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# Christianismus Primitivus:

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## The Antient Christian Religion,

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Its *Nature, Certainty,* and *Excellency,* above  
any other RELIGION in the World.

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### B O O K. I.

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#### S E C T. I.

*Shewing briefly certain great and mischievous Obstructions to  
the Christian Religion.*



S it is certain we now stand a very great distance from the Primitive Times of Christianity, as well as from the Country where it was first planted, and its Foundation laid in the holy Doctrine, Miracles, and Sufferings of the *Messiah*, the Author thereof, called *The Apostle, and High Priest of our Profession, Christ Jesus*. So there hath intervened many dreadful Occurrences to render that glorious Profession either suspicious

in respect of its Verity, or but of mean consideration in point of Excellency; partly through the prodigious impiety and immorality of many, who have assumed the Christian Name; and partly through the monstrous Alterations, and contradictions in Doctrine and Manners, and the Implacable and Sanguinary Feuds and Animosities, which have fall'n out among the Professors of Christianity, to the great Scandal of the *Jews*, and other Nations, as well as to the unspeakable prejudice of many Lovers of Christianity. Amongst those who have thus injured this holy Calling of Christianity, the *Papists* are not the least Culpable, but very deeply Criminal; To say nothing here of their Sanguinary Practices, notorious throughout the World, it shall not be amiss to recourit

See a Book  
called, The  
Life and Death  
of Mr. Henry  
Foley.

one only Instance (in stead of a multitude) of their imprudent and mischievous Obstructions of the Advancement of Christ's Interest, among the poor Jews in Hungary, October 22. 1650. where a great Council of the Jews were met, to search the Scriptures concerning the Messiah, whether he was already come (as saith my Author): when and where after seven Days debate, about the time and manner of his Coming and Person; not a few arguing the possibility of Jesus being He, chiefly from his Miracles, and the grievous Desolation and Captivity of their Nation, since his Crucifixion (nor to be parallel'd with former Prefidends) and the Lord's not Answering their Prayers as he was wont to do. Hereupon the Popes Deputies were called in, viz. Two Jesuites, two Franciscans, and two Augustine Friars, to give an account, That if the Messiah be come, and if Jesus be He, what Rules and Orders had he left for his Followers to walk by?

These Popish Companions being admitted, forgot the Cause of Christ, and spake not a word for him, or it; but at the first on-set, began to solicit them to become Profelytes to their holy Catholick Church, (as they call that of Rome) whose Rules and Government, said they, are the only Institutions of Christ, whose Vicar the Pope is, &c. And thence descended to Particulars, asserting the Bodily Presence in the Sacrament, the Invocation of Saints, and in particular of the Virgin, who could procure any thing of her Son; the Use of the holy Crosse; the religious Use of Holy-days. As soon as they heard these things, the Assembly broke up in great Tumult, and loud Screeks, crying out, *No Christ, no Woman God, no Images*; many rent their Clothes, and cast dust on their Heads, and cried, *Blasphemy, Blasphemy*. (And thus were these poor Jews hardned, instead of being Converted by those Popish Vanities). This Story (as my Author truly saith) is worthy to be written in all Annals and Languages of Christendom, to the eternal Infamy of *Papists* and their Cause.

By this sad Instance we may see, with what Jealousies poor enquiring Souls are as it were round begirt, and put to their Wits-end; by those dismal Occurrences, scarce knowing what to think of this most Innocent and Venerable Profession. To dispel which Clouds, and dissipate that Smoke, which the Evil hath cast to darken the Sun and the Air, and to dim the Eyes of Men, left the Light of the Glorious Gospel should shine upon them, I conceive it needful in our entrance here, to shew the Certainty and Liberty of that Religion, which we (God willing) to describe according to its Native Purity, and to shew wherein in such Branches, as are most opposed by the Errors of the Times wherein we live.

And because in an undertaking of this Weight, and common Concern to all that love the Lord Jesus, it is not good to go alone, and not finding any that have more pithily and briefly, set forth the Certainty and Excellency of Christianity, than that Learned and Moderate Man, Mr. *Hugo Grotius*; I shall therefore do little more herein, than present the Reader with what he hath calculated, and by sundry Authorities confirmed. And sith the Christian Religion depends mainly upon the Life,

Death,

Death, and Resurrection of the Lord Christ, we shall (with our Author) begin our Discourses there; where our Saviour began the Days of his Pilgrimage; for the Salvation of Mankind.

## S E C T. II.

That it is certain Jesus once lived upon the Earth.

SO uncontrollably evident is this, that Jesus the Lord of Christians, *This is testified by Suetonius, Tacitus, Pliny jun.* once lived upon the Earth, and that in the Land of Israel, according to the Prophecies that went before of him; that we hear not of any sort of Adversaries to Christianity that deny it; but rather grant it by deriding his Humility, or that Abject Estate wherein it pleased his Majesty to appear among Men. The Turks do not only acknowledge that such a Person there was, but they speak very Honourably of him, as being a Prophet of the Lord, and do greatly abhor the Jews for Crucifying so Holy a Man. And *Josephus*, a modest and eminent Writer of the Jews, who lived much about the time of the Passion of our Lord, left to Posterity a very remarkable Testimony of the Life and Death of Jesus: His words are these:

“At that time was Jesus a Wise Man, if it be lawful to call him a Man; for he was the Performer of divers admirable Works, and the Instructor of those who willingly entertained the Truth; and he drew unto him divers Jews and Greeks, to be his followers. This was Christ, being Accused by the Princes of our Nation before *Pilate*, and afterwards Condemned to the Crosse by him, yet did not those who followed him from the beginning, forbear to love him for the Ignominy of his Death; for he appeared unto them alive the Third Day after, according as the Divine Prophets had before Testified the same, and divers other wonderful Things of him: And from that time forward the Race of the Christians, who have derived their Name from him, hath never ceased. This being so full to our present Purpose, we shall (omitting at present the Evidence of Sacred Writ) forbear to add further Evidence from our Adversaries, of the Life of Blessed Jesus; save that we here insert the Testimony of a Heathen Writer, who describes both his Person, manner of Life and Doctrine. Namely *Lentulus* the Procurator, in that Epistle written to the Roman Senate, (which goes under his Name) who residing at Jerusalem at the time of the Death of our Saviour, gives this Description of him, viz.

At that time there was one Jesus, who was called of the Nations, the Prophet of Truth. A Man goodly to behold, having a reverend Countenance, his Stature somewhat Tall, his Hair after the colour of the ripe Hazel-Nut, from his Ears somewhat crisped, parting it self in the midst of his Head, and waving with the Wind, after the manner of the Nazarites: His Face without wrinkle, mixed with moderate Red: His Beard somewhat copious, tender, and divided at the Chin: His Eyes gray, various and clear. He

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was in Rebuke severe, in Instruction wonderful; Merry with Gravity. He sometimes Wept, but was never seen to Laugh; in Talk full of Understanding, sparing and modest; thus far *Lentulus*. It is true, none of the Evangelists have given any description of the Stature, or Features of Holy Jesus, probably he might advise them the contrary; lest when he came to be worshipp'd throughout many Nations, Men should erect Images to him, or basely counterfeit his Similitude, and give that Honour to the works of their own Hands, which is only due to him; who as he once lived, and was known in Person both to *Jews* and *Gentiles*, to all Nations shall see him, and wail because of him; for though he was dead, yet now liveth for evermore.

