

# REMARKS

ON THE

# PLEA,

AND THE

# DEFENCE

OF THE

# PLEA,

FOR

# HUMAN REASON:

WHEREIN

The Principles of these Books are examin'd, and the Arguments in Proof of the Sufficiency of *Reason* in Matters of *Religion*, are shewn to be Frivolous and Inconclusive.

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By ANTHONY BLISS, D. D.  
Vicar of PORTSMOUTH.

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*Tu, — si me audias, eandem Causam agas, neque Pontificem esse cogites. Cic. de Nat. Deorum. Lib. 2. in fin.*

*Si in hoc juvenus sobria incumberet, hoc majores docerent, hoc minores addiscerent, cix ad fundum veniretur, in quo veritas posita est; quam nunc in summi terra & levi manu quarimus. Senec. Nat. Quest. Lib. 7 cap. 22.*

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# ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE

READER.

 *HAT* I have already offer'd to the Publick, in my *OBSERVATIONS* on Mr. Chubb's *DISCOURSE* concerning *REASON*, does, I apprehend, clearly shew that the Notion about the Sufficiency of Reason is altogether groundless. Nevertheless, the Author of the *PLEA* for Human Reason being a Divine of Note, and well known by his Writings to the learned World; and having moreover mention'd several things (particularly in his frequent Appeal to the Writings of the old Heathens, and their Doctrines

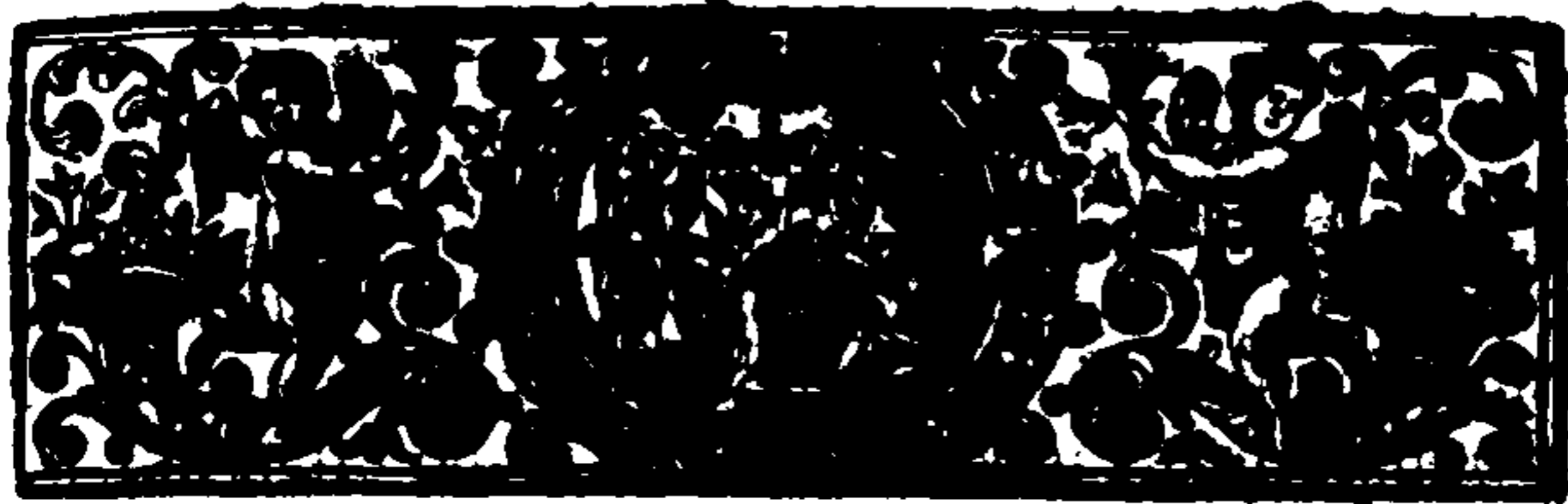
## Advertisement to the Reader.

*trine in Fact) which are not to be met with in Mr. Chubb's Book; this has induc'd me to re-consider the Subject, and to trouble the Publick farther with the following Pages; which, for Method's sake shall be thrown into distinct Chapters.*

*I will begin with shewing the Rise and Occasion of this Controversy.*



REMARKS



# R E M A R K S

O N T H E

P L E A, and the Defence of the P L E A  
for H U M A N R E A S O N, &c.

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## C H A P. I.

*Concerning the Rise and Occasion of this  
Controversy.*



H E Bishop of London's Second Pastoral Letter was occasion'd by the late Attempts of some Infidel Writers against our most Holy Religion, who  
“ \* endeavour to lead Men into a  
“ Disregard of all Revelation, by  
“ magnifying the Strength of Natural Reason,  
“ and recommending it as a full and sufficient  
“ Guide in Matters of Religion, and from thence  
“ infer, that the Means of Salvation, directed by  
“ the Gospel, notwithstanding all the Evidences  
“ of their being God's own Appointment, are to  
“ be laid aside as Superstitions and Human Inven-

\* See Page 2.

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“ tions, and every Man is to have the framing of  
“ his own Religion. ”

These, and such like Principles, openly avowed and insisted on, are but too likely to prove the Ruin of many unwary People, (who often mistake confident Assertions for substantial Proofs) by inducing them to make Shipwreck of their Faith, and to apostatize from Christianity to Deism, or, it may be, No-Religion. And therefore it well becomes every Pastor to stand in the Gap against the growing Evil, and, if possible, to prevent the Contagion from spreading amongst his People. In particular, the City of *London* and the Parts adjacent, \* “ being the Scene, in which these Attempts against  
“ Christianity are form’d, and from whence they are  
“ propagated into all Parts of the Nation, ” it is very commendable in the Bishop of that Diocese, † to keep a watchful Eye over them, and to consider from Time to Time of the most effectual Means to defeat them : ” And his Lordship might reasonably have expected that no Christian Priest or Christian Layman would have taken Offence at the main Scope and Tendency of his Argument ; but that, on the contrary, all true Friends of our most Holy Religion ; all, who set a just Value on what our Blessed Lord did and suffer’d for us, would be pleased with it.

The Author of the *Plea for Human Reason* doth not deny, but that his Lordship’s Reasoning concludes against the Adversaries he had in View, and overthrows the very Foundation of their *Anti-Christian* Scheme. ’Tis the † “ opposing the Sufficiency  
“ of Reason universally and without Limitation, ” that he is offended at ; and only in this respect, he

\* See the Bishop of *London*’s CHARGE in the Year 1730. p. 3.

† *Ibid.*  
p. 26.

‡ Defence of the Plea for Human Reason,



complains against his Lordship, as § “going beyond  
“the Bounds of Truth and Reason.” Nay, he  
says expressly, that \* “had the Bishop confined his  
“Reasoning to the Unbelievers of our Age and Country,  
“He would have had no Controversy with his Lord-  
ship.”

But what a strange Capriciousness of Temper does this discover? Ought not this Gentleman to have considered the *Design* of his Lordship's Letter, that 'twas levelled against those who assert, that the *Bulk* of Mankind, or the *meanest Individuals*, can, by the Dint of their own Reason, discover every Part of true Religion, draw out a *compleat* System of the moral Law, acquire a *certain* Knowledge of the *Immortality* of the Soul, &c.? And would not Candor, Equity, nay, common Justice, have oblig'd him to understand the Bishop as opposing the Sufficiency of Reason, in *that* extravagant Sense and excessive Latitude, wherein these Infidels assert and contend for it? He may again, if he pleases, call this \* “quibbling”: But the Intelligent know that this is what he ought to have done; and that by putting another Interpretation on his Lordship's Letter, not only different from the professed Design, but also repugnant to the express Doctrine of it, (as will presently be shewn:) he has been injurious to his Lordship, to Truth, and to the Church of *Christ*; and has done all he could to impede the Influence of a *Pastoral Letter*, which his Lordship tells us was written  
“† with an Eye, throughout, to the present At-  
“tempts of Infidels against our common Faith,  
“and with a sincere Desire to preserve the People  
“of his Diocese from the Infection, and to estab-  
“lish them in that Faith”.

§ See Defence, p. 26.  
Letter, p. 91.

\* *Ibid.*

† See Third Pastoral

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I have read over the *Pastoral Letter* again and again: And, after all, can find no such Doctrine, as the *Pleader* would brand it with. So far is his Lordship from contending for the *absolute Necessity* of Revelation, or that no one can possibly be sav'd without it, that, on the contrary, he expressly says, “ \* If it appeared that God would judge Men for  
“ the Transgression of any Duty, which they did  
“ not and could not know to be their Duty, —  
“ it would be difficult to reconcile such a Proceed-  
“ ing to the Divine Justice. But since the con-  
“ trary to this is true, and it is certain God will  
“ not punish Men for invincible Ignorance, surely  
“ he is at Liberty, &c. ” And again, † “ Tho’  
“ the Light of Reason is but dim, yet they who  
“ have no better Light to walk by, and who  
“ honestly make use of that, as the only Guide  
“ God has given them, cannot fail to be merciful-  
“ ly dealt with by infinite Justice and Goodness.”  
These Passages are so plain and express against the *absolute Necessity* of reveal'd Light, *universally* and *without Limitation*, that the *Pleader*, to create Ground for cavilling, is forc'd to pretend that his Lordship herein § *contradicts himself*. What was judiciously observ'd to prevent Misconstruction, is, by this fair, ingenuous Writer, construed into an Inconsistency and Self-contradiction. But who that will read with Candor, and judge righteous Judgment, can deem it so? What should hinder but that the denying the Sufficiency of natural Light, to ascertain the Immortality of the Soul, the Forgiveness of Sins, &c. may be very compatible with believing that Men may be sav'd in a State of Nature?

However, let us consider what the Ground of his Objection is. It seems he finds the *Pastoral*

\* P. 45.

† P. 46.

§ Plea, p. 48.

*Letter* \* “ to oppose universally this favourite Prin-  
 “ ciple of some late Infidel Writers, that Reason is  
 “ a sufficient Guide; nay, asserting and teaching that  
 “ Reason of it self is an insufficient Guide.” Behold  
 the Passage that gives him so much Disgust, and is  
 so full of deadly Poison; that † “ weakens the Ob-  
 “ ligation of natural Religion,” and § “ destroys the  
 “ Wisdom and Goodness of Divine Providence in the  
 “ Government of the World!” Hence he infers,  
 that his Lordship teaches the || *absolute Necessity* of  
 Revelation to Man’s Happiness. Never, surely,  
 till now, was any Prelate, writing in Vindication  
 of our common Christianity, so groundlessly, and  
 withal so roughly, attack’d by one, who has un-  
 dertaken the Priest’s Office, and devoted himself to  
 the Service of the Church! He does not produce  
 any one Proposition, wherein his Lordship express-  
 ly teaches the Doctrine he charges him with. No:  
 But barely to say that Reason of it self is an insuffi-  
 cient Guide, is, (he pretends) to maintain the In-  
 sufficiency of Reason *absolutely and without Limita-*  
*tion*, and as much as to say, that no one can be  
 sav’d under the Guidance of Reason only, or with-  
 out Revelation. A strange Way of arguing indeed!  
 The Term *insufficient* being wholly *relative*, and  
 having no *absolute* Signification, the Query is, What  
 Purposes Reason is insufficient for? And this is  
 what his Lordship very particularly and expressly  
 sets forth, enumerating several Instances, wherein,  
 in Opposition to the Deists, he insists that Reason is  
 not capable of being a Guide. The *Pleader* should  
 have attended to this Design of the *Pastoral Letter*,  
 and not have suffer’d himself to be led away by the  
 Sound of Words, or something worse, to charge it  
 with a Doctrine, which by reiterated Remonstrances

\* Plea, p. 3.      † Plea, p. 9.  
 p. 8. Introd. to Def. p. 2, 14  
 p. 1, 2, 13,

§ Plea, p. 4: See also  
 || Plea, p. 4, 7, 9. Introd.



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it expressly opposes and disavows. Doubtless, he would take it much amiss to be us'd himself, as he has us'd this Right Reverend Prelate, and to have his Meaning thus egregiously perverted. If any one should turn his own Reasoning upon him in the Manner following, ——— \* “ I find you to maintain the Sufficiency of Reason universally, without regard to Men's having or not having Opportunities of knowing the reveal'd Will of God ; nay, asserting and teaching, that Reason *of it self* is a *sufficient* Guide in Matters of Religion, without any Limitation ; consequently that it is sufficient for profess'd Infidels and Apostates, and capable of leading them, or any one else, to as great a Perfection of Virtue, as high a Degree of Happiness, and as well-grounded an Assurance of God's Favour, as the Gospel can : ” In this case, I say, what an Outcry would he presently make ? How tragically complain of his Meaning being perverted, his Design maliciously misrepresented ? Was it then right and fair in the *Pleader* to construe his Lordship's Words in this Manner ? No, 'twas absolutely wrong and unjust, and the World, I am persuaded, must *absolutely* and *universally* blame him for it.

Thetaking Notice of this one Thing, and shewing the true Occasion and Design of the *Pastoral Letter*, obviates the principal Matters alledg'd against his Lordship ; and would have been a sufficient Reply to this Writer, if he had contented himself to oppose only the *absolute Necessity* of a Revelation. But he proceeds much farther, giving the Deists more and more Advantage, and thereby shewing that he has drank deep, one way or other, of the Poison of those Writings, which he professes himself to † *know nothing of* : He magnifies the Strength

\* Compare *Pica*, p. 3, 4.

† *Plea*, p. 4.

of Reason beyond the Bounds of Truth, and by ascribing to it a Capacity for such Discoveries as are owing to reveal'd Light, derogates from the true Value, Excellence, and Usefulness of that extraordinary Largess and supernatural Bounty of Heaven. This is what I shall endeavour to make appear in the following Pages; influenc'd by nothing but a Regard to Truth, and desiring that nothing I shall write may have any Influence on any one, farther than it conduces to the Glory of God, the Honour of our Religion, and the Good of Men.

What I have to offer will fall under the following Enquiries :

*First,* Whether Reason is a sufficient Guide with respect to the *Matter* of human Duty, or capable of discovering to Mankind a compleat and faultless Rule of Life?

*Secondly,* Whether it teaches a *certain* Method of reconciling Sinners to God?

*Thirdly,* Whether it demonstrates the Necessity of praying for Grace, or the Effluxes of God's Spirit, and gives Men an Assurance of his Willingness, upon their Prayers, to assist them in the Discharge of their Duty?

*Fourthly,* Whether it ascertains the eternal Duration of the Soul in a State of Rewards or Punishments in the next Life?

*Lastly,* I will enquire into the different Tendencies of affirming and of denying the Sufficiency of Reason, and endeavour to shew what the Consequences of these Doctrines respectively are, or may probably be.



## C H A P. II.

*Whether Reason can discover a compleat and faultless Rule of Life?*

**T**IS not to the purpose of the present Argument to say what Duties *Plato* and *Cicero* fully understood, if they were ignorant about *any*; nor yet, to say, (supposing there was room for it) that they had a right Knowledge of the whole Compass of human Duty, if that Knowledge was acquir'd by *excessive* Labour and Application of Thought. Farther, 'tis of no Significancy, what Discoveries have been made either by the *few* of a philosophick Genius; or by any others whom the Light of Revelation reach'd to. If Reason be sufficient to lead Mankind to the Knowledge of a faultless Rule of Life, a mere Heathen, of however mean a Capacity, may with reasonable Ease and great Clearness make the Discovery. Accordingly this is what our Author contends for: Whose Doctrine, that the Reader may have a more distinct View of it, I shall lay down under the following Particulars:

First, He maintains, that Mankind by the Strength of Reason alone may draw out a System of Morality, comprehending every Branch of human Duty, and as full and faultless as that which the Scriptures teach. \* “ Reason, says he, *with the*

\* *Plea*, p. 58.



“ moral Power of Action with which Man was originally endued, was sufficient for him in all Matters of moral Duty and Religion: [And therefore] it must continue to be so.” In another Place he speaks thus: \* “ With respect to all the Parts of Duty, — What does reveal'd Religion teach more, than that we should worship and please God, and do good unto Men? ” &c. then follows, † “ These are the Principles and Doctrines of true Deism, in which Heathens were instructed by the mere Light of natural Reason: ” i. e. in plain English, the Christian Ethicks are not a jot better than the Pagan.

Secondly, That every individual is naturally capable of making the Discovery above-mention'd. His own Words are: † “ You weaken the Obligation of natural Religion, whilst you derogate from the Sufficiency of human Reason, which is the natural Will of God made known to all Men. — § God might justly have left Men [the whole Species or every Individual] to the mere Light of natural Reason, which in it self was sufficient in all Circumstances to guide them to [not a single Virtue, or two, but to every] Virtue. — ‡ Without being Philosophers, every one, by employing his Reason in the best Manner he was able, might, and could not but see, — that he ought to worship his Creator, ” &c.

Thirdly, That every one may find out, or form to himself, such a compleat System of Ethicks, clearly and with certainty. In his own Words thus: ∴ “ The Light of Nature included in it, a certain Knowledge of the acceptable way of Worship. — † There is no Part of Religion or Morality enjoin'd in the Gospel, which is not clear and evident in natural Religion, [to Men living in a

\* Def. p. 13.

† Def. p. 15.

