

without descending to particular instances, which are every where to be met with, and have in part been touched at, and offered before.

1. Let us view man as a creature made for this end, TO GLORIFY GOD, AND ENJOY HIM FOR EVER: abstracted from the consideration of his corruption, which the deists sometimes deny, and sometimes with difficulty do but in part admit. And let us consider him as left to pursue this noble end, in the use of his rational faculties under the conduct of the mere light of nature. If we consider him thus, and enquire into the experience of the world, how far he has reached this end, we shall find such an account as will much confirm the truth we have asserted, and weaken the credit of the deists, with their imaginary sufficiency of nature's light to conduct man to the end for which he was made.

If we look to the VULGAR, the generality of mankind, we shall find them with their backs turned to the chief end, never once thinking for what they were made, but pursuing other things: every one, as lust leads him, following his own humour, walking in a direct and open contradiction to that law, which was originally designed for the guide of our life, and the directory to bliss; that happiness which all would enjoy, though they know not where to find it.

If

If we observe the PHILOSOPHERS we may see them sitting up late, rising early, eating the bread of carefulness, wearying themselves in the search of happiness, running into some hundreds of different notions about it; and yet not one of them discovering, or at least understanding the true one; and as little agreed about the way to it. We may hear them talk of virtue, but never directing to its proper end, the glory of God. We may hear them urging the practice of it, but not upon the proper grounds. Rarely having any regard to the authority of God, the only formal ground of obedience. Instead of plain rules, useful to mankind, they obtrude dark sentences, rather designed to make their fellow mortals admire them, than to be useful to any individual. They every where tack their own fancies to the divine law, a weight sufficient to sink the other, as to its truth, in the apprehensions of men, or at least, as to its usefulness. They offer a rule defective in most things of moment, corrupt in many, ruining in not a few instances, destitute of any other authority than their own say so, or *ipse dixit*, unintelligible to the vulgar, and destitute of inducements to obey it.

2. Let us consider man as made to glorify God; but barred from this end, by the interposition of those great hindrances and difficulties which now are certainly in its way; I mean

DARKNESS,

DARKNESS, GUILT, and CORRUPTION, which are like vast mountains in the way to happiness.

As to that DARKNESS that has overspread the minds of men; if we examine the state of the vulgar, we find them like blind men, content to grope along in the dark, through a miry way, stumbling frequently, and falling sometimes dangerously; yet satisfied with their case, not looking after light: not so much because they want it not, as because they have no notion of it, or its usefulness; like blind men that never saw the sun, and therefore suffer the want of light with less regret than they who once saw, but now have lost their eyes. They follow as they are led; are ready to take hold of any hand, though of one as blind as themselves, and are never sensible of the mistake till sunk into an abyss, from which they can never extricate themselves. The philosophers, indeed, seem a little more sensible of their case; but after all their painful endeavours, we find them utterly in the dark, as to all useful and necessary knowledge of GOD, or the way of worshipping him; of ourselves, our happiness, our sins, the way of obtaining pardon, our duty, or our corruption.

As to GUILT; if we look at the case of mankind, and their endeavours for the removal of it, we find the vulgar drowned in endless despair, or fatal security; like men at their wits end, trying all the methods which fear, superstition, or racked imagination

gination can devise, and still unsatisfied with their own inventions; they are ready to try every scheme which self-defigning men, or even the devil, can suggest to them, sparing no cost, no travel, no pain. They refuse not to give the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul. The philosophers either think, through their pride, they have no sin, because they are not so bad, quite so bad as the vulgar; or, if they still retain some sense of sin, they are driven into the utmost perplexity, being convinced of the wickedness of the measures taken by the vulgar, or at least, of their uselessness and impertinency, and yet unable to find out better; they try to divert their thoughts from a fore they know no plaister for.

