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Chap. XIII. Touching the reasonableness of the Christian religion, and the sutableness thereof to the reduction of the soul to its due state, position and happiness.

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C H A P. XIII.

Touching the Reasonableness of the Christian Religion, and the Suitableness thereof to the Reduction of the Soul to its due State, Position and Happiness.

THere are many Truths both in Nature and Divinity, that have not, neither indeed can have their first Discovery unto Mankind, but by supernatural Revelation, which yet being discovered, have a high Congruity and Consonancy to true Reason: As for Instance, The manner and order of the Creation of the Universe, as it is delivered by *Moses*, if it be duly considered, is greatly consonant to the Nature and Reason of the things in the World, and yet it is impossible that it should at first be discovered, but by supernatural Revelation; for no Man was, or could be a Witness to the Creation of things that were pre-existent to his Being, neither is it possible for humane Reason to search out by bare Ratiocination, the distinct order, method, periods, and other Circumstances of that Great Work of Omnipotent Power, and Wisdom: And the same may in a great
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measure be asserted, touching many of the important Methods and Circumstances of the Redemption of Mankind, and Evangelical Doctrine: Some things therein delivered, I confess, were before believed, either by the Light of Nature, or at least by some antient Tradition; as the Existence and Perfection of Almighty God, the Immortality of the Soul, and a Future State of Rewards and Punishments; though the Notions thereof were troubled and confus'd: But the Evangelical Revelation hath these great Preferences: 1. That some things are discovered therein which were never before discovered, nor discoverable but by Divine Revelation; as, the Miraculous Conception and Mission of the *Messias*; the Expiation for the Sins of Men, and the Impetration of Eternal Life for Mankind, by his Death; and divers other great Evangelical Mysteries. 2. That as to those very Points of Truth that in some measure were before apprehended and believed by Mankind, yet they are more distinctly, plainly, and evidently discovered, in and by the Evangelical Revelation; so that as to both these, it is truly said, *that life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel.* But although this be true, that the Contrivance of Man's Redemption could only be by infinite

finite Wisdom, and the Discovery it self is supernatural, a divine Message from Heaven, and published to us by the Son of God, *Heb. 1.* yet the Truths thus revealed do bear a great Consonance and Congruity to the True Light of Reason, to the true State of the humane Nature. For to say the Truth, True Reason in the Souls of Men, is but a Ray or Beam of that transcendent Wisdom that is in God; and it is no longer true Reason, than as it bears a Congruity and Consonance to that Divine Reason (as I may, with Submission, call it;) namely, the Divine Wisdom: And though in relation thereunto, the humane Reason bears not so great a Proportion as the Light of a Candle doth to the Sun, yet certainly, if it be True Reason, it holds an Analogy and Conformity to its Fountain and Original, and ceaseth to be Reason when it suits not to it. And in this respect I have adventured to range this means of Conversion of the Soul to God, among Means that are rational, and to call them reasonable and intellectual Means. And indeed they are so: there is no Religion that is, or ever was professed in any Age, that hath so great a suitability to True Reason; no Means or Method of bringing the Soul into its true, genuine State and Position,

Position, as the Christian Religion and Doctrine.

I shall not pursue this Subject at large: but shall give some Instances, making good my Affirmation.

1. The Evangelical Doctrine gives us a clear Account of the Immortality of the Soul, and this is a Doctrine highly suitable to the very Sentiments of our Souls. 1. The Consent of the most Learned and Judicious Sects of the Philosophers, the Platonists, and many of the Stoicks. 2. It seems an utter unlikely thing, that the Noble Creature Man, of such admirable Endowments and Faculties of Mind, a Mind of that great Capacity, furnished with Conceptions that are of an Extent beyond a Life of Sense; a Mind reaching after Immortality, and Communion with Almighty God, or at least, with those Noble Creatures the Angels: I say, it is highly incredible that such a Nature, such a Mind, should be placed and made, only to take a Turn for a few years upon the Theatre of this World, and then die and perish, and vanish like a blast of flame or smoke, and have a lesser Privilege of Duration, than many Vegetables and Brutes.