## S E C T. III.

## That Christ was put to an Ignominious Death.

THIS also is no uncertain Report, but a Truth famously known. The memory whereof was so fresh among the Infidels for many Years after, as that the Queen, Mother to *Constantine* the Great, hearing of her Sons Conversion to Christianity, sent him her Letter, wherein she laid great Folly upon him, for that he would put Confidence in such a Man, as suffered himself to be Nailed to a Cross of Wood. And the *Turks* to this Day, as well as the *Jews*, do frequently upbraid the Christians by their Crucified God: Though as God he never died, nor could die; however the Philosopher did conceive the matter, when he cried out, upon occasion of that dreadful Darknes which covered the Earth at his Crucifixion: *The unknown God suffers, by reason of whom the whole World is darkned and shakn.*

## S E C T. IV.

## Understanding Men worship Christ after his Death because of his Miracles, they were so Great and Indubitate.

**A**S *Nicodemus* was convinced (as well as many among the *Pharisees*, John 3.2. John 12.42.) that *Jesus* was a Teacher sent from God, because no Man could do the Miracles which he did, except God were with him; even so these Living Works which he wrought, had the same powerful Influence upon, not the meanest of the People only, but also upon divers Persons of Eminency for Learning and Judgement. Such were *Sergius Paulus*, Governour of *Cyprus*, Acts 13. 12. *Dionysius*, the *Areopagite*, Acts 17. 34. *Polycarpus*, who died for his Witness to Christianity, An. 169. *Justin Martyr*, who wrote for the same, An. 142. *Irenaeus*, who was famous in Christian Knowledge, An. 180. *Athenagorus*, who

Tab. Chron.

Dionysius.

Dionysius.  
Polycarpus.  
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Athenagorus.

Flourished,

Flourished, 180. *Origin*, 208. *Tertullian*, about the same time. *Clemens Alexandrinus*, and many more, who being Men of such Excellent Parts, why they should devote themselves to the Worship of a Man, put to a reproachful Death; and hated by his own Nation, even to that Day; especially being almost all bred up in other Religions, which we find to be so powerful a tie upon the Conscience, that it must be some extraordinary Motive that draws off from that. Nor were these Men allured to Christianity by any temptation either of Honour, or Profit; It being their rather a Shame than Credit among Men, and the ready way to Ruine inwards, to profess that Name. There can in reason no Account be given, but only this: That by diligent Inquisition, such as becomes Prudent Men, in a Business of the greatest Concernment, they had found the fame was true, and verified by sufficient Witnesses, which was spread abroad of his Miraculous Works; as of the Sick healed by a word only of his Mouth, and by the touch of his Garment, and openly in grievous and inveterate Diseases: Of sight restored to the Man that was born-Blind, and the Fig-tree made fruitless for ever, by the word of his Mouth; and by the same, the boisterous Winds and Waves of the Sea to be filled. Of the Loaves multiplied more than once, to Feed many thousands, who were Witnesses thereof: Of Water turned into Wine; and the Men raised again to Life; with many more of the same nature, legible throughout the sacred Writings of the New Testament. And this fame sprung from too certain and undoubted an Original, that as the *Hebrews* in their *Talmud* openly confests, *Celsus*, that Adversary to Christ, and *Julian the Apostate*, when they wrote against the Christians, had not the boldness to deny that some Miracles were wrought by the Hand of Christ.

## S E C T. V.

That these Works were not done by natural force, which worketh by Instrumental Causes. For as they are called Miracles, so it is certain that by the force of Nature, it is impossible by a word of the Mouth only, or touch of the Hand, grievous Diseases should be cured, and that upon the sudden; And that as well when the Patient was absent as present, Luke 7. 10. Again, If these Works might have been in whole, or in part, referred to Natural Efficacy, it may justly be presumed, that some of those that were professed Enemies to Christ himself living, and no less Enemies to his Gospel which he left behind him, would have told us so long since, and have demonstrated the same, either by doing the like, or shewing how without a Miracle those things might be done.

Nor were those Miracles Impostures; Or things done in appearance only: Because most of the Works were done among the People, and in the view of many Learned Men among the People, such as had Wit enough and Malice enough, to observe all the Actions of Christ with curiosity. Nor did they bring anything of that nature against him, when they Arraigned him before the Judgment-Seat, and would have been glad of such Articles, to have rendered him more Obnoxious to their Revenge.

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And besides, the like Works were often repeated, and the Effects not Momentanous but Permanent. These things weighed, ic clearly follows ( which the Jews also confels ) these Works proceeded from some Spirit, either Good, or Evil. *They said (through Malice) against Reason and their own Experience, that these Works ( at least his casting out unclean Spirits ) was done by Beelzebub the Prince of Devils, blaspheming the Power of God, by which these things were wrought.*

## S E C T. VI.

*Christ's Miracles were not from an Evil Spirit.*

**T**HAT Rational Answer which our Saviour gave to those that envied his Mighty Power; *That Satan doth not cast out Satan, for then his Kingdom must (forthwith) come to nought; doth clearly acquit his Works from such impious Imputations, which yet are further cleared.* Because the the Doctrine of Christ, for Confirmation whereof the Works were done, *Heb. 2. 3, 4.* is the greatest overthrow of Evil Spirits, whom it forbids us to worship, under the severest Penalties, even that of Eternal Death, and draws us away from all Pollutions, wherewith the Evil Spirits are delighted. *As is abundantly shewed by Aug. De Civitate Dei, Lib 8, & 9.* In the account he there gives of the most obscene and abominable Sacrifices and Services, which were offered by the Heathens to Bacchus, and Priapis. And by blessed Experience we see, where once that Doctrine of Christianity, is received in the Love and Power of it, the worship of Devils and Magick Arts, do forthwith vanish, and the one True God is served with detestation of the Devils, whose power and force was broken by the coming of Christ. *As Porphyry ( a subtle and bitter Enemy to Christianity ) himself acknowledgeth: That Jesus his Ascension to Heaven, caused the publick service of the Gods [ that is the Dæmons ] to cease.* Neither is it Credible, that any Evil Spirit would be so imprudent to effect such things, and that very often, whereby no Honour, or Profit, could redound to himself, ( nor less but gain to Mankind, which we know they labour to obstruct in all they may ) but on the contrary, great incommodity and disgrace must thereupon accrue to him. *But grant that the Devil should play the fool for once, as oft-times he doth, in taking ways to obstruct, which yet turns to the furtherance of Christian Vertue; yet if no way becomes the Wisdom, and Goodness of God, to permit the Infernal Spirits to deceive Men, in whom was no guile, or design of Evil, and who were devoted to his Fear and Service; such as were the first Disciples of Christ, as both the unblamableness of their Conversion, and the many Calamities endured by them for Conscience sake, in assesting what the Word of God did plainly hold forth, do evidently declare.*

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## S E C T. VII.

*If the Works of Christ proceeded from a Good Spirit, then from God.*

**I**F yet it should be said, that the Miraculous Works of Christ proceeded from a Good Spirit, yet inferior to God: this is to acknowledge that they pleased God, and pertained to the Honour of God, because the Good Spirits do nothing but what is acceptable in the sight of God; nor do they these things without Authority from God, and to his Glory only: *Though it's evident, some of these Works do plainly point at God the Author of them, as the restoring of sundry dead Men to Life again: And we know that God neither doth Miracles, nor suffers them to be done without Cause; for this is the part of a wise Law-maker, not to recede from his own Laws (which in respect of God, is his common way of Providences, and not by Miracles) without some Cause; and that of moment.*

Now there can be no other Reason given why these things were done, beside that alledged by Christ, the bearing Witness to his Doctrine, which being now to take place of Moses's Law, so as in many things to put a period to the Obligation thereof; as also to be published throughout the World, to alter the State of Religion every-where, it was requisite the same should be so approved from Heaven: Neither could any of the beholders of these Miracles (among whom were many of a very Pious disposition) conceive in their Minds any other Reason thereof, than to confirm the Doctrine of Jesus. And upon this Ground, very many of the Jews that lived about the times of Jesus, even they that could not be induced to omit any part of Moses Law (the Nazarites and Ebonties) did nevertheless honour Jesus as a Master sent from Heaven.