‡ Plea, p. 9.

§ Plea, p. 10.

‡ Plea, p. 15.

∴ Def. p. 36.

‡ Def. p. 44.



State of Nature; or having nothing else to guide them but their Reason, which he calls *the natural Will of God made known to all Men* ] and which was not in fact taught amongst the Heathens. — † Reason is sufficient, by its clear and demonstrable Evidence, to determine all Points of natural Piety and Virtue. — ¶ Immorality and Idolatry were as plainly repugnant to natural Reason, as they are to the revealed Will of God. — § The spiritual Worship of the one true God, and every moral Rule of Life, is not only plainly discoverable by Reason, but was actually taught amongst the Heathens; nor does the Gospel command any Duty relating to God, our Neighbour, or ourselves, which was not taught by Plato, Tully, &c.

Lastly, That this Discovery may be made by every one with Ease and Facility. His own Words are: ¶ *As every one has, and always has, Authority to judge for himself in Matters of Religion; so it is, and was always, easy to determine what Opinions are true or false in all the main Parts and Duties of Religion. — ∴ Whatever Corruptions crept into the Scheme of natural Religion might easily be known and reform'd, if Men would have attended to their Reason.*"

Such are the Principles of this Writer, which he advances and contends for with great Confidence; but, whether with equal Strength of Argument, must now be examin'd. In order to which, I must observe, that we cannot determine by Deductions *a priori*, or any abstract Contemplations on the Nature of the human Mind, what the inbred Strength of it is, or whether 'tis equal to this or that Disquisition. The only way to judge in the Case is) by arguing *a posteriori*; from Facts either

\* Plea, p. 9.

† Plea, p. 18.

‡ Plea, p. 46.

§ Introd. p. 5. 6.

+ Plea, p. 27.

∴ Plea, p. 47.

within our own Knowledge, or within the Observation of others, whose Testimony may be rely'd on. The *Pleader* indeed affirms, that he \* “*has prov'd from the Nature of the thing, that Reason could not but be in itself a sufficient Guide.*” But where he has done this, he does not particularly say, nor will he ever be able to shew. The Pretence is palpably absurd, no less so, than is the other thing he pretends at the same time, *viz.* that he “*has prov'd likewise from Fact, that Reason could not but be so.*” *Facts* are stubborn Things, and cogent in their Evidence, so far as the Nature of it reaches: But they never can do any such Feats, as this over-sanguine Gentleman ascribes to them. Suppose the Matter of Fact to be certain, that the World was created just 5737 Years ago; Would this shew that it could not possibly have been created, either sooner or later? *Facts* are declarative only of the Existences of Things, how they are, or have been. They no ways prove there was an *absolute, antecedent* Necessity for those Things to be precisely so, as we find them, or that they could not possibly have been otherwise. But to let this pass.

'Tis plain enough the *Pleader* must proceed in the way I have mention'd. Accordingly he alleges, that † “*Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Epictetus, Marcus Antoninus, and others, taught the practical Duties of Religion, as clearly as the Law of Moses, without receiving their Religion from Revelation.*” But there is one grand incurable Flaw in this Argument. He cannot prove, that what these Philosophers taught, was the Result of *mere Reason*, or that they had no Assistance from Revelation in framing their Morality. 'Tis easy to assert, but what Evidence can he bring,

\* *Introduct.* p. 2.

† *Def.* p. 60.

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 that *Epictetus*, and *Marcus Antoninus*: receiv'd no  
 Improvements from Christianity, which was spread  
 all around them? And long before the Gospel-age,  
 how knows he, but the *Heathens* deriv'd consider-  
 able Light from the *Jewish* People, who were dis-  
 pers'd every-where almost throughout the known  
 World?

The Bishop of *London* has sufficiently obviated  
 this Fallacy, in his *Pastoral Letter*; where, among  
 the Advantages which the Enemies of Christianity  
 unduly take, he mentions this as one, — “ the  
 “ taking an Estimate of the Strength and Power  
 “ of Reason from Books upon the Subject of Mo-  
 “ rality, that have been written since the Christian  
 “ Revelation was made. ” And his Lordship  
 judiciously remarks farther, that † “ to judge  
 “ rightly how far Reason is able to be a Guide in  
 “ Religion, we must form that Judgment upon  
 “ the Writings of such of the ancient Philosophers,  
 “ as appear not to have had any Knowledge either  
 “ of the *Jewish* or the *Christian* Revelation. ”

But the *Pleader* alledges, that § “ *Mankind*  
 “ were left to the Guidance of mere Nature for many  
 “ Ages, and so, destitute, not thro' their own Fault,  
 “ but the Necessity [the unavoidable Necessity, he  
 “ afterward calls it] of their Circumstances of a suf-  
 “ ficient Guide, unless their Reason was sufficient: ”  
 Meaning, I suppose, that, before the Gospel-age,  
 all but the *Jews* were unavoidably destitute of super-  
 natural Light, and that no other People could  
 possibly derive any Advantages from it: Which  
 yet he cannot prove to be true of any one Nation;  
 and which, with respect to those that we have the  
 largest and best Accounts of, is known to be false.  
 Nay, he pretends, that || “ true Religion (without

• P. 12. † *Ibid.*  
 Introd. p. 2. Def. p. 39.

§ Plea, p. 8. Compare p. 45, 66,  
 || Def. p. 59, 60.



“ being Matter of Revelation), or true Deism, free  
 “ from all mixture of Idolatry, was profess’d by the  
 “ old Magians:” And, which is still more, that  
 even \* *Melchisedec* and *Job* were *Deists* too, guided  
 by the Light of Nature only, and not assisted in  
 the least by Revelation: Whereby it appears that  
 he writes at Random, framing History out of his  
 own Head, as Spiders draw their Webs out of  
 their own Bowels. What! Was it true Religion  
 to maintain † “ two Principles, One the Cause of  
 “ all Good, the Other the Cause of all Evil, ”  
 (which was the Doctrine of the whole *Magian* Sect)  
 and (as § many of them were of Opinion) both  
 eternal too? Or was it “ true Deism, without any  
 “ mixture of Idolatry, ” to † worship the Sun,  
 Moon, and Stars, as they all did? The Gentle-  
 man seems to think, that *Creature-worship* may be  
 true Worship, and makes Idolatry to consist only  
 in the Adoration of Images: For that was the  
 grand ∴ Corruption of the *Sabians*, which the  
*Magians* reform’d from, and set up their new Sect  
 in Opposition to. Beside, How knows he that  
 the old *Magians* were mere *Deists*? They claim’d  
 §§ *Abraham* for the Founder of their Sect, pretend-  
 ing their Religion was the same which he profess’d:  
 And the Reason of the Thing shews, that the  
 earlier they liv’d, the more likely they were to  
 receive Light from the several Revelations made to  
*Abraham*, and others of the Patriarchs. And as to  
*Melchisedec* and *Job*, ’tis inconceivable why he  
 should rank these among *Deists*. ’Tis quite uncer-  
 tain who either of them was. The *Jeros* generally  
 agree, that the former was †† *Sben* himself: Others

\* Def. p. 59, 60.  
 p. 179. eighth Edit.

∴ Ibid. p. 179, 241.

†† Patrick on Gen. 14. 18.

† *Prideaux’s Connection*, Vol. 1.

§ Ibid. †† Ibid. p. 177, 217.

§§ Ibid. p. 225.



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think \* he was *Shem's* Son; and others again, that he was the Son of *Peleg*. Whoever he was; the *Pleaser* might (for ought he knows) as truly call *Noah* himself a *Deist*, as call this Man so; who, probably enough, had frequent Opportunities of conversing with *Noah*; or, at least, with one or other of his Sons, and of making himself fully acquainted with all the Revelations they had any Knowledge of. 'Tis not at all unlikely that *Melchisedec* was much older than *Abraham*, and *Abraham* was born but two Years after the Death of *Noah*, and dy'd several Years before *Shem*. As to the latter, some think he was a near Descendant from *Abraham*. He was of the Land of † *Uz*, and we meet with a Person nam'd *Uz* among the Off-spring of *Esau*, from whom a Part of § *Idumea* anciently took it's Name. Others, perhaps more plausibly; say, he was descended from *Uz*, the Son of † *Nabor*, *Abraham's* Brother. Either way, in all likelihood, he had many Advantages from Revelation. He speaks plainly of † *Adam's* Disobedience, and his Attempt to excuse it, mentioning him by Name: And by the same Way which this Information was convey'd to him, he might much more easily learn the Purport of the Revelations made to *Noah*, or any of his more immediate Progenitors. We cannot reasonably suppose him ignorant of any Truths in Religion, which his three Friends, or any of his Acquaintance, were capable of communicating to him. Now *Elihu* the *Buzite*, very probably was a Descendant from ∴ *Buz*, the Son of *Nabor*, *Abraham's* Brother. *Elihu* the *Temanite*, probably descended from §§ *Tema*, the Son of *Ishmael*:

\* See *Bedford's* Scripture Chron. p. 318. † *Job* 1. 1.  
 § See *Bochart's* *Phaleg*. lib. 2. cap. 8. *Leviticus* on *Jer.* 25. 29.  
 † *Gen.* 22. 21. † *Job.* 31. 33. ∴ *Gen.* 22. 21.  
 §§ *Gen.* 25. 15.

And

And *Bilhad*, the *Sbuite*, from \* *Sbub*, one of *Abraham's Sons* by *Keturah*. I don't mention these Matters for certain Truths. If they but carry with them an Air of Probability, that is enough for my Purpose. The *Pleader* affirming that these People were mere *Deists*; 'tis his Business to prove they were so; which he has not attempted to do, (a very unfair Thing this!) and must be conscious too, I am verily persuaded, that he cannot do. But so proceed.

Taking the Heathens as they were, and with all the Advantages they had one way or another from Revelation, did any of them set forth a compleat System of Ethicks, or teach a pure and uncorrupt Morality? The *Pleader* pretends that he  
 “ † can produce every Precept of true Religion from  
 “ the Philosophers; ” and says expressly, § “ the  
 “ Gospel does not command any Duty relating to God,  
 “ our Neighbour, or ourselves, which was not taught  
 “ by Plato, Tully, Seneca, Epictetus, Marcus  
 “ Antoninus, and others. ” The like he says in another Place, enlarging the Number of his Philosophers, and adding ¶ *Socrates* and *Aristotle* to those above-mention'd. — I will believe him, when he has extracted and publish'd seven several compleat Systems of Ethicks, one out of each of these Heathens. In the mean Time, I may take Notice of some of their Errors. *Socrates* maintain'd, that 'twas neither † unjust nor revengeful to take Pleasure in the Afflictions of our Enemies. *Plato* taught, that in some Cases it was lawful and expedient to . . . expose Children, and leave them to perish. He not only made a Practice of §§ For-

\* *Gen.* 25. 2.

† *Introd. to the Def.* p. 6.

§ *Ibid.*

¶ *Def.* p. 60.

† *Plato in Philebo.* p. 88.

. . . *Plato de Republica.* lib. 5. p. 460, 461.

§§ See *Diogen. Laert.* lib. 3. p. 205. *Athen. Deip.* lib. 13, p. 589.

nication himself, but gave \* others the same Liberty whenever they pleas'd. Nay, which is still worie, he allow'd of a † Community of Wives: And in his Commonwealth, the Women were commanded to uncover their § Nakedness, and expose to every one's View, what in Decency should be kept secret. 'Twas *Aristotle's* Doctrine, that Women in certain Cases might and should ‡ destroy the *Fœtus* in their Wombs, and force Abortion; that \*\* Meekness argued a Defect of Mind; and that Patience under Reproaches was the Spirit of a Slave. *Tully* allow'd, and pleaded for §§ Fornication with Strumpets: And he not only profess'd that he would be ∴ reveng'd on every Soul that at any Time should use him ill, but approv'd also of the same Disposition in others; making a †† meek, forgiving Temper, the Sign of a Fool. *Seneca* (as did most of the *Stoicks*) esteem'd Self-murder to be sometimes a †† Duty; Pity and Compassion, to be a || Weakness and a Crime; and ‡ Prayer to God, to be silly and quite useless.

\* *Plato* de *Repub.* lib. 5. p. 461. *Cicero* pro *Cælio*.

† *Plato* de *Repub.* lib. 5. p. 459. *Diogen. Laert.* lib. 7. p. 517. *Laërt.* lib. 3. cap. 21, 22. *Chryf. Hom.* 4. in *Actu* *Apost.* p. 482.

§ *Plato* de *Repub.* lib. 5. p. 457, 459. *Chryf. Hom.* ubi supra.

‡ *Arist.* de *Repub.* lib. 7. cap. 16.

\*\* *Arist.* *Eth.* lib. 4. cap. 11.

§§ *Detur* aliquid *etati*: sit *Adolescentia* liberior. non omnia voluptatibus denegentur: non semper superet vera illa, & directa ratio: vincat aliquando cupiditas, voluptatique rationem. *Orat. pro Cælio*.

Si quis est, qui meretriciis amoribus interdictum juventuti putet, est ille quidem vaide severus: negare non possum: sed abhorret non modo ab hujus sæculi licentia, verum etiam a majorum consuetudine & concessis. Quando enim hoc factum non est? Quando reprehentium? Quando non permissum? *Ibid.*

∴ Sic vicinèr facinora lingua, quemadmodum à quibusque sum provocatus. *In Antonium*.

Odi hominem & odero: utinam ulcisci possem. *Ad Atticum*.

†† *Tull.* *Quæst.* l. 3. *De Invent.* l. 2. †† *Ep.* 70.

|| *De Clemen.* l. 2. c. 5. ‡ *Ep.* 31. 41.

*Epictetus,*



*Epictetus*, instead of peremptorily prohibiting, does in a manner \* allow of, Fornication: And his Advice, that every one should conform to the Religion of his † Country, will lead a Man blind-fold into the grossest Idolatry and Superstition. *Marcus Antoninus*, as living so many Years after the Publication of the Gospel, much exceeds the very best of the most antient Philosophers. And yet, after all the Encomiums that have been given of this Emperor, he was far from being without his Errors both in Belief and Practice. More than once he speaks in favour of § Self-Murder. How ridiculous is the Reason he gives for Patience under Pain, or any other Calamity? || “ It would not have been sent you, *says he*, if it had not been for the Good of the Universe. *Jupiter* himself, or the great Governor of the World, is the happier for it; whose Felicity is, in some measure, continued and perfected thereby. ” In several Places he speaks of God, as a mere *Anima Mundi*. He calls the Soul of Man a ∴ Part of the Deity; and yet was doubtful, whether, upon its Separation from the Body, it was scatter’d into † Atoms, or absorb’d in the Soul of the Universe. But the most unaccountable thing of all was, his §§ deifying *Lucius Verus* and *Faustina*; than which, nothing could be more impious as well as ridiculous.

I could instance in several other Enormities taught and recommended by these Heathens; but those that I have mention’d are sufficient to shew, that our Author has exceeded in his Account of their Morality. What Mr. *Locke* has remark’d on this

\* *Enchirid.* Cap. 47. † Cap. 29. § Lib. 3.  
 Sect. 1. Lib. 5. Sect. 29. Lib. 10. Sect. 8. || Lib. 5. Sect. 8.  
 ∴ Lib. 8. Sect. 7. † Lib. 6. Sect. 24. Lib. 8. Sect. 25.  
 §§ *Capitolin.* Compare *Herodian*, Lib. 4. p. 57.



Occasion is worth transcribing: \* "Natural Reason in its full Extent, was no-where, that I know, taken Care of by the Force of Natural Reason. It should seem by the little that has hitherto been done in it, that 'tis too hard a Task for unassisted Reason, to establish Morality in all its Parts upon its true Foundations, with a clear and convincing Light. ——— Whatever was the Cause, 'tis plain in Fact, that Human Reason unassisted, fail'd Men in its great and proper Business of Morality. It never, from unquestionable Principles, by clear Deductions, made out an entire Body of the Law of Nature. And he that shall collect all the moral Rules of the Philosophers, and compare them with those contain'd in the New Testament, will find them to come short of the Morality deliver'd by our Saviour, and taught by his Apostles; a College made up for the most Part of ignorant, but inspir'd, Fishermen." To the same purpose the learned Dr. Clarke speaks, affirming that there were † various Mixtures of different Errors, in what every one of the Philosophers discover'd of Truth singly; † and citing with Approbation what *Lactantius* has observ'd, viz. that § "no One's single Scheme was in all its Parts consistent and agreeable to Reason and Truth; and none of them were able to collect into one whole and entire Scheme, the several Truths dispers'd among them all: † That † tho' they saw and discover'd singly, almost all the Particulars of which the whole Scheme of Morality consists, yet, this was done by different Men, and at different Times, and in

\* Locke, Vol. 2. p. 532.  
p. 193. Third Edit.