2. The Evangelical Doctrine gives us a distinct Account of a Future State of Rewards

Rewards and Punishments : This is also a Truth highly consonant to natural Sentiments of Mankind, and to the ordinary Appearances in the State of humane Nature. 1. There is scarce any Sect of Learned and Judicious Men, nay, scarce any Nation under Heaven, but is highly persuaded of the Truth thereof in general, though they labour under differing manners of explicating it. 2. The whole Frame of the Universe do proclaim Almighty God to be delighted in the due Order and Disposal of all things; every thing is full of Order, Congruity, Beauty, and Comeliness : only the Dispensations of External Good and Evil to Mankind, seem very confused and disproportionable to the Conditions and Deserts of Men; *Good Men to whom it happens according to the work of the wicked; and wicked men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous* : therefore it is not conceivable but that there must be a time to set things at rights; a day of the manifestation of the Righteous Judgments of the God of Order : this was the natural Conclusion of the Wise Man, *Eccles. 3. 16, 17.* when he saw the Disorder that was in the Dispensations among Men, *I said in my heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked; for there is a time for*

Metaphysical and Divine Contemplations. 125
for every purpose, and for every Work.

3. The Gospel teacheth that the Way and Means to attain a State of Blessedness and Glory in that future Life of Immortality, is, by converting the Soul to Almighty God, by Faith, Love, and Obedience; by Purity and Holiness, by Righteousness, and Charity, by Sobriety, and Patience; and all these Christian Vertues recommended to us by the Precept and Example of Christ Jesus: And certainly if we examine this impartially by Reason, such a State and Position, and Temper of the Soul is most sutable and agreable to a Life of Immortality and Happiness.

And we may take a measure of it by the contrary: Let us but suppose a Soul entirely addicted to a Sensual Life, and the love of this World, placing its Felicity in Carnal Pleasures, Eating, Drinking, Wantonness, Recreations, Bravery of Apparel, Splendid Houses and Furniture, Great Retinue, great Store of Lands, Money, Flocks, Herds; in Delights of the Ear, the Eyes, and other Senses; in Power and Rule over others, and in the Sence and Delight of these Enjoyments, the Soul to be wholly immersed: let any Man but think with himself, how it is possible for such a Soul, thus addicted and habituated, to be in any
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kind of Congruity, with the State of Happiness of a separated immortal Soul; nay, how it is possible for such a Soul to be without extream Vexation, Sorrow, and Perturbation, when it comes into such a State as is wholly unfutable to, and uncapable of such Enjoyments, which once it made its Felicity; and if it had a Capacity to relish and taste such worldly Contentments, yet they are not in that State to be had, they are quite gone, and out of date, and vanished away.

4. The Doctrine of the Gospel commands and commends unto Mankind, Piety towards God, Vertue, Charity, Righteousness, Justice, Veracity, Fidelity, Sincerity, Integrity, Purity, Holiness, Humility, Sobriety, Temperance, Patience, Longanimity, and all other excellent Vertues; and certainly if we take a Measure of these Precepts even by the Light of Nature, and True Reason, we shall find them admirably consonant thereunto, though there were no other future Life to come. 1. If once that most radical and natural Notion of the Existence of a Deity, and of his great Perfection be but deeply digested in the Soul, the greatest and most divine sort of Evangelical Precepts are and would be as naturally consequential thereupon, as the most
necessary

necessary Conclusion of a Logical Demonstration: such as are the Love and Fear of God, Reverence and Veneration of him, entire Obedience to him, Patience and Resignation of our Wills to his Will, Sincerity and Uprightness of Heart, Thankfulness to him, Dependance upon him, Trust in him, a vigilant Conversation becoming his Sight and Presence; an imitation of him in all things that we are capable to imitate him in. Again, 2. Tranquillity of Mind and Conscience was accounted among the Wisest of the Philosophers, the greatest Pitch of Happiness attainable by Man in this Life; and I dare confidently assert, That no Precepts, no Practice under Heaven is more conducive to the Tranquillity of the Mind of Man, than these Evangelical Precepts before-mentioned, as might be made easily evident by Induction of Particulars. 3. The Peace and Good of Mankind, and of humane Societies, is a thing justly valuable by all Wise and Good Men: And what in the world is more conducive thereunto, then Veracity and Truth, Fidelity, Righteousness, Justice, Temperance, Sobriety, Charity, Beneficence, Longanimity, Goodness, Forgiveness, Meekness, Humility, Contentation, and all this bound on to the Soul, by the strictest Bond
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of the Love, Fear, and Duty we owe to the God of Heaven? The greatest part of the Disorders in humane Society, arise by those Vices that are contrary to those excellent Vertues, as by Pride, Ambition, Covetousness, Falseness, Dissimulation, Churlishness, Injustice, Unrighteousness: These and the like Distempers of Soul, fill the World with Rapine, Violence, Oppression, Contention, and Deceit, which are cured and remedied by an Observance of the Evangelical Doctrine, than which there cannot be any thing more conducive to the perfecting of the humane Nature, and benefit of humane Societies.

