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SOME  
 THOUGHTS  
 Concerning the Several  
 Causes *and* Occasions  
 OF  
 A T H E I S M,  
 Especially in the  
**Present Age.**

With some Brief Reflections on  
 SOCINIANISM; And on  
 a Late BOOK

Entitled  
*The Reasonableness of Christianity as  
 deliver'd in the Scriptures.*

a. BY *2619.*  
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TO THE  
Most Reverend Father in GOD,  
His GRACE  
**THOMAS,**

By Divine Providence

Lord Archbishop of *Canterbury*,  
Primate and Metropolitan of all  
*England, &c.*

MY LORD,

**Y**OUR Grace being not  
only by Your Place and  
Station, but by Your own  
Choice and voluntary A&,  
the *Grand Patron of our Reli-*  
*gion*, it cannot be improper  
to present You with these  
brief Papers, which, though

A 3 in

*The Epistle Dedicatory.*

in themselves very mean and inconsiderable, and unworthy of Your Grace's View, are a Vindication of that *Holy Cause* against the repeated Cavils and bold Insults of *Atheistical* Spirits, who (as Your Grace with a very deep Resentment and Regret \* observes) are of late grown very numerous. How vigorously Your Lordship hath attacked this sort of Men, is well known to the World; and that hitherto they have not been able to bring about their impious Designs, is in great part owing to Your Lord-

\* Sermon of the Folly of Atheism. Sermon at the Queen's Funeral.

ship's

*The Epistle Dedicatory.*

ship's successful Attempts. I presume, from the Encouragement which so Illustrious an Example hath given me, to engage in the same Cause, that is, to lay open the *Folly* and *Absurdity* of their Pretences, and withall to discover some of those Heads and Springs whence the *Atheistick* Apprehensions of these present Times arise, and whereby they are fed and nourished. Which I hope will be of good use to those who desire to be caution'd against the Venom of this Raging Evil, and will in some measure operate even on those who are infected and

## *The Epistle Dedicatory.*

corrupted with it already.

I am sensible how Precious Your Grace's Minutes are in this time of extraordinary Business and Emergency ; and therefore I will not be injurious to the Publick by any farther Applications to Your Grace. Only I superadd my hearty Prayers for Your Health and long Life, wherein the Common Welfare and Happiness both of Church and State are so much involved : And so I subscribe my self,

Your Grace's  
Most Dutiful Son,  
and Devoted Servant,  
*John Edwards.*

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## T H E P R E F A C E.

**I** *Designing, by the Divine Help and Conduct, to defend the Existence and Providence of God by Arguments drawn both from the Greater and the Lesser World ; it is my Request to the Reader, that he would accept of this Brief Essay in the mean time, which I conceive will be a suitable Introduction and Preparative to that other Undertaking. For as in that intended Discourse I shall carefully trace and discover the Footsteps of the Divinity every where ; so here I make it my Business to shew how frequent and obvious the Occasions of Disbelieving it are. By which means we shall effectually learn how to purge our Minds of those ill Qualities which naturally are subservient to Atheism ; we shall know how to remove those Stumbling-blocks, to answer those Objections, and to clear up those Mistakes which usually betray Men to this Infidelity. And thus there will be a*  
Way

## The PREFACE.

*Way made for what I design. Persons will be fitted to receive and retain the Impressions which those Topicks that I shall afterwards make choice of will enstamp upon their Minds: And I hope the Age, which hath lately been stigmatized with Marks of Atheism, will for the future be renowned for these truly illustrious and glorious Characters.*

*I will only farther acquaint the Reader, that some part of what I here offer (viz. such Particulars as I thought were convenient for an usual and mix'd Auditory) was deliver'd lately in one of the City-Pulpits; and the other Heads, with their Enlargement (which are of somewhat a different strain, and are chiefly adapted to the Curious and Inquisitive) are an Addition since. But as I have added several things, so I have omitted some, at the Desire of those who are concern'd in both. This is all that I had to advertise the Reader of; and so I bid him*

Farewel.

SOME

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# SOME THOUGHTS

Concerning the  
Causes and Occasions  
OF  
ATHEISM.

**T**HAT the World was not void of Atheists in King David's time, may be gathered from his Words in Psalm xiv. 1. *The Fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.* But it is exceedingly to be lamented, that the number of them is much increased since, yea, that it is the Unhappiness of this Present Age, to be pester'd with

with not a few of them. Notwithstanding those cogent and incontestable Arguments for a Deity which are suggested from the Holy Scriptures, and the Natural Reasonings of sober Minds, there is still an *Atheistical* Spirit prevailing in the World. There is a sort of Men (if I may call *them* so whose bold Infidelity is so Irrational and Brutish) that reckon the Notion of a *God* to be a Melancholick Conceit, and the mere Effect of Credulity and Ignorance. Yea, there are some that pass for *Wits*, who strive for the honour of being accounted the most *Able Atheists* of the Age.

Wherefore, instead of rehearsing or urging those Topicks which are wont to be produced for the Proof of the *Divinity*; my Business at present shall be, to enquire into the *Causes of Atheism*, which now vaunts it self with an impudent Fore-head, and

and begins to boast that it hath got Footing in a great part of the World.

I will search into the *Occasions*, either real or pretended (for I will mention both) of this Reigning Mischief. I will shew you on what *Grounds* the Impious do at this Day not only, with the Psalmist's *Atheistical Fool*, say in their Hearts, but openly and avowedly proclaim to the World, that *there is no God*, that is, no Supreme Over-ruling Being of infinite Perfection, no eternally Wise, Intelligent, and Omniscient Substance that at first gave Existence to all things, and ever since upholds them, and takes care of them.

I. I assign *Ignorance* to be one great Spring of this gross Unbelief. As *knowing* as the World is at this day, there are too many People of inferiour Rank whose Education hath been so unhappy, that they have

4 *Some Thoughts concerning*  
 have not been instructed in the  
 Common Principles of Religion;  
 and they are more unhappy in that  
 they will not allow themselves time  
 and leisure to look into their own  
 Minds, and to rouse those inbred  
 Notions which are implanted there  
 by God, and which would (if they  
 would give way) lead them to him.  
 Wherefore it is the Concern of all  
 Persons, to know how to converse  
 with Themselves, and to rife their  
 own Breasts, that they may find a  
*Deity* written there; and besides,  
 they should be careful to acquire  
 such a stock of Knowledge from  
 without, that they may understand  
 their Religion, and not be seduc'd  
 by Atheistical Notions that fly up  
 and down every where.

But this first Cause which I as-  
 sign of *Atheism*, is not only to be  
 found in some meaner sort of Peo-  
 ple who have not time (as they or-  
 der

der their Affairs) to think of a God,  
 but in others of a higher Rank and  
 Quality; for by *Ignorance* I mean  
 a wilful and sottish stifling of na-  
 tural Notions and Impressions:  
 And this sometimes prevails in Men  
 of great Parts and Knowledge.

Think it not strange that I reckon  
 such Persons in the number of  
 the *Ignorant*; for (to speak impar-  
 tially) they are so: and this was the  
 Sense of the \* wisest *Pagans* long  
 since. For to have no Knowledge,  
 and to stifle it, is the same thing;  
 which is the Case of these Men:  
 they make it their business to choak  
 the innate Principles of their Minds,  
 and to disregard those Notices  
 which their Natures suggest to  
 them. Thus these Persons are stub-  
 bornly and obstinately ignorant.  
 Whatever their Pretences and Boa-

\* Ἀνέντων ἀνάγκη ἢ ἀθεῖον εἶναι, ἢ ἠθεῖον ἀνέντων.  
 Hierocl.

stings

stings be, their Atheism proceeds from want of Learning and Wit. For 'tis not the part of a Learned and Ingenious Man to destroy the Notions of Mankind, and pull down what hath been built by the universal Suffrage of the World, and in its place to erect a Conceit of his own. Some may take such for Brainish and Scholar-like sort of Men, but then these are so without *Thinking*; for it is the want of this that makes them what they are. Or, to say the best of this kind of Men, an *Atheist* is but a *half-witted* Person: He hath perhaps made some Attempts in Science, but to little purpose: He hath attain'd to some slight and trivial Notions; but hath not penetrated into the heart of Things; and thence it comes to pass, that he is full of Doubts and Cavils, which he is able to raise, but he hath not Skill  
and

and Ability enough to answer them. Wherefore it was excellently said of my Lord Bacon, \* *A little Philosophy inclines mens minds to Atheism*; but depth in Philosophy brings mens minds about to Religion and a Deity. Thus though this misshapen Monster would be thought to be the genuine issue of True Wisdom and Sound Knowledge, yet it is really the daughter of an Affected Ignorance. Wherefore to secure your selves against Atheism, be careful that you blind not your minds; willingly receive the rays of light into your souls, cherish all sound notions and conceptions, and by all proper methods bring your selves to a right understanding, and steady embracing of all the Fundamental Principles of your Religion.

II. There is great *Disingenuity* and *unhandsome Dealing* in the case,

\* His Essays.



else we should not have so much *Atheism*. Here I will prove, that they do not act fairly, but that they are *Ungenteel*, which perhaps will affect these Persons more than any thing that I can say. What they are willing and forward to grant in other matters, and on other occasions, they refuse to grant here, yea they utterly deny it, though there be the same reason for one as the other. This plainly appears by their *Objections*.

As first, they tell us they have no Sensible Notices of a God, and therefore they can't admit of it; for all the knowledge (say they) which we have of things, is deriv'd to us from Sense. But here we see that these Men are *Partial* and *Dis- ingenuous*, for they will not deny that there are many things which they judge not of by Sense; they grant that the swiftness of Motion often-

oftentimes out-runs the nimblest Sense, and the Observation of the quickest eye; yet they do not deny the Motion it self: The Element of *Air*, in which they daily converse, is not seen, nor is it heard or felt (unless when 'tis extraordinarily moved and disturbed, which is but seldom:) nor will they say they taste it; and 'tis as certain that they cannot smell it, (for this is only the Vehicle of Smells, but is not it self the object of that sense) and yet these nice Gentlemen do not deny the Existence of the *Air*. They can by none of their Senses discern the Motion of the *Sun*, *Moon*, and *Stars* (or, as perhaps they think it most proper to say, the Earth), and yet there is not a man of them that denies that they move. It can't be determin'd by Sense, whether the Sun be bigger than it appears to be, and there-

10 *Some Thoughts concerning*  
fore *Epicurus* ( who was a great  
Man for Sense ) held it was of no  
greater dimension than it seems to  
the Eye to be ; yea, of no greater  
heat in it self than it seems to the  
Feeling to be here on Earth. And  
the Atheistical Poet, who borrow'd  
his Notions from him, was of the  
same mind,

*Nec nimio solis major rota, nec minor ardor  
Esse potest nostris quam sensibus esse videtur.*  
Lucret. lib. 5.

This is certain, that the things  
that are least discernible act most.  
The Animal Spirits, which do all  
the great things in our bodies, are  
themselves Imperceptible. They are  
the Insensible and Invisible Parts, as  
Spirits, Wind, Subtile matter, Ex-  
halations, which ( being agitated )  
do the chiefeft Exploits in Nature.  
There are Fine Particles and Atoms  
diffused through all bodies whatso-  
ever ; and these are the cause of  
Sense

Sense and Motion in Animals : by  
help of these, Minerals, Plants, and  
all Vegetables, are brought to per-  
fection. These Invisible Agents  
effect strange things, and act most  
wonderfully in the World. The  
*Nutritious Juice* in the Nerves, if  
we may credit the famous *Glisson*,  
is of mighty use and influence : yet  
( as he confesses himself ) there are  
no Cavities to be seen to convey it,  
and none of this *Succus* is ever dis-  
cern'd in the dissecting of Animals.  
Notwithstanding this, some Phy-  
sicians of the most piercing Judg-  
ment, have granted ( whatever they  
do now ) the real being of it. And  
in other Instances it might be shew-  
ed, that *Sense* is not always made a  
Judge even in sensible Objects, but  
we gather the being and operation  
of them from Reason and Discourse.  
This the persons whom we are now  
dealing with do not deny, but even

practise it themselves, and are willing to allow of it. Why therefore are they so void of Ingenuity and fair-dealing, as not to admit of the same in the case that is before us? Why do they most irrationally deny a God because they do not apprehend him by Bodily sense, whereas they judge not of some other things by Sense, nay though they be proper objects of it? This is a plain proof of these mens wilful Prejudice and Partiality, especially if I add, that *God* is infinitely farther removed from our most exalted Apprehensions, than the *Sun* (of which we spoke before) is from this Earth. This Glorious Sun  
\* dwelleth in that light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, or can see.

Secondly, they tell us that there are *Great Difficulties* in conceiving a

\* 1 Tim. 6. 16.

God, and they are loth to swallow these down: and more especially the notion of a *Spirit*, i. e. a Being that is void of Matter and Body is too hard to be conceiv'd by them, and therefore seeing we hold *God* to be a *Spirit*, they can form no conception of him. I will reply to both the parts of this Objection distinctly: and first as to the General Cavil, That this notion is accompanied with *Difficulties*, I answer, there are great *Difficulties* in other matters, which yet they leap over with ease, and do not disbelieve the things themselves because of the *Difficulties* that attend them. It is very hard to explain how a little Wheel of two inches diameter, fixed on the same Axil with two greater Wheels of ten inches a-piece, moving together (the greater ones on the ground, the lesser on a table) should move over the very same

space in equal time, with equal rotation with the greater ones: and yet the thing it self is not denied by any one. And many other puzzling Problems might be mentioned, where the Hardship doth not discourage them from embracing them. But I will instance in one of their own Hypotheles, viz. that of *Atoms*, which they chuse to solve the Original of the World by, that they may evade the *insuperable Difficulties* (as they think them) of the Acknowledgment of a *God*. If they say that these *Atoms* had their Existence from *Themselves*, then instead of denying one *God*, they assert many, for Self-existence is of the very nature and essence of a *Deity*; wherefore if they were all from themselves, they are all *Gods*. If they say that *other Matter* or *Atoms* were the first Cause of these, then they run to Infinity, and no body

is

is able to trace them. If they say they are of *Nothing*, then they had as good have begun with that, and have confessed in plain terms, that the World was made out of *Nothing*, and then they come to us, but they are resolved they will not do that. Thus they are confounded as to the *Rise* and *Origine* of their *Atoms*.