† Clarke's Evidences, &c.  
§ *Ibid.* p. 192: † *Ibid.*

“ different Manners, and without finding the  
 “ Connexion of the Causes, and Consequences,  
 “ and Reasons of Things; from the mutual De-  
 “ pendencies of which, the Completeness and  
 “ Perfection of the whole Scheme arises; and  
 “ that it was not possible for any Man, without  
 “ the Light of Revelation, to have collected and  
 “ put together in Order all the several Truths,  
 “ which were taught singly and scatteredly by  
 “ Philosophers of all the different Sects, and to  
 “ have made up out of them one entire consistent  
 “ Scheme.” I must add, (since the *Pleader*, by  
 an \* idle Pretence, and a Citation which no way  
 reaches the main Point in Debate, would  
 drag this learned Author into his Party:) that the  
*Doctor* insists farther, that † “ tho’ the Obliga-  
 “ tions of Morality be naturally and in themselves  
 “ demonstrable; [and, since all the Parts of our  
 “ Duty have been reveal’d to us, Men of Sense  
 “ and a superior Genius may † begin and de-  
 “ duce their Obligation from Reason;] yet, con-  
 “ sidering the manifest Corruptness of the pre-  
 “ sent Estate which Human Nature is in, the  
 “ Generality of Men must not by any Means be left  
 “ wholly to the Workings of their own Minds;”  
 and that § “ ’tis undeniably too difficult a Work,  
 “ for Men of all Capacities to discover every Man  
 “ for himself, by the bare Light of Nature, all  
 “ the particular Branches of their Duty.”

The *Pleader* particularly alledges with respect to  
 an acceptable way of Worship, that † “ the Light  
 “ of Nature includes a certain Knowledge of it.”  
 But let us hear again the late Dr. Clarke maintain-  
 ing the Reverse: \*\* “ That God, says he, ought

\* See Def. p. 44, 47.

† Evidences, &c. p. 165.

‡ See *Ibid.* p. 420.

§ *Ibid.* p. 198.

† Def. p. 36.

\*\* Clarke’s Evidences, p. 178. See also his Sermons, Vol. 2  
 p. 18.

“ to be worshipped, is, in the *general*, as evident  
 “ and plain from the Light of Nature, as any  
 “ thing can be: But in what *particular Manner*,  
 “ and with what Kind of Service he will be wor-  
 “ shipped, cannot be certainly discover’d by bare  
 “ Reason. Obedience to the Obligations of Na-  
 “ ture, and Imitation of the Moral Attributes of  
 “ God, the wisest Philosophers easily knew was  
 “ undoubtedly the *most acceptable* Service to God:  
 “ But some *external* Adoration seem’d also to be  
 “ necessary; and *how* this was to be perform’d,  
 “ they could not with any Certainty discover: ”  
 In which the Doctor, as might easily be shewn,  
 has the general Suffrage of the best Writers fully  
 on his Side.

Our Author may try, if he pleases, but, I ap-  
 prehend, he will find it no easy matter, to instance  
 in any one particular Kind of *outward* Service,  
 which unassisted Reason can ascertain the binding  
 and obliging Fitness of. Even *Prayer* it self need  
 not be excepted; especially if (as some judicious  
 Writers have lately observ’d:) it be only a \* *posi-*  
*tive* Duty, and no ways founded in the necessary  
 and immutable Relations of Things. *Piety*, in the  
*abstract* Idea of it, or as it denotes an inward Ve-  
 neration of the Mind for the great Creator, ever  
 was and will be fitting; and the Reverse cannot  
 but be displeasing to God: But what outward  
 Acts of Adoration this inward *Piety* might most  
 properly accompany; or, out of the great Va-  
 riety that might be us’d, which of them has the  
 best natural Fitness, and is deem’d best by God,  
 could never have been certainly known without  
 Revelation: Nor can I conceive *how* the wisest  
 Man in a State of Nature can demonstrate, con-

\* See Dr. *Steebling’s* Use and Advantages of the Gospel, p. 36,  
 &c. Essay on Moral Obligation, p. 76.



cerning Prayer, Sacrifices, Vows to God, and swearing by his Name, from any natural Fitness he can discern in them, that God must necessarily chuse these for the outward Acts of Worship; or that, in his infinite Wisdom, he can see no others more, or so much as equally, fitting.

The *Pleader* undertakes to \* “ *shew in Fact,*  
 “ *from the Doctrines of Heathen Writers, that Rea-*  
 “ *son was not insufficient to teach Men the true and*  
 “ *acceptable way of publickly worshipping God.* ”  
 To which purpose he urges the Testimony of *Seneca, Plato, and Persius.* I answer, All he can urge from these Writers will signify nothing, unless he could first prove them to have been totally destitute of the Aids of Revelation; which he has not as yet done, and never will, I am persuaded, attempt to do. *Simplicius* long ago remark'd, upon the Credit of *antient History*, that † “ God  
 “ himself instituted the right and acceptable Way  
 “ of Worship, and reveal'd to Mankind in what  
 “ Manner they should express their Reverence and  
 “ Veneration for him. ” And 'tis exceeding probable, from what we know of the Manner of peopling the Earth, and from the great Resemblance which many of the *Pagan Customs* bear to the *Jewish and Patriarchal*, that no Sort of Worship ever obtain'd in the World, but what (so far as it agreed with the Divine Will) was originally deriv'd from Revelation. However, let us suppose the Authors he refers to, to have been mere Heathens: What now will their Testimonies amount to? *Seneca* (as was before observ'd) disap-

\* Def. p. 12. 13.      † ὅτι [scil. πρῶτον τῷ θεῷ προσελα-  
 μενῶν] τὰς νομίμους καὶ ἐπιθέτους ὁ θεὸς πάντως τοῖς ἀνθρώποις  
 ἐξέστηεν, ὡς αἱ ἰσοεῖαι δηλοῦσι. Comm. in *Epicet.* cap. 38.  
 P. 196.



prov'd of all publick & Worship, properly so call'd, maintaining, that our Veneration of the Deity should be shewn by inward Piety and Rectitude of Heart. And therefore 'twas very apposite and pleasant in this Writer to refer us to the Testimony of *Seneca* on this Occasion; whose Judgment on the Case must needs be of particular Service towards proving, in *Fact*, that all virtuous Heathens knew full well which was the true and acceptable Manner of Publick Worship, and "agreed" in their Notions about it. As to *Plato* and *Persius*, the Passages cited from them are plainly enough to be understood of idolatrous Worship, and the Service of inferior Deities; nor is there the least Intimation about the right Way of publickly worshipping the one true God. 'Tis well known *Plato* was an avow'd \* Idolater, and, however he might acknowledge one supreme Governor of the Universe, encouraged the worship of subordinate Deities: And *Lactantius* says, that not only † *Plato*, but all the rest of the old Philosophers, and the Poets too, were silent about the Worship of the *supreme*

‡ Turpe est, etiamnum Deos fatigare. Quid votis opus est? Sic te ipse felicem. Ep. 31.

— Quam stultum est optare, cum possis a te impetrare! Non sicut ad cœlum elevandæ manus. Ep. 41.

\* Πρώτον μὲν θαμὲν πρὸς τὰς μετ' ὀλυμπίους τε καὶ τὰς ἑπομένους ἔχοντες θεούς. τοῖς χερσίν αὖ πε θεοῖς ἄρπα καὶ δυνάμεις καὶ ἀρετὰς ἔχοντες, ὁρδοῦνται καὶ ἡ ἐπιβουλὴ σκοπεῖ πύργους. — Μετὰ δὲ τούτοις καὶ τοῖς δαίμοσι ὅγ' ἔμφρων ὀργάζονται αὖ. — Ἐπακολουθεῖ δὲ αὐτοῖς ἰδρύματα ἴδια πατρῶν θεῶν καὶ τὰ ἑτέρον ὀργαζόμενα. *Plato de Leg. l. 4. p. 601.*

† Hic *Plato* abetravit; hic perdidit, quam primum arripuerat, veritatem; cum de cultu ejus Dei, quem Conditorem rerum ac Parentem fatebatur, obticuit. *Lactant. Epitome, cap. 10.*

— Summum Deum cum & Philosophi & Poetae, & ipsi denique, qui Deos colunt, sæpe fateantur: de cultu tamen & honoribus ejus nemo unquam requirit, nemo differuit, ea scilicet persuasionem, qua semper beneficam incorruptamque credentes, nec infelicem cuiquam, nec ullo cultu indigere arbitrantur. *De*

*Dei, cap. 11.*

God,

God, thinking there was no need of paying him any publick Homage, and that 'twas enough to be exact in the Adoration of *inferior Deities, Demons, and departed Ghosts.*

But did not \* “ *all virtuous Heathens agree, that God regarded Purity of Soul, and Righteousness, and Holiness of Life, far above the most costly Sacrifices; and that he was only properly worshipped by Piety, and Rectitude of Will and Affections?* ”

Be it so: What is the Consequence? Surely, *Holiness of Life, Rectitude of Will, and fifty other Words of the like Import, and which might be us'd to denote a careful Abstinence from all known Sin, are far from including in them a certain Knowledge of the right and best way of publick Worship.* Admitting the Heathens to have sagaciously discover'd, that *Rectitude of Will is right and proper; and that God, who tries the Heart and Reins, regards inward Holiness more than outward Services; what would this signify towards determining, whether they could demonstrate by the Light of Nature, that † Prayer, Sacrifices, &c. were proper Instances of Divine Worship, and so eminently proper too, that no other outward Acts could have a greater natural Aptitude for that Purpose; or by infinite Wisdom be preferr'd before them?*

What I have here mention'd is a Fallacy that our Author is much addicted to. Something of this Kind runs from one End to the other of his Reasoning, and leavens the whole Lump. He tells us again and again § “ *Reason had always Evidence to enforce the Obligation of Religion.* ”

\* Def. p. 13. † See *Max. Tyr. Dissert. 30.* Where this Philosopher debates, whether Prayer is a Duty or no; and concludes upon the whole, that 'tis so far from being so, that, on the contrary, 'tis a Duty *not* to pray. § *Plea, p. 20.*

— \* “ Every one might, and could not but see  
 “ the Reasonableness and Obligation of Piety and  
 “ moral Duties. ” — † “ Immorality is as plain-  
 “ ly repugnant to natural Reason, as to Revelation. ”  
 — ‡ “ By the Light of Nature we see the Difference  
 “ of Virtue and Vice; and know we are under an  
 “ unchangeable Obligation to do what is righteous and  
 “ good, and not to do what is unrighteous or evil: ”

And many other Passages there are of the same Stamp. The like Sophistry is made use of by a late § Libeller of the Gospel-Revelation, in his Attempt to shew the Perfection of the Law of Nature, and the Unchangeableness of true Religion. The Answer to it is obvious enough. Without doubt Good and Evil are essentially different from one another, and have been constantly thought so, ever since the Invention of these Terms. A Repugnancy to Reason, or the Idea of such a Repugnancy, is annex'd to the Words Immorality, Vice, Impiety, Unrighteousness; and makes up the formal Nature and Definition of these Things. On the other Hand, Virtue, in the very Notion of it, (as 'tis a Conformity to the Law we are to walk by) includes Obligation; because the Word Law does so. And as Piety, Charity, and Temperance, ever were, and could not but be bounden Duties: So they, or any Set of Words, whereby we express Benevolence towards the several Parts of the intelligent System, always will include the Whole of Religion strictly so call'd; and nothing can be formally good, or be made the formal Part of Duty, beside these. But what is the great Use of this Way of Reasoning? What Point of Consequence does it elucidate, or clear up? It brings to my Remembrance the profound Axioms of a

\* Plea, p. 15.

† Ibid. p. 46.

‡ Ibid. p. 54.

§ See Christianity as old as the Creation.



famous Popish Writer, — a Rule is a Rule, &c.

The Question is not concerning *general Abstract* Ideas, which are of Mens own Growth, compounded, join'd, and form'd into Associations, as they think fit, and express'd by Words arbitrarily coin'd and set for them. A *Genus* being form'd, all the several *Species*, which appear to belong to it, and all the known *Individuals* of these *Species*, are unavoidably included under it: Nor can any thing be of the *Essence* of the *Genus* which does not belong to its several *Species*, and their *Individuals*. So that; supposing Men to have form'd a *complex Idea* in their own Minds, and to agree to express it by those *general Terms* *Virtue* and *Religion*: And, supposing farther, this *Genus* or *complex Idea* to branch it self out into several *Species*, which they also agree to call *Piety, Charity, Temperance*; and each of *These* to have several *Particulars*: In this case, I say, if what they call *Virtue*, carries the Idea of *Obligation; Reasonableness, Acceptableness* to God, &c. along with it; so must *Piety, Charity, Temperance*, and every individual Act reducible to them. All this is plain enough; nor is it conceivable but that if Men annex *one Set of Ideas* to the Terms *Goodness* and *Virtue*; *another*, and a quite *opposite Set*, to *Vice* and *moral Evil*, they must see there is a *Difference* between these things, as our Author most judiciously remarks in several Places: And whatever Actions they find reducible to either one or other of these *Kinds*, or agreeing with the Ideas they have annex'd to these Words, they must respectively call them *Good* or *Evil*.

But the grand Point to be consider'd is, whether Men (after they have got a Notion of *Virtue* and *Religion* in the *general*, and have branch'd it out into several *Species*, which they agree to call *Piety, Charity, Temperance*, or by whatever other

Names they think fit) can go on, and demonstrate, by the Light of Nature, in what *particular* Instances each of these Virtues may fitly be shewn? Or can exhibit a System of outward Actions which have a natural Aptitude to be the Matter of human Duty, without being chargeable therein with any Faults, either of Omission or Commission; that is to say, without failing to represent every thing as matter of Duty which is so; or calling any thing materially Good, or Indifferent, which is materially Evil? This, I conceive, to be the Cardinal Point, or the main Hinge on which the Controversy turns: And if neither the *Pleader* for Reason, nor the Infidel-Writer whom he seconds, and is assisting to, can prove this, they must leave off contending for the Sufficiency of Reason. The Religion of Nature, or the best System of Duties which unassisted Reason can discover, will then be faulty and imperfect: And then also, Men will be still improving in moral Science, according as they see more and more into the natural Fitness and Relations of Things; and even the *Matter* of Religion or Duty will vary likewise, whenever *new* Circumstances shall (as God in his infinite Wisdom may think it best they should) arise, rendering that unfit at present, which in former Ages and quite different Circumstances, was fit, or, at least, indifferent; and making things materially good now, which once were otherwise: Notwithstanding, Religion, Virtue, Godliness, &c. will and must, in the *general abstract* Idea of these Things, always remain invariably the same.

'Tis allow'd by the *Pleader*, that \* " *Christianity is a better Guide than mere Reason, as it delivers a pure uncorrupt Rule of Life and Actions.* " and that † " *Men wanted a Teacher to instruct*

\* Def. p. 30.

† Def. p. 31.

“ them in the pure genuine Principles and Laws of Reason: ” Whereby he plainly gives up the Point. For if Men, by the Exercise of their own Faculties, cannot find out a pure and uncorrupt Rule of Life; and therefore stand in need of a Revelation, for the Discovery of such a Rule, What becomes of the Sufficiency of Reason? Why contends he, that \* “ there is no Part of Religion or Morality enjoin’d in the Gospel, which is not clear and evident in natural Religion, ” i. e. to Men living in a State of Nature; that † “ Reason is sufficient, by its clear and demonstrable Evidence, to determine all Points of natural Piety and Virtue, ” and that † “ whatever Corruptions crept into the Scheme of natural Religion, might easily have been known and reform’d, if Men would have attended to their Reason. ” Our Author, being a great Dealer in *Metaphysics*, may, perhaps, by the Help of some subtle Distinction, bring himself off from the Charge of Self-contradiction in these Passages: But to me he plainly appears to militate with himself, and to be no better than *Felo de se*.

Again, he allows that § “ Christianity has great Advantages above mere Reason, darken’d by the Clouds of Error, and a general Corruption; as being the most perfect Rule of Life. ” He intimates also, that † “ the Law of Nature being corrupted by Superstition and immoral Practices, there was need of the Gospel Revelation, to instruct Men in their Duty, and to convince them of the Obligation to perform it; ” and that ‡ “ Christianity was necessary to lead Men again into the Paths of that Reason which they had darkned and forsaken, thro’ their wilful Sins. ” Will these Concessions comport well with the high Encomiums he else-

\* Def. p. 44.

† Plea, p. 18

‡ Plea, p. 57.

§ Introduction, p. 10.

† Introd. p. 6.

‡ Plea, p. 7.



where passes upon Reason, and the great things he says of it? Could there be any great *Need* of the Gospel-Revelation to instruct Men in those Points, which, † “ *without being Philosophers, every one, by employing his natural Reason in the best Manner he was able, might and could not but see* ” of himself? Or could Christianity be necessary to reform the Corruptions of the World, if they “ † *might easily have been reform'd* ” without it?

Further still, he allows that the reveal'd Will of God is § “ *the best and surest Rule of Faith and Manners; as being absolutely free from all those Errors, and Superstitions, both of Belief and Practice, which no human Composure was ever before free from, or, probably, would have been free from without Revelation.* ” If so, what Evidence can he have of the Sufficiency of Reason? Why is he so confident, that every Man has a natural Ability to do, what he confesses was never done by any one, and, in all Probability never will? Or why, in plain Contradiction to this Acknowledgment, does he pretend, that “ † *the Gospel commands no Duty which was not taught by Plato, Tully, Seneca, and others?* ”

After these Concessions from the *Pleader*, if he will abide by them, 'tis no ways needful to press the Matter further upon his Account. However, for the sake of others, it may be observ'd, that supposing some Body should collect, from the Writings of the most eminent Heathens, a just System of Ethicks, deducing some Duties from *Plato* and *Aristotle* in *Greece*, and several others from *Cicero* and *Seneca* at *Rome*; and travelling as far as *China*, to enrich his Collection, and deduce the rest from

‡ Plea, p. 15.  
 † Introd. p. 6.

