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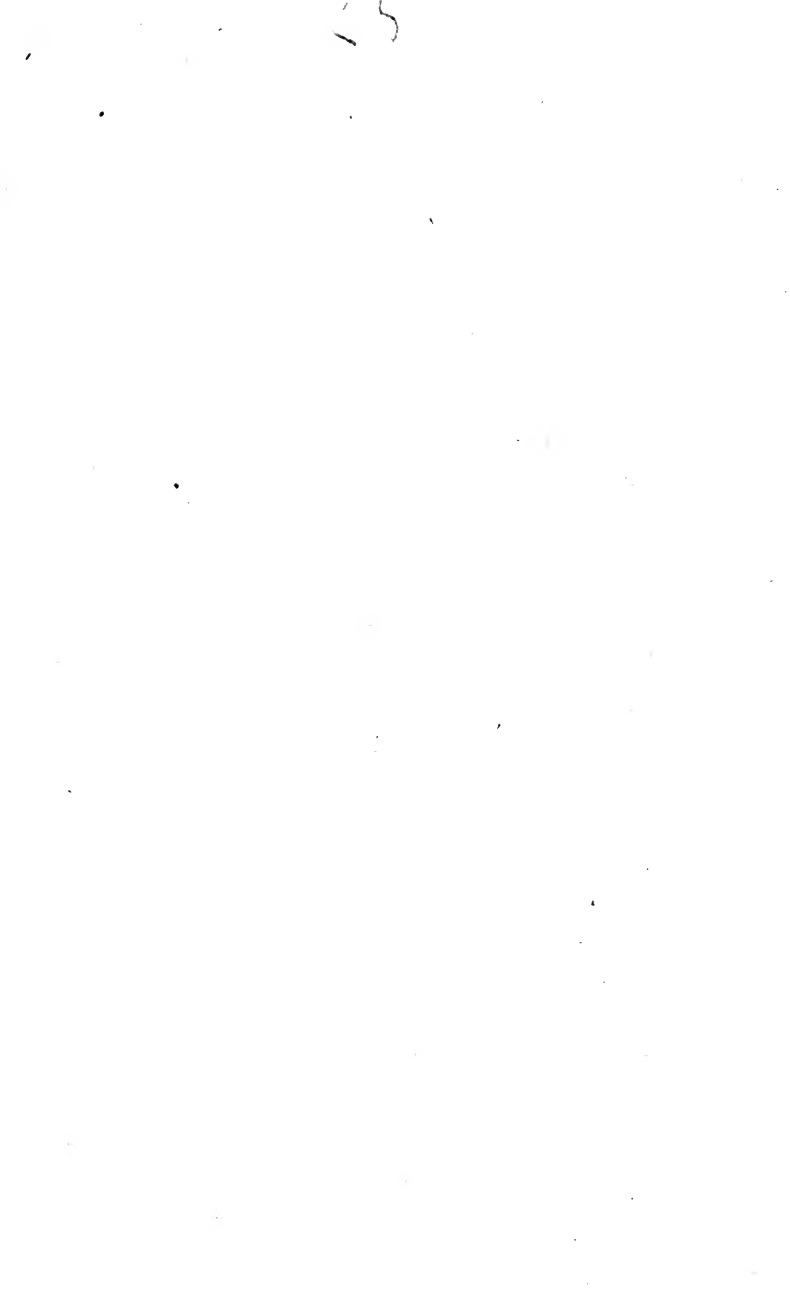
PRINCETON · NEW JERSEY



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*J. Burin's*

THE BENEVOLENCE  
OF THE DEITY,  
FAIRLY AND IMPARTIALLY  
CONSIDERED.  
IN THREE PARTS.

The first explains the sense, in which we are to understand Benevolence, as applicable to GOD. . . . //

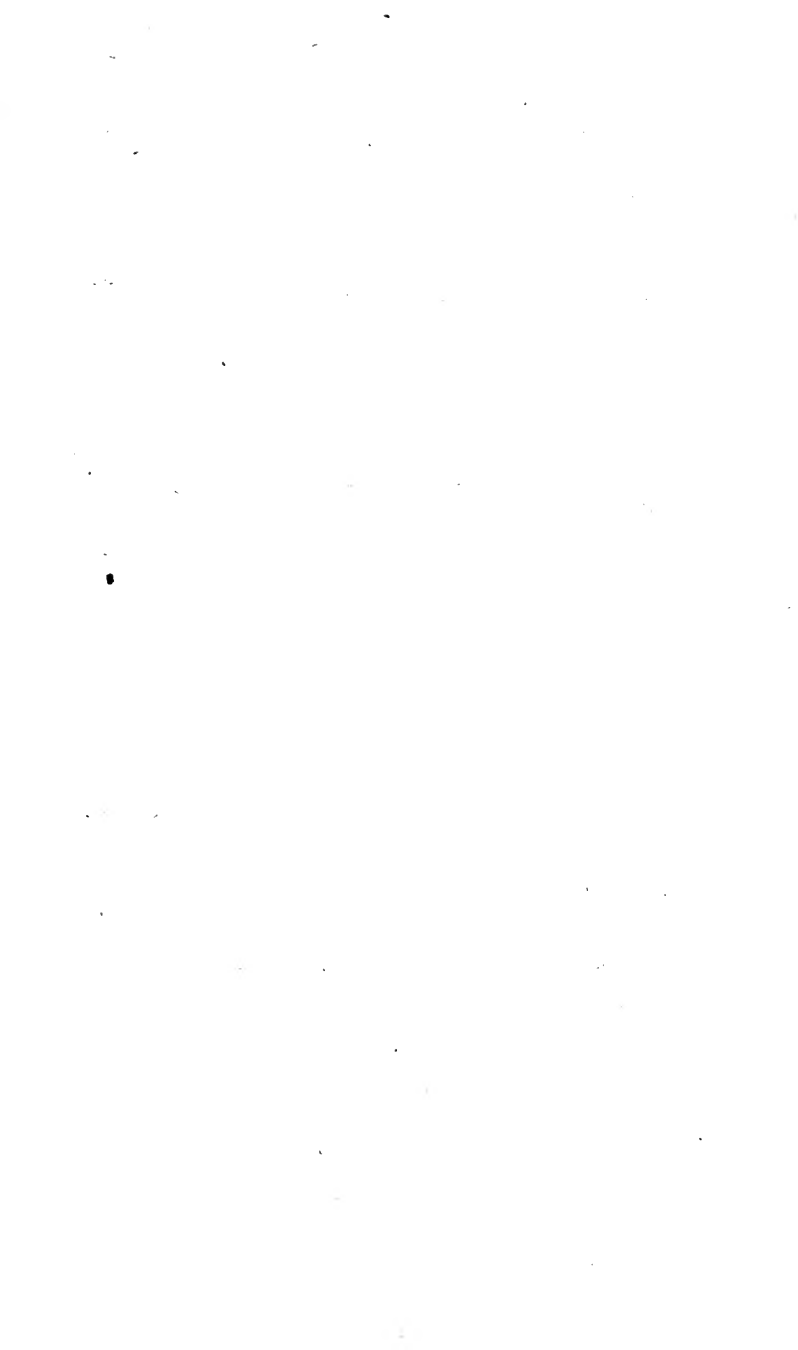
The second asserts, and proves, that this perfection, in the sense explained, is one of his essential attributes. . . . 57.

The third endeavours to answer objections. . . . 174.

Under one or other of these heads, occasion will be taken to view man as an *intelligent moral agent*; having within himself an *ability and freedom* to WILL, as well as to *do*, in opposition to NECESSITY from any extraneous cause whatever:— To point out the ORIGIN OF EVIL, both *natural and moral*:—And to offer what may be thought sufficient to shew, that there is no *inconsistency* between *infinite benevolence* in the Deity, which is always guided by *infinite wisdom*, and any *appearances of evil* in the creation.

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AMERICA: MASSACHUSETTS;  
BOSTON: PRINTED BY POWARS & WILLIS.  
MDCCLXXXIV.





## INTRODUCTION.

**BENEVOLENCE** is that quality, in the human mind, without which we could not be the objects of one another's esteem: Neither, were we wholly destitute of it, could we, whatever other qualities we might be endowed with, place that confidence in each other, upon which the well-being of the world, in so great a measure, depends. Were we possessed of power, but no benevolence, it would operate in tyranny; were we the subjects of wisdom, but no benevolence, it would be nothing better than craft: And the higher we enjoyed these properties in degree, the greater reason we should have, had we, at the same time, no benevolence, to shun one another through fear of mischief. It is benevolence, tempering our other qualities, and making way for their exercise in the methods of kindness, that constitutes us worthy objects of each other's love, and lays the foundation for that mutual trust between man and man, without which there could be no such thing as public happiness.

And this observation, extended to all other created intelligent agents, is equally true: Yea, it is so far true, with respect even to the uncreated Supreme Being himself, as that, if we had no idea of him as benevolent, we could not esteem him, though we might fear him: Neither could we place our trust in him, though we might in a servile way, do homage to him. Benevolence is that ingredient in his character which exhibits him to our view as amiably perfect, and worthy of our warmest love, and entire confidence. His other attributes, separate from  
this,

*this, are insufficient to inspire these affections ; nor are they indeed at all suited to such a purpose. "Eternity and immensity amaze our thoughts : infinite knowledge and wisdom fill us with admiration : Omnipotence, or irresistible power, is great and admirable ; but, at the same time, if considered simply by itself, 'tis also dreadful and terrible : Dominion and majesty, clothed with perfect and impartial justice, is worthy of our highest praises ; but still to sinners it appears rather awful and venerable, than the object of desire and love : Purity and holiness are inexhaustibly beautiful and amiable perfections, but of too bright a glory for sinners to contemplate with delight. 'Tis goodness that finishes the idea of God, and represents him to us under the lovely character of the best as well as greatest Being in the universe. This is that attribute, which both in itself is infinitely amiable, and, as a ground-work interwoven with all the other perfections of the Divine Nature, makes every one of them also to become objects of our love, as well as of our admiration. Immense and eternal goodness, goodness all-powerful and all-wise, goodness invested with supreme dominion, and tempering the rigor of unrelenting justice : This is indeed the description of a Perfect Being ; a character truly worthy of God."\**

*But though Benevolence thus essentially enters into the character of the Deity, it has been objected to by some, and abused by others. And it may be, more objections have been levelled against, and greater reproaches cast upon, this attribute of the Divine Nature, than any of the other ; though it is, in it-*

*self, the most lovely of all the perfections of God, and eminently that perfection, which, being intimately conjoined with the rest, in all their exercises, is the true and only source of all created existence, and dependent happiness, whether in present possession or future prospect.*

*With respect to some, their abuses of the Divine benevolence don't so much spring from any distinct notions they have formed of the nature of this principle, as existing in the Deity; or the methods, in which they conclude it ought to operate, as from a wrong state of mind. They are dissatisfied with their situation in the world, and quite out of humour, because they don't partake so liberally of the good things of providence, as they imagine they might do. And their discontent is still heightened if they meet with disappointments, and are reduced to suffering circumstances, though by their own folly. And being out of frame, uneasy and restless in their spirits, they find fault with their Maker, and vent themselves in reflections on his goodness; as though it were greatly defective: Otherwise, as they imagine, a more advantageous condition in life might have been allotted to them; and would have been, if the Deity had been as good as they can suppose him to be. These are the complaints, by which the infinitely benevolent Creator, and Governor, of all things, is abused by the less knowing and inquisitive, who are the most numerous: But, as their complaints don't so much originate in judgment, as a bad temper of mind, this chiefly needs to be rectified, and then their complaints will cease of course.*

*There*

*There are others, whose objections against the Divine Benevolence arises from a vain mind, proudly aspiring to comprehend that which is above the reach of their capacities. Some appearances, in the constitution of nature, and government of providence, are such as they can't account for, upon the plan of infinite benevolence. They find themselves unable to connect these, with other appearances, so as to constitute an whole which, they distinctly and particularly perceive to be an absolutely good one, free'd from all difficulties: And they are therefore rather disposed to dispute the existence of an infinitely perfect principle of benevolence, than to call in question their own capacity to see through the whole of its operations: Though, if there be such a principle, it must be employ'd about the universal system of things; and, for that reason, require an understanding, in order to adjust its exercises, that can take in connections, and dependencies, vastly transcending the most enlarged conceptions of such imperfect creatures as we are. Nothing can be sufficient to satisfy such objectors, till they have first learnt to be modest; entertaining just apprehensions of their own weakness, and the unsearchable greatness and goodness of God.*

*There are yet others, whose objections against, and abuses of, the benevolence of the Deity, take rise from their misconceptions of the nature of this Divine attribute. Having formed to themselves wrong apprehensions of supreme absolute benevolence, and the methods of its display, they either deny that God is thus benevolent, because some detached ap-  
pearances*

appearances of goodness are not such as they were led, from their mistaken notions, to expect they should be: Or else, they reproach this glorious attribute of the Divine Being, giving false and dishonourable representations of it, conformably to the erroneous thoughts they have previously entertained of its nature, or manner of exercise.

Some there be who seem to have no other idea of absolutely perfect benevolence, than an uncontrollable impulsive principle, necessarily urging on to the greatest communication of good, and the total prevention of evil; its prevention so as that it should have no place in the creation, in any shape, or view whatsoever: And the constitution of nature, not falling in with this notion of goodness, they question the reality of any principle of benevolence: Not considering that benevolence if seated in an infinitely perfect mind, like God's, is never exerted blindly, or necessarily, but always under the conduct of reason and wisdom: Which thought justly pursued, will sufficiently account for all appearances, however seemingly inconsistent with goodness; as we may have occasion to shew hereafter, in its proper place: Whereas, a principle of benevolence, though of infinite propelling force, if not guided in its operations by wisdom and intelligence, instead of producing nothing but good, might, by blindly counteracting itself, produce, upon the whole, as the final result of its exertions, infinite confusion and disorder.

The effect of mistaken notions of Divine Goodness, in others, is, not their denying that God is good, infinitely good, but speaking reproachfully of this  
attribute

attribute of his nature. And, perhaps, the reflections which have been cast upon the benevolence of the Deity, from this cause, have been equally malignant with a total denial of it, and done as much disservice to the interest of true religion, and real virtue, in the world. A more shocking idea can scarce be given of the Deity, than that which represents him as arbitrarily dooming the greater part of the race of men to eternal misery. Was he wholly destitute of goodness, yea, positively malevolent in his nature, a worse representation could not be well made of him. And yet, this is the true import of the doctrine of absolute and unconditional reprobation, as it has been taught, even by those who profess faith in God as a benevolent, yea, an infinitely benevolent Being: But they could not have taught this doctrine, it would have been impossible, if they had not first entertained intirely wrong conceptions of benevolence, as attributed to the Deity. 'Tis indeed strange that any, who feel within themselves the working of kind affection, should give in to an opinion so reproachful to the Father of mercies. To be sure their ideas of goodness in God, if they have any, must be totally different from all the ideas we have of goodness, as we apply the term to ourselves, or any created intelligent agent whatsoever. And if their ideas are thus different, and may consequently signify the same thing with what we call cruelty in men, or any other creatures endowed with moral agency, they can really mean nothing when they say, that God is good: And it is of no importance, if not the least significancy, whether they call him good, or not.

From those, and such like causes, he that is good so far beyond all other beings, as that it may be justly said of him, in a comparative sense, he only is good, has been basely treated, either by objections against the existence of any principle of goodness in him, or by such representations of it as have tended to exhibit him, to the view of the world, rather an odious than a lovely being. An attempt therefore to remove away these objections, wipe off these aspersions, and set forth the benevolence of the Deity, in its true glory, will not be condemned as a thing needless.— This is the design of the present undertaking; and I have the rather entered upon it, as I am fully persuaded, that the knowledge of God, in his amiable beauty, as an infinitely benevolent being, will lay the best and surest foundation for that sincere esteem of him, and love to him, and trust and hope in him, in which consists the sum of true religion.

I shall offer what I have to say, in prosecution of this design, under the three following general heads.

I. I shall ascertain the sense in which I attribute perfect and absolute benevolence to the Deity.

II. I shall look into the natural and moral world, and endeavour to make it evident, from what is there to be seen, that this is the idea we are most obviously and fairly led to form of God.

III. I shall examine those appearances which may be alledged as objections against the supremely perfect benevolence of the Deity, and show that they are no ways inconsistent herewith.

And in discoursing to these points, I shall rather apply to men's understandings, than their imaginati-

## INTRODUCTION.

ons ; endeavouring to set what I have to say in the clearest, and strongest point of rational light, that I am able. And if I should now and then be led to speak of things abstruse in their nature, I hope, I shall give no just occasion for complaint, that I talk so as not to be understood. And if I should be really unintelligible to an attentive reader, tolerably versed in such matters, I am willing it should be attributed, not so much to the obscurity of the things themselves, as to my own confused conception of them. For it is with me a settled point, that any man may express that clearly and intelligibly, of which he has clear and distinct ideas in his own mind, unless he is either criminally negligent, or has some design to serve by covering himself with clouds and darkness.



PART I. *Explaining Benevolence as attributed*  
to the DEITY.

THE first thing necessary, in treating of *Divine Benevolence* is to ascertain the *sense* in which this *perfection* is ascribed to the *Deity*. In order whereto,

It may be proper to begin with fixing the *general* notion of goodness, as a *moral* attribute. And here we shall meet with no great difficulty. We have clear and distinct ideas of this moral quality. 'Tis as readily perceived by the mind as any sensible quality whatsoever, and as readily distinguished from all others.

'A principle disposing and prompting to the communication of happiness,' is the first idea that enters into its composition. As therefore *perceiving* beings only are capable of happiness, they only are the objects of goodness. Inanimate matter, 'tis true, in all its various forms, may *passively* be the occasion of happiness, to creatures that are either sensible, or intelligent. And, upon this account, it may be considered as an object, about which goodness may be employed, and by means of which it may be manifested: Though, being void of perception,

perception, it cannot itself immediately be the object of goodness, because an incapable subject of happiness. But whatever beings are endowed with *perception*, as they are hereby rendered capable of happiness, in an higher or lower degree, in proportion to their faculties, they are the proper objects of goodness: And goodness consists in 'a disposition to make them happy.'

'This disposition also must be exerted freely.' And hence it is that we don't attribute goodness, as a character, to the *brute creatures*. Not that they exist without kind propensions, or that happiness to others, in various kinds, is not the effect of their several exertions: But as these *insensitive* principles are thrown into exercise by a *mechanical impulse*, we look upon the *animals*, in whom they are implanted, as instruments only in the diffusion of good, not the *moral causes* of it. Communicated happiness must be the *chosen act* of some *agent*, otherwise we never consider it as a *moral quality*, and call it *commendable* goodness. Accordingly, the *good man*, is not a meer *passive instrument* in the bestowment of good: Neither do we call a man *good*, tho' he does good, if it be beside his intention, and by accident only. But he is the *good man*, and he only, who *voluntarily* acts for the benefit of others. His offices of kindness are the result of *free choice*; and for this reason we apply goodness to him, under the notion of a *moral virtue*.

This disposition must also be exerted with a truly benevolent design. We don't call that

man

man good, whose actions may be productive of good to others, if it was beside his intention in doing them : Much less will he deserve this character, if he did them with a view to serve himself only, not them. And, instead of benevolent, he will be quite the reverse, if, in the instances wherein he manifests goodness to others, his design is to entrap and ensnare them ; making use of that which has the appearance of intended kindness, as an enticement to lead them aside, and bring upon them some greater evil. A worse character can scarce be given a man. It is indeed the character of that Being, who, of all Beings, is the most malevolent.

In fine, ‘ this disposition must be exercised under the guidance of *reason*, and in consistency with *right* and *fit* conduct :’ Nor otherwise do we consider it as a *moral* perfection. If we look within, and reflect upon our perceptions, we shall find, that our idea of benevolence, as a *commendable* quality, is not a *single* disposition ; but a disposition exercised under the conduct of *intelligence*, and within the limits of *moral truth* and right. Conformably whereto, experience teaches us, that we do’nt expect, that the man, we call benevolent, should act for our advantage without thought, and at random : We should esteem such *blind* benevolence great weakness, and look upon the expressions of it as little better than so many instances of folly. Neither do we expect, that the benevolent man should do us kind offices, in contradiction to the known laws

laws of justice and truth. Such a display of goodness would make an odious appearance to our uncorrupted minds, and we should rather call it an instance of *vice*, than *virtue*. The truth is, whenever we speak of benevolence, as a moral character, we consider it as directed by *wisdom*, and exercised within the bounds of *right reason*: And the more wisely and justly it is conducted, and exercised, the higher do we rise in our estimation of it, as a *lovely* quality.

These are the ingredients that constitute the compleat *general* idea of *moral* goodness; which is the same, whether we apply it to *men*, or *angels*, or *any created intelligences* whatsoever; or even to the *Supreme Being* himself. Only, when we ascribe goodness to the *Deity*, we must remove away all defects, and conceive of it as *infinitely perfect*. Goodness in *men* is always mixed with frailty and imperfection. Even in *angels*, and the *highest order* of created moral agents, 'tis finite and defective. But as to the quality itself, 'tis the *same in kind*, in all intelligent moral Beings whatsoever. Every Being, in heaven and earth, to whom this attribute may be applied, partakes of the *same quality*, though not in the same *manner*, nor in the same *degree* and *proportion*.

Some, I am sensible, pretend, that the goodness, and other moral attributes of *God*, are not only different in *degree*, but in *kind* likewise, from moral qualities in the creatures: insomuch that the words goodness, justice, veracity, and the like

like, are no otherwise applicable to the *Deity*, than as they stand to signify some *unknown* qualities, answerable indeed (as they unintelligibly speak) to those dispositions in inferior moral agents; but yet, in their nature, altogether transcendent, and not to be conceived of by us. But this is certainly a most absurd notion. For, if when we apply the terms good, just, faithful, and the like to *God*, the qualities signified by these words, are applied to men, or other created intelligent agents, are not the qualities intended, but other *inconceivable* ones of a quite *different kind*, we really mean nothing when we say, that *God* is just, true, and faithful; but ascribe to him an *unknown* character. In which case, how can we make him the object of our adoration and worship? We must certainly, upon this supposition, worship him as an *unknown God*, if we worship him at all. The truth is, we must know what goodness, justice, and faithfulness, in *God*, are, or we shall unintelligibly apply these attributes to him; using words that have no meaning at all: And, without all doubt, we are capable of this knowledge. The moral attributes of the infinitely perfect Being, 'tis true, are *incomprehensible* by such narrow understandings as our's, and perhaps by the understandings of all creatures whatsoever. But this does not mean, that we know nothing at all about their *true nature*; but only that their *mode of existence, manner of exercise, and degree of perfection*, transcend our, and all other finite, capacities

cities. In this sense, the moral qualities of the *Deity* surpass all understanding; while yet, we have as positive, clear, and distinct ideas of their *real nature*, as of the nature of any qualities applicable to ourselves: Insomuch that we may, with all desirable certainty, argue from them, to the directing of our worship, forming our expectations; founding our hopes, and governing our conduct: Nor otherwise would religion be an *intelligible*, or *reasonable* service. I may add here, the opinion which makes moral qualities, in *God*, totally *different in kind*, from moral dispositions in men, and other inferior intelligent agents, is altogether *unintelligible*. We have no conceptions of different *kinds* of goodness, or justice, or veracity; tho' our ideas of a difference, in *degree*, between these qualities, are clear and distinct. Accordingly, nothing more common than to speak of goodness, and justice, and faithfulness, as qualities *more* or *less* excellent and perfect, in proportion to the *manner*, and *degree*, of their exercise. But we never severally distinguish these qualities into *kinds*, attributing *one kind* of goodness, or justice, or veracity, to these beings, and *another* to those. Nor indeed is there any foundation in truth for such a distinction. They are properties, in their nature, invariably one and the same, whatever subjects they are applied to, whether finite or infinite, *God* or man. And it would be grossly absurd to rank them severally into *sorts*, as truly so as if we should divide *roundness*, or *squareness* into *different*

*rent*

rent kinds of roundness or squareness. We properly distinguish these figures into *more perfect* or *less perfect*; and we have distinct ideas of such a difference: But of *different kinds* of roundness or squareness, we have no idea at all: And thus to distinguish them is a self-evident absurdity. The same is true of goodness, and all other moral qualities. They are invariably one and the same thing in *kind*, whatever beings they are applied to. They are incapable of a division into *different kinds*. We have not the least conception of such a difference; tho' we clearly understand what is meant, when they are distinguished as to their *degrees* of perfection; and *modes* of exercise. So that to ascribe goodness and justice, and the like, to *God*; and to say, at the same time, that these qualities, as applied to him, mean something wholly *different in kind* from what they mean, when attributed to inferior moral agents, is to talk in the dark, using words without any ideas: The tendency of which must be to destroy all real knowledge of the moral character of the Supreme Creator, and consequently all religion; for if we have no ideas of the moral attributes of *God*, we can have no foundation on which to build any rational religion, but must live as without *God* in the world.

It appears then, upon the whole, that the goodness of *God*, is the *same thing* with goodness in all other intelligent moral beings; allowing only a due difference in *degree* and *proportion*. So that if we remove from our ideas, even of a good

man, all frailties and defects, and add to it boundless perfection in *mode* and *degree*, we shall entertain just thoughts of the *Divine Benevolence*, and need not fear being led into a mistaken notion of this most glorious attribute of the Supreme Being.

But it may be worth while to be still more particular, and critical, in the application of the *general* idea of goodness to *God*, and in going over its several parts as thus applied.

‘A natural disposition then in the *Deity*, moving him to the communication of happiness,” is the first ingredient in the notion of goodness as attributed to him. When I speak of goodness as a *natural disposition* in the *Deity*, I would be understood to mean a *certain state of mind*, call it inclination, propension, disposition, or whatever else may be thought more proper, analogous to what is signified by a *benevolent disposition* in men; or any other created moral agents. Such a disposition we find within ourselves. ’Tis natural to us; one of the principles implanted in our original frame, and what we all partake of, in a less or greater degree. And some principle answerable hereto, I suppose inherent in the nature of the Supreme Being, and *necessary* in him, in the same sense that *intelligence* is a *natural* and *necessary* perfection: Inasmuch that we should as truly wrong him, to conceive of him without a benevolent, as without an intelligent principle: Only, the principle of benevolence in *God*, like that of intelligence, ought always to be considered as *infinitely perfect*, both as to its *mode* of existence,



existence, and *manner* and *degree* of operation : Nor should we allow ourselves to think of this disposition in the *Deity*, without removing out of our minds those weaknesses and imperfections, which attend the like dispositions in ourselves.

In order whereto, and to help us in forming the most just and honorable thoughts of benevolence, as a *disposition* in *God*, it may be proper to observe, that the two grand principles, in human nature, *self-love* and *benevolence*, the former determining us to *private*, the latter to *public*, good, are accompanied, each of them, with particular appetites and passions, severally adapted to promote the more effectual prosecution of these ends, as occasion may require : Nor should we have been so well qualified to pursue either our *own* good, or the good of *others*, had it not been for the implantation of these appetites and passions, which are fitted to hasten our exertments, and give them an additional force, answerable to the state and circumstances, we ourselves, or others, may be in. *Self-love* is a general, calm, dispassionate principle ; and would not, in a variety of cases, especially considering the slow progress we make in knowledge, and the weakness of it at best, have been sufficient, singly and alone, to put us upon seeking, or shunning, with requisite speed and vigor, the things necessary to our own preservation. And therefore the author of our beings has kindly and wisely provided against this defect, by the implantation of particular  
appetites

appetites and propensions, attended with uneasiness proper to rouse our attention, and call us forth to action. The same may be said of the general common principle of *Benevolence*. 'Tis calm and dispassionate: And tho' a strong and noble principle, yet, as planted in such imperfect beings as we are, might prove insufficient to put us upon those exertions, for the good of others, which their circumstances, in this present state, would render necessary. The *God* of Nature has therefore given us particular affections, apt to be excited upon proper occasions, and make us active in using our endeavours to contribute our part towards the production of *social* happiness. Thus, the helpless state of children, requiring the constant care and patience of others, in ministering to their wants, a strong affection is planted in the hearts of parents, disposing them both to do, and bear, almost any thing for their advantage: Nor without this *STORGE* is it conceivable, how they should so often deny themselves, and go through so much toil and labour, for the sake of their offspring: which yet their circumstances make absolutely necessary. In like manner, the dangers mankind are liable to, and the difficulties, sorrows, and distresses, they meet with, so often call for the sudden, vigorous exertment of some kind hand, that *pity* is an affection *God* has fixed in our nature: And to this it is owing, that we are so readily moved to activity, in proportion to the distress of the object presented to our view. Now,

Now, when we attribute *benevolence* to *God*, we must cautiously distinguish between the *general principle* itself, and those *particular affections* which accompany it in us men, and are attended with uneasiness, tho' wisely suited to the imperfection of our present state. They are easily and evidently distinguishable from each other. And, 'tis probable, there are orders of created beings, in whom they are in *fact* distinguished; the perfection of whose powers and state are such, as that they have no need of these additional excitements. Much more may this be supposed to be the case, with respect to the infinitely perfect cause of all existence. 'Tis common, it is true, in speaking of the *Deity*, to ascribe to him these passions and affections. Instances to this purpose are frequent, even in the sacred writings themselves. But such attributions are to be understood in a loose and figurative sense only. And we should always take care to separate from benevolence, when attributed to *God*, all the *modes* of it that are suited only to imperfect beings, in an imperfect state; as is the case with respect to us men. But as to the principle itself, considered without these *affections*, arguing weakness, and uneasiness, in the subjects of them, and heightened beyond all conceivable bounds, in *mode* and *degree*, I see not but it may, in a strict and proper sense, be attributed to the *Deity*; as containing nothing in it but what is worthy of him, and consistent with his character as an absolutely amiable and perfect being.

It is the opinion, I am well aware, of some great and learned men, that benevolence, as a *disposition*, inclination, or propension, ought not to be ascribed to the *Deity*. They allow indeed that benevolence, as a *disposition*, is planted in *man*; but say, that the *general principle* itself, together with the *particular affections* belonging to it, are designed only as *auxiliaries* in support of *reason*, which needed such help, in creatures so weak and imperfect as we are: But that, in *God*, whose understanding is infinite, and who perfectly sees all possible connections of ideas, and fitnesses and unfitnesses of actions arising therefrom, there can be no need of such an *additional aid*. And consequently, that we ought to conceive of him as giving existence, and happiness, to his creatures *solely* from the *fitness* and *reasonableness*, of the thing as an object of *intelligence*: And that it would reflect dishonour on him, to suppose him in the least excited hereto from any *natural state of mind*, call it temper, inclination, disposition, or by any other name, signifying the like idea.

The answer whereto is, that the *particular propensions*, belonging to benevolence in us, were undoubtedly planted in human nature (as has been observed) in consideration of the imperfection of our present state and powers: But that this is, by no means, the truth of the case, with respect to the *general principle* itself; which seems to have been a matter of such necessity, as that, if it had not been planted in our nature,

ture, our *reason*, tho' ever so perfect, would have been insufficient to put us upon exerting ourselves in pursuit of *social* happiness: Nor indeed could we have *reasonably* done it. And the same, perhaps, upon examination, will be found to be the real truth, with respect to the *Deity* likewise: Which, that we may clearly conceive of, let it be observed,

It is necessary, with respect to all beings whatsoever, that they have some *constitution* or *nature*; which nature must be previously supposed, and, in some measure, known, or it will be impossible to determine whether they are capable of action, or not: Or, if they are, what would be reasonable and fit action in them. As for example—It is by knowing the constitution of *man*, that he is formed with a capacity to receive pleasure; with a state of mind *inclining* him to pursue it, both for his own *private* good, and the good of *others*; with the powers of *intelligence* and *volition*, qualifying him to *discern* what will conduce to these ends, and to *will* the exertion of his endeavours for the accomplishment of them: I say, it is from our thus knowing the constitution of man, that we understand what is *fit* and *reasonable* conduct in him: Was he differently constituted, what is now reasonable and fit, might not be so: On the contrary, it might, as to him, be *unreasonable* and *unfit*.

Had man been formed with the powers of *intelligence* and *volition*, but without any capacity

capacity in his nature for the enjoyment of *happiness*, or any state of mind naturally *inclining* him to pursue it, as a valuable end; either with respect to *himself*, or *others*, of what use would *intelligence* or *volition* have been to him? Most certainly, upon this supposition, he could never have been excited to action, either with reference to himself; or others: Neither would there have been; as to him, any reasonableness or fitness in action of any kind.

Or if, in addition to the principles of intelligence and volition, he had had planted in his nature; a capacity for the perception of *happiness*, and *private affection*, inclining him to seek his *own interest*, as an ultimate end, he would; in this case, have been excited to action; but then, his actions would have wholly centred in *himself*: Nor could he have put forth his endeavours, in pursuit of *social happiness*, otherwise than as he might perceive a tendency, in such pursuit, to promote his *own*. This would have been his governing end; and every thing would have appeared (yea, and *really* would have been, as to him) reasonable, or unreasonable; fit, or unfit, as it stood connected with this end, and had a tendency in its nature to forward, or obstruct it.

But if, together with the powers of intelligence and volition, we suppose *social* as well as *private affection*, to have been implanted in him, *disposing* him to pursue the happiness of *others*, as well as his *own*, a proper foundation

is now laid in his nature for *benevolent* actions. He is as truly constituted for the pursuit of *social* as *private* good: And it is now easy to understand the meaning of *fitness*, when predicated of *benevolent* actions, and how it is eternally *reasonable*, from the *fitness* of the thing itself, for a being *so constituted* to seek the welfare of *others*, as well as his *own*: Nor is this language readily *intelligible*, upon any other supposition.

And this reasoning extends to all created beings whatsoever; and I see not but it equally takes place with respect to the *Supreme* Being himself. We must suppose him existing with some constitution or other; which constitution, as to him, being *self-existent*, must be looked upon as *necessary*, in the same sense that we call his existence itself necessary. And what constitution can be imagined more worthy of the *Deity*, or consentaneous to all the ideas we have of perfection, than that which supposes him to exist, not only with the powers of *intelligence* and *volition*, heightened in degree of perfection beyond all bounds; but with the principles also of *self-love*, and *benevolence*, heightened in like manner) disposing him to seek his *own*, and the happiness of *others*? Upon the previous supposition of such a *constitution of nature*, the conduct of the *Deity*, in creating the world, and giving being and happiness to so many creatures is *intelligible*: Otherwise, not very easily to be accounted for. It can indeed be scarce conceived, if the *Supreme* Being existed without any *natural state of*

*mind inclining* him to the communication of happiness, how he could have communicated it, or judged it reasonable to do so.

It will probably be said here, the communication of happiness is, in itself, a *fit, reasonable* thing : And the *Deity*, if supposed to be an *infinitely reasonable* being, must have seen a *fitness* and *reasonableness* in it, and accordingly have *willed* it. For, to a *perfectly reasonable* being, there cannot be a more suitable or effectual motive to action, than the *reasonableness* of the action itself.

The reply is, It is readily acknowledged, that to a *reasonable* being, the *reasonableness* of an action is a sufficient excitement to it, and the only one that is so : But then I add, that no reasonable being can be supposed to exist *merely* with the *principles of reason*, without any other ingredient in his nature. And if a *constitution of nature* is previously supposed, no action can have any *reasonableness* in it, but in consistency with this supposed nature. To apply this particularly to the *Deity*. If, when he is spoken of as a *reasonable* being, nothing more is meant than his *simply* existing with the powers of *intelligence* and *volition*, it does not appear how he could have *seen* any action to be *reasonable*, or chosen it as such. *Intelligence* and *volition*, considered *simply*, and as abstracted from all perception of happiness, and connection with it, in any view whatsoever, are really worthless powers, and can serve for no manner of use : And the case  
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would be the same, should we heighten them in *degree*, even to *infinity*. The being, possessed of them, could have no excitement to action, but would eternally exist indifferent to every thing. The *Deity* therefore must be supposed to exist with *sentiments of happiness*, and a *capacity* for it, in addition to the powers of intelligence and volition, together with a *natural state of mind* inclining him to pursue it, either with respect to *himself*, or *others*, or *both*: And according to the idea we frame of his *nature*, in these respects, so must our ideas be of *reasonable* action in him. If we suppose him existing with a *state of mind* disposing him to pursue happiness, with respect to *others*, as well as *himself*, 'tis now easy to understand the meaning of *fitness* of *benevolent* action in him; and how it would be *reasonable*, *eternally reasonable*, from the *fitness* of the thing, for him to communicate being and happiness: But if a *principle of benevolence* is not supposed to have place in the *Deity*, if he is to be conceived of as *naturally* destitute of all desire of the happiness of *others*, and as having no *inclination* to pursue it as a valuable end, how could he do it? What exciting reason could he have to do it? 'Tis true, he might, from his all-comprehensive understanding, perfectly know all the various ways in which creatures might be made, and constituted happy: But the desire of making them happy, not being supposed *natural* to him, this knowledge of his could have no tendency to put him upon acting for the procurement of  
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this end : Nor can it be supposed *fit* or *reasonable* that it should. For no conduct, in any being, is *fit* and *reasonable*, but what agrees with his *natural state*, and *powers*, not perverted. So far as he acts in consistency with his *nature*, he acts as it is *fit* and *reasonable* he should act : Not otherwise. *Reasonableness*, or *fitness* therefore, in benevolence, to a being who has no *disposition* to it in his *nature*, is *unintelligible* and absurd.