Then, as to their *Motion*, whence had they that? either of themselves or of an other? They could not have it of *Themselves*, for we see it is not of the nature of *Matter* to move: it is in it self a dull and inert, a lumpish and unactive thing. If this *Motion* was impress'd on it by an *Other*, then that was either some *other Matter*, or *something else*. If they hold the former, they run again *in infinitum*, and he is a distracted man that will run after them. If they maintain the latter, they

they

they betray their Cause, and acknowledge a *Spirit*, for there is no real and substantial thing besides Matter and Spirit. In brief, whether the former or the latter Assertion be held by them, they do in a manner own what they deny; for we will not disagree about the Name, if we can agree on the Thing it self. That Being or Agent which gave the first Motion to things, is *God*.

If after all they say, that Matter had this Motion by *Chance*, and so was neither from it self or any other, they talk more absurdly and wildly than before; for *Chance* is a Word made to signifie only the *unexpected happening of a thing*, but doth not import that there was no Cause or Author at all of it. But however, if they will stand to this (as generally they do) that Matter at first had a strong power by *Chance* to jump into an Orderly System

stem of *Heavens, Earth, Sea, &c.* then I ask them, What is the reason that there hath been nothing of this nature since? What reason can be given why all the Atoms and Effluvia in the several Ages and Successions of Time, ever since this visible World had its being, have not produced some excellent Frame either like this World, or of an other nature? What! is this *Lucky Chance* quite ceas'd? Is this *Fortunate Lottery* at an end? Is there no probability of a brave fortuitous hit once again? Is there no such fine piece of work as that of *Sun, Moon, and Stars*, to be expected once more? No: there is an utter despair of it; for from Eternity (according to them) to this moment, we have had no such good Luck, and therefore what reason have we to expect any such afterwards? yea indeed, what ground have these  
Chance-

Chance-Philosophers to think that there ever was any such thing? What reason have they to declare it to be their firm persuasion that Matter was set into motion from Eternity, and that by the frisking of its Particles, it at last danced into a World? yet this and all the rest they believe and vouch rather than they will hold that the beginning of things was from an *Intelligent and Wise Being*.

It appears hence, that they will say any thing rather than acknowledge themselves to be in the wrong: they make nothing of talking idly and impertinently, of running into Banter and Nonsense, as we have heard. They can give credit to this extravagant Fancy, that an everlasting Juncto of *Atoms* did without Counsel and Knowledge club together to make the World. They can tamely submit  
to

to this unaccountable Maxim, that these infinite Bodies, after eternal Brushings, Agitations, Encounters, Knockings, Tiltings, Jufflings, Jumblings, fell by mere Chance into this excellent Frame that we now behold. Thus the Atheist, to avoid some seeming Difficulties, runs into those which are really so, yea into the greatest Absurdities imaginable. If it be difficult to conceive the Self-existence and Eternity of one God, surely it is insuperably so, to conceive infinite Matter moving it self, and giving Being to it self from all Eternity. It is plain then, that these men deal not fairly and uprightly, but wilfully deceive themselves and others. They cry up Reason, and yet maintain things which are repugnant to ordinary Discourse and the Common Dictates of Reason; and therefore are rather to be exploded than with  
much

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much industry to be confuted. They cannot only swallow down, but digest *Absurdities* when they think fit, and at other times they can fancy them where there are none, nor any shadow of any.

Then as to that particular Difficulty, *viz.* That the Notion of a *Spirit* is inconceivable, and therefore they have no conception of a *God*; I return this brief Answer, That if this which they say be true, if it be impossible to apprehend the Idea of a *Spirit*, then there is no such thing: and if so, then *Matter alone* must do all things in the World, but particularly, it must have *Understanding* and *Knowledge*, it must *think* and *reason*, for (whatever the precarious Hypothesis of Atoms suggests) the Curious frame of this World could not be erected without Knowledge and Wisdom, and it cannot be kept up and managed

naged without these. Now, I appeal to any considerate man, whether the flat denying of this, and the asserting that the *Dimensions of a Body* are *Intellectual*, that to be *Long* and to be *Broad*, and to be *Deep*, are *Acts* and *Exertments of Reason* or *Will*, and (in short) that *Extension* is *Thinking*, be not far greater *Absurdities* than any thing they imagine to be in the notion of a *God*. It is a sign therefore that these men make *Difficulties* where there are none, and do not take notice of them where they are. I could here prove that our *Faculties* may form as clear, explicit, and distinct an Idea of a *Spirit* (which they so much boggle and startle at) as they do of their own *Existence*, or any other *Principle* in *Nature*; but this I have made my task in another place.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, they tell us they cannot believe a Deity, because there are no Proper *Demonstrations* to prove it. For you must know, that these Persons whom we have to do with at present, are great men for *Demonstrations*. But I answer, The Existence of many things in the World cannot be made out by *Demonstration*, strictly so called, and yet no man questions the reality of them. The skilfullest Mathematician under Heaven can't demonstrate that the Sun shines, and yet there is no doubt at all of it, and he would be counted a Mad-man that denies it. We are morally certain of many things which we cannot possibly demonstrate; but this doth not hinder us from yielding a firm assent to them. And 'tis certain, that an Assent is as firm on Moral grounds as on rigid *Demonstrations*, when the matter is capable

ble of no other grounds; for the Evidence is proportionable to the Matter to be proved, and that is as much as can be desired by any intelligent man. There can be no greater than a Moral Certainty of a Deity; for there are no grounds of it Mathematically Demonstrative. But by being Morally Certain we are certain enough, and as certain as the nature of the thing will bear. This should content any Rational man, and it is unreasonable to demand any more.

Then, as for those *Demonstrations* which they talk so much of, they cannot but acknowledge, that as they are sometimes managed they yield but little Certainty. For, not to speak now of the old *Academicks* and *Scepticks*, who denied *Geometrical Principles*; or of *Demetrius*, *Sextus Empiricus*, *Epicurus*, *Zeno*, and others of the Ancient Philosophers

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who reason'd against them, I will mention some of our *Moderns* (and those of great Skill and Learning) who have disagreed about Mathematical Proofs, and thereby proclaim to the World their Uncertainty. The greatest Astrologers hugely differ as to the distance of the Sun from the Earth. It is nearer to it ten thousand miles than it was, saith *Copernicus*. But *J. Scaliger* would have the Writings of those Authors who hold the Sun is nearer to the Earth than 'twas in former days, \* *to be razed out with sponges, or the Writers themselves to be corrected with stripes*. And other very good Astronomers are so far from consenting to this, that they maintain the Sun is farther off from the Earth than it was at first. And yet on both sides they proceed on *Mathematical* grounds. There is no

\* *Exercitar. 99.*

Mathematical Demonstration for Comets being above or below the Moon, saith \* *Ricciolus*, a very skilful Mathematician: but others of that Faculty have pretended much to the contrary. The *Paralax* is well known to be a Mathematical business, that by which the Planets are judged to be higher or lower: but the greatest Astronomers have quarrell'd with one another about this Doctrine. *Tycho* is for it; but *Claramontius* is against it; and *Galileus* even explodes the Proof brought from the *Paralax*. Dr. *Wallis* and Mr. *Hobbes's* Contrasts in Print, shew that *Mathematicks* are dubious: and this latter (who was so stiff an Opposer of the Notion of a *Spirit*, and consequently of a Deity) finds fault with all Geometricians, old and new, in his Book entituled *The Principles and*

\* *De Cometis.*

26 *Some Thoughts concerning Ratiocination of Geometricians.* *Cartes's Dioptricks and Geometry* are pretended to be baffled by other Learned Mathematicians, as *Bourdin, Hobbes, Fermat. Franciscus du Laurens,* and *Dr. Wallis,* scuffle about a Mathematical Problem. So that it seems it is not an Infallible Science. *I am certain,* saith \* *Dr. Henry More,* that *Mathematical Certitude it self is not absolute.* There is an *Essay* of *Dr. Pell* to shew the Errors and Mistakes of the best and most celebrated Astronomers for want of better Knowledge in *Geometry.* Even † *Monsieur Malebranch,* a profound Admirer and Follower of *Descartes,* acknowledges that in his *Geometry there are some footsteps of the weakneß of the humane mind.* And I will conclude with the Words of One that was known to be eminent

\* Preface before his *Philosoph. Writings.* † Search after Truth, Book 3. Chap. 4.

in

in *Mathematical Studies,* \* *Even in Geometry and Arithmetick* (saith he) *how many things are forcibly concluded to be true which are inexplicable, unimaginable, incomprehensible?*

Thus you see the Mathematical Certainty which some men talk of, is not so easily to be attain'd as they fancy. Disputes have place in *Geometry; Demonstrations* sometimes prove to be *Paralogisms.* But as for a Mathematical Demonstration for the proof of a GOD, it is vainly and unreasonably required, because there can be no such thing, for the matter will not bear it. Wherefore though † some *Divines* have been great *Philosophers* and *Mathematicians,* yet they never attempted any such thing. A man

\* *Bishop Ward's Serm.* † *Copernicus, Lansbergius, Clavius, Petavius, Tacquet, Scheiner, Gassendus, Fromondus, Kircher, Ricciolus, Oughtred, Ward, Wallis, More, Glanvil.*

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must

must not expect to have every thing proved the same way. If we have things evidenced by the Arguments which they are capable of, it is satisfactory, and every wise man rests in it. And these men themselves do so in other things: they acquiesce in that Evidence which the things admit of, and they seek no farther. Which shews, that in the present Case they are *Disingenuous*, and *Cross-grain'd*, and act merely out of Prejudice; which was the thing I undertook to make good. Their *Insincerity* nourishes their *Atheism*. Therefore let us have a care that we give way to no such thing.

III. Another Cause of this Pernicious Opinion, is, *Ostentation of Wit*. For you may take notice, that this Mischievous Plant springs from Contrary Seeds. As before this kind of men put on a very grave and solid Countenance, so now they

they shew themselves to be very Pleasant and Airy, and set up for the Art of Drolling. Before they appear'd like Philosophers, now they come upon the Stage like Buffoons. Then with a Magisterial Grimace they affected Demonstrations; now nothing will please them but the Comical part. It is observable, that they are a sort of Jestling, Scoffing People, giving themselves to Railery and Burlesque. And it is this Jocular Humour that in part betrays them to *Atheism*, for they take liberty to jest with their Maker. These witty and facetious Folks must needs play with Heaven, and laugh God out of his being. They are defective in sound Learning and Judgment, and in the place of these have a fanciful way of Jeering, which they addict themselves immoderately to. *Democritus* was the

great Asserter of Eternal Matter, and thought that the Casual Motion of it was the Cause of all things: the influence of which Principle on his Cogitations, made him at last laugh at every thing he saw, and mock at all Actions and Occurrences of humane life; for 'tis certain that if they are all by Chance, they are to be denied. The Followers of this Great Man have learnt from him to be *Laughing Philosophers*; and there are abundance of this Sect now-a-days. This I look upon as one Cause of the great *Atheism* of this Age. They think *their Tongues are their own*, and they may say what they please; and they persuade themselves, that what is wittily said is well said. Hence these Sparks venture to ridicule Religion, to scoff at Virtue and Piety, and to mock God himself. Then at last they really believe what they fancy'd,

fancy'd, and jestingly utter'd; and they assert in good earnest what at first perhaps was said only in Merriment. Wherefore, to guard your selves from *Atheism*, be always very Serious, and abhor the sportful vein, the flashy fancy of these men, who think they can't be men of Parts unless they make a mock of God and Religion. Whereas the Brightest and most Accomplish'd Heads ever exploded this: and in our own Nation we have abundant Instances of this, that even the \* *Wisest* and the *Wittiest* Men (tho no Church-men or Divines) have express'd their deep sense of *God* and serving him, and defied the contrary Profane *Atheistical* humour.

IV. *Pride* and *Self-conceit* may justly be reckon'd another Spring

\* *Sir Tho. More, Sir Phil. Sidney, Sir W. Raleigh, Sir Hen. Wotton, Lord Bacon, Mr. Selden, Mr. Cowley, &c.* of

32 *Some Thoughts concerning*  
of Atheism. Men in this and former Ages have thought it below them to go tamely along with the generality of Mankind in asserting a Deity. They would be thought wiser than others: and consequently they affect to go against a commonly receiv'd Notion. But more particularly these High-Flyers account it base and sneaking to listen to an Old Story of *Religion*, and to submit their Belief to *the Harangues of the Parsons*, as they are pleas'd to word it. Especially *Great Men* are apt to be possessed with this Pride, and consequently to be Atheistical. They strongly incline to King *Alphonsus's* impious Bravado, *That if he had been present at the Creation, he would have framed the World better than 'tis now.* There is in many an excessive Desire of a Name and Vogue; and they think to obtain them by scorning the Common

way,

*the Causes of Atheism.* 33

way, and going out of the beaten road, by giving the Lye to all Mankind. And though one would think that they might shew the subtilty of their Wit by diving farther into things than the Vulgar, and not by casting off the agreed Sentiments of Mankind; by refining and improving the Principles of Nature, and not by nulling and evacuating them; yet they choose the latter, that they may (as they think) give the greater proof of their Wit and Parts, and that it may be seen that they are able to weather a Cause be it never so bad. To maintain this all sober Considerations are postpond'd; they superciliously renounce (when they are in the Humour) all Reason and Arguments; they arrogantly resolve to hold the Conclusion, whatever becomes of the poor Premises. *Atheism* owes its Being much to this,

this, as I apprehend; as I think it is sufficiently evident from what I have said before, when I shew'd that they chuse rather to maintain the greatest Absurdities, than to adhere to a Received Truth. Wherefore that we may effectually prevent this Folly in our selves, let us banish Presumption, Confidence, and Self-Conceit; let us extirpate all Pride and Arrogance; let us not list our selves in the number of Capricious Opiniatours.

