrupted with the Contagion which he first derived from Others, but unhappily heightened it much himself. He was a Master indeed, and not a bare trifler with Wit, as some of these are who repeat, and that but scurvily, what they may have heard from him or some others,

others, and with Impudence and Laughter will face the World down, as if they were to teach it Wisdom; who, God knows, cannot follow one Thought a step further than as they have conned it; and take from them their borrow'd Wit and their mimical Humour, and they will presently appear what they indeed are, the least and lowest of Men.

If they will, or if they can think a little, I wish they would consider that by their own Principles, they cannot be sure that Religion is only a Contrivance, all they pretend to is only to weaken some Arguments that are brought for it: but they have not Brow enough to say, They can prove that their own Principles are true.

So

So that at most they bring their Cause no higher, than that it is possible *Religion* may not be true. But still it is possible it may be true, and they have no shame left that will deny that it is also probable it may be true; and if so, then what mad Men are they who run so great a hazard for nothing? By their own Confession it may be there is a God, a Judgment, and a Life to come; and if so, then He that believes these things, and lives according to them, as he enjoys a long course of Health and quiet of Mind, an innocent relish of many true Pleasures, and the Serenities which Vertue raises in him, with the good Will and Friendship which it procures him from others; So when he dies, if these things prove

prove Mistakes, he does not out-live his Error, nor shall it afterwards raise trouble or disquiet in him if he then ceases to be: But if these things be true, he shall be infinitely happy in that State, where his present small Services shall be so excessively rewarded. The *Libertines* on the other side, as they know they must die, so the thoughts of Death must be always Melancholy to them, they can have no pleasant view of that which yet they know cannot be very far from them: The least painful *Idea* they can have of it is, that it is an extinction and ceasing to be, but they are not sure even of that. Some secret Whispers within make them, whether they will or not, tremble at the Apprehensions

hensions of another State; neither their Tinsel-Wit, nor superficial Learning, nor their impotent Assaults upon the weak side as they think of Religion, nor the boldest Notions of Impiety, will hold them up then. Of all which I now present so lively an *Instance*, as perhaps History can scarce parallel.

Here were parts so exalted by Nature, and improved by Study, and yet so corrupted and debased by Irreligion and Vice, that he who was made to be one of the Glories of his Age was become a Proverb, and if his Repentance had not interposed, would have been one of the greatest Reproaches of it. He knew well the small strength of that weak Cause,
and

and at first despised, but afterwards abhorred it. He felt the Mischiefs, and saw the madness of it; and therefore though he lived to the scandal of many, he died as much to the Edification of all those who saw him; and because they were but a small number, he desired that he might even when dead yet speak. He was willing nothing should be concealed that might cast Reproach on himself, and on Sin, and offer up Glory to God and Religion. So that though he lived a hainous Sinner, yet he died a most exemplary Penitent.

It would be a vain and Ridiculous Inference, for any from hence to draw Arguments about the abstruse Secrets of Predestination; and to conclude

clude that if they are of the number of the Elect, they may live as they will, and that Divine Grace will at some time or other violently constrain them, and irresistably work upon them. But as *St. Paul* was called to that Eminent Service for which he was appointed, in so stupendious a manner, as is no warrant for others to expect such a Vocation; So if upon some signal Occasions such Conversions fall out, which, how far they are short of Miracles, I shall not determine, it is not only a vain but a pernicious Imagination, for any to go on in their ill ways, upon a fond Conceit and Expectation that the like will befall them: For whatsoever Gods extraordinary dealings with
N some

some may be, We are sure His common way of Working is by offering these things to our rational Faculties, which, by the assistances of His Grace, if we improve them all we can, shall be certainly effectual for our Reformation; and if we neglect or abuse these, We put ourselves beyond the common Methods of Gods Mercy, and have no reason to expect that Wonders should be wrought for our Conviction; which though they sometimes happen, that they may give an effectual Alarm for the awaking of others, yet it would destroy the whole design of Religion, if men should depend upon or look for such an extraordinary and forcible Operation of Gods Grace.

And

And I hope that those who have had some sharp Reflections on their past Life, so as to be resolved to forsake their ill Courses, will not take the least encouragement to themselves in that desperate and unreasonable Resolution of putting off their Repentance till they can sin no longer, from the hopes I have express'd of this Lords obtaining Mercy at the last, and from thence presume that they also shall be received, when they turn to God on their Death-Beds: For what Mercy soever God may shew to such as really were never inwardly touched before that time; Yet there is no reason to think that those who have dealt so disinguously with God and their own Souls, as designedly to put off

N 2 their

their turning to Him, upon such Considerations, should be then accepted with Him. They may die suddenly, or by a Disease that may so disorder their Understandings, that they shall not be in any capacity of Reflecting on their past Lives. The inward Conversion of our Minds is not so in our power, that it can be effected without Divine Grace assisting. And there is no reason for those who have neglected these Assistances all their Lives, to expect them in so extraordinary manner at their Death. Nor can one, especially in a Sickness, that is quick and critical, be able to do those things that are often indispensably necessary to make his Repentance compleat: And
even

even in a longer Disease, in which there are larger Opportunities for these things; Yet there is great Reason to doubt of a Repentance begun and kept up meerly by Terrour, and not from any ingenuous Principle. In which, though I will not take on me to limit the Mercies of God, which are boundless; Yet this must be confessed, that to delay Repentance, with such a design, is to put the greatest Concernment we have upon the most dangerous and desperate Issue that is possible.

But they that will still go on in their Sins, and be so partial to them, as to use all endeavours to strengthen themselves in their evil Course, even by these very things which the Provi-

dence of God sets before them, for the casting down of these strong holds of Sin: What is to be said to such? it is to be feared, that if they obstinately persist, they will by degrees come within that Curse, *He that is Unjust, let him be Unjust still: and he that is Filthy, let him be Filthy still.* But if our Gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this World hath blinded the Minds of them which believe not, least the Light of the Glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the Image of God, should shine unto them.

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