† Plea, p. 57.

§ Introd. p. 9.

the Writings of *Confucius*: Nay, supposing that two or three of the Philosophers, a *Plato*, an *Aristotle*, and a *Cicero*, had exhibited a *Code of Morality*, full and faultless in every Respect; and this too by the unassisted Strength of their own Minds; even this, I say, would be no Proof of the Sufficiency of Reason. For what signifies it, what Discoveries have been made by a *select few*? Were all Heathens Philosophers? Or all Philosophers equal in Parts and Genius to these above-mention'd? It would still remain to be prov'd, that every Ploughman or Dairy-Maid is capable of attaining the same Perfection in moral Science. *Sir Isaac Newton*, *Dr. Halley*, and others, have made of late several Improvements in *Mathematics* and Natural Philosophy, and have advanc'd these Sciences vastly beyond what was known in former Ages: And many Problems, the Solutions of which they first found out, and communicated to the World, are since become familiar to Thousands. But can it be said now, or will it be said in After-ages, that the Bulk of Mankind are capable, by the unassisted Strength of their own Heads, of making the same Discoveries? Or, will the Writings of these so extraordinary Genius's be appeal'd to, as the common Standard of human Wit; or to shew that every the meanest Mortal, for Reason and good Sense, is equal to, and sufficiently qualify'd for, *such* Speculations! — I leave the Reader to make the Application.



## C H A P. III.

*A Continuation of the same Enquiry, viz. Whether Reason can discover a compleat and faultless Rule of Life?*

**F**ROM what has been said in the fore-going Chapter, it may well be concluded, that the *Pleader* has neither prov'd,

1st, That Mankind *universally*, or Persons of the *meanest* Understanding, can by the *Dint* of Reason find out a *compleat* Morality, or draw forth the *whole* Matter of human Duty, respecting God, our Neighbour, and our selves. Nor,

2dly, That any *one* or *more* of the *wisest* Heathens ever did, in *fact*, do this. Nor yet,

3dly, That the Morality which the most celebrated Heathens taught, *imperfect* as it was, ow'd its Origin *intirely* to *unassisted* Reason, (as his Argument, in appealing to what the Heathens taught, requires he should prove) and was in *no measure*, and by *no manner* of Way, deriv'd from *Revelation*.

I need not say of what Consequence this *Default* of Evidence is in the Debate. The Reader will easily see that it quite ruins the *Pleader's* Cause. For, unless he can bring substantial Arguments in *Proof* of *all three* of these Points, he cannot come at his Conclusion, and the Doctrine he has taught is utterly groundless and unwarrantable. What must



must we think of it then, when he neither has, nor can prove so much as *one* of them?

Nevertheless, as this Gentleman has thought fit to object to the Argument, drawn from the corrupt Principles and Practices of the Heathens in *Fact*; I will consider the Force of his Objection, and then go on to examine what he has argued from Scripture with reference to this Head.

'Tis pretended, that \* “ *whatever Arguments can be brought from the actual Immorality and Superstition of Heathens, to prove the Insufficiency of Reason, will conclude with equal Strength against the Sufficiency of the Scriptures:* ” And the same is repeated over and over again, both in the *Plea* and the *Defence* of it. But 'tis easy to observe, there is this remarkable Difference between the two Cases. We have no other way of judging, whether Men, in a mere State of Nature, can discover the Whole of human Duty, but by arguing from *Fact*, and taking into Consideration what Discoveries they have *actually* made relating thereto: Whereas, on the other Hand, 'tis frivolous and absurd to judge of the Perfection of the Gospel-Revelation; or whether it is, or is not sufficient, by the Doctrines which have been taught and maintain'd by Christians. Let its own *internal* Evidence be heard. *That* alone will decide the Point, and nothing else need or ought to be consider'd.

This might suffice in answer to this Objection: But, because the *Pleader* insists so frequently upon it, let us consider it a little farther. By denying the Sufficiency of Reason, we mean, that Men cannot, by the unassisted Strength of their own Brains, form a full and faultless System of Morality: In Proof of which, we urge the vile

\* *Plea*, p. 18.

Principles of the wisest and best Heathens that have been heard of. When therefore the *Pleader* objects to this Argument, and retorts upon us the Corruptions of Christians, his plain Meaning is, that these do as strongly prove God, in his holy Word, to be an insufficient Guide with respect to Religion; as the *universal* Corruptions of Heathens are a Proof, that they were insufficient to guide themselves aright, and to form *every* Man for himself a *Pandect* of Morality. But herein he proceeds intirely on a wrong Hypothesis. He supposes the Proof of the Point, that the Word of God contains the Whole of human Duty, depends as much upon the Principles broach'd by particular Christians, as the Resolution of the Question; whether Reason be well enough qualify'd for the Discovery of a compleat Morality, depends upon the Doctrines which the wisest Heathens are known to have taught; which is palpably a Mistake. The Want of a proper and perfect Body of Ethicks in every Place, where Reveal'd Religion has not prevail'd, affords plain Evidence [the fullest the Case will bear, and as much as can be expected for a *Negative*] that unassisted Reason is incapable of forming one; it being impossible to judge of its Ability, or what it *can* do, otherwise than by considering what it *has* done: Much more does it shew, that the Bulk of the Pagan World are unequal to this great Work: And, as I have argued elsewhere, " 'tis strangely absurd to maintain that *all* Mankind are very well qualify'd for doing *that*, which never yet was prov'd to have been done by *any one*, and which the most eminent Heathens are *known* to have fail'd in. " On the other hand, in proving the Perfection of the

\* Observations on Mr. Chubb's Discourse, &c. p. 12.

Gospel-morality, we never regard what the private Opinions of particular Christians are, nor is it of any Significancy to the Argument, one way or the other, that we should. The Religion of *Jesus* is a fix'd, unchangeable thing; which the New Testament Writings are the Standard of; and, being neither the worse nor the better for the private Principles of it's Professors, can be judg'd of only by the internal Characters it bears. Deists indeed charge it with the Faults of those who profess it; but without any manner of Reason. For why must the Blame of Men's Errors be laid upon God? Has the Holy Ghost fail'd of what was promis'd, *viz.* that he should \* *guide* the Apostles *into all Truth*? Or, does it follow that what he taught, is corrupted with a Mixture of Error and Superstition, because fallible and corrupt Men have misinterpreted it? The Oracles of God we know to be a sufficient Guide; forasmuch as they deliver the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth: And whoever undertakes to call in question their Perfection, either as failing to teach some one or more Duties, or delivering any thing for Duty which is not, will but expose himself to the Ridicule of all Mankind. Let such or such Christians be as corrupt as possible; by appealing to the Law and the Testimony, where these Corruptions are declar'd against, we can shew that God has taught better.

But how know we that the Heathens had a sufficient Guide? Can we be sure of this, or have any tolerable Evidence for it, since their *best* Moralists taught and recommended some of the *vil-st* and *most abominable* Practices, and *none* were without gross Corruptions both in Belief and Manners? Yes, says the *Pleader*, † “ *Reason is*

\* John 16. 13.

† *Plea*, p. 18.



34      REMARKS on the Plea, and the  
“ a Law and Rule, to which Men might have  
“ always appealed,” as well as Christians appeal to  
the Bible. And again, \* “ It is certain and  
“ evident, that the Errors and Impieties of Heathens  
“ were as contrary to Reason, as to Scripture.” If  
by Reason he means right Reason or Truth, he does  
but trifle, and abuse his Readers with an imper-  
tinent Quibble. For where could the Heathens  
lodge their Appeal to right Reason? Where meet  
with a certain Standard and Criterion of it, to put  
an End to their Differences, and rectify all their  
Mistakes? The Philosophers fancied that Truth  
lay hid in a Well, where Men might dig and  
search for it, but after all could never be sure of  
getting at it. But if he means thereby, the  
Faculty of Reason, or the fallible Dictates of it, he  
might as well have said that Men might always  
have appeal’d to themselves, to their own Under-  
standings and Judgments of Things: Which is an  
Observation just as acute, as the Inference drawn  
from it, is sound and good, viz. that therefore  
Reason is sufficient. Without doubt the Heathens,  
as being Men, were endued with rational Powers,  
and might always have us’d them: But is this a  
Demonstration that they could of themselves  
discover a compleat Draught of human Duty?  
Does the abstract Consideration of their being  
intelligent, prove that they could not but be  
equal to this Task? Cannot God form a Person  
with so mean an Understanding, as to be incapable  
of discovering that inward Concupiscence is a Sin,  
or that the Forgiveness of the greatest Injuries, the  
returning Good for Evil, &c. are Duties? Does  
this imply a Contradiction? Or can the Pleader  
shew that ’tis an absolute Impossibility, and more  
than Omnipotence itself can do? As far as I can

\* Pic2, p. 42.

conceive, his Notion must resolve into this, that the most minute Philosopher or even the meanest Peasant, has a natural Capacity to be *infallible* in *all* the Branches of moral Science, and by using his own Reason in the best Manner he can, may without any other Help be rais'd above the *Possibility* of making any Mistakes about them? The Ignorances and Errors of the Heathens he imputes intirely to an *undue* Use of their natural Understanding, allowing none of them to be *involuntary*, or such as they might not easily have prevented or got over.

The Bishop of *London* has observ'd, \* “ This “ is in effect to beg the Question ; ” which the *Pleader* finds fault with, objecting that † “ This “ is no more begging the Question than 'tis begging “ the Question to say, that the like Instances of Cor- “ ruption among Christians are owing [not to the “ Gospel itself, but] an undue Use of the Gospel.” But the Case is plain : The corrupt Doctrines of Christians no ways impeach the Purity and Perfection of the Scriptures, which prove themselves to be a sufficient Rule, containing the whole of true Religion : And we know these Doctrines to be corrupt, because the Scriptures reclaim against them, and teach us better. In this Case therefore, there is no begging the Question ; but 'tis clearly shewn *what* the Errors of Christians are owing to, *viz.* not the Gospel itself, but Men's ill Use and Misinterpretation of it. On the other hand, to ascribe the Corruptions of the Heathen World to the undue Use of Reason, is as much as to say, that Reason in itself, and if rightly exercis'd, was sufficient to have taught them better, and to have remedy'd these Corruptions ; which is palpably

\* Pastoral Letter, p. 35.

† Plea, p. 42.

36      REMARKS on the Plea, and the  
to beg the Question, and take for granted the  
Point in debate.

It remains now that we consider, how the  
*Scripture* stands inclin'd to this Question; which  
the *Pleader* has made necessary, by pretending that  
his Notion is countenanc'd by it. The FIRST  
Text he cites is, *Acts* x. 34, 35. *Of a Truth, I*  
*perceive that God is no respecter of Persons; but in*  
*every Nation, he that feareth him, and worketh*  
*Righteousness, is accepted of him.* \* “ One would  
“ think, says he, that this Text, without any Ex-  
“ planation, was very plain for the Sufficiency of  
“ natural Reason.” The Gentleman, though he  
talks much of *Mathematicks* and *Demonstrations*,  
here forgets one of the first Principles of that  
*Science*, viz. that the *Whole* is more than a single  
*Part*. Admitting that the Text says, † “ Reason  
“ will enable Men, by the Worship of God, and doing  
“ Works of Righteousness, to make themselves ac-  
“ ceptable to him :” Does it say that Reason can  
discover the Immortality of the Soul, a certain  
Method of Reconciliation after Offences, &c. ?  
No, nor is any thing like it hinted at, or in the  
least intimated. And yet these, and such like,  
are some of the principal Matters of Religion,  
and of as necessary Consideration in this Argument,  
as the Duties of it are. So that, unless the Text  
teaches that Reason is capable of making these  
Discoveries, as well as of finding out a proper  
Rule of Life, the general Conclusion, that Reason  
is sufficient, cannot be drawn from it, and to  
pretend it may, is to make an *Universal* Inference  
from *Particular* Premises.

Again, he says, § “ The Text is very express,  
“ that EVERY Heathen is capable, by following the  
“ Light of Nature, to render himself acceptable to

\* Def. p. 47.

† Def. p. 47.

§ Def. p. 49.

“ God.”



“*God.*” Now, according to my Apprehension, this is so far from being express’d, that there is no manner of Intimation about it. The Apostle speaks not of *every individual* Heathen, but of Heathens in *every Nation*: And he might say that Heathens (some of a superior and extraordinary Genius perhaps) might discover a good Rule of Life; and whoever did so, and acted according to it, would, whatever Nation he belong’d to, be accepted of God; (which is the utmost the Text can amount to:) He might affirm this, I say, without intending to insinuate, that *every* Heathen, of however *mean* a Capacity, was qualify’d for the Discovery of such a Rule.

Farther, to *fear God and work Righteousness*, by no means imports a Knowledge of a *perfect* Rule of Life, but barely the acting uprightly and sincerely, according to the best Knowledge we have, be it *more or less*; so that the Text no way reaches the Point in debate. Without doubt a Man, who has no Opportunity of Access to Revelation, may discover, by the Light of Nature, all that *himself* will be accountable for. This is agreed on all hands, and *uniformly* taught. But the grand Question is, whether he can acquire an exact Knowledge of the *whole* Compass of moral Duties, or determine concerning *every material* Action, whether it be naturally good, evil, or indifferent? And as to this, what does the Text say? Our Author may try his Skill, and deduce from it what Evidence he can, in favour of the *Affirmative*.

Farther still, it may be ask’d, *What* is the *Acceptance* here spoken of, and *to what* does it relate? Is the Apostle speaking of an Acceptance to *such* Rewards as are attainable by Christians? No, the *Pleader* will allow that Christianity intitles Men to higher Rewards, than mere Reason does;

does; higher, in proportion \* “ To those greater  
 “ Improvements in Virtue, which it is able to pro-  
 “ duce in them.” Though by the way, this accords  
 but ill with the Doctrine of the SECOND PLEA,  
 viz. That † “ if Men attain to all the Virtue and  
 “ Happiness to which natural Reason, carried to its  
 “ utmost Extent, is able to conduct them, their  
 “ Virtue and Happiness is little inferior, if not  
 “ altogether equal, to the Virtue and Happiness at-  
 “ tainable by the Gospel.” Nay, he does not say  
 expressly, that the Text speaks of an Acceptance  
 to any Life eternal; as indeed 'tis plain it does  
 not. The utmost he deduces from it is, that Rea-  
 son § “ can direct Men in the certain way to make  
 themselves [finally] acceptable unto God.” (N. B.  
 I insert the Word *finally*, because he acknowledges,  
 as will hereafter be shewn, that the most virtuous  
 Man, or the sincerest Penitent, may, for ought  
 Reason can discover, before his Admission to final  
 Happiness lie in *Purgatory*, God knows how long :)  
 And even this is more than is countenanc'd by  
 the Text. For the Apostle speaks only of what  
*himself* perceiv'd and knew by *Inspiration* of God;  
 not of what the Heathen Nations had certain  
 Knowledge and full Assurance of, by the dim  
 Light of Nature. And in other Places, in plain  
 Contradiction to the *Pleader's* Doctrine, he fre-  
 quently and largely insists that Justification is to  
 be had only from the *free Grace* of God through  
 the Gospel, and that the World being *universally*  
 concluded under Sin, no one can claim Heaven as  
 a *Debt*, or ascertain to himself (as what he may  
 reasonable challenge, and God cannot equitably  
 refuse him) the Pardon of his Sins.

If we observe the Occasion of the Words, there  
 is no Necessity of understanding them, as bearing

\* Def. p. 30, 50.

† p. 13.

§. Def. p. 49.

any *immediate* Relation to the next Life. 'Twill be more natural to interpret them as meant only of an Acceptance into the Church of *Christ*, or the Gospel-covenant. *Cornelius* being a good Man, it pleas'd God to reveal himself to him, and to refer him to *St. Peter* to be farther instructed concerning the Things he *ought to do*. *St. Peter* also was directed by God to give him these Instructions: Upon which Occasion he declares, that in *every Nation*, those who are good and sincere, *are accepted of God*; that is to say, are so well esteem'd by Him, as that he will graciously bless them with an Opportunity of being \* *converted* to the Faith of *Christ*, and admitted into the New Covenant. This is all the Apostle had directly in View. And does this shew that mere Reason can lead Men into *every* Virtue, and *ascertain* to them the Pardon of their Sins, and as much Happiness as their Natures are *capable* of? Rather the Reverse may be concluded from it, and God's interposing so *miraculously* for the Conversion of this good Man, affords a much better Argument *against*, than *for* the Sufficiency of Reason, for these and the like Purposes.

Once more; of *what* Nations is the Apostle speaking? Of *mere* Heathens, People *utterly* destitute of the Aids of Revelation? So the *Pleader* imagines: And indeed, unless such as these are here intended, the Passage is impertinently alledg'd, and nothing to the Point in hand can be drawn from it. But he cannot prove there ever was

\* To this purpose 'tis well observ'd by Dr. *Whitby*. " This  
 " Acceptance may not reach so far as to put them under the  
 " same Privileges and Favours with his Church and People;  
 " but if they live in such Times and Places where an exacter  
 " Knowledge of his Will might be obtain'd, it may induce his  
 " Providence to find out Means of imparting that also to them."