V. *Undue Apprehensions* of a Deity joyn'd with *Superstition* are the high road to Atheism. Those that think amiss of God will easily be enclined to question his Existence. It is too true that men model the Divinity according to their own fancies: the Creature fashions his Creator. Or, like him that engraved his own Image in that of the Goddess, they shap themselves and figure

figure out their own absurd notions and conceits, whilest they pretend to give the Pourtraiture of God. Therefore imposing of false Doctrines concerning the *Attributes* of God is very pernicious, for they are destructive of his very being and nature. It is no wonder that when these come to be scann'd and examined, men doubt of the very existence of God, because so irrational and absurd things are attributed to him. They are loth to think there is such a One, or they wish there were not. So that they endeavour to destroy that which they can't endure. Thus mistakes and misprisions concerning God lead to Atheism. False Conceptions of a Deity expunge at last the belief of one.

And so 'twas of old in Paganism, *Idolatry* was the great mother of *Atheism*: gross *Superstition* undermined

36 *Some Thoughts concerning*  
 mined the Godhead. It hath been  
 falsely and blasphemously said that  
 \* *Fear* was it which first introduced  
 a God into the world: but yet it  
 is certainly true that This with some  
 persons hath expelled the notion of  
 him out of the world: for they be-  
 ing Timorous and Melancholick  
 create to themselves strange fancies  
 concerning Him whom they are to  
 worship, and represent him to their  
 thoughts as Severe and Tyrannical.  
 And the *Gentile* Priests and Rulers  
 laid hold on this passion of *Fear*,  
 and did what they could to pro-  
 mote and heighten it, that thereby  
 they might keep the people in awe.  
 To which purpose they invented  
 Innumerable Rites and Ceremonies,  
 many of which were harsh, trouble-  
 som and afflictive. So that Bigotry  
 and Excess in Religion made way  
 for none at all: and when they were

\* Primus in orbe Deos fecit timor. — Pap. Stat.  
 wearied

wearied with the intolerable burden  
 of it they cried out, with that Non-  
 sensical Atheist,

*Tantum Religio potuit suadere malorum.*

Then Religion it self and the Au-  
 thor of it were discarded. This was  
 caused by the *Undue Representations*  
 which were made of God: the  
 Priests would have the Superstitious  
 Bigots believe that the *Divine Nu-  
 men* could not be appeased without  
 those wild Observances. This is  
 that which *Plutarch* took notice of,  
 telling us that \* from such gross,  
 absurd and extravagant Devotion  
 men came to disregard a Deity, and  
 to conclude there is None rather  
 than to believe there can be Such a  
 one, one that is delighted with so  
 unaccountable Ceremonies and U-  
 sages. Therefore, to shut out A-  
 theism, let us have right concepti-

\* Περὶ Δησιδαιμονίας.

ons of the Supreme Being whom we worship and serve. It concerns us to assert *rightly* the notion of God, lest otherwise we slide into a disbelief of any. Who misrepresenteth the Divine Being is in a ready way to deny him.

VI. *Corrupt Affections and Lives* (for I will joyn both these together, because they are never asunder) make men *Atheists*. Men of depraved minds and manners doubt of all Religion because they like none, and at last they flatly deny what they love not. An Atheist first desires and wishes no God, and his desires and wishes work on his Understanding. His Willingness to have it so enclines him to believe it. He easily credits what he longs for: his Affection corrupts his Judgment. Thus the indulging of Lust and Vice dispose a man to Atheism. To which purpose observe the Soil where this  
Poison-

Poisonous Weed springs up, grows, and thrives most, *viz.* in the Courts of Debauch'd Princes, among such Nobility and Gentry, and in Great Cities where vicious and prophane living is most in fashion. They are lewd and dissolute in their manners, and give themselves up wholly to the satisfying of their Lusts: and this naturally prejudices them against the belief of a God and a life to come. Nothing doth so much extinguish all apprehensions of these as Carnal Pleasures. He that lives dissolutely and wickedly can't easily entertain the notion of a God, for 'tis counter to his course of Living. Therefore he goes on in his Debauchery, and huffs and swaggers, and perhaps swears by the Divinity that there is none. It is plain that this sort of men decry a God, because they would not be obliged by his Laws. Sensuality

D makes



makes them desirous to remove all stops of a wicked life, and therefore they whet their wits (such as they are) to annihilate Religion, and to extirpate a Deity. An abhorrence of the Practical part of Piety engages them against the Theory. Their Lives influence on their Belief. They are addicted to Atheism by their Lewd and Prophan Courses.

For we must observe this, that these two mutually advance one another. As Atheism is the highway to Wickedness (which the Psalmist takes notice of when he saith, *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God: Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity,* Psal. 53. 1.) so 'tis as true that Wickedness is the original of Atheism and Infidelity. For 'twas rightly said by a Great Man, \* *None deny there is a God but*

\* Lord Bacon's Essay of Atheism.

*those*

*those for whom it maketh that there were no God.* For they know that if there be one, he will certainly judg them for their evil doings. They cannot therefore be secure in their sins unless the notion and remembrance of a Deity be blotted out. It is their supposed Interest then, not their Reason, that makes them deny a God; for it is their Concern to be perswaded, that there is none to punish them. Briefly, they are unwilling to believe any thing but what their Lust shall put into their Creed. Thus you see the true Reason of the Atheism of these times. It is fed and pamper'd by Luxury; the constant Fumes and Steams of this affect the Brain, and discompose the Intellect. Practical Atheism leads to that which is Dogmatical, i. e. holding and believing that there is no God. Evil and perverse minds, profane and debauch'd lives, strange-

D 2

ly

42 *Some Thoughts concerning*  
ly byas and incline men to this.  
Wherefore if you would effectually  
shut out this Vile Perswasion,  
take care to suppress your Evil Af-  
fections and Practices, for these are  
wont to court mens understandings  
to turn Atheists.

VII. Atheists take occasion from  
our *Divisions, Broils, and Animosi-  
ties*, from the many *Parties* and  
*Squadrons of Sects* that are in the  
World, to bid defiance to all Reli-  
gion; and they resolve to profess  
none till they can see them all  
Agreed. Thus \* *Tully* observed of  
old, that the Dissentions of Philo-  
sophers, the various Sentiments and  
Opinions that prevail'd among them  
were a cause of some mens denying  
a Deity, at least of their staggering  
about it. And truly this Observa-  
tor himself, in his Books *De Natu-  
ra Deorum*, is so given to the *Aca-*

\* De Nat. Deorum, Lib. 1.

*dematical*

*the Causes of Atheism.* 43

*dematical* vein of Disputing, that he  
seems sometimes to be irresolv'd  
whether there is any God or no. So  
it hath been among some of those  
who have taken upon them the ex-  
ternal Denomination of *Christians*.  
The Differences in Opinion, the  
Errors and Heresies which they  
take notice of, cause them to suspect  
yea to renounce all Truth. A great  
deal of the Atheism of this present  
Age may be ascrib'd to this. Some  
behold the great Scufflings that are  
about Religion, not only the Sin-  
gle Combates, but the Pitch'd Bat-  
tels that are about it, and thereup-  
on they discard all thoughts of any  
such thing, and become perfect  
Libertines. And herein they are  
promoted and push'd on by such  
persons as the Author of *Fiat Lux*  
and the *Treatise of Humane Reason*,  
who both design *Scepticism*, and so  
*Atheism*.

D 3

But

But though it is thus, though the Different Perswasions about Religious Matters have this ill effect, yet this can be no true Reason why any man should renounce the Belief of a God. For he that is truly rational and considerate, will rather make this an Argument of the contrary: for it was foretold by \* Christ and his † Apostles, that Errors and Delusions should be in the World, and therefore the *Fulfilling* of these Prophecies be as witness not only to the Truth of the Writings of the New Testament, and consequently of Christianity, but of the Divinity it self. For things of this nature, which depend wholly on free and arbitrary Causes, cannot be foretold without Divine and Supernatural help. None but an All-seeing eye could have a prospect of

\* Mat. 24. 15. Luke 17. 35. † 1 Tim. 4. 1. 2 Tim. 3. 5. 6. 2 Pet. 3. 3. Jude 18.

these

these future Occurrences. The Predicting of such things to come is an Evidence of an Omniscient Deity.

And then as to the thing it self, why should any man think it Strange and Unaccountable that there are *Dissentions* in Christendom? He may as well wonder that there are *Men* in the World; for as long as these retain their nature, *i. e.* are subject to Prejudice, Love of Interest, Passion, Pride, and the like, there will be *Errors* and *Heresies*, for these proceed from some of those ill Principles: and unless God should change the frame of the World, and destroy the freedom of Man's will, *i. e.* make him another Creature, it cannot be otherwise. How unreasonably then do men question a God, and cry out against Religion it self because they see so many of this sort of Disorders

D 4

46 *Some Thoughts concerning*  
ders in the world? Whereas it is  
certain, that it is not the fault of  
Religion that things are thus, but  
they are thus because men have so  
little Religion.

Again, the Cheats and Delusions  
that are in the world are useful for  
the *Trial* of Mankind, *that* (as the  
Apostle saith) *they who are approved*  
*may be made manifest*, 1 Cor. 11. 19.  
I do not say they were *design'd* for  
this (for no Evil is *design'd* by God)  
yet it is certain they are expedient  
for this purpose; and there is no  
better way to have an experiment  
of the Upright Judgment, Sincerity,  
Faithfulness, and Constancy of Per-  
sons, than by their being expos'd  
to these Impostures. Lastly, God  
deservedly *Punishes* men with erro-  
neous and false Doctrines. 2 *Thess.*  
2. 10, 11. *Because they receive not*  
*the love of the truth* (yea because  
they hate it, and oppose themselves  
to

*the Causes of Atheism.* 47  
to it) *and have pleasure in unrighte-*  
*ousness, for this cause he sends them*  
*strong delusion, that they shall believe*  
*a Lye*, and that they shall defend  
and maintain it. It is just with  
God to leave men to the Error and  
Blindness of their Minds, and judi-  
cially to give them over to Atheisti-  
cal Perswasions when they have wil-  
fully debauch'd and abused their  
Faculties. This is the dreadful,  
but just Judgment of God; and I  
doubt not but the present *Atheism*  
of this Age is such.

Thus it is evident that Errors  
and Dissentions about Religion are  
so far from being Arguments of the  
Non-Existence of a Deity, that  
they are undeniable Proofs of it.  
Let not then the diversity of Sects  
and the Disputes of wrangling  
Heads (as particularly the late up-  
start Contrast between the *Unitari-*  
*ans* and *Trinitarians*) prejudice us  
against

48 *Some Thoughts concerning*  
against our Christian Faith. But  
let us rather be stirr'd up hence to  
hold fast the Principles of our Be-  
lief, and to own a Deity when there  
are so many in this degenerate Age  
that deny it. And withal, let us  
endeavour to banish *Atheism* by do-  
ing so to our *Divisions*: let us lay  
aside our Religious Squabbles, and  
arrive at last to a happy Agreement  
in Doctrine, that we may hereby  
cut off occasion of Atheistick Un-  
belief on this Account. However,  
though in some Points we can't  
fully accord, let us not be hot and  
siry against one another, as if Cha-  
rity were no Virtue with us.

VIII. There is something more  
heinous than *Divisions*, which fre-  
quently occasions *Atheism*, and  
confirms men in it; and that is,  
the *Hypocrisie* and *Evil Practices* of  
*too many that make a very fair professi-*  
*on of Christianity.* Whilst it is ob-  
serv'd

*the Causes of Atheism.* 49

serv'd that they talk Religiously,  
and pretend to Holiness, but do  
nothing of what they talk of or  
pretend to; whilst it is seen that  
they have a *form of godlineß*, but de-  
ny the power thereof; whilst it is evi-  
dent that they cry *the Temple of the*  
*Lord, the Temple of the Lord*, and  
yet are unhallowed in their Lives;  
whilst it is known that they lay  
claim to the Spirit, but are Carnal  
and Sensual in their Manners, and  
enterprize very vile things for their  
worldly Profit and Advantage; in  
short, whilst it is observ'd that the  
Behaviour of sundry of the avowed  
Professors of Christianity is unan-  
swerable to their Principles, there  
is a sort of men that for the sake of  
these, presently conclude all to be  
Hypocrites, and Christianity it self  
to be an Imposture. This then I  
grant, that the Unbecoming Lives  
of Christians are an *unhappy occasion*  
of

50 *Some Thoughts concerning*  
of Atheism sometimes, but they  
can never be alledged as a *sufficient*  
*one*. For what though there be  
mere Pretenders to *Godliness*? doth  
it thence follow that there is none  
at all? What though there are  
great numbers of Religious Impo-  
stors? Must I therefore thence con-  
clude that all Professors of Religi-  
on are an errant Cheat? Then by  
the same Logick I may perempto-  
rily infer, that there is no such Me-  
tal as *Silver*, because by too noted  
experience we find at this day that  
it is generally counterfeited; and  
there is no such thing as True  
Coin, because so much is adultera-  
ted amongst us. No man of sense  
will make these Conclusions: and  
'tis as certain, that he can with as  
little reason make the others. Let  
us not then be abused by unsound  
and fallacious Inferences: let us  
not think there is no Religion be-  
cause

cause there are so many Unworthy  
Retainers to it. Yea, let us be  
fully convinced of this, that though  
Christianity hath been, and is to  
this day abused and sophisticated,  
and thereby dishonoured; yet it is  
a Reality, and we may venture our  
Lives upon it. And seeing the  
Evil Deportment of some that pro-  
fess Christianity is the greatest en-  
couragement to Atheism and Vice,  
let us all make it our great business  
to adorn our Profession with a ho-  
ly, strict, and exemplary Conver-  
sation. Let our *light so shine before*  
*men, that others seeing our good works*  
*may be so far from denying, that*  
*they may glorifie God.* And let us  
pray for the arrival of that Happy  
Day (and I hope it is not very far  
off) when Religion shall univer-  
sally bear sway upon Earth, and  
when men shall be throughly con-  
vinced of the real Worth of Chri-  
tianity

Christianity from the Practices of those that profess it.