## S E C T. VIII.

*The Miracle of the Resurrection of greatest Weight, and confirmed by sufficient Witnesses.*

**A**S from the Miracles wrought by Christ in his Life-time, so we argue from the greatest of Miracles after his Cross, Death, and Burial, namely his Resurrection, and return to Life again. For this, not only as true, but as the principal foundation of their Faith, the Christians of all Times and Places (that are worthy that Appellation) build upon, as that which giveth Life to the whole of Christianity, which had been impossible, had not the first Teachers of Christian Faith certainly persuaded their Auditors, that the thing was so done. Neither could they have persuaded Men endued with Judgment, unless they did affirm themselves Eye-Witnesses, without which Affirmation, no Man, though of

mean understanding, would have given credit to them, *the thing being so like to things Incredible in the wisdom of Man*; and especially for that they must purchase their Belief so dearly, at the cost of the greatest danger and perfection.

THAT this was affirmed by them with great constancy, even their own Books, and the Writings of other Men do shew; yea, 'tis in their Books, they appealed to the testimony of five hundred Witnesses at once, 1 Cor. 15. 9. It is not a custom of Lyers, in matters of Fact; to appeal to Witnesses so many; nor can it be that so many should conspire to bring in an Evidence, in such a case; contrary to what they knew to be the Truth. Had there been no other Witnesses but those first most famous Propagators of the Christian Doctrine, their Testimony had been sufficient; especially considering that these Witnesses all endured intolerable Ignominy, and other Afflictions; and most of them Death it self, for attesting in the case of Christ's Resurrection; nor what they had by report from others, but what their Eyes beheld, and their Hands had touch'd, even the Sacred Body of the Lord Jesus being alive, and eating, drinking, and discoursing with them, forty days after he was risen from the dead: So that either this Testimony is most true; or else they must tell a wilful Lye, which in their Conscience and certain Knowledge they must know to be false, and that with the danger of death for so doing. Now this being utterly incredible, that so many Men, and such Men as could not be charged with impiety, should be so mad as to destroy themselves for nothing; it follows that the Resurrection of Christ is as certain and uncontrollable as any thing whatsoever can be known by any Men, in the most certain way of knowing any thing knowable by Man: and if the Evidence given in this case be rejected, there is nothing to be believed which Men report to others, upon the best knowledge of Sight, Hearing, and Touching, that Man is capable to exercise. I conclude then, that the certainty of Christ's Resurrection is to be accounted (even from rational demonstration) among things which are most certain, which are recommended to us at any distance from our reach and sight; or else all things offered to our Understanding must be accounted false or uncertain.

And what we have spoken of those first Witnesses, the same is also true of Paul, who declared openly; that he had seen Christ reigning now in Heaven, 1 Cor. 15. 9. 2 Cor. 12. 4. Acts 22. 3. Yet wanted he none of the Jewish Learning, nor was he out of hope of Honour, if he had gone forward in his Fathers steps. But on the contrary part, he could expect nothing but hatred of his Kindred, travels over all the World, Difficult, Perilous, and Laborious, and last of all Death and Infamy.

S E C T.

## S E C T. IX.

*The possibility of Christ's Resurrection; and that being gained as undoubted true, Christ's Doctrine is evidenced, and Christianity established.*

SURELY no Man can fairly deny credence to the Testimonies recited; unless he shall suppose the Resurrection of Christ to be like things which imply a contradiction, impossible to be done: which cannot be said in our case. It might indeed, if one should affirm the same Man alive and dead at the same time; But that a Dead Man should be restored to Life, by his efficacy, who at first gave Life to Man; why this should be counted impossible, there is no cause, nor have wise Men believed it impossible: For Plato hath written the same of *Er the Armenian*, *Heracles Ponticus* of a certain Woman, *Herodotus of Aristotle*, *Plutarch* of another; which whether true or false, shew that Learned Men have thought a Resurrection no impossible thing. Neither can any Man that believes there is a God, that he made the World, and is Omnipotent, with any shew of reason question the Resurrection as a thing impossible: for it must needs be every whit as easie (yea far more) to raise a Dead Man to Life, than to make the first Man, yea the whole World of Nothing.

Now if it be neither impossible for Christ to have returned to Life, and evidenced by sufficient Testimony, (wherewith the Jewish Master *Bechai* being convinced, acknowledged the truth thereof) and the same Christ, as both his own Followers and other Men confess, published a new Doctrine as by Divine Authority; it truly follows that the Doctrine is true, because it cannot consist, neither with the Wisdom or Justice of God, in so excellent a way to honour him who had been guilty of fallhood in so great a matter, especially when he himself, before his Death, foretold his Disciples of his Death, and the kind of Death; and his Resurrection also, adding these things should come to pass for the confirmation of his Doctrine. And thus is the Christian Religion confirmed for a most sure and undoubted verity, above and beyond what can be pretended for Mahometism, Judaism, (as now maintained by the Jews) or any other Religion whatsoever held in opposition thereunto.

## S E C T. X.

*The Christian Religion excels all other Religions in the World.*

THE former Arguments are drawn from Matter of Fact, let us now come to those that proceed from the nature of the Doctrine. Surely either all the Worship of God is wholly to be rejected, (which he will

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never agree to, who believes there is a God, and such a God as hath care of the World; and who considers Man, endued both with excellent Understanding, and with Power to chuse moral Good and Evil; and therefore having in himself Matter, as of Reward, so of Punishment likewise;) or else this Religion is to be admitted, not only for the evidence of Fact, whereof we have spoken, but also for the things intrinsecal, and of the very nature of the Religion it self.

Seeing no other Religion in any other Nation or Age can be produced, either more excellent in Reward, or more perfect in Precepts; or for the manner wherby it was commanded to be spread, more admirable: Or which is of greatest moment, the excellency of the High Priest, Sacrifice and Altar, pertaining to Christianity, as that by which the same is consecrated, ratified, and confirmed.

To begin with the High Priest of this Holy Profession, Christ Jesus, who greatly excels Aaron and the Priests descending from him, in respect of his Personal Excellency; being immaculate or sinless, which is not so much as pretended by any of the Priestly Tribe of Israel. For the Law maketh Men High Priests which have infirmity: but the Word of the Oath, which was since the Law, maketh the Son who is consecrated for evermore. They were sinful Men; and therefore did offer first for their own Sins, and then for the Sins of the People, and were not suffered to continue by reason of death. Our High Priest hath abolished Death, liveth ever, hath an unchangeable Priesthood, Heb. 7. 24. Made a Priest with an Oath, by him that swore and will not repeat, Thou art a Priest for ever, &c. By so much was Jesus a Surety of a better Testament than that of the Law, as that the one is fading, and the other permanent: He is not a Minister of the Tabernacle pitched by Man, but that which the Lord pitched, being set on the right Hand of the Throne of the Majesty in the Heavens, Heb. 8. 12. This is the Priest of the New Testament, Jesus the Son of God, Heb. 3. 14. On this ground his Followers are encouraged in their Profession, because he is able to save to the uttermost.