See his Note on Rom. ii. 14.



such a Nation of *mere* Heathens: Or, if an Instance of this kind could be found out, he does not know but the most intelligent among them would be grossly ignorant in divine Matters, and the Majority have little or no Notion at all of a God, a Providence, or at least of a Life to come. He speaks of *Cornelius* as a *mere* Heathen; but neither has, nor can have the least shew of an Argument to prove he was so. Nay, the Reverse is evident enough. He was of \* *Cæsarea*, and is call'd a *devout Man, and one that feared God*, which is the Title the *Jews* gave to the *Profelytes* of the Gates.

Secondly, he cites *Rom. ii. 10, 14*. And here again he forgets that a *Part* is less than the *Whole*. He † “ *thinks it almost impossible that so plain a Text should be disputed; wherein the Apostle declares that the Gentiles are a Law unto themselves, and that this Law written in their Hearts shall either accuse or excuse them.*” But does the Apostle say here, that the Gentiles had a *certain* Knowledge of an *immortal* State hereafter, or indeed of any future State? That they were fully *assur'd* of God's Willingness to pardon their Sins, upon the *bare* Consideration of their Repentance? Or that Reason demonstrated to them the Necessity of praying to God for *Grace* and the *Effluxes* of his Spirit? I cannot find the Apostle teaches all or any of this, or gives the least Intimation about it. How then can the *Pleader* draw his *general* Inference from this Passage, or pretend it *almost* indisputably proves the Sufficiency of Reason in *all* religious Matters? The utmost that can with any Shew of an Argument be urg'd, is, that it proves Reason is sufficient for *one particular* Purpose, *viz.* to discover a proper Rule of Life: And even

\* Acts x. 1, 2.

† Def. p. 50.

this is more than, upon Examination, will be found to be true. For there is no Necessity for understanding the Apostle, as speaking of *mere* Heathens. We have no Grounds to think, there were any such in his days, or that he ever heard of a Nation *totally* destitute of super-natural Light. The Word *οὐκ* admits of various Acceptations, and need not be taken in the most *rigid* Sense, for the *inbred Faculty* of Reason or Understanding. Our Apostle himself says, \* *Doth not even Nature itself teach you, that if a Man have long Hair, it is a Shame unto him?* Where he means no more, than that *Custom*, which is a *second Nature*, teacheth this.

Beside, it has been usual for the best Writers to speak of Heathens, as in a State of Nature, when yet they would be understood with a Grain of Allowance, and not according to the utmost Strictness and Severity of the Expression; intending to affirm only, that they have not the *full* and *clear* Light of Revelation to walk by, not that they have no traditional Hints, nor any other Kind of Advantage from Revelation. The *Pleader* insinuates, that the Apostle is speaking of † *mere Gentiles*, those who act only under the Law of Nature, written in their Hearts: and says § “ *the Antients, Origen and Chrysoftom, understood the Text as he does.*” How the former interprets it, I know not, because I have not his *Commentary* at hand to consult. But the other teaches no such thing. Supposing him to say, that “ *they were not such Gentiles as were Idolaters, but were Worshippers of God according to the Law of Nature; such as Melchisedeck, and his People, Job, the Ninitives, &c.*” The Law of *Nature*, in one Sense of the Word, very properly includes all those Duties which are founded in the *Nature* and *Rela-*

\* 1 Cor. 11. 14.

† Det. p. 53, 54.

§ Def. p. 54.

tions of Things. Why then must it here be understood in that *narrow* Sense, wherein it comprehends no more than *mere unassisted* Reason teaches? St. *Cbryfostom*, to the Instances abovemention'd, adds *Cornelius*, and him *only*: Whom therefore the *Pleader* might as well have mention'd *exprefly*, as have broken off, both here and in \* another Place, where he cites this Passage, with an *Et c.* as if *Cbryfostom* had instanced in *several* more. But then, indeed, the *Fallacy* would have been more easily discover'd. *Cornelius*, for the Reasons before given, and also, because he liv'd where the Gospel was promulg'd, and was not converted till *fourteen* Years after the Promulgation of it, had *too palpably* many Advantages above a mere Hea-then.

Thirdly, He appeals to *Heb. xi. 6.* *He that cometh to God, must believe that he is; and that he is a Rewarder of those who diligently seek him.* The Argument drawn from hence is, § “ *If Reason, or*  
 “ *the Law of Nature, (which the Apostle here re-*  
 “ *speeth) has the Sanction of Rewards and Punish-*  
 “ *ments annex'd to it; — which is so certain in it*  
 “ *self, that the Apostle here supposeth it to be the im-*  
 “ *mediate and necessary Consequence of the Belief of a*  
 “ *God, and the Ground of Men's Worship of him;*  
 “ *it must follow, that Reason is of itself a sufficient*  
 “ *Guide in Matters of Religion.*” My Answer to which is as follows: The particular Case of *Enoch* gave occasion to those Words. The Apostle, for ought appears, had no respect to *mere Heathens*, and probably enough never knew of any such. But be this as it will, I deny that the Law of Nature, *i. e.* of natural *unassisted* Reason, ascertains to the least of Sinners, or the very best of our sinful Race, a State of Rewards in the next Life; or that Saint

\* Def. p. 59.

§ Plea, p. 52.



*Paul* here supposeth it does. The Apostle's Argument does not relate to "the immediate and necessary Consequences of the Belief of a God." He only observes what Points are necessary to be believ'd, before Men can engage in his Service, or yield Obedience to him. And he tells us, they must acknowledge his *Being*, and his *Providence* over the moral World; which no ways justifies the Conclusion, that Reason is sufficient in all religious Matters, capable of demonstrating the Immortality of the Soul, &c. In Reality, this Passage affords a much better Argument against, than for the Sufficiency of Reason. It shews that the Virtues of many of the Heathens were, properly speaking, no Virtues, as being practis'd, not upon a true Principle of Religion, but for the sake of some temporal Conveniency, and † "without a clear Knowledge and Acknowledgment of the Deity, and the great Rewards and Punishments for those who would, or would not, obey him." This was the Case of several of them, and those too Men of Repute for Sense and a fine Genius. Let this Gentleman shew if he can, that the meanest *Mechanicks* and *Spinsters* might, with reasonable Ease, and all the Evidence of Demonstration, have known better, and fix'd Religion upon its right Foundation.

Lastly, He urges *Gen. i. 27. God created Man in his own Image*; together with *Eccles. vii. 29. God made Man upright*. The Meaning of which Places, he says, is this, \* "that Man being endued with rational moral Faculties, in which he resembled the moral Perfections of his Creator, was upright or perfect in his Kind, capable to fulfil the Duties and attain the End of his Creation." I am not certain I rightly understand what this Writer

† See Mr. *Locke's Works*, Vol. 2. p. 534.

\* *Fica*, p. 53.

44      R E M A R K S *on the Plea, and the*  
means by the *Duties of Man's Creation*. Will he  
say that our first Parent was created capable of  
exhibiting the whole Matter of human Duty, ac-  
cording to the *present* Oeconomy and Constitution  
of Things; or of demonstrating in what Manner  
it would be proper for him to act in every Rela-  
tion and Circumstance of Life, which might *after-*  
*wards* arise? This is what he is concern'd to prove  
from these Texts; and also, that *Adam's* Reason  
*ascertain'd* to him the *Immortality* of his Nature,  
and was sufficient for all other Purposes of Reli-  
gion: Which, I apprehend, he will find it no  
very easy Matter to do. God, who best knew  
the natural Strength of *Adam's* Mind, thought fit  
to superadd the Light of Revelation, and gave  
him a *positive* Precept too, enforc'd with an *ex-*  
*press* Sanction: And the *Pleader* may demonstrate,  
if he's able, that this was altogether *unnecessary*,  
and that *Adam*, without any Revelation; I may  
add also, without the Effluxes of God's Spirit to  
improve and strengthen his natural Faculties,  
could have fully answer'd the End for which he  
was created.

However, this is not what I would principally  
insist on. In reality, it matters nothing, how  
perfect Reason originally was. What if *Adam*,  
by unfinning Obedience to the *whole* Will of God,  
might have certainly recommended himself to the  
divine Favour and Acceptance? Does it follow  
that *fallen* Man can do the same, or must upon  
his Repentance be forgiven, and accepted of God  
unto *eternal* Life, in return for his *imperfect* Ser-  
vices? The *Pastoral Letter* judiciously remarks,  
that \* “ there is no arguing from the Powers of  
“ Reason, in a State of Innocence, ——— to its  
“ Powers and Abilities under the present corrupt

\* P. 7.

“ State of human Nature, ” and enters a *Caveat* against this Fallacy. I know not whether the *Pleader* will allow of the Distinction. In one Place he says, \* “ *the Appetites of our first Parents were prone to be inordinate, as Experience shew’d, by their yielding to the first Temptation.* ” At another Time he contends, that Man was created *perfect and † upright*; varying his Note, and running into Inconsistencies and Self-contradictions, according as his Views alter, and he has different Turns to serve. However, nothing can be plainer, than that *uncorrupt Reason* was *originally* much better qualified to be a Guide, than *corrupt Reason* can *now* pretend to be: And therefore those Texts, which relate *only* to Man’s *primitive* State, are of no Significancy to the present Argument.

To conclude this Head; The Passages before us are so little to the *Pleader’s* Purpose, that I should have taken no Notice at all of his Reasoning from them, but that he seems to think there is something very § strong and cogent in it. He strains hard to raise the Appearance of an Argument; but is all over Confusion, and will not stand uniformly to either side of the Question; that our first Parents were or were not created upright. And even when he inclines to the *Affirmative*, ’tis pleasant to observe how crudely he expresses himself about it: || “ *Their Reason, says he, was sufficient to have prevented their Fall.* ” The plain *English* of which is this, that if they had been left to the Guidance of Reason only, and never had receiv’d any Revelation at all from God, they might have continued constantly obedient to a reveal’d Law. A very extraordinary Piece of Reasoning indeed!

\* Plea, p. 11.

† Plea, p. 53.

§ See Def. p. 58.

|| Plea, p. 11. See also p. 59.





## C H A P. IV.

*Whether Reason can ascertain the Pardon of our Sins, and an effectual Method of procuring a Reconciliation with God?*

**I**F the *Pleader* has fail'd under the former Article ; and neither prov'd that *all* Mankind, if brought up in a State of Nature, are capable of discovering a proper Rule of Life, comprehending all the Branches of human Duty ; nor yet, that *any Individual* Person so brought up, ever *did* or *is capable* of doing it ; he will be found to succeed still worse, and to advance what is still more unwarrantable, under the next Point to be consider'd, *viz.* Whether Reason teaches a certain Method of reconciling Sinners to God.

He contends, that the penitent Heathen  
 “ \* might be secure, that God would not deny him  
 “ that Favour and Happiness, which, by a Renova-  
 “ tion of Mind, he had made himself capable of ; ”  
 and that † “ the Light of Nature always taught  
 “ Men, that to forsake their Sins, and lead holy  
 “ Lives, was a sure way of making an Atonement  
 “ for them. ” Now this is so far from being true, that the *Pleader* cannot instance in any one

\* *Plea*, p. 22.† *Def.* p. 36.

Set of Men, who trusted in Repentance *alone*; and who, beside Amendment of Life, had not also Recourse to Sacrifices for the Expiation of Guilt. And the Scriptures exhibiting the Son of God dying a Sacrifice for our Sins, (by whose vicarious Sufferings alone we are reinstated in a Capacity of being Happy, and freed from that Obligation to Punishment which we lay under: ) and requiring us not only to repent and become better; but also to rely on his *Satisfaction*, and to expect Forgiveness only from the *free Grace* of God, thro' his *Mediation* and *Intercession*: This affords Evidence enough, that Repentance *alone* does not *necessarily* cancel the Guilt of any former Crime, or *insure* the Forgiveness of it. 'Tis well argued by Dr. Clarke: \* “ From the Consideration of the Goodness and Mercifulness of God, the Philosophers did indeed very *reasonably hope*, that God would shew himself placable to Sinners, and might be some way reconcil'd: But when we come to inquire more particularly, *what Propitiation* he will accept, and in *what manner* this Reconciliation must be made; here Nature stops, and expects with Impatience the Aid of some particular Revelation. That God will receive returning Sinners, and accept of Repentance instead of perfect Obedience, *they cannot certainly know*, to whom he has not declar'd that he *will* do so. — For it cannot positively be prov'd from any of God's Attributes, that he is *absolutely oblig'd* to pardon all Creatures all their Sins at all Times, barely and immediately upon their repenting. There arises therefore from Nature no *sufficient* Comfort to Sinners, but an anxious and endless Solitude about the Means of appeasing the Deity.”

\* Evidences of Natural, &c. p. 182.

To the same purpose another late Writer speaks, whose Reasoning, I have some particular Grounds to hope, will have due Weight with our Author:

“ \* God is not oblig’d to accept even our Repentance: because we owe an entire Obedience to his Laws for the Benefits of his Creation and Preservation of us; and so our Sorrow, and Confession of past Faults, and Resolutions and Endeavours of future Amendment, are only Appeals to divine *Grace*, and render us Objects of Compassion: but cannot of themselves cancel the Penalty of the divine Laws, which we incurr’d by our Violation of them. ”

Again, † “ Tho’ the Curse pronounc’d upon the *Serpent*, included in it a Promise of a future Remission of Sin, and of Restoration to that Life and Immortality which was lost by it; yet this was so obscurely and imperfectly intimated, as not to be clearly and fully known, till the Accomplishment of it by the coming of *Christ* to be the Saviour of the World. Thus Man lay under the fatal Effects of Sin, without plain or express Assurances of obtaining Forgiveness of it. ”

Nay, even the *Plea* itself (so irresistible is the Strength of Truth, and so naturally will it force itself upon the Mind, in Opposition to the strongest Prejudices) makes some Acknowledgements of the same Kind. ’Tis said, that § “ the divine Mercy and Favour are not so clearly ascertain’d to Heavens as to Christians; ” that || “ the Scriptures propose that Assurance of the Pardon of Sin, (without any Punishment of the Sinner) which mere Reason could not make certain to Man; ” that ‡ “ the Gospel excels the best Scheme of Natural

\* See Mr. Jackson’s Exposition of the Lord’s Prayer, p. 123.

† Ibid. p. 126. See also p. 124.

§ *Plea*, p. 7.

|| *Plea*, p. 19.

‡ *Plea*, p. 21.



“ Religion, that ever was or could be propos’d; in  
 “ declaring the Terms of sinful Men’s Reconcilement  
 “ with God;” that \* “ the virtuous Heathen wanted  
 “ an Assurance of free Pardon;” and that † “ what  
 “ Punishment God might see fit to inflict for Sin, tho’  
 “ repented of, Man, by Reason alone, could not pos-  
 “ sibly find out.”

The Author of the *Plea for Revelation* has remark’d, that these Positions are inconsistent with maintaining the Sufficiency of Reason. I must needs own I think so too, nor could I have divin’d that our Author would have fled to *Purgatory* to get clear of the Difficulty. Yet, so it is: And what Subterfuges will not the Pride of Man’s Wisdom invent, and have recourse to, rather than yield to a Retraction, or acknowledge a Mistake? He begs leave, in his DEFENCE, to observe to my Lord Bishop of London, that || “ the  
 “ Platonicks (with other Sects) who never doubted of  
 “ God’s being to be pleas’d for Sin, and of the Happi-  
 “ ness of good Men in a future State; yet believ’d  
 “ it was necessary for those who were not perfect in  
 “ Virtue, to pass thro’ a purgatorial Fire, or State  
 “ of Punishment, to a State of Happiness.” But is not this a Kind of *After-game*, a wretched *Salvo* newly devis’d, and which was quite remote from his Thoughts in writing the *Plea*; wherein ’tis said, § “ No serious or reasonable Heathens ever ap-  
 “ prehended that pious and righteous (tho’ sinful) Men  
 “ would undergo Punishment in a future State.”

Let us, however, consider, whether this so extraordinary a Fetch will be of any real Service to him. His Principle now is, that Men by the Light of Nature may be assured, that God will forgive them upon their Repentance, and make them finally

\* Plea, p. 22.

† Plea, p. 23.

|| Def. p. 19.

§ Plea, p. 23.

Happy; only 'tis acknowledg'd they cannot be certain, but it may be necessary for those who are not perfect in Virtue, (which no Body is) to pass thro' a *purgatorial* Fire, or a State of Punishment, to this State of final Happiness. Now, admitting this to be true, Of what Significancy is it to the main Point in Debate? Without doubt Reason is well enough quality'd for several Purposes, and may suffice where it is sufficient. But does such a Sufficiency as this, (which leaves the *truest* Penitent under *remediless* Anxiety, diffident about the State of his Soul in the next Life, and under an *uncurable* Dread of the Divine Vengeance) supersede the Use of Revelation? Is this all that the *Deists*, whom the *Pastoral Letter* is levell'd wholly against, contend for under this Article? Surely it discovers a very disputatious Temper, and a strong Propensity to the meanest Kind of Sophistry, *viz.* quibbling upon Words; to insist that Reason is a sufficient Guide, notwithstanding it cannot ascertain to the most sincere Penitent, the free Pardon of his Sin, but leaves him under the dismal Apprehension of some *indefinite* Punishment; \* “ the  
 “ Degree and Manner whereof cannot be deter-  
 “ min'd, ” and which (for ought that can be known to the contrary) may last for Millions of Ages.