I shall only add, we can judge of the *benevolence* of the *Deity*, only from the ideas we have of benevolence in *ourselves* ; removing away all weaknesses, and adding infinite degrees of perfection. And, in this way of judging, we are directly led to conceive of this quality, as originating in some *state of mind*, analogous to that we call benevolent in ourselves. With respect to ourselves, 'tis found true, in fact and experience, that the *spring of social action* is *benevolence of temper* ; a disposition *natural* to us, tho' capable of being strengthened, and rendered still more perfect. And if we have any idea at all of *benevolence* in the *Deity*, it is the *same in kind*. The only difference is, that the *disposition* in him is originally and absolutely perfect, both in *mode*, and *degree*. ——— To proceed,

'This disposition in the *Deity* must be exerted *freely*'. Otherwise, it will be a *mechanical* principle, not a *moral* one ; which would destroy our idea of it as a *commendable* quality. Nor is there any inconsistency in saying, that this disposition *necessarily* inheres in the Divine mind as a *natural* principle,

principle, and yet that it is capable of being exerted *freely*. For thus it is, in fact, with respect to ourselves. Benevolence is a disposition planted in our nature, and exists *necessarily* there. What I mean is, we possess this turn of mind, disposition, or inclination, independently of our *own choice*; and yet, our exertions, in acts of beneficence, spring from *our wills*, which are determined *freely*, and not impelled by force. We feel it to be in our power, notwithstanding the *propension* in our nature, inclining us to benevolence, either to *will*, or *not will*; these or those beneficent acts. And accordingly, we neither esteem ourselves, or others, virtuous or praise worthy, otherwise than as our or their offices of kindness proceed from *free choice*.

There are, it is true, some particular propensions, in our nature, which have the appearance of being *mechanical*. Not only the inclinations themselves, but the exertments in consequence of them, seem to be, in a degree, *necessary*, as not resulting from any proper act of the will. Such is the *STORGE*, or *natural affection* of parents towards their offspring. And such is the affection of *pity*, which is a more universal propension, and common indeed, in a less or greater degree, to all mankind. These propensions seem to be of the *mechanical* kind, operating *necessarily*, and not from *choice*: At least, this appears to be the case, in some instances, and with respect to some persons. And if, instead of trusting the well-being of helpless children, and persons in imminent

ment distress, to the general, cool principle of benevolence, in such weak, imperfect creatures as we are, the *Deity* has planted this *propelling force* in our constitution, for the good of the world, which could not otherwise be so effectually provided for, it is no more than might be expected from his wisdom and goodness. But then, as *parental kindness*, and *pitiabie exertions* upon the view of miserable objects, are thus, in a measure, *mechanical*, we scarce allow the name of *virtuous* to them : To be sure, we never call them *virtuous*, only as there was room for *choice*, and in proportion as they sprang from the *free determination* of the mind. Nay, even with respect to the general principle of benevolence itself, there is no virtue in it, considered simply as a natural affection, nor in any of its exertions, otherwise than as they are *chosen acts* : And the more they are so, the higher do we rise in our opinion of them as truly excellent and virtuous.

And the same reasoning extends with equal force to the *Deity*. He is *morally* good, and we speak of him as such, because his exertions for the benefit of others are *chosen acts* ; tho', at the same time, they originate in a *natural* principle of benevolence. Such a principle *necessarily* inheres in him, i. e. independently of his *own choice* : And yet, his benevolent exertions, in all instances, and kinds, are perfectly *voluntary*, and so intirely depend on his *will*, as that they could not have been, if he had not *freely willed* that they should be. And 'tis this that gives us the  
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idea of benevolence in *God* as a *moral character*. If he was *necessarily* urged on to the bestowment of being and happiness, from the benevolent state of mind that is natural to him, there would be no value, *morally* speaking, in his communications of goodness: But as this disposition, though *necessarily* inhering in his nature, is yet *freely* exerted, he is justly looked upon as a *moral agent* in the good he dispenses, and therefore worthy of the highest love and gratitude. Nor is it at all more difficult to conceive how benevolence in the *Deity* should be a *necessary* disposition, and yet a *moral* perfection, than it is to conceive how *intelligence* or *volition* in him should be in one sense *necessary*, and in another *moral*. The *Deity necessarily* exists a being endowed with the principles of *intelligence* and *volition*; and yet, he *freely* exerts these principles: Nor otherwise would they be *moral* ones. The same may be said of his *benevolence*: He *necessarily* exists with this state of mind; and yet, he truly *wills* the communication of good, in all instances whatsoever. And this constitutes benevolence in him a *moral character*.

This disposition must be exerted also with a nobly benevolent intention, not with a secret, hidden view to make those miserable, and with increased aggravation, who are the objects of that which has the appearance of communicated goodness. Some there are, who, though they call the *Deity* benevolent, yet, represent him as making some of his creatures, and bestowing

Bestowing upon them riches of goodness with an express design, that they should misuse them, and by this means give occasion for the infliction of his wrath upon them, and in an enhanced measure, and this forever. Yea, there are those, who make the infinitely benevolent God the *grand and only efficient*, not only in the bestowment of good, but even in the abuse of it; and that he has so laid his plan, and connected a chain of causes, as that this abuse shall inviolably be brought into event, and on purpose that its final result should be the everlasting damnation of a great number of the creatures his hands have formed. Some late writers will not disown, that this is a just representation of their published sentiments. What their idea of benevolence is; I will not pretend to say; but this I will say, that it essentially differs from that moral quality, which goes by the name of benevolence among men; and it most certainly would, in any created intelligent moral agent be deemed, not merely malevolence, but malevolence in the highest degree. And to attribute such benevolence to the all-perfect Deity; would be to make him, not constructively and by distant consequence; but directly and in explicit terms, a more malevolent being, than even the evil one has ever been represented to be. For he is only a tempter to wickedness; but, according to this scheme, the infinitely good God is its *efficient*, its only *proper cause*, and in order to produce eternal misery

tery as its effect. Far be it from reasonable creatures to harbour in their breasts such dishonorable conceptions of the only good God! If he is possessed of that moral quality we call benevolence, he must, if we can form any idea of what benevolence means, in all the manifestations of it to his creatures, intend their good, without any secret reference to the contrary; in so much, that if they chuse that to their hurt, which was truly designed for their good, they themselves, and not the God that made them, and has been kind and good to them, are chargeable with the guilt and folly of their misconduct.

Finally, this disposition in the Deity must likewise be exerted 'under the *direction of intelligence*, and in *consistency with fit conduct*.' I say under the *direction of intelligence*, because otherwise it would be that *blind* sort of benevolence which is really of no worth, *morally speaking*. And I add, in *consistency with fitness of conduct*, because there is certainly such a thing as *unfitness*, as well as *fitness* of conduct, in the production of happiness. And the *latter* must be regarded by an infinitely wise and intelligent being: Nor otherwise would he act *reasonably*, whatever benevolence he might discover in his exertions.

Some may be ready to think, that the *will* of the Supreme Being is the only measure of *fitness*, in the communication of good; that what he *wills* is for that reason *fit*, and there is

no need of any other to make it so. But this is a great mistake. There is, beyond all doubt, a certain *fitness* and *unfitness* of conduct, in order to the production of good, antecedently to, and independently of, all will whatsoever, not excepting even the will of God himself. *Love* and *hatred*, *justice* and *injustice*, *truth* and *falsehood*, *hypocrisy* and *sincerity*, *gratitude* and *ingratitude*, are, in their natures, separate from all choice, *fitted* to the contrary purposes of *social good*, and *social evil*: Nor is it possible for any will, whether in heaven or earth, to alter their natures, or that *fitness* there is respectively in them to promote these ends. This may be more readily understood, perhaps, in an instance of some other kind. Circles and squares are *fitted*, each of them, from their very nature, to serve *different* purposes: Inasmuch that it would be preposterous and absurd to make use of a *circle* to answer the purposes, which are peculiarly fitted to the nature of a *square*, and vice versa: Nor could any *will* whatsoever make an alteration in the case. All intelligent beings capable of knowing the respective uses of these figures, must know that they are fitted to answer different purposes; for which reason, they could not *will*, without the supposition of absurdity, the employment of a *circle* for that use to which the nature of a *square* only is peculiarly *fitted*. And the same is equally true, with respect to those qualities we call *moral* and *immoral*. The making a number of creatures with

*malevolent*



*malevolent affection*, branching itself into the several modifications of *hatred*, *bitterness*, *wrath*, *malice*, and the like, is a method of conduct *unfit* in itself to promote their *common happiness*: Nor could it be constituted a *fit* method to attain this end, by any *will whatsoever*, not the will of the Supreme Sovereign himself. For *wrath*, *malice*, and *hatred*, are, in their natures, absolutely *unfit* to promote *social good*. And this is as self evidently true, as that *three and three* are *unfit* to make *seven*; and would be so, whether such creatures were brought into *actual existence*, or not; and must have been seen to be so by an eternal being, comprehending all the possible ways, wherein creatures might be made to exist: And, to such a being therefore, it must have appeared *unreasonable* and *unfit* to make creatures, with such a constitution, in order to such an end: And he must, accordingly, if wise, have refused to do it. In like manner, *falsehood*, *deceit*, *injustice*, *ingratitude*, and the like, are, independently of all will, *unfit* in their nature to produce *social happiness*, and must have been perceived to be so, by a being infinitely intelligent: Upon which account, he could not be supposed, without palpable absurdity, to make creatures, in order to their mutual and common good, with *natural dispositions* urging them on to those *unfitnesses* of action, with reference to this end. And I may add, neither can it be supposed, that the *Deity* should be himself *unjust*, *deceitful*, and the like, in order

der to promote the *common good* of his creatures, any more than that he should bring *them* into existence with dispositions to be so. For *injustice, falsehood, deceit*, and the whole train of acts we call *immoral*, are, in their nature, absolutely the same, whether we attribute them to *God*, or *man*; and so far from being *fit* to promote the *good* of the creation, that they would, if repeated without restraint, certainly bring about its ruin. And this must be known to a perfectly intelligent agent: For which reason, he would never in the methods of *injustice, deceit, and falsehood*, exert his benevolent disposition in order to effect the happiness of his creatures. It would be *unreasonable* in him to do so, and reflect dishonour on him, as not regarding the eternal *fitness* and *propriety* of action, in prosecuting his designs.

It may perhaps be thought reproachful to the *Deity* to have it said, that he cannot, by a sovereign act of his *will*, constitute *good, evil*; and *evil, good*. And it might, with as much reason, be looked upon as dishonorable to his infinite understanding, that it cannot make *truth, falsehood*; and *falsehood, truth*; For these are equally impossible. There is such a thing as *eternal* and *immutable truth*; And it reflects honor, not dishonor, on the infinite understanding, that it will, and must, perceive this to be truth. And it is, in like manner, *eternally* and *immutablely true*, that some actions are *fit*, and others *unfit*, in order to such an end: And it

is an honor, not a dishonor, to an infinitely perfect *will*, that it is limited, in its determinations, by the *fitness* of action. It is not a real lessening to the true *liberty* of the *will* of God, that he is thus confined, as it were, by the *fitnesses* of action, any more than it is to his *power*, that it does not extend to *impossibilities*.

And as there is *fitness* and *unfitness* of conduct, in order to the production of good, so is there likewise a *greater* fitness in one method of conduct than another, in order to promote this end. We know this to be the truth with respect to ourselves. And indeed one great use of our *reason* is to help us in cases of this nature, by pointing out that particular method of conduct, among a variety that may open to our view, which is best *fitted* to answer the end we have in pursuit. And the same is as true, with respect to the Supreme Being. There are, antecedently to all will and choice, some ways of acting better accommodated to answer the design of *common happiness* than others. And as he must be supposed to have, in his all-comprehensivemind, an intire view of all the ways, wherein it is possible happiness should be promoted, he must if he acts wisely, pitch upon that, which is the *fittest*, and *best adapted*, upon the whole, and all circumstances considered, to answer this design. And the reason here is the same, as in the case of *fit* and *unfit* methods of conduct. As the *former* is selected because *fit*, for the same reason, in general, that must be chosen which is the *fittest*, and will best answer the end. So

So that happiness, as communicated from the *Deity*, is, by no means, the effect of *mere inclination, blindly and boundlessly exerted*: Neither is it the result of *unaccountable will and pleasure*; pleasure not excited by the *eternal fitness and reasonableness* of action: No; but the exertions of the *Deity*, in benevolent acts, are all directed and governed by an unerring principle of wisdom and intelligence: Inasmuch that he cannot do a benevolent action, but within the limitations (if I may so speak) of reasonable and fit conduct. It is not possible (I mean *morally* so, in the sense in which we say, it is impossible for God to lie: It is not possible,) for him to dispense happiness in any other way. It would argue some defect in wisdom, or some depravity in disposition, which is inconsistent with the supposition of his being infinitely perfect and intelligent. No happiness therefore ought to be expected from the *Deity*, but what may result from *wise and fit* conduct: But I may properly add, all the happiness that can, in this way, be communicated, may fairly and reasonably be looked for.

The sum of what has been said concerning *benevolence*, as attributed to the *Deity*, is, that it supposes 'a *natural state of mind*, inclining him to the *communication* of good;' a state of mind analogous to *kind affection* in us men, only as *kind affection in us* is attended with frailty, *in him* it is absolutely perfect, both as to *mode* of existence, and *manner* of exercise: That, as he

exists a *free agent*, in the highest and most glorious sense, he is not *mechanically*, or *necessarily*, urged on, from this *natural disposition*, to the communication of good; but acts herein *voluntarily*, and of *choice*: And, in fine, that, as he is an infinitely *wise* and *intelligent*, as well as *free agent*, his exertions, in order to the production of good, are never *unfit*, never *unreasonable*, but always *fit*, *reasonable*, and *absolutely* and *perfectly* so. So that, in one word, *benevolence* in the *Deity* signifies precisely the same thing with “a disposition freely to communicate all the good that is consistent with *wise* and *fit* conduct:” For, supremely perfect benevolence of nature, being, in him, conjoined with an all-comprehending understanding, and unerring wisdom, he must know all the ways of producing happiness, and the *greatest* sum of it that can be wisely produced: And this therefore is the happiness that may reasonably be expected should be produced by him; that is to say, all the happiness to the *whole*, and every part of the creation, than can be, not in respect of *omnipotence*, considered as a *natural* power, but in the way of *fit* and *reasonable* conduct. What this comprehends, is not distinctly and fully known by creatures, formed with such narrow capacities as our’s: For which reason, in all perplexed cases (as to us there must necessarily be many) it becomes us to be *modest* and *cautious*; ever taking care that we do not rashly determine *that* to be inconsistent ‘with goodness, wisely and reasonably dispensed,’ which, in reality, may be

a good argument in proof of it, and would appear to us to be so, had we one intire view of the *whole case*, in all its connections and dependencies,

I should have now proceeded to look into the *constitution of nature*, and inquire whether we are not therefrom led into this conception of the *benevolence of the Deity*:—But I shall first dilate a little upon a few deductions, which seem too important to be wholly passed over in silence.

In the first place, it is obvious to deduce, from the explanation that has been given of benevolence as a *moral* quality, a just conception of the thing meant, when the Deity is spoken of as *infinitely* good. There may have been, in the minds of some, indistinct, if not wrong, apprehensions of what is signified by this adjunct. The application of it, if applied intelligibly, is not intended to suggest, that benevolence infinite in degree is displayed in every communication of goodness from the Deity. For it is evident to common sense, that these communications are various; some manifest goodness in one degree, others in another; and so on, with inconceivable diversity. Neither is it to be supposed, because God is *infinitely* benevolent, that he has in fact made an infinite manifestation of his goodness. This, perhaps, is impossible; and for this very good reason, because *infinity* in benevolence knows no bounds; but there is still room for more, and higher displays

displays of it. The true idea therefore of the epithet, *infinite*, when applied to God as benevolent, is, as I apprehend, plainly this ; that he has within himself a boundless source of benevolence, that he is so benevolent, in his nature, as that he may go on eternally making discoveries of his goodness, or, in other words, that this perfection of his is, strictly speaking, inexhaustible, not capable of being exerted to a *ne plus*. It is observable, we do not say that God is almighty, omnipotent, because he has exerted his power to the utmost ; for he may go on exerting it without end ; otherwise, he could not be said to be *infinite* in power. In the same sense God is *infinitely* benevolent. But then, as he is infinitely intelligent and wise, as well as benevolent, he never manifests either his power, or goodness, but under the guidance of intelligent wisdom. Whatever this directs to, he wills shall be ; and whatever he wills shall be, is actually brought into event. This points out the reason, and the true one, why God, though *infinitely* powerful and benevolent in his nature, is yet under a limitation as to the display of those attributes. He manifests no more power, or goodness, than unerring wisdom directs to : Nor could it be otherwise ; unless these perfections were to be manifested blindly, and at random ; the absurdity of which is too glaring to be supposed. This leads

To another obvious and important deduction, which is, that no communications of

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goodness may reasonably be looked for from the Deity, though infinitely benevolent, but such as fall in with what wisdom directs to, as fit and proper. We may please ourselves, and too often do, with vain expectations, taking rise from false ideas we have in our minds of infinite benevolence, as existing in the breast of God. But it ought to be remembered, and seriously considered, that the same Deity who is infinitely benevolent, is also infinitely intelligent, wise, just, and holy, and cannot therefore, unless with gross absurdity, be supposed to manifest his benevolence in any acts of goodness, but in harmony with those perfections, all which are equally essential ingredients in his nature. Many men are apt to imagine, that God is all goodness, and that they may hope for every thing from this attribute of his, without so much as once thinking how unreasonable, and unfit it would be in an infinitely intelligent, wise, and just being to make displays of his benevolence in any instances, or degrees, but under the guidance of wisdom, and in perfect consistency with rectitude. What are our sentiments of those good-natured, kindly affectioned men, who dispense their bounties, not with understanding and wisdom, but in a random way, without thought or consideration? We pity their weakness, and wish they had more discretion. And shall we attribute that to the all-perfect Deity, which we esteem a disgrace even in man! Benevolence, though infinite in  
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its source, or principle, must yet be limited, restrained, and governed in all its manifestations, by wisdom, equity, and justice, or it may, in the final result of its operations, do more hurt, than good; to be sure, it will not otherwise bring honor to the being possessed of it, if, at the same time, he is supposed to be endowed with intelligence and wisdom, in a sufficient degree, for his direction in the displays of his goodness.

Another deduction still, highly interesting and important, is, that intelligent moral beings have no just ground, from the infinite benevolence of God, to expect the enjoyment of that happiness they are made capable of, but in consequence of, or connection with, a wise and virtuous use of their implanted powers, under such advantages as they may be favored with. The reason is, because God, though he has within himself an infinite, never-failing spring of benevolence, yet will not suffer it to flow from him, in any instance or degree, but under the guidance of wisdom that cannot err. And can it be thought wise or fit, that moral agents, whether they are virtuous or vicious, without regard had to their respective opposite characters, should be indiscriminately treated as suitable objects of the Divine benevolence? How would such a conduct comport with the design of heaven in the bestowment of intellectual and moral powers? To what purpose were they given, if it was a matter of indifference, in relation to their being fit objects of  
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their Maker's kind notice, how they employed them? And how could even these moral beings themselves, entertain in their minds, becoming conceptions of the wisdom and rectitude of the Supreme Creator and Ruler, upon this plan of manifesting his benevolence? Besides, it may be justly questioned, whether moral agents can be made truly happy, but by a wise and right use of their implanted faculties. The goodness of God, under the direction of wisdom, has given them various faculties, and placed them within reach of objects fitted to yield them the enjoyment, they were formed capable of; but if they will seek for happiness in other ways, and not in this, which a good God has purposely adapted to give it to them, how should they be the subjects of it? It cannot be. There must be an agreement between faculties and objects, and a due application also of these faculties to their respective objects, or there can be no proper satisfaction. It is indeed impossible there should be, according to the present constituted way of enjoyment. The nature therefore of intellectual moral beings must be changed into some other, or they must, in a measure, act up to their character as possessing this nature; otherwise, they can no more enjoy the happiness proper to this kind of beings, than righteousness can have fellowship with unrighteousness, or light have communion with darkness."

I have hitherto considered this deduction only in general, as it respects all intelligent moral beings, in all worlds. But it may, with pertinency be applied more particularly to us men, as containing that in it which is well worthy of our most serious attention. We are formed by the God that made us, not only with animal, but intellectual and moral faculties ; in which view of our constitution, we have nothing to expect, in a way of favorable notice, from the Deity, though infinitely benevolent, but what is suited to the faculties, he has given us, and to be enjoyed only in connection with, or in consequence of, a due and proper use of them. Was benevolence in God a propensity in his nature, of the instinctive kind, blindly urging him on to a gratification of it, it might be done at any rate : But, far from this, it is a disposition inhering in an all-perfect mind, and that is inseparably conjoined with infinite knowledge and wisdom, and can therefore be never manifested *ad extra* but with reason, and in consistency with rectitude. And as we men are formed, not only with bodily appetites, but with intellectual and moral powers also, shall it be imagined, that such a being as God is should make us the objects of his benevolence, in any way but that, which is suitably adapted to the nature he has given us ? And if, instead of cultivating our superior powers, and exercising them in a due manner upon their proper objects, we neglect their improvement,

improvement, or, what is much worse, pervert them to the purposes of vice and folly, making use of them, not to answer the noble ends for which they were given us, but to invent and contrive ways for the more enlarged gratification of our inferior inclinations : I say, if, instead of acting up to our rank as men, we thus degrade ourselves into the class of brutes, what may we reasonably expect, but evil, rather than good, from even the infinitely good God ? It is owing to such characters as our's, that the creation has been marred and in so great a measure filled with disorder and confusion. And shall that Being, who is the righteous King and Judge, as well as Creator of men, make this kind of persons the special objects of his benevolent notice ? Is it not far more reasonable, and fit, and this, even, from a principle of benevolence, that he should recompense to them according to the evil of their doings ? As one expresses it much better than I can do,—  
 “ Because God is supremely good, therefore will he punish the obstinately vicious ; since to be indulgent to them, would be to encourage what must produce the greatest misery to the moral world. As certainly as God desires the welfare of his rational creatures, that is, as certainly as he is good, he will punish obstinate transgressors, and maintain the honor of his laws and government, nor suffer those to be trampled upon with impunity, until impiety, cruelty, injustice, intemperance, and brutal debauchery,

ty, become universal. No state of things can appear so evil, as this appears, to an infinitely wise and good Parent and Governour. He will therefore certainly take the methods proper to prevent it. And as punishing the perverse and obstinately wicked, according to their demerits, and with circumstances of terror, sufficient to restrain others from like practices, is a proper and necessary means to this end, obstinate sinners must expect such punishments; and to promise themselves impunity because God is good, is to hope that God will cease to be good to the *whole*, and to the *best deserving*, that he may be fatally indulgent to those who are not objects of his mercy." He goes on, in the following pathetic but infinitely reasonable exhortatory advice, "Give up then, presumptuous sinner, all thy deceitful hopes. As God hath made thee rational and free, thou canst not be happy, but by piety and goodness, by an imitation of the Deity, and in his presence and favor. As long as thou continuest wicked, thy temper incapacitates thee for the Divine favor, and for real happiness. God cannot shew mercy to such as thee, without letting in a deluge of wickedness, the greatest evil conceivable, on his moral creation. And to punish such is necessary to the welfare of the pious and virtuous, and of all who may become holy. Repent therefore immediately, and become qualified for mercy; otherwise, the unchangeable goodness of the Divine nature, instead of promising thee impunity,

punity, will insure thy destruction ; which will be the more dreadful, as proceeding from infinite goodness, and evidencing thy guilt to be so malignant, that even infinite clemency could not extend to thee."

It may with propriety be added here, that the Supreme Being himself, as he is an intelligent moral agent in absolute perfection, is infinitely happy from the delight he takes in always chusing, willing, and doing, and with perfect freedom, that which is right and fit. And as he has made us men with intellectual and moral powers, after the similitude of his own, though in a low degree, he has planted a capacity in our nature of being happy with the like kind of happiness, he himself exists in the enjoyment of. But then it should be remembered, we must be the subjects of this happiness in the same way that he is, that is, by a wise and fit use of our rational and moral faculties ; or, in other words, by so governing our elections, volitions, and consequent actions, as that they may be conformed, as nearly as may be, to the eternal rule of right. This is the way, and the only one, in which we can attain to the happiness that is suited to the nature of such beings as we are. Benignity of heart, probity of mind, conscious integrity, self-approbation, and a good hope of the approbation of our Maker, evidenced to us by an habitual, steady course of freely chusing and practising the things that are comely, 'just, pure, lovely, and of good report,' are the true  
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Source of the moral happiness we are formed capable of. We may, in consequence of the imperfection that is natural to us as creatures, from free choice, act below our character as men; walking in impiety, sensuality, unrighteousness, deceit, malignity, and the like vicious ways: But, instead of being adapted to yield us real, solid satisfaction, they powerfully tend to make us miserable; and misery will be the result of such a walk, according to the constitution of nature, unless counteracted by the Deity, which, to expect, would be the vainest thing in the world. Yea, it should seem impossible, that a rational moral being should be happy, whose choice, and consequent practice, are a contradiction to his reason, and a violation of the rule of right. It would be a subversion of that order, which is the establishment of a good God, that the happiness proper to an intelligent nature might, in this way, be attained to. If we would be happy, as beings of our rank in the scale of existence, we must act up to our character, and not as if we had no understanding, and there were no difference between us and the beast that perishes. The blessed God himself, as an intelligent moral being, is morally happy, and completely so: But how? By invariably choosing, and acting, so as to approve himself perfectly holy, just, faithful, and good, both in the internal disposition of his mind, and in all the manifestations he makes of himself to his creatures. We are made capable of the like

kind of happiness : But how shall we become the percipients of it ? By an imitation of God in benignity of temper and conduct, in purity, in righteousness, in charity, and in every thing that is amiable, and worthy of esteem. In this way God is happy ; and in this way we may be happy also : but in no other. If, according to our measure, we are perfect as God is perfect, holy as he is holy, just and true as he is, we may depend we shall never fail of being as happy, with a God-like happiness, as our nature will allow of. In this way, he has judged it wise and fit to make us happy ; nor has he given us the least reason to expect he will do it in any other, or to imagine it possible he should, in consistency with wisdom and rectitude.



## PART II.

*Proving, that the Deity is supremely and perfectly benevolent, in the sense that goodness, as a moral quality, has been explained to belong to him.*

SOME have endeavoured to prove, by metaphysical reasoning, that the Deity is perfectly and infinitely benevolent. And I see not, I must confess, but that may be offered in this way of reasoning which is strictly conclusive. We may be as sure, from the exercise of that power of discernment we are naturally endowed with, of the perfect benevolence of the Divine Being, as of his existence, or of any of the perfections we connect with it. The same intellectual power that assures us there must be an eternal self-existent Deity, assures us also, and in the same way, that he must be possessed, not of this or that perfection only, but of every perfection. For, having always existed without any exterior cause to limit his existence, either as to its nature, manner, or properties, there is, and must be, precisely the same reason to suppose him the subject of all perfections, as of any one in particular. Benevolence, therefore, supremely perfect benevolence, is as justly applicable to him as immensity, spirituality, omnipotence, or any of the Divine attributes, to which the epithet, *natural*, is commonly applied, to distinguish them from those

these that are called moral: Not that these terms of distinction import any difference between the perfections of God, in regard of their necessary co-eternal existence in the Divine Nature. They are rather intended to point out a difference in their kind only. The *natural* perfections of God are of *one sort*; his *moral* ones of *another*. The former are, in their very nature, different from the latter; upon which account they have been, as they reasonably might be, distinguished by different adjuncts. But they are all, without discrimination, *natural* properties. The Deity eternally existed in possession of them; and they are essential to his very being, and equally so: Inasmuch that he cannot be supposed to exist with the exception of one, any more than all of them. It may with as much reason and truth be affirmed of him, that he is by *nature* holy, just, and good, as that he is almighty, immense, omnipotent; and that he always was so, and always will be so, and that it is impossible he should exist otherwise.

But, as this method of arguing may appear to some abstruse, and not so well adapted to carry conviction with it, I shall leave it, and go to another that is more easy and familiar, and, it may be, at the same time, more strikingly conclusive.

By the things that are made, the eternal power and Godhead of the Creator may be, and are, clearly perceived by duly attentive minds,

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and the same may be said, and with equal truth, of his all-perfect benevolence. Do we attribute almighty power to God, from the effects of power he has produced? And shall we not conceive of him as perfectly benevolent, from the effects of his goodness we every where see in our world, and in all parts of the universe we have any knowledge of? How numberless are the creatures he has formed with capacities of enjoyment? How amazingly various are these capacities? What abundant provision has he made for filling them with the good that is suited to their respective natures? And how immense is the quantum of good enjoyed by them all, considered in one collective view? Every creature we cast our eyes upon, discovering pleasure in its existence, from the good it is made capable of enjoying, and actually does enjoy, is, at once, both an instance, and proof, of the Divine benevolence. How inconceivably is this evidence increased in its strength, when such multitudes of beings in the creation of God, the number of which no man can count, have been, through a long succession of ages, and still are, the percipients of his bountiful care, and munificent goodness! Can any one, in the sober exercise of his understanding, question, whether this is a clear proof of benevolence in the Deity? Especially, when there has been the display of such astonishing skill and contrivance in the formation of faculties, and the making and placing  
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objects within the reach of them, so admirably suited to yield them delight, and in ways and degrees beyond conception various. Who can help, in this view of things, breaking forth in some such words of admiration as those of pious David, "Theu, Lord, art good, and d'it good! Thy tender mercies are over all the works of thy hands!"

But, as it is a matter of no small importance, that we entertain in our minds lively conceptions of the benevolence of the Deity, I shall be particular and distinct in mentioning some of those effects of it, which must, unless we are greatly faulty in the use of our intellectual powers, oblige us to confess, that God is good, supremely and perfectly good.

Only, before I enter upon this argument, and in order to clear the way to it, I desire the following remarks may be previously well considered.

The *first* is, That this system of our's is not to be considered *fully*, and by *itself*, when we are arguing about the benevolence of the Deity. And for this plain reason, because there are *other* systems of beings, to whom *God* has made manifold stations of his goodness. If we may depend upon the *bible*, as a sacred book, there are certainly *other* beings, capable of happiness, and in actual possession of it, besides those which dwell on this earth. Nay, more than this, their capacities for happiness are *much larger*, than the capacities of any of the beings belonging to this system; and they actually en-  
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joy it, in a *much higher* degree. But if any should esteem this a consideration of little weight, I would add, there are so many globes visible to our sight, equally capable, with this globe we live upon, of containing inhabitants, furnished with sentiments of happiness, and means of obtaining it, that it is, without all doubt, the truth of *fact*, that they are filled with such inhabitants. With respect to our earth, we certainly know, that it has relation to *life and enjoyment*. It is indeed so constituted as to support in *being and happiness* innumerable animated creatures of various kinds. And why should the other globes, revolving in the same heavens, be looked upon as *meer dead matter*? We have infinitely greater reason, from what we see to be *fact*, in our own globe, to suppose that they also are so formed as to be subservient to the preservation of numberless *perceiving* beings, to the honor of the Creator's munificence. The all-powerful, and infinitely wise, God could as easily have modelled the other globes to the purposes of maintaining *life*, and rendering it comfortable, and happy, to millions of creatures, as he has done this: And the thought that he has actually so made and contrived the other globes, in the heavens, is perfectly analogous to what we behold of his goodness; with respect to our own system: It is indeed the most obvious and natural inference, from the consideration of him as *benevolent*, as well as powerful and wise Being.

If now we are naturally led, from *known appearances*, to argue, that there are *other* beings besides those on this globe; and that this globe, with all the animate and intelligent beings dwelling on it, is only *one* of the systems that has been produced by the infinitely benevolent cause of all things, the consequence is plain; viz. that this world of our's ought to be considered as only a *part* of some *great whole*, about which the *benevolence* of the *Deity* is employed. And in this view of the case, the *full discovery* of benevolence is not to be looked for, in our system *singly* and *separately*, but in them *all collectively* considered. And it would be injurious to the *Deity*, to complain of him for want of goodness, merely because the manifestation of it to our *particular* system, considered *singly*, and *apart from the rest*, is not so great as we may imagine it could be. It is no argument that the *Deity* is not *absolutely* good, because the *greatest communicable good* is not to be found in our world. Was our world indeed the *only one* in which there were perceiving beings, and we knew this to be *fact*, the argument might then carry weight with it. For, if the *Deity* was *absolutely* and *perfectly* good, our world, in this case, would be the proof of it, considered *simply in it-self*. But if there are other systems, they must be taken care of, and provided for, as well as our's: And no more happiness is required for our system, even from *infinitely perfect* benevolence, than is proper for a *part* of some *great whole*.

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And it is enough to illustrate the *real being* of an *absolutely perfect* principle of benevolence, if the displays of it towards our world, one of the constituent parts of this whole, are clearly discerned to contain *as much good* as can reasonably be supposed to fall to our share.

A *second* remark though not very foreign from the former, is, that, in arguing concerning the *Divine Benevolence*, we ought not to consider its *displays* as they affect *individual beings only*, but as they relate to the *particular system* of which they are parts. For, as all *particular systems* are, probably, related to some *universal one*, and, properly speaking, are so many *parts* constituting this *great whole*, designed, by the *Deity*, for the *full* manifestation of his *infinitely perfect* benevolence: In like manner, the several beings, in any *particular system*, are the *parts* constituting *that a particular whole*: And the Divine benevolence therefore, is to be estimated from its amount to *this whole*, and not its constituent *parts*, separately considered. These, it is true, must partake of good; but then, the good looked for ought to be no other than is proper to *parts*, bearing such a relation to such a *whole*.

To be sure, the only fair way of judging of the Divine benevolence, with respect to our world, is to consider it, not as displayed to *separate individuals*, but to the *whole system*, and to *these* as its constituent *parts*. For it is true in *fact*, that the *Deity* originally made, and

constantly governs, all the various kinds of beings, on this earth, and all the individuals in each of these kinds, with a *relative* view. He considers them not simply as so many *kinds* of beings, much less as so many *single individuals*, but as *parts* constituting such a *particular system* in the universe. We therefore find, that the *individuals* in every *kind* are wisely and variously related to each other; and not only so, but the *kinds themselves* are, in like manner, related to one another, so as to be *parts* properly fitted to fill up this *system*, and constitute it a *good particular whole*. And, accordingly, our ideas of the Creator, as *benevolent*, are to be fetched from the discoveries he has made of goodness to the system made up of these *parts*, and not to any of the *parts* as detached from the system to which they are related. And, in this way of judging of the infinitely benevolent *Deity*, no more good is to be expected from him, with respect to any *species* of beings, or any *individuals* in these species, than is reasonably consistent with the *good* of the *whole system*, of which they are *parts*. And, if there appears to be the manifestation of *so much* goodness towards them as might reasonably be expected for *such parts*, bearing such a relation to a *good whole*, it is all the goodness that can be expected from benevolence, though *infinite*, if, at the same time, it is *wise* and *reasonable*.



It will probably be said here, *infinite benevolence* is not to be restrained, by *constitutions* and *systems*, from doing all the good it possibly can to every individual capable subject of happiness; and that the *most good* ought to be produced, though it should be by *single unrelated* acts of benevolence. To which the answer is, that *infinite benevolence* will do *all the good it can*: But for any to suppose, that it may do *more good*, upon the *whole*, by *single unconnected* displays, than by *relative* ones, is only talking in the dark. For who can so much as guess at the *result* of such *unconnected* displays of goodness? It may be, in the nature of things, for aught any man living, knows to the contrary, *impossible* that so much happiness should be communicated in this way, as may be communicated in the way of acting that, in fact, takes place. And as the *Deity* has thought fit to display his goodness, not by *unrelated* acts, but such as are *connected* with some general *plan*, *constitution*, or *system*, this ought to be presumed to be the *fittest* and *most effectual* method for the communication of the *greatest good*, unless it can be fully and clearly proved, that it is not: And till then, if we would judge fairly and impartially of the Divine Benevolence, we must form our sentiments of it, not from its display to *individuals* *fairly considered*, but to the *systems* of which they are *parts*; looking for no more good to the *individuals* than is consistent with the place they bear in the constitution of the *whole*.

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Another remark is, That we must not judge of the *benevolence* of the *Deity* merely from the *actual good* we see produced, but should likewise take into consideration the *tendency of those general laws* conformably to which it is produced. The reason is, because the *tendency of these laws* may be *obstructed*, and *less good actually take place*, than they are naturally fitted to produce: In which case, it is no argument of *want* of goodness in the *Deity* that no *more good* was communicated; though it may be of *folly* in the creatures.