Now what can be said by any Nation, Tongue, or People, since the Creation? Did any such Priest arise among the Nations? Sure it is not pretended; but the contrary is granted by consent of all Nations, by the continual interruption of their Sacrifices, by Death and other Changes. The Jews themselves pretend not that any but the Messiah can be such a Priest. It is reported of Rabbi Nathan, that being desired to expound the Scripture, Isa. 52. 3, 4, 5. He was wounded for our Transgressions, &c. Turning to the Hebrew Text, he answered, That the Prophet spake of the Messiah; and further said, That the Spirit of the Messiah was present with God at the fall of Adam and Eve, and in mercy stooped down to Man's Misery, and undertook to bear Man's Infirmity; and thereby made Reconciliation with God, and defended Man from Wrath, otherwise the World could have had no longer continuance, in regard God's Justice could not otherwise have been satisfied. Forasmuch then as the Jews themselves confess the Messiah only to be the Repairer of Mankind, by stooping down to Man's Misery, and undertaking to bear Man's Infirmity, and that without this the World could not continue; It must needs follow that their High Priest-

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hood is inferior to the High Priesthood of Christianity, upon this supposition, (which is not hard to prove) that Jesus is the Christ. And consequently that our Religion is more excellent than any other Religion whatsoever, in this respect.

## S E C T. XI.

### Of the Sacrifice and Altar pertaining to Christianity.

THE Lord Christ being acknowledged the most excellent High Priest, the excellency of his Sacrifice cannot be denied; It being his own most blessed Body, which he freely offered, through the Eternal Spirit (or by virtue of his Divinity) without spot to God for the Sin of Mankind; it is therefore called the Sacrifice of himself, Heb. 9. 26. And of that perpetual Vertue, as that it needs not daily to be offered, (as all other Sacrifices must be repeated) because by one Offering it perfecteth what concerns the necessity of Man; and is to God an Offering of a sweet-smelling savour, Ephes. 5. 2. And doth therefore excel all the Offerings and Sacrifices which were offered by the Law; which stood in Meats, Drinks, the Blood and Flesh of Bulls, Goats, &c. which God hath now rejected, as having no pleasure therein: For how is it possible that such Sacrifices should cleanse the Sin-defiled Consciences of Men? And though many of the Gentiles did sacrifice Humane Flesh unto their false Deities, yet these were polluted Sacrifices, being sinful Flesh, as well as for other Causes, and therefore could not purge others from Sin.

Of the Christian Altar the same consideration is to be had: for sith the Altar sanctifies the Gift, it can be nothing inferior to himself, that is, the Lord Jesus. Though he was pleased to offer his own Body upon the Cross, which Men had prepared for him, and set in an unclean place: But the Altar whereon the Christian Sacrifices are accepted, is said to be before the Throne of God, Rev. 8. 3. where the High Priest himself entred to present his Sacrifices; and so to appear in the presence of God for us. And this is that whereof Christians have right to eat, by Faith, feeding daily upon the Flesh of Christ, which is Meat indeed, and the Blood of Christ, which is Drink indeed. And thus from the excellency of Christ's Sacrifice, and Altar, we infer the Excellency of Christianity it self.

## S E C T. XII.

### Of the Excellent Reward annexed to the Christian Religion.

NOW concerning the Reward, that is the end proposed to Man, because that (as we use to say) is the first in intention, though last in execution; Moses in the Institutes of Judaick Religion, if we regard (only) the express Covenants of the Law, promised nothing above the good

good things of this Life, a fruitful Land, and plentiful Store, victory over Enemies, long and healthful Age, and hopeful Posterity. What is beyond these, is veiled under Shadows; or to be collected by wise and difficult Ratiocination; [*Which mysterious Discourses, though they were very much unvail'd by the Prophets, which that People was blessed with abundantly by God, who cared as well for their Eternal as their Temporal Happiness.*] Yet those that attended only on the Pentateuch, as the *Sadducees*, renounced all hope of good things to be attained after this Life. Among the *Greeians*, who received their Learning from the hands of the *Chaldeans* and *Egyptians*, they that conceived any hope of another Life, after the end of this, spake of it with much hesitancy; as appears in the Differtations of *Socrates*, in the Writings of *Tully*, *Seneca*, and others: and when they sought Arguments for it, they found very little certainty; for what they alleadg, most of it holds no better for Man than Beasts. This being observed by some others, it is not much to be admired, if they devised a transmigration of Souls, from Men into Beasts; from Beasts into Men. And this again being built on no certain Testimonies or Arguments, and yet it being clear that some end was proposed to Man, others were inclined to say, that Virtue is Reward to it self, and a wife Man is happy enough when he is tormented in the *Bull of Phalaris*. But this also, and not without cause, displeas'd others, who were sensible enough, that where Dangers, Incommodities, Torments, and Death are; there Felicity, especially the highest, cannot dwell, unless Men could content themselves with a sound of words without reality; and therefore these Men plac'd the supream Good, and the end of Man in such things as bring pleasure to the Senses. But this Opinion too is by very many, and that by sound Arguments, refuted, as an Opinion that extinguisheth all Honesty, and degradeth Man, born and crec'd for higher things, into the rank of brutish Creatures, which with their down-cast looks, regard nothing but what is earthly.

In so many doubts and by-ways Mankind went astray in that Age, when Christ brought into the World the true Knowledge of the end: *Not but that it was in a good measure revealed before, and understood by very many; yet not so evidently revealed, and openly set forth to all, as now it was by Christ; who, promised his Followers after this Life, a Life, not only without Death, without Pain and Trouble, but attended also with Joy unspeakable; and that not only to a part of Man, that is, his Soul, of whose hopeful felicity after this Life, was extant (even among the Heathens) partly by some Conjecture, and partly by Tradition: But now made as manifest concerning the Body also, with a great deal of reason, that as the Body for the Divine Law often suffers Hurts, Tortures, and Death, so it should at last be partaker of the representation, in the Glorious Resurrection.* Now the Joys which are promised are not vile, as Banquets to satisfy the sensual Appetite, which the gross Jews hope for after this Life; nor the Pleasures of the Bed, which the *Mahumetans* promise to themselves: These are proper to this frail Life, in the modest use thereof, and by God's Ordinance a Remedy against Fornication. But the Delights of the Life to come, are perpetual vigour of Body, and more than

than Star-like Beauty; in the Soul perfect Understanding, even of God and his Providence, and of what now lies hid; a Will quiet, taken up with the fruition of God especially, and with the admiration and praise of him: briefly, all things better far than can be conceived, by comparison of the best and greatest things we know in this World, *because we shall be like Jesus, for we shall see him as he is,* 1 Cor. 12. 1 John 3. 2.

## S E C T. XIII.

Of the Excellency of Christian Precepts; and 1. about the Worship of God.

The next thing wherein Christian Religion excels all other, that are, or have been, is the exceeding sanctity of Precepts, both in things pertaining to the Worship of God, and the rest. The *Pagan* Rites almost all the World over, as *Porphyry* shews at large, and the *Sea-Voyages* of our Times do confirm, were full of Cruelty: For in most places the custom was, to appease their Gods with humane Blood; a custom which neither the *Grecian* Learning, nor the *Roman* Laws took away. And their most Sacred Mysteries (as they suppose them) either of *Geres*, or *Liber Pater*, were most full of all obscenity, as appeared after the Veil of their secrecy was taken away. Which *Clement Alexandrinus*, and others, largely declare. Moreover, the days consecrate to the honour of their Gods, were celebrated with such Spectacles, as *Cato* was ashamed to be present at.