IX. In the next place, more particularly, the *Ill Examples* of some who by their Office are *Spiritual Guides and Instructors*, are mention'd as another great occasion of Irreligion and Atheism. It is necessary to take notice of this, because it is alledged (but very frequently without ground) by the sworn Patrons of that Cause which I am now pleading against. They observe of some of this Order of men, that they urge Virtue and Holiness with great Warmth and pathetick Zeal, and yet are very cold, yea wholly neglectful in the Practice of them, and visibly favour those Vices and Enormities which they dissuade others from: whence it is no wonder (say they) that these Persons are not believed to be in good earnest, yea that they are

are thought not to believe themselves, *i. e.* to be really perswaded that those things are true which they discourse of; for it is seen, that their Lives wholly contradict their Doctrine. Whence this rash Conclusion is made, that Preaching is a meer Trade, that the Ministerial Function is a Cheat, and that Religion itself is so too, and that a Deity is no other. Thus where is there more of *Atheism* than in *Italy*, the Pope's own Soil, part of which is call'd *Holy Land*.<sup>3</sup> Which the Observing\* Author of *Europa Speculum* (who had convers'd in his Travels with the *Italians*, and knew them very well) attributes to the gross Wickedness of the *Roman Clergy*, and particularly of the Popes and Cardinals, of whose scandalous Speeches and Actions the people of that Country have a greater

\* Sir Edwyn Sandys.

54 *Some Thoughts concerning*  
knowledge than others. They are  
not ignorant that several Popes were  
inclined to be Atheists; as *Paul 3.*  
when he was dying told the Stan-  
ders by, that he should now know  
three things; viz. whether the  
Soul be immortal, whether there  
be a Hell, and whether there be a  
God. And *John 23.* (as is plain from  
that Council of *Constance* by whom  
he was deposed) profess'd that he  
look'd upon Religion as a Fable,  
and God and the Soul's Immortali-  
ty as such. And they dayly behold  
the lewd and dissolute Practices of  
some of the Cardinals and Prelates,  
Abbots, Monks, and of their Parish-  
Priests, which very thing (as the  
foresaid Author observes) makes  
them the most Irreligious People  
in the World, yea causes them to  
desie *all Religion* for their sakes.  
Especially they conclude, that there  
is nothing true and real in *Christi-*  
*anity,*

*the Causes of Atheism.* 55  
*anity,* because so many of the emi-  
nent Pretenders to it and Assertors  
of it, live continually in opposition  
to all Religious Principles and Pra-  
ctices, and are seen to be guilty of  
the most horrid Impieties, of the  
most execrable Villanies that are to  
be imagined. Their being so near  
to the *Head of that Religion* (as he is  
stiled) makes them averse to the  
whole kind. And this is *in some*  
*measure* the case of People in other  
Countreys, where even the *Prote-*  
*stant* Faith is profess'd, but is ac-  
companied with the Scandalous  
Lives and Lewd Practices of some  
that are immediately concern'd in  
Holy things, and whose Employ-  
ment it is to direct others in Reli-  
gion.

But to speak impartially to any  
considerate Person, this cannot yield  
an occasion of being *Atheistical*: for  
though the manners of *some* of the

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Sacred



Sacred Function be offensive, yet 'tis irrational and absurd to blast all Religion for their Misdemeanours. We do not read that our Saviour condemned the *Jewish Church* and *Mosaick Law* because of the Hypocrisie and Wickedness of the Chief Priests, Scribes, and Doctors of the Law. Nay, he tells the People, *All that they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works*, Matth. 23. 3. As much as if he had said, The Moral Law, and all the Offices of Religion, are not in the least discredited by the vicious Manners of some of your Teachers. Be careful that you imitate them not in their Practices; but be very observant of the Holy Doctrine which they deliver; entertain no ill Thoughts of it, because of the corrupt Lives of your Guides. The like may be said now; the Faults and Miscar-

riages

riages of any Ecclesiastical Persons must not be charged on the Sacred Institution of Christ; we ought not to think ill of Christianity for the disorderly Behaviour of any spiritual Officers in the Church. We see that there is no man refuses to follow a Learned Physician's Prescriptions and Rules concerning Health, because he doth not observe them himself. Nor can the Spiritual Patient with any reason reject the Rules of Saving Health and Happiness, though they are not observ'd by the Prescriber himself.

But to be yet more plain with the Persons I am now dealing with, *they* (of all men) cannot with any tolerable pretence make use of this Plea: they cannot complain of the Lives of the Clergy as administering to their disregard of Religion, for the more strict and religious any Church-man is, the more is he de-

E 2 spised

58 *Some Thoughts concerning*  
spised and hated by them. A Pious  
Clergy-man is reckon'd by them a  
weak shallow Creature, a fantastick  
Bigot, and is laugh'd at as such.  
So that it is evident, that what they  
alledge concerning the undue Be-  
haviour of some that serve at the  
Altar, is a more groundless Cavil;  
for they would have all men as  
Wicked and Debauch'd as them-  
selves.

It must indeed be acknowledged,  
that this is a great Scandal, and of ve-  
ry pernicious consequence, and such  
as is not to be permitted with im-  
punity in the Church: but it is no  
excusable ground of Impiety and A-  
theism. However, since it is so hei-  
nous in it self, and is made by the  
perverse minds of many an Excuse  
for their Atheism, it is the concern  
of all Christian Guides of Souls to  
be Examples to the Flock, to con-  
form their Lives with great Cir-  
cum-

cumspetion and Exactness to the  
Laws of Christ Jesus their Master,  
and to take care to perform them-  
selves whatever they require others  
to do.

X. Unbelief of a God is occasi-  
on'd sometimes by the *Strange Revo-  
lutions and Changes, the Odd Events,*  
and *Unaccountable Administrations* that  
are in the World. Especially men  
are inclined to question God's Exi-  
stence as well as his Providence  
when they behold the prosperous  
state of the most vicious Persons,  
and on the contrary, observe how  
miserably sometimes the Best men  
are treated in this Life, and at Death  
are not at all differenc'd from the  
Worst, but perish alike. Then  
you shall hear one cry out, *Quis pu-  
tet esse Deos?* And another uses the  
like Language of the Poet,

*Dum rapiant mala fata bonos, ---  
Sollicitor nullos esse putare Deos.*

But any understanding man, who will take time to consider and deliberate, will see that nothing of this nature can justly administer matter of Atheism. For it must be remembered, that we are finite shallow Creatures, and are not able to comprehend the Wise Designs and Purposes of Heaven in every Event that we see: and therefore when we meet with obscure and rugged Dispensations, and such as seem to be very disorder'd and irregular, we have no reason to find fault with them, and to think them unworthy of God, and of Divine Providence, because we are not able to make a judgment of them. Those Events which seem to be excentrick and at random, are guided by a steady unerring hand: but we have not depth of Apprehension to conceive it at present. But it may be afterwards, when our minds are more enlight-

ned, we shall know how to solve these difficult *Phænomena*. However, at the last Day all these Intrigues, these Knots, these Labyrinths, these Riddles, shall be fully resolved; and it shall be part of our employment in the other world, to admire and adore the Infinite Wisdom of God in the disposal of the Affairs here on Earth. And particularly we shall then be satisfied, yea we may be now, concerning the foresaid Problem, *viz.* the Prosperity of the *Wicked*, and the contrary Circumstances of the *Good*; for 'tis evident, that these are according to exact Justice and Wisdom. God intended the former should *have their portion in this life only*; and he designed the latter to be prepared for Heaven by those rougher dealings here below.

Lastly, *Learned Times*, especially if accompanied with *Peace* or

62 *Some Thoughts concerning*  
*rity*, are reckon'd by a \* Judicious  
Person as another Cause of Atheism.  
Nor is this inconsistent with what  
I said before, that *Ignorance* is the  
Mother of *Atheism*. For Learned  
or Peaceable times are only thus  
far conducive to this Great Evil,  
that men are then generally too In-  
quisitive and Curious, too Nice  
and Wanton, and over-busily pry  
into Secrets; which when they  
cannot satisfy themselves about,  
they are inclined to be Atheistical,  
and to doubt even concerning the  
chief things of Religion. Where-  
fore I question not but the starting  
and keeping up at this day the De-  
bates about the Doctrine of the *Ho-  
ly Trinity* are a great advancement  
to this evil disposition of mind.  
There are those who push on both  
Parties to wrangle and quarrel a-  
bout this Grand Point, and in the

\* Lord Bacon's Essays.

mean

*the Causes of Atheism.* 63  
mean time laugh at the Comba-  
tants on both sides. Whilst they  
encourage some Writers to baffle  
the *Trinity of Divine Persons*, their  
Project is to destroy the *Essence it  
self*. Whilst they put them upon  
maintaining the Unity of the God-  
head, they hope in the close of the  
Dispute to introduce a Nullity not  
only of the Deity, but of all Re-  
ligion. For by these Bandyings  
backward and forward, they know  
that mens minds will be unsettled  
and that they will be apt to waver  
about the truth and certainty of the  
main Articles of our Religion.  
When Persons observe, that the  
very Divinity of our Blessed Lord  
and Saviour is tosd and torn by  
rude Fens; when they see so *Catho-  
lick* a Doctrine attack'd with such  
Violence; what can they think of  
the other great Verities of Christi-  
anity? And withall, the *Anti-Tri-  
nitarians*

64 *Some Thoughts concerning*  
*nitarians* hereby provoke some of  
their *Adversaries* to an indecent  
sort of Language concerning these  
Holy Mysteries: so that some of  
these latter have hurt the Cause it  
may be almost as much by their  
Defending it, as the others have by  
their Opposing it. Thus it must  
needs be when Persons immoderate-  
ly indulge *Curiosity* in these Abstruse  
and Sublime Matters, and will not  
be content with what the *Bible* and  
*immediate Inferences* drawn thence  
suggest to us. By this means they  
lose their hold, and give their An-  
tagonists a clear Advantage against  
them, and manifestly promote the  
Design of those who make it their  
work to make void the Notion of a  
Deity.

Nay, in the very *Socinian* Do-  
ctrine it self there seems to be an  
*Atheistick* Tang. Would not a man  
guess that there is an approach to  
Atheism

Atheism in those Reflections which  
are made on a Sermon preach'd by  
the Right Reverend Bishop of *Wor-*  
*cester*, \* where one of the most re-  
ceiv'd Notions concerning the Na-  
ture of the Deity it self is cashier'd.  
The *Self-Existence* of God, which  
is the Primary, Fundamental, and  
Essential Property, and is the very  
Life and Soul of the explicatory  
part of the Doctrine of the Deity,  
is peremptorily pronounced by them  
to be a *Contradiction*. It is well  
known, *Socinus*, and *Crellius*, and  
others of this Party, deny God's  
*Immensity*, i. e. his being present  
every where as to his Essence and  
Nature. All of them agree, that  
he hath not a Knowledge and Fore-  
sight of every thing that happens in  
the World, for future Contingen-  
cies are hid from him. Particularly

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\* Considerations on the Explications of the Doctrine  
of the Trinity, Page 5, 6, 7.

\* *Socinus* largely argues against this *Præscience*, and tells us, that he is to be laugh'd at that asserts the contrary. Nay, it is farther observable, that this great Patriarch of the present Cause disowns the *Immaterial* or *Spiritual Nature* of God, as may be undeniably gather'd from his † Exposition of *John 4. 24.* and other Passages in his Writings. And he is followed by *Crellius*, as is manifest from that Account which this latter gives of a *Spirit*, when || he speaks of the Nature of God. He doth not make it to be any thing above a *refined body*, a *substance void of all gross matter*, such as the Air or *Æther* is. So that when these men call God a *Spirit*, their meaning is, that he is a Fine and Te-

\* *Prælect.* cap. 8, 9, 10, 11. † *Fragment. Disp. de Adorat. Christi.* || *Deus est Spiritus æternus: spiritum autem cum nominamus, substantiam intelligimus ab omni crassitie, qualem in corporibus oculorum arbitrio subjectis æcernimus, alienam. Hoc sensu Angelos dicimus Spiritus, & Arem, &c.* De Deo & Attrib. cap. 15.

nuious

nuious sort of Matter, not that he is wholly Incorporeal, and altogether free from Matter. This is the same with Mr. *Hobbs's* Corporeal God. Thus four of the Chief Attributes of the Deity, viz. *Self-Existence, Omnipresence, Omniscience, and Spirituality*, are either in whole or in part rejected. Whereupon, I ask this Question, Whether these things do not discover a Tendency (to say no more) in the *Anti-Trinitarians* to that which I am charging them with? For to assert a God; and yet to deny some of his Choicest Properties (whereby we know him to be God) is in effect the same with denying a Deity.