As to CORRUPTION; we find all confessing it, crying out of the disease; and indeed it is rather because it will not be hid, for the fore runs, than because it is painful to many. The vulgar despair of stemming the tide, and finding it easier to swim with the stream, are willingly carried headlong. The body of philosophers are indeed like weak watermen on a strong stream, they row one way, but are carried another. Though they pretend to aim at the ruining of vice, yet really they do it no hurt, save that they speak against it. A few of the best of them being ashamed to be found amongst the rest swimming, or rather carried down the stream on the surface, that is, in open vice,

vice, have dived to the bottom; but really made as much way under water, as the other on the surface.

3. LET US VIEW MANKIND UNDER THE GOODNESS AND FORBEARANCE OF GOD, THESE HELPS WHICH SOME THINK SUFFICIENT. This word is used, or rather abused, as a blind in a matter of very great importance; and men who use it will scarce tell, if they can, even in the subject of the present discourse, in what sense they use it. But let it be as it will, some pretend the works of providence, particularly GOD's goodness and forbearance, sufficient. Well, let us see the experience of the world in this.

If we view mankind under this consideration, we may see them so far from being led to repentance, that the most part never once take notice of this conduct of GOD. Others, and they not a few, have abused it to the worst purposes. Because judgment against an evil work has not been speedily executed, therefore their hearts were wholly set in them to do evil. The more inquisitive have had the insolence to charge GOD as encouraging wickedness. And as for the favours they enjoyed themselves, they looked on them, not as calls to repentance, but as rewards for their pretended virtues, and scanty ones too, below the worth of them. Not a few of them have gone near to arraign GOD of injustice for lesser afflictions they were tried with; while others

have been entangled and tossed to and fro by cross appearances. So that none have by this goodness of God been led to repentance.

4. Let us view men living in the place where REVELATION obtains, or where the CHRISTIAN RELIGION is professed and taught, but renouncing and rejecting it, and in profession owning only NATURAL RELIGION: such are the DEISTS among us. If we consider their words, they talk indeed that natural religion is sufficient; and to make it appear so, some of them have adorned it with jewels stolen from the temple of God, ascribing to the light of nature discoveries in religion, which originally were owing to revelation, and were never dreamed of where it did not obtain; though being once discovered, they have gained the consent of sober reason. But now we are not considering the speech, but the power of these men; not what they say of the sufficiency of natural religion, but what real experience they have of it, and what evidence they give of this in their practice.

If we thus consider them, we find, that altho', when they have a mind to impose their notion of the sufficiency of natural religion upon others, they pretend, that it is clear as to a great many points or principles, that are confessedly of the greatest moment in religion; yet when they begin to speak more plainly and freely their own
inward

inward sentiments, they shew that they are not fixed, no not about the very principles themselves, even those of them which are of the greatest consequence. Mr. Gildon, publisher of the Oracles of Reason, is not far from asserting two anti-gods, one good, the other evil, and so falls in with the Persians. Blount favours the opinion of Ocellus Lucanus, of the world's eternity, and consequently denies, or at least hesitates about, the creation. The immateriality of the soul seems to be flatly rejected by them all. Nor do they seem very firm concerning its immortality. In short, after they have been at so much pains to trim up natural religion, and make it look like sufficient, they yet express a hesitancy about its sufficiency to eternal life. We may see what Lord Herbert says in his writings. Blount, in a letter to Dr. Sydenham, prefixed to the Deists Reasons, tells us plainly, that it is not safe to trust deism alone, without christianity joined to it. And the deists hope is summed up in this, in the fourth chapter of the summary of the Deists Reasons, that there is more probability of his salvation, than of the credulous and ill-living papist: and that is just none at all.

Nor does their practice give one jot of a better proof of the sufficiency of that religion they profess: nay, on the contrary, it affords convincing evidence of its weakness, uselessness, and utter in-

sufficiency. Their lives evidence that they are not in earnest about any thing in religion. They are Latitudinarians in practice. Their words and their actions have no favor of a regard to a deity: but they go on in all manner of impieties in practice; and, perhaps, in the end, put a period to a wretched life by their own hands, as Blount, Uriel, Acofta, and others have done; and the survivors justify the deed, upon trifling and childish reasons; as not knowing but they may one day be put to use the same shift. I am not in the least deterred from asserting this by the commendations that the publisher of the Oracles of Reason gives to Mr. Blount as a person remarkable for virtue.