Now though the *Judaick* Religion had in it nothing unlawful or undecent; yet to keep the People, who were prone to Idolatry, from departing from the Truth, it was encumber'd with many Precepts of such things as of themselves were neither good nor evil, namely, slaying of Beasts, Circumcision, the exact Rest of the Sabbath, and the interdiction of sundry sorts of Meats. Some whereof the *Mahumetans* have borrowed, adding to them the prohibition of Wine.

But the Christian Religion teacheth to worship God, the purest Spirit, with Spiritual Purity, and with such Works, as of their own Nature, without any Command, are most fit to be done, *John 4. 24. Rom. 12. 1. And yet containeth a few solemn Rites by command from Heaven; to commemorate the Love of God in the Gift of his Son; and for Christians, to express their Unity and Communion in the Mystery of the Gospel.* It commandeth not the Flesh to be Circumcised, but the Lusts of the Flesh, *Rom. 2. 28, 29. Phil. 3. 3.* Not to cease from all Work, but that which is unlawful, and yet to employ much time in the Worship of God. Not to offer unto God the Blood or Fat of Beasts; but if need be, to sacrifice our own Blood for a Testimony to his Truth; and to believe what we give of our Estates to the Poor, to be given to God, *Matth. 6. 4.* Not to abstain from certain kinds of Meats and Drinks, but to use both with that moderation, which is convenient for our Health; And somewhat by

1 Cor. 5. 9.  
1 Cor. 10. 16.  
Heb. 12. 4.

Luke 21. 34.  
Mat. 6. 18.  
John 12. 14.  
Luke 11. 18.  
Mat. 21. 21.  
Rom. 4. 25.

Fasting, to subdue the Body to the Soul, that it may be the better raised to things above. But the Chief part of *Christian Religion* is placed in a pious Confidence, whereby we being compos'd to faithful Obedience, rely wholly upon God, and without doubting believe his Promises; whence also Hope springs, and sincere Love, both to God and our Neighbour, so that we observe his Laws not servilely, for fear of punishment, but to please him, and to have him according to his infinite Goodness our Father and Rewarder. Moreover, we are commanded to pray, not that we may obtain Riches, or Honours, or other secular things, that have proved hurtful to those that have desired them; but first, to pray for such things as more immediately relate to the Glory of God, as that his Name may not be profaned, but hallowed or sanctified; that his Kingdom may be advanced in Righteousness, and perfected in its Glory; That his Will may be done, and not ours, but that we in all things may be subject to him. And for our selves, we are allowed to pray for so much of this Worlds goods as Nature wants, leaving the rest to Divine Providence, not over-much caring which way God shall dispose them. But the things which lead to Eternity, those we are taught to ask with all ferventness, that is, pardon of our Sins past, the aid of the Spirit for time to come, whereby fortified against all Errors and Temptations, we may persevere in the way of Piety to the end. This is briefly the Worship of God in Christian Religion, than which certainly nothing can be devised more worthy of God.

## S E C T. XIV.

*What Christian Religion teacheth more excellently than others, respecting those that trespass against us.*

OF the same Heavenly Nature are the Duties required towards our Neighbour, in the Christian Way, which herein excels all others. The Religion of Mahomet, may truly be said to be born in Arms, breaths nothing but Arms, and by Arms is propagated. So the Laconian Institutions, most commended among the Grecians, even by Apollo's Oracle, were all directed to puissiance in War, as Aristotle notes, and blames them for it. But the same Aristotle saith amidst himself, when he tells us that War is natural against Barbarians; when the contrary is true, that Nature hath constituted Amity and Society among all Men, which excellent Principle of Love and Friendship is much furthered by the Rules of Christianity. And indeed what is more unjust than for single Acts of Murder to be punished with Death, and destruction of whole Nations, as an honourable Achievement, to be glorified with Triumphs? And yet by what other means, but by War, oftentimes openly unjust, (as themselves confess of the War of *Sardinia* and *Cyprus*) did that to Celebrious City of *Rome*, rise to so great Renown? And indeed generally, as most worthy Historians have related, Robbery out of their own Bounds, most Nations accounted

accounted no Dishonour. Aristotle and Cicero, make Revenge a part of Valour. The Gladiators (or Sword-Players) mutual Slaughter, were Cicero. the Pagans delightful, among their publick Plays. 'To expose, or suffer their Children to be devoured by wild Beasts if they were any way Deformed, was ordinary, no Law forbidding it.

The Hebrews truly had a better Law, a more holy Discipline, yet being a People of unruly Passions, some of their Infirmities were winked at, or indulged, as their eagerness against the seven Nations that had merited Extirpation; wherewith not contented, they had enlarged their hatred to all People different from themselves, the marks whereof to this Day appear in their Prayers, conceived against the Christians. But to satiate their Passion by the Law of Retaliation, to kill the Manslayer by the private hand of a Kinsman, was permitted by the Law, Deut. 19. 21.

But such is the Excellency of the Law of Christ, that it wholly forbids to return Injury, whether in word or deed, lest the Malice we reprove in others, we again approve by Imitation; it commands to do good to the Good especially, and to the Evil too after God's Example, from whose Goodness we have received Sun, Stars, Air, Showres, as common Gifts to all Mankind. Yea, so perfect is the Law of Christ, that it strikes at the root of the detestable sin of Hatred and Murder, not permitting Anger which is attended with Sin, and though Anger may be lawful, yet it is not permitted to Christians to let the Sun go down in their wrath; Nor are they permitted to pray, without an heart as ready to forgive those that trespass against them, as they desire God to be ready to forgive them. In a word, this is the Christian Law, to render to no Man evil for evil, but to overcome evil with good; to love those that hate them, pray for those that spitefully use them and persecute them; Precepts hardly found in any Religion in the World except the Christian, being evidently of a more noble descent and higher Pitch, than the best Moralists can fashion, or attain to.

## S E C T. XV.

*Of the Excellency of the Law of Christianity above others touching Marriage.*

THE conjunction of Male and Female, whereby Mankind is Propagated, is a thing most worthy the care of Laws. It is no wonder it was neglected by the Pagans, when the Gods they adored, are so famous (or rather infamous) for their Whoredoms and Adulteries, to say nothing of Buggery, which they learned by the example of their false Gods; into whose number was refer'd upon that score *Ganymed*, and afterward *Antinous*. The same impurity is frequent among the *Mahometans*, among the *Chineses*, and other Nations, it is allowed lawful; and the Greek Philosophers seem to have taken pains to impose upon a foul Thing, a fair and comely Title. Those Greeks, the most Eminent of

of them, having praised a community of Women, what have they else done, but turned the whole City into a common Stews. The very Animals, some of them, observe a conjugal Covenant; How much more should the divinest Creature, Man? That he might not spring out of uncertain Seed, and so the mutual affection that Nature hath kindled between the Parent, and the Children, be utterly extinguished. *How almost incredibly wise the Nations were by unlawful Lusts, is set down by the Apostle, Rom. 1. who in the just judgment of God, they refusing to glorify God, were given up to vile Affections, for even the Women did change the natural use into that which is against Nature; and likewise the Men leaving the natural use of the Women, burned in their Lusts one towards another, Men with Men working that which is unseemly: all which Impurities, are so abandoned where Christianity reigneth, that these things are scarce imagined as possible to be acted; so pure and so powerful is that holy Religion, to the killing such Iniquities.* The Hebrew Law, indeed, forbids all Uncleanness, but allows one Man many Wives, *Deut. 17. 16, 17.* and gives the Husband power to dismiss his Wife upon every cause, *Deut. 24. 1, 2, 3.* Which at this Day is in use, among the *Mahometans*, and was of old among the *Greeks* and *Latines*, with so great and odious License, that their Wives were out to Use, and lent for a time by the *Laconiens*, and by *Cato*; So prodigiously foolish were their Wise-Men, and so unwholesome were the Laws under which they lived.