After all, as this Notion of a *purgatorial* Fire is wholly a *Chimera*, and without any Foundation in Truth or Reason; so mere Reason cannot demonstrate that the Sinner, however Penitent, is intitled to any Rewards in the next Life, or will be finally Happy. According to the Tenor of the Gospel, 'tis of *Grace*, not of *Debt*, that we are fav'd and in favour with God; and instead of pretending to *merit* Heaven, we accept it only a

\* Def. p. 18.

an *Alms* from the Divine Bounty. And if the highest Perfection in Virtue, attainable by Christians, gives no other Expectations of Rewards, but what are founded originally in the *free* Promise of God; certainly *Pagans* (who are Strangers to the Covenant, and Aliens from the Commonwealth of *Israel*) can never claim Heaven as a *Debt*, nor be so transcendently holy, as to *merit* an Inheritance with the Saints in Light. Suppose *Weweena* to have reason'd himself, from the unequal Distributions of Providence here, into the Belief of another World, and to expect to fare better there than *Cbuckery* or *Cousheda* will, (as being less wicked, and yet more afflicted than they) What does this amount to? He may, nevertheless, have no *Assurance* of final Happiness; no *Claim* or *strict Right* to a Reward from God. Tho', in the main, a good and upright Man, he is yet a *Sinner*, and stands chargeable with many gross and wilful *Enormities*: And therefore (for aught he knows) he may be *as certainly*, tho' not *so severely*, punish'd hereafter, as those who are more wicked. So uncomfortable, as I apprehend, every one's Case is, and must be, upon the Foot of *Natural Religion*. Their best Services have no *Merit*, and their Sins necessarily subject them to Punishment: And since no one can say, I am clean from Guilt; but all are Sinners, with this only Difference, that some are more sinful, others less; therefore all are by Nature Children of Wrath, and liable to Punishment: And the utmost that is necessary in order to the Vindication of God's Providence, and the clearing up the present Inequalities of it, is, that Men should be punish'd hereafter *proportionably* to their Crimes here; that is to say, that the most Wicked should be doom'd to the greatest Misery; and those who



52 REMARKS on the Plea, and the  
liv'd freeft from Sin, and did the leaft Evil,  
would meet with the flighteft Punifhment.

Our Author exceeds in his Valuation of human  
Virtue, and attributes more Worth and Efficacy  
to it, than either Reason or Scripture will allow.  
He fancies that \* “ *in its own Nature it tends to*  
“ *our final Happinefs.* ” A Confciousnefs of hav-  
ing done well, cannot indeed produce any thing  
befide Joy and Pleafure: But this does not  
amount to what is here advanc'd. A State of  
Happinefs imports a Fruition of the moft defirable  
Good, and a total Exemption from every Kind of  
Evil, which human Virtue, becaufe imperfect,  
and over-ballanc'd too (when weigh'd in the Scales  
of ftrict Juftice) by the Evil we commit, cannot  
naturally produce, or afcertain to us. Again, he  
fays, † “ *Good Works are never fuppos'd to want*  
“ *any thing to render them acceptable to God; —*  
“ *but were always acceptable to him from their very*  
“ *Nature, and from their Agreeablenefs to the Reffi-*  
“ *tude of the Divine Nature itfelf.* ” If by “ *good*  
“ *Works* ” he means fuch as are *absolutely* and  
*perfectly* fo, he only fpeaks thus magnificently of  
the fine Qualities and Excellencies of a Non-entity.  
Far be it from every Man, to arrogate Perfection  
to himfelf, or the very beft of his good Deeds.  
If he would be underftood to fpeak of *such* good  
Works as we in *fact* perform, the very beft of  
them are too imperfect to challenge the Approba-  
tion of God; or, in their own Nature, to merit  
his Acceptance. We ftand in need of Pardon,  
not only for our grofs downright Impieties, but  
alfo for the † *beft* of our good Deeds: And the  
Reason is, becaufe tho' we call them good, for-

\* Def. p. 43. † Introd. p. 16, 17. ‡ Our good  
Works, as we call them, are at beft fo imperfect, as to need  
Pardon, rather than deserve a Reward, Clarke's Sermons, Vol.  
9. p. 200. See alfo Vol. 4. p. 317.

asmuch as they are *comparatively* so, and are moreover accepted thro' *Christ*; yet they have an Alloy of Evil. Some Defects and Imperfections cleave to them: So that instead of *necessarily* recommending themselves to the Divine Acceptance, or having any *natural Efficacy* towards ascertaining a Reward, they stand in need of Expiation; which as they have thro' *Christ*, we are taught to apply to him to purge away their Dross.

Upon the Whole I conclude, that how well soever the Religion of Nature might do in case of *unsinning* Obedience, yet it yields *now* a very uncomfortable Prospect: And all Mankind being Sinners, wilfully transgressing in many Instances, and falling short of *Perfection* even in their best Services; a mere Heathen, however penitent, can have no *Claim* upon God, no *Assurance* of the Pardon of his numberless Sins, or of any Reward in the next Life. I will only add, that *it is very* probable the Heathens ow'd, in some measure, the Hopes they had of Forgiveness and *Acceptance* with God, to *traditional* Hints about the *Design* of *Christ's* coming to die for Sin; which (notwithstanding the *Plea* represents the World to have been left for so many Ages to the Guidance of Reason only) the \* “ Heathens themselves, at  
“ various Times, seem to have had some, tho'  
“ a less perfect, Knowledge and Expectation  
“ of.”

\* See Mr. Jackson's *Expos. of the Lord's Prayer*, p. 64.



## C H A P. V.

*Whether Reason can demonstrate the Necessity of praying for Grace, or the Effluxes of God's Spirit, and gives them an Assurance of his Willingness, upon their Prayers, to assist them in the Discharge of their Duty.*

**T**H E Consideration of God's co-operating with us in our Spiritual Warfare, and assisting our sincere Endeavours, being so excellent a Motive to a Life of Holiness, and tending also to humble the Pride of Man's Heart, and hinder him from ascribing the Goodness of his best Performances wholly to himself, our Author, that he might appear a thorough-pac'd Advocate for mere Pagan Reason, would not pass over this Article; notwithstanding he cannot produce the Shadow of an Argument in Proof of its Sufficiency for such a Discovery. He tells us, \* "That we should by Prayer implore the Divine Grace, is a Principle and Doctrine of true Deism, in which Heathens were instructed, by the mere Light of Natural Reason." And farther he says, 'tis One of † "these Sentiments and Dictates which are of eternal and immutable Obligation, and

\* Def. p. 14, 15.

† Ibid.

" demon-



“*demonstratively agreeable to the Nature and Will of God.*” But by *whom* is this boasted Demonstration to be made? By the rude *Vulgar*, and the *Bulk* of the Pagan World? This he must maintain, or else he does but trifle, and shoot vastly short of his Mark. It matters not what a *few* Philosophers may be able to do. The proper Question is, Whether ordinary People, and Men of a low Genius and Capacity (who are vastly the Majority) are equal to this Work? the *Affirmative* of which the *Pleader* will find it difficult enough to prove. Let him consider, whether the Proofs of God’s Omnipotence, Omnipresence, and Omniscience (which are some of the Attributes whereon the Duty of Prayer is founded) lie level to *such* Capacities. Nay, let him shew that the Doctrine of *one* eternal Being, with these Attributes belonging to him, was not deriv’d by the old Heathens from *Tradition*, rather than their own Reason; or produce, if he can, from their Writings, any Arguments which demonstrate it. *Plato* (as indeed may be said of almost all the great Philosophers of *Greece*) was not a Man of a retir’d Life and solitary Speculation, but a great Traveller, who went from Place to Place, gleaning the Remains of the Antients, and collecting as many of their *Dogmata* as he could meet with: And he speaks particularly of a Tradition deriv’d from the Antients, (who liv’d nearer the Gods, and were more belov’d by them than the *Greeks* were) from whence he borrow’d the Notion of the Divine \* *Unity*. And tho’ some undertake to *demonstrate* that there is but one eternal Being; yet ’tis by a Way of Reasoning too intricate and subtle for the Gross of Mankind either to find out of themselves, or fully to † comprehend when

\* In *Philebo.*  
Preface, p. 6.

† See *Colliber* of Nat. and P.ev. Religion.

devis'd and inculcated by others; and which indeed very able Writers, after the most careful Researches, and deepest Thoughts upon the Matter, have not been ¶ satisfy'd with; and therefore have been content to rest this Point, I mean the *Certainty* of it, upon the Authority of Scripture, where 'tis frequently taught, and most expressly asserted. The like may be said of God's Omnipresence, on which his Omnipotence, Omniscience, and other Attributes have a Dependance. Scripture teaches it expressly, but Reason is short-sighted, affording no demonstrative Evidence of it. Dr. Clarke's fam'd Demonstration is this: He first establishes a *Necessity* of Existence, *absolute* in it self, and *independent*: And then observes, that it must be *every where*, as well as *always*, unalterably the same.

“ \* For, says he, a Necessity which is not every  
 “ where the same, is plainly a consequential Ne-  
 “ cessity only, depending upon some external  
 “ Cause, and not an absolute one in its own Na-  
 “ ture: For a Necessity, absolutely such in itself,  
 “ has no Relation to Time or Place, or any  
 “ thing else: Whatever therefore exists by an  
 “ absolute Necessity in its own Nature, must  
 “ needs be Infinite ” or Omnipresent. A Way  
 of Reasoning *this*, which, perhaps, not one in ten Millions of Millions would have fallen into by the Exercise of his own Faculties alone; which many attentive Readers do not easily comprehend; and which several of the most sagacious have † scrupled to acquiesce in.

¶ *Nye* on Nat. and Rev. Religion, p. 41. *Locke*, Vol. 3. p. 625, 626, 630, 631. Dr. *Waterland's* farther Vindicat. of *Christ's* Divinity, p. 53, 58. Notes on Archbishop *King's* Orig. of Evil, p. 36, 63. \* Demonstration of the Being and Attributes, p. 47. † See Letters to Dr. *Clarke* from a Gentleman in *Gloucestershire*. *Colliber's* Impartial Enquiry, p. 168. — 175. Notes on *King's* Origin. &c. N<sup>o</sup>. 5, 13, 16.

But be it, that the Unity of God, his Omnipresence, and the Duty of Prayer in the *general*, may be found out by Reason; Can it demonstrate that we are oblig'd to pray for *Grace*, and the *Effluxes* of his Spirit upon our Minds? I would not detract from the Abilities of this Gentleman, and therefore will not peremptorily say, he cannot prove this to be a Duty upon the Foot of mere Reason: But, as I cannot conceive *how*, or by *what Medium* it can be done, I may take the Liberty to invite him to try his Skill, and bring forth his *strong Reasons* and his *Demonstration*. A very thoughtful, learned, and exact Writer has observ'd, that \* “ the Holy Spirit moves upon the  
“ Minds of Men in a most *familiar* way; and that  
“ his Motions are not discernible by us, from the  
“ *natural* Operations of our Minds. We feel them  
“ no otherwise than we do our own Thoughts  
“ and Meditations; we cannot distinguish them  
“ by the manner of their affecting us, from our  
“ natural Reasonings, and the Operations of  
“ Truth upon our Souls. ” 'Tis added further;  
“ Such is the manner of the Spirits Operations in us,  
“ that if God had only design'd to give the Holy  
“ Spirit to us, without making any mention of  
“ it in his Word, we could never have known,  
“ unless it had been communicated to us by some  
“ private Revelation, that our Souls are moved  
“ by a Divine Power, when we love God and do  
“ his Will. ” To this let me subjoin a Passage from another Author: † “ As the Sense of the  
“ Derivation of all Virtue and Goodness from  
“ the Divine Assistance of God's Holy Spirit,  
“ was very far from the Sentiments of the most  
“ refin'd Moralists among the Heathen; [before

\* Dr. Clagett on the Operations of the Spirit, p, 306.

† Whiston's Sermons and Essays, p. 39.



“ the Gospel-Age] so those Devotions and Prayers  
 “ for the same, as well as that Humility of  
 “ Mind, which are the Consequences of the own-  
 “ ing of this Truth, appear but too evidently to  
 “ have been Strangers to them. — They look’d  
 “ on their Virtues as their own proper Acquisi-  
 “ tions, and the principal Things their Deities had  
 “ no Share in at all: And so they could not, by  
 “ their own avow’d Principles, put up any Peti-  
 “ tions to the Gods for them.”

The *Pleader* alledges, that \* “ *the best Heathens*  
 “ *generally believ’d and taught the Assistance of Di-*  
 “ *vine Grace to enable Men to be virtuous and good.*  
 “ *This — was consistently and concurrently taught*  
 “ *by all Philosophers, but Epicurean Atheists, and*  
 “ *a few others of atheistical Opinions.*” But this is  
 more than he has or can prove. He refers us to  
*Cicero*, and one more of their Writers; as if, from  
 what these advanc’d, and deliver’d too, only as their  
 own Opinion, the concurrent Sentiments of all the  
 Philosophers, excepting a few Atheists, and of  
 the Generality of good Heathens, might be col-  
 lected. Such Reasoning shews him to be an *Adept*  
 in *Mathematicks*, and a great Dealer in *Demon-*  
*strations*. With Submission, I take the Truth to  
 be this: The more antient Heathens had little or  
 no Notion of this Matter. I cannot recollect, nor  
 has this Gentleman cited any Passage, which shews  
 it to have been their firm Persuasion. After-  
 wards, when the Opportunities of receiving Light  
 from Revelation were better and more frequent,  
 the Operations and Assistances of Grace were much  
 talk’d of; and the later Philosophers, such as  
*Hierocles* and *Marcus Antoninus*, seem to have been  
 fully in that Sentiment. The Passage † cited from  
*Plato*, in the *Defence of the Plea*, has no Relation

\* *Plea*, p. 25.† *Def.* p. 71.

to the Point in Debate. It does indeed represent Virtue to be the Gift of \* God. But *how*? Not by his Spirit's co-operating with us, and fortifying our Minds against Temptations; but by an overruling Power; by forcing it upon, and infusing it into our Hearts, † without any Endeavours on our Part towards obtaining it. And what Relation has this to the *Christian* Notion of Divine *Grace*? How is it prov'd hereby, that the Heathens clearly taught the Doctrine of God's Assistance to enable Men to attain to Virtue? The *Pleader* is no less unfortunate in his || Appeal to *Cicero*. I grant that he says, § “*Both Rome and Greece have produc'd many excellent [famous, extraordinary] Men; none of which we have Reason to believe to have been such, but by divine Assistance.*” But for *what*, were they so famous, and so extraordinarily accounted of? The *Pleader's* Answer must be; for their Sanctity, their moral Virtues, and heavenly Dispositions: Yet *Cicero* says not a Syllable about Saints, or Men famous for Virtue and Heavenly-mindedness. All this was quite remote from his Thoughts; and the Reader will smile to find that *Cicero's* excellent and extraordinary Men were ‡ *Martial Heroes* and successful *Warriors*; and that the Assistance he speaks of, was not to enable them to mortify themselves, and subdue their own Lusts and sinful Affections; but to knock their Enemies o'th' Head, and, after an hazardous Encounter, to sleep in a whole Skin. Again, 'tis

\* Θεία ἡμῶν φαίνεται μοίρα παρρηγομένη ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ παρρηγοῦντος. *Meno.* in fin. † Μὴδὲν εἰδότες. — ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐ. *Ibid.* || *Def.* p. 71. § Multos & nostra civitas &

Græcia tulit singulares viros; quorum neminem, nisi juvante Deo, talem fuisse credendum est. *De Nat. Deorum, Lib 2. in fin.*

‡ Quæ ratio Poetas, maximeque Homeram impulit, ut Principibus Heroum, Ulyssi, Diomedi, Agamemnoni, Achilli, certos Deos, discriminum & periculorum comites, adjungeret. *Ibid.*

granted that Cicero says, † “no one was ever a great Man, without some divine *Afflatus*.” But why was this Passage cited to shew, that “the best Heathens generally believ’d and taught the Assistance of Divine Grace to enable Men to be virtuous and good?” According to the Pleader’s Way of Arguing, a Man any way famous in his Generation, must on Course have been a Saint; and Alexander the Great, tho’ a General Nuisance, and the Plague of the Age he liv’d in, was one of the best of Men.

But supposing these Passages were meant of God’s Grace and Assistance in Matters of Religion, yet still it might have been objected (as I said before) that they express only Cicero’s private Opinion, not the concurrent Sentiments of the Generality of good Heathens. And ’tis remarkable, that himself introduces Cotta asserting it to be the † general Opinion of Mankind, that Virtue is entirely their own Acquisition; and arguing, that no one ever † thank’d the Gods for his being virtuously inclin’d; and that ’tis § right in us to pride ourselves and glory in being virtuous; and yet, that it would be wrong to do it, in case our Virtue was the Gift of God, and not owing wholly to ourselves.