5. The Evangelical Doctrine evermore inculcates these two great Qualifications of the humane Soul; namely, the True Knowledge of God, and the true Love of God: the former is that which excites the latter, and the latter is that great commanding Affection of the Soul that fully brings about the Soul to God, and to a chearful and sincere Observance of him and his Will; The Love of God is the First and great Commandment, and draws along with it the Whole Duty of Man to God. And this is most consonant to what Reason it self dictates, and Experience evidenceth; he that hath but the
firm

firm hold upon this Affection, governs a Man as he pleaseth.

6. The Evangelical Doctrine, in order to bring about Man to love God, gives us the highest, most transcendent, and obliging Instances of the Love of God, the antecedent, undeserved Love of God to Man, especially in the admirable Oeconomy of our Redemption by Christ, as hath been before shewed: And certainly this is the most rational way that can be imagined, for the gaining of this great Affection, and the Conversion of the Soul to God. 1. It is in it self a most effectual Means to that end; Love and Beneficence is the great Attractive of Love, as hath been before shewn; and that Great God that formed the humane Soul, and placed it in its several Habitudes and Affections, and therefore best knows what doth most vigorously strike upon those active Strings, the Soul, did therefore choose this effectual Magnetism to bring about the Soul to him, *1 John 4. 10. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us first.* Again, 2. This Method of Attracting the Soul to God by the great and primitive Instances of his Love to Man, is most sutable to the Frame and Mould of the Nature of the humane Soul, and offers no Violence to it. It is true, the Glorious

God is not necessarily bound to the Laws that he hath established in Nature, they were Laws given to his Creatures, and not to himself, and he may, and sometimes for great Ends, derogates from those Laws by the Interposition of his own immediate Power, as in Miracles. And upon the same Account may or might if he please, break in upon the Laws that he hath instituted in the humane Soul, and might infringe the Liberty of his Will, and turn him about to him, by an irresistible overpowering Necessity: But the Wise God hath settled and established the Rules and Laws of the Natures of things, with so great Wisdom and Foresight, that he rarely violates them, but ordinarily proceeds in the way of his Providential Regiment of all things, according to those Laws and Institutions which he hath fixed in the Natures of things: in things simply Natural, he usually proceeds by Natural Applications; and in Rational Beings, by Means suitable to a Rational Nature, and therefore hath chosen this Means to draw the Soul of Man to him; namely, by the Cords of a Man, and the Bonds of Love, as most suitable to the Complexion, Nature, and Constitution, settled by his own Ordination in the humane Soul.

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Upon the whole Matter therefore I conclude, that as the Apostle, *Rom. 12.* styles the Consecration of the Body and Soul to God *a reasonable Service*; so I do with the same Evidence of Reason style the Doctrine of the Gospel the *Christian Religion*, a reasonable Religion, a Religion fitted and ordered with the most exquisite Reason, and suitability thereunto, to bring the Soul to its due Position, Respect, and Habitude to Almighty God, and thereby to have an Everlasting Happiness.

C H A P. XIV.

Concerning the Supernatural Means of retaining the Soul in its due Respect and Position to Almighty God and of the Reduction thereof unto it.

I Have hitherto considered of those two Means of Reduction of the Soul to its due Position and Respect to Almighty God, which I have styled Natural and Rational.

It now remains that I should consider the Third Means, which I call Supernatural.