This I look upon to be the most important remark deserving previous consideration, in the present debate; and shall therefore be particular in explaining myself upon it. In order whereto let it be observed,

It is, in fact, true, that the *Deity* does not communicate either being or happiness to his creatures, at least on this earth, by an *immediate* act of power, but by concurring with an *established course of nature*. What I mean is, he brings creatures into existence, and makes them happy, by the *intervention of second causes*, operating, under his direction and influence, in a *fixed, regular, uniform* manner. They are all brought into being, and preserved in being, in this way: And not only so, but all the happiness they attain to the enjoyment of, is, in like manner, dependent on *general laws*, whose operation the *Deity* does not coun-

ter-act, but *concur*s with, in order to produce this effect. This is *universally* true of all the *animate* kinds on the earth: And it is particularly true of *men*, its only inhabitants that are endowed with *rational* and *moral* powers. They are brought into existence according to a *settled uniform course of nature*: And their existence, which, at first, is nothing more than a *variegated capacity for happiness*, is upheld by *stated laws*; and it is by *stated laws* still that this capacity, agreeably to its *diverse nature*, is opened and expanded, and gradually fitted for the happiness that is proper to it.

These are all unquestionable *facts*. And the consequence from them is another *fact* as indisputable, viz. that *less good* may be produced by the operation of these causes, than they *naturally tend* to produce, and actually would produce, if they were not obstructed in their operation. To illustrate my meaning by an example. It is by the *intervention of ourselves*, in a great measure, that we come to the enjoyment of that happiness our *implanted capacities tend to*. The good we are originally formed for is put very much into our *own power*; insomuch that we are *more or less* happy, in consequence of our own conduct. This is one of the *general laws*, according to which the *Deity* operates in the communication of good. And it so universally takes place, that he does not so much as uphold us in being, exclusively of *our own care*.

*care* in providing, and using, that sustenance, without which, according to *another law* of nature, we cannot be preserved in life. Neither does he open and enlarge our implanted faculties, or fill them with the good that is suited to them, but with the concurrence of *ourselves* : inasmuch that the increase, especially of our *mental* and *moral* capacities, is so far put into our own power, that it is, in a great measure, dependent on *ourselves*, whether they attain to any considerable degrees either of *perfection*, or *happiness*. And it is true, in experience, that a great part of mankind do not arrive to that *extent*, either of *perfection* or *happiness*, their original capacities would have allowed of, and they might have attained to, had they more wisely fallen in with the *tendency* of that *general law*, which makes their *perfection* and *happiness* so much dependent on *themselves*. They do not use their own powers, in order to their own good, as they might do ; and so come short of that *degree* of good, this *general law tended* to produce, and would actually have produced, had it not been their own fault. It is therefore owing to *themselves*, and not to the *Deity*, that they do not partake of good, in larger measures : And it would be a wrong to his *infinite benevolence* to judge of it *meerly* from the good they *actually* enjoy, without taking into consideration the *tendency* of *this*, among the other *general laws* by which he operates in displaying his goodness.

It will possibly be said here, infinite benevolence cannot be *confined to general laws*, in the communication of good: Or if general laws are expedient, it may reasonably be expected, that a perfectly benevolent being should *interpose*, as occasions may make it necessary, to prevent that mischief which might take place, if *general laws* were steadily and rigidly adhered to.

As to the first part of this objection, that infinite benevolence is not to be restrained, in its exertions, within the limits of general laws; it is more than we can pretend to affirm, upon any other foot than that of meer conjecture. For notwithstanding all that we can prove to the contrary, the method of communicating good by *general laws* may be the *fittest*: And the *Deity*, who is perfectly acquainted with all the methods in which it is possible, that good should be communicated, might see it to be the *fittest*; and, for that reason, select it from all others, as the only one in which he was determined to manifest his *infinite benevolence*. And indeed, we ourselves, weak as we are, can discern this to be the *fittest* and *best* method we are able to conceive of. For it is the alone foundation of all our rational exertions, whether of body or mind, separate from which they would be, in a manner, useless, as they could not be directed to any end. Did the *Deity* observe *no rule, no order, no stated course*, in his communications, what should we be able to make

of such a method of conduct? What beauty or harmony could we discover in it? What rules could we form from it to govern our own pursuits? Appearances that do not result from *established laws*, operating in a *stated, uniform* way, are absolutely unintelligible. For being, by supposition, *single, separate, independent* effects; nothing could be argued from them: They could not be ranged in *order*, so as to serve any valuable purpose; but must be perceived by every intelligent mind as a *loose, rude, unconnected* heap of irregularity and confusion. Those appearances only, which take place in a *uniform* way, according to *established laws*, are capable of being reduced to a certain rule, and so as to lay a proper foundation, either for science or *forefight*: Nor do any other seem to become the wisdom of an *infinitely intelligent* agent.

*Inconveniences*, it is true, may arise from this method of acting by *general laws*, in a *stated* way. And, perhaps, it is impossible, in the nature of things, that *general laws* should be so framed as *absolutely* to prevent *all irregularity*. But may not the same be said, of any other method of conduct that could be pitched upon, with equal truth? And for aught we can say to the contrary, there may be less danger of irregularities in *this*, than any other method whatsoever; at least, of irregularities that cannot be rectified in the *final issue* of things, so far as it can be done in consistency with wisdom and rectitude.

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The other branch of the objection is, that, if *general laws* should be thought expedient, it may however be expected, that an *infinitely benevolent* being would *interpose*, as occasion required, to prevent the mischief which would otherwise take place. In reply wheret, it may be observed, tho' *inconveniences* will probably arise, *for the present*, when *general laws* are stately kept to, yet it may be *possible*, as has been just hinted, that these inconveniences may be *remedied*, so far as it can be wisely done, in the final result of their operation: And if so, there can be no absolute need that they should, by *interpositions*, be prevented for the present. But was this *impossible*, who knows what would be the consequence of these desired *interpositions*? It is certain they would entirely *alter* the present method of communicating good: And will any man take upon him to determine, that *good upon the whole*, and not *evil*, would be the result of such an alteration? Possibly this method of communicating good by *general laws, uniformly adhered to*, is, in the nature of things, a better adapted one to produce the *greatest good*, than the other method by *interpositions continually repeated*. It is true, if by *interpositions* no other effect would follow than the prevention of the mischief they are introduced for, they might well be desired: And I see not indeed but they might reasonably be expected from an *infinitely benevolent* being. But it is certain, they would be followed with other effects; and I may add, bad

ones too, which might be more than a balance for the good it is intended they should produce. As thus :—They would render all *foreſight* abſolutely uncertain, and, in no meaſure, to be depended on ; they would put a final bar in the way of men's *aſtivity* and *iudſtry*, in the uſe of their various powers, whether bodily, or mental ; and, in ſhort, they would totally deſtroy the *whole buſineſs of life*, which is carried on, upon this ſuppoſition, that ſuch and ſuch actions will be followed with ſuch and ſuch conſequences, in virtue of thoſe *eſtabliſhed laws*, which *uniformly* take place in the world. No one indeed can ſo much as conjecture what theſe *interpoſitions* would finally iſſue in. If they did ſome good, they might poſſibly do more hurt. And for aught we know, they might, upon the whole, counter-act the very end for which they were introduced : That is to ſay, they might be the occaſion of an overbalance of *miſchief*. And if ſo, ſo the Deity, *not interpoſing*, in the manner pleaded for, is an inſtance of *goodneſs*, and not an argument in proof of the *want* of it.

The great thing more particularly aimed at, by theſe *interpoſitions*, is, the prevention of *moral evil* ; which has done ſo much hurt in the world. And could the Deity, in this way, have prevented the *abufe of moral powers*, without bringing on, at the ſame time, other conſequences, as truly fatal to the *happineſs* of *moral agents*, he would, no doubt, have done it.

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And his not doing it ought to be looked upon as a strong presumptive argument, that he could not, without the following of these bad effects ; unless it can be clearly shown, that no such effects would have followed thereupon. The entrance of *wickedness* into the world, it is readily owned, has done *vast mischief* : But will any man undertake to prove, that *less mischief* would have been done, if this had been prevented by the *interpositions* pleaded for ? Possibly, no *interpositions*, but such *over-bearing* ones as would have destroyed *moral agency*, would have *certainly* and *absolutely* prevented *moral evil* : And the destruction of *moral agency* would, I will venture to say, have at once destroyed the true and only foundation, on which the *greatest* and *most valuable* part of the happiness, that is communicable from the Deity, is built ; as any intelligent reader will easily perceive, by pursuing the thought in his own mind, and as we may have occasion largely to pursue it hereafter.

It appears then, upon the whole, that we have no just reason for complaint, that the Deity communicates good by *general laws*, whose operation he does not counter-act, but concurs with, in a *regular uniform* course. The main question therefore, in the present argument, is, whether *those laws* are as good as it might reasonably be expected they should be, if established by a *perfectly benevolent being* ? And this must be determined (the other previous remarks having had their due weight) by  
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the *tendency* of the laws themselves to the production of good, as well as by the good that is *actually* produced by them. These should be considered not *singly*, but in one conjunct view. The good *actually* produced ought to come into consideration, because it cannot well be supposed, that an *infinitely benevolent God* would have established any laws for the manifestation of his goodness, unless he had foreseen by his *infinite prescience* that it would hereby have been *eventually* and *actually* displayed: It should seem as though he would not have carried any plan into execution, but what would have had this effect. But then, the *tendency* of these laws ought to be considered likewise, because *this* might manifest *greater benevolence* than the good that is *actually* produced. The *laws* might be well adapted in their nature, and tendency, to effect *more* good than is *actually* accomplished: And that *more* good is not produced may be owing, not to any *defect* in the laws, but to a *misuse* of them by his creatures: for which *they* are answerable, and not the *Duty*.

And this is particularly worthy of consideration, with respect to our world; which is not in the state *now*, that *God* originally made it, but abounding with *evils*, introduced by *ourselves*, against the manifest *tendency* of those laws which he was pleased to establish, in order to effect its *greater good*, so far as it could reasonably and wisely be done. And that this end is not accomplished, is wholly chargeable to that *abuse*

of our faculties, whereby we have perverted the *tendency* of those laws, which would otherwise have operated to its taking effect. It is impossible therefore we should judge fairly of the *Creator's benevolence*, from a view only of our world, under its present *actual enjoyments*: But if we would form right sentiments of it, we must consider the *tendency* of the Divine scheme of operation, and what the state of the world would have been, if the *rational* and *moral* beings in it had acted up to the *laws of their nature*, and given them full scope to operate for the production of good. This will give us the idea of *good*, in some measure, answering the *plan* of it, in the Divine mind. Every other view of it, separate from this, will be either *partial*, or *false*, and fall short of exhibiting to us the true character of the *Deity* as *benevolent*.

The *last* remark, though not the least important, is, that, in judging of the Divine benevolence, we must carry our thoughts beyond the *present* to some *future* state of existence, and consider them as *connected* in the Divine *plan* of operation for good. Was *death* the entire destruction of all the *intelligent moral* beings that have existed, or will exist, on this earth, it would be *difficult*, I may say *impossible*, to entertain the thought, that the Creator was *benevolent*, in the sense we are pleading for. And one of the reasons, why some are so ready to call in question his *absolutely perfect* goodness, is their looking upon the *present* state, in an *independent*

*independent* view, and not as *inseparably conjoined* with some *future* one. And no wonder they are puzzled with difficulties, and find them selves unable to *reconcile* actual appearances with the idea of *infinite benevolence*. For if it should prove the real truth of the case, that the *present* state of things is nothing more than a *part* of the Divine plan carried into execution, and a part too that is related to *another* state, that will succeed in due time, it cannot be but that *present* appearances, considered independently of this connection, should be such as are not to be accounted for. It is no other than might reasonably be expected. And the only way to remove them, and judge impartially of the Divine Benevolence is to extend our thoughts to *another* state of existence, connecting the *present* with one *hereafter to come*, and considering both in one *conjunct* view.

And, possibly, there are no irregularities, in the *present* state, but are so taken care of, in some *future* one, as that they will finally prove an illustration of the *Deity's benevolence*. We are too short sighted to trace any irregularities, in the *present* state, through all their connections, either *here* or *hereafter*; and therefore cannot pretend to affirm, with any degree of probability, that they may not finally turn out a proof of benevolence, rather than an objection against it: Nor is there the least room for dispute, but that the *evils now suffered* may *hereafter* be repaid by an *over-balance of enjoyments*. And, in this way, the goodness of *God*, notwithstanding

notwithstanding the *present* intervening dark appearances, may gloriously shine forth, in the winding up of his scheme for the production of good.

And it is the rather proper, in arguing about the *Deity's benevolence*, to take into consideration *another state* of existence, because this is the thought we are most obviously led to, even from *present* appearances themselves; which carries, in their nature the evident marks, not of a *completed* plan of operation, but of one that is dependent on something *still to come* to render it *perfect*. Though there is enough visible, in the *present* state, to give us an idea of the Supreme Being, as prosecuting a *scheme for good*; yet there are, at the same time, plain discoveries that the scheme is but *begun*, that what we now see is only a part of it carried into execution, and that what is wanting to finish it, is to be looked for in some *future* state of existence. It is quite natural, from what we know of the *present* state, to look upon it as only *introductory to another*, and *preparatory for it*. *Present appearances* are fitted to give us this idea of it. They are such as well suit a *probation-state*, one that is intended to train us up for some *future one*, that will take place in due time. Whereas, if we consider these *appearances*, without any connection with *futurity*, and as designed to exhibit an *entire view* of the Divine plan, with respect to this world, we shall needlessly run ourselves into perplexity, and unavoidably think more dishonorably of the  
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*Deity*, than we have any occasion to do. For, so far as we are able to judge, *present appearances*, if they completed the scheme of God, are not so perfectly adjusted as it might reasonably be thought they would, by such a being as we can demonstrate God to be. And, without the supposition of a *future state*, perhaps it is impossible, in the nature of things, that such creatures as we are, in such a world as this, should be *universally* treated by the *Deity*, at all times, and in all cases, as it is eternally *fit* and *just* that we should be. And if this should be the truth, as I am confident no one can prove it is not, it may be *necessary*, in the nature of things, that the *Divine scheme*, with reference to this system, in order to its being *perfect*, should extend to *another state*, and not be confined to this.

Having briefly mentioned these previous remarks, the way is now clear to the *main point*, which is to make it evident, that the *appearances of good*, in our world, are such as fairly lead us to conceive of the Supreme Creator as *absolutely* and *perfectly benevolent*. I do not mean, that the *present actual amount* of these appearances is *so much good* as will answer to the idea of *infinitely perfect benevolence*: But what I intend is, that they arise from *such laws*, and are so *circumstanced* and *related*, as that, in this view of them (as has been explained above) we may clearly and fully argue, that the original author of them is *supremely* and *infinitely good*.

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I have it not in my view, here, minutely to consider *all the effects* of benevolence apparent in the constitution, and government of this world of our's. This would be beyond the reach of my ability, and a *needleless* labor. It will be a sufficient enforcement of the present argument, if *so much* is said as to make it plain, that *all the good*, suitable for *such a system as this*, is apparently the *tendency of nature*, and the *Divine administration*; and that it *actually* prevails so far as *this tendency* is not *perverted* by the creatures themselves, whom God has made; for which *he* is not answerable, as has been hinted already, and will be more fully shown hereafter.

The way in which I shall endeavour to illustrate this important subject shall be, by giving, in the first place, some *general* touches on the *visible frame of inanimate nature*; then by taking some *transient* notice of the *inferior creatures* made capable of happiness; and finally by viewing more *critically* and *fully* the *intelligent moral* beings, in this world, towards whom the Divine goodness has been displayed, in the *largest* measures.

We shall begin our illustration of the present argument, with some *general* touches on the *visible frame of inanimate nature*, and the *purposes of goodness* to which it is subservient. Not that goodness is communicable to *inanimate matter*. Neither the *sun*, nor *moon*, nor *earth*,

to which they are related, are *themselves* capable recipients of good. The *sensitive* and *intelligent* beings, in these globes, are the *only objects* of benevolence. But yet, the *globes themselves* may well be considered as illustrations of this noble quality, if it be found that they are constituted so as to be *passively instrumental* in occasioning good to numberless beings, formed with capacities for enjoyment. And this is the real truth.

An illustrious instance of it we have in the *sun*, whose constituent parts, magnitude, and situation in the heavens, are admirably accommodated to the design of conveying *light* and *heat*, in the most suitable proportions, to this *earth*; without which it would have been an unfit habitation for any of those *animated*, and *intelligent* beings, who now exist happy on it. And it is an additional display of goodness, as well as wisdom, in the *Creator*, that he has, by the earth's *annual* and *daily* revolutions, so conveniently distributed these blessings; causing the vicissitudes of *day* and *night*, *seed time* and *harvest*, *summer* and *winter*. It is true, all parts of the earth are not, by this means, *equally* favoured with *light* and *heat*: Neither was it possible that they should. But yet, the kindness of the *Deity* has adjusted this *inconvenience*, as well as the nature of things would permit. For, on the one hand, he has guarded the earth against the mischiefs of *frost*, in those parts where there is a *defect* of *heat*, by providing for



It a covering of *snow*, that, instead of lessening, *improves* its fertile capacity, which capacity he has also wisely adapted to such productions as require a *less degree* of heat to bring them to maturity; hereby providing for the support of *life*, even in these places; which he has likewise taken care to render *comfortable* both to the *rational*, and *meerly animal* subjects of it: To the *former*, by a growth of *wood*, in vast plenty, furnishing them with fuel to keep them warm; and to the *latter*, by a natural increase of furr upon their skins, in those seasons when it is needed as a defence against the severities of the cold. On the other hand, he has contrived refreshing breezes, where the earth and its inhabitants are exposed to the *direct rays* of the sun; which commonly increase as *that* ascends, whereby the heat is so corrected, as that they are both preserved from suffering by its violence. Besides which, he has fitted the earth's *fertility*, in these parts, to this proportion of heat: insonuch that its productions, in certain kinds, are abundant for the supply both of *animal* and *intelligent* life. And wherein could the *Deity* have made the *sun* more serviceable to our world? It is not conceivable, how he should, in this respect, have given a more full and ample discovery of his benevolence.

*Our globe* is another instance, manifesting the riches of the Divine goodness, as well as wisdom. For though it is, itself, incapable of good, yet it is wonderfully adjusted to occasion good

to innumerable creatures capable of it, by its disposition into *seas*, *dry-land*, and *air* encompassing it about, all accurately corresponding with each other. Had the surface of this globe been all *dry-land*, none of those *animated kinds*, in their numberless *individuals*, could have had existence, whose proper element is *water*; and who are fitted, by a suitable organization of parts, to live in it, exerting themselves, and moving about, with ease and pleasure: And consequently there would have been a *less* manifestation of good, than there *might* have been, because a *greater*, by this method, is now *actually* seen. Besides, if there had been no *seas*, there could have been no rains, without which the *dry-land* must have been useless to the purposes of *vegetation*; and then *animal life* would have wanted a support, at least, in the present way.—Or, had the earth been universally covered over with *water*, none of those creatures, on the other hand, could have had existence, whether *rational* or *meerly animal*, who are fitted, by their make, for a dwelling on the *dry-land*: Neither could there have been those infinitely various productions for *necessity*, *convenience*, and *delight*, which are now so many evidences of the Creator's bounty.—And it is beyond man to imagine a better contrivance for good, than the *air* that surrounds our earth. It is this that makes way for the transmission of light, without which the faculty of seeing, in all animals, would have been useless: It is this that provides for  
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the ease and freedom of motion upon the earth, without which life itself had been bestowed to little purpose : It is this that communicates sound, without which we could not have conveyed our thoughts to one another, by the help of speech ; not to say any thing of the pleasure, in various kinds, which results from the harmony there is between one sound and another : It is this that gives rise to the *wind*, which mixes and tempers the exhalations interspersed in the atmosphere, corrects the heat in hotter climates, and carries the clouds, from place to place, to distill the rain that is needed : And, in a word, it is this that preserves life, by the power of *breathing*, in all creatures, from the highest to the lowest : And to this it is also owing that so many classes of creatures, by the help of suitable organs, are able to wing their way through the regions above, ascending to the tops of mountains, and tall trees, where they find both nourishment and shelter.—The proper reflection from all which is, that the *benevolent Deity* could not have better adapted *inanimate nature* for the diffusion of good. It is visible wherever we cast our eyes. Neither *earth*, nor *sea*, nor *air*, are empty of *living inhabitants* ; but they are all filled with them ; and provision, at the same time, made both for their support and comfort.

The *disposition of material nature*, I know, has been objected to, and complaints made, because its parts were not better adjusted. But the more

more accurately these complaints have been examined, the more groundless they have always appeared. Is it complained, that there are *too wide seas*? It has been made evident, by the best observations, that the proportion between the *sea* and *dry-land* could not have been settled with greater exactness, for the supply of that mixture which is necessary to render the earth fruitful. Is it complained, that the water in the sea is *salt*? This was a necessary quality to keep it from *putrefaction*. And besides, it loses this quality, before the exhalations from it fall in rain, or, by being condensed on the tops of mountains, are formed into springs whether for the service of the earth it self, or the creatures that are on it. Is it complained, that the surface of the earth is too unequal? Some inequality was absolutely requisite in order to guard against inundations from the *sea*: Nor is that inequality *useless* which makes even the highest mountains; for these are the sources of springs, to the great benefit of all living creatures: And, in their bowels, are contained those *minerals* and *metals*, which are so advantageous to mankind. In a word, there is nothing in the *order* or *disposition* of the parts of this earth that can justly be complained of; as is evident from this, that, if we do but make an alteration in our thoughts, and pursue it in its consequences, we shall soon see our own folly. There is not indeed any part of *inanimate nature* but what serves to shew forth the Crea-

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God's goodness, by that variety of uses it is accurately fitted to serve, some of which we are acquainted with, though the infinite number of them, the wisest philosophers have not been yet able to investigate, and it may be never will: But yet, the more closely they view the constitution of the world, the more reason they continually find for surprize at the riches of *goodness*, as well as *wisdom*, therein so clearly shining forth.

We go on, in the next place, to take a transient view of the *animal* world, in which I include *all* the creatures, on this earth, endowed with *perception* and *life*, mankind only excepted. And I thus distinguish them from mankind, calling them *animal*, not because I suppose they exist without some *superior principle* of the *same kind* with the *highest principle* in *men*; but because, if they do possess such a principle, it is in *so low a degree* as to render it improper to rank them with *intelligent*, much more with *moral* beings, as *men* are. But whether they have minds, or not, they are *capable objects of goodness*; and the *Deity* has accordingly contrived, in the *best manner*, to make the displays of it towards them.

One signal instance whereof is, his distributing their *animal life* into *so many different sorts*. Herein the order of the *material* world is consulted, and one uniform design of good evidently carried on. And, by this means also, the wisest and best method has been taken for the *fullest* manifestation

tation of *animal* good. For no one *species* of *animated* beings could have supplied the place of *various* species, so as to have made way for an *equally large* discovery of benevolence. It is only among *different kinds* of animals, constituted *variously* capable of happiness, that *all the happiness* meer animals may be formed to enjoy, is to be looked for. This we find to be the truth of fact. And it is by this method likewise, that *chafms* are prevented, and the creation *filled* with being and happiness. These inferior kinds are so many well adjusted parts in the chain of existence: And, perhaps, this system could, in no other way, have been constituted so *full and coherent a whole*.

Another instance illustrating the *Deity's goodness* is, the care he has taken, notwithstanding this *disposition* of animals into such *various kinds*, so to provide for them *all*, as that they are *severally* capable of attaining the happiness that is *proper* for them. It is accordingly true of them all, in all their various classes, that they have organs fitted to give them *pleasing sensations*; and their implanted *instincts* are wisely adapted to their respective natures, severally determining them to that which is suitable for their preservation and happiness: Besides which, they are not only endowed with the power of *propagating their kind*, but favoured with such a *con- texture of body*, or furnished with such *instruments of defence*, with a *natural sagacity* to use them, as are admirably fitted to guard them  
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against the injuries, to which they are more peculiarly exposed. And, in consequence of this provision, the *general tendency* of their nature is to *good*: And they actually enjoy a great *over-balance* of it. So far as we are acquainted with them, instead of going on heavily with life, they give plain indications that it is comfortable and pleasant to them. And, from what we know of our own *animal* frame, so analogous, in many respects, to their's, we have sufficient reason to believe, that life, under the circumstances in which they hold it, is accompanied with many gratifications rendering it infinitely preferable to *non-existence*.

Nor does it argue any want of goodness in the *Deity*, that they are not *all equally happy*, or that they none of them enjoy that *degree* of happiness which is common to other beings of a *superior order*. It is enough to the purpose of the present argument, if *so much happiness* is allotted to them, as is proper to creatures in their *state*, and filling up *such a place* in the scale of beings. This is all that can be reasonably looked for, in order to a *perfect display* of the Creator's benevolence.

Neither are the *inconveniences* they may *naturally* be liable to, an *objection* of any weight. For as their structure is *material*, (at least so far as it is so) they are, from their very *make*, subjected to the same *general laws* which take place in the *material* world. And it might be an *impossibility* that they should be so framed as not to

be liable to inconveniences. And *unavoidable* inconveniences are not to be mentioned, as *inconsistencies* with the *most perfect* benevolence; unless it can first be proved, that no system ought to be made, nor laws established, but what are *absolutely* freed from them: Which perhaps may not be the case, with respect to any system, in the whole circle of existing nature.

It is a still further manifestation of the Creator's goodness towards these *inferior kinds*, that he has contrived to make them, in some measure, *useful to one another*. Perhaps, they are so classed into sorts, as that they not only fill up the creation, but, at the same time, do it so as to be, in the best manner, conducive to the *good* of each other. There may be an established *general relation* between all the species of inferior creatures, in consequence of which the *particular interests* of the several kinds; instead of *interfering*, are mutually subservient to each other. This is undoubtedly the truth of fact, in many instances. Several of the *lower kinds* are serviceable to the *superior*: And it looks as though they were purposely placed in such a *subordination* to this end. Nay, some of the *highest* animal species are, in like manner, useful to *mankind*: And they seem to have had this degree of *subordination* assigned them for this very purpose. And there may be a *certain order* running through the whole animal world, tending to render all the *various kinds* as serviceable to one another, as the nature of things would permit. There



There is certainly a *bond of union* established between the *individuals of every species*. As they have some instincts determining them to their *own private good*, so have they others that unite them to their *respective kinds*. They dislike solitude and discover pleasure in the company of each other. Some live together in flocks, seem uneasy when separated, and will run ventures that they may get *associated* with their species. And there is universally a *strong affection* in the *females* towards their *young*. They are urged on by their natural *STORGE*, not only to exert themselves in providing for their sustenance, but in securing them against danger. They will risque their own ease, and engage in combats for the sake of their young; exposing themselves to greater extremities on *their account*, than their own. Even the most *savage* animals are *affectionate* to their *offspring*; and will take care of them with all desirable tenderness.

It is readily acknowledged, the *instincts* by which *individuals* are attached to their own kinds are not so strong, but that they may be *mischievous* to one another; and the *relation* between the *several species* may be still more loose, inasmuch that it may seem as though *some kinds* were rather *destructive*, than *beneficial*, to other kinds. But this notwithstanding, *individuals* may exist with respect to their *own kinds*, and the *several kinds* with respect to *each other*, in the best manner it was *possible* they should, in order to their conspiring, as *parts*, to promote the

the *common* happiness. And if some instances of a contrary aspect, to such short-sighted creatures as we are, could be mentioned, it ought to be esteemed a *counter-balance* to what is *generally* the general tenancy of the *animal constitution*. It becomes us, in such cases, to take care how we rashly censure the *benevolent Deity*; especially, if it be considered, that *cetacea instances* may have the *appearance* of *evil*, to our imperfect view; while yet, in their connection, they may be *good*. And as *good* is so apparently the *general tenancy*, we have sufficient reason, from hence, to think that this is the *real truth*, with respect to these *special instances*; unless we could clearly prove the contrary. In order wherefore,

It is pleaded, I know, that some *animal kinds live on others*, to the entire destruction of their *being* and *happiness*. But this notwithstanding, they may, in the wisest manner, be *useful* to one another; and even this very *objection* may be a strong evidence of it. It is true, the *destruction of life* will follow, if some animals are *food* to others. But it may be true also, that there could not have been *so much* life, and consequently happiness, in the creation, had it not been for this expedient. Perhaps, *so many kinds* of creatures as now exist, and it was necessary should exist in order to fill up this system, could not, in any other *established way*, have been *supported in being*. And if it was necessary, as we cannot say it was not, in order to the *maintenance*

*renance of life*, in such a *variety* of kinds, that it should be upheld, by a *succession* of individuals in each kind, and not by the *continued existence* of the *same* individuals, we are, at once, let into the *wisdom* and *goodness*, not only of the *general law* subjecting all animals to *death*; but of that *more limited* one also, according to which *some species live upon others*. The scheme, in this view of it, is certainly intended for *good*: And *more good*, upon the whole, may be communicated in *this*, than any other way. And therefore it is so far from arguing a *defect* of benevolence in the *Deity*, that it is a strong illustration of it. Besides, we know not the *intire plan* of heaven, with reference to the *animal world*. Perhaps, their *present* existence is only an introduction to something further. It may possibly be the *first* stage of their being, and a *step* to some *other* state, this may be previously necessary to fit them for. And as we are able to see but a little way into the design of the *Deity*, with respect to these *inferior* creatures; and yet, are at no loss, from what we do see, certainly to determine that it is a design *tending to good*: instead of complaining that it is not a *better contrived scheme*, we have reason rather to look upon it as the *best in its kind*, and to believe that it will turn out so, in the final result of its operation.—

To proceed,

The most important head of argument, in the present debate, is the *constitution* and *government* of the *intellectual* and *moral* world; by which

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I mean *ourselves*, the *highest order* of beings it has pleased *God* to place on this earth, and that order towards which he has made the *largest* displays of his benevolence.

And there is one thing *peculiar* in our *constitution* which it may be proper to give a *general touch* upon, before we come to *particulars*. What I speak of as thus *peculiar*, and worthy of notice, is our *compound make*; in consequence of which we are partly *animal*, and partly *rational*, being allied both to the *highest*, and the *lowest* orders of beings in the universe. And the giving us *this constitution* is an illustrious instance of the Divine goodness, and naturally leads us to conceive of the *Deity* as *absolutely* and *perfectly* benevolent.

It may indeed seem, at first view, as though there was an argument rather proving the *imperfection* than *perfection* of the *Deity's benevolence*. But it is far otherwise. For it is by means of this *compound make*, that *inanimate nature* is not only enjoyed but *perceived* to have *beauty* and *order*, and to be a contrivance worthy of the Supreme Creator. The *inferior kinds* are variously capable of a *lower* sort of happiness, from their relation to, and situation in, this material world: But this is all. Being destitute of *reason*, at least in any considerable measure, *sensitive enjoyment* is the *highest* they can attain to. It is the union of *reason* and *sense*, in such a *superior* degree, that enables us *men*, at the same time that we enjoy *sensitive* good, in common with the *inferior*

*ferior* creatures, to discern the wisdom, and power, and benevolence, of the *Deity*, herein displayed. And it is from hence also, that we become capable of that *more noble* happiness, which is the result of the exercise of *reason* upon the *order* of the *material* world, and the adjustment of bodily organs thereto, so as to occasion so much *sensitive* pleasure. In a word, if there had not been some order of beings, like us, of a *compound* make, who were, at once, qualified for enjoyment from this *material* world, and for *perceiving*, in some measure, the connections and dependencies by means whereof this is accomplished: I say, if there had not been some such order of creatures, this *material* world must have been *comparatively* lost. No honor would, in an *active* way, have been reflected on the *Deity*; and little, very little, of that happiness would have been enjoyed, which there is now a proper foundation laid for, according to the established course and order of nature. So that *such a constitution* as our's seems to have been necessary in order to a *complete* display of that *good*, this *material* world was fitted to produce: And it looks as though it was *principally* made with a view to us *men*, and that the *inferior* creatures, in their *various kinds*, were formed for the prevention of *needless voids*, and to *fill up* this system: To which purpose they are admirably fitted, as, by their gradual and insensible subordination, they make it the *best coherent whole*, in its kind.

It is not pleaded, that we are, by this *compound* make, the *most perfect* beings that can be brought into existence : Neither is this necessary in order to the *most perfect* display of benevolence. It is sufficient, if by this make, we are fitted for the world to which we are more especially related, and rendered capable of *as much happiness* as is proper for beings in our *situation*, and bearing *such a part* in the *general plan* for the manifestation of good.

Neither is it pretended, that this *compound* constitution is not liable to *inconveniences*. For, so far as we are *material*, be the matter of which we are made what it will, or our bodily organization what it will, we must of course be subject to those *laws*, by which the *material* world we are related to, is governed. And, if some *inconveniences* should arise herefrom, it ought to be attributed, not to *want* of *goodness* in the *Deity*, but to *necessity* in the nature of things : especially if it appears, that he has, in the best conceivable manner, taken care to prevent these *inconveniences* ; as we shall presently see that he has.

And so I proceed to a *distinct* consideration of *both parts* of our frame, in order the more fully to illustrate the *Divine benevolence* from its displays towards *us*, the *highest* order of beings in this system.

Our *lower part* first presents itself to view : As to which, we are allied to the *inferior* kinds, and partake, in common, with them, of a *bodily organization*, rendering us capable of pleasure ;

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in various ways: Though we are highly set above them, even with respect to this our *animal* part. Its exterior form has greatly the *pre-eminence*; as bearing the evident marks of superior beauty and majesty. And the same may be said of its several *members*; which are fitted for a much greater diversity of useful exertions. Besides, it is endowed with some powers, which they are destitute of: Such is the power of speech; and such are the powers of *perceiving beauty and harmony* in the objects of *sight* and of *hearing*: All which are rich sources of *good*, and administer unspeakably to the *benefit*, and *delight*, of life. The advantage, it is true, would, in some respects, have been on the side of the creatures *below* us, had not the union of *reason* with *sense*, in our constitution, turned the scale in our favour. They have a quicker sagacity, with respect to the things which belong to their preservation and safety. They surpass us, at least many of them, in the natural firmness of their make, whereby they are better fitted to endure hardships. They can more easily provide themselves with the means of subsistence, not being called to that labor and pains, which nature has made necessary for us. And they sooner come to an ability to shift for themselves. And this *disposition* of things is just as it might be expected it would be, upon the scheme of *perfect benevolence*. For, the giving those creatures the advantage, in these respects, is, on the one hand, a *fit* display of

goodness towards them ; as they have only their *appetites* and *instincts*, with a *low degree of reason*, at most; to guide and direct them : And, on the other hand, it is no evidence of any *defect* of goodness towards us, because being endowed with reason and understanding, in a comparatively high degree, the *advantage*, by this means, turns greatly on our side ; as indeed it ought to do. If they have a stronger animal sagacity, our larger degree of reason is more than a balance for it. If they are, any of them, more robust in their make, we are notwithstanding better able, by the help of our reason, to guard ourselves, than *nature* has guarded them. If they are supported with less care, we, by the exercise of reason, can make our greater care a pleasure, and, by means of it, bring in a much richer supply for the comfort of life. And if it is in a more gradual and leisurely way, that we come to the use of our animal powers, we can, by the help of reason, make them more extensively useful afterwards, by employing them to a vastly greater variety of good purposes. Besides, our animal frame is originally made for a *longer* duration ; and the time required in order to its coming to its perfect state, may be, in the best manner, adjusted thereto. And further, as we are designed for *intellectual* and *moral*, as well as animal growth, this method of coming to *maturity*, by *slow* and *gradual* steps, may be the most *suitable one* to promote these *several intentions*, as united in the same constitution.

So



So that there is no comparison between the *inferior* creatures, and us *men*. We have much the advantage of them : At least, we are qualified to turn the balance in our own favour. For it is in our power, by the help of our understandings, to render our *animal life* far more easy and happy, by guarding it against injuries ; by providing for it necessaries ; by diversifying its pleasures ; by multiplying its delights ; and by refining and exalting its enjoyments, in a variety of ways, not within the reach of their capacities.