But the most perfect Law of Christ, pierceth to the very roots of Vices, and condemneth him that assaulted any Womans Chastity, or deflowered her with his lustful Eyes, as guilty in the Judgment of God; who beholds the Heart of Sin desired, though not performed. And seeing all true Friendship is perpetual and indissoluble; justly hath it required that Tye to be such, that contains with the society of Affections, the communion of Bodies too; which without question doth more conduce also to the good education of Children. Hence our Saviour establisheth Marriage, according to its Institution in Paradise, *Mat. 9. 9.* where the Lord joynd one Man and one Woman together. And the Apostle, as fully directs every Man to have but one Wife, as every Woman to have but one Husband, *1 Cor. 7.* Among the *Pagans*, some few Nations were content with single Wives, as the  *Germans* , and  *Romans* . This is the use of Christians, that the affection the Wife intirely bestows on her Husband, may be paid with equal Retribution; and that the Household Government may be more rightly ordered under one Guide; nor permits divers Mothers to bring in discord among the Children.

## SECT. XVI.

*Of the Excellency of Christian Doctrine about earthly Substance, above what other Laws prescribe.*

TO come to the use of such things, as are commonly called Goods, We know Thefts were permitted by some *Pagan Nations*, namely the

the *Egyptians*, *Diod. Sic. l. 1. fuit Licurgo*, as also the *Spartans*; and they that permitted not the like to private Persons, made it their employment in publick; as the *Roman Orator* once said, If they did restore to every one their own, &c.

The *Hebrews* indeed did not such things, yet were they permitted to take Use of Strangers, their disposition being favoured by their Law that promised Riches, *Lev. 26. 5. Dent. 28.* to the due observer of it.

But the Christian Law, not only prohibits all kind of Injustice, and that with respect to all Persons, whether Friends, or Enemies; but also forbids us to place our study in those perishing things, *Mat. 6. 24.* Because our mind is not able with sufficient diligence to attend the care of two severals, that do each require the whole Man, and oft-times distract us divers ways. And again, both in getting and keeping Riches, there is a Sollicitude, that draws with it a kind of Servitude, and Vexation, and so corrupteth the delight we hope for out of Riches. And the things wherewith Nature is contented are but few, and to be obtained without much Labour and Expence: Nevertheless if God shall indulge us more than is necessary, we are not commanded to throw it into the Sea, as some Philosophers have unwisely done, nor to detain it without use; but to supply the needs of other Men, either by giving or lending to them that ask, *Mat. 5. 42. Luke 6. 35. 1 Tim. 6. 17.* as it best becomes Men who believe themselves to be Procurators and Stewards of God Almighty, their Father. For a Benefit well bestowed, is Treasure full of good Hope, and is neither subject to the violence of Thieves, nor to variety of other Accidents. Of this true and sincere Liberality, an admirable Example is left us by the Primitive Christians, when even from *Macedonia* and *Achaia*, was sent relief to *Palestine*, *Rom. 15. 25, 26.* just as if the whole World, of those professing the Name and Doctrine of Christ, were but one Family. And there is added in the Law of Christ that Caution also, that our Beneficence be not deflowered by any expectation of recompence, or glory from Men, *Mat. 6. 1, 2.* The Gift loseth its reward from God, if beside God it look at any other representation: Now that no man may (as the manner is) cover his Tenacity, or withholding his hand from good Works, with this pretext, a fear left himself in old Age, overtaken with some Calamity, should have need of what he is required to give in Alms; our Law promiseth a special care of such as keep those Precepts, *Mat. 6. 32.* and to cherish their Confidence, reminds them of God's Providence, *Mat. 7. 26.* conspicuous in feeding wild Beasts and Cattel, and in adorning the Herbs and Flowers. Now it were an ill Debtor, nor to trust him longer than we hold possession of a Pledg.

## S E C T. XVII.

## Of Swearing, and other Precepts, respecting Conversation.

Other Laws forbid Perjury, but the Christian Law requires us to abstain from all vain Professions, and from all unnecessary Affirmations; and to be such punctual keepers of our Word, and lovers of Truth in all our Speech, that there may be no need to exact an Oath from us at all. Briefly, there can be nothing found out, in the Law of Nature, the Grecian Philosophers, or in the Sentences of the Hebrews, or other Nations, that is Excellent, concerning Modesty, and Temperance, and Goodness, and discreet Behaviour; concerning Prudence, the Office of Magistrates, honoured by Christianity as God's Ordinance, Rom. 13. requiring every Soul to be subject thereto, for the Lords sake: Of Parents and Children, Husband and Wife, Master and Servant, but especially touching Vices to be shunned, which by a fair shew of Vertue, deceived most of the Greeks and Romans; namely the itching desires of Honours and Glory. Lastly, The sum of all Precepts, admirable for the solid Brevity, to love God above all things, and our Neighbours as our selves; that is, to do to another, what we would have done unto our selves.

Against this commendation of Christian Religion, it is wont to be objected by some, and particularly the Jews, The great difference of Opinions among Christians: whence is sprung also a multitude of Sects: But though this may better be urged to prove the Doctrine of Christ to be Good than otherwise, sith Satan and wicked Men, always went about to mischief such as walk in the Truth, by stirring up Commotions and Distractions among them, whose differences alter not the Doctrine, which stands as the clearest Witness against such Disorders. Yet we have another Answer ready, viz. That the same accident befalls almost all Arts whatsoever, partly through the imbecility of humane Understanding, and partly because Judgment is overwayed by Affection; yet are these varieties of Opinion wont to consist within the bounds of certain Truths agreed on, whence Arguments are drawn in Disputations of the Questions. As among the Jews (who cannot boast of their Unity) the Pharisees, Sadduces, and Essicans, &c. differed as much as Christians, yet they all acknowledged one Deity, one Law, and one Law-giver; and their differences were about the Exposition of the same Law. The Heathen may not boast in this case: for according to their Nations, so were their Gods; the variety of Gods adored by the same Nation, as may be seen in Homer, of the Wars of Troy, in Aug. de Civitate Dei; of the state of the Romans, Goths, and Vandals. In humane Arts, as the Mathematicks, it is disputed, whether a Circle may be Quadrated: It is agreed on all hands, that equal parts being taken away from Equals, the remainders are equal. The like we see in Physick and Medicine, and other Arts. So also the discrepancy among Christians, who were sincere lovers of that Holy One, and his Gospel in general (for all are not Christians that call themselves so) could not spoyl, though

though it may injure, the Harmony of the Principal Points; that is, the agreement in those Precepts, from which we have especially taken estimation of Christian Religion; the certainty whereof is apparent in this, That whosoever in the heat of their Quarrels seek out matter of difference, yet do not proceed so far, as directly to deny those things commanded by Christ; no not they who will not compose their Life after that Rule; and if any one will be so absurd as to contradict these Precepts of Christianity whereof we have spoken, he must be numbered with the Philosopher that denied the whiteness of Snow. For as these are refuted by Sense, so are they by consent of Christians in all Nations, and of the Books written by the Primitive Christians, and their immediate Successors, who sealed the Faith of Christ with their Blood. What all these acknowledg (especially the Primitive Witnesses) to be the Doctrine of Christ, must be accounted so by every upright Judg; as Plato is believed, Xenophon, and other Socrates's, concerning the Doctrine of Socrates; the School of Stoicks, in those things which their Master Zeno taught. And indeed nothing can be objected against the certainty of the Doctrine of the Gospel being Christ's, which will not equally call Moses himself in question, and all Authors of any Form of Doctrine whatsoever, whether such Doctrines were theirs.