If a profane, jocular, and unbecoming treatment of the gravest and most important truths which belong, even by his own acknowledgment, to natural religion; yea, and are the principal props of it; and if gross and palpable disingenuity be instances of that virtue he ascribes to him, and evidences of those just and adequate notions of the deity, in which he says Mr. Blount was bred up: I could give instances enough from the book itself of such virtues; but I love not to rake in the ashes of the dead. Again, others of the deists have wearied themselves in chase of a phantom to no purpose; and, having neither the grace nor ingenuity to return to the religion they abandoned, either land in downright atheism in principle

principle and practice, or they throw themselves into the arms of the pretended infallible guide; and thereby give evidence how well founded the jesuitical maxim is, *Make a man once an atheist, he will soon turn papist.*

5. LET US VIEW MEN LIVING UNDER THE GOSPEL, EMBRACING IT IN PROFESSION, BUT UNACQUAINTED WITH THAT SPIRIT THAT GIVES LIFE AND POWER TO ITS DOCTRINES, PRECEPTS, PROMISES, THREATS, AND ORDINANCES. They, besides being possessed of all the advantages of the light of nature, have moreover the superadded advantages of revelation, and its institutions. They have ministers and parents instructing them, and discipline to restrain them; they are trained up in the faith of future rewards, and instructed in the nature and excellency of them for their encouragement; they have punishments proposed to deter them from sin, which they profess to believe; yet, if we consider the practice of the generality of such persons, it gives a sufficient evidence, that all this is not enough. Who but a man blind or foolish can then dote so far as to pretend the light of nature alone sufficient, when it is not so, even when helped by so many accessory improvements.

6. IF WE CONSIDER THE EXPERIENCE OF THOSE, WHO HAVE RECEIVED THE GOSPEL IN TRUTH, AND FELT ITS POWER, WE FIND THAT THEY HAVE IN-

DEED

DEED REACHED THE ENDS OF RELIGION IN PART, and have a fair prospect of future success. Well, what is their sense of the sufficiency of nature's light? Why, if you observe them in their public devotions, you shall hear heavy out-crys of their own darkness, weakness, and wickedness; you may hear serious prayers for divine light, and life to quicken, strengthen, and incline them to follow duty, and support them in it, against the power of temptations, which they own themselves unable to withstand, without the powerful aids of divine grace. If you follow them into their retirements, where the matter is managed betwixt God and them alone, where they are under none of these temptations to maintain the credit of any received notions, and therefore must be presumed to speak out the practical sense of the state of their case without any disguise; there you shall find nothing but deep confessions of guilt, darkness, and inability, with earnest crys, prayers, and tears, for supplies of grace: and what they attain in matters of religion, you shall find them freely owning, that it was not they themselves, but the grace of God in them which brought them to this. And the more any one is concerned about religion, knows and has attained in it, still you will find him the more sensible of this state of things. This is but a hint of what might have been said. But we have rather chosen
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to offer a general scheme of the argument from experience, which every one, from his own private reading and reflections, may illustrate with observations and particular instances, than to insist upon it at large, which would have required a volume.*

XI. DEISTS proved to be defective in INTEGRITY and real WISDOM, or the shocking ABSURDITIES which clog and ruin the DEISTICAL SCHEME.

We shall now proceed to shew that infidels are guilty, not only of the most destructive folly and madness with respect to themselves, but of cruelty to mankind, and of inveterate spite against GOD; and consequently that they ought to be rationally opposed by the united force of all good men upon earth.

Let it be farther premised, that we will have nothing to do in this paper with any deist, unless he believes the *existence* of a GOD, the *immortality* of the *soul*, the eternal difference between *vice* and *virtue*, and a *future state* of happiness or misery. With regard to those infidels, who deny the above articles of *natural religion*, as they live like beasts, we disdain to enter for one moment into any dispute with them.