But we have considered as yet only that *lower sort* of happiness we are furnished for, by means of our *animal* make. This, it is true, is *very considerable* : And mankind have *such* an opinion of it, if we may guess at their thoughts by their practice. For *sensual* pleasures are the great object of their pursuit. Too many indulge to them, as though they were designed for no higher happiness. Our fault indeed is, not that we have no value for *animal* gratifications, but that we value them too highly, and place too much of our happiness in them ; as they contain only the *lowest* sort of good we are fitted for the enjoyment of, by means of our *animal* part. For it is to be remmembered,

That a great proportion, even of that happiness which is proper to us, as *intelligent* and *moral* agents, *originates* in our *animal* frame, which *fits* us, by its various well adjusted organs, to have communication with the *material* world,

in a certain stated way, established by the author of nature. How many of our ideas are we beholden to our *senses* for? They are indeed the *primary* inlets to the materials of knowledge, the true foundation of all *intellectual* happiness. It is from hence, in a great measure, that our reason, imagination, invention, and other *mental* powers, are supplied with objects, which not only employ their *exercise*, but yield those various pleasures which vastly surpass the highest animal delights. Nay, even the *social* and *moral* happiness we are formed for, takes rise, in part at least, from our *animal* nature, by means of which we become *visible* to, and *conversible* with, each other, and capable of interchanging those various offices of justice, and kindness, and friendship, which chiefly lay the foundation for those *moral* and *social* pleasures, which are the most *refined* and *exalted* we are made capable of enjoying: Nor, unless we had possessed such *material* bodies, could there have been those ways of communion with one another which now take place, or those occasions for helping and pleasing each other, which so frequently arise from our present constitution, and give so large a scope for *social* and *moral exercises*, and those sublime pleasures which are the result therefrom. Besides all which, it is owing to our animal frame, that we have *senses* and *appetites* to restrain within the bounds of a just decorum; which constitutes a proper sphere of *dominion* for our reason, and gives opportunity to employ

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it to very excellent purposes, by putting us upon the practice of sobriety, chastity, and moderation, those private virtues which tend to ennoble the mind, and prepare it for the most exalted *exercises* and *enjoyments* it is made capable of.

And it is this view of the *inferior part* of our constitution, that gives us the *true* and *full* idea of its *main* design and use. We should entertain but a poor low thought of our *bodily organization*, if we looked upon it as contrived for no higher an end, than meer *animal* gratifications. It was proper indeed, for many reasons, that it should be furnished, as it really is, for this kind of pleasure : But the great thing aimed at, by the *Deity*, in employing so much skill in adjusting the structure of our bodies, was, that he might fit us, by this means, for such a communication with *material nature*, as might lay the best foundation for those *intellectual* and *moral exercises*, and the *noble pleasures* resulting therefrom, which so highly exalt our natures, justly giving us the first place among the numerous classes of beings which inhabit this earth.

I may properly add to what has hitherto been said, that the *Deity's benevolence*, with respect to our *inferior part*, is conspicuous, not only in the *positive good* he has fitted it to be the means of to the *mind*, but in the care he has also taken to *secure it against inconveniences*. It may possibly be thought, that *perfect goodness* would have ab-  
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*solutely* freed our *bodies* from *all inconveniences* whatsoever. But this may be only a mistake of our own. It is certain, in point of fact, that *that* bodily organization, whereby we are fitted for the perception of good, is liable to be *disordered*, yea, *destroyed*, in numberless ways: Nor can we say, that it was *possible*, in the nature of things, *absolutely* to have *secured* it from this *liableness to disturbance*. All therefore that can, with reason, be required of the *Deity*, upon the scheme of *perfect benevolence*, is, that he should provide for the *security* of our *animal-structure* against *mischiefs*, in the best manner that was consistent with the operation of those *laws*, he has established for the displays of his goodness towards this system. And this, so far as we are able to judge, he has actually done; partly, by putting it in our power to contrive suitable methods for our own safety; and partly, by planting within us a *variously modified* principle of *self-preservation*, urging us on to avoid every thing that we apprehend will be *hurtful* to us: But principally, by annexing the *sensation of pain* to those touches upon our *bodily mechanism*, which tend to *disturb* its *order*; hereby rousing the principle of *self-love*, and putting us upon the most effectual exertions in order to our own security. And wherein could the *Deity* have contrived better for our being guarded against mischief? I know indeed that the *very capacity of perceiving pain* is urged as an argument against the *benevolence* of the *Deity*: But  
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with nothing more than the bare shadow of reason. For it is a *most useful* capacity. Even the principle of *self-preservation*, with all its appendages from the *body*, and assistances from the *mind*, would have been *essentially defective*, was it not for this additional *stimulus*: Nor is it conceivable, how we could have been, in any tolerable measure, secured it from danger, without some such *expedient* as this. Some *warning* seems to have been absolutely necessary, especially to creatures, whose knowledge of the *material world*, and its capacity to do them *hurt* as well as good, is not *intuitive*, but *gradual* and *experimental*; as it is best it should be for many reasons: Some of which we may have occasion to mention hereafter: I say, some *warning* of the mischiefs we are exposed to, in such a world as this, was necessary: And what more proper one than *that*, which makes *every thing hurtful at the same time painful*? What warning short of this would have been effectual to have answered the purposed end? Notwithstanding the *new force* or *stimulus*, herefrom awakening the principle of *self-preservation*, we are careless enough in guarding ourselves against even those things which we know to be *hurtful*, by *feeling* that they are *painful*. And was it not for the *sensation of pain*, which we are so ready to complain of as inconsistent with goodness, in the *Creator*, we should not enjoy any happiness in comparison with what we do now. It is this that rouses our attention to guard ourselves against those external objects that

that may cause wounds and bruises, or in any other way do mischief to our bodies: It is this that reminds us of the necessity of food and raiment, and puts us upon the use of care properly to supply nature in these respects: And it is this, in one word, more than any thing in our constitution, that tends to make us cautious and prudent, looking about, and employing our thoughts and pains that we may enjoy life with as little *inconvenience* as may be. So that the *sensation of pain* is a noble contrivance for good, and strongly argues *benevolence* in the *Creator*, rather than the contrary. It is indeed the *grand expedient* to prevent those *inconveniences*, which, had it not been for this contrivance, must have been *inevitable*. And as to those that are so, notwithstanding this provision of nature, such as the *disposition of our animal frame*, and those *disorders we are naturally subjected to*, we shall particularly take notice of them, hereafter, in a more proper place.

In the mean time, let us go to the *other part* of our constitution, whereby we are allied to the *highest* order of beings in the universe, and rendered capable of *intellectual* and *moral pleasures*, the *highest in kind* that are communicable from the *Deity*. And here it will be worth while to be a little *particular* in illustrating the *Creator's benevolence*, from the *provision* he has made for our *enjoyment of both these sorts of happiness*.

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To begin with the care he has taken to provide for our enjoyment of *intellectual* happiness; which we shall show to be such as is sufficient to lead us into an idea of him as *perfectly* and *absolutely benevolent*.

The *mental* capacities we are endowed with here properly come into consideration. And these we shall find, upon inquiry, to be wonderfully adapted to qualify us for *intellectual* acquirements; it is not indeed conceivable how an order beings situated as we are, should have been better furnished for this noble purpose.

Our *mental* capacities are of two sorts. The *first* furnishes us with the *materials* of knowledge; the *other* qualifies us for the proper use of them.

The *powers* furnishing us with the *materials* of knowledge are *sensation* and *reflection*; both which are admirably fitted to answer the end for which they were implanted in us.

*Sensation*, the first of these, is that capacity by means of which *impressions from without* become *perceptions within*, variously affecting the mind, and giving rise to what we call *sensible* ideas. And in vain had our bodies been so curiously fitted with *organs*, and external objects fitted, by their mediation, to make impressions on our minds, was it not for this capacity. Barely a susceptibility of impressions, from *material nature*, would not have been sufficient for the purposes of *intelligence*. Besides this, a *perceiving power* in the mind was necessary. And it is in consequence of this, that *corporeal* objects, by the medium

of bodily organs, are the occasion of various distinct *sensations*, presenting to the view of the understanding so many ideas, as objects to employ its exercise. The *inferior creatures*, it is true, are formed with this capacity, in common with us *men*; but with this difference. It was planted in *them* for the sake of *animal life*, as an expedient to render *that* comfortable and happy; whereas *we* are endowed with it, not for this end *only*, nor yet *principally*, but that we might be furnished with the proper *materials* for the acquirement of *knowledge*, and the enjoyment of that *pleasure* which results therefrom. And a noble capacity it is to this end. It is from hence that we derive all our *sensible ideas*; that is to say, all our ideas of *color, taste, sound, light, heat, cold*, and, in a word, whatever ideas we have of external objects, or any of the *modes* or *properties* that belong to them.

The *other* power, furnishing us with the *materials* of knowledge, is *reflection*, on the mind's ability to look within, and take notice of its *own operations*. And these, thus observed, give rise to *another set* of ideas, *different in kind* from those we received from sensation. *New* objects, by the exercise of this faculty, are presented to the view of the mind, which have no affinity with *external nature*; such as *thinking, willing, knowing, believing, counting, loving, hoping, fearing*, and the like: Furnishing the *materials* for a *new* sort of knowledge, superior in its nature to that which results from *sensible ideas*,



ideas, and suited to yield us far more exalted pleasure. It is from this set of ideas that we rise above the *material* world, and are enabled to turn our view to *moral* objects, in the *mental* survey of which we may entertain ourselves with the highest satisfaction.

These now are the *inlets*, and the *only* ones, to all our ideas: Inasmuch that we have no notion in our minds, nor can form any, but from the ideas we receive in *these* ways. \* But yet, we have no reason to complain for want of *intellectual materials*. It is true, the *simple ideas* originally let into the mind, whether by *sensation*, or *reflection*, are but *few*: Yet, they are capable of being put together with such variety as to make *new complex ones* almost to infinity. Some conception we may frame of this, from the composition of *words* out of the *letters* of the alphabet. *These*, though few in number, are yet sufficient for the formation of *words without end*: Which words are again capable of being placed in such positions, with respect to each other, as to be proper signs for the conveyance of all manner of truths to the mind. In like manner, our *simple ideas*, though not very numerous, are yet capable of being compounded so as to exhibit *new images* beyond account: And these complex forms are again capable of being put together  
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\* I am not convinced, by any thing I have seen wrote upon the subject, that we have any ideas, but what take rise from *sensation* and *reflection*, or that we can have any, upon the present establishment of nature, any other way. They are all derived from this source, and may be traced up to it.

with almost an infinite variety. So extensive is the *ground work* laid by those powers of *sensation* and *reflection*, for acquirements in *knowledge*, and *mental pleasure* the consequence therefrom.

The *other sort* of faculties, or those which qualify us for the use of these *materials* of knowledge, are such as these.

The first is, the mind's ability to lay up the ideas it has received, in either of the above ways, as it were, in store for use afterwards, with a readiness to revive them, without the presence of external objects, or the help of those inward reflections, by which they were at first occasioned. This is done by the *memory*; which is a necessary faculty. For, the mind not being capable of attending to many ideas at once, we should have been but poorly qualified for proficiency in knowledge, had we not been endowed with a power to *recall* ideas into view, as we might have occasion for them, after they had lain out of sight. And this ability we are accordingly furnished with: Nor is it a meer *passive* one; but dependant, in a good measure, on the *will*. It is true formerly imprinted ideas will sometimes obtrude themselves upon the mind, and come undesired to the view of understanding: But this notwithstanding, the mind can of *choice* lay up ideas; and is able to a good degree, as it *pleases*, to recall them. It can, on purpose, employ itself this way: And the readiness, with which it often revives the perception of past ideas, is really astonishing.—

I need not say any thing to point out the *usefulness* of this faculty, and the mighty help it is fitted to afford us in *intellectual* acquirements. Were we not thus furnished, we should necessarily be confined to *present* ideas, as they might happen, in a *passive* way, to be excited in our minds : Whereas now we have it in our power to employ our thoughts on any of those ideas which have, at any time, been imprinted in our minds, as we are *pleas'd* to call for them, in the pursuit of *intellectual* happiness. And what an unspeakable advantage is this ? It not only makes the way to knowledge much easier and quicker than it could otherwise have been ; but greatly enlarges the capacity for it, by laying a proper foundation in our nature for very considerable attainments in this kind.

Another power is *discernment* ; by which I understand an ability to *distinguish* ideas from one another, according to the real difference there is between them. And a very important faculty this is. Without it the former faculties would be, in a manner, useless. It is not merely the power of receiving ideas, or the power of recalling them into view after their disappearance, that would have been sufficient for attainments in knowledge. A faculty to *discriminate* them from one another was further necessary : Nor otherwise would our thoughts have been any other than so many confused ideas. What we call *judgment* is chiefly dependant on this faculty. It consists in the mind's readiness to discern

discern the difference there is between ideas. And the more nicely and accurately it is able to distinguish them, the better and more perfect is the judgment. It is owing to this faculty that ideas lie clear and determinate in the mind; and by the help of it we are not only preserved from perplexity in our notions, but from mistakes also, arising from a seeming likeness in ideas when they really differ. It is, in short, in consequence of this faculty, that we are able to reason clearly and solidly, setting before our own view, and the view of others, the evidence of truth in a strong and satisfactory point of light. The *usefulness* of this faculty may be learned from those *perceptions of truth*, which have taken rise from it, to the increase of knowledge, in so many instances, redounding so greatly to the benefit of mankind.

Another power the mind is furnished with, is that of *compounding, enlarging, and diminishing*, the ideas that have been let into it: By means whereof it is capable, in a sense, of making *new objects* of perception, by presenting to the view of the understanding the *original* ideas, received by *sensation or reflection*, in *new complex forms* without end. In consequence of this *compounding* power, we become, as it were, *Creators*; being able to frame images at our pleasure, hereby *multiplying* the objects of thought, and giving occasion for infinitely various *new perceptions*, accompanied with pleasure, we must otherwise have been strangers to. The *imagination* is chiefly employed

employed in this work of making *new complex ideas*. It is able indeed, with quickness and vivacity, to revive former images; but its power lies principally in framing *new forms or species*, which exist only in conception. And a wonderful faculty it is to this purpose. How admirably quick is it in its operations? How readily can it unite and blend together the most distant ideas, varying them from their simple originals, and setting them before the mind with infinite diversity? This power, it is true, is peculiarly liable to *abuse*. It may be prostituted to vain and base purposes. It may be debased with mean images, or polluted with vicious ones. But yet, it is in itself a noble capacity: And had we not been endued with it, those excellent productions of art and genius would never have had a being, which are so variously fitted, both for the service of life, and the entertainment of the mind.

A still more useful power is that whereby we are enabled to assemble ideas in *various positions and arrangements*, in order to *compare* them together, and view them in the *respects and relations* they bear to each other. It is owing to this faculty that we perceive *new truths*. For every different *juxta-position* of ideas exhibits to the mind some agreement or disagreement it was not before acquainted with, and opens to its view some *new discovery*. This faculty, as employed in finding out truths, by placing ideas in *various positions or orders* with respect to each other,

other, is what is principally meant by *invention*. But as it is employed in placing *invented truths*; or propositions already perceived to be truths; in like *positions*, in order to deduce still other truths, it is called *reasoning*; which is the noblest and most useful operation of the mind, and that indeed for which all its faculties were principally designed.

The last power of the mind which I shall mention, and indeed I have only mentioned the foregoing ones; for it would require a volume to enlarge severally on them, as might easily be done: I say, the last power the mind is furnished with is that of *abstraction*; by which it makes *particular* ideas *general* ones. And this it does by withdrawing or separating from them these and those circumstances which accompanied them, as excited by *particular* objects, and considering them in that *general* view only; wherein many other objects do agree with them. As for example:—The same idea, signified by the term *redness*, being perceived to day upon the sight of a *cherry*, which was perceived yesterday upon the sight of a *brick*; and the day before upon the sight of *blood*, the mind considers this idea *abstracted* from these *particular objects*, or at least those concomitant ideas which accompanied its perception from each of them, making it a *general* idea comprehending all existences that agree in being *red*. And to this faculty we are beholden for the benefit of *language*. *Particular names for particular ideas* would,  
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in a great measure, have destroyed the use of speech, by rendering it infinitely tedious. *Abstraction* is the remedy against this. It is the mind's capacity to make *general* ideas that has given rise to *general* names; by means whereof language is made easy, and we are qualified with convenient speed, by the intervention of words, spoken or written, to convey our thoughts to one another. Besides, it is of vast use, in acquiring knowledge, to have this power of considering ideas in an *abstracted* view; as, without it, the making progress in understanding would have been an infinitely lengthy business. And further, we have it in our power, by the help of this faculty, more fully and thoroughly to examine ideas than we could otherwise have done; considering them *singly*, and *a-part* from all others, and so as to have the compleatest conception of them, in their several properties and relations.

Those now are the powers, qualifying us for *intellectual* acquirements. And how admirably fitted are they to this end? *Material nature* is, by this means, in a great measure, subjected to our command. We can view *external* objects, even in their absence, by their images retained in the mind; examine their relations and dependencies; enquire into their properties and powers; and investigate numberless truths concerning them: Applying them to the *uses of life*, or the *entertainment of the mind in speculation*. And this *intellectual pleasure* is always

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ready at hand : And it will not, like *animal delight*, pall the desire, and bring on fatigue and disgust; but the oftner we repeat it, the more we shall be delighted : For it is, in itself, a noble exercise, and fitted to yield continually growing satisfaction to the mind.—Nor are we confined to *material nature* only ; but, being furnished by *reflection*, with another set of ideas, have it in our power to bring even the *moral* world also under examination ; enquiring into its qualities, relations, and dependencies, and herefrom discovering the most important truths, not only applicable to the purpose of governing our own conduct, but of giving our minds the highest pleasure it is capable of from *contemplation*. It is from hence that we perceive a difference of powers in our own constitution, some superior, others inferior, and become acquainted with that government of them wherein consists that *moral oeconomy*, which is our greatest glory as men : It is from hence that we argue, with so much probability, the existence of numberless orders of beings, of like *mental* powers with ourselves, though possessing them in far more exalted degrees : And, in fine, it is from hence that we are capable of rising in our thoughts to the existence of some uncreated original being, at the head of all, endowed with the highest possible perfections, in the contemplation of whom the mind may take the *greatest* complacency. The forming us with faculties whereby we are qualified for such noble *intellectual* attainments



tainments, evidently carries with it the marks of *benevolence*. Nothing indeed but *supreme* and *perfect* goodness, could have so wonderfully adorned and endowed our nature.

It is readily acknowledged, *these capacities*, as planted in us, are but *low* and *small*, in comparison with what we may suppose them to be in many other beings above us. And this may seem to some an objection, if not against the *benevolence* of the *Deity* in general, yet against that *absolute perfection* of it which we are pleading for. But it is an objection of no great weight. For if these capacities in us, however low and imperfect, in comparison with what they are in other beings, are well adjusted to the state and circumstances of an order of creatures bearing *such a part* in the *general scheme for good*, it is all that can be required of *reasonable benevolence*, though heightened to *infinity*. Had no other beings been brought into existence besides us *men*, the objection, in this case, it is owned, would have held good: But as we are only one of the numerous orders that constitute a *general system*, this quite alters the case; making those capacities only an evidence of *wise and reasonable benevolence*, which are fitted for a *particular part*, sustaining *such a place*, in the constitution of this *whole*. In this view of the matter, it is easy to see how benevolence may be *infinitely perfect*, while yet the creatures that are produced by it are *variously* endowed with capacities, some *superior*, others *inferior*;

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Nor could they otherwise have been fitted to fill the place assigned them in the *chain* of being; Neither could they have answered those good ends, they were *particularly* formed for. Had the *brute* creatures, for instance, been endowed with the capacities that belong to us *men*, they would have been *unfit* for the place they now take up in the creation: Neither could they have been the means of *that good*, they are now properly the occasion of. And the same may be said of us *men*. Had we been endowed with the capacities of *angels*, we should not have been formed for *such a world* as this, and for answering those ends, in it, which we are now fitted to answer, and it might be necessary should be answered in order to a *full* manifestation of Divine goodness. The truth is, the *perfection* of benevolence consists, not simply in the *largeness* of the capacities it bestows upon any beings, but in *fitting* them to the *state* and *circumstances* of beings in *such a situation*, and bearing *such a place*, in the *general plan* of operation for good: And if our capacities are thus adjusted, which cannot be disproved, it is all that can *reasonably* be expected. It is no argument of the *want* of benevolence in the Creator, that they are not *greater*: Nay, had they been *greater*, the *benevolence* discovered would have been, in the same proportion, *less wise* and *perfect*.

It is confessed likewise, that mankind are not endowed with *those mental* powers, in *equal* degrees. So far is this from the truth of fact, that the capacities of scarce any two men are exactly alike.

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Some excel in one turn of mind, others in another; some have no great genius for any thing, others are distinguished with a very extensive one, fitting them for almost every thing: And perhaps some individuals in the human species differ as widely from others, in their *rational* powers, as those others do from the next species below them. And this may possibly be esteemed by some another objection against the plea we are making for an *absolutely perfect* principle of benevolence in the *Deity*. But neither does this appear to be an objection, carrying with it any considerable force. It may be, some such *diversity*, as that which is visible in men's *mental* powers, could not have been *prevented*, in consistency with those *general laws*, according to which mankind were intended to be made happy. One of these laws (which we have had occasion already to mention) puts it very much into men's own power, by industry and proper application, to enlarge their capacities, and make progress in intellectual attainments: And in consequence of this law, a *difference* in men's powers will be *unavoidable*; though we should even suppose, what perhaps is not true, that they were *alike* in their *original* implantation. Besides, the exercise of *mental* powers, being, according to another law of nature, in so great a measure, dependant on the *mechanism of the body*, this also renders it *impossible* but that they should be *different*; for a difference in *bodily organization* cannot but take place, in such a world as this, unless the laws of nature should be interrupted

rupted in their course. So that to object against a *disparity* of *mental* powers is, in true consequence, to object against the *general plan* according to which this system is made, upheld, and governed: Which, in such short-sighted creatures as we are, can be no other than *objecting* in the dark, by urging that which finally terminates in our own ignorance.

But to come more directly to the point.— This difference in men's capacities, whatever it is owing to, whether a difference in their *original implantation*, or a difference in the *body's mechanism*, either of which amounts to precisely the same thing, in the present argument: I say, this *inequality* of powers is so far from arguing *want* of goodness in the *Deity*, that it strongly illustrates the *glory* and *perfection* of it.

Possibly, the gradation in beings, by means of which all spaces are filled up, could not have been so accurately compleat, unless there had been a difference between the *individuals* in each species as well as between the species themselves. Some disparity between *men* compared with one another, and between the creatures in every other class considered, in the like comparative view, might be necessary to link together the *several species*, so as to make one *coherent chain*, without any void or chasm.

Or however this be, it is easy to see the *preferableness* of the *present* constitution to its *contrary*; as being better fitted to promote the happiness of such an order of creatures as we are. Were

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our *mental* powers so exactly alike, as that one man could not go beyond another, but every man must have within himself the whole source of intellectual furniture, there would be no room for that *converse* between man and man, which is, in the present state of things, one of the chief *pleasures*, as well as *improvements* of the mind: To be sure, it could not be carried on with that mutual *satisfaction* it now may; nor could it turn out to so great advantage. Besides, if there was no such thing as one man's *excelling* another, as there could not be upon the present supposition, the strongest *stimulus*, that now prompts us to exert ourselves in order to enlarge our intellectual powers, would be wanting; and by means thereof our very powers themselves, so far as we can judge, must be in danger of being rendered inactive, and of decreasing in their fitness for exercise. And further, if our capacities had been precisely the same, that *subordination* in the human species, those *superiorities* and *inferiorities*, could not have taken place, without which life itself could not have been enjoyed, in such a world as our's, with tolerable comfort. And what is of yet greater importance, there would not have been the *occasion* for those interchangeable offices of humanity and social kindness, which, upon the present scheme, not only enlarge our sphere of mutual serviceableness, but give opportunity for the exercise of many virtuespective of our nature, and fitted to yield us high degrees of happiness

happinefs we muft otherwife have been ftrangers to. The plain truth is, the conveniences and pleasures, poffible to be enjoyed by the human kind, do not feem to have been obtainable, in a world conftituted as this is, but by an union of counfels and endeavours; every one doing his part in order to promote the good of the whole. And *different capacities* are the requifite expedient to this purpofe. Thefe not only fit the feveral individuals for reciprocal fervices, but fecure their mutual dependance on each other; hereby properly linking them together, and making way for thofe various exertments which are neceffary for the common benefit. If mankind could at all have enjoyed the advantage of fociety, without this *inequality* of powers, it is very evident that they could not have enjoyed it to fo good a purpofe as with it. Their being *variously* endow'd is that which puts it in their power to be *variously ufeful* to each other, fo as that the happinefs of every individual may hereby be increas'd beyond what it could otherwife have been. And it is the infufficiency there is in every man for his own happinefs by himfelf *fingly*, and *alone*, and his being oblig'd to depend on others for many things, without which he muft be very uncomfortable, that is, in reality, the *only effectual bond* that unites the human fpecies, fecuring their attachment to each other, and ftimulating them to thofe mutual fervices, upon which the good of all the individuals does very much depend.

It is still further acknowledged, that our *intellectual* powers, at first, are *weak* and *feeble*, and it is in a *slow* and *leisurely* way, under *due cultivation*, and in the use of *labor* and *pains*, that they gain strength, and advance to any considerable degrees of their attainable perfection. And this likewise may be thought an *objection* against the plea for an *absolutely perfect* principle of benevolence in the *Deity*. But it is, duly considered, an argument rather enforcing this plea; than in any degree lessening its real weight.

Perhaps, no mind, the infinitely comprehensive one only excepted, can be so perfect as to be incapable of *progression* in understanding. For one degree of knowledge is so connected with another, and so naturally prepares the way for it, as that it may be an *impossibility* but that every *created mind* should be capable of attaining still higher degrees of it. So that if we were at all made capable of intelligence, it should seem as though it must have been, in general, in the way of *progression*. And as to the *particular method of progression* that takes place, with respect to the human mind, it is the most natural and rational one that could have been contrived, for an order of beings constituted in other respects, and situated, as we are; as we shall evidently see by going over its parts that are objected to.

It is complained, that our faculties are *weak* at first, and advance in a *slow* and *gradual* way

to their attainable maturity. To which the reply is, That, as the only way, according to the established order of nature, in which the mind can be furnished with ideas, is by the medium of the bodily senses, and its own reflections afterwards, it was *impossible* but that the attainment of knowledge, with respect to us, should be in a *slow* and *leisurely* manner. And though our faculties are *feeble* at first, it is *best* they should be so, and an instance of goodness, in the Creator, rather than the contrary. For, it is to be remembered, they could be of no manner of service till supplied with proper objects, and there had been time to learn the use of them. We must have been, at first, whatever was the state of our faculties, totally unacquainted with ourselves, and with the world about us: And it would have required *time*, and *experience*, and *instruction*, before we could have acquired knowledge sufficient for the proper application of any thing to the purposes of life. And as this is the condition of our nature, faculties *feeble* at first, but yet capable of gradually advancing to a mature state, seem the *best suited thereto* of any we could have been endowed with. There is evidently a *congruity* and *proportion* between such faculties, and the *method* according to which knowledge is attainable by such creatures as we are. Instead of having faculties in their *full strength* and *vigor*, before it was possible, conformably to the established order of nature, that we could make the  
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proper use of them, it seems much better that they should gradually open and enlarge, as ideas are gradually let into them to employ their exercise, and fit them for the offices and enjoyments of life. And perhaps the time of our coming to a *mature* state of faculties, is, in the best manner, adjusted to the time requisite for the mind to get *stored with ideas*, and furnished with that *skill in the use of them*, which is proper for *full grown* powers. Besides, as we come into the world, and must do so according to the present laws of nature, with *infant bodies*, what more fit than that we should have at first *infant minds* also? How unsuitable would a *manly mature state of mind* be, for an *infant body*? What *mis-matched companions*, would they be for each other? It is most proper, as the *body* slowly and gradually advances to its attainable maturity, that the *mind* should do so likewise. There is, upon this scheme, an apparent adjustment between the two grand parts of the human frame; and it is all along preserved in the joint progress they gradually make towards the *maturity* they are designed to attain to. And, it may be, that state of *tuition* and *discipline* we are placed under, while we leisurely pass through the several periods of *infancy*, *childhood*, and *youth*, is the *best fitted initiation* into a state of *manhood*, or *full grown* faculties. It is certainly of eminent service in many respects; as hereby opportunity is given, while ideas are lecturing into the mind, and the faculties are opening  
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and expanding, to introduce that *attentiveness*, *teachableness*, and *modest diffidence*, which are the grand preparatives for considerable attainments in useful knowledge. And that *exercise* which we are now called to, and put upon, is the most natural and suitable method, not only to *strengthen* and *improve* our faculties, but to form that *habit* of *industry* and *diligence*, without which we shall in vain think of advancing in *intellectual* pursuits. And this leads to the other part of the *complaint*, which is,

That our attainments in knowledge are connected with care and labor; insomuch that we can never make any considerable progress in understanding, unless we apply ourselves, with *diligence*, to cultivate and improve our minds. And here it is queried, Why could not we have been formed, at once in the same degree of *intellectual perfection* we are ever capable of attaining to? And would not this have discovered *greater benevolence* than is discovered in the method that now takes place? Why should the benefit of intelligence be trusted, in such a measure, with ourselves, and be made to depend upon our own industry? What need of so much pains, and such a tedious round-about way in order to knowledge, and the happiness that is consequent thereupon, when it might have been given at once, without so much ado? To which the proper answer is, that the communication of knowledge, in the way here pleaded for, may be an *impossibility* in the nature of things;

things : Or, at least, such a communication of it may be *less fitted*, upon the whole, and all things considered, for the production of *so much good*, as is capable of being produced in the method that at present takes place. Perhaps, the putting intellectual attainments *into the power of creatures themselves*, in a good measure, making them possible only in the way of *due care and diligence*, is the best adapted of any method, that could have been pitched upon to produce the *greatest sum* of happiness. It is certain, that if as much knowledge, as we are ever capable of attaining to, was the *absolute gift* of nature, and (if the supposition may not be thought an impossible one) a gift bestowed *at once*, upon our first coming into existence ; it is certain, I say, that knowledge communicated this way would not be an endowment that had any value in it *morally speaking* : For which reason it could not be the source of *that pleasure*, which might have resulted from it, had it been an *acquisition of our own*. And it cannot be denied, that pleasure is naturally connected with the idea of knowledge, as the fruit of our own industry. We need only attend to our perceptions, in order to be convinced that we *feel pleasure* in viewing this quality under the notion of a purchase of our own, in the way of diligence : And it is indeed one of the highest and noblest sorts of pleasure we are capable of enjoying. But, it is plain, this pleasure could not have been perceived ; there  
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would have been no foundation laid for it in nature, if it was not in our own power, by care and pains, to make *intellectual improvements*. If knowledge had been the gift of the *Deity*, independently of ourselves, we should have had no reason, were we endowed with it in ever so high a measure, for the least *self-approbation* on this account: Nor could we *rationally* have enjoyed *that pleasure* which is now a natural consequence therefrom. So that the present method for the communication of *intellectual good* is a better fitted one for the purpose, than that which is pleaded for in the objection; because knowledge *absolutely communicated* is not capable of yielding *so much* happiness, as that which is attained to, by proper faculties, in the use of labor and pains: For there would be wanting the conscious reflection on our *own merit* in the procurement of it: We could not look upon it as our *own acquisition*, and consequently could not, unless upon a false bottom, perceive that *self-approbation*, from whence alone can result the *noblest-kind* of pleasure we are capable of. The truth is, it is really *best* that *intellectual*, and indeed every other kind of good, is made to depend, in so great a measure, upon *ourselves*. For it is this that gives rise to the various exercise of our faculties, affording, at the same time, both proper *scope* and *reason* for their employment: Whereas, if good was communicated without the concurrence of our own endeavours, it is not easily conceivable,

conceivable, how there could have been either *room* or *reason* for those noble exertions, which, upon the present plan, are properly called for, and suitably recompens'd. Besides, there could be no such thing as any *moral* attainment, if nothing could be acquired by the due exercise of our natural faculties. The capacity of making acquisitions, by our own endeavours, suitably employed, is the true and only basis of all our *moral* perfection. It is in consequence of this, and this only, that we become capable of *virtue*, and worthy of *praise* and *commendation*. And had we not this power, we should be nothing more than *meer perceptive* beings, who do not *act*, but are *acted upon*: Nor, if we were thus the *passive recipients* only of good, would there have been any foundation laid in our nature, for the *highest* and *noblest* of all pleasure; the pleasure I mean, which is consequent upon the reflection on good as our *own attainment*, by a right application of our own powers.

So that, upon the whole, instead of complaining of God for not furnishing us with powers, wondrously contrived to fit us for intellectual attainments, and the happiness consequent thereupon, we have reason rather to admire the greatness of his benevolence. It does not indeed appear, wherein he could have displayed his goodness, as guided by wisdom, more conspicuously than he has done, in an order of beings in such a world as ours, and

as sustaining such a place in the scale of intelligent existences.

I now go on to illustrate the benevolence of the Deity, by taking as concise a view as I well can of those powers, he has endowed us with, fitting us for *moral* happiness, the highest any being can be made capable of. And those, the other mental powers, already mentioned, not being attended to, are, in general, the following ones:

The first power in our nature [call it *common sense*, *moral sense*, *moral discernment*, or give it any other name that may be thought better] is that by which we are enabled at once, without the labor of a long train of reasoning, to distinguish between moral good, and moral evil; in all instances that are of primary importance, and essentially connected with the good of the moral world:

There is an unalterable difference between virtue and vice, or, what means the same thing, between moral good, and moral evil. They have their respective natures, and are unchangeable opposites. Vice cannot be made virtue, nor on the contrary, can virtue be made vice. They are in themselves what they are, and will remain so without variation, or the shadow of turning. It is, on the one hand, fit and right, that we should be pious towards God, righteous towards our fellow-men, and sober with respect to ourselves; and, on the other, unfit and wrong, that we should be impious towards the Deity, unjust

in our treatment of men, and intemperate in the gratification of our animal appetites: Nor is it possible this moral order should be inverted. No will, no power, either of men, or angels, or even the Supreme Ruler himself, can make it right to be impious, instead of pious towards God; or unrighteous, instead of righteous towards men; or intemperate, instead of sober, in regard of ourselves. To suppose this, would be to erase the foundations of the moral system, to destroy the relation that subsists between the Creator and his creatures, and between the creatures with respect to one another, and to make virtue and vice nothing more than arbitrary names, having in themselves no certainly fixed nature.

And as virtue and vice, moral good and moral evil, are thus different from each other, so is this difference obviously and at once, perceivable by all morally intelligent minds, unless they have been greatly corrupted. There may indeed be instances of moral conduct, in matters of comparatively small importance, with respect to which it may be difficult to distinguish between the right and wrong. And the analogy here, it may be worthy of notice, is very exact between the *natural*, and the *moral* world. Light and darkness may be so mixed, that one can scarce know which to call it. Sweet and bitter may be so blended together, that it may be difficult to say which is prevalent. Colors may be so dilated, and placed on a portrait,

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that

that the eye of a skilful painter may not be able to discern the precise point where one begins, and another ends. But, notwithstanding these mixtures, light is never the same thing with darkness, nor bitter with sweet, nor one color that of another; and they are, unless in such complicated cases, readily and at once distinguished from each other. In like manner, there may be, and often are, in the moral world, cases wherein the boundaries between good and evil, and the spot that divides them, may not be easily, if at all, discerned, so as to be able to say, with precision, here virtue runs into vice, and vice into virtue. But this hinders not but that, in the main and essential branches of morality, the virtuous, and the vicious conduct may obviously be perceived, where the mind's perceptive power has not been, in a great degree, vitiated, and hurt. And, in very truth, the God of nature has, in his abundant goodness, so formed our minds, and given us such a power of discernment, that it must be owing, unless we are idiots, or madmen, to some heinous faultiness, we ourselves are justly chargable with, if we are not able, without difficulty, to discern the difference right and wrong, in the more important points of moral obligation. Will any man, who has not strangely perverted the proper use of his perceptive powers pretend, that he cannot, or that he does not, see it to be fit and right, on the one hand, that such a creature as he is so related to God, and dependant on him, should



should yield to him the love of his heart, and the obedience of his life ; and, on the other, that it would be unfit and wrong to withdraw his affection from him, and behave with disrespect towards him ? Will any man, in the due use of his discerning power, calmly and deliberately say, that he cannot perceive it to be right, that he should do to others, as he would they should do to him, in like circumstances, and wrong, unalterably wrong, that he should do otherwise ? Will any man, not having darkened his heart, declare, speaking the truth, that he does not see it to be right, that he should govern his passions, and keep his sensual appetites within the restraints of reason ; and wrong, evidently wrong, to give way to anger, wrath, malice, and to take an unbounded liberty in gratifying his animal nature ? That man, be he who he may, if not void of common sense, is wholly inattentive to its dictates, who perceives no moral difference between revering, and mocking his maker ; between being honest and knavish, in his transactions with his neighbour ; between being chaste, and lewd ; between living soberly and in the practice of drunkenness ? Or if he does not perceive the former to be amiable virtues, and the latter detestable, infamous vices ? The moral difference in these ways of conduct is self-evident. There needs no argumentation, no series of intermediate ideas, to point it out. Barely mentioning them, provided it is done in  
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words that are clearly understood, will at once, enforce conviction, unless in seeing men will not see; in which case it would be a vain thing to expect, that reasoning should have an effectual influence on them. For illustration, I shall bring to view here a particular instance. That rule of conduct, "do to others as you would they should do to you," is so evidently fit and right, that, upon the bare proposal of it, the mind at once discerns it to be just and equal. To use arguments to make it appear reasonable, would be only to darken the evidence of its being so. No medium of proof could, in this case, be introduced, which would not more need to be proved, than the thing itself it is brought to prove. It is not indeed easily conceivable, that any man, who has the understanding of a man, and is not under undue influence from evil affection, should hesitate one moment in his judgment as to the suitability of this moral rule of conduct, its equity is so obvious, and so instantly and glaringly strikes the discerning power, we are all naturally furnished with. And, in truth, however common it may be, among men, to throw practical contempt upon this rule in their treatment of one another, none do it because they entertain in their minds an opinion of it as an unfair, unequal regulator of their behavior; but because they are thoughtless and inattentive, or suffer themselves to be enticed, and led aside by ungoverned pride, passion and lust of one kind or another.

another. This is the true reason, why they act in contradiction to the rule of right, not only in this, but in all other great and important cases in moral life. They indulge these and those vicious gratifications, not because they do not perceive them to be unreasonable, but because they are excited hereto by the lusts of the flesh, or mind, or both. It is true, the moral power of discernment, as well as the other intellectual faculties, may, in common with the bodily organs, be so debilitated, if not spoiled, by men's accustoming themselves to do evil, as to be unfitted for the proper use for which they were implanted in their nature. And, perhaps, there are some, among wicked men, who, by having long habituated themselves to live and act, as hurried on by the impetus of ungoverned passions and affections, such as an irregular love of themselves, and their own separate interest; the love of honor; the love of riches; the love of sensuality, and other lusts: I say, there are those, who, by a course of thus conducting, have gradually so weakened their moral sight, as to be, in a great measure, if not totally, unable to discern those actions to be wrong, which are glaringly so, and appear to be so, with a meridian lustre, to all who have eyes to see. But this is not the common and ordinary state even of wicked men. There are, it may be, comparatively few, but have so much moral discernment, as not to be able to go on in vicious practice, in instances that are great and  
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heinous, without remonstrances from within. They do not sinfully gratify their appetites, because they have no sight, or sense, of its being unfit, and wrong that they should do so; but because they are tempted of their lust and overcome. The law in their members, getting the better of the law in their minds, influences them to do that they approve not; yea, many times, that they even hate, it is so opposite to the light in them, which ought to be the guide of their conduct.