’Tis imprudent to be confident about an *universal Negative*; but, as far as I can collect, none of the Philosophers, before Seneca, ever express’d

† Nemo igitur vir magnus sine aliquo afflatu divino unquam fuit. *Ibid.*      \* Plea, p. 25.      † Judicium hoc omnium mortalium est, fortunam a Deo petendam, a seipso sumendam esse sapientiam. *De Nat. Deorum. Lib. 3.*      † Virtutem nemo unquam acceptam Deo retulit. — Num quis, quòd bonus vir esset, gratias Diis egit unquam? — Jovem optimum, maximum, ob eas res appellat, non quòd nos justos, temperatos, sapientes efficiat, sed quòd salvos, &c. *Ibid.*      § Propter virtutem jure laudamur, & in virtute rectè gloriamur. Quod non contingeret, si id donum a Deo, non a nobis haberemus. *Ibid.*



themselves in favour of this Principle : And even he fluctuated, and was far from being uniform and consistent in his Notions about it. In one Place he says, † ~~No one can be a good Man without the Divine Assistance.~~ But then he elsewhere grossly contradicts himself, imputing all our Virtue wholly to §§ ourselves, and equalling, nay even preferring † good and wise Men to God ; because their Virtue is owing to their own laudable Endeavours ; his, to the Necessity of his Nature. And indeed, 'tis no wonder he was thus unsteady in the Belief of a Point, which, in all Probability, he had only some imperfect Notice of, one way or another, from Revelation ; and neither knew how to trace the Tradition up to the Fountain-head, nor to confirm, by his own Reason, what he had thus borrow'd from the Word of God.

I will only add, that (unless the *Pleader* can himself produce full Evidence from the Nature and *necessary* Relations of Things, that God will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask it, and assist them in their Duty) he must not call this a Principle of Deism, which the Heathens were instructed in by mere Reason : He must not say, that any one in a State of Nature, strictly so call'd, is capable of making this Discovery ; and much less, that the meanest Individual is so : Consequently, here will then be one Instance at least, in which mere Reason is insufficient, and absolutely unfit to be a Guide.

† Bonus vir sine Deo nemo est. — Ille dat consilia magnifica & erecta. *Ep.* 41. §§ Quod votis opus est? Fac te ipse felicem. — Tutum iter est, jucundum est, ad quod natura te instruxit. Dedit tibi illa, quæ si non deserueris, par Deo surges. *Ep.* 31. † Si cui virtus animusque in corpore præsens, hic Deos æquat. *Ep.* 92. Est aliquid, quo sapiens antecedit Deum. Ille naturæ beneficio, non suo sapiens est. *Ep.* 53.



## C H A P. VI.

*Whether Reason ascertains the eternal Duration of the Soul in a State of Rewards or Punishments in the next Life?*

**H**AD the Pleader contented himself with such wise Reflections as these, — that \* “ Good Men always hoped, “ and firmly believed, to receive that “ Reward which God should see fit to “ bestow upon them ” ; and that † “ it was demonstrable in Reason, and none could deny, but God could “ continue the Existence of the Soul as long as he “ pleased, and reward or punish Men, according to “ their Works, in what Manner, and as long as he “ pleased ” ; I should then have given him no Opposition under this Article: Or, if he had went no further than to say, that virtuous Heathens had ever some *Hopes* and *Expectations* of future Happiness; this might have been allow’d him. But he runs into Extremes, to very hideous Lengths, contending that ‡ “ the Belief of future Rewards “ and Punishments was the Sanction of the Law of “ Nature ” ; that § “ all but Atheists agreed in “ the Duration or Immortality of the Soul ” ; and

\* Plea, p. 55.      † Plea, p. 56.      ‡ Ibid.      § Plea, p. 33.

that ‡ “*Rewards attend Obedience with as much Certainty by Reason as by Révelation.*” Farther, having observ’d, that \* “*the Principles and Motives upon which we act, ought to be the certain Belief of a future State of Rewards and Punishments,*” he goes on to say, “*this is one of the Principles and Doctrines of Deism, in which Heathens were instructed by the mere Light of Natural Reason.-----’Tis a Sentiment or Dictate of eternal and immutable Obligation, and demonstratively agreeable to the Nature and Will of God.*” Nay, he insinuates, that Revelation teaches nothing at all about the Motives to Obedience, but what Reason had taught before. † “*With respect, says he, to the Motives and Designs upon which our Duty ought to be discharg’d, What does reveal’d Religion teach more than that, &c? Which was a Principle of Deism, discover’d by mere Heathens, and demonstrable by Reason.*” And farther still he says, that || “*Men under the Law of Nature only, by the constant Practice of Virtue, could not but attain all that Happiness which their Nature was capable of.*”

In answer to all this, I observe as follows: The Heathens did not so unanimously agree about the Duration or Immortality of the Soul after Death, as he represents. Himself § excepts the *Stoicks*, allowing them to have been *uncertain* about it; and the *Stoicks* were a great and famous Sect: How then could he say, † “*all but Atheists agreed*” herein? He ||| attempts to free himself from the Charge of Self-contradiction: But he may as well hope to wash a *Blackmoor* white. His Plea is, that because he had represented (p. 23.) the *Stoicks* as *uncertain* about a future State, there-

‡ Plea, p. 16.

¶ Introd. p. 6.

|| Def. p. 78.

\* Def. p. 14.

§ Plea, p. 23.

† Def. p. 13.

‡ Plea, p. 33.



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fore when he added, (p. 33.) all but Atheists agreed in these necessary Points; the Stoicks in part were to be excepted with respect to one Point of Doctrine there mention'd. I am clearly of his Opinion. The Stoicks ought to have been excepted: But why then did he not except them? The Case is plain: In the Interval of *ten* Pages he forgot himself, and in insisting that all but Atheists agreed in the Belief of this Article, did not recollect that himself had before represented the Stoicks as *uncertain* about it.

Farther, he represents the Heathens as more confident of the Immortality of the Soul, than he can prove them to have been. They appear to have been under great Doubtfulness and Uncertainty, none ever expressing himself with full Assurance of it; and such of them as were most sanguine in their Expectations, and reason'd best in favour of this Doctrine, could not sometimes help being dissatisfy'd with their own Arguments; or forbear intimating a Suspicion that it might be otherwise. I cannot here omit citing the remarkable Words of Mr. Jackson on this Point: \* “ The  
 “ Motives of Obedience which God made use of  
 “ for many Ages, were the Rewards and Punish-  
 “ ments of this Life. ” ---- † “ The Gentiles, for  
 “ the most Part, had little or no Expectations  
 “ beyond this Life. ” ---- ‡ “ Future Happiness  
 “ and Misery were not made the express Sanction  
 “ of the divine Laws till the coming of Christ.  
 “ Then only it was that a Redemption from Death  
 “ and a State of Immortality was procur'd for us.”  
 Dr. Clarke likewise has well observ'd, that § “ the  
 “ best of Heathen Philosophers disputed with  
 “ great Uncertainty and Doubtfulness about the

\* Exposition of the Lord's Prayer, p. 126. .  
 p. 128.

† Ibid. p. 129.

‡ Sermons, Vol. 9. p. 6.

“ Immortality of the Soul. ” And again,  
“ \* those who were the most celebrated, and with  
“ the greatest Reason, discours’d yet with much  
“ Uncertainty and Doubtfulness, concerning things  
“ of the highest and most universal Importance,  
“ the Providence of God in governing the World;  
“ the Immortality of the Soul, and a future Judg-  
“ ment. ”

But supposing their Hopes were ever so firm and well fix’d; yet, What Degree of Happiness was it they expected hereafter, and had in View? Reason can discover no such Rewards as the Gospel proposes, as our Author himself has sometimes acknowledg’d, tho’ not in any good Agreement with himself in a Passage or two but just now cited. Much less can it insure to good Men *all* that Happiness their Natures are *capable* of. For their Natures are capable of as great Happiness, as ’tis possible for God, with all his Omnipotence, to bestow upon them: And this is more than even the Gospel-covenant intitles us to: I may add farther against the *Pleader*, that his Notion will not well comport with that *Difference* of Rewards which there will be in the next Life. It implies that a constantly good and virtuous Heathen, as being of the same *Nature* and *Species* with, and differing in nothing *essential* from, the most holy Christian, will attain to the same Degree of Blessedness; notwithstanding he has not so perfect a Rule to walk by, nor so clear a Knowledge of God, his Ways and Works, nor so well-grounded and vigorous an Expectation of another Life, and consequently his Virtue cannot be so Sublime and Excellent as a Christian’s may: The *Pleader’s* Notion, I say, implies this, which is palpably a

\* Sermons, Vol. 9. p. 33. See also Evidences of Natural, &c. p. 184, 5. Third Edit.

groundless Fancy, and a \* great Absurdity. I know of no Heathen that ever dream'd of future Blessedness, comparable to what the Scripture sets forth: And 'tis worth remarking, that † “ when Achilles's Ghost, in *Homer*, is complimented by Ulysses as the happiest of Men, both alive and dead; he makes answer, That he had rather alive be a poor Day-labourer to the meanest Peasant, than be Emperor of all the Dead. ” This was no very elevated Notion of Heaven; nothing like what reveal'd Religion teaches: Nor could the Expectation (however strong and constant it might be) of such a Reward be a sufficient Support to Virtue, especially under great and pressing Temptations, when, by adhering strictly to it, a Man would involve himself in the greatest of temporal Evils; and by defecting from it, might procure some of the most desirable Advantages in this Life.

Beside all this, whatever Expectations of this Kind the Heathens had, 'tis likely enough they were not owing to the Strength of their own Minds, or founded on any just Deductions of Reason. Admitting † *Cicero*, in the Passage cited in the Margin, to teach that the Immortality of the Soul was the concurrent Belief of all Nations, as the *Pleader* § insinuates; (tho' 'tis plain, to make it pertinent and home to his Argument, he must

\* 'Tis excellently observ'd by Mr. *Whiston*: “ The Graces of a Christian are deriv'd from so much higher Assistance; are done from so much nobler Principles and Motives; to so much better Ends; and offer'd to the Divine Acceptance thro' so much a more acceptable Medium, and more powerful an Intercession, than the Virtues of a Heathen; that 'tis no wonder they are esteem'd quite of another Nature, and capable of a much greater Reward, than the other's are, or can be suppos'd to be. ” *Sermons and Essays*, p. 37. See also Dr. *Whitby's* Note on Rom. ii. 14. † See *Phileleuth. Lips.* Pt. 1. p. 44.

‡ *Permanere animos arbitramur consensu nationum omnium. Inf. Qu. Lib. 1.* § *Plea*, p. 26. *Def.* p. 79.



stretch the Sense of the Passage, which speaks only in the *general* of the Soul's continuing after Death; or not dying with the Body, without any Intimation of its *eternal* Subsistence: ) yet the same Cicero takes Notice, and in the same Book too, that this Notion was \* handed down to them from the earliest Antiquity, and that this was Ground enough for the Belief of it; because those, who liv'd nearest the Beginning of the World, were most likely to know the Truth. 'Tis allow'd him likewise, that † “ Lactantius, speaking of Epicurus, “ says, that he held the Mortality of the Soul, but “ was herein confuted both by all Philosophers, and “ the general Persuasion of Mankind.” But has not the same excellent Father of the Church observ'd, that those Philosophers fell into this Notion of the Soul's Immortality by ‖ Chance and Accident; that they argued for it upon a false Bottom, deducing it from the Principle of § *Præ-existence*; and imagining, that if the Soul had no Subsistence before the Body, it could not be prov'd to subsist after the Body; that they were not ‡ able to defend this Notion against Gainsayers, whose Authority was † as good as theirs; and who, by the Opposition they made, brought the Matter to be

\* Auctoribus ad istam sententiam uti optimis possumus; quod in omnibus causis & debet, & solet valere plurimum: & præcipuum quidem omni antiquitate; quæ quo propius aberat ab ortu & divina progenie, hoc melius ea fortasse, quæ erant vera, cernebat. *Tus. Qu. Lib. 1.* † Def. p. 79. ‖ Non scientia, sed casu inciderunt in veritatem. *Lib. 3. c. 18.* § Nam cum timerent argumentum illud, quo colligitur, necesse esse ut occidant animæ cum corporibus, quia cum corporibus nascuntur; dixerunt non nasci animas, sed insinuari potius in corpora, & de aliis in alia migrare. Non putaverunt aliter fieri posse, ut supersint animæ post corpora, nisi videantur fuisse ante corpora. *Ibid.* ‡ Aliis refellentibus defendere id, quod invenerant, nequiverunt; quia Singulis ratio non quadravit. *Lactant. Lib. 7. cap. 7.* † Non minus auctoritatis habuerunt, qui contra hanc sententiam differebant; — Adeo ut res ipsa, de qua inter se pugnabant, ipso dubium vocaretur. *Lib. 7. cap. 8.*

doubted of? And lastly, has he not observ'd, that *Cicero*, having recounted the several Opinions of the Philosophers for and against the Immortality of the Soul, says, which of these Opinions is the true one, none but God can tell: And again, Each side of this Question has been espoused by most learned Writers, nor can it be determin'd which of the two is the right?

The *Pleader* alledges, that † “without Dispute the Pythagoreans and Platonists taught the Doctrine of a future-State.” Yes, the Pythagoreans did so, as maintaining the Transmigration of Souls. But is this, what he pleads for, a Sufficiency in Reason to discover that the Soul goes on in a perpetual Round, animating at one time a Man, then a Beast, and afterward a Bird? Has the Gentleman any natural Evidence that his own Soul will be thus perpetually changing its Habitation, and thus immortal? Then, as to *Plato's* Doctrine, 'tis rightly observ'd by *Lactantius*, that he did not § reason himself into the Belief of the Soul's Immortality; and that his Arguments for it are ¶ trivial and of little Weight. What he had

• *Tullius* expositis horum omnium de immortalitate ac morte sententiis, nescire se quid sit, verum pronuntiavit. Harum, inquit, sententiarum quæ vera sit, Deus aliquis viderit. Et rursus alibi: Quoniam utraque, inquit, earum sententiarum doctissimos habuit Auctores; nec, quid certi sit, divinari potest. *Lib. 7. cap. 8.* † *Def. p. 78.* ¶ --- Migrare animas de corporibus vetustate ac mortè confectis, & insinuare se novis ac recens natis; & easdem semper renasci modo in homine, modo in pecude, modo in bestia, modo in volucre; & hac ratione immortales esse quod sæpe variorum ac dissimilium corporum domicilia commutent. *Lact. L. 7. c. 12.* § Sensit animas æternas esse: sed non per gradus ad eam sententiam descendit. Ampius enim mediis, incidit potius in veritatem, quasi per abruptum aliquod præcipitium; nec ulterius progressus est, quoniam casu ad eam, non ratione pervenerat. — *Lactant. Epis. cap. 10.* ¶ *Platonis* argumenta — parum habent firmitatis ad probandam & implendam veritatem. *Lib. 7. cap. 8.* His itaque argumentis, quæ nec *Plato*, nec ullus alius invenit, animarum æternitas probari ac perspicui potest. *Lib. 7. cap. 9.*

learn'd from Revelation, by means either of *traditional* Hints from the first Ages after the Flood, or of later Notices from the People of the Jews, he endeavour'd to prove by Deductions of Reason, tho' he succeeded ill, and has not done it. We know also that several other Philosophers had some Improvements from reveal'd Light; and, perhaps, none were *totally* destitute of the Aids of it: So that the Gentleman I am concern'd with, proceeds wrong, in laying so much Stress upon their bare Assertions. It matters not, what the Philosophers believ'd or said. Opinions are often taken up *implicitly*, without Evidence enough to work a rational Conviction, or to ground a full Assurance upon. The proper Question is, What they, and the rest of the Heathen World, found out and *prov'd* by *mere* Reason, without any Notices from Revelation? And does this Author think, that the Philosophers were in a State of Nature, *strictly* so call'd, and taught no Doctrines but what were *merely* the Inventions of Men? *Pberocydes* and *Pygoras* were the two \* *first* of them that maintain'd the Immortality of the Soul. Does he know that these Philosophers had no Assistance in the least from Revelation? The contrary has been often maintain'd: And one would suspect they ow'd even this Doctrine, one way or other, to reveal'd Light, tho' there were no other Grounds for the Suspicion but this, that neither they, nor indeed any one else † before *Plato*, ever *reason'd* upon the Point, or brought any *Arguments* in Proof of it.

\* Cicero, *Tusc. Quæst.* Lib. 1. Lactant. Lib. 7. cap. 8.

† Rationem illi [scil. antiqui] sententiæ suæ non ferè reddebant. — Platonem ferunt, ut Pythagoreus cognosceret, in Italiam venisse, & didicisse Pythagorea omnia; primumque de animorum æternitate non solum sentisse idem, quod Pythagoras, sed rationem etiam attulisse. *Cic. Tusc. Quæst.* Lib. 1.