If they distinguish between the *English* and *Foreign Socinians* (as I perceive they do) and tell us that the former do not assert the things before mention'd, I answer, the very *English Prints* avouch the first  
of

of those Particulars: and as for the rest, they being the Doctrines of the Chief Patrons of the Socinian Cause, yea and of the Most of them, the English Unitarians are involved in them, because those Foreigners are the greatest and most substantial part of that Body of men call'd Socinians. Thus the *Trinitarian Scheme of Religion*, drawn up by some English Socinians of late is thought by them to touch all the Trinitarians (else it could not be stiled the *Trinitarian Scheme*) though every individual Trinitarian doth not hold all those things mentioned there. Let them apply this, and they will have nothing to object.

And further, I would argue from their own avowed Principle, which is that *they are to admit of nothing but what is exactly adjusted to Nature's and Reason's Light, nothing but what is entirely clear and evident:*  
for

for though it is true some Socinian Writers of late have laid aside this Notion (and truly we may observe that they are shifting every day their Arguments, and so we know not where to have them) yet he that is acquainted with the Writings that make up the main Body of Socinianism knows full well that this is a Principle constantly asserted and maintain'd by the generality of them, and upon all occasions insist'd upon. This hath been the Stanch Notion of the Great Dons of the Party, and of the famous *Socinus* himself. And *Slicktingius*, though he seems indeed sometimes to be otherwise perswaded, yet comes to this at last, that the *Trinity* is a Doctrine that *can't be borne*, because *it can't be understood*. And why do \* *Crellius* and others argue from Rea-

\* Comment. Vol. I. page 118. \* De Uno Deo P. lib. 2. sect. 1, 2.

70 *Some Thoughts concerning*  
son and Logical Arguments against  
the Trinity, if they do not refuse  
the Doctrine upon the account of  
Reason? And it is certain they  
would not do this if they were not  
perswaded that these things in Re-  
ligion must be adjusted to Natural  
Reason, and that they are displeas-  
ed with the Doctrine of the *Trinity* and  
*Incarnation*, &c. because these are  
not exactly squared to their Natu-  
ral Notions. You see then what  
is the sentiment of the Greatest  
Rabbies of this way, and therefore  
we must make our estimate of the  
Socinian or Antitrinitarian Do-  
ctrine from these, and not from  
one or two Modern Writers. This  
I think will be granted by all men  
of reason.

But what if it doth appear that  
even the very *English* and *Modern*  
*Socinians*, though they seem to wave  
this Principle, do yet retain it, and  
govern

*the Causes of Atheism.* 71  
govern themselves by it? Else why  
do they complain that \* *they have no*  
*conception of the Trinity* as the Trini-  
tarians represent it to them, *they*  
*cannot form an idea of it; it is a noti-*  
*on that excites no ideas in their minds;*  
*it is against Reason and Natural Light?*  
We are advised by the *Modern Pen-*  
*men* † *to consult our Reason about the*  
*thing in question; and if we do so, we*  
*shall find an absolute impossibility in the*  
*Trinitarian Doctrine: our Reason will*  
*assure us that an Almighty Father and*  
*an Almighty Son are most certainly two*  
*Gods, and that two Creators can be no*  
*other than two Gods: therefore we may,*  
*and we must infer that the explication*  
*of the first Verses of St. John's Gos-*  
*pel, which advances such a Doctrine,*  
*is certainly false.* Again, the  
*English Socinians* tells us that || *the*

\* Letter of Resolution concerning the Doctrine of the  
Trinity. The Unreasonableness of the Doctrine of the  
Trinity. † An Accurate Examination of the Principal  
Texts, &c. chap. 5. || Observations on the Answer to  
the brief History of the Unitarians, chap. 2.



72 *Some Thoughts concerning*  
*Doctrine of the Trinity* classing al-  
 together with our natural idea's can be  
 no matter of Revelation, and therefore  
 ought not to be believ'd. And hear  
 their Final and Resolute Determi-  
 nation, which fully speaks their ab-  
 solute adherence to this Principle,  
 † *We abide by this Argument, here we*  
*fix our foot, never to be removed, that*  
*the inconsistency of the Trinity (as*  
*well as the Incarnation) with Reason*  
*and Natural Knowledge being undenia-*  
*bly evident, therefore this Doctrine can*  
*have no real foundation in Divine Re-*  
*velation, that is to say, in Holy Scrip-*  
*ture. And we find that our English*  
*Unitarians* \* argue from Reason in  
 this Point, and they declare that  
 they cannot believe it because Rea-  
 son doth not teach it. Thus we  
 find that the bottom of all is, the  
 Trinity and such like Doctrines are

† Letter of Resolution concerning the Doctrine of the Trinity. \* Observations on the Answer to the brief History of the Unitarians, chap. 1.

above

*the Causes of Atheism.* 73

above their Reason, and Natural  
 Idea's, and therefore they are no  
 matter of their Faith. This is it  
 which the Reverend Person before  
 named charges these men with in  
 a great part of his  
 \* Sermon: and cer-  
 tainly he would not  
 have done it if there were no such  
 persons in being. It is too plain  
 that there are such, and I think I  
 have proved it from their own  
 mouths. The sum of their Opi-  
 nion and resolution is this, that  
 there is nothing difficult and ab-  
 struse in Religion, and that they  
 will not believe any thing in Chri-  
 stianity but what they can make out  
 by Reason: otherwise it must be  
 discarded presently.

Now, to apply this Principle of  
 the Antitrinitarians; we are assured  
 that *we cannot by searching find out*  
*God, Job 11. 7. his Infinite Nature*  
 and

F 2

and

\* Of the Mysteries of  
 the Christian Faith.

74 *Some Thoughts concerning*  
and *Immense Essence* are not com-  
mensurate to our Conceptions, are  
not adjusted to our Ideas, but are  
far above them: it is impossible  
that the Apprehensions of finite  
Creatures should reach these things:  
therefore according to the foresaid  
Principle, the *Unitarians* are not  
obliged to believe any such things;  
they must not admit of the Infinite  
Nature of God, concerning which  
our Conceptions will always be ob-  
scure and unproportionate; yea,  
they cannot but infer from their  
own Maxim, that *God* is an impos-  
sible Being, at least that His *Im-  
mense Nature* is such. They cannot  
comprehend and conceive the Man-  
ner of the Immense and Infinite  
Presence or Knowledge of God;  
therefore they must disown the  
things themselves. Thus by vertue  
of their own profess'd Principle,  
the *Godhead* it self as well as the  
*Trinity*

*Trinity* is shock'd by them: and  
consequently one would be apt to  
gather that a *Socinian*, so far as he  
is led by this Principle, is an *Atheist*,  
or (lest that should seem harsh)  
one that favours the Cause of A-  
theism. For he may as well quit  
the belief of a *God* because of these  
Difficulties and Abstrusities in the  
Nature of God, as renounce the  
Doctrin of the *Trinity*, because  
there are some inexplicable and un-  
intelligible things that accompany  
it. But because all men do not fol-  
low the natural Conduct of their  
Principles (the Divine Providence  
over-ruling in these cases) I do not  
here pass an Universal Censure, I  
do not speak of every individual  
man, nay I hope charitably concer-  
ning most of them. However, it  
is to be fear'd, that some are un-  
happily under the force and sway  
of the foregoing Principle; and

these are the Persons I speak of, and no other.

These things I freely and openly suggest. Which the Learned and Ingenious Gentlemen of the *Racovian* Perswasion cannot dislike, unless they disapprove of themselves, unless they disclaim their own Writings; for they cry up in almost all of them (and in \* one very lately) a Freedom of Discourse, a Liberty of speaking their Thoughts, which they applaud as a very *Generous* and *Noble* thing, and much value themselves upon it. They cannot deny that to me which they allow of and magnifie in themselves, especially when I most sacredly profess to them that I have sincerely delivered my Thoughts, and spoken what I conceive to be the words of Truth and Soberness. Wherefore I expect to be approved of by Persons

\* An Exhortation to a Free and Impartial Enquiry, &c.  
of

of their Ingenuity and Free Temper, who (as I find) blame others (even some of the Clergy) for palliating and dissembling, and not speaking out. I think they will not charge me with this Fault, for I have acted according to their own Generous Principles: and I must tell them there is not a Friend of theirs in all their dear *Eleutheropolis* that is more disingaged and unbiass'd than I am.

But though I have used a becoming Freedom, yet there are some things that I omit, because I would let the World see that I am not eager and lavish in blaming and censuring any Party of Men, especially since it is suggested to me by some that are Learned and Sober of that Perswasion, that it is hard that their Opinion should suffer for the *Ill Consequences* of it, or for the *Insincerity* of any that profess it, or

by reason of the *Rash indiscreet Passages* which occur in some of their late Writers. I do it likewise because I would give the World an Example of Moderation and Temper in this Disputing and Wrangling Age; that it may be seen, that whilst I remonstrate against the Errors and Mistakes (as I suppose them to be) of any Side, I can forbear to publish the Aggravations of them, and that I had rather the Truth should prevail than the Contrary Opinion, or the Maintainers of it should be exposed. Finally, I consider that it is improper and unseasonable to contend among our selves at home whilst our Armies are engaging the Enemy abroad.

The Proper Antidote belonging to this Head of my Discourse is this; Let us make a Difference between *Finite* Beings and that which

is *Infinite*: for seeing there is such a Vast Difference between them, we ought to observe it. We cannot form the same Conceptions of one and the other; yea the latter is exalted above our reach and comprehension; wherefore let us be satisfied, that the Properties of an Infinite Being (such as *God* is) are incomprehensible, and therefore that may be possible in the Infinite Nature of God (as namely that it is communicable to Three Distinct Persons) which is impossible in the Finite Nature of Man or other Creatures. Let us attend to that which may be known, and that clearly and distinctly, and not trouble our thoughts and wrack our brains about Unsearchable Mysteries. A Lover of Peace as well as Truth should not be so much solicitous about the *Manner of the Three Personalities or Subsistencies* as about  
the

80 *Some Thoughts concerning the Trinity it self.* We are sure of the latter, as sure as the Scripture can make us; therefore it doth not become us to wrangle about the former; especially when we find that ill-minded men make use of this Quarrel to promote the Cause of Atheism; and truly they make advances towards it every day.

I proceed to Other Doctrines which administer to this Great Evil which I have been speaking of, and which may justly be reckoned among the Blemishes of these Inquisitive Times. Such is that of a \* late Writer, that the Books of the Old Testament were not written by those Persons whose Names they bear, that the Historical parts of the Bible are lame and imperfect, and repugnant to themselves; that the Writings were not carefully and faithfully transmitted to us, but

\* *Spinoza. Tract. Theol. Polit. cap. 8, 9, 10.*

abound

abound with many faults and mistakes, that the Books of the *Prophets* are mere scraps and fragments, and taken without order and method from other Writings. All which put together, destroys the Authority of Divine Revelation, and consequently of all Reveal'd Religion, from whence we have the strongest and most pregnant Arguments for a Deity.

Again, The same Design is advanced in these *Learned Times* by thrusting of Opinions and *Theories* on the world in defiance of the plain *Letter* and *Historical Part* of the Bible: as if the Sacred History, which was written by Inspired Men, were not as credible and authentick as that of Prophan Authors. The frame of the *Primitive Earth* is represented opposite to what *Moses* tells us it was: the account which he gives of *Paradise*

as

( as it is a Particular Place ) is contradicted, yea it is strongly averr'd, that there never was any such thing. What *Moses* relates concerning our *First Parents* is laugh'd at as a Romantick Story. The *Universal Deluge* in *Noah's* time is attributed to an accidental diruption of the Earth; which when scann'd, is found to be fictitious and imaginary, and thence the *Deluge* it self is concluded by many to be so; and *Moses* is reckon'd by them as an Impostor. Which is taken notice of, and thus animadverted upon by a Curious Observer, and One who ( as becometh so Learned an Head ) joyns Religion with his Philosophical Researches, \* *The Atheistical Party had hereby an occasion ( saith he ) boldly to give out that such a Deluge as that described by Moses was altogether incredible,*

\* *Dr. Woodward's Hist. of the Earth, Part 3. 161.*

and

and that there never was, nor could be any such thing. Nothing was talk'd of among them under *Mathematical Demonstrations* of the falshood of it, which they vented with all imaginable *Triumph*, and would needs have it that they had here sprung a fresh and unanswerable *Argument* against the *Authenticness* of the *Mosaick Writings*; which is indeed what they drive at, and a Point they very fain would gain. For if the Pen-man of the first book in the *Bible* be found tripping, then the Credit of all the rest falls to the ground; we may justly question their *Fidelity*, yea deny whatever they say. And so the *Bible* falls, and with it all our *Religion*, and with that necessarily a *Deity*, which is the thing ultimately aimed at, I do not say by the first Hand from whence these *Notions* came ( for I charitably hope better things of so Learned a Person, especially since he

he hath shew'd himself not unwilling to retract them) but by those ill-minded men who make their Markets of these Opinions. All that I will add here is this, that if (according to a Learned \* Doctor of the Sorbon) *it be a very dangerous Paradox to presume to deny that the Pentateuch was composed by Moses,* and accordingly *Hobbes and Spinoza* are condemn'd by him for using Arguments to that purpose, then surely it must be much more dangerous and pernicious to hold that any part of *Moses's Writings* is mere Forgery and Fiction, *i. e.* was designed only to comply with the Ignorant *Jews* at that time, and doth not contain matter of fact. I have said something of this nature in another place, and on another account, but I never had occasion before to represent it as an unhappy Handle

\* *De Pin Hist. of Ecclef. Writers. Prelim. Dissertat.*

which

which Atheistically disposed Persons may lay hold upon. Wherefore let those who are Philosophically disposed take warning hence, and forbear to prefer their own precarious Hypotheses before the plain Account which this Inspired Historian gives of those first things in the World. Let none presume to represent the Writings of this First Author as false, in order to make their own true, and thereby to gratify the worst sort of men. I need not say more here, because I have already antidoted against the Infection of these two last Heads, *viz.* in those Discourses wherein I have treated of the *Authority and Perfection of the Scriptures.*

In the next place, Learned Enquirers are apt to give Encouragement to Atheism by *an obstinate endeavouring to solve all the Phœnomena in the world by mere Natural and*

*Cor-*

*Corporeal Causes*, and by their averfeness to admit of the aid and concurrence of a Supernatural or Immaterial Principle for the production of them. The *Mechanick Philosophy* hath done a great deal of mischief on this account: not but that (so far as it ought to be made use of) it is generally the most excellent (because the most plain and sensible) way of displaying the Operations of Natural Bodies: and it cannot be denied, that since This hath been revived and entertain'd, there hath been that Improvement in Natural Philosophy which never was thought of before, and which could never have been attain'd by the *Aristotelian* way: yet this is to be said with truth and reason, that the Great Reviver and Manager of it hath carried it on too far by undertaking to give an account of All Effects and Events in the production

tion of Vegetables and Animals, and in the very Formation and Organization of the Body of Man himself by mere Mechanick Principles, thereby in a manner ascribing Divinity to Matter and Motion. This Great Philosophick Wit over-shot himself here: and though it is true he hath otherways (*viz.* by asserting the Notion of *Souls* or *Spirits*, and by demonstrating the essential and real Difference from Bodies) made some part of amends for this, yet there are many at this day who make very ill use of this Doctrine. Some take occasion thence to believe, that Men as well as Brutes are no other than Engines and Machines, mere Neurospasts and Senseless Puppets. Others build upon this Notion the Conceit of *Thinking Matter*, for if *Pores* and *Particles* do all things in the

G Bodies



Bodies of Brutes, it is probable they serve instead of *Souls* to those of Humane Race: and so a Spiritual and Immaterial Principle is excluded. This *Philosophy* is *Vain Deceit*, and too many are *spoil'd* by it.