The account I have thus given of that implanted power in our nature, which enables us at once, without labor and pains, to discern the difference between right and wrong in all great and important instances in moral life, is, I imagine, strictly just, and verified to be so by the universal experience of mankind. The plain truth is, we are so formed by the God of nature as that we as readily, and with as much certainty, perceive *moral* qualities as those that are possible. By the intervention of our bodily organs, we directly perceive the difference between white and black, sweet and bitter, and know that the one is not, and cannot be, the other. By the discerning power of our minds, we perceive, in the like direct and immediate way, these and those qualities of temper and conduct, and are at once satisfied that they are either morally good, not evil; or morally evil, not good: Nor is this moral discernment confined to some among men, in distinction from others;

others ; but is common to all ; as being a power the whole human race come into the world endowed with. And it is from this power that moral reasoning takes rise. It supposes such a perception of moral qualities as is common to all, and in which all, not having corrupted their minds, acquiesce as primary principles ; and in these, reasoning, with reference to the moral world, must finally terminate in order to its being strictly conclusive ; and wherein it fails of doing so, by a non-connection in the chain of intermediate ideas brought to view, it is essentially defective ; or should the connection be just, but not discerned by any to be so, it must, as to them, be the same as if it was really insufficient arguing. Primary moral truths, such as are perceived, and assented to, as such ; and this, without hesitation, by mankind in common, in consequence of that power of discernment they come into being furnished with, are the only basis on which there can be reasoning to any purpose among men, with relation to the moral system. Reasoning powers, if there were no first moral principles, in which mankind could agree without debate would serve rather to promote endless wranglings, than virtuous pursuits, in opposition to those that are vicious. The author of our beings has therefore wisely, as well as kindly, taken care to plant in our nature a morally discerning power, which is admirably fitted to distinguish without difficulty, between right and wrong, that we might chase and pursue  
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the former, and refuse and avoid the latter. In virtue of this power, and by the exercise of it, if we have not weakened, nor spoilt it, we may, as it were, by a glance of our moral sight, in all important cases, so perceive the difference there is in actions as to pronounce with certainty, that these are morally good, those morally evil. What a noble implantation is this power in our nature? What a mighty guard against vice, and preparative for virtuous practice? Wherein could better provision have been for such imperfect beings as we are to engage our care to act up to that which is right, and not allow ourselves in doing what is wrong? We are certainly laid under the strongest obligations of love and gratitude to that Glorious Being, who has implanted in us this excellent power, and shall be inexcusably blind if we do not see that he is benevolent, and base to an high degree if we do not find ourselves disposed to make our humble and thankful acknowledgements to him as such.

Another power in our nature is that of *self-determination*, which gives rise to our volitions, and consequent actions, and is, in true propriety, the cause of them. This power in us men, whether it be called self-determination, or by any other name, is the only basis of moral obligation. Unless this be first supposed, to talk of moral agency is a contradiction to common sense, and in itself a gross absurdity. We might, it is true, without the implantation of such a power in our nature, in consequence of a chain  
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of exterior causes, not within the reach of our controul, be made instruments in the production of any effects which are unavoidably connected with their chain of fatality, should even volition or choice be one of its links. But agents, free agents, we could not be, of whom it might, in consistency with truth, be affirmed that they were the producers of these effects : The author of this chain of causes, which inevitably gives existence to them, is their real, and only proper cause. A power in man that will subject his volitions to his command, and constitute him the efficient of those effects that are consequent upon them, is the only bottom upon which agency can, with the least shadow of propriety, be grounded. There is, in the nature of things, an essential difference between conscious voluntary machines, and agents ; that is, in other words of precisely the same import, beings that are, strictly speaking, causes of the effects that are ascribed to them. Such agents are we men ; and we are, or maybe, as certain of it as that we possess existence. For it is as evident a truth, and as evidently perceived by the mind to be so. We do not ordinarily make ourselves so ridiculous as to endeavour, by reasoning, to prove to ourselves that we exist. We know that we do without argumentation, because we feel that we do. It is an object of direct, immediate, and unavoidable perception, superseding the use of arguments, and indeed rendering it needless,

not to say absurd. The same may be said, and with equal propriety, of that power, we are naturally endowed with, which constitutes us agents, or beings that are *efficiently* the causes of their own volitions and actions. To go about to prove this, by a long train of reasoning, would be very like holding a candle to the sun, in its meridian lustre, for light that we might be able to see. It is a first, and fundamental principle in morals, and to be evidenced, not by arguing, but by an appeal to common sense, or, in other words, the perceptions of mankind universally. We all feel the existence, and operation of this power every day we live. The language of all the world, their projections, their pursuits, and the whole frame and order of their affairs, relative both to this, and the state that is beyond it, are founded on this supposition, and would be so many downright inconsistencies, if they were not, from their own perceptions, so certainly convinced, that this supposition was the real truth, as to admit it into their minds as such without the least hesitation.

Many there were, I know, among the pagan philosophers, in former ages, who thought, and some there are among the philosophers, not to say divines, of the present age, who agree with them in thinking, that all effects take rise from a chain of causes, with the Deity at its head as the only efficient, so unavoidably linked together, connected with, and dependant on each other,  
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that the coming of these effects into event, in consequence of the unavoidable operation of these causes, is not only certain, but absolutely inevitable. And they consider mankind, with all their powers, as so many links in this adamantine chain, no one of which can possibly fail in the production of the effect assigned to it.

Those, among the abettors of this scheme, who are capable of looking forward to consequences not very far distant, clearly and fully perceive its inconsistency with men's being free agents, and that it totally destroys the idea of moral good and evil. They accordingly declare with an honest, frank openness, that the distinction that is commonly made between moral good and evil has no foundation in nature, however well adapted it may be to vulgar prejudices and conceptions. And they are herein consistent with themselves. And further, as it is supposed in this scheme of their's, that there is no evil in the creation but what is natural, intended for the production of good, and so unalterably connected with it as that it shall finally terminate in it, by effecting the complete happiness of all, without limitation, or exception, it reflects infinitely less reproach upon the Deity than the scheme of those, who would graft free agency upon the doctrine of fatality, and ill-desert in men, upon the operation of causes over which they have no power; and, as the result of all, fix vast multitudes of them in the place where they shall be tormented

mented day and night, without intermission, forever and ever. This is the scheme embraced by some at this day, and by some too who are called divines, and would be looked upon as the only orthodox ones among their brethren. But it is so grossly false an one, so debasing to the nature of man, and so dishonourary to the perfectly benevolent God, that it is strange any should entertain a favourable opinion of it.

The chief thing they say in its support is, that it leaves mankind at liberty to do as they shall please, to conduct without restraint conformably to what they have willed, and chosen. And what greater liberty can be desired? If we may not be thought capable of acting morally well or ill, while we are able, without hindrance from exterior causes, to do as we chuse to do, what can make us moral agents? What more is necessary? What more are we comel'd us of, from any perception of our minds? The answer is at once obvious. It is not true, that our perceptions go no further than to assure us, that we can do as we have willed, and are pleas'd to do. Besides this, and far beyond it, they certify it to us, that we are at liberty to will or not to will, to chuse or not to chuse, the doing of these and those actions. We feel in ourselves a power over our volitions, and such a one as enables us to direct, suspend, reverse, or put an intire stop to them: Nor, unless we were possess'd of this dominion, could we be agents, however great liberty might be allowed

allowed us in bringing into event what we have previously willed. It is essential to free agency, and such a use of it as to make us capable of good or ill deserts, that our volitions, upon which our actions follow, should be within the reach of our command. The birds of the air, and the beasts of the field, will and chuse what they do as really as we men; and it may, with as much truth, be said of them, as of us, that they do as they are pleased to do. Their whole course of conduct is the effect of previous choice and pleasure. But we never call them agents, nor do we esteem them such. And why? The reason is, because they have no power over their volition. They are effects produced in them by the operation of causes, not within their governing command. The same may be said of mad-men. Their actions are voluntary. They do nothing, but in consequence of previous will and pleasure; but we do not account them capable either of moral good or evil. Should they do ever so much mischief, we do not charge them with ill desert, however loud we may be in complaints that they are not restrained from doing hurt, by being kept under due confinement. And what is the reason of our thinking thus differently of distracted men, and others who have the full use of their mental powers? The true and only reason is, the former are hurried on to volition by a wild impetus, over which which they have no power; but the latter have it in their power, to restrain  
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and govern their wills and choices: Nor, unless they were endowed with this power, would it consist with common sense to think, or speak, of them as moral agents. If, instead of being the causes of their volitions, they were produced in them as unavoidable effects of an established concatenation of causes exterior to them, and over which they had no dominion, not more than they have over the palpitation of their hearts, or the motion of their lungs, they might be conscious machines, meer passive instruments, capable of being wrought upon in various ways; but agents they could not possibly be. With respect to them, the application of the words, virtue or vice, reward or punishment, would be nothing better than so many unmeaning sounds. Most certainly, the ideas those words are made the signs of, in common speech, could not be applied to them with the least degree of propriety, I might rather say, without the greatest absurdity: What conceivable absurdity can be more shocking to the human mind, not corrupted with a false glare of vain science, than for men to commend or blame themselves, or for others to do it, for what they are no more the causes of, than of the beating of their pulse, and could no more prevent than the ebbing and flowing of the sea, the rising or sitting of the sun, or the motions of any the stars they see rolling in the heavens!

It may be worthy of remark here, this plan of fatalism is wholly the product of metaphysical subtilty, and on direct contradiction to the  
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invariable consciousness mankind have of a power within themselves to give motion to the faculties, both of their souls and bodies. Nay, even those who pretend to believe the doctrine of fatal causality, directly contradict, by their practical sentiments, and in a steady uniform course, what they profess in words. For their whole conduct in life is just as their's is, who really think they are possessed of an active self-moving power, and are the causes of their own volitions, and the effects consequent upon them; and, I may add, just as it would be, if they were fully of the same speculative opinion. Their practice in life is a confutation of their faith in theory.

It is readily allowed, liberty in man, in opposition to necessity, is one of the great wonders of God. The power in our nature that constitutes us free agents is an amazing contrivance of infinite wisdom. The modus of its existence and operation is too great a deep for us to fathom. It has tried, and puzzled the greatest geniusses in all ages, and in all parts of the world. And, perhaps, we shall never be able, at least on this side mortality, to take in a comprehensive idea of it. But is this a good reason why we should deny, or dispute, the real being of such a power in our constitution? Do any know, or can they, by metaphysical searching, find out the nexus between soul and body? Can they tell us how they influence each other? And yet, it is certain there is this nexus,  
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and mutual influence between them: Nor can it be disproved by all the subtilty of vain reasoning. The same may be said with respect to the power of man over his volitions, and consequent actions. The manner of its existence goes beyond our investigation; but the real existence of such a power can never be disproved, however it may be darkened and perplexed. We feel it to be a truth, in consequence of which we are, in a reasonable sense, masters of ourselves. Our daily experience, if attended to, will indubitably assure us, that the exertions of our minds and bodies are under our own dominion.

The plain truth is, such a power in men as will make them causes, real proper causes, of their volitions, and the effects consequent upon them, is the grand supporting pillar of the world, considered as moral. Take this away, and it at once falls into desolation and utter ruin. If men's volitions, and their consequent effects, are the result of invariable necessity, in virtue of exterior causes so inviolably connected, as that they will, and must, come to pass, the author of this connection, which, according to this plan, is God, is the only agent in our world, and the only efficient, and real author, of whatever has been, or shall hereafter be brought into event; not excluding any of the most complicated villanies that have been, or may be perpetrated by any of the sons of Adam. Is this a scheme of thoughts fit to be embraced by intelligent creatures? Will it not directly;

rectly, and certainly follow, from the supposition of its truth, that virtue and vice are idle names, having no reality in nature? That men's accountableness to God, and liableness to be punished, upon the foot of ill-desert, are vulgar notions only, incapable of any solid support? That the character of God, as a moral Governor, is a vain imagination? And, in a word, that religion, whether natural or revealed, is a senseless pretence, suited only to serve the purposes of politicians and priests? It would indeed, upon this scheme, be ridiculously absurd to suppose there ever was, or could be any such thing.

Having thus evinced, from our conscious perceptions, that we are the subjects of an inward, governing power over our faculties, in virtue of which we are constituted free agents, as being the true and proper causes of our volition, and consequent actions, it will be easy to point out the benevolence of the Deity in putting this power in our nature. It is indeed the most important one we are endowed with, and the only basis of the highest happiness, in kind, we are made capable of enjoying. Had not this power been planted in us, we should have been passive instruments, not moral agents. It is this power that distinguishes us from all the various classes of inferior animals, and renders it possible for us to perceive pleasure far superior in its nature to any, they can be the subjects of. They have no perception of self-approbation, from a consciousness of having done well,

nor of the pleasure that is the natural result therefrom. This, perhaps, is the highest kind of pleasure communicable from the Deity; and it is perceivable only by moral agents. No beings, to whom the Deity has not committed the care of governing their faculties, can, by the exercise of them, deserve the applause of their own hearts, and enjoy the sublime satisfaction arising herefrom: But it is within the reach of the capacity of all such to feel this self-approbation, and consequent pleasure; and they may go on in this enjoyment with continually increasing degrees, in proportion to the degrees of virtue they discover in the good government of these various faculties, they are entrusted with the care of. What a nobly interesting power is this, that makes us free agents; as, by doing so, it makes us the capable percipients of happiness more highly exalted, in kind, than it could otherwise have been? It is not conceivable, wherein the perfectly benevolent Being could have made a better, and, at the same time a wiser provision for our enjoyment of the highest kind of happiness: Especially, if it be remembered, that he has constituted such a connection between this happiness he has made us capable of, and the actual enjoyment of it, as that it cannot be enjoyed but in consequence of a right exercise of that power, which characterises us moral agents; by which means, our coming to the enjoyment of this happiness, we may be the subjects of, is a constant, continually abiding,



abiding, and powerful motive to engage our care thus to exercise this power in our nature. What an admirable contrivance for our good is this? How amazingly does it illustrate both the wisdom, and benevolence of God! It may further enlarge our idea of this benevolence, if it be considered, that our Creator has, in like manner, constituted a connection between carelessness in the exertion of this power, or, in exerting it an undue wrong manner, with self-disapprobation, and consequent uneasiness. This, it is possible, may appear to some, at the first glance, an objection against the Divine benevolence, rather than a proof of it. But a little attention will shew the contrary. What was the design of our maker in thus connecting disapprobation and uneasiness with a careless, inattentive, and wrong exertion of the power that constitutes us agents? Was it that he might make us unhappy? No; but quite the reverse. It is an expedient he purposely contrived, a connection he wisely and kindly constituted, that he might prevent our making ourselves miserable. His view was, that we might perpetually carry in our own breasts a powerful motive to make ourselves happy. And one of the most constraining motives it is to put us upon focusing our determining power, as that we may hold existence with self-approbation and that heart-felt pleasure which results therefrom. I may properly add yet further here, this command we are entrusted with over the exertion of our faculties, and a right use of it,  
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are the true and only basis of that approbation of our Maker, and that consciousness of it within ourselves, upon which is raised, that inward peace and satisfaction of soul which yield the highest relish to life, and have in them a sufficiency to support and comfort us under all the various vicissitudes, trials, and events, we may be called to pass through, while in the world; and, what is more, inconceivably more, this inward sense of the approbation of God, the foundation of which is the right use of the power of determination we are endowed with, is that only which can rationally relieve us in the view of death, and inspire the hope of a glorious immortality beyond the grave, as the reward a good God will bestow upon those, who have acted their part well on the stage of life. Some, perhaps, may be disposed to treat the notion of happiness, as taking rise from the approbation of God, and the perception of it in the breast, with sneering contempt. But they ought, without fear of giving them any just occasion of offence, to be freely told, they are so formed by the author of nature, that they could not be chargable with this guilt, if they had not first corrupted, and in a great measure spoilt, their perceptive powers, by having walked according to the course of this world, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and mind. It is, beyond all doubt, owing to this, if any can find within themselves a disposedness to prophane this highly important and interesting matter with banter and ridicule,

If there is such an existing being as God (as there most certainly is) his approbation must be worth more than all earthly good; and a consciousness that we are the objects of it must yield inward delight, greater than can be conceived of by those whose affections are set upon the infinitely lower pleasures of time and sense. Free agency, in opposition to necessity, is that only which can, in consistency with reason, prepare the way for what we mean by the approbation of God. And it is an argument of his benevolence, and the greatness of it, that he has so made us, as that, by a right use of our powers, we may attain to a consciousness of being the objects of this approbation, and a perception of pleasure in connection herewith, or consequent hereupon, which exceeds all other pleasurable sensations, while yet it is only a foretaste of far more noble and exalted pleasures at God's right hand forever.

Besides what has hitherto been said, it may be further worthy of notice, our being free agents is that which not only makes us living images of the Deity in that perfection of his nature which is his greatest glory, but capable percipients, in a degree, of that happiness which is his highest. Did the exertions of the Divine Being take rise from the same necessity as his immensity, or eternity, he would not be a free agent. In order to this, he must be possessed of a power over his volitions, as well as a power of exertion in consequence of which he has willed and chosen.

chosen. Had he not this power, it would be absurd to attribute to him that liberty, which is inseparable from free agency: Nor would any displays of his perfections be morally valuable in the least degree, as they would, in this case, be the effects of natural necessity, not of free choice. It is their being exertions, following upon what was freely willed that gives them the denomination of moral, and claims our love and gratitude. This power in the Deity, which enables him with freedom, in opposition to necessity, both to will, and to do, is his greatest glory. And it is, perhaps, from the exercise of this power, that his blessedness, in the enjoyment of himself, principally flows. Now, by the implantation of a like power to this in our nature, we are made after the similitude of God; and, by a right use of this power, we are capable of being, in a noble degree, happy as he is, and with the like kind of happiness. Without controversy, the most exalted happiness, it is possible we should enjoy, is that which is connected with, and dependant on, a free, but wise and good, use of that power, in the exercise of which we may manifest it both to ourselves, and others, that we are benevolent, holy, just, faithful, and, in a word, perfect, according to our measure, as God is perfect. Had we not this power, we could be happy in no other sense, than that in which all merely percipient beings are so. Our happiness could not be the result of our own choice, in  
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the free exercise of our powers ; but the effect of exterior causes, over which we had no command. We might, it is true, in this way be in a degree happy ; but our happiness would not be worthy the name, in comparison with that which arises from a morally good conduct, in consequence of a right use of that power which makes us free agents. It may be subjoined here, the Supreme Being would not have been so happy as he might have been, had not this freedom of will and choice been one of the glorious perfections of his nature ; and the exercise of this perfection is invariably accompanied with delight. He is ever pleased with his elections, and they are a source of eternal satisfaction to him. The same may be said of us men, all due allowance being made for the infinite superiority of God to such creatures as we are. We could not have been so happy without freedom of choice, as we may now be in consequence of our being endowed with it. It is with pleasure we view ourselves as dignified with the power of free election, and the exercise of this power is always attended with satisfaction ; but with satisfaction of the highest kind, and in the highest degree within the reach of our capacities, when exercised in a due manner, and in consistency with what is right and fit. If we cannot discern the benevolence of God, and the greatness of it, in implanting this power in our nature, it should seem as though it must be because we have so blinded our eyes that we cannot,

not, or hardened our hearts that we will not, see and own it to the praise of the glory of his goodness.

Another power still, relative to moral agency, and an highly beneficial one, is *conscience*. No one will deny, that this is one of the powers implanted in our nature. It is an object of immediate perception. We all feel, or have felt, its operation in us.

It would carry me too far out of the way of my present design, should I enlarge in ascertaining with precision the more special office of this power, in distinction from the other powers we are endowed with. It may, however be needful just to say, that its office is that of a witness, not of a law-giver. The work appropriated to it is, not to point out to us the virtues we ought to practice, or the vices we ought to avoid, which would be to invade the province of some other of our powers; but to be in our breasts a testifier for, or against us, as we have done that which we knew to be right, or wrong. The apostle Paul has given us a very exact account of the work of conscience, in his epistle to the Romans. Speaking there of those Gentiles, in his day, who, not having the revealed law, yet practised, from the principles planted in their nature, the duties which this law prescribed, he says, they herefrom made it evident, that they were not wholly destitute of a rule or standard for their moral conduct, for that the law of God appeared from hence to be, as it were, engraven

engraven on their hearts : Upon which he adds, " their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another." This great apostle accurately distinguishes here between " the law written on the heart," and " conscience;" not making it the work of conscience to tell men what the precepts of this law were, but to testify in their favor, or disfavor, as they had been either obedient or disobedient to them; in consequence of which their thoughts either acquit or condemn them. This witness-bearing power of conscience may, it is true, be obstructed in its influence, and diverted in such a variety of ways; that the design and tendency of its implantation in us may not be so fully answered, as might be wished. Virtuous men may, through superstitious fears, wrong notions in religion, unreasonable jealousies and suspicions, lose in a great measure, the advantage that would otherwise arise from the testimony of conscience in their favor. And vicious men by blinding their eyes, and hardening their hearts, may so hinder the operation of its witness, as that the check it would give to their mad course of conduct is, in a manner, taken away. But it is capable, even with respect to such men as these, of being so roused as that its voice shall be hearkened to. In spite of all their efforts to the contrary, it will assure them, and upon testimony carrying with it stronger evidence than a thousand outward witnesses, if God has not been in their  
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thoughts, but they have behaved with irreverence and undutifulness towards him, that they are impious wretches; if they have gone on in a course of fraudulent, unjust dealing, that they are knaves; and if they have accustomed themselves to an intemperate, unchaste, lewd way of living, that they are thorough-paced debauchees. In these, and such like cases, it will say to them, as Nathan did to David, "Thou art the man." How advantageous a power then is conscience? How kindly, as well as wisely, is it adapted to promote, on the one hand, the right exercise of our moral liberty, and, on the other, to restrain us from all vicious practice? Our Creator therefore has manifested benevolence in giving this power a place in our constitution. And his benevolence will shine out with yet more conspicuous lustre, if we go on, and consider the affections, or passions, he has annexed to conscience, as auxiliaries in order to answer the end of the implantation of this power in us. They are such as these.

Joy, upon its giving testimony to a man's having acted his part well. If there are any, who have not felt the working of this affection, it must be because it was never in the power of conscience to set it in motion. For the pleasurable sensation to which we give the name of joy is naturally connected with its witness to a man's having done what was right. The apostle Paul has expressed this in very significant words. Says he, "This is our rejoicing, the testimony



testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity, and godly sincerity, not by fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." And what he has thus said perfectly accords with the truth of known experience. A conversation ordered, not by the wisdom of this world, but by the rule of strict virtue, will put it in the power of conscience to tell the man, whose character this is, that he has done well; upon which, agreeably to a Divine establishment, that affection, unless obstructed in its motion, will be excited, which will yield joy much greater, both in kind and degree, than their's, whose only pleasure is that which takes rise from their bodily senses. A most kind and powerful incentive this, to virtuous practice.

And as the witness of conscience, when in favor of a man, is connected with joy; so is its testimony, when against him, accompanied with shame. This is a passion we can much better understand the meaning of, by internal feelings than by outward description. And we are none of us ignorant of what is intended by it, as we have often had occasion, from our own perceptions, to know what it is. Its proper object is that which is, in its nature, reproachful. And as nothing is more reproachful than moral deformity, nothing is more powerfully fitted to excite the exercise of this passion. And the God of nature has so formed us, that we cannot easily avoid the motion of shame,

shame, upon having made ourselves morally deformed, especially when conscience shall speak to us, and tell us that this is our just character. There have all along been, it must be owned, and there now are those, who, by debauching their minds, and weakening, if not destroying, their natural sensibility, have, in a manner, eradicated the innate principle of shame, being able, without a blush, notwithstanding the power of conscience, to do those things which are grossly ignominious and reproachful. This is emphatically expressed, by Jeremiah, in these words, "Thou hast a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed." And again, "Were they ashamed, when they had committed abomination? Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush." But this is not the ordinary state of vicious men. Few, comparatively, are so blinded, and hardened, as not to be filled with confusion of face, when conscience tells them in direct and positive terms, that they have been, and know that they have been, adulterers, fornicators, oppressors, extortioners, and the like. Such is the turpitude of these vices, and such the suitableness in their nature, to excite shame, that this passion, when they have committed these abominations, and conscience testifies to them that they have, will be put into motion, in a less or greater degree, even by an established constitution of heaven, till the very passion itself has been so debilitated, as to have no power to raise a blush. And it is in kindness

to the world, that the God of nature has implanted in man this passion of shame. It is one of the strongest restraints from an undue, wrong use of our moral liberty. And was it not for this powerful restraint, mankind would be more abandoned to vicious conduct than they now are, as we may reasonably conclude from the mad behaviour of those, who, by their debaucheries, have so suppressed the operation of this passion, as that they are able, notwithstanding its implantation in them, to commit abominations in almost every kind, without being ashamed of what they have done. But it may be worth remembering here, even these shameless livers in the practice of vice may, upon some solemn alarm in providence, have their conscience so awakened, as to bear witness to their abuse of their moral liberty in so lively and powerful a manner, as to disenable them to look back upon their past follies without the emotion of shame, and to a degree that will not suffer them to live at ease. The exact truth is, Such is the moral deformity of vice, such its ignominious and disgraceful nature, that it is naturally fitted to excite shame; and there will accordingly be the perception of it in the breasts of wicked men, whenever they live in the practice of it, and it is testified to them by conscience that they have done so, till by an habitual course of immoral conduct, they have so blinded their eyes, and stupified their hearts, as to be past seeing and feeling.

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There is yet another passion capable of being excited upon the witness of conscience against a man, and this is that uneasy sensation, which is signified by the words, remorse, regret, horror of mind. Few there be, perhaps none, but have felt, in a greater or less degree, the meaning of these words, and of the passion intended to be pointed out by them; and they know also, and from inward perception, that it is a kind of uneasiness quite different in its nature from every other. It is essentially connected with self-condemnation, a consciousness, and feeling of ill-desert, upon having done wrong. And the pain of mind capable of being excited herefrom is inexpressibly great. The wise Solomon has said, "a man may sustain his infirmities, but a wounded spirit who can bear?" And this observation of his has often been verified in experience. Such has been the pressure of remorse, in consequence of the testimony of conscience, that it has exceeded the patient's art as well as ability to live under it without sensations of distress beyond all description. Some may disposed to think, that this is an argument of defect in the display of the Deity's benevolence, rather than an illustration of its greatness. But such a mistake in their apprehensions must arise from not duly considering the design, and tendency of the connection between this remorse, and the witness of conscience against a man, which is, that he might be powerfully guarded against vicious practice, which will

not only deprive him of the happiness that is peculiar to morally good conduct, but expose him to ruin as the final result of a licentious, debauched course of life. In this view of the matter, the bitterest remorse, from a sense of guilt, is an argument of kindness in our Maker; yea, of the greatness of his benevolence in thus taking care that we might be happy, and not miserable.

I have now said what was in my intention to offer, in illustration of the Divine benevolence, in the provision he has made, by the constitution of the nature he has given us, that we might be morally happy.

Before I proceed, I shall subjoin a thought not unworthy of notice, though it should be a digression. It is this.—The passions of shame, and remorse, upon the conviction of conscience, are not only an illustration of the Deity's benevolence, in guarding us against an ill use of our elective power, but a strong proof that we are endowed with this power. Every one knows, from what he has felt within himself, the difference between these uneasy sensations, that are occasioned by evils, which are the effects of exterior causes, whose operation is necessary, and over which we have no command; and those that are the production of our own folly, in misusing the power we have over our own volitions. Uneasiness will be excited in a man's breast, when he meets with disappointments, losses, and misfortunes, which were brought  
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upon him by mechanical causes, in a train of necessary operations ; but he will not feel remorse, self-condemnation, and conscious guilt. And why ? The true reason is, because these evils, however grievous, are the effects, not of his own will, or choice, but of causes extrinſick to himſelf, and whoſe operation it was not in his power to counteract. A man that is born blind may feel the emotion of uneaſineſs on this account, he may be ſorry, and wiſh he had not come into exiſtence with this defect ; but he cannot reproach himſelf for it, or feel the leaſt degree of guilty remorse : Whereas, if he loſt his ſight by an intemperate, debauched courſe of living, he will, if conſcience is ſuffered to do its office, be ſelf-condemned, and filled with bitter reſentments againſt himſelf. In like manner, if the lightning of heaven ſhould deſtroy the life of his wife, or child, he would feel the working of grief, but not of ſhame, or remorse : Whereas, if he maliciously laid violent hands on them, and ſlew them, he would, if he was not a monſter, reproach and condemn himſelf, feeling that bitter remorse which flows from great conſcious guilt. What now ſhould be the reaſon of theſe different ſenſations ? It can be no other than this, that there is a difference in the cauſe of their production. If a man had no power over his volitions, but they were the effects of inſeparable neceſſity, in virtue of a previous concaſionation of cauſes, he would be no more to blame, nor could be any more

the subject of remorse, than fire which occasions mischief, or a stone that breaks a man's head by accidentally falling from some height. The plain truth is, the sensations of shame and remorse are grafted on the supposition of liberty of choice, in opposition to necessity. Take away this liberty, and consider men's volitions, not in their power, but as effects produced in them by causes exterior to them, over which they have no controul, and they are not, nor can be, the subjects of blame, or of that shame, and remorse, which flow from it. And as we are so constituted by the author of our beings, as that we shall, and must, blame ourselves in consequence of certain volitions, and effects proceeding from them, and feel shame and remorse upon this account, it should seem as evident as it well can be, that we have within ourselves a power to will, or not to will; to chuse, or to refuse. We certainly think we have this power; and we have, at the same time, as much reason for this conception, as we should have, if this was the real truth. And if it is not, we are so made as that, by deception blended with our very nature, we are inevitably influenced to condemn ourselves, and feel the anxieties of guilt, and bitter remorse, for what we are no more the causes of, and no more worthy of blame for, than being laid senseless by an apoplectic fit, or a stroke of the numb-palsy.

I now go on, in as brief a manner as I well can, farther to illustrate the Divine benevolence

from the providential care he has taken, not only to perpetuate the existence of percipient beings, in all their various classes, but to support them in life, and to render it, agreeably to their respective natures, comfortable and pleasant to them.

Existence in our world is perpetuated, with respect to all the classes of percipient beings, not by a continued prolongation of life in the same individuals, but by a succession of others of the same kind, in their room, as they, in various periods, are taken off from the stage of time. And an admirably wise and benevolent contrivance this is for the bestowment, and enjoyment, of more life and happiness, than there could have been, if existence had been perpetuated without death, in the same individuals; as we shall have occasion hereafter to point out particularly. In the mean time, it is to be observed, that this succession in percipient life is effected conformably to a general established law, that of propagation, which extends to all orders of percipient beings, from the highest to the lowest. Almighty God, without all doubt, could, if he had so pleased, have constantly supplied the place of all individuals, of every species, as they ceased to be here any longer, by bringing new ones into being, as he did the first of our race, by immediate creation; but he chose rather to do it, by the intervention of second causes, operating under his influence and direction. It would have argued benevolence,



lence, and to an high degree, had he perpetuated life and enjoyment in the former of these ways ; but, as his benevolence is always manifested under the guidance of wisdom, he has preferred the latter of them ; and with good reason. For amazing skill and contrivance are displayed in carrying into effect this law of propagation ; and it is so done, in concurrence with other wisely contrived laws, as to set off the goodness of God in the most conspicuous lustre. This is a point we shall more fully consider afterwards in its proper place. I shall therefore only say at present, if the giving of life, and a capacity of enjoying happiness, to vastly various classes of beings, with innumerable individuals in every class, is a proof of benevolence, it must be a greatly enhanced evidence of it, to perpetuate this life, and capacity of enjoyment, in so many successions, through all ages, from the beginning of time. It will surely betray blindness of intellectual sight, or badness of heart, if we cannot discern the display of riches of goodness, in thus making provision for prolonging, and multiplying, both life and happiness to such millions of creatures.

The manifestation of the Divine benevolence is likewise marvellously conspicuous in the care God continually takes for the preservation and comfort of life in all the classes of percipient creatures, however numerous, when, by propagation, they are brought into existence.

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To support life, so as that it may be enjoyed with pleasure, in a single individual only, argues benevolence ; it will argue it, in a still higher degree, should it be supported, with enjoyment, in a class of percipient beings, containing a goodly number of individuals : But how amazingly must the argument rise in strength, when the classes of creatures are numerous beyond conception, and the individuals in those classes much more so ! Did we behold, among men of large ability to do good, one who found within himself a heart to provide and distribute supplies to hundreds of persons, conflicting with the straits and difficulties arising from poverty, and in such noble measures, as to render life pleasant to them, and saw him going on doing this in a steady uniform course, accounting and feeling himself happy in the satisfaction of others from the communications of his bounty : I say, if we knew of such a man, what would be our sentiments of him in regard of benevolence ? We should think him a miracle of goodness. We should never mention his name but with honor, and esteem him worthy to be held in high reputation by all who have any degree of rational moral discernment. But what a nothing is the benevolence of this good man, in comparison with the benevolence of God, whose bounty daily supports millions of men, and numberless millions of inferior creatures, has supported them through thousands of past successions in life, and will yet support them,

them, having settled an establishment herefor, till time shall be no more.