## S E C T. XVIII.

The Eminency of the Author of Christianity, and the manner of its being propagated, shews it to be very excellent.

Another Point wherein Christian Religion excels all other which are or may be devised, is the manner whereby it was delivered and propagated; where first we must look upon the Author of the Religion. The Authors of the Grecian Wisdom, confessed the uncertainty of their Doctrine, saying, Truth was as it were drowned in a deep Well, and our Mind like the Night-Owl to the Sun's Light, is dim-lighted to behold things Divine, And therefore it was no mistake in Paul, to say these Disputers of this World through Wisdom knew not God. And beside there were none of them but were some way vicious, either for flattery of Princes, or for impure Love, or for snarling Impudence. All are convinced of Envy one towards another, by this very Argument, their contentions about words, and of things of no moment; and of boldness in God's Service; for that when they believed one God, laying him aside, they worshipped others, and such as they believed to be no Gods, making the Custom of the People the Rule by which they squared their Religion. Lastly, Of the Reward of Piety, they asserted nothing firmly, as is manifest in the last Discourse of Socrates before his Death: And consequently their Religion which could assure nothing in point of Reward, must needs be far from Excellent.

To proceed; Mahumet was the Author of a Religion far and wide dispersed,

Democrit.  
apud Cic.  
in Acad.

persed, but he was all his Life given over to Lust, which his own Followers do not deny, and his own *Alcoran* doth make appear, himself saying, *That it was allowed to him to have as many Women as he pleased.* And the Reward he promised, consisting in Feasts and Veneries, he gave no assurance it should ever be extant, for his Body is not said to have returned unto Life again, nay to this hour it lies buried at *Medina*.

Next for the Hebrew Law-giver, *Moses*: He was indeed a rare Man, but not excused from all blame, seeing, with much regret, he at last undertook the Message God sent by him to the King of *Egypt*, *Exod.* 2. 10. and shewed some diffidence of God's Promise, about drawing Water from the Rock, *Numb.* 20. 12. as the Hebrews do confess. Neither did he obtain scarce any part of the Reward he promised his People by the Law, being vexed in the Desert with perpetual Seditions, and entred not into the Land of Promise.

But Christ is set forth by his Disciples, without the least spot of Sin; and by his Enemies is not accused of any Fault that can be proved by competent Witnesses. What he prescribed to others, he performed himself; for the Commands laid upon him by God, he faithfully fulfilled; in all his Life most innocent, *1 Pet.* 2. 22. of Injuries and Torments most patient, (as he shewed induring the Cross) most Charitable to all Men, even to his Enemies, even to them that cruelly nail'd him to the Cross, at once suffering their Malice, and praying for them: Then the Reward he promised his Followers, himself is said and proved to have obtained, in a most eminent way. After his Resurrection he was seen, heard, and felt of many: He ascended into Heaven in the sight of the *Eleven*. That he received supream Power there, is demonstrated by the variety of Tongues, *Acts* 2. 3, 4. given to those that were unlearned Men; which can be no Fable, being so openly done in the presence of so many thousands of his Enemies; and that to the Conviction and Conversion of three thousand of them at that very time, that it is impossible to doubt of this, if any thing in any Story, Sacred or Humane, may be believed. And, together with the Gift of Tongues, other marvellous Gifts he poured down upon his Followers, according to his Promise, before he left them. Which as this his faithfulness to these his chosen Disciples, must needs create a most sure confidence in them, with respect to whatsoever he had promised, or ordered to be done; so it will not suffer us to doubt, neither of his Faith, nor of his Power, to render us that Reward which he hath promised. And seeing nothing like this, either is or can be pretended with such demonstration, concerning the Author of any other Religion; Hence we justly collect the Christian Religion is most eminent herein, because the Master thereof himself performed what he commanded, and what he promised, himself obtained; and as far as was hitherto meet, hath fulfilled his Word unto his Adherents.

## S E C T. XIX.

## Further of the Propagation of Christianity.

Let us now consider the Effects of that Doctrine whereof Christ was Author: Which if we mark well; are of such a Nature, that if God have any care of Humane Affairs, the Doctrine can be believed to be no less than Divine. It was a thing becoming the Divine Providence, to take care that the best things might be most common, and of largest extent: So is Christian Religion, which we see is taught through all *Europe*, yea in the utmost Recesses of the North; and through all *Asia*, the Islands of the Ocean not excepted; through *Egypt* also, and *Ethiopia*, and some other parts of *Africa*; lastly, through *America* too. Nor is it so only in our Time, but in former Ages (and probably with far greater purity) as appears by all Histories; by the Books of *Ancient Christians*; by the Acts of Synods; by the Ancient Tradition still preserved, even among the *Barbarians*, of the Journeys and Miracles of *St. Thomas*, *Andrew*, and other Apostles. How far the Name of Christ was spread in their Times among the *Britains*, *Germans*, and other remote Nations, is noted by *Clemens*, *Tertullian*, and others; What Religion is there that can equal the Christian in so large a Possession. If you name *Paganism*, you alledg the name, not Religion, for they adored not the same Deity, but some the Stars, some the Elements, some the Beasts; some things of no Substance; neither had they one Rule or Law, nor any common Master of their Religion. The *Jews* indeed are dispersed; but all one Nation; and since the Time of Christ, their Religion hath received no notable increase. Yea, their Law hath been made known more by Christians than themselves. *Mahometanism* hath enlarged it self into Countries more than enough; but not alone, there is a mixture of the Christian Religion; and in some places the Christians are the greater number, when yet *Mahometans* are not found in many of them, where Christians are. And suppose those Christians, many of them, be much degenerated from the purity of Christianity, and so perhaps do as much disservice, as service to the Christian Cause: Yet still by this means the Divine Law of Christ (the Scriptures) have been translated into most Languages, God hath his Witness in those Nations, setting forth as well the Way to fear and serve him in sincerity, according to his Will, as rebuking those that falsely pretend to that worthy Title of Christian.

## S E C T. XX.

The Infirmary and simplicity of the first Preachers of Christianity, shews the excellency of their Ministry or Religion.

That saying of Paul, 2 Cor. 3. 7. *We have this Treasure in Earthen Vessels, that the excellency of the Power may be of God, may justly give us occasion to consider with admiration, by what Hands and Instruments Christian Religion was carried so far, that in this respect also it may be compared with others. We observe how most Men are so affected, that they easily are drawn after the Examples of Princes and Great Men; and the more, if the Example be strengthened with Law and Force. Hence had the Pagan Religions, hence had the Mahometan their encrease, as is abundantly shewed by Records of those Times.*

But the first Teachers of Christian Religion, were not only without Command (or Authority) but of a very low Condition, Fishermen, Tent-makers, and the like. And yet by their Labours, the Doctrine within about thirty Years was propagated, not only through all the Parts of the Roman Empire, but even to the Parthians and Indians: Neither at the beginning only, but for three Centuries, by the Hands of private Men, without any Threats, without any temporal Encouragements, and notwithstanding all the opposition of secular Rulers, was this Religion promoted. So that before Constantine gave his Name to Christianity, this was not the lesser part of the Roman World.