But they should consider that the Noble French Philosopher himself did not believe all that he wrote. *Malebranch*, who was a great Admirer and Defender of him, tells us, that *he never pretended that things were made in that manner that he describes them* \*. Yea, we have *Des Cartes's* own word for it, † *I require not any one, saith he, to believe that Bodies which compose this visible World were ever produced in that way which I have represented them.* It seems by his own Con-

\* Search after Truth, Book 1. † Princip. Philos. Pars 4.

fession,

fession, that he was not in good earnest in all the parts of his *Philosophy*, and therefore we may gather that in some of the Particulars aforementioned he only propounded his Conjectures.

We might carry this Thought yet farther, and observe that the generality of the Modern Philosophers (not only *Cartesians*, but others) have contributed much to *Atheism*, by referring All things, not only in Organiz'd Bodies but in every part of the World, and all the *Phænomena* that we take notice of in it to a *Corporeal Principle*, and to the Efficiency and Power of this alone. Whereas, it is certain that there are many things which happen in the World that cannot be solv'd any other way than by the Superintendence of a *Spiritual Being*. There are several wonderful

G 2 Occur-

90 *Some Thoughts concerning*  
Occurrences which no man can  
give an account of, but by suppo-  
sing an Almighty Immaterial Agent,  
which is no other than *God*. Thus  
we must be constrained to repair  
to an Incorporeal Principle to solve  
the Cause of the *Seas constant Ebb-*  
*ing and Flowing*, and the *Attraction*  
*of the Loadstone*, and the *Hanging-of*  
*the Clouds*, and many other *Phæno-*  
*mena* in Nature: for the Accounts  
that are given are imperfect and in-  
consistent, and do no ways satisfie  
any Serious Enquirer. A man that  
is not willing to be put off with  
flight and insufficient Suggestions,  
cannot rest in them as true Causes  
of those things. Only Philosophi-  
cal men will be assigning some  
Reasons of things, whether they  
can or no: and this is an Inclinati-  
on which is incident to the best  
and wisest Naturalists in all Ages.  
But

But they may as reasonably under-  
take to shew whence it is that the  
Sun hath its continual Motion  
from East to West, or (as they  
would rather express it) why the  
Earth wheels about upon its Axis  
from West to East: which yet I  
do not see attempted by any Philo-  
sopher whatsoever; and yet there  
is as much reason for the one as the  
other.

So for *Gravity*, that known af-  
fection of Bodies whereby they are  
inclined towards the same Com-  
mon Center, it seems not to be  
solved by any Principles of *Mecha-*  
*nism* that have hitherto been pro-  
pounded, whether it be from a  
kind of *Magnetism* in some parts of  
the *Earth* (as hath been imagin'd  
by some) or from the reflected  
Particles of the *Celestial Matter* dri-  
ving down into their places the ear-  
thy

thy bodies they find above them, or ( as they at other times are pleased to speak ) from the *pressure of the Atmosphere*, which moves all Bodies continually downwards, because it doth it self press always towards the Earth: or whether it be ( as the Learned *Isaac Vossius* holds ) from the *Diurnal Motion of the Earth*, whereby all heavy Bodies ( which move with greater difficulty than light ones ) tend to the middle or Center, and light Bodies are expelled towards the Superficies or from the Center. But a man that would be very serious in Philosophizing, can hardly acquiesce in any of these Solutions. He is not hereby satisfied how *Non-gravitation* can be and not be in a thing at the same time, as in Water in the Sea or in a River: for it is heavy and presses down, and yet the parts do not gravitate;

for

for 'tis known that those that dive, and are under so great a heap of Waters, yet feel it not upon them. Here must be *αἰὸς ἀπὸ μηχανῆς*, there must be acknowledged an other Cause besides those before mention'd ( if they may be said to be *Causes* at all ).

And accordingly I find that some of the most Judicious Philosophers of our own Nation have averr'd that a God, a Divine Incorporeal Substance may be evinced from the *Phænomena of Gravity*. This is made good by strong and nervous Arguments in an \* Undertaking of the Learned Dr. *More*. † Another Ripe-witted Naturalist positively determines, that *the common Phæ-nomenon of Gravity is impossible to be explain'd by any natural operation of*

\* *Enchirid. Metaphys. Cap. 11.* † *Mr. Lock concerning Education.*

94 *Some Thoughts concerning Matter, or any other Law of Motion but the positive Will of a Superiour Being, so ordering it.* And there is lately risen in our Horizon another Bright Philosophick Luminary, from whom we may expect Great Discoveries: it is his frank Acknowledgment that this wonderful Property of Bodies, whereby the World is tied and link'd together, and all things in it are kept from running back into their First Chaos and Confusion, and which consequently is necessary for the welfare, yea the very subsistence of the Universe, is supernatural. \* *No power, saith he, of mere Nature can produce it: it surpasses all the Mechanism of Matter.* And in several other Instances which might be offer'd, there may be seen a despair of resolving the nature of them by material Causes wholly.

\* *Dr. Woodward's Nat. Hist. of the Earth. Part 1.*

No

*the Causes of Atheism.* 95

No meaner a Person than \* Doctor Lower (who was voted by all the Faculty to be one of the most Accomplish'd *Anatomists* of this Age) imputes the wonderful *Motion of the Heart,* and the *Circulation of the Blood,* to a Divine and Supernatural Cause. He who was as well skill'd as any man in the Fabrick of the Parts and Vessels of the Body, and knew all the Springs of their Actions and Operations, was of opinion, that these could not be solv'd by any ordinary Principle. I mention this only to let the Reader see that some of the Bravest and Wisest Philosophers are forward to own a Divine Hand even in the Common Works of Nature. They do not think it below a Man of Philosophy to resolve some things into an Immaterial Principle. For

\* *De Corde.*

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a Pious and Christian Philosopher may plainly discern that there are some things above the Efforts of Matter and Motion.

It cannot be denied ( whatever some are pleas'd to say to the contrary ) that we live in as *Learned Times* as ever have been extant. All Arts and Sciences are improved even to a Prodigy ; and particularly the Accessions which are made to *Philosophy* are very great and astonishing. But yet I must needs concur with that very Thoughtful and Ingenious Gentleman before cited, who hath most truly told the World, that \* *without the notion and allowance of Spirits our Philosophy will be lame and defective in one main part of it, when it leaves out the Contemplation of the most Excellent and Powerful part of the Crea-*

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\* Concerning Education.

tion,

tion, viz. those Immaterial Beings. And herein he follows all the Great and Renowned Philosophers of our Age, especially those of our own Country, as Dr. *More*, Sir *Matthew Hale*, Dr. *Willis*, Mr. *Boyle*, Mr. *Ray*, &c. who pretend not to solve all things in Philosophy by mere Natural Causes, who look not upon Man as a piece of Clockwork, but have frequent recourse to those Springs and Causes which are Spiritual and Incorporeal, and sometimes to the immediate hand of the Almighty Himself. To conclude then, let not the inestimable Blessing of Knowledge and Learning which is so peculiar to this Age, make us forgetful of the Grand Source and Spring of all operations and effects in Nature. Let us beware of those men who ascribe all the Phænomena in

the

the world to the power of the modified matter, and will leave nothing for God to do himself. Neither let us think that to Philosophize is to jar with the Sacred Writings, and to deny the very Natural History of it. The Scoffers at a Deity never had a more hopeful Harvest then since these Notions have prevail'd. By this means it comes to pass that *Philosophy*, which is the Study of Wisdom, affronts the Truest and Highest Wisdom; and even *Natural Philosophy*, which is one of the Choicest Accomplishments of humane minds, leads men even to the denial of the Author of Nature.

No wise man will disapprove of a Latitude either in *Philosophy*, or in the dubious and controverted Points of *Theology*: but then here he must be upon his guard, for there

there are those that under the pretence of throwing off some precarious things in the Old Philosophy, and discarding the empty Speculations of the Schools cast off those Principles which are useful and sound: under the notion of the Advancements of Arts and Sciences, and the Improvement of the *belles lettres*, and carrying Learning up to a greater height, they in the mean time help to pull these down. Especially in Religion, under the colour of searching further than others have done into Divine matters they abandon some of the choicest Principles: under the pretext of Reason and Good Sense they obtrude any New Conceit upon the world, and regard not the suffrage of the Holy Scriptures or of the Primitive Church. This they call a *Rational Religion*, and if you

you offer any thing against it, they cry it down as a *Dream*, a *Romance*, a *Fable*, a *Phantom*, an *Hobgoblin*, and ( which is a word which they think comprehends all the rest ) *Priest-craft*.

And here I might observe that among the Opinions which lead to Atheism, the denial of *Dæmons* and *Witches*, which \* of late hath so much prevail'd, is none of the least. For besides that this is an open defiance to unquestionable History, Experience and matter of Fact, and so introduces the worst sort of Scepticism ( which is the high-way to Atheism ) it is evident that this supplants the belief of *Spiritual Beings* or *Substances* : for *Witchcraft* and all *Diabolick Transactions* are disbeliev'd on the ac-

\* Mr. Hobbs Leviath. chap. 34. Mr. Websters Display of supposed Witchcraft. Dr. Becker's Enchanted World.

count of the improbability, if not impossibility of *Spirits*. So that it is plain the rejecting of the being and commerce of *Dæmons* or *Infernal Spirits* opens a door to the denial of the Deity, of which we can no otherwise conceive than that it is an *Eternal Spirit*.

There are *Other Doctrines* which advance Atheism, and may be reckon'd among the *Dangerous Luxuriances* of these *Inquisitive Times*. Such is the vilifying of the *Hebrew Text* of the *Old Testament*, the proclaiming it to be faulty and erroneous, in order to establishing the *Seventy's Version* as only *Authentic*. Such is the building the Authority of the Books of the *Old Testament* on the pretended inspiration of certain *Public Scribes* or *Notaries* among the *Jews*, in imitation of such among the *Egyptians* ;

the

102 *Some Thoughts concerning*  
the avouching that the *Leaves* or  
*Volumes* on which those Books were  
wrote are misplaced and put out of  
order; the professed declaring that  
the *Canonical Books* are not the *same*  
that they were at first, but that  
several words and passages are left  
out. All mere Fiction and Con-  
ceit, unworthy of so Excellent a  
Genius as *F. S's*. Such also is the  
maintaining that the greatest part  
of the *Religious Rites* and *Constituti-*  
*ons* which God himself settled a-  
mong the *Jews* were a Transcript  
of those that were in use among  
the *Idolatrous Pagan Nations*, and  
that the All-Wise Lawgiver  
borrow'd those immediately from  
these. The two former of these  
Attempts null the Authority of the  
Sacred Writings, and the last of  
them disparages not only them but  
the Blessed Founder of the Jewish  
Oeco-

*the Causes of Atheism.* 103  
Oeconomy. I speak not this as if  
any of these Opinions can be thought  
to be True Reasons on which a  
man may ground his disesteem of  
the Scriptures, or of the Holy Do-  
ctrines contain'd in them, or of the  
Sacred Inditer of them; for they  
are the Sentiments but of a very  
few, and of those whose Learning,  
though it was exceeding great, had  
not wholly conquer'd their Preju-  
dice, or freed them from Misappre-  
hensions in some things. I cannot  
charge them with any direct design  
of favouring the Cause of Atheism,  
but ill-disposed men have made use  
of their Notions to that purpose.  
Wherefore, as we value the Reputa-  
tion of our Religion, and the  
Honour of the Divine Author of  
it, let us be careful that we split  
not upon any of these *Rocks*; nor  
endanger our selves on any of the  
H *Shallows*



*Shallows* before mention'd, and thereby make Shipwrack of our Faith and Holy Profession, or so endanger our selves that we can hardly be brought off again.