The preserving providence of God extends even to vegetables, who, in all their kinds, and individuals, have life though without perception; which life is preserved and perpetuated by succession, and so as to manifest all-wise goodness, though not to those existences themselves, not being capable of enjoyment, yet to others, who, together with life, are endowed with a perceptive power. Of these I am now more particularly speaking, and they are all the providential care of a good God. He maintains life in them, in their numerous classes, and still more numerous individuals, and carries it on to its appointed state of maturity and perfection, and all along with a balance of pleasure in their favor. Whether they are men or beasts; whether they are fowls of the air, or fishes of the sea; whether they are insects, or other animals so low in the descending scale of subordination, as not to be visible to human sight, but by the help of glasses; the benevolent God is the grand efficient in supporting their life, and providing for its comfort. It is true, they are both supported, and provided for, by the intervention of second causes; but, far from lessening, this increases the greatness and glory of the Divine goodness. Did God immediately preserve and happy life in his creatures, the beneficence hereby displayed would be confined to a single act of  
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his power only ; but as he does this by a train of intervening means, and instrumental causes, his goodness is, as it were, multiplied in proportion to the variety of these wisely adapted means and causes. For they are all instances of goodness, as truly as one immediate act of power would be. A very sensible writer has pertinently expressed himself upon this head, in these words ; “ whatever God effects by the interposition of means, and a train of intermediate causes, he could produce by his own immediate power. He wants not clouds to distil rain, nor human industry to make the earth fruitful, nor the fruitfulness of the earth to supply food, nor food to sustain life. He could do this by his own immediate power. But he chooses to manifest his providence, power, wisdom, and goodness, in a variety of instances, and dispositions ; and yet, his power and goodness are not only as much concerned, and exercised, in this way, as if he produced the end without the intervention of means, but even much more : Because his power, wisdom, and goodness are as much exerted, and illustrated, in every single intermediate step, as if he had done the thing at once, without any intermediate step at all. There is as much power, wisdom, and goodness exercised in producing rain, or in making the earth fruitful, or in adapting food to the nourishment of our bodies : I say, there is as much power, wisdom, and goodness, exercised in any one of these steps,

steps, as there would be in nourishing our bodies by one immediate act, without those intermediate means." In the method of preservation therefore, which God has pitched upon, he has in admirable wisdom contrived so to exercise his goodness, as both to multiply and beautifully diversify the displays of it. For this is the real truth, with respect to every intermediate step in the way of preserving providence. It is by vapors exhaled from the earth and seas, by the heat of the sun, that the clouds are formed : it is from the clouds that the rain falls ; it is by the rain, and other concurring causes, that vegetables of every species, with their individuals, are preserved in life and growth ; it is by means of these vegetables, that innumerable multitudes of inferior perceptive creatures are supplied with food ; and it is from both these, that we men, the highest order of beings in this lower world, are nourished and supported in life and vigor. What an astonishing train of intermediate instrumental causes are held out to view, as made use of in carrying on the great and important work of preservation ! And yet, every one of these instrumental causes, as intended, established, and adapted, to accomplish the preservation of life, manifest goodness, and to a marvellous degree, as truly as if it was effected by one almighty act of immediate power ; and as justly give occasion for grateful acknowledgments to that infinitely benevolent being, who is thus good to  
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all his creatures, and continually so, as he every moment concurs with each one of these various subordinate causes by whose operation, under his influence, they are so provided for as to be supplied with the supports of life.

It may with pertinency be added here, that the benevolence of God, had it not been displayed under the guidance of perfect wisdom, would probably have preserved life, in the creatures to whom he had given it, in an immediate way by one continued single act of power. But his goodness, as manifested in such a way, would have been less, far less, than in the way of instrumental means and causes, the way in which it is now done. In order to convey a clear and just idea of this, let it be observed,

It is not conceivable, how the inferior creatures, in any of their classes, could have had pleasure in life, had it been supported without means, by a continued single act of almighty power. For it is by the means employed in preserving their life, that they are the percipients of most of that enjoyment they are made capable of. Was it not for the food they live upon, and the satisfaction they take in procuring, and then eating it, of what advantage would life be to them? In what way could they enjoy it, or be happy in its continuance to them? It is owing to the wisdom of God, in so contriving to preserve their life, as that his goodness is not only manifested, but the manifestation of it is multiplied in proportion to the multiplication  
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of the means that are used to this end, for that these means give rise to the delight they take in life. Had your life been preserved by an immediate act of power, where should we have looked for the happiness proper to their respective natures? Their life, so far as we are able to judge, must have been preserved in vain. There would have been nothing, which could have yielded them pleasure. The admirable contrivance discovered in their various senses, and suiting objects to them, would have been to no purpose. Both their senses, and these objects, would have been altogether useless. They could not have been the means of gratification to them.

And the same may be said of us men, so far as we agree with the inferior creatures, as to our animal part. We, as truly as they, are so made with respect to our bodies, that life, considered as bodily only, would have yielded us, comparatively, little or no delight, had it been supported by an immediate exertion of the power of God. There would, in this case, have been no room for those instrumental, secondary causes, in the administration of providence, which are now, not only the means by which we are continued in bodily life, but the means also by which our life, in this view of it, is rendered pleasant and happy to us. To what purpose was the wisdom of God employed, in so curiously contriving our bodily faculties, and adapting so great a variety of objects to give

them pleasure, if it was not, that he might display his goodness, and the riches of it, by preserving life in a way, that should be closely connected with making it, at the same time, desirably sweet and pleasant? And this goodness of his is enlarged in proportion to the number, variety, and adaptation of those objects, which are, at once, the means both of preserving life, and rendering it more happy than it could have been, in the way of power immediately exerted from above.

But the goodness of God, in the work of preservation, with respect to us men, is not confined, as it is in regard of the inferior creatures, to the animal pleasure only, which he has connected with his continuing us in life, and the mediate way in which he does it. For, as we are endowed with intellectual and moral powers, as well as bodily senses and appetites, we are made capable of happiness, and in a noble degree, by the exercise of these powers upon the very means, and instrumental causes, by which we are supported in life. The amazing contrivance God has manifested, in the formation of our bodies with senses and appetites, and in the adaptation of such a multiplicity of objects to give them satisfaction within reasonable limits, is a vastly plentiful source of pleasure to the mind, as well as body, but in a far superior and more exalted kind. Is the body so fitted, by its make, to be supported, and, at the same time, delighted by this variety of objects,



objects, the mind also is so framed, as to be capable of being much more delighted in the view it may take of the riches of wisdom and skill, the Deity has manifested in so contriving the method of sustentation, as that, by means of it, we may enjoy the happiness that is suited to the nature of intelligent, as well as animal beings. The constitution, indeed, of the earth we live on is such, that most of its productions appear to have been intended, as they are well adapted, to carry into effect the work of preservation, so as that, we might not only be supported by a vast variety desirable for food, raiment, and the reasonable gratification of our bodily appetites, but that we might also take occasion, even from this very way in which our bodily life is supported, and with pleasure, so to exercise our mental powers, as that, unless it be owing to ourselves, we may be even more happy as intelligent, than animal creatures. And we may be still more happy as moral beings. For among all the objects in nature, though they are inconceivably multiplied with variety, there is not one that is suited to the preservation and comfort of life, and made use of by the Deity to this purpose, but what affords just matter for, and a powerful excitement to, those religious, devotional, grateful acknowledgments to our daily preserver and benefactor, which constitute no small part of that moral happiness we are made capable of. There are, perhaps, few truly pious persons, but  
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have felt more pleasure in contemplating, admiring, and adoring the amazingly wise, and benevolent way, in which they are supported in life with so much comfort, than they ever did from the gratification of their bodily senses. They certainly might; and if they have not, it must be ascribed to the dullness of their moral perception, or a faulty perversion of it.

The truth is, had the preservation of life, in the creatures on whom God has bestowed existence in this world, been affected by a single continued exertion of Almighty power, there would not have been that multiplied manifestation of the Divine goodness, which we have now so much reason to admire, and be thankful for. The alwise God, no doubt, could have made man, and the other percipient beings on earth, and preserved them in life, by an immediate act of power; but then their make, and the way in which they might be fitted for the enjoyment of happiness, must have been, in many respects, different from what it now is, and the whole constitution of the world also must have been modelled upon a different plan. Possibly, there may be such creatures, existing in such a world. But for such creatures as exist in such a world as our's, preservation in life, not by secondary instrumental causes, but an immediate exertion of power, would be so far from increasing, that it would lessen, the manifestations of the Divine benevolence. For, in the latter of these ways, its ma-  
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nifestation would be confined to one act only, whereas, in the latter, it is manifested in every intermediate step, and is consequently diversified, and multiplied, in proportion to the number, and variety of them.

There is yet, in the administration of providence, another proof of the Divine goodness, and a more striking one, to those who are believers in revelation, than any that have been mentioned. It is the redemption of man by Jesus Christ.

This great work of God, as we are told in the scriptures, from whence alone all our knowledge of this matter must be fetched, took rise from his rich love, and disinterested good will towards the race of man. The infinitely good God, if we may depend upon the bible, was not excited to purpose, or contrive, or reveal, or execute the gospel-plan of salvation, by any motive extraneous to himself; but benevolence of heart was the true source, and the only one, from whence it all proceeded. Had not God been moved by the essential, immense goodness of his own nature, he would not have come into it. The movement hereto was within himself. He consulted his own bowels of love and mercy, and from hence it was, that he employed his wisdom to contrive it. It sprang from this source antecedently to all other considerations whatever.

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But then it should be minded, the mission of his own son from heaven, into our world to become incarnate, that he might by being obedient to death, make atonement for the sins of men, and by his exaltation, in consequence of this obedient submission, at the right hand of God to finish the work, he had begun on earth, are the grand means by which this stupenduous benevolence of the Deity, in the business of salvation, is carried into effect. Only, it should be carefully observed, that neither the incarnation of the blessed Jesus, nor any thing he ever did, or suffered, or may be now doing in heaven, are to be considered as the original motive to the plan of redemption. For the intervening mediation of Jesus Christ was posterior to, and consequent upon, this good will of God, and one of the glorious effects of it. The scripture always views it in this point of light. Some may have expressed themselves, so as to lead one to think, that the blood of Christ was shed to pacify the resentments of God, and to produce in him a willingness to become reconcilable to sinful man. But such a mode of conception is highly injurious to the father of mercies, and utterly subversive of that benevolence in God, to which even the appointment of Christ to be the Savior was originally owing. So far was the blood of Christ from being intended to work upon the heart of God, and stir up compassion in him, that it was love,

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and because he delighted in mercy, that he " spared him not, but delivered him up for us all."

The incarnation, obedience, sufferings, and death of Christ are therefore to be considered as the way, or method, in which the wisdom of God thought fit to bring into event the redemption of man. And a most wisely concerted method it is. In this way, mankind are obviously led into just sentiments of the vile nature, and destructive desert of sin; as also of that sacred regard, which God will forever shew to the honor of his own governing authority: Nor could they, in any way, have been more powerfully engaged to turn from their iniquities, and submit to the government of heaven, as preparatives without which they can have no reasonable hope of being happy. Perhaps, there is nothing more powerfully suited to work on the human mind, impressing it with an holy awe and reverence of the Divine Majesty, hatred of sin and resolutions to forsake it, than a serious turn of thought to the sorrows and sufferings of Jesus Christ, appointed by the wisdom of an infinitely benevolent God, as the only way, in which he has judged it expedient to admit his offending creatures to the benefit of a pardon. What horrible ideas must that man entertain of sin, what adorable apprehensions of the authority, the righteousness, and holiness of the great Governor of the world, who considers, in a believing, realising, affecting manner, what the blessed Jesus did, and suffered, in his state

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of humiliation, as the only method conformably to which the alwise God, though infinitely good, has thought fit to make the grant of forgiving mercy?

Though this method of our redemption by Jesus Christ appears to be a wisely concerted one for the display of the Divine benevolence, on account of the reasons we have mentioned; yet we may, at present, be ignorant of other reasons which concur to make it so. We must indeed be acquainted with the whole affair of redemption, that is, with the whole effect that would have been consequent upon sin, and the whole effect of deliverance from it, and this throughout our whole existence; and we must also be acquainted with all the ways, in which there may be a connection between the mediating work of Christ, and salvation, before we may, with any face of propriety, pretend perfectly to see into the wisdom of this method of God's manifesting his benevolence. It may be a mean most wisely connected with its proposed end in ways unthought of by us at present. Nor is this an objection of any weight against its fitness as a mean well adapted to accomplish its end. For it is a certain truth, that moral means often look forward to distant futurity, and the wisdom of their connection, with the end to be effected by them, is not discerned, at least in perfection, till the end and the means can be compared with each other. The state of things, for instance, under the Mosaic dispensation,

dispensation, was, according to the new-testament representation, a moral mean in order to some future, distant end; and its fitness, as such, was little understood till the dispensation of the Messiah: Nor is it yet so clearly and fully perceived, as perhaps it may be, even in this world, in the coming days of greater light and knowledge, and certainly will be in that world, where we shall “know even as we are known.”

And this is undoubtedly the case, with reference to the method of our salvation by Jesus Christ. It was contrived by God, in order to his wisely displaying his benevolence towards sinners. And the scripture has said enough to satisfy us for the present, that it is a wise and fit method, particularly in those ways wherein we have shewn it to be so: But there is no need of supposing, that it has fully revealed the whole of what may be known in another world, tending to illustrate the wisdom of it; what I mean is, that revelation may not have explained in direct, and positively clear and full terms, wherein “the obedience of Christ to death” has virtue and efficacy in the affair of man’s redemption, as a wise, fit, and benevolent mean in order to this end. And, perhaps, it might not be convenient it should, had it been possible.

But some may say, this method of salvation, through the mediatory doings and sufferings of Jesus Christ, instead of magnifying the benevolence of the Deity, is rather a diminution of it, if not an inconsistency with it. And so it really

would be, if God had wanted pity, and the design of the mediation of Christ had been to excite it in him ; but this was no part of the intention of his undertaking for sinners. For it was God who sent him upon this work ; and he was moved to it from his own bowels of mercy. His own infinite benevolence of heart put him upon it : Nor should we ever have heard of Christ, or of the way of redemption through him, if the motive hereto had not been within the breast of God. This is the account the scripture always gives of the matter. Says our Savior himself, " God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." Every word in this text is emphatically expressive of the truth we are upon." God so loved the world," so greatly, so inconceivably ; was so moved by the original, essential, and eternal goodness of his nature, that " he gave," that is, of meer mercy and free favor ; without any thing obliging, or constraining him hereto ; he gave " his only begotten son," and for this most benevolent end, that " whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." You observe, the gift of Christ, through which we have redemption, sprang originally from the love of God. His own merciful nature put him upon the bestowment of this gift, and upon no less a design than the saving of men from destruction, and opening a way for their admission to  
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life and immortality in heaven. The same account is frequently to be met with elsewhere in the new-testament books. Says the apostle Paul, "God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." You perceive at once, that God's love is here represented as that which gave rise even to Christ's dying for us. To the like purpose is that declaration of the apostle John, "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten son into the world, that we might live through him." And the same thing is either expressed, or implied in many other passages in scripture, which it would be needless to mention. And wherein could the Deity have more illustriously displayed the greatness of his benevolence, than by the constitution of his own son to be the medium through whom salvation should be communicated to us?

It may perhaps be said, Had God, by one single act of free, sovereign grace, without any intervening means, proclaimed his readiness to pardon sinners, and admit them to his favorable notice, would he not have manifested more goodness, have more conspicuously displayed the riches of his grace, than he could have done in any other way?

It would, no doubt, have been evidential of goodness, if God had thus made an absolute sovereign grant of pardoning, saving mercy to the sinful sons of men; but there would in this way, have

have been a far less manifestation of it, than in the method the gospel reveals. Had the work of preserving providence been effected by a single act of almighty power, though it would have argued goodness it would not have done it, as has been shewn, with such conspicuous variety, and enlargedness, as by the intervention of means, and instrumental causes. The same may be said, with like truth, of the work of redemption. As it is carried into effect, not by an absolute sovereign grant from God, but in a mediate way, his benevolence is more gloriously illustrated than it otherwise would, or could, have been. For it is as true, with respect to redeeming grace, as preserving goodness, that it is enhanced by every intervening step by which it is carried on, and in proportion to the number and important worth of these steps. It argues benevolence in God, that he should find within himself an heart to entertain a thought of saving sinful man; his benevolence is greater, in that he should be willing to send his own Son, from heaven into our world, in order to accomplish this purpose of his heart; the benevolence is still heightened, in sending him, though "in the form of God," to take upon him "the fashion of a man;" and it rises beyond all conception, when we behold this Son of his love, after he had assumed human nature, "becoming obedient to death, the death of the cross," hereby making way for the bestowment of pardoning, saving mercy,

mercy, so as that the bestowment of it should be honorary to his perfections, and the authority of his government as Ruler of the world. Surely, the goodness, as well as wisdom of God, are displayed much more illustriously in this mediate way, than if it had been effected by one meer sovereign act of grace ! Yea, so far as we are able to judge, more benevolence is manifested in this method of our redemption, than in all the other works of God's providence ; and we have abundant reason given us, upon this occasion, to admire and exclaim, " Herein is love, not that we have loved God, but that he has loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins ! O the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of God ! It passeth all understanding."

## P A R T III.

*Answering the principal objections which have been urged against the benevolence of the Deity.*

**T**HE traces of goodness are so visible, in every part of the creation we know any thing about, particularly in this world of our's, and in the formation of man, his implanted faculties, and the methods by which, according to established laws, under the government of providence, they may be improved to his being as perfect and happy as can reasonably be desired, that it is strange any should call in question the Creator's benevolence: And yet, no one of his attributes have been more violently attacked. The great difficulty objected, is the evil there is in the world. This world of our's, and mankind in particular, its noblest inhabitants, which are represented as monuments of the Deity's goodness, are mentioned as proofs of a deficiency in this very point.

Say these objectors, if an infinitely benevolent Being is the Supreme Creator, and Ruler, whence came those imperfections, and positive evils, which abound in the world, and which all ranks of creatures are subjected to? How shall we account for the miseries, in innumerable kinds, which men in particular lie groaning

ing under ? What shall we say of the many diseases, accompanied with torment of body, and anguish of mind, to which they are liable; and which finally put an end to their present state of existence ? And could these things be accounted for, who can reconcile that *moral* irregularity, which has been introduced into the world, and its direful effects, with the super-intending agency and government of a being absolutely holy and good ?

This, in general, is the difficulty pleaded. And a very great one it is ; but a difficulty, it may be worth remarking, as we pass along, not levelled against Christians only, or the religion they profess, but against all religion, natural as well as revealed : Inasmuch, that let men's religion be what it may, whether they are Jews or Heathens, Deists or Christians, they are equally embarrassed with it. For it being a sure fact, that sin and misery are in the world, if they believe that a wise and good God made and governs it, they are all under like obligations to do what they can to reconcile these two things, which have such an appearance of inconsistency with each other. And this accordingly has been the endeavor of persons of all different religions, in all parts of the world. *Whence came evil ?* has indeed, in all ages, been a perplexing question ; and no one, it may be, has more puzzled the greatest pretenders to reason, as well as religion.

It was this that gave rise to the scheme of *two independent opposite principles* in the universe; the one good, from whom is derived every thing that is good; the other evil, from whom is derived every thing that is evil, whether natural or moral. It is observable, even this Manichean notion, however ridiculous, is yet founded on the supposition of such evidences of goodness in the creation, as are too glaring to be denied. The fault therefore of the system is, not so much that it disputes the existence of a benevolent cause, as that it weakly imagines the existence of another opposite one, equally powerful and independent; the supposition of which two co-ordinate Deities looks too much like an arbitrary contrivance, invented only for the sake of removing away the difficulty arising from the appearance of evil. To be sure, it is an opinion so far from being founded on solid proof, that it cannot be supported by any argument fetched from the principles of true reason. It is indeed a scheme utterly destructive of itself. For these two opposite principles being, by supposition, perfectly equal, it is impossible there should have been, either good or evil, unless by their mutual consent in operation; and it is impossible also there should have been this consent, upon any other plan than that, of the production of good and evil in equal proportions. And is this the truth of fact? So far from it, that, in the whole circle of existence, there is no appearance of such equality. The truth is, the  
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uniform, invariable tendency of nature, with respect to all the creatures we know any thing of, is their perfection and happiness within their proper sphere: Nor can it be truly said of any species of creatures that they do not actually attain to the enjoyment of good, much out-weighing the evil they are obliged to suffer; which could not have been the case, if there was existing an evil power of operation equal to the good one. Some of the creatures, upon this hypothesis, must have carried the marks of the evil principles that produced them, in the tendency of their constitution to misery, balancing the tendency of it to good: Otherwise, there would not be an equality in the exertions of these opposite equal powers.—But I need not enlarge in the refutation of so palpable an absurdity. However, the difficulty, which occasioned it, deserves to be seriously and thoroughly debated. And this will be more clearly and intelligibly done, by going over its several parts, and treating them distinctly as so many objections.

Only, it may be fit to make one previous general remark, which I esteem an important one, and desire may be kept in mind through the whole that may follow. It is this: that no objection ought to be esteemed sufficient to set aside the positive proof, that has been given of the Deity's benevolence, which, when thoroughly examined, will be found finally to terminate in

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ance in nature, capable of being alledged, ought to be looked upon as conclusively arguing an *inconsistency* with goodness, MEERLY OR ONLY because we may not be able particularly and fully to point out their consistency with each other : I say, meerly or only for this reason, because there is an evident difference between our not particularly discerning wherein the *consistency* of two things lies, and clearly perceiving that there is a *real inconsistency* between them. And could any *appearance* be alledged, between *which* and *infinite goodness*, the human mind clearly perceives a *real inconsistency*, it is readily confessed, it would be a sufficient restraint, in true reason, from attributing this perfection to the *Deity*. But the case is quite otherwise, where the amount of all that can be said concerning any appearance is only this, that it surpasses our ability particularly to trace the ways, wherein it may tend to *good*. And shall it be thought strange that there should be, in nature appearances of this sort ? It is no more than might reasonably be expected, considering the imperfection of our faculties, and incapacity therefrom to view the works of *God* as connected with, and dependant on, each other, in the Divine plan of operation. No eye but God's can take in the *whole scheme* of creation and providence. And therefore it is probable, the highest order of created beings are incapable of seeing perfectly into the reasons of the Divine conduct. Much less may it be thought,  
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that this should be the privilege of such comparatively low, weak creatures as we are. So far are we from comprehending the connection of the universe in its various parts, their mutual dependence on, and subordination to, each other, that our knowledge is confined to a few beings and things in it, and to a very small part of the scheme of God, even with respect to these. And shall it then be counted an objection of any weight against the goodness of God's works, that we are not able, in every instance, to see wherein they are connected with *good*? Ought it not rather, to be concluded, as to such instances, that the defect lies, not in the tendency of God's works, but in our incapacity to connect them together, and view them in the reference they bear to each other? This is certainly no more than a fit expression of humility and modesty in such short-sighted creatures as we are. And it were to be wished, that our inquiries into the measures of the Divine conduct were more generally made under the habitual influence of these principles. I would not be misunderstood in what I now say. I have no intention to restrain mankind, imperfect as they are, from reasoning with all freedom upon the present, or any other subject, wherein the Deity is concerned: Much less have I it in view to stop the mouths of objectors, only by bidding them be humble and modest, because God is above them, and his ways and thoughts high above their's as the heavens are high above the earth.

earth, I am sensible, that humility duly regulated by reason and religion, as it ought always to be, is no enemy to the freest debates, not those which relate even to the proceedings, of *God*. It is the pretence of humility, not the principle itself, that makes an out-cry against such inquiries. And to this false humility, at least in part, it may be owing, that so many absurdities, horribly reproachful to the nature and government of *God*, have been embraced in the world. It has doubtless too often betrayed men into superstition and bigotry, giving them a mean, abject cast of mind, whereby their intellectual faculties have been very much unfitted for the right discharge of their proper office. This in truth, is the rock which multitudes have split upon; not considering that submission even to the *Deity* ought always to be exercised under the conduct of reason and good sense. And if thus exercised, though it will be an effectual restraint from pride and arrogance, keeping men within the sphere of their powers, and making them modest and cautious, especially in regard of the things which they are able to consider not in their *intire connection* but *singly* and as *separate parts* of some *great whole*: Yet, it will, at the same time, put them upon due care and pains, in the use of their faculties, that they know the truth; it will dispose them freely and fairly to hear and examine whatever may be decently offered on both sides of a question, that they may be

rationally

rationally prepared to make a wise and impartial judgment in the case; in a word, it will influence them to form their sentiments, not according to the authoritative decisions of men, or the opinions generally prevailing in the places where they live, but according to the truth of things so far as they are able, under the advantages they are favoured with, be they more or less.

It will not be supposed after saying this, that the present remark is made with a view to take shelter under the pretence of that humility and modesty, which become creatures, especially such imperfect ones as men are, towards the great Creator. It is freely confessed, there are many things, possible to conception, which are absolutely inconsistent, in true reason with *infinite benevolence*. And it is as readily conceded, that we are endowed with faculties, enabling us clearly and certainly to discern this inconsistency: In so much that no solid reason can be assigned, why we should call in question the truth of our perceptions in this case, any more than in others. And should we do it, instead of humility and submission, I see not but we should discover downright contempt of our implanted powers. And, in truth, could any appearances, in all nature, be produced between *which* and *infinite goodness* the human mind could, clearly perceive a *real, positive inconsistency*, it could, acting rationally, assent to it as true that there was existing an *infinitely benevolent* first cause.

cause. Here therefore is full scope allowed for the objectors in the present dispute. And if they are able to produce, in the whole compass of being, any *appearances* that will excite in the minds of rational agents the idea of a *real, undoubted inconsistency with goodness*, it is granted their end is answered, they have argued conclusively. But then, it ought to be acknowledged, on the other hand, that if these *appearances*, in their last result, center in *ignorance*, and only prove that our capacities are scanty, and not formed to take in the whole of what is proper to be considered in the case; and that *good*, the *greatest good*, may be the production of these *appearances*, in the end, for all that we know, or can prove, to the contrary; I say, in this view of the matter, it ought to be ingenuously confessed, that *such appearances*, in strict reasoning, conclude nothing against the *benevolence of the Deity*. For this is certainly the truth of the case. And all the reproach that is reflected on the Divine goodness by this kind of arguing can reasonably be looked upon as no other than the effect of *ignorance*; not to say pride and arrogant presumption, in taking upon us to judge and determine in matters so evidently beyond the reach of our powers.

This general observation, which I believe no one will deny to be just, I esteem fully sufficient to answer the general objection against the *benevolence of the Deity*, which has been brought from the appearances of evil in the creation.

tion. However, I shall not content myself with this general reply, but proceed to a distinct consideration of the particular objections contained in the general one above-mentioned. And they may be reduced to these three, the *imperfect powers* of so many of the creatures who are capable of happiness; the *moral disorders* which have taken place in the world; and the *natural evils* which are so numerous, and turn so much to the disadvantage, especially of *man*.

1. The first objection against the infinite benevolence of the Deity is taken from the *imperfection* of so many of the creatures on this earth of our's. What a diminutive creature, comparatively speaking, is even man, the most perfect of them all? How small his capacity for happiness? And how much smaller still the capacities of the inferior perceiving beings, through their several ranks, in the descending scale, of subordination? And could it be thus, if God was infinitely good? Could not an infinitely benevolent Creator have communicated nobler capacities for happiness? And if he could, how can his not doing it be reconciled with the idea of him as an infinitely benevolent Being?

In answer to this difficulty, it may be said, the bringing into existence an absolutely perfect creature is not within the reach of infinite goodness, aided by almighty power. The very idea of a creature is essentially connected with comparative imperfection; as it derives  
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its being from another, is dependent on that other for its continuance in being, and is necessarily finite in its nature and powers. To suppose a created being infinite, would be to suppose it equal with its Creator; which is too absurd to be admitted. Absolute perfection therefore is an incommunicable glory of the only true God. And should there be a creation, comparative imperfection must exist in it, otherwise it could not exist at all. Consequently, if such imperfection is an evil, it is such an one as must take place, or there could be no display of the Divine benevolence. —But the truth is, meer imperfection is no evil, to be sure no positive one: Nor may God, with the least propriety, be considered as the author of it. This matter has been set in a clear and strong point of light by Arch-Deacon Law, in his 32d. Note on Arch-Bishop King's "origin of evil." His words are these, "God is the cause of perfection only, not of defect, which so far forth as it is *natural* to created beings hath no cause at all, but is merely a *negation*, or *non-entity*. For every created thing was a negation or non-entity, before it had a positive being, and it had only so much of its primitive negation taken away from it, as it had positive being conferred on it; and therefore, so far forth as it is, its being is to be attributed to the sovereign cause that produced it: But so far forth as it is not, its not being is to be attributed to the original *non-entity* out of which it

was produced. For that which was once nothing would still have been nothing, had it not been for the cause that gave being to it; and therefore, that it is so far nothing still, that is, limited and defective, is only to be attributed to its own primitive nothingness. As for instance, if I give a poor man a hundred pounds, that he is worth so much money is wholly owing to me, but that he is not worth an hundred more is owing wholly to his own poverty. And just so, that I have such and such perfections of being is wholly owing to God, who produced me out of nothing; but that I have such and such defects of being is only owing to that *non-entity* out of which he produced me."

It will probably be said here, we see in the creation innumerable beings with implanted faculties, making them the capable percipients of happiness in indefinitely various degrees, some in an higher, others in a lower, till we have got down to the lowest we can conceive of. Can this be the work of an infinitely benevolent Being? Would he have made so many creatures so imperfect, as to be capable of happiness in such low degrees only? If it was his pleasure to bring beings into existence, from non-entity, would he not if infinitely good, have endowed them with higher and more noble capacities for happiness? The obvious answer is this, if in a creation, in which there are beings inconceivably various in their capacities for happiness, there may be the communication of MORE

GOOD, than could otherwise have been communicated, it is so far from being an objection against the Divine benevolence, that these beings of lower capacities for the enjoyment of happiness were brought into existence, that it is at once an illustration, and strong proof of it. It is readily owned, if the whole result of communicated good was nothing more than the production of such imperfect beings, as are capable of happiness in a low measure only, it might be thought the Deity, if infinite in benevolence, had been wanting in the manifestation of it. But, if there are other beings gradually rising, in the scale of existence, to an inconceivable height in their capacities for the enjoyment of happiness, and of the most superior kind too, why should it be thought strange, that there should be imperfect ones also, in the like gradually descending scale? Especially, if they are all considered as parts of some GREAT WHOLE, severally concurring to make one universal, gloriously connected system, capable of yielding as much good, as the infinitely benevolent Being, guided in his exertions by unerring wisdom, has thought fit to communicate.

In this view of the matter, it is not necessary, that every system making the universal one, or that every creature in each system, should be equally perfect. For, though, with respect to particular systems, and beings, compared with one another, there should be ever



so great a *diversity*; yet this ought not, in reason, to be esteemed an objection against the Divine benevolence, if, upon the whole, there is the display of as much good as infinite wisdom has thought proper: Nay, upon supposition there may, in this way, be the communication of *more good*, than in any other, it would be an objection against infinite benevolence, if it was not in this way displayed. The creation is, in fact, a *diversified* one. It therefore lies upon the objectors against the benevolence of the Deity to make it appear, that *less good* is capable of being communicated upon this plan, than might have been upon some other. Until this is done, which never will be, as it has never yet been, no complaint can reasonably be made against the Deity, as having been wanting in his benevolence, on account of bringing into existence a creation, *diversified* in the manner we see this is in which we hold our beings.

There are only two ways in general, in which an infinitely benevolent cause is supposed capable of exerting itself in the communication of good. One is, by displays ad ultimum posse, that is, to the utmost in all instances whatever; the effect of which displays would be one order only of beings, the most perfect there can be. But this supposition is, perhaps, an impossible one, as it carries with it that which looks very like a contradiction. That which is infinite is unlimited, and not to be restrained within any bounds. To suppose therefore *à ne plus*  
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of exertion in an infinite being, is to suppose that this being is restrained within certain limits; which seems to contradict his being infinite. If the Deity is infinitely benevolent, his exertions in manifesting the glory of this attribute can never be exhausted. To suppose otherwise, would be to suppose that he was not thus infinite, strictly and properly speaking, the word *utmost*, or any other word of similar signification, cannot be applied to an infinite being, with respect to any of his communications. He ought rather to be conceived of, as having within himself an ability to go on communicating to eternity. Communications *to the utmost*, so far as we are able to conceive of the matter, are incompatible with the idea of an infinite ability to communicate. Besides, should the benevolence of the Deity (was this possible) be displayed in all instances to the *utmost*, this attribute of his would appear more like a *natural instinct*, mechanically and blindly urging him on to the communication of happiness, than a *moral disposition*, immutably guided in all its exertions by unerring wisdom, and in consistency with unspotted rectitude.—The other way of the Deity's communicating good, may be by limited displays of it, in particular instances; the consequence of which might be the production of creatures indefinitely *diversified* in their powers; some capable of happiness in one degree, others in another, and so on, in a gradual ascension, without discontinuity, to the highest

highest conceivable perfection. This, I say, may be the effect of limited exertions of benevolence, in an infinitely productive cause, with respect to the particular parts of some great and good whole. And the reason is obvious at first view. For if any one conceivable degree of imperfection will argue a defect in the exertions of an infinitely benevolent Being, another will argue the same thing with equal truth, and no stop can be made till we have got to the highest created perfection. If a low reptile, for instance, cannot be the production of an infinitely benevolent cause, because less perfect than a man; a man, for the same reason, could not have had existence, because less perfect than an angel; and an angel, for the same reason still, could not have been made, because less perfect than some being of a yet superior order; and so on, till there are no creatures but of the highest, and most perfect class in the creation. So that, if there can be any limited exertions of Divine benevolence, there are no creatures, be their capacities for happiness as low as any in nature, but may have existence in a scale of beings, which shall gradually ascend to as high perfection as infinite benevolence, guided by infinite wisdom, shall think fit to create.

The only inquiry then is, which of these sorts of exertion are capable of yielding, upon the whole, the most good. And it will not be denied, that the presumption is strong in favor of the latter; as they actually take place in a world,

world, that will readily be owned to be the effect of infinite benevolence, conducted by unerring wisdom, if it be possible, that *more good* should be the result of such exertions, than of any other within the reach of our ability to point out. And that this is not only possible, but highly probable, if not certain, I shall endeavour to evince by the following reasons, which appear to me strongly conclusive, especially if considered in one conjunct view.

The first, I would offer, may be set in the following light. We see, in fact, that the various species of creatures, living on our earth, are so constituted, as that the existence of one of them is no hindrance to the existence of another; but they are all well enough capable of existing together, as the extent of the world gives a sufficiency of room for it. The existence of man, the top-creature in this system, is no bar to the existence of any other class of creatures, in the descending scale, quite down to the lowest perceiving animal: But there is, as real a sufficiency of space for their existence, as if *he* had not been made; and as like a sufficiency for him, as if *they* had not been in being. And the same may be said, with equal truth, of all the other orders of beings, with respect to the existence of one another, in this part of the creation.—And should we extend our thoughts to other worlds, and the various classes of beings in them, there is the same reason still to think, that the existence of one of them

them does not interfere with the existence of another. *Angels*, and any superior order of beings, may as easily be made capable of existing, at the same time, as if one only of these orders had been created. And as to all the other classes of beings, in all worlds, they are doubtless so made, as to be all of them capable of existing, as truly as if only one class of them had been brought into existence.

Upon the truth now of these premises, it plainly follows, that the capacity for happiness, in the universe, is enlarged by means of the diversity of beings that have existence in it. And if the capacity is enlarged, it is, from hence, demonstrably certain, that *the quantity of good may be greater* than it could have been, if, instead of this *diversity*, fewer orders of beings, or a single one only, had been made.

It is, indeed, from this diversity of beings, duly subordinated to each other, that the *plenty* of nature arises. A few orders of beings only would not have served to this purpose. The creation is *filled up*, by that admirably nice and curious variety in the classes of creatures, whereby they are fitted to be proper links in the chain of existence; all concurring, as so many well adjusted parts, to constitute *one whole* without void or chasm. Thus we are naturally led to think, from what falls within the reach of our observation, in this system to which we belong. For, it is evident, that, if the order of men only had been created, the

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*room*, that is now filled with the inferior ranks of creatures, would have been a *vast chasm*. *Men* would have multiplied no faster than they do, if there were no *brutes*: Nor would they have been better accommodated. One of the *brutal* species does not hinder the existence, or increase, or support, of another; but there is both room and suitable provision for them all. And should any other classes of the creatures be pitched upon, they are so constituted as that there would be room still for all the other orders. And the same reasoning will hold good, if extended to all other systems. There are various ranks of creatures in them: And, perhaps, otherwise, they would not have been so full of *being* as they might have been.

The truth is, This world of our's is so contrived, as that we can no where discern in it any *void*. It appears, on the contrary, by means of the various ranks of creatures, gradually rising in perfection to *men*, the highest order of them, to be perfectly filled with being. And, if there is no *chasm* in this system, of which we are a main part, why should we suppose *one*, in the other systems constituting the universe? It is far more reasonable, from the analogy of nature, to think, that the gradation still goes on rising, in other worlds, beyond the bounds of our most enlarged imagination.

And what though, in this vast diversity, there should be orders of beings formed for happiness (at least in the first stages of their possible existence)

istence) in an imperfect, low degree only? Is it not sufficient to answer, that *no capacity* for happiness, however small, should be excluded the creation, so long as it is not an hindrance to the existence of other gradually rising capacities, till we have exceeded all conception: Especially, if it be added, that the leaving out any *capacity* for happiness, however diminutive, in this chain of beings, will proportionably subtract from the *sum total* of general happiness; which, in this case, would not be so great as it might have been.

The short of the case is, the creation of God, by means of this diversity of beings, gradually and regularly rising in perfection, even to the highest possible degree, becomes a *most perfect and contiguous whole*; demonstrating the riches and glory of the Creator's goodness, far beyond what it could have done, if the *continuity* had been broken, by the *non-existence* of any of the ranks of creatures, which now make it an *absolutely full and well-connected universe*.