I. A deist is obliged to confess, that GOD is a being infinitely good, that he has a free *ardent will*

* The above views are taken from Mr. Halyburton, 4to. 1714.

will to make his creatures truly happy to the full extent of their capacities.

That He is a being full of kind affections, ardent passions to do us good, and tender forcible inclinations to please our souls.

That, from an inward principle of good-will, he exerts his active power, in diffusing happiness far and wide through the vast extent of creation, in rich and plentiful proportions, to the different capacities of his creatures, which are the proper objects of goodness, and the proper subjects of happiness.

Deists are forced to allow, that his intentions and active powers terminate in doing good for its own sake, as his proper object and last end; in which design and operation GOD's heart rests for ever with high satisfaction and joy.

That He has a strong propensity to do good with infinite delight, resting in the action of doing good most freely, without any other motive or inducement, but merely to shew how immensely kind and good he is, and can be, to his creatures; and that his utmost goodness can be exerted eternally in our highest happiness and fulness of enjoyment.

Deists are obliged to confess, that GOD has suffered mankind, in every age and nation, for five thousand seven hundred years, to remain
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under much ignorance and darkness; to labour under many wretched prejudices; to be guilty of horrid vices, rebellious madness, and shocking murders; and to plunge themselves into terrible miseries, without affording them any kind of aid or supernatural assistance; that is, GOD has never afforded them any sort of help, light, or assistance, beyond the bare power of their own reason, the laws and power of the civil magistrate, and the advice and maxims of those few philosophers that have appeared in some parts of the world. Now, who can reconcile these three ideas, the rich goodness of GOD, the horrid state of mankind, and his refusing to give them any effectual aid in misery?

2. *Deists are forced to assert, that the book called the Bible, was every word of it invented and written by men that had no help from GOD.*—That not one idea or thought was infused by the wisdom and goodness of GOD; but that this book, the sole invention of men, was offered to mankind, and attested in such a manner, so full of apparent strong evidence; and yet the book itself is utterly false.

The prophecies are all false, there never was one true prophecy given from GOD; and if there is no true prediction, so, on the other hand, there can be no true fulfilment; but all the pretended prophecies were written after the events took place.

All the miracles were either never done at all, or were mere tricks of art, sleights of hand, or vile juggle and combination between Moses and the Egyptians, between Christ and the Jews.

Although the doctrine, in many respects, appears to be good, and the morality so pure, yet it never came from God, any more than the writings of Cicero, or Seneca, or Mahommed.

And as to the moral character of the penmen, however appearing good, yet at bottom they were all vile rogues, deceivers, and liars.

3. *Deists are obliged to assert, that a great part of the sensible, learned, and virtuous world have been suffered by GOD to live and die under a total delusion.*—That the greatest geniuses of Britain have been deluded and deceived all their days: the great Bacons, Boyles, Lockes, Newtons, Miltons, of the past and present age, have been deluded fools, and silly enthusiasts; they have embraced the scriptures as a divine revelation from God, when there is no such thing as a revelation, it is all a lye; it is all mere cheat and falsehood; and yet Bacon, Locke, and Newton, never did, or never could, discover the cheat.

What bold and absurd men are these deists, to dare set up their understanding above Bacon, Locke, and Sir Isaac Newton? when it is evident, that any one of these worthy and great men will

weigh down all that deists have either said or written, or can say to the end of the world.

4. *Deists are obliged, on their own scheme, to assert, that all the persons employed in delivering the doctrines and laws of the Bible, have imposed upon us by known deceit, and designed wilful imposture, and all without any prospect of riches or advantages to themselves.*

They are obliged to maintain, that these men, the writers of the Bible, were guilty of the vilest wickedness upon no motive, but to be undone in this world, and be damned for lying in the next, unless they were such hardened atheists and fools as to disbelieve a future state.