I might in the last place take notice of a Plausible Conceit which hath been growing up to a considerable time, and now hath the fortune to come to some maturity. Not to speak of its reception, (if not its birth) among some *Foreign* Authors, chiefly *Socinians*, it seem'd among our selves to be favour'd by that Learned, but Wavering, Prelate who writ the *Liberty of Prophesying*, and afterwards by another of his Order who compos'd \* *The Naked Truth*. Lately it hath been revived by the Author of *the Naked Gospel*: and since more particularly fully and distinctly it hath been

\* Chap. 1. Concerning the Articles of Faith.

main-

maintain'd by the late Publisher of *the Reasonableness of Christianity, as deliver'd in the Scriptures*. He gives it us over and over again in these formal words, viz. that *nothing is required to be believed by any Christian man but this, that Jesus is the Messiah*. He contends that there is no other Article of Faith necessary to Salvation; this is a Full and Perfect Creed, and no person need concern himself in any other. This takes up about three quarters of his book, for he goes through the *History of the Evangelists* and the *Acts of the Apostles*, according to the order of Time (as he thinks) to give an account of this Proposition. But yet this Gentleman forgot, or rather wilfully omitted a plain and obvious passage in one of the *Evangelists*, *Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father,*

H 2

and

106 *Some Thoughts concerning*  
*and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,*  
*Mat. 28. 19.* From which it is plain,  
that all Profelites to Christianity,  
all that are adult Members of the  
Christian Church, must be *taught*,  
as well as baptized, into the Faith  
of the *Holy Trinity*, Father, Son,  
and Holy Ghost. And if they  
must be *taught* this Doctrne (which  
is the peremptory Charge and Com-  
mission here given to the Apostles,  
*Go teach, &c.*) then it is certain that  
they must *believe* it, for this Teach-  
ing is in order to Belief. This  
will be denied by none, I suppose,  
and consequently more is required  
to be believed by Christian men,  
and Members of Christ's Church,  
than that *Jesus is the Messiah*. You  
see it is part of the *Evangelical*  
*Faith*, and such as is necessary, ab-  
solutely necessary, to make one a  
Member of the Christian Church,  
to

*the Causes of Atheism.* 107  
to believe a Trinity in Unity in the  
Godhead; or, in plainer terms, that  
though God is One as to his Essence  
and Nature, yet there are Three  
Persons in that Divine Essence, and  
that these Three Persons are really  
the One God: for we can't ima-  
gine that Men and Women should  
be required to be baptized into the  
Faith and Worship of any but the  
Only True God. This Epitomi-  
zer of the Evangelical Writings left  
out also that famous Testimony in  
*John 1. 1.* *In the beginning was the*  
*Word (Christ Jesus) and the Word*  
*was with God, and the Word was God.*  
Whence we are obliged to yield as-  
sent to this Article, that *Christ is*  
*the word of God.* And there is add-  
ed in Verse 14. another indispen-  
sable Point of Faith, *viz.* that the  
*word was made Flesh*, i. e. that God  
was Incarnate, the same with 1 *Tim.*  
H 3 3. 16.

3. 16. *God manifest in the Flesh.* And it follows in the same Verse of this first Chapter of *St. John*, that this *Word* is the only begotten of the *Father*: whence we are bound to believe the *Eternal*, though ineffable, *Generation of the Son of God*. Our Author likewise takes no notice that we are commanded to believe the *Father and the Son*, *John* 14. 10, 11. and that *the Son is in the Father, and the Father in the Son*, which expresses their *Unity*. This is made an Article of Faith by our Saviour's particular and express Command. And other eminent parts of Christian Belief this Writer passes by, without having any regard to them, and yet pretends to present the World with a Compleat and Entire Account of all that is the matter of our Faith under the Gospel. This cannot but seem ve-

ry

ry strange and unaccountable to any man of deliberate Thoughts, and who expects Sincerity from a Writer who makes some shew of it?

But this is not all; this Learned Gentleman, who with so much industry amasses together Quotations out of the *Gospels* and the *Acts of the Apostles*, yet is not pleas'd to proceed to the *Epistles*, and to give an Account of them as he did of the others; though the *Epistles* are as considerable a part of the *New Testament* as the *Gospels* and the *Acts*, and the Pen-men of them were equally inspired by the Holy Ghost. Can there be any Reason given of this partial dealing? Yes, it is most evident to any thinking and considerate person that he purposely omits the *Epistolary Writings* of the Apostles because they are fraught

110 *Some Thoughts concerning*  
with *Other Fundamental Doctrines*  
besides that One which he menti-  
ons. There we are instructed con-  
cerning these Grand Heads of Chri-  
stian Divinity, viz. the Corrupti-  
on and Degeneracy of Humane Na-  
ture, with the True Original of it  
(the Defection of our First Parents)  
the Propagation of Sin and Morta-  
lity, our Restoration and Recon-  
ciliation by Christ's Blood, the  
Eminency and Excellency of his  
Priesthood, the Efficacy of his  
Death, the full Satisfaction there-  
by made to the Divine Justice, and  
his being made an All-sufficient  
Sacrifice for Sin. Here are pecu-  
liar Discoveries concerning Christ's  
Righteousness, and our Justifi-  
cation by it, concerning Electi-  
on, Adoption, Sanctification, or  
the New Birth, and particularly  
Saving Faith, which is so signal  
a part

*the Causes of Atheism.* 111  
a part of it. Here the Nature of  
the Gospel, and the New Cove-  
nant, the Riches of God's Mercy  
in the way of Salvation by Jesus  
Christ, the Certainty of the Resur-  
rection of Humane Bodies, and of  
the Future Glory, are fully display-  
ed. These are the Matters of *Faith*  
contain'd in the *Epistles*, and they  
are essential and integral parts of  
the Gospel it self: and therefore it  
is no wonder that our Author, be-  
ing sensible of this, would not  
vouchsafe to give us an Abstract  
of these Inspired Writings, but  
passes them by with some Con-  
tempt. And more especially (if I  
may conjecture) he doth this be-  
cause he knew that there are so ma-  
ny and Frequent, and those so il-  
lustrious and eminent Attestations  
to the Doctrine of the ever to be  
Adored *Trinity* in these *Epistles*.  
Nor

Nor is this any uncharitable conjecture, as the Reader may easily satisfy himself if he takes notice that this Writer interprets *the Son of God* to be no more than the *Messiah*; he expounds *John 14. 9. &c.* after the Antitrinitarian mode, whereas generally Divines understand some part of those words concerning the Divinity of our Saviour. He makes *Christ* and *Adam* to be *the Sons of God* in the same senses, *viz.* by their Birth, as the *Racovians* generally do, and so he interprets *Luke 1. 35. John 5. 26.* according to their Standard. When he proceeds to mention the *Advantages* and *Benefits* of *Christ's* Coming into the world, and appearing in the flesh, he hath not one syllable of his Satisfying for us, or by his Death purchasing Life and Salvation, or any thing that sounds like

it.

it. This and several other things which might be offered to the Reader, shew that he is all over Socinianized; and moreover that his design was to exclude the belief of the Blessed *Trinity* in this Undertaking of his, *viz.* to prove that the believing of *Christ* to be the *Messiah* is the only Point of Faith that is necessary and saving. All the other Articles and Doctrines must fall a sacrifice to the Darling Notion of the Antitrinitarians, namely that *Christ* is not the True God, and coessential with his Father. For the sake of this one Point they are all dispatch'd out of the world, and are made by him Martyrs to this Cause. One could scarcely imagine that a person of Ingenuity and Good Sense should go this way to work. Which inclines me to think that the Ingenious

rious

nious Gentleman who is suppos'd by some to be the Author of this Treatise is not really so. I am apt to believe that the world is impos'd upon in this matter, for in this present Attempt there are none of those Noble Strokes which are visible in that Person's Writings, and which have justly gain'd him a fair repute. That Vivacity of thought, that Elevation of mind, that Vein of Sense and Reason, yea and of Elocution too which runs through his Works are all extinct here: only he begins as twere to recover himself about the Close when he comes to speak of the Laws of Christian Morality. Some may attribute this Flatness to the Ill Cause he manages; but for my part, I question whether we have the right Author, I can't perswade my self but that there is an *Error*  
of

of the Person: at least I will charitably presume so, because I have so good an opinion of the Gentleman who writ of *Humane Understanding and Education*.

But what is the ground of the foresaid Assertion? What makes him contend for One Single Article, with the Exclusion of all the rest? He pretends it is this, that all men ought to understand their Religion. And I agree with him in this; but I ask him, may not a man understand those Articles of Faith which I mention'd out of the *Gospel* and *Epistles*, if they be explain'd to him, as well as that One which he speaks of? Why then must there be but One Article, and no more? But he, notwithstanding this, goes on, and urges that there must be nothing in Christianity that is not plain, and exactly

116 *Some Thoughts concerning*  
actly level to all mens Mother-wit  
and common apprehension. For  
\* God considered the poor of the world,  
and the bulk of mankind: the Christi-  
an Religion is suited to vulgar capaci-  
ties, and hath only \* such Articles  
as the labouring and illiterate man may  
comprehend. The Writers and Wran-  
glers in Religion fill it with Niceties,  
and dress it up with Notions, (viz.  
the Trinity, Christ's Satisfaction,  
&c.) which they make necessary and  
fundamental parts of it. But the bulk  
of mankind have not leisure for Learn-  
ing and Logick: and therefore there  
must be no such doctrine as that  
concerning the Trinity, the Incarna-  
tion of the Son of God, and the like,  
which are above the capacity and  
comprehension of the Vulgar. And  
in the Entrance of his book he hath  
the same notion, for he tells us that

\* P. 302. † P. 302.

the

the Scriptures are a collection of writ-  
tings designed by God for the instratti-  
on of the illiterate bulk of mankind,  
(for he is much taken with this  
phrase, you see, *the bulk of mankind*)  
whereby he understands the Igno-  
rant and Unlearned Multitude; the  
*Mob*, as he calls it in another place.  
Surely this Gentleman is afraid of  
*Captain Tom*, and is going to make  
a Religion for his Myrmidons:  
and to please them he gives them  
as little of this kind as he possibly  
can, he contracts all into One Ar-  
ticle, and will trouble them with no  
more. Now then the sum of all  
that he aims at is this, that we must  
not have any Point of Doctrine  
whatsoever in our Religion that  
the *Mob* doth not at the very first  
naming of it perfectly understand  
and agree to. We are come to a  
fine pass indeed: the Venerable  
*Mob*

*Mob* must be ask'd what we must believe: and nothing must be receiv'd as an Article of Faith but what those Illiterate Clubmen vote to be such. The *Rabble* are no *System-makers*, no *Creed-makers*; and therefore away with *Systems* and *Creeds*, and let us have but One Article, though it be with the defiance of all the rest, which are of equal necessity with that One.

Towards the close of his Enterprize he hath a fling (and that a Shrewd one) at the *Dissenters*, telling them that \* *their Congregations and their Teachers understand not the Controversies at this time so warmly manag'd among them*. Nay the Teachers themselves have been pleas'd to make him their Confessor, and to acknowledge to him that

\* Page. 303.

they

*they understand not the difference in debate between them*. Why? because they (as well as the Conformists) have Obscure Notions and Speculations, such as *Justification*, the *Trinity*, *Satisfaction*, &c. terms that all the *bulk of mankind* are unacquainted with: whereas Religion should have no Difficulties and Mysteries in it. The very Manner of every thing in Christianity must be clear and intelligible, every thing must be presently comprehended by the weakest noddle, or else it is no part of *Religion*, especially of *Christianity*, which yet is call'd the \* *Mystery of Godliness*: but this being in the *Epistles*, it is no great matter; we are not to mind what they say.

Thus we see what is the Reason why he reduces all Belief to

\* 1 Tim. 3. 16.

I

that



that one Article before rehearsed: as if the other Main Points which I produced were not as *easily learnt* and *understood* as This; as if there were any thing more difficult in this Proposition [The Father, Son and Holy Ghost are One God, or Divine Nature] than in that other [Jesus is the Messiah]. Truly if there be any Difficulty, it is in this latter, for here is an *Hebrew* word first to be explain'd before the *Mob* (as he stiles it) can understand the Proposition. Why therefore doth this Author, who thinks it absurd \* *to talk Arabick* to the Vulgar, talk *Hebrew* to them, unless he be of opinion (which no body else is of) that they understand this Language better than that? Or, suppose he tells the Rabble that *Messiah* signi-

\* Page 302.

fies *Anointed*, what then? Unless he explains that word to them, it is still unintelligible. So that it appears hence that this Article which he hath spent so much time about, is no more level to the understanding of the Vulgar than that of the *Holy Trinity*, yea it is not so much.

To conclude, this Gentleman and his fellows are resolved to be *Unitarians*; they are for *One* Article of Faith, as well as *One* Person in the Godhead; and there is as much reason for one as the other, that is, none at all. But it doth not become me perhaps to pronounce this so peremptorily, and therefore I appeal to the Judicious and Impartial Reader; desiring him to judge of what I have suggested. But this I will say, if these Learned men were not highly

prejudiced and prepossessed, they would discern the Evil and Mischief of their Assertion: they would perceive that when the Catholick Faith is thus brought down to One Single Article, it will soon be reduced to none: the Unit will dwindle into a Cypher.

The Proper Remedy here is to consider that it is unlawful \* to add unto, or diminish ought from the Written Word: yea, a Curse is threatned against those that † add to or take away from the Scriptures; for if it be criminal, and deserves a Curse to deal thus with the book of *Deuteronomy* or of the *Revelation*, then by the same reason those that add to or detract from any other part of the Holy Scriptures are undeniably guilty, and are obnoxious to the Divine Plagues. I

\* Deut. 4. 2. † Rev. 22. 18, 19.

hope

hope such as practise the latter will seriously think of it, and for the future believe themselves concern'd to embrace *All* the necessary and fundamental Articles of Faith, as well as *One* of them.