It may add both light and force to the present argument, if I just subjoin, That the various ranks of creatures are so far from being an obstruction to the existence of one another, that their existence in this multiform bestowment of it, is a *greater blessing* than it would have been, if they had existed *singly and alone*. This is certainly the truth, in fact, with respect to the order of man. The existence of the other classes of beings below him is so far from being a disservice to him, that, if they had not

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been created, he must have enjoyed existence without many of the advantages, tending to the comfort of it, which he now possesses. And this is most probably the truth, with respect to all the other species of creatures. They are placed in such a degree of subordination, as to be fitted to be useful to one another: In-  
 somuch that every class of beings, by reason of this subservient diversity, enjoys existence under more desirable circumstances than it could otherwise have done. And this may be the real truth of the case, throughout the whole compass of *percipient* existence.

Another consideration, not improper to be mentioned, in proof of the point we are upon, is, its being plainly *impossible*, that any *single* order of beings could be formed capable of *all the good*, which *many* orders, variously endowed with faculties, may be fitted for the enjoyment of. It is indisputable, that every being, of whatever rank, whether high or low, must have its own proper nature. This, we at once perceive to be necessary, in regard of beings that have material bodies. They are indeed ranked into different classes, on account of their different bodily make. And a difference in bodily structure can no more exist in the same bodies, at once, than they can occupy different places, at the same time. And, as different organizations of parts, in *perceiving* beings that have bodies, are intended, among other uses, to form *different capacities*, in kind sometimes,



as well as *degree*; it is plain, that beings thus differently organized can no more be capable of *just the same good*, than they can partake of the same bodily structure. And the same is as true of *incorporeal* beings. They must, in all their different classes, have different *mental* powers: Otherwise, they could not be ranked into different orders. And there is no reason to think, but that different *mental* powers, as well as bodily ones, should form different *capacities for happiness*, and *such*, many times, as cannot exist in the same minds, at the same time: The consequence from all which is obviously this;—That should the most perfect order of beings be created that *could* be, it must be an order of some certain nature and constitution, which nature could not be capable of all the different powers of innumerably various natures, some of which, at least, are absolutely incompatible with each other. And if no single order of beings could be endowed with the various faculties of all natures, it is impossible they should be the subjects of all the various degrees and kinds of happiness, which these *natures* may be severally fitted for, and capable of.

Perhaps, it will be objected here, though no single order of beings could be capable of *just the same happiness*, which various orders might be capable of; yet one order possibly might be so formed as to be qualified for *greater happiness of another and more perfect kind*:

In reply whereto, it ought to be considered, that the first link, in the chain of *diversified* beings we have supposed, is the most perfect order that can be. And it is certain, if all the happiness of all the subordinate ranks of beings, be added to the happiness of this highest order, the *sum-total* will be greater, than if the happiness of this highest order only is taken into the account. And the strength of this reasoning will still increase, if it be remembered, agreeably to what has been already observed, that the existence of none of the subordinate ranks of beings is any obstruction to the existence of the highest, but that they may all exist together, and as free from interference, as if only one of them had been brought into existence.

Another argument still, to the purpose we are upon, is this; that the infinitely benevolent Being ought always to be supposed to exist himself in producing good, with *intelligence*, wise *design*, and according to some method discovering exquisite skill and contrivance. A mysterious something, capable of happiness without faculties fitted for such an end; or actually enjoying it, without regard to any stated method adapted to the purpose, is a supposition if not impossible in itself, yet entirely dissonant from the idea we entertain of good *wisely* communicated. In order to this, there must be faculties previously created and contrived for the perception of this good; and more than this, it must be the effect of the exercise of these  
 faculties

faculties upon their proper objects, according to some well-established constitution. And in a diversified creation, one filled with different ranks of beings, all variously endowed with capacities fitted to make them happy, according to stated laws, in a certain degree; I say, in such a creation as this, there *may* be a manifestation of more art and contrivance in dispensing good, than in a creation in which one order only of beings should have existence, though the skill herein displayed should be as *great* as it *could* be. For it is indeed impossible, that *all* the methods of wise contrivance should be discovered in the make of any single order of beings whatever. And of this we have as good proof as we can desire; because it is evident from what we see, in fact, that some of *these methods* are of such a nature as to be incompatible with any one class of beings that can possibly be made. It is a contradiction that any order of beings should have a mental structure *only*, and yet, at the same time, possess bodies with various organs admirably contrived for the conveyance of sensations of such a kind. And unless the same beings could have bodies, and not have them, at the same time, it is impossible that the *whole* of that contrivance, which is actually discovered in the creation, could be manifested in the make and circumstances of any one order of beings that could be created. So that, had the goodness of the Deity been displayed towards one rank of beings only, however perfect,

fect, and not to numberless orders of them, variously endowed and situated, there could not have been those amazing discoveries of exquisitely wise contrivance and art, which are now visible in all parts of the creation ;\* obliging us to own the pertinency of those words of admiration, *How manifold are thy works, O Lord ! In wisdom hast thou made them all.*

Should any object here, Though just the same traces of wisdom which are discernable in the creation, according to its present plan, could not have taken place, if one order of beings only had been made ; yet this is no reason why an order could not have been made, that might have discovered greater skill and wiser contrivance, though of another kind. It may be sufficient to return a like answer to one we had occasion to give before, viz. That this very order of beings may be the highest in the ascending scale of existence, and compleat the manifestation of the riches of Divine wisdom, in the manner of communicating good.

But besides what has been hitherto said, it may be worth while to enquire, whether much of the most valuable kind of good could have been communicated, had not the creation been a diversified one, like to that which really exists. It will not be denied, that *intelligent moral* beings are the most noble, and formed with capacities for the highest good, in *kind* as well as *degree*. And perhaps, upon examination, it will be found, that a great part of the good they are capable

\* Vid. Taylor, p. 48, of his Key.

of is so essentially connected with a diversified constitution of beings and things, as that they could not possess it but upon this plan. It is certain, in point of fact, that the *intelligent moral* beings, in our system, do, from this diversity, receive, according to established laws, those numberless ideas, which are the source of all those acquirements in knowledge, which give them their whole *intellectual* pleasure. And it is from the same diversity that those various relations and dependencies arise, which are the foundation of their *moral dispositions*, and give occasion for the exercise of them, in infinitely various fit ways, to the production of all the happiness they are capable of. And there is reason to think, that this is the truth of fact, among all *intelligent moral* beings, in all worlds. I do not mean, that their ideas, the spring of their intellectual delight, are conveyed into their minds in just the same way that ideas are let into our's; or, that the relations subsisting among them, giving occasion for moral exertments, accompanied or followed with high pleasure, are precisely the same that take place among us: But what I intend is, that they *all* come by their ideas, the foundation of their intellectual happiness, according to some constitution, wisely contrived and adapted to such a purpose; and that they are also so endowed, and situated with respect to one another, as that there may be fit occasions for the exercise of their *moral powers*, in order to their perceiving the pleasure that is proper to

*moral*

*moral agents*. And it seems as though they could not otherwise, in a rational, wise way, enjoy the happiness that is suited to such kind of beings. It is true, if the happiness of *intelligent moral* creatures might be supposed to consist in indolent ease, or a meer inactive enjoyment of existence, there would be no room for dispute upon the matter: But such an *Epicurean* sort of happiness ought not to be ascribed to an infinitely wise agent as its cause, however benevolent; for it is not worthy of a communication from him. Happiness, in respect of *intelligent moral* beings, ought always to be conceived of as the result of *intelligent moral* powers, regularly exerted, according to established laws, wisely adjusted to the nature of such beings. They ought to be considered, as receiving their ideas, not by immediate infusion, but in conformity to some stated order, manifesting wise design and contrivance: They ought to be considered, as making a regular use of their *intellectual* faculties in the management of their ideas, in order to their perception of *intellectual* delight: And they ought also to be considered, as so situated with respect to other beings, as to have proper occasions for the exercise of their *moral* powers, in various fit ways, so as to enjoy pleasure herefrom.

And now, in a *diversified* constitution, there is room for the conveyance of all possible ideas into all various minds, not by meer impression, but in certain ways, and according to stated

ed laws, manifesting the greatest wisdom and design : And there is likewise all the scope that can be desired for all possible relations and dependences, from whence, according to the abstract reason of things, may arise a fitness and propriety in infinitely various exertments of *moral* dispositions, making the beings possessed of them wisely and rationally as happy as they can be : Whereas, in a creation of one order of beings only, be their perfection as great as possible, it is not conceivable, how they should be capable of that happiness which may naturally and wisely result from the contrary plan.

There is certainly one sort of happiness, which I esteem a consideration sufficient of itself to bear the whole weight of the present cause : I say, there is one sort of happiness (perhaps the noblest, and most God-like) which could not have place in the creation, but upon supposition of its being, in some measure, a *diversified* one. What I mean is, that if there had been one order only of beings, *equal* in perfection and happiness, there could not have been the *pleasure* that is the result of the *communication of good*. For it is only upon the plan of *diversity* in beings, that one creature can be the object of another's beneficence. Reduce the creation to a *perfect equality*, and all participation of that part of the Creator's happiness, the *communication of good*, is, at once, necessarily destroyed. For where the same perfection and happiness, both in *kind* and *degree*, is, at all times, equally possessed

fessed by all beings, it is evident, that *good* cannot possibly be communicated from one to another. And can it be imagined that the *Deity* would pitch upon a plan for the communication of good, which would render it impracticable for any of his creatures, either to resemble him in that which is his *greatest glory*, or to partake, in any measure, of that which is his *greatest pleasure*? There is no truly benevolent mind, but will readily be reconciled to a *diversity* in beings, rather than the *pleasure of communicating good* should be excluded the creation: And excluded it must be, if there is not some *diversity*. Upon any other supposition, not one being, in the creation could be the object of another's beneficence; and consequently, the noblest and most truly divine pleasure, that which arises from *doing good*, could not have place in the whole circle of existing creatures. So that it is evident, a *diversity* of beings is so far from being an *objection* against *infinite benevolence*, that it really flows from it as its proper cause. There could not have been the manifestation of so much goodness, if there had not been *some difference* between the creatures brought into existence. And the least attention will obviously lead any one to determine, that if goodness may be the cause of any *diversity* at all, no stop can be made, without continuing it down, through all variety of orders, so long as the balance shall turn in favor of happiness, or, in other words, so long as existence can be called a *good*, and pronounced *better than not to be*.



I shall only subjoin, upon the whole, that we know not but those beings, who are the percipients of happiness, in the lowest and most imperfect degrees, may be designed for a much higher state of existence. This may be possible to the power and wisdom of the infinitely benevolent Creator; and that he has not actually made provision for it, in the *plan* upon which he intends to operate for the *general good*, is more than any one can pretend to determine. It is highly probable from *reason* only, and certain from *revelation*, that *man*, though, at present, one of the lowest *intellectual moral* beings, is yet designed for exalted perfection and happiness. He is now in an *infant* state, compared with what this may be introductory to. And, for all that can be proved to the contrary, he may go on in *intellectual* and *moral* attainments, till he has reached as great perfection, and is possessed of as great happiness, as, at present, comes to the share of any of the ranks of created beings: Though they also may be supposed to be gradually rising in perfection and happiness, in proportion to their *greater* original capacities; so that the distance will still be preserved among the various orders of creatures, and go on to be so, forever.

II. I now proceed to the *second* objection, taken from those *moral* disorders, which, it is pleaded, could not have existence in the creation, if it was produced and governed by an infinitely *holy* and *benevolent* being. Such a  
 Maker:

Maker and Ruler of the universe, it is said, must have taken effectual care for the prevention of *moral* evil, and the unhappiness arising therefrom. It cannot be supposed, that a being infinitely averse from *moral* impurity would have suffered the works of his hands to be defiled with it. It cannot be imagined, that an infinitely *benevolent* Being would have left creatures of his own forming to such *immoral* conduct as would reflect dishonor on his goodness, by bringing unhappiness and misery into a world of his contriving and making? It is not possible that such a being as the Deity is represented to be, should place his creatures in circumstances, wherein they might pervert their powers, and involve themselves in ruin. These things cannot be. They are not worthy of an infinitely holy and good *God*: Especially, if it be considered, that the existence of *moral* evil cannot be conceived of without *permission*, at least, from the Deity: Nay, it cannot be supposed, but that he must have *foreseen*, not only the *possibility*, but the *high probability*, of its taking place in the world; and yet he suffered it to do so: Yea, so far was he from preventing it, that it seems as though some of the most important measures of his conduct were formed, upon the supposition of its *actual being* in the universe.

This is the objection urged at large, and, I think, in its full force, against the creation and government of an infinitely holy and benevolent

lent Being. And it is far from being a trifling one. Had it so been, such numbers of philosophers and divines, in all parts of the world, would not have employed so much of their time and pains in order to remove it. And it is, perhaps, a difficulty that cannot be perfectly removed, in the present state of human faculties. But this is no proof that it cannot be done. It ought to be remembered, that we men are but a low order of intelligent creatures; and what wonder is it, if that should be a difficulty, and an insuperable one, to us, which may be none at all to a superior order of beings. It is a certain fact that moral evil exists in our world; and it is as certain a truth, that God is infinitely benevolent. And should we find ourselves unable to point out so clearly and fully, as we might desire, the consistency between this fact, and this truth, we may, notwithstanding, keeping within the reach of our faculties, go so far as to say, and upon rational grounds, that which may be sufficient, if not to silence all objection, yet to satisfy ourselves, that moral evil may exist, and the Deity at the same time be infinitely benevolent. Let it then be observed,

Though the being of moral evil, in our world, is not denied; it may have been exaggerated. A great deal of this kind of disorder, it is readily owned, we are acquainted with; but not so much as has been pretended. If we may believe the representations of some, this world, by  
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reason of the vices, of all kinds, which are almost universally committed in it, is little better than hell itself. But it is not fair, in making an estimate of the corrupt state of the world, to enumerate all the horrid immoralities which have been perpetrated, at the same time overlooking the many shining virtues which have adorned the character of multitudes. The greatest vices can be matched with as great virtues. If some have sunk their *moral* powers so as to become capable of the basest and vilest actions; others have improved them so as to exhibit a truly God-like temper and conduct. And, it may be, notwithstanding the out-cry that is made of the wickedness of the world, if a just comparison could be made, it would be found, that it is far more than balanced with the *good* that is in it of the *moral* kind. But however this is, it is not disowned that there are *moral* disorders in the world, and many of them too, and of various sorts: Nor is it pretended, that this has not been the case in all ages; though it is very evident, that in *some* they have not prevailed to so great a degree as in *others*.

And now, that I may, in as clear a manner as I possibly can, offer what may be proper in order to account for this *appearance*, and reconcile it with perfect wisdom and goodness in the great Creator and Governor of the universe, it may be necessary to observe, that the *evil* specified in the objection, and called *moral*, includes  
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in it two things, *irregularity* in the beings chargeable with it, and *consequent unhappiness* as the fruit thereof, either by the *constitution of nature*, or *positive infliction* from the *Deity*. And I shall, accordingly, be distinct in speaking to each of them.

As to the *first*;—The very supposition of *moral irregularity*, as distinguished from *natural*, and meaning the same thing with *vice* or *wickedness*, is essentially connected with *free agency*, in the beings upon whom this guilt is fastened. Its nature indeed consists in *wrong determinations*, and *disorderly conduct*, which yet are *voluntary*, and argue a *wilful* misapplication of *moral* and *rational* powers. And as this is the true notion of *moral irregularity*, in contradistinction to meer *weakness* and *imperfection* in causes that are incapable of *blame*: I say, this being the true idea of this first part of *moral* evil, free agents themselves, and not the *Deity*, are the *sole* and *proper* authors of it. It takes rise intirely from them, and would not have been but for their corrupt choices, and voluntary perversion of faculties, which they might have employed to wise and good purposes.\* And shall the *Deity* be charged with want of goodness, for that which is not the work of his hands, but a production wholly owing to the creatures; insomuch, that it could not have existed, had not they abused the powers he was pleased to endow them

\* Vid. A thought in Hutcheson on vice being the degeneracy of powers designed for good.

them with, perverting their design and tendency, and by this means bringing unhappiness upon themselves, and confusion into the world.

But *could* not the *Deity*, it will be here said, have prevented this abuse of liberty, and perversion of moral powers? And if he *could* have prevented this mischief, how comes it to pass that he did not? And how can his not taking this care be reconciled with his character as infinitely holy and benevolent? In answer whereunto, I see not, I confess, but the *Deity*, if infinitely holy and benevolent, must have prevented this moral disorder, *if he could have done it*. Only, let it be remembered, when I say, *if he could have done it*, I speak not so much of a *natural*, as *moral* ability; an ability invariably guided, in all its exertions, by perfect wisdom, and in exact conformity to the abstract reason and fitness of things. And it should seem, as though, in this sense, it was not within the power of the infinitely benevolent Cause of all things, to have prevented *moral* defection. If it was, what imaginable reason can be assigned, why it was not actually done? And, in what possible way, can the *non-prevention* of it be reconciled with that goodness, which is attributed to the *Deity* as an essential character? Whereas, if he *could not* prevent it, in consistency with *wise* and *fit* conduct, it is a good reason why he did not do it; and he may notwithstanding be fairly and justly acknowledged as an infinitely benevolent being,

Being. And that this is the real truth of the matter, it shall now be my business to show. In order whereto, let it be observed,

If the *Deity* could have prevented the abuse of *moral* liberty, it must have been in one of these three ways, either by not giving *free agents* a place in the scale of beings; or by making them so perfect as to be incapable of any wrong conduct; or by interposing, at all times, as occasion might require, to hinder the *misuse* of *moral* powers, in beings that possess them, either in a higher or lower degree. These are the only conceivable ways, in which the *Deity* can be supposed to have it in his power to prevent *moral* disorder in the creation. And will any say, that he *must*, if infinitely benevolent, in one or other of these ways, have certainly prevented it? So far is this from being capable of proof, that there is good reason, on the contrary, to think, it was *naturally*, or *morally* impossible, that he should, in either of them, have done it.

As to the *first*;—The not giving *free agents* a place in the scale of beings would have been a gross reflection upon the *benevolence* of the *Deity*, instead of making way for its brighter display. For the *quantum* of good, capable of being communicated, would, upon this supposition, have been greatly lessened, and indeed reduced to a very pittance, comparatively speaking: And the good enjoyed would have been of the lowest and most imperfect kind too. For there is no *pleasure* like that which is intel-

*lectual* and *moral*; none so noble and divine in its nature, none so satisfying to the subjects of it. Besides, if there were no *moral agents* existing, there could be no way for the *Deity* to manifest his *moral* glory, which is his greatest. He might, it is true, by creating and governing an *unintelligent* world, or creatures in it endowed with *intelligence* in so low a degree as to be incapable of *moral* conduct, display, in a measure, both power, and contrivance, as well as goodness; but he could make no manifestation of holiness or justice, or those modifications even of goodness, mercy, forbearance, long-suffering, forgiveness. If there was no *free agency*, there could be no virtue, nor any of that sublime happiness, which may be the result of it. There could not, in one word, be any such thing as *moral government*, without which the richest displays of the most amiable perfection could have no place in the creation. And would it now have been for the honor of the *Deity* to have withheld the blessing of *moral* liberty, by not giving existence to *free agents*? Can it be thought *fit*, that such an *intelligent moral agent*, as *God* is, should create beings, but with such constituted powers, as that in the whole circle of existence, there should be no living images of himself, no creatures made capable of that *intelligent moral* conduct, or of that *rational* moral happiness, which compleat his character as a most glorious and blessed Being? Is it reasonable that  
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the high privilege of *moral intelligence* should be excluded the creation? That no being should be made capable of *virtue*, and that truest kind of happiness which is the result of it? Will any say, it is better there should be no *free agency*, than that beings should be liable to abuse it? This cannot justly be pleaded; for if *free agents* are liable to abuse their liberty, they are also capable of making a good use of it, to their consequent, unspeakable happiness. And can it be thought right, that so glorious a capacity for happiness as *free agency*, should be totally withheld from all beings, because it might possibly have been perverted in its tendency? What though some should abuse it, might not others make a wise improvement of it? And why should this be prevented? Why put out of their power, by the *non-bestowment of freedom of choice*?

It is true, if the gift of *liberty* was likely, upon the whole, to produce more *moral* evil than good, it would be a sufficient reason why it should be withheld. But there is no solid ground on which to build such a supposition. It may be justly questioned, whether this is the case, even in this world of our's, where moral freedom is enjoyed but in a low and imperfect degree: Much less may it be thought to be so, in other words, among superior orders of *intelligent moral* beings. Perhaps, taking into consideration all the ranks of this kind of beings, in all parts of the creation, but a *few*, comparatively,

comparatively, have misused their *moral freedom*. To be sure, it is not known to be otherwise; and therefore, for all the proof that can be given to the contrary, the effect of moral and intellectual endowment *may* have been the happiness of the creation, inconceivably beyond what it could have been, if these endowments had not been bestowed. And should this be the truth of fact, as it may be, can it be thought fit, that so much happiness should never have been, by not giving existence to *free agents* at all, because some have foolishly misimproved their moral liberty to their own disadvantage? It cannot, with any reason, be pretended.

But, it will be said, could not the *Deity* have made *all* free agents *so perfect* as to be *incapable of wrong conduct*? This is the *second way*, in which it is imagined, that he might have prevented *moral evil*, and would have done it, if he had been infinitely benevolent. To which it may be replied as follows.

That, if *all* free agents had been made with such *perfect* moral powers, as is here supposed, it must have been an unavoidable bar to that *diversity* in the creation, which, as has been already proved, is so far from lessening the quantity of communicable good, that it really makes way for a richer and fuller communication of it, upon the whole, than would otherwise have been possible. And, was there no other reason, this must have been effectual to restrain the infinitely benevolent *Deity*, from making  
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all beings so nearly equal in their rational and moral powers.

But, letting this pass for nothing, it may be justly questioned, whether the creation of intelligent beings *so perfect* as to be *incapable of misconduct*, is not an *impossibility* in the nature of things. For, should we suppose creatures as perfect as they can be, they would yet be *finite*: And how *intelligent moral* beings that are *finite* should be wholly incapable of becoming faulty, in any kind, or degree, is beyond all conception. It is certainly more reasonable to think, that the infinitely perfect Being is the *only one* that can be *absolutely impeccable*. For he only can see, at once, all the possible connections of ideas, and unerringly know what is right and fit in all cases whatever: And he only is immutably and everlastingly disposed to chuse and act according to the truth and reason of things.

But, should it be supposed *naturally* possible for *free agents* to be *at once* created so perfect as that it could not be that they should err in *choice* or *behaviour*, it will still remain a question, whether it be *morally* possible, i. e. possible in consistency with wise and fit conduct in the Deity? And, perhaps, thus *morally* speaking, it is not possible. This, it is probable, may seem a paradox to some; but there are reasons for its support, which are justly conclusive; though they should not amount to strict demonstration.

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So far as our knowledge extends, it is certain, in point of fact, that *intelligent moral* beings are not when they *first* come into existence, either so *perfect* or *happy* as they may be, and indeed cannot but be, if the tendency of their faculties is not obstructed. They are so formed, some of them at least, as to be capable of progress, both in perfection and happiness, to a very high degree : Which progress is very much dependant on themselves, the use they make of their implanted powers, and the pains they are at to cultivate and improve them. Thus it is with *man*, the highest intelligent moral agent we are particularly acquainted with. His faculties, at first, are feeble, and not to be exercised but in a low degree : Yet they are so made as to be gradually capable of enlargement, even beyond what could have been imagined, if it had not been for experience. And this enlargement is, in a great measure, though not wholly, dependent on himself : inasmuch, that he will be in respect less perfect and happy, both as an *intelligent* and *moral* being, in proportion to the use he makes of his faculties. Neither the perfection, nor happiness, he is capable of, is communicated to him *independent* of his own *choice* and *conduct*, but in *connection* therewith, or in consequence thereof, and as a reward therefore. If he makes a wise and good improvement of the powers he is endowed with, he will reap the advantage of his pains in corresponding attainments in perfection and happiness : Whereas, if  
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he takes no care to cultivate his faculties, the effect will be, their remaining in a low, imperfect state: Nay, such is the constitution of his nature, as we may see afterwards, that, by misimproving them, he may not only check their growth, but bring them into a declining condition, so as that they may become gradually unfit to yield him any fruit but that of unhappiness and misery.

This is the truth of fact, respecting the highest, if not the *only*, order of *intelligent moral* beings, in this world. And the fact, so far as we are able to judge, is perfectly agreeable to what is *wise* and *fit* in the reason of things. As the beings, we are speaking of, are made capable of happiness, in consequence of their own *choice* and *conduct*, and in proportion to the *regularity* therein discovered, what more just than its dependence thereon? In what more proper way could *wisdom*, though infinite, benevolence communicate happiness to them? What unsuitableness is there in making happiness their own acquisition, the fruit of their own industry? What reasonable beings would not chuse existence upon these terms? And who will say, that they would make an unwise choice? It is certain, this method of communicating happiness *may* be the *wisest* and *best*; and that glorious intelligent Being, who perfectly sees the fitness of things, in all possible connection, *may* know it to be so: And sh<sup>ould</sup> this be the case, as cannot be disproved, it was not possible

possible for him, acting *morally*, or, in other words, as an *intelligent wise* agent, to have communicated it any other way.

And this reasoning, if extended to the other ranks of free agents, in other worlds, will equally hold good. It is *fit* and *right*, in true reason, that they also should be so constituted, as that their perfection and happiness should not be communicated with their beings, but made to depend, in some suitable measure, on the wise and regular exercise of their powers: The consequence of which must be their *liableness*, in common with mankind, though in various degrees, according to their various capacities and circumstances, to a *voluntary perversion* of their faculties. This, I say, appears to an attentive mind the *fittest* method of communicating *good* to *reasonable moral* beings: And the Deity perceiving it to be so, may have all along observed this rule, in the bestowment of it. Nor is there a *known fact* to the contrary, in the whole creation: Though, if we may give credit to the writings called sacred, there is a *fact*, relating to some of the *intelligent* beings, in other worlds, which perfectly coincides with this method of dispensing happiness. For we there read of the ‘angels which sinned,’ and of the ‘angels which kept not their first estate;’ which account of their *moral intelligences* does not consist with their being created happy, independent of their own virtuous conduct, but supposes the contrary: Obviously leading to the  
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thought, that they were made, as *men* are, capable of happiness, but yet liable to a *voluntary self-corruption*. And all the ranks of *moral* beings *might* be created in like circumstances: And, I will add, *must* have been so created, if this was *most wise*, and *fit*, as we have seen there is reason to think it was, and no proof can be given to the contrary.

Not but that there are *free agents*, who may, before this time, have got beyond any *probable danger* of *moral* defection. And this may be the case, even of *men*, in some other state; though so inferior an order of *intelligent* beings. But then, this freedom from danger ought to be considered, as owing, not to the perfection of their faculties, as, at first, communicated to them; but partly to the *strong, habitual* turn that has been given them, by wise and regular exercise; and partly, though principally, to the *superintending influence* of the *Deity*, who may think it *fit* and *wise*, after suitable *trial* and *improvement*, to preserve them from all faulty conduct, so far, at least, as that they shall never fall from the perfection and happiness of their present state.

But, before *intelligent moral* beings have gone through some state of trial, wherein they have made the happiness proper to their natures, their *own choice*; and have so conducted themselves as to be worthy of it, and to have fitted themselves, by a course of suitable exercise, for the enjoyment of it: I say, before this, it does not seem *meet* and *fit*, that it should be con-

ferred on them ; much less in such a way as that *it could not be but they must be happy*. It is certainly consonant to the notions we most readily and naturally form of *right* and *fit*, that such kind of beings should come to the enjoyment of happiness, in conformity to some method wisely adjusted to their proper natures : And what more suitable one can be imagined than this, which makes happiness, not the *unavoidable privilege* of their creation, but the *effect* of their own *moral freedom* ? Which bestows it, not *absolutely*, but in *consequence* of their own *virtuous conduct*, or, in other words, as the *result* herefrom, according to settled laws, under the notion of a *motive* hereto, or a suitable *reward* therefor ? This, to be sure, as has been observed, *may be* the *fittest* way of communicating happiness to *all* moral beings, without distinction ; and *might* appear to be so to the infinite and supreme Mind : And, if this was the real truth, as we cannot say it was not, it could not be within the *moral* power of the *Deity*, to have created *free agents*, and put them *at once*, without previous *trial* or *improvement*, in a state of *full perfection*, and *confirmed happiness*. And if so, they could not have been made *impeccable*, as it is pleaded they might have been, and must have been, if their Maker had been an *infinitely benevolent* Being.

There is yet another way, in which it is thought the *Deity* might have *prevented* moral evil ; and this is, by interposing, at all times,



as occasion should require, to keep *free agents* from *misusing* their liberty. If by this *interposition* be meant (and it must mean, if to the purpose for which it is introduced) such a *presidency* of the *Deity* over free agents as is accompanied, at all times with *such exertions* as shall be *certainly effectual* to restrain them from perverting their faculties, it may be answered, as under the former head, that it looks like a *moral impossibility*, or, in other words, a method of conducting towards *free agents* which is *unfit*, in the reason of things; as not being suited to the *nature* of such kind of beings. The exertions of the *Deity* ought always to be conceived of as directed by *perfect wisdom*: And if, as the effect of such exertions, *free agents* are brought into existence, the same wisdom that created them, requires such a method of conduct towards them, as is *consistent* with the powers bestowed on them. And can it be justly said, that such a method would be taken, if, by any *extrinsic* power, their faculties were *unavoidably* put into exercise in *one certain way only*? If all conjunctures of circumstances should constantly be prevented, in which their *moral freedom* could possibly be *abused*; or, if motives should, in all cases, be set in such a *strong and powerful* light, as that *no wrong choice could be made*; or if, by *immediate* impression from the *Deity*, free agents should be kept, in all times of temptation, from *all hazard of being drawn aside*: I say, if, in any of these ways, the *Deity* should exert himself to the

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prevention of moral irregularity, how would such a method of operation *consist* with the proper powers of *free agents* ! It does not appear to the human mind a thing *fit*, that they should be thus *irresistibly* guided, by any *extrinsic* power, though it were even *Divine*. This method of government is well suited to the *unintelligent* part of the creation, which, being possessed of no *self-directing* principle, must be absolutely conducted by the power of the Supreme Will. But the influence of the *Deity* on *free agents* must needs be of a different kind : Otherwise, it would not harmonize with the *essential* powers of their nature. And why indeed should there be any beings at all endowed with *moral liberty*, if they are not left to the *free* use of their faculties ? What room would there be, upon supposition of some *foreign over-ruling influence*, either for their choosing or acting virtuously ? What foundation for the *moral* government of them ? And, in a word, what distinction would there be, in *reality of consequence*, between them and meer *inanimate* beings, as to the *Deity's* exercising rule over them ? It is true, being endowed with the faculty of perception, they would be capable of *happiness* ; but this could have no connection with, or dependance on, any *proper choice of their own*. It would be an *unavoidable* communication of good ; good dispensed, not as the *effect* of the regular exercise of a *self-directing* principle, not in *consequence* of any *real determining power of their own*, but by the *irresistible* will of the *Deity*, in  
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his government of them. And will any call this a *fit* method of dealing with *free agents*? It cannot be so pronounced, unless by those, who have no idea of *good*, but as communicated to the *utmost*, with respect regard to the *natures* of *essentially different* beings, and that wise conduct which ought always to be used with reference to them.

But, after all that has been offered, some will say, should it be allowed to be fit, that an order of moral agents, such as men are, might be brought into existence, and that it would consist with the benevolence we attribute to the Deity, to place them in a state, wherein their virtue should be put to a trial; why need this trial have been so dangerous an one? Why should there have been the implantation of these appetites, propensities, affections, and passions, in their nature, with a variety of external objects so suited to give them pleasure, as almost unavoidably to entice them to will, and to act, in contradiction to the rules of virtue, and so as to make themselves unhappy? Would a kind and good Creator have put them to a trial so difficult and hazardous? Yea rather could he have done it, if he had been infinitely benevolent?

In answer to this, which, perhaps, is an objection to the Divine benevolence, the most difficult of any intirely to remove, it may be observed as follows.

In a creation inconceivably diversified, it may be proper there should be as great a variety of moral beings, as of meerly animal ones; and  
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that there should be a similar gradation from the highest to the lowest order of them: The consequence from which is, that the capacities of these moral beings must be various, and their attainment to a confirmed, virtuous temper proportionably more or less difficult. The class of men, I suppose, may justly be reckoned the lowest of the moral kind; for which reason, their conducting in life so as to deserve the character of virtuous may be most difficult. But this notwithstanding, it may be fit there should be such a class of moral intelligences, in order to compleat that variety in existence, which the infinitely wise Deity might judge expedient for a full manifestation of his benevolence. As many orders of beings, as might be thought proper, not united to matter of any kind, may have been brought into existence, the lowest of which may surpass in glory the highest of those who are embodied; among whom also there may be as great a variety in the mode and degree of their perfection: In which view of the matter, it is no other than might be expected, that there should be, such a creature as man, whatever comparative imperfection may attend his make, and whatever difficulties may lie in the way of his attaining to that virtue and happiness, he is formed capable of: Especially, if it should be found, that, for a being compounded as he is, there is nothing in his constitution but what is wisely and kindly adapted to promote his good, with respect to both parts of his composition.

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Has he animal appetites and propensities? These, as planted in him by his Maker, were intended, and are wisely adapted, to guard him against inconveniences; and not only so, but to give him pleasure. And he is, accordingly, surrounded with objects purposely suited, by the benevolent Creator, to yield him this pleasure: Nor can he reasonably be charged with acting below his character, as a man, if, within proper limits, he gratifies these natural appetites. They are therefore a wise contrivance to increase, not to diminish, his happiness.

Has he implanted in him a variety of affections and passions? They are all designed to promote his good, not his hurt. Was he destitute of self-love, how feeble and languid would be his endeavors, if he endeavored at all, to preserve life, or render it so comfortable as it might be? Had he no fear, how often would he run into danger, and expose himself to numberless disasters? Had he no resentment, how would he invite injuries, and suffer abuses of every kind in such a world as this? Had he no ambition, what a powerful stimulus would be wanting in his constitution to excite his endeavors to excel in this or the other art and science, or in any thing laudable and praise-worthy? And the same may be said of every other affection and passion. They all tend to good, and we should enjoy less of it without them than with them. It is true, they are capable of abuse; and so must have been, or we could not have been free agents, placed in a state of trial.

And should we abuse that to our hurt, which our Maker designed, and wisely adapted, to promote our good, would it not be highly unreasonable to bring such an abuse, as a complaint against his benevolence? And yet, this is the real purport of the objected difficulty, put into plain English: Unless it should be said, that the Deity would have manifested more kindness to us men, if he had not planted these appetites and passions in our nature, than he has done by planting them; as the danger of our falling from virtue and becoming miserable, by means of them, is so great as scarcely to be avoided. But will any one of sound understanding calmly and deliberately say, (to speak in the words of a very sensible and judicious writer) “That the Creator, if he would have approved himself wisely benevolent to mankind, should have precluded all from the pleasure they taste in eating and drinking, because otherwise some will prove intemperate: That he should have appointed marriage, and the care of children, to be unattended with any sensible pleasure, because otherwise some persons would be lewd and unjust; that we should receive no pleasure from beauty of any kind but moral, lest some should foolishly and wickedly prefer the beauties and pleasures of sense and imagination, before the beauty of virtue: That none should naturally love themselves, and be strongly excited to take care of their own welfare, lest some should be tempted to gratify this passion with the injury of others: That we should  
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have been formed indifferent to oppression, injustice, and wickedness, and have felt no resentment at the view of those, to prevent any person's being angry, even when they are not injured : That there should have been naturally no satisfaction attending a just self-approbation, that men might not be inclined to value themselves without reason ; and no desire to recommend ourselves to the esteem of others, by excellent qualities and benevolent actions, lest some should endeavor to gain the favorable opinion of others by foolish, or wicked actions : That men should have been without the passion of shame, to restrain them from what is base, and deserving infamy, lest some be ashamed of what is virtuous and honorable : That there should have been no attraction in liberty, lest some should be tempted to licentiousness ; and nothing appear desirable in a power to do great good, that none might strive for a power of doing great mischief : And that no noble emulation should have been felt in the human bosom, lest envy should creep in, and make self-tormentors, and mischievous to their neighbours. Would this have been a better constitution, than the present ? What wise and considerate person can think it ?" The plain truth is, there is no appetite, affection, or passion, as planted in our nature by the God who made us, but what was intended, and wisely adapted, to answer some valuable purpose or other ; inasmuch, that it would have been greatly disadvantageous to us, had we not been

furnished with them. And should they, by not being kept under due government, prove the occasion of sin, and consequent misery, could the Creator, in consistency with reason, be charged with not having been benevolent? Especially, if it be considered, that these very appetites and passions, might have been a means, wisely improved, of promoting that virtue in us, which would yield the full happiness proper to such beings as we are.