5. Deists are forced to assert and believe, that all these *impostors* and *cheats*, the writers of the Bible, all united in the same black and *horrid designs* to invent monstrous lies, and impose them upon the world in the name of God, and go on telling lies in the name of God; and that none of them did ever recant and discover the fraud, no, not even Judas himself, who was strongly obliged to it: * that neither the love of life, nor the terrors of dreadful deaths, which were their usual lot, had any influence upon them to make them confess the truth: but still these vile stubborn

* Read Mr. Bonar, on the Life and Character of Judas Iscariot, as an evidence of the truth and inspiration of the christian religion. Pr. 6d.

born wretches persisted in their testimony concerning their doctrine and mission from God to the last breath.

6. Deists are irresistibly forced, upon this *glaring absurdity*, to confess, that these authors and inventors of the Bible did, in the midst of their wickedness, and with a guilty consciousness of their own lyes, *set themselves to do the greatest good in the world*; that is, deliver the most excellent doctrines and morals in the name of God, though they knew they were telling abominable lyes all the time.

That these men published the most excellent ideas of God's nature and perfections, and the most refined and compleat body of morals and motives, such as have the highest use and tendency to promote the honour of God's moral character, and the true happiness of mankind.

That here are a company of the vilest lyars and rogues, the worst of men in the world, doing the greatest good in the world; and that with death and horrid damnation before their eyes, acting with a certain prospect of the greatest present evils and terrible sufferings for themselves and all their followers, and without the least hope of future honours, riches, or comforts, either in this world, or in a future state.

7. The deists are forced to assert, with impudence and absurdity, that these authors of the Bible,

Bible, these deceivers and cheats, were able, without any human advantages of learning and *eloquence*, to dazzle and *persuade*; or of *subtlety* and craft, to inveigle and *intice*; of worldly arms and *power*, to *terrify*; or of *riches*, to *bribe*: yet that these men did persuade millions of mankind to believe their fables and lyes; and, upon terms of severe self-denial and painful sufferings, embrace the doctrines and stories which these vile fellows had invented of their own heads.

8. Deists are obliged, with a *shameless front*, to assert, that all the professed experience, which thousands and millions of *sober, grave, learned, and wise men*, have had of the truth and the divinity of the Bible, and of its power to convince, reform, and change mankind, and to comfort them in their greatest distresses and sorrows, to direct them in the worst difficulties, and guide them in the most doubtful cases, was *all a lie or a delusion*.

That all their experience is a foolish mistake, or a vile pretence, because no man in the world ever had any comfort or direction from God by means of the Bible.

9. Deists are inevitably forced to assert *, that there is a sovereign, wise, and good God at the head of the world, the constant and omnipresent governor of the universe, the *accurate inspector* of all human actions and thoughts; and that *this great*

* See Mr. Bennett's Sermons on Inspiration, 8vo, 1730. p. 285.

great God has stood by, and looked on every moment, and has seen this horrid delusion prevail; has known, to the bottom, a vile lying imposture to spread for 1700 years, yea, above 3000 years, amongst the best and most pious of mankind; and yet God has never interposed for its defeat; but, instead thereof, has, by surprising operations and events, given open favour to the Bible.

10. Deists, with astonishing rudeness and assurance, are irresistibly obliged to maintain, that, although the Bible is a *mass of lies*, and the product either of *rascally imposture* or *mad enthusiasm*, yet the discovery of this falsehood remains the peculiar privilege and *honour* of the *deists only*, who are the alone men of sagacity to find out, and of honesty to expose, the vile scheme of lying and roguery.

Deists, according to their own assertion, are the only men endowed with keen and strong understandings, and refined taste, to distinguish between truth and error.

These are the only men that have the proper share of honesty and honour to profess and own the truth, and to declare the lies of the Bible!

Deists are the only men of the most penetrating minds in the world, the most elevated and powerful geniuses that ever lived amongst mankind; they are, if you believe them, the judicious and honest
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