Thus I have briefly discover'd the Springs and Sources of *Atheism*, and I have endeavour'd all along (more or less) to stop them up, and hinder the current of them. Now, for the close of all, let me add these *Inferences* from the whole,

I. We ought to bewail the spreading *Atheism* of this Age wherein we live. Of old there were but few that openly profess'd it. There are reckon'd up *four* several sorts or forms of *Atheism* by a late \* Learned Writer, viz. *Anaximandrian*, *Democritick*, *Stoical*, *Stratonical*, and yet

\* Dr. Cudworth's Intellectual System.

there was scarcely one of these that was a downright denying of a God. Some have given *Diagoras*, *Theodorus*, *Protagoras*, the title of *Atheists*, and have thought them to be absolutely such: but others, upon a strict search, are of opinion, that they deserv'd not that infamous Name; yea, they find that they were great Asserters of a Deity. The first of these was accused of Atheism, and banish'd for it by the *Athenians*; not that he denied a God, but because he derided the Feigned Gods of his time, whom the *Athenians* had such a reverence for. The second pass'es for an Atheist; but those who have narrowly enquired into things tell us, that he got that Name because he spoke against the Idolatrous Worship of the *Grecians*, and had a kindness (it is probable) for another Religion: for  
being

being a *Cyrenian*, and acquainted with King *Ptolomee*, he came to have some Intercourse with the *Jews of Alexandria*, and had some notice of the True God. The third was reputed and call'd by some an Atheist because he doubted of the Truth and Reality of the *Gentile Gods*. So *Anaxagoras* (another Greek Philosopher) was arraign'd for Atheism by the *Athenians* because he denied the Sun to be God, and freely discours'd against the other Pagan Deities. Thus the malicious Accusers of *Socrates* represented him as an Enemy to the Gods: part of the Crime charged on him, and for which he was condemn'd, was his speaking against the Traditions and Fables of the *Poets* concerning the Gods, and his declaring them to be lewd and wicked. To give this Great Man  
his

his due, he was so far from being an Atheist, that he died a Martyr for a Deity. Only to gratifie the Vulgar, and that he might not go off unlamented, after he had drank his Poison he requested his Friends to offer a Cock for him to *Æsculapius*. Some put *Democritus* into the Catalogue of the Ancient Atheists, but if we read his Life in *Laertius*, we shall find that they have little reason to do so. *Lucretius* is the most suspicious man of all, and *Lucian* may be join'd with him, the former a serious, the latter a jocular Atheist.

But it is sad to consider that the number of this sort of men hath been exceedingly augmented since. \* *David Perron* undertook in the presence of King *Henry the Third* of *France*, to prove that there is

\* *L'Histpire d' Henr. 3.*

no God. *Mersennus*, in his Commentary on *Genesis*, tells us, that in the Year when he wrote it, viz. 1623. there was a vast multitude of them in *France*: there were at least fifty thousand Atheists in the City of *Paris* at that time, and in one house sometimes a dozen were to be found. A worthy \* Author, whom I had occasion to mention before, acquaints us on his own Knowledge, that Atheism was very common and rampant in most parts of *Italy*. Not to mention *Machiavel*, *Aretine*, &c. it cannot be denied that *Vanenus* openly declared and profess'd himself an Atheist, and died so at the Stake. Indeed I am apt to suspect those who tell us there are scarcely any of this Perswasion in the World. Thus † one declares that *he bath*

\* In his *Europa Speculum*.  
from *Oxford*.

† An Essay in a Letter

*travelled many Countries, yet could never meet with any Atheists, which are few if any: all the noise and clamour is against Castles in the Air, i. e. such and no other he fancies them to be. But to come nearer, our Own Nation hath produced too many of this kind. Even in this Civilized Christian Protestant Country there are those that are infected with this Cursed Infidelity, and despise all Religion and a God. It is an unquestionable Truth, that there are in this great City of the Kingdom constant Cabals and Assemblies of Profess'd Atheists, where they debate the Great Point of the Existence of an Infinite Spirit that governs the World, and in the close determine in the Negative. I have sometime accidentally happen'd into the Company of, and held Discourse with some that acknowledge they belong to that Society; and they*

they have not been ashamed to own whatever is done in it. Mr. Hobbes is their Great Master and Lawgiver. I find that they pay a huge reverence to him. If they acknowledge any *Divine Thing*, it is *He*. If they own any *Scriptures*, they are his *Writings*. The Language that I lately met with from the mouth of one that was, I suppose, a *Well-wisher* (according to his poor ability) to Mr. Hobbes's *Mathematicks*, was this, *His Leviathan is the best Book in the world next to the Bible: He himself was a Man of great Piety, and is spoken against by none but the Priests*. And whom do they (for this man speaks the sense of the rest) mean by *Priests* but the *Ministers of Religion*? So they would have a *Bible* and *Piety* without these; which is as much as to say, they would have neither of them. But indeed this man had a way of being something

thing more plausible than his Fellows, and would vouchsafe to mention the *Bible and Piety*, and thereby seem as it were to allow of such things; whereas Others are wont to laugh at *them* as well as at the Persons they call *Priests*, for they go together. I may say truly, it is grown *Fashionable* to deride whatever is Sacred, and to talk like an *Atheist*. In some Companies it shall be question'd whether a Person be a *Gentleman* if he does not give Proofs of his being Prophane. To defend the wildest Principles, and to ridicule Religion, is counted one certain mark of a *Wit*. He that doth not shew his Raillery against Virtue and Goodness, and speaks not contemptibly of God and Religion, is not a *Man of Parts*. This is the Sentiment and Perswasion of a great part of this Nation. I would not libel the Land of our Nativity;

yea,

yea, I rather heartily wish that what I have said on this occasion might receive a Confutation. But it is too evident that I speak truth; it is too manifest to be denied that there are every where considerable numbers of men who openly renounce the Existence of God. *David's Atheist* was modest, and only said in his Heart, *There is no God*; on which account some Atheistical Spirits now-a-days may think perhaps he deserved the Title of *Fool* which the Psalmist gives him. But these count themselves a *Wiser* rank of Atheists, because they say *this with their mouths*, and speak it aloud, audibly proclaiming their Opinion, and being very zealous to gain Proselytes to it.

2. Let us abhor the Converse and Society of those Persons whom we know to be of this Character. And truly they are very common every where.

where. It is prodigious to see how they daily encrease. There is scarcely a Town where there are not some that may justly be reckon'd in this number. Do not mistake me. There are some deluded People who are apt to censure all as *Atheists* that are not of their way. The \* Primitive Christians were thus stigmatized, and usually called by that name because they did not comply with the Pagan Worship and Usages. If a man discourses not according to some mens fond Notions and Bigotisms; if he speaks against their superstitious Practices, he presently hath this Brand set upon him. There are those that call all Persons *Atheists* and *Hypocrites* that hold not the same Principles with themselves. Yea, if a man be a great Student in Philosophy, some weaker People may be apt to fix this Character on

\* Just. Mart. Apol. 2.

him.

him. As heretofore all that had skill in *Mathematicks* were said and thought to deal in Art Magick; so in the opinion of some at this day men of great Art and Learning are voted *Atheists* by them, and almost every *Physician* hath this Censure past on him by men of weak minds. But I hope none of those I now speak to are so unwise and weak, or at least not so uncharitable and censorious as to bestow this Ignominious Epithet on those to whom it doth not belong. By an *Atheist* or a person very much disposed to be so, I mean one that hath an Enmity to the very notion of a Divine Infinite Being, a Supreme Immaterial Substance, that is the Sovereign Author of Nature, and the First Cause of all things, from whom all things were, and on whom they depend. I mean such a one as owns no Allegiance to this Divine Ruler  
and

and Sovereign, and in his Words and Actions discovers this to the World. And accordingly he is one that acknowledges not the Infinite Power, Wisdom, Goodness, and Justice of God in the Government of all things: he speaks irreverently of all that appertains to Religion and Godliness: he laughs at the profound Mysteries and sublime Doctrines of Christianity: he endeavours always to diminish the esteem of Sacred things: yea, he will be jesting and drolling on them if he hath any Talent that way. If he be open-hearted, and not upon the Reserve, he will tell them that Religion is a mere Invention of Politick Heads to awe the Multitude, and to keep the World in good order. He is one that blasts Religion with the ignominious Title of a Popular Cheat, and labours to persuade others to do the like. Where  
do

you find these Characters in any person, you may conclude without breach of Charity, that he is an *Atheist*.

And it is the Company of such that I exhort you to beware of, and wholly to avoid. It is almost incredible that such great numbers should be every day led away with this *Ignis Fatuus*, and plung'd into Bogs and Mire, never to be pluck'd out thence. Therefore take heed what Society you mingle your selves with in this Dangerous Age. Sit not with the known Despisers of God and Religion, for they will insensibly instill their poison into you. By frequent associating with them you will learn to resemble them. Wherefore fly from them as from a Serpent, and be not prevail'd with by any Entreaties or Threats to hold Correspondence with them. Assure your selves of this, that the Title of  
K *Atheist*



*Atheist* is the most Reproachful and Detestable one imaginable, though some of late who glory in their shame entertain other thoughts. Nay, some of these Persons seem to be partly sensible of it, and change the name into that of *Deist*. At this day *Atheism* it self is slyly call'd *Deism* by those that indeed are *Atheists*. Though they retain the thing, yet they would disguise it by a false Name, and thereby hide the Heinousness of it. But let us not be deceived and blinded by pretended Shews, but throughly apprehend the Vileness of this Opinion which some endeavour to palliate. It is a very denying the Creed of Nature, it is a Renuntiation of that which the very Devils believe, and tremble at. It is briefly but fully represented in St. *Cyprian's* words, \* *This*

\* *Hæc est summa delicti nolle agnoscere quem ignorare non possit. De Vanit. Idol.*

(saith

(saith he) is the sum of this most heinous Crime, that those who are guilty of it wilfully refuse to acknowledge Him whom they cannot be ignorant of. For their own Beings and Natures furnish them with Arguments for a God: and if they did not obstinately shut their eyes, they must needs behold a Deity. Therefore to be *Atheists*, or without God in the world (as the \* *Apostle* speaks) cannot but be a Great Prodigy; it is Unaccountable almost (if the Degeneracy of Mankind were not so great as it is) that the *World* it self should not administer to mens Thoughts Convictive Arguments of a Divinity. Whence it hath been observ'd by a very Wise Man, that there never was any Miracle wrought by God to convert an *Atheist*, because the Light of Nature might have led him to confess

\* *Ephes. 2. 12.*

K 2

a God.

a God. This shews how detestable and pernicious *Atheism* is; and much more might be said to this purpose. Wherefore I hope I need not multiply words when I call upon you to keep out of the Company of those men who you know are infected with this hellish Poison.

3. Let us labour to work in our selves and others a profound Sense of that *Great God* with whom we have to do. Generally the Belief of a Deity is from Custom and Education, because it is the Perswasion of the Place and the Persons we converse with: but we should not content our selves with this, but arrive to the Knowledge of the true *Grounds* and *Reasons* of this Belief. Seeing this is the First thing in Religion, and no Man can be Religious and Vertuous unless he believes there is a God, let us fortifie our Minds against *Atheism* by those  
seve-

several *Arguments* and *Considerations* which are wont to be propounded by Learned and Religious \* *Writers*: that we may as throughly be perswaded of this Great Truth as of our own Being, which a Great Philosopher makes one of his First and Indubitable Principles.

But especially view the Works of the Creation, and perswade your selves of this, that a Material World without an Immaterial Cause of it; is mere Nonsense. Look abroad, and behold the Heavens and the Earth, and all the Furniture of them; there you may believe a Deity, because you do as 'twere see it. The Creator is made visible by his Works. Every thing in the Sensible World is an † Image, a Picture, a

\* *Fab. Faventini Diss. 4. adv. Atheos. Tho. Campanella Spizel Scrutin. Atheismi. Muller. Atheismus devictus. Jan. & Joach. Jan. Disputat. contr. Atheos. Dr. More, Mr. Smith, Sir Charles Woofsey, Dr. Tenison, (now Archbillhop of Cant.) Dr. Cudworth, Dr. Barrow.*

† *Εἰκὼν, εἰδωλον, ἰχνο.* Plato.

Footstep of the Deity. From this Exquisite Fabrick we infallibly gather the Existence of its All-wise Architect and Moderator. Of which I shall give the Reader a particular Demonstration in a short time. And that you may effectually extirpate Atheism out of your minds, frequently peruse the H. Scriptures. Read God in his own Book. There you will certainly inform your selves concerning the Superintendence of Spiritual or Immaterial Agents, *viz.* *Angels*, which makes way for the Belief of a *God*, who is a Spirit. There you will meet with those Wonderful Operations and Events which can no ways be solv'd without granting an Omnipotent and All-wise Disposer of things. And there you will find this Supreme Governour of the World communicating his Will and Pleasure to Mankind. I question not but one great

great Reason (and I might have mention'd it among the rest) why men are so disposed to be *Atheists*, is because they never, or very seldom, consult this Holy Volume: they refuse to hear God Himself speaking to them in these Writings. Wherefore I recommend to you the serious and frequent reading of the Bible as the most effectual means to confirm you in the Belief of a Deity. Assure your selves that this Book is the best Antidote against Atheism.

4. and lastly, Labour to be truly Religious and Holy; beg the Divine Assistance to sanctifie you in your Hearts and Lives; and thereby you will be let into the intimate knowledge of this Grand Verity which I have been discourfing of. You will then more sensibly understand and be convinced of it than by all the Arguments that can

can be offer'd: or rather, this one will make all the rest effectual. Whereas on the contrary, Men of Unsanctified Minds and Profane Lives despise and scoff at that of which they have no experience, and will not believe the Existence and Power of God which they never felt. Strive then by an Inward Experiment to confute Atheism: so that you may not have any Inclination to say in your hearts (though you do not utter it with your tongues) *There is no God*, but that you may be so strongly convinced of the contrary Truth that you may be able to assert it with a firm and unshaken Belief, and from an internal sense of it on your hearts, to attest the reality of it to the whole World.

*F I N I S.*

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E R R A T.

Pag. 104. lin. 8. dele to.