Now the Masters of Manners among the Grecians, were commendable for their other Arts, as the Platonists for Geometry, the Peripateticks for Natural History, the Stoicks for Sophistry, the Pythagoreans for Musick; not a few of them, as Plato, Xenophon, Theophrastus, were graced with a kind of admirable Eloquence. But the first Doctors of Christianity had not the aid of any such Art; Their Speech was with great simplicity, and without alluring Ornaments, contemptible naked Precepts, Promises, Threats; which having not of themselves an efficacy equal to such great Progress, we must needs conclude, that either Miracles, or the secret assistance of God, or both, prospered their Work. For the Devil and the Earthly Powers bending continually against them, it can be no other than Almighty God which stood with them; as also is witnessed by the Apostle, 2 Tim. 4.

## S E C T.

## S E C T. XXI.

The Impediments overcome by Christian Doctrine, shews its Excellency.

BE it further considered, that the first Disciples and Followers of those our Christian Doctors, had not minds unprepossessed of certain former Religions, and so not easie to be framed to the form of the Religion they proposed, but the contrary: and here the pulling down of the old Form according to the Law, might prove more difficult, than setting up the new form of Gospel-Worship. Whereas those that first admitted Mahomet's Law, were generally devoid of any Religious Tye; but contrariwise, where our first Preachers came, the People were ordinarily preingaged to Opinions, and (that second nature Custom) repugnant to these new Doctrines; having been bred up, and by the Authority of their Country Laws, and by their Parents confirmed in Pagan Idolatry, or Jewish Ceremonies. To this Obstruction, was added another as great; that is, most grievous Sufferings, which presented themselves to the Professors at the very entrance of Christianity, to be endured, or feared for that Cause. For seeing human Nature is abhorrent from Evils, it follows that the causes of such Evils are not undertaken without much reluctance; for who that is wise would expose himself, and all his, to inevitable Ruine, but only in a Cause that he is sure will produce thereby an advantage greater than the loss.

The door of preferment was long shut against the Christians, and it's most likely hath been little open at any time to sincere Christians, whilst the way to Exile, or Sequestration lay open. These were lighter Matters; they were also condemned to the Mines, they were afflicted with Torments, the most Cruel that could be invented, and to Death often: So that the Writers of those Times do testify, by no Famine, by no War, by no Pestilence, was a greater multitude of Men consumed at one time. Neither were the ways of Death vulgar, but Burnings alive, Crosses and Punishments of that sort, which without greatest horror we cannot read, or think upon. And this Cruelty, that continued without any long breathing spaces, (and those Intervals not every where) till about the Reign of Constantine, in the Roman Empire, in other places longer. Yet were these Troubles so far from diminishing the Christians, that on the contrary their Blood was compared to Seed; so fast did they grow up again after the Cutting down.

Here also let us compare with the Christians, other Religions: The Greeks, and other Pagans, accustomed to vaunt and amplify what was their own; number some few, who for their Doctrine suffered Death; some Gymnosophists, Socrates, and a few more. Neither can it be easily denied, but these most noted Persons were emboldned with a desire of transmitting their fame unto Posterity.

But among Christians that suffered Death in the early Times of the Gospel,

pel, for their Doctrine, were very many *Plebeans*, scarce known to their Neighbours, Women, Virgins, Youths, who had no appetite, nor probable hope of a lasting Name; and few of them are by Name recorded in the Martyrologies, in respect of the great number that suffered for the *Christian Cause*, being only honoured with a general Remembrance.

It is worth observing by the way, that by an easie Stimulation, as the casting a little Incense upon the Altar of the *Heathen Gods*, very many might have escaped Death; which cannot be said of them (*for such there were among the Philosophers*) who whatsoever thoughts they concealed in their Hearts, certainly their open Actions complied with the vulgar Manners: So that to have died for the Honour of God, is an Honour hardly communicated to any other but *Jews* and *Christians*; nor to the *Jews* at all, since the Times of *Christ*; in former Times but a few of them, if they be compared with *Christians*. More of whom in some one Province, suffered for the Law of *Christ*, than ever did of *Jews*: All whose Patience of that kind, is almost reduced to the time of *Manasse*, and *Antiochus*.

Wherefore, when the Christian Religion in this part also, so infinitely exceeds all others, it deserveth to be prefer'd before them. From all that so great multitude of every Kind and Sex, divided by so many Places, and who feared not to die for this Religion, but rather after a wonderful manner of Courage, did many times put themselves into the greatest jeopardy on that Account, condemning the face of the *Presidents*, the *Teeth of wild Beasts*, *Fire*, and all Instruments of Torment, as *very Straws and Toys*, not to be feared or regarded. Upon this account of their love to *Christ*, we must conclude there was some cause of so great Constancy, and no other cause can be imagined but the Light of Truth, and the Spirit of God.

## SECT. XXII.

The Conclusion, reflecting briefly upon the former Discourses.

TO conclude, seeing from the Grounds alledged, Christianity is a Religion as certain, as any thing that is knowable by Men, by virtue of the best Records, or Monuments of Antiquity, whence the knowledge of the Things they receive for true, are gathered; and that not only from the holy Scriptures, (the surest and fullest Witnesses thereof\*) but also from the next Testimonies of greatest Credit and Estimation otherwise alleagable, whether Authorities, or rational Demonstration, inasmuch that all things must be false, if Christian Religion be not true, from the same Grounds on which Men build their Objections against the

\* Not to insist upon the concurrent evidence of God himself, by his equalty in the consciences of such as receive the Truth: in the love of it, such that Witness (though we in no wise condemn) being more intrinsic and particular, is not so fitly to be alleag'd here, and rather for that it might seem to be ballanced by Pretences as high as the contrary side, though in reality it cannot be.

verity thereof: It will, I trust, abundantly satisfy judicious Men, upon their diligent consideration of the Proofs above, collected as you have heard, mostly out of the works of the Learned Author aforesaid; so that it shall be needless here to add any more.

And for the excellency of this holy Profession, sith it therein stands not only upon equal Grounds, with whatsoever may be said for any other Religion which hath yet appeared in the World, but in many things (if not in every thing that renders any thing truly excellent, especially in a Divine, or Spiritual way of Excellency) doth over-match upon the most equal Trial, the most specious Religions any where extant. It follows, that laying aside all Hesitancy, and watching against all low Concoits of the Christian Faith, we devote our selves to honour this Holy Calling, in assured confidence of the Beatitude annexed to it.

And because this holy Profession, as other excellent Donations from the Hands of a Gracious God, hath been abused, injured, and rendered thereby less desirable (through the enmity of Satan, and the indiligence of Men) we shall in our following Treatise, endeavour to set forth the Christian Religion in its ancient and naked Purity, and therein joyne our Labours with those that sincerely are for *naked Truth*; because she is most lovely in that appearance, disrobing her (as much as in us lieth) of all those gorgeous Vanities, wherewith too many of her pretended Friends have burthened her, thereby rendering her more like the Vanities of the *Gentiles*, than the solemn way of Christianity.

Add further, that which is as crying and dreadful a Consideration as any other: That this holy Title of *Christian*, should be invaded by so many, and yet so few found that walk in any measure of Conformity to her sacred rules of Piety and Morality. Inasmuch, that the Lord may justly complain against this Generation, as he did against the House of *Israel*, Hosea 8. 12. *I have written to him the great Things of my Law; but they are counted a strange Thing.* To remedy all which unanswerable walkings towards a Gracious God (if it may be) are these Treatises written, and in the fear of God recommended to the consideration of all professing Christianity, and to every one that are any way concerned therein.