But perhaps it may be urg'd, that the *Jews* themselves had no Revelation of this Matter, and therefore could not communicate it to any other Nations. The *Pleader* says, that \* " God left the  
 " *Jews to the Evidence of natural Reason, common to*  
 " *them with the rest of Mankind, to infer the Cer-*  
 " *tainty of a future State ;* " --- If he had left off here, this would have been a bold Stroke. But his Courage failing, 'tis presently subjoin'd, -----  
 " *not without giving them Hints also from Facts and*  
 " *Passages of their own History, from whence they*  
 " *might reasonably and easily infer it.* " What egregious trifling is this? Is such a way of Reasoning worthy of the *accurate Pen of Mr. -----*? He might as well have said, that the *Jews* had nothing else but the Light of Nature to discover this Point; only they had the Light of Revelation to guide them to it. The former part of the Passage is current Doctrine among Men of Infidel Principles, and frequently insisted on by them; wherein they have been strenuously oppos'd by Christian Writers, and the Sentiment has been shewn to be contrary to Truth, and injurious to God and his Revelation under the Law. And if this was an Article of the *Jewish* Faith, founded upon the Testimony of God in a Supernatural Way, 'twas easy enough for the Philosophers to borrow it from them, among the other Doctrines, which even *Heathen* Writers, as well as *Jews* and *Christians*, affirm, were deriv'd from that Fountain.

The Truth is, the Immortality of the Soul is no ways proveable by unassisted Reason. The Arguments drawn from the *Nature* of the Soul, *abstractedly* consider'd, are all precarious; And the Inequalities of Providence in this Life, (tho' they afford the best Argument of any, and prove the

\* Def. p. 62.

most) shew only in *general* that there will be a future State, without determining *how long* it will last; or inducing a *Necessity* of its being *eternal*. The *Pleader* says, \* “ a future State of Rewards is the Sanction of the Law of Nature. ”  
 If he means a State hereafter of only a *temporary* Duration; or that will last but fifty or sixty Years perhaps, this, tho’ ever so true, is quite remote from the proper *Question* here in *Debate*. If he would be understood to speak of an *eternal* State hereafter, let him prove the *Position* at his *Leisure*. Suppose *Adam* had never sinn’d; from what *Principles* could he have reason’d himself into a full Assurance of *Immortality*? Or indeed, How could he have acquir’d a *certain* Knowledge of any future State at all, as a *Sanction* of the *Law* of *Nature*? The *Gentleman* is concern’d to shew this; which, upon *Trial*, he will find impossible to be done. It is therefore a *Misrepresentation* of the *Bishop* of *London*’s *Doctrine*, to say, that his  
 “ § *Arguments for the Insufficiency of Reason are*  
 “ *such only as are founded upon the general Corrup-*  
 “ *tion of natural Reason in Fact.* ” For one of his *Lordship*’s *Arguments* relates to the *Point* now before us; which *Reason* in its utmost *Purity* and *Perfection* could not *ascertain*. Upon *Examination* perhaps it will be found, that if *Man* had continued *Innocent*, the *Justice* of *God*’s *Providence* would have been concern’d only to see that that *Good* should preponderate and outweigh the *Evils* of *Life*; and not to permit him, since he was brought into *Being* without his own *Consent*, to be reduc’d to a State worse than *Non-entity*: Nor can I conceive *God* to be under a *natural* *Obligation* to *immortalize* any of his *Creatures*; whom, for ought we know, he might

\* *Plea*, p. 56.

§ *Introduction*, p. 1.

72    **REMARKS on the Plea, and the**  
have continued for ever in a State of *No-existence*,  
and, without the least Impeachment of any of his  
*Attributes*, never have created at all. Mr. *Jacks-*  
*on* has well remark'd, that 'tis \* "by the positive  
" and gracious Appointment of God, that the  
" Happiness of good Men hereafter is made to be  
" eternal:" And 'tis observable, that tho' Dr.  
*Clarke* has urg'd all he could in Favour of the Soul's  
Immortality from natural Principles, yet his Ar-  
guments leave the Matter under great Uncertainty,  
affording nothing like a *strict Proof or Demonstra-*  
*tion*; and rising no higher than to *Probability*.

Upon the Whole I observe as follows:

First, The *Pleader* neither has nor can prove  
(as his Argument, in appealing to their *bare un-*  
*prov'd Assertions*, necessarily requires he should) that  
what the Heathens believ'd or taught concerning  
the eternal Duration of the Soul after Death, was  
the Result of *mere unassisted Reason*.

Secondly, He has not shewn that any of them  
(notwithstanding all the Notices they receiv'd one  
way or other from Revelation) were under a full,  
settled, and constant Assurance of this Point; nor  
can he deny, but that many of the chief among  
them spake, sometimes at least, *diffidently* about  
it.

Lastly, He has not assign'd any Argument,  
whereby *any one* Philosopher ever did or might  
demonstrate the Soul's Immortality: Much less  
has he produc'd any Argument of such a Ten-  
dency and so much Weight, which lies level to  
*vulgar Capacities*, and whereby the *Bulk* of Man-  
kind may easily reason themselves into a full and  
well-grounded *Assurance* of it.

\* *Expos. of the Lord's-Prayer*, p. 83.





## C H A P. VII.

*The different Tendencies of affirming, and of denying the Sufficiency of Reason, consider'd.*

**I**T has already been observ'd, with respect to the particular Case of the *Pleader*, that by maintaining the Sufficiency of Reason, in Opposition to the *Pastoral Letter*, (which the Bishop wrote with a most Christian View, *viz.* to keep the People of his Diocese sound in the Faith, and to prevent the Growth of Infidelity among them) he has done all he could to defeat the laudable Intention of that Letter; he has confederated with the Enemies of our Religion, patroniz'd their Cause, help'd them forward in their dirty Work, and strengthen'd their Hands against his Lordship.

What I am now to remark is, in *general*, concerning the probable Tendency of this Doctrine, and the Consequences which in it self it may be apt to produce. The *Pleader* says, he \* “ *hopes* “ *it is not true what his Lordship says, --- that Men* “ *shew a Zeal for Reason and Philosophy as* “ *their best Guides in Religion, in order to in-* “ *dulge their vicious Lusts and Desires.*” In truth, he is but too much concern'd to hope and

\* *Pica*, p. 39.

with so ; because by pleading the Cause of Infidels, and seconding them in their Attempts against Christianity, 'tis very probable he may have turn'd aside many from the Truth, and given Occasion to the Enemies of *Christ* to blaspheme. But has he any substantial Grounds for thinking thus? or are his Hopes well founded? What else, but to loosen the Tyes of Religion, and to indulge their Lusts with less Interruption, can be the View of those Men, who set up Reason as the BEST Guide; preferring human Philosophy to the Oracles of God, and Pagan Ethicks to *Christ's* Sermon upon the Mount?

He proceeds ; \* “ *The Indulgence of all vicious Lusts and Desires is as contrary to the Dictates of Reason and true Philosophy, as it is to the Precepts of the Gospel.* ” 'Tis observable the Word “ *true* ” is here disingenuously foisted in, only to create the Shadow of an Argument. Setting aside the Precepts of Revelation, every one will be left to follow his *own Imagination*, and to walk in the Sight of his *own Eyes*, without any certain Standard of Good and Evil, any *sure Compass* to steer by. The Question is not concerning *true Philosophy*. God himself is guided only by that: And *true Philosophy* and *right Reason* would do as well as the Gospel-Morality ; and are indeed but other Words for it. But the Misfortune is, without the Help of Revelation no one, as far as we can judge, would be capable of determining universally, or in all Instances of a moral Nature, *what is true Philosophy* and *right Reason* ; and there are many *material Actions*, which the Bulk of the World would be incapable of reducing to their *proper Class* of good, evil, or indifferent. Our Author should have consider'd, whether the Dictates, of Men's unassisted Reason, and their Philosophy,

\* Plea, p. 39.

which are *fallible* in their very Nature, and, in *fact*, never were pure or free from a Mixture of Error and *material* Sin, may not be more indulgent to vicious Lusts and Desires, than the Precepts of the Gospel are, and for that Reason be magnify'd as the BEST Guides in order to exclude all Revelation.

The like way of arguing I meet with in anothe Place. 'Tis observ'd in the *Pastoral Letter*, that  
“ \* the asserting Reason to be a sufficient Guide,  
“ tends to persuade Men that they may, without  
“ Danger and Inconvenience, lay aside and neg-  
“ lect the Gospel-Revelation. ” The Observa-  
tion is undoubtedly Just, as his Lordship intended it. To maintain the Sufficiency of Reason in that *extravagant* Manner as the Deists do, whom his Lordship opposes, and in which the *Pleader* himself presses upon their Heels too closely, is manifestly disserviceable to the Cause of Christianity; and for that Reason they so maintain it. Nevertheless the *Pleader* objects to the Observation, alleging that this Doctrine † “ *has no such Ten-*  
“ *dency, because, on the contrary, to lay aside or*  
“ *neglect the Gospel-Revelation, is to lay aside or*  
“ *neglect natural Religion and Morality, which Rea-*  
“ *son teaches.* ” But can he convince the Deists, that to neglect the Gospel, as a Revelation, or to deny the Penmen of it to have been divinely inspir'd, is necessarily to neglect and lay aside natural Religion? They will own the New Testament to be an excellent System of Morality, and it's Precepts to be agreeable to Reason: But then they contend, that Reason plainly teaches the same, and therefore that a Revelation is quite useless. Upon the whole then, the *Pleader* has worded his Argument very unfairly; and so, as that 'twill be too apt to perplex and deceive a weak Mind. By

\* Page 1.

† Plea. p. 5.



neglecting the Gospel-Revelation he don't mean the neglecting it, consider'd as a Revelation, but the neglecting the moral Doctrine of it, consider'd *simply and in itself*; which is indeed to neglect the best and only true Morality. Whereas he cannot be insensible that his Lordship means by it, the neglecting this Revelation, consider'd *as such*, or *as a Revelation*, i. e. the disbelieving it's special and divine Authority: In which Sense his Lordship's Observation is manifestly Just; nor can the *Pleader* gainsay it. To teach that \* "*there is no Part of Religion or Morality, which is not plainly discoverable by the Light of Nature;*" that † "*Reason is sufficient, by it's clear and demonstrable Evidence, to determine all Points of Morality,*" and ‡ "*might easily have reform'd all the Corruptions that ever crept into Religion;*" that § "*Reason will lead Men to all that Happiness their Natures are capable of;*" and that † "*Revelation teaches no other Motives to a good Life than Reason does:*" To teach *all* this, I say, is the ready Way to incline Men to lay aside their *Bibles*, to acquiesce in the Dictates of their own Minds, and seek no other Guide but *natural Conscience*.

Such is the Tendency of the Doctrine of the *Plea*. Let us now consider, on the other hand, what will be the Consequence of *denying* the Sufficiency of Reason. *First*, 'tis alledg'd that it renders Men "*‡ excusable in their greatest Enormities, Superstitions, and Immoralities, as being destitute, not thro' their own Fault, but the Necessity of their Circumstances, of a sufficient Guide in Matters of Religion.*" 'Tis observable, that our Author takes this to be a notable Argument; he calls it ||| a *Demonstration ex absurdo*, and complains that the PLEADER for

\* Def. p. 44.    Introd. p. 5.    † Plea, p. 18.    ‡ Plea, p. 57  
 § Introd. p. 6.    † Def. p. 13, 15.    ‡ Plea, p. 8.  
 || Def. p. 22.

*Revelation* has \* *artfully dropt* it. Great Art indeed, to drop an Argument which has nothing at all in it! I should rather think, 'twas in mere Pity pass'd over. What Propriety is there in calling *invincible Ignorance* and *absolutely involuntary Errors*, the *greatest Enormities* and *Immoralities*? Beside, he has no Foundation in History for the Case he puts, of Men *unavoidably* left to the Guidance of Reason only. Let him tell us *when* or *where* those People liv'd: And if he knows of none such, let him not pretend that it necessarily follows from the Supposition of the Insufficiency of Reason, that any Set of Men ever were inexcusable in their grossest Immoralities; or " *left under under an unavoidable Necessity of Infidelity and Sin.* "

Secondly, He argues thus, † " *If Men are unavoidably destitute of a sufficient Guide in Religion, and, being so, are not accountable to God for those Vices and Errors which they could not help, the Providence of God over Mankind [over those Men] is manifestly destroy'd; he ceases to be a moral Governor and Judge of [those] Men, and they are unavoidably left to live without God in the World, and in a State of downright Atheism.* "

What if *Titius* and *Tilenus*, with a thousand more of *mean Capacities*, cannot discover such and such Actions to be proper Matter of human Duty? Does this (tho' Ground enough for denying the Sufficiency of Reason) destroy the Providence of God over *all* Mankind, or even over these *particular* People? May they not be accountable, *so far* as they do or may understand? And is not God the moral Governor of those who have but *one* Talent, as well as of those who have *ten*?

I may ask further, Why he represents a State of *unavoidable Ignorance* of the Duties and Obligation of Religion, as a State of downright *Atheism*?

\* Def. p. 33.

† Introd. p. 14.

Does he deem *Infants* and *Idiots* to be poison'd with *Atheistical* Principles? He makes no Distinction between those who *absolutely reject* or *deny* the Being of a God, and others who *neither* believe nor disbelieve it, as having perhaps, thro' some natural Incapacity, never once thought upon the Question, whether there is a God or no. He might with equal Propriety call the Pulpit in *Regent's-Church* an Atheist, as call those so, who are unavoidably left to live without God in the World, and in utter Ignorance of his Being.

Further still it may be ask'd, What Propriety is there in saying, God ceases to be a moral Governor and Judge of such Men? Admitting the Matter of Fact, that there have been some so grossly ignorant, (which, however true in some particular Cases of mere Idiots, who are only by Courtesy call'd Men, may yet, with respect to whole Nations and Communities be reasonably question'd) I would fain know, whether God ever was their moral Governor? If not, how can he *cease* to be what he *never* was? In a better Cause the *Pleader* could easily write with less Confusion.

*Thirdly*, Out of the profound personal Respect which, in several Places, he professes for the Bishop of London, he accosts his Lordship in this manner: \* “ To teach, with your Lordship, the  
 “ *Insufficiency of Reason in Religion, and withal*  
 “ *the Necessity of obeying it, would be a manifest*  
 “ *Absurdity: — And your Doctrine tends to per-*  
 “ *suade Men, that they may safely neglect, or lay*  
 “ *aside natural Religion, since their Reason is not a*  
 “ *sufficient Guide in it: And whether this, which is*  
 “ *the just Consequence of your Lordship's Doctrine,*  
 “ *does not lay the Foundation of Irreligion and Atheism,*  
 “ *(tho' your Lordship sees it not) I leave all reason-*

\* Def. p. 25.



“ *able Persons to judge.* ” The Matter may be safely trusted with any reasonable Person: And no one, who calmly and without Prejudice considers his Lordship’s Doctrine, will charge it with such a hideous Consequence. What if Reason is an insufficient Guide, as being incapable of discovering the Immortality of the Soul, a certain Method of Atonement for Sin, or a pure and perfect Rule of Life? Would this quite disannul it’s Authority, vacate the Obligation of obeying any of it’s Dictates, and \* “ *render it of no more use in Religion to Men than to Brutes?* ” The Pleader himself acknowledges that the Heathens, by the mere use of Reason, never discover’d a Rule of Faith and Manners *absolutely* free from Errors and Superstitions; and probably *never* will. Would he then deliver it for sound Doctrine to Heathens, that the Ground of obeying Reason is the Assurance of the Sufficiency of it; and that they need not regard any of it’s Dictates, till it has exhibited a *faultless* Rule of Life, and given them, with demonstrative Evidence, *as compleat* a Morality as that which the Gospel teaches? Surely, every Man is oblig’d to follow the Guidance of Reason whithersoever it directs, tho’ it cannot lead him into *all Truth*: And why should the Supposition of it’s not being capable of understanding *all* Knowledge, or not being *infallible* in *all* Matters of a Moral Nature, annihilate it’s Authority, and render it quite useless and insignificant? The short is, the Pleader either here forgets himself, or else he artfully *sinks* his Note, and *drops* the *proper* Point in Debate. His Argument now proves only this, that Reason is sufficient to discover all that those, who have no other Guide, are oblig’d to do, and that there is no Necessity of obeying Reason in any *such* Instances *wherein* it is insufficient; which no

\* Def. p. 21.

Body will dispute with him. The Word *Obey* being *relative* to *Law*, imports as much; and in Propriety of Speech, a Law, whatever it may be to *other* People, should not be call'd a Law to *those* who are incapable of knowing any thing about it. But the Sufficiency he elsewhere contends for, is of an higher Nature and larger Extent, *viz.* a Sufficiency to reform any Corruptions that have crept into Religion, and to teach all the Parts of Duty which reveal'd Religion does. Yes, this is the Sufficiency which, in other Places, he ascribes to Reason, however it came to pass that his Note is here chang'd: And let him prove, when he is able, that the opposite Doctrine tends to persuade any one to lay aside natural Religion, or lays the Foundation of Irreligion and Atheism.

Thus have I gone thro' the Articles I propos'd to consider. The World must now judge on which side of the Question the Truth lies. One thing I must needs say: 'Twas my Aim throughout to attack the *Pleader* in his strongest Holds, and to reply distinctly to those Passages wherein his greatest Strength seems to lie: Nor am I conscious of having pass'd over in Silence any one Passage of Consequence in the Debate, or on which he can pretend to lay any Stress. If he should think fit to make a Reply, I hope he will proceed in the like Manner, and carry on the Debate with the same Fairness.