Some will still plead, if appetites and passions, in such a constitution as our's, should be supposed to be proper, why need they have been heightened to such a degree of strength? Or if even this should have been expedient, why were not our intellectual and moral powers proportionably exalted, that the undue influence of appetite and passion might the more easily be controuled? Would it not have been more kind in our Creator, and have argued greater benevolence, if he had given us stronger rational abilities, and weaker animal propensities? Especially, as it is principally owing to the strong impetus of our bodily inclinations, that we are so generally led aside into the path of vice and folly, to our own great disadvantage. The answer I would return to this objection, which, far from being a trifling one, deserves a serious consideration, is as follows.

If our appetites and passions, in their natural state, and as implanted in us by our Creator, had been lowered in their strength, they  
might



might have been insufficient to answer the good ends of their original implantation. In like manner, had our intellectual powers been heightened, they might have unfitted us to live in such a world as this is. The contrivance of the Deity in man's constitution, and the adjustment of its various parts, both animal and mental, is perfect, and will admit, other things remaining as they were, of no amendment. One power is so closely connected with, and nearly related to another, and that other to another still, and the whole to such a world as we are placed in, that no alteration could be made in one part, but what would affect another, and that other still another, and so on, till there must be a total alteration, not only in man, but the world he lives in; the absurdity of which will be explained, and the pertinency of this whole paragraph justified, in its proper place hereafter.

It may also be worthy of notice, that a variety in the trial of various classes of intelligent moral beings, in point of difficulty and hazard, may be a wise contrivance of the Creator for the more illustrious display of his goodness, in harmony with his other moral attributes. It is certain, with respect to us men, that our trial, as individuals, is, for wise and good ends, admirably various in point of difficulty and danger; and why might it not, for like good ends, be a more difficult one, should we be considered as a class of beings, than has been allotted

to other classes of a superior order? There is an analogy in this with the whole conduct of God, which has been various, both in making and governing all the creatures he has given existence to. And, it may be, his benevolence, by means of this variety, is more wisely, and fully displayed, than it would have been by any other. And one class of beings would have no more reason to complain, should the difficulty of their trial, in consequence of this expedient variety, be greater, and attended with more hazard, than the trial of another class; I say, they would have no more reason for complaint, than they have because they were not made that other class of creatures.

It ought to be considered still further, that men's appetites and passions, by being indulged beyond what is fit and right, may be heightened in their impetus, and quite altered from their natural state. And when this is the case, as we all know it too commonly is, by not keeping them within those restraints we both might, and ought to have done, we ourselves, and not our Creator, are to blame, if disorders are introduced into our frame, and our trial, by this means, is made more difficult and dangerous, than it otherwise would have been; and, instead of reflecting on the Deity for not having been so benevolent, as we fondly imagine he might have been, we should condemn ourselves, and throw the blame wholly on our own wickedness and folly; for to this it ought, in all reason, to be ascribed. It

It is acknowledged, that the natural state of the appetites and passions may be altered, and often is so, and much for the worse, even where the subjects of this alteration are not the blamable causes of it. By propagation, a disadvantageous bodily temperature may be conveyed, subjecting the descendants from parents to a greatly heightened force of animal propensity. And by the neglect also of these to whom the care of children has been committed, in restraining their inclinations and passion, or by purposely allowing them to take an unbounded latitude, they may increase in strength, so as to be, with great difficulty, kept under the government of reason. In which cases, the trial of these persons will be attended with much more danger, than the trial of others of the same species. But this is to be accounted for, and may justly be so, by duly considering, that the state these persons are in is the effect of general laws, wisely contrived, and powerfully adapted, to promote the good of the system, of which they are parts; Nor could the difficulties, they are subjected to, have been prevented without the extraordinary interposition of the Deity, the inconveniences of which have already been mentioned; or without an alteration in these laws, that is, without altering the plan upon which this world, and the creatures that are in it, were formed, which would be to substitute another world in the room of this, which may be as

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suitable an one, in that variety which constitutes the universe, as wisdom has thought proper. What has been suggested here will be enlarged upon, and set in a clear light, when we come to answer the objection from natural evil.

In fine, it may tend to break the force of the objection we are upon to bear in mind, that the difficulty of attaining to a virtuous temper and conduct, however great, is not unmountable; as it may be counter-acted by a wise improvement of that reason, conscience, moral discernment, and other powers, which our Maker has implanted in our constitution, on purpose to check the undue influence of our appetites and passions, and to keep them within their proper sphere; especially, as, in addition hereto, we may, upon just grounds, hope for the smiles of heaven upon our careful endeavours, in the use of the means, helps, and advantages, we are favored with, to get delivered from the dominion of sin and lust, and to become possessed of that noblest of all moral powers, a freedom, without hindrance or controul, to do that which is right and good. And let it be remembered, the greater the difficulty we are put to in order to this, the greater our virtue will be; laying a just foundation for a proportionably higher reward, in self approbation here, and pleasure forevermore in the future world. Besides all which, it may be depended on as a sure truth,  
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the good God will make all reasonable allowances for whatever disadvantages our state of trial may be attended with ; conducting towards us, conformably to that eternal rule of equity, “ according to what a man has, and not according to what he has not, shall be given to him.” And this same rule, adapting it to all other classes of beings, in all worlds, is that by which the Supreme Ruler and Judge will measure his conduct towards them : In consequence of which, they will all, in regard of just and fair treatment, be brought to an exact equality. Less will be required of those beings, whose powers were small, and their difficulties great ; and proportionably more of those, whose powers were greater, and their difficulties less. So that, however low the capacities of us men are, and whatever difficulties our state of trial may be attended with, the Supreme King and Judge will be equally impartial and just in his dealings towards us, as with respect to any of the beings that are above us, in the scale of existence.

The sum of what has been said, in order to reconcile moral irregularity with benevolence in the Deity is, that it ought not to be attributed to him, as its productive cause ; but to the creatures that were made *free agents* : That the making of free agents was *necessary* in order to the communication of the highest good in kind ; because, if they had not been made, this kind of good would have been wanting in the creation :

tion : That, if free agents were at all brought into existence, it *must* have been with powers *so far imperfect*, as to import a *possibility* of their erring, without *interpositions* of the *Deity* to prevent it : That their *could not* have been *such interpositions*, in consistency with wise and fit conduct ; because they would, in true construction, destroy the very notion of *free agency*, and together with it all foundation for any distinction between *moral* right and wrong : And finally, that however low a class of moral agents we men are, and however difficult our trial, by means of implanted appetites and passions, may be, such an order of beings might be fit, in that variety of existences the wisdom of God might judge proper, in order to a full display of his perfections in general, and his benevolence in particular ; From which premises, if true, as we have seen good reason to think them to be, and no proof can be given to the contrary, it follows, that the *actual defection* of free agents is not to be imputed to any *deficiency* of goodness in the *Deity* ; and therefore that there can be no *real* inconsistency between the existence of this *moral depravity* and *infinite benevolence*, whatever there may be in *appearance*.

I would only observe, before I proceed, it is all along supposed, in the above reasoning, that the entrance of *moral disorder* into the creation would have been irreconcilable with *pure* and *unbounded goodness*, unless every thing had been done, which, in true reason, was fit and proper

per to be done, to have prevented it. And could it be proved, in respect of any *class* of intelligent moral beings, or in respect of any *individual* in this class, that the *Deity* had been wanting in what was *reasonably* necessary, on his part, that there might not have been a *defection*, I see not but it would be an invincible objection against the *infinite benevolence* of his nature. For it is not supposable, but that a being supremely and absolutely good should desire the happiness of his *whole creation*; especially of *intelligent moral* creatures, in all their various *ranks*, and numberless *individuals*: And that he should operate, in all wise and reasonable methods, to promote it. And it would certainly argue a *deficiency* in his goodness, if he could see them *act wrong*, and not exert himself *so far* as he *might do*, in consistency with *reason* and *wisdom*, to hinder it. It is indeed impossible, if we may say any thing is so, not only that infinite benevolence should put *innocent moral agents* into circumstances, wherein their *seduction* would be *unavoidable*; but that it should withhold its cooperation, in any proper ways, agreeable to their natures, to advance the perfection and felicity they are made capable of. To us *men*, it may possibly seem, as though more might have been done for the *human species*, some of them at least, to have secured their attachment to virtue: But are we sure of this? Are we able to exhibit clear and full proof, that the *Deity* has been wanting in any thing, proper

on his part, to keep mankind from debasing their natures? It is true, we were not placed in the highest class of moral beings: But can we say, that the *order* of the creation, and the wise and good ends for which it was made, would not allow, that a rank of beings, constituted and endowed as we are, should be in it? Or will we take upon us to show, that the conduct of the *Deity*, towards us, has not been so wisely and fitly adjusted to the design of making us happy, as it might reasonably have been? Can it be proved, that the only good God expects more from us, than he ought to do, in true equity? Or that he has neglected any *suitable* method of operation to guard us against *error*, either in *choice* or *practice*? Are we not conscious to ourselves, when we do wrong, that we do it *freely*, and as furnished with all the *preservatives* against such conduct, which we could *reasonably* expect, or desire, as *moral* agents, and which might have been effectual to our restraint, if we had carefully used them, in the due exercise of understanding and attention? And if this is the real truth, as we are conscious to ourselves that it is, shall we reflect upon the *Deity*, as not having exerted himself, in all proper ways, to prevent our *misconduct*? We cannot pretend, without the highest arrogance, to say, much less to prove that *he* has not done all that he *could* wisely do to preserve us innocent: And more than this would have been inconsistent with his own *absolute perfection*. So  
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that he may be *infinitely good*, notwithstanding the *degeneracy* of mankind, which we know much about, and complain most of.

I now proceed to consider, in the *second* place, the *unhappiness* arising from *immoral* conduct. For by the *evil* complained of, in the objection, is meant, not only the *irregularity* of *free agents*, but the *misery* *consequent* herewith, or *consequent* hereupon, either by the *constitution* of *nature*, or *infliction* from the *Deity*. If wrong determinations, and unreasonable pursuits, were not *accompanied* nor *followed* with unhappiness, either to the *faulty agents* themselves or *others* by their means, the objectors against *infinite goodness* would not, it may be, be so strenuous in urging this difficulty: But as the *fact* is, they are bitter in their complaints, thinking it extremely hard, that creatures, for only *misusing* their liberty, should be subjected to *consequent punishment*, *natural* or *poenal*; and that *others* likewise should be made such *great sufferers* by their vices and follies. How, say they, could the *Deity*, if infinitely benevolent, not only permit creatures of his own forming to *corrupt* themselves, but *connect misery* with their so doing; constituting things so as to make their *wrong doing* an *occasion* of *unhappiness*, in infinitely various kinds, not only to themselves, but to others also? What a wide door has hereby been opened for the entrance of *misery* into the creation? Who can compute the immense sum of pain and torment, of one sort or another, this constitution

constitution has paved the way for? And can it be attributed to an infinitely benevolent Cause? Could such a state of things have ever been, if a good God had been at the head of it, as its supreme directing Cause?

It is answered, in the first place, by freely owning, that *moral irregularity* is unavoidably connected with unhappiness; insomuch, that by far the greater part of those *evils* which abound in the creation are the *natural* or *penal* effect hereof: Nay, it is readily granted, that the constitution of things is such, that *moral intelligent* beings are capable of so corrupting their implanted powers, as that misery *must* be the consequence, both to *themselves* and *others* also, in certain degrees, while they continue in this state of degeneracy. Nay, I deny not, but the constitution of things is such, as that unhappiness must be the fruit of abused *moral* freedom, in another period of existence, so long, and in such proportion, as the wisdom of the Supreme Creator and Governor may think requisite.

But then I add, in the next place, that this is so far from arguing want of *goodness* in the *Deity*, that it very conspicuously illustrates the benevolence of his nature. It will probably seem strange, to those who have not exercised their thoughts upon this subject, to hear it said, that *unhappiness* may be the fruit of *benevolence*, and an argument in proof of it, rather than an objection against it. And yet, this is the real truth; and I doubt not but that may be said  
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upon the matter, which will make it clearly and fully appear to be so.

Only, let it be previously remembered, that the *possibility* of *moral irregularity* has been already accounted for, and the actual being of it, in the creation, reconciled with infinite goodness: Which being supposed, in this part of the argument, I proceed to show,

Wherein the *unhappiness* that is connected, in nature, or by *positive infliction* from the Deity, with the *misuse of moral powers*, is subservient to the *general good* of the *rational creation*, which is hereby more effectually promoted than it would have been, if *free agents* might have *acted wrong with impunity*.

And it is very obvious, in the first place, that a great part of the unhappiness following upon *voluntary misconduct* is of the medicinal kind, and strongly tends to the cure of its patients. The uneasy sensations occasioned by vicious practice, together with those various other pains, which are *naturally* consequent thereupon, what are they but so many *motives* to repentance, and a due care to make a wiser use of moral powers? What better adapted *means* could have been contrived to rouse the faulty agents to attention, bring them to consideration, and put them upon endeavours to prevent their own ruin? If they found no inconvenience in an irregular course, what should stop their progress, having entered on it? What probable prospect would there be, in  
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this case, of their ever coming to themselves, and recovering a right mind? And is it not for their *good*, that their vicious conduct should be attended with *suffering*, while this *suffering* is considered under the notion of a *means* powerfully fitted, in a reasonable way of operation, to check their folly, and reduce them to virtue? Does not *pain*, in this view of it, cease to be an *evil*, and become a *real good*? And ought not the *Deity*, who has thus constituted things, to be looked upon as a physician and friend, designing their *interest*, and not as an enemy, who is doing them harm? And the case is just the same in respect of *punishments* more *positively* inflicted. They are a *means* wisely adapted to promote the welfare of those who suffer them, and are so intended by the all-merciful Governor of the universe, so long as they are capable of *amendment* by any means whatever. And if, after this, they should be continued in suffering circumstances, even such a method of conduct would be perfectly consistent with infinite goodness, for some other reasons we may have occasion to mention afterwards.

It is very evident, in the next place, that the evils connected with immoral action, in the Divine government, are for the *good* of *others*, as well as the faulty agents themselves. They are indeed, at least in this lower world, with which we are best acquainted, a *general* discouragement to vicious practice, a standing, perpetual *means* provided by the *Deity* to secure the  
*virtue,*

*virtue*, and by consequence the *greatest happiness*, of the *human species*, it may be, the only *rational moral* agents here existing. It is highly probable, if not certain, that mankind, considering their various propensions, though all suited to their *condition*, and subjected to the guidance of their *reason*, would not be restrained within any tolerable bounds of decency, if it was *seen* that no disadvantage followed, when any of their rank perverted the order of their faculties, and pursued an irregular course of action. The *unhappiness*, inseparably conjoined with voluntary, continued misconduct, by the known, established laws of the Divine administration, is one of the grand restraints provided for their security: And were this to be taken off, they would, without all doubt, notwithstanding all the remonstrances of *reason* against *inclination*, be soon lost to all sense of virtue, and trample upon the sacred obligations to the practice of it. And if it is for the *good* of mankind that this should be prevented, so far as may be, in all suitable ways, it is equally for their good, that *vice* should be connected with *misery*; because a powerful, and yet well adapted *means*, to this end. And it should seem indeed as though *this connection* was a *necessary provision*, in the government of the *whole intellectual system*, to preserve it from confusion, and accomplish, by a regular and consistent method of operation, the great thing intended and pursued by the *Deity*, viz. its *greatest good*. It may, perhaps,

haps, be thought more noble for *rational* creatures, especially the *higher* order of them, to be influenced to right conduct *solely* from the *fitness* of the thing in itself considered : But, it may be, there are no created intelligences above the need of *other motives*. It is certain, an *aversion from misery* must be looked upon as a leading principle in all their natures, from the *highest* to the *lowest* of them : And if so, what a powerful guard must it be to their innocence, to see the loss of it, in other beings like themselves, attended, in *fact*, with vexation and sorrow ? How strongly must it tend to secure their adherence to the rule of right, to behold a deviation from it, in this and the other instance, accompanied with misery, by the Divine constitution ? It is reasonable to think, it may be owing, in part, to *this connection*, that the *whole moral creation* is preserved, under the superintendency of the Supreme Governor, in a regular, orderly state. It must be confessed, it is true, that some ranks of *rational* beings have probably never acted below the dignity of their character, and consequently that they know not, from what have seen among themselves, what unhappiness means : But who can say, that the *sad effects* of immoral conduct, in one system of intelligent beings, may not, in the Divine administration, be so related to others, as to be useful to them also ? What is there unreasonable in supposing, that the evils suffered, by means of abused faculties, in this world of our's, may, in ways, surpassing

surpassing our comprehension, be capable of promoting, in a measure, the good of moral beings, in other parts of the creation? It is certain, in the *system of material nature*, that other globes, and some of them vastly distant too, are useful to this earth, as *that* also in return may be, in some degree, useful to them: And it is by this mutual usefulness, to each other, that they become one harmonious good whole. The like may be said of the *intellectual general system*;—It may be constituted the best whole, by the mutual subserviency of the various ranks of *rational* beings to each other, and their jointly conspiring, according to some settled order, to advance the *general good*. And, among the ways, wherein the wisdom of the infinitely benevolent first Cause may have made the several classes of intelligent agents capable of being thus useful, this we are considering may be one. The *misery*, which the individuals of one order, of *moral* beings, may, by their disorderly pursuits, bring upon themselves, may be designed, in the divine plan, and adapted, to promote the *good*, not only of that *particular* order, but of *other* orders likewise, by exhibiting a most powerful *motive* to discourage the like misconduct, and secure an attachment to the law of reason and right.

But, if any should think this is carrying the matter too far, and upon conjecture only, it cannot however be denied, that the *unhappiness* accruing to some of the *individuals* of any

species of *moral* beings, in consequence of their having chosen and acted perversely, may be of *service* to the *rest* of the same species, by ministering to them seasonable and proper warning. And it may, upon the whole, be a kindness to *this order* of beings, and an argument of the *Deity's* benevolence towards them, that he has thus connected *vice* and *unhappiness* together. For it is one of the most powerful restraints from *irregular action*, and as strong an inducement to the choice and practice of virtue. And so far as they are preserved in due order, *this*, without all doubt, is one of the great means by which it is accomplished.

And should we pursue this reasoning, and examine its force as applied to a *future state*, and the *punishments* there is reason to think will be there inflicted on wicked men, we shall find it a sufficient vindication of them. For if they are considered, as the present argument requires they should be, under the notion of a *needful moral mean* intended and calculated to promote, upon the whole, *more good* in the *intelligent* creation, than might otherwise be reasonably expected, they are so far from being the effect of *ill-will*, that they really spring from benevolence, and are a proof of it. It carries the *appearance*, I own, of hardship and severity, for creatures to exist in *suffering* circumstances: But if their sufferings, whether in this or another state, are the fruit of their own mis-doings, and it is for the *real benefit* of the *moral creation*,



*creation*, upon the whole, (as we have seen that it is) that *such sufferings* should be the consequent effect of such conduct, why should the goodness of the *Deity* be called in question? It is true, the *sufferers* in a *future state*, if supposed to be past amendment, can reap no *advantage themselves* from their sufferings: But then, it is to be considered, these sufferings were *originally* intended for *their good*, by being presented, in the *forebodings* of their own minds, as a powerful *motive*, not only to restrain them from those courses which would end in these sufferings, but to urge them on to those virtuous pursuits which would be followed with all the happiness they were made capable of. And if, notwithstanding so powerful a means used with them for their *good*, they have gone on debasing their natures, till they have rendered them incurable by any of the means the wisdom of God has seen fit to use with them, why should it be thought a dishonor to infinite goodness to subject them to that *misery* they have thus exposed themselves to by their own wickedness, that they might be a *warning to others*, and serve as *public examples* for *general good*, so long as the wisdom of God shall know it to be best: Is it not *better* that *some individuals* should be in suffering circumstances if they will not, by any of the methods of God's dealing with them, be brought back to the *choice* and *practice* of virtue; I say, is it not better, that *some individuals* should be made

made miserable, in consequence of an established connection between *vice* and *mifery*, than that the *virtue* of the *moral creation*, together with all the happiness dependant thereon, should be endangered, through want of such a provision for their security? The plain truth is, the benevolence of the *Deity*, is not confined to particular beings, or orders of beings, but is absolutely *universal*; and ought therefore to be conceived of as exerting itself in those ways which are best adapted to advance the *general good* of the creation. And if, by connecting *mifery* with *moral irregularity*, this end is, in the most effectual manner, promoted, as we have seen reason to think it is, the establishment of such a connection, notwithstanding what may eventually happen to particular individuals, must be an argument of *goodness*, rather than of *inconsistency* with it.

There is yet another way wherein it may be for the *good* of the *intelligent* creation, that wickedness should be connected, in the manner it is, with *mifery*. What I intend is, that by this connection *occafion* is given for such manifestations of the Divine glory, as are *rationaly* and powerfully suited to promote the virtue, and *consequent* happiness, of *moral* beings; which manifestations there would have been no room for, or, at least, not in so great a degree, had it not been for *this connection*. It is evidently from hence, that most of the *moral* attributes of the *Deity* become capable of a more illustrious

illustrious display, than would otherwise have been possible: And it may be, *some* of them *could* not have been manifested at all, had not this given the opportunity therefor. The *holiness* of the Divine Being would not have appeared so conspicuous, if *moral* agents might have behaved ill, and not found it to their disadvantage: Neither would his *justice* have shone with such a distinguishing lustre; as he could not, so fully and impartially, have rendered to them according to their deserts. And, as to the various modifications of goodness, such as mercy, forbearance, patience, long-suffering, forgiveness, it does not appear, how these perfections of the *Deity* could have been at all displayed, had it not been for these evils that are the consequent fruit of voluntary misconduct. The idea of pity, and mercy, and pardon, as Divine attributes, exercised towards moral agents, is essentially connected with their *actual suffering*, or, at least, *liableness* to it, on account of their ill-doings: insomuch, that, were it not for the unhappiness we become obnoxious to, upon being faulty in their behavior, they could have had no notion of these amiable, Divine glories. And it is from hence that those marvellous displays of goodness, in these modes of exercise, have taken rise, which tend, not only to the eternal honor of the *Deity*, but the best and greatest good likewise of moral and intelligent beings. Nor is it difficult to conceive how the display of these attributes of  
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the Supreme Creator should operate to this end. For it is obvious, upon the slightest attention, that riches of forbearance, long-suffering and forgiveness, are naturally adapted to work powerfully upon *intelligent* minds, if they have been faulty, to lead them to repentance, and bring them back to the practice of virtue, the only way to true happiness. And, perhaps, so long as there are any remains of ingenuity, nothing is more rationally suited to produce this effect. And where any, under the influence of these Divine displays, have been recovered to a virtuous disposition, there are no motives, better fitted to strengthen and establish it, than those which may be selected from that pity and mercy, which the *Deity* has exercised towards them. Besides, there will be the excitement of pious affections in their minds towards the *Divine Being*, accompanied with *high pleasure*; which pleasure they could never have perceived, but in this method of conduct. And, I may add, this same goodness of the *Deity*, appearing in his lenity, and patience, and mercy, towards guilty moral agents, is as naturally fitted to produce, in *other* intelligent beings, who are not the *immediate* objects of it, such sentiments, and affections, attended with corresponding delight, which they could not otherwise have been the subjects of; whereby both the virtue and happiness of the rational and moral creation is better provided for, than it could have been in a different state of things.

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It will not from hence follow, it is owned, that *moral irregularity* ought to have been permitted : Nor was the above reasoning intended to justify such a permission ; this having been before accounted for upon other considerations. The only inquiry here in debate is, whether the *connexion* of *unhappiness* with this *moral irregularity* is reconcilable with goodness ? And the argument we are upon, is, I think, sufficient for the proof of the affirmation ; as it has particularly pointed out the way wherein the *good* of intelligent beings is better provided for by this expedient, than it could otherwise have been. For by means of the evils that accompany ill-doing, occasion, we have seen, has been offered for such a display of the Divine moral perfections as is the greatest encouragement to virtue, not only to the *agents* who may have acted wrong, but to *others* also ; besides that it lays a foundation for such *pleasing perception* as could not have been enjoyed in any other method.

In fine, whereas it is complained, that *wickedness* is made an occasion of *suffering*, not only to the *guilty* agents themselves, but to *others* likewise, in various ways, so as to render life very uncomfortable ;—The answer is, that this unavoidably arises from the constitution of nature, at least, in respect of the *human species*. It is impossible, upon supposition of the existence of such an order of beings as men are, but that they should *suffer* more or less by the vices and follies of one another. According to the  
*proceeds*

*proverbs* as old as *Solomon*, a *foolish son is the heaviness of his mother* ; and again a *foolish son is a grief to his father*. And the consequences of oppression, rapine and violence, whether public or private, must be felt and groaned under, in a world, where creatures are so nearly allied to, and dependant on, each other. Nay, the *penal* evils, which the *Deity* may, in kindness, inflict to stop the progress of wickedness, must, many times, touch the *innocent* as well as guilty, while they live mixed together, as in the present state : Nor could it be otherwise without an inversion of the course of nature. So that, if this objection proves any thing, it is that such an order of beings ought not to have been created. But we have already seen, that the *Deity* was not obliged to make only the most perfect beings ; yea, that the communication of the *greatest good* required the creation of all ranks of beings, in the descending line, so long as the enjoyment of existence could be called an happiness. Nor may such creatures as we are, who have so narrow a view of the works of God, and the whole system of the universe, take upon us to say, that an order of beings constituted as we are, could not, in consistency with wisdom and goodness, have a place in the creation ; or that such creatures, with all the evils to which they are subjected, would not make a beautiful, necessary part, in the Divine plan, contrived to form a scene wherein the perfections of the *Deity* might be most admirably

bly displayed in producing, upon the whole, the *greatest possible good*.

Besides, it ought to be considered, that *these evils*, which wicked men bring upon others by their vices, are supposed to bear hard upon the *benevolence* of the Creator and Governor of the universe, chiefly on the *presumption*, that the *present* is an *entire independent* state, not having relation to, or connection with, any *future* existence : Upon which supposition, it is owned, the difficulty objected would be an un-furmountable one. But will any pretend to *demonstrate*, that there is no *future* state, that death puts a total end to the being of man, and all further capacity of enjoyment? And if this cannot be *demonstrated*, which must be confessed to be the truth of the matter, it is possible, that the evils which any suffer in *this* may be made up to them in *another* state : Nay, it is possible, that these evils which they suffer may be intended as a *means* to prepare and qualify them for *greater happiness*, in some future period of existence, than they could otherwise have enjoyed. And this leads to another remark of great importance in the present argument, which is,

That the evils suffered by some, through the faulty conduct of others, are so over-ruled, in the all-wise, gracious government of the *Deity*, as to give occasion for the exercise and improvement of such virtues as tend to promote their *greater happiness*. Vice, it is true, has intro-

duced into the world a great many trials, grievous to bear : But it is as true, that they are capable of being improved to advantage. And what though any should suffer through the caprice, the pride, the hatred, the malice, and other ungoverned passions and lusts of wicked men, if they may hereby be gainers in the end? And this is made possible as the *Deity* has constituted things. For these very distresses, which are caused by the prevalence of sin and folly, are so many opportunities offered, in providence, for the exercise of meekness, patience, forgiveness, and the like virtues ; which, being often, by this means, thrown out into action, become settled *moral dispositions*, not only firming a most beautiful character, but together with it a *capacity* for happiness, which could not otherwise have been enjoyed. It is certain, that the exertment of the mind, in one particular way, is the method, according to the established laws of nature, by which it contracts a faculty in this way of exertion, and becomes possessed of what we call *habits*, in any kind. And it is as certain, that *opportunities* offered, in the course of providence, for the frequent repetition of these exertments, are the *occasion* by which the mind receives that corresponding *lent*, or *turn*, to which we give the name, *habit* or *disposition*. From whence it follows, that the evils suffered through the fault of others, as they give opportunity for acts of meekness, and forbearance, and forgiveness,



givenness, are properly adapted to form the virtuous dispositions answering to these acts. And accordingly it is seen, in fact, that none among men are possessed of these excellent virtues, in so confirmed a degree, as those who have taken occasion, from the evils they have suffered, to be much in the exercise of acts of patience, contentment, and resignation. They have, by this means, got formed in them, and greatly strengthened, the dispositions to these virtues. Nor is this all: But their *capacity* for moral rational happiness is thereby proportionably enlarged. These virtues, when called forth into exercise, are, at present, rewarded with *pleasure*, and such pleasure as none know the value of but those who have felt what it is. Besides which, there is no reason to think but that, in some other and future state, they shall further reap the fruit of their *moral improvements*, in answerable measures of rational satisfaction and delight. To be sure, it cannot be proved, that this may not; yea, that it will not, be the case. And upon this supposition, it is easy to conceive, how the evils which good men have suffered, through the wickedness of their fellow-creatures, may finally turn out to their benefit. What special use there may be, in *another* state, for those dispositions which have been formed in *this*, and particularly suited to trials from the perverse behaviour of others, we know not: But thus much we may be sure of, that virtuous habits, by what means soever they have

have been formed, improved, and strengthened, do enlarge the general capacity for rational moral happiness; inasmuch, that, if there is an there is another state, the subjects of them, on this account, must be the more happy in proportionable returns of true and solid pleasure.

The sum of the whole argument is this, that the *connection of unhappiness with moral irregularity* is a means wisely adapted to operate powerfully upon *rational moral agents*, to reduce them to a right conduct, if they have been faulty, and to preserve them inviolable in their attachment to virtue, if they have been innocent: Inasmuch, that it may be owing to this *connection*, there is so much *order and happiness* in the *intelligent creation*; of both which, had not this connection been constituted, there would undoubtedly have been much less than there now is, and has all along been. The consequence wherefrom is, that this provision, fitted for the production of so much good, is so far from being *inconsistent with benevolence*, that it is a strong indication of it. And whereas the *sufferings* of the virtuous, by the wickedness of the vicious, are great and trying, these also, upon supposition of *another state* (which cannot be proved to be an *unreasonable*, much less an *impossible* one) may be, in the end, for their *advantage*; as they are capable of being improved so as that the fruit, upon the whole, shall be *more happiness*, than if these sufferings had not been endured:

endured : And if they may possibly be a *means* to produce *greater* good, they cannot prove a deficiency in the benevolence of the *Deity*, but are rather an argument in proof that he is endowed with this attribute.

I have now offered what I had to say in illustration of the *consistency* between *infinite benevolence*, and *moral irregularity*, together with all its *consequent unhappinesses*. And I see not, upon the review, but the reasoning employed to this purpose is strictly conclusive. *God* having created *free agents*, it appears, from what has been discoursed, that they are the proper and sole causes of all the moral disorder that is complained of, and not the *Deity* ; who has done every thing that he *could*, in consistency with reason and wisdom, not only to prevent their abuse of their faculties, but to promote their improvement of them so as to attain to the highest perfection and happiness : And further, that the very *evils*, he has connected with their *voluntary misconduct*, are kindly intended, and wisely adapted, to bring about their *best good*, and will certainly do it, if it is not their own *fault*. So that, upon the whole, it cannot be conceived, what the *Deity* could have done more, in a wise and rational method of operation, to have made *intelligent moral beings*, in all their *various orders*, as happy as their original capacities would allow of : Which is as much as can be expected, even from *benevolence* that is *infinite*.

It now remains to consider the third and last objection to the infinite benevolence of the Deity. And this is taken from the *natural* evils, common to all perceiving beings, in this world of our's, in all their classes, from the highest to the lowest; such as pains, diseases, and disasters, in various kinds, and degrees; and, at last, death, mostly accompanied with distress, and sometimes with aggravated circumstances of misery and torment. And the complaint upon this head is, that these evils are not only permitted by the Deity, but were, in a sense, appointed; as being the effect of that constitution of things, which he contrived, and established, and has all along upheld: Nay, it is urged, with respect to some of these evils, as to their kind, if not degree, that the Deity intended they should take place, and originally endowed the creatures with such natures, as that a liability to them was absolutely necessary. And would an infinitely benevolent Being, say the movers of this objection, have brought creatures into existence under such circumstances, subjected, by the very laws of their nature, to pain and misery? Does this look like the doing of supremely perfect goodness? Can it be supposed, that such a state of things could have been, if originally planned, and all along conducted by a Being essentially, and infinitely kind and good?

I answer by acknowledging, that the perceiving beings of all orders, in this lower world,

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are liable to pain, and death; and that they were made thus liable by the God, who gave them existence under such circumstances, as that these evils could not be avoided. Only, let it be remembered, and considered, before I come to a particular resolution of this difficulty,

That even these *natural* evils, so far as mankind are concerned in them, are all of them increased in their malignity, by means of that *moral* disorder, which they have introduced into the world. And to this same cause, and not to the Author of our beings it is owing also, that the *kinds* of natural evils are become more numerous. Had it not been for the lusts of men, we should never have heard of many tormenting diseases, which multitudes now lie groaning under. And as to those which were unavoidable, in consequence of the established laws of nature, they would have been comparatively few, and attended with only tolerable degrees of pain. An intemperate, luxurious, debauched course of living, through the prevalence of ungoverned appetite, and sensual inclination, in opposition to the dictates of reason, and the remonstrances of conscience, is that which has aggravated, as well as multiplied, the evils of the world. It is therefore very unfair to take occasion, from the vexations and sorrows of human life, in its present degenerate state, to reflect dishonour on the goodness of the Deity. The only just way

way of forming an impartial judgment, in the case, is, to consider these evils, not as multiplied and aggravated, through men's perverting their powers, and acting counter to the rules prescribed for the government of them; but as it may reasonably be supposed, they would have taken place, according to the course of nature, not hindered in its regular operation. The miseries that infect the human species, in the former view, are the sole fruit of their own folly, not an effect of God's producing, for which men themselves, and not God, are answerable: Though I may add here, his goodness is such, that he has done every thing fit and proper, that even these evils of men's own bringing upon themselves may turn out, in the end, to their final good, as we have already seen. In the latter view only of the evils of life is discovered the proper effect of those laws of nature, which the Deity has established, and which we are, at present, called to consider, in order to vindicate his supreme benevolence.

And here it may be again proper, before I proceed to the particular evils complained of as inconsistencies with the Divine goodness, to observe in *general*, that they are the effects of established laws, the design and tendency of which are greatly beneficial. And though they may be, in some instances, more especially at certain times, the occasion of evil, they are notwithstanding eventually productive  
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Of a vast overbalance of good. The air we breath in may, in consequence of the laws of nature, be sometimes subjected to those heterogeneous mixtures, which will, until it is purified, make it of such an ill temperature, as to occasion hurt both to man and beast; but yet, life itself in all animals, without which there could be no enjoyment, is absolutely dependant on it, and preserved by means of it. Fire, conformably to the laws of nature, may unhappily be the occasion of extensively ruinous desolation; while yet, it is one of the most useful creatures of God. Storms and tempests, thunder and lightning, may sometimes be the causes of no small hurt, by destroying the lives, or substance, of numbers of individuals; but, by clearing the air, and disengaging it from those noxious exhalations that were blended with it, it fits it for respiration, and in this way does good, beyond all comparison for surpassing the evil it ever brings into event. The same may be said of earthquakes, inundations, famines, and pestilences, they are the effects of laws, which are not only, in that general tendency, good, but actually produce more and greater good, than they ever do evil. In short, the laws of nature are all of the beneficial kind, and we feel that they are so, by the enjoyment of innumerable good things, which are the effects of their operation; and the evils they may, at any time, be the occa-

sion of, are not worthy of being mentioned, they are so much over-balanced with good.

And it may be, upon the whole, best, in this world of our's, that general laws should be so established, as that evils should sometimes be occasioned by them. The final cause of such an establishment might be the good, particularly of mankind. A world, in which there is a mixture of evil with good, may be most suitable for such creatures as we are. Were the laws of nature such as to leave no room for those occasions of sorrow, fear, and suffering, we are now subjected to, this earth might have been a place altogether unadapted for training us up for the enjoyment of God, the supreme good. It was, perhaps, highly expedient, if not absolutely necessary, that we should live in a world of *discipline*, a world that would, in the natural course of things, be the occasion of difficulties, inconveniences, and trials, by means of which we might be formed to a meetness for another world, in which we should be totally freed from them. An uninterrupted state of ease and pleasure, would, morally speaking, be the ruin of mankind. We need a mixture of evil with good to check our pride, to restrain our sensual appetites ; to take off our affections from the things of the earth ; and to excite in us a just sense of our dependance on God. And we need also, every now and then, to be alarmed by this or that dispensation, which shall speak with a voice more  
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loud and awful, than is common and ordinary. The inhabitants of the world in general, and those of this or the other place, in special, are sometimes sunk into a state of such carelessness and stupidity, have so little faith in God, and are so given up to commit all iniquity with greediness, that, humanly speaking, there is no room left to expect their reformation and amendment, but by such manifestations of the power, the greatness, and majesty of God, as even force a faith in him, and a serious attention to his character as the moral Governor of the world. The course of nature is, accordingly, wisely and mercifully adapted to both these ends; giving occasion, at all times, for *disciplinary* trials; and bringing on also, at certain intervals, such tremendous events as are powerfully suited to alarm their fears, and engage them to betake themselves to a better course of conduct. And it is highly probable, the all-wise good God has so adjusted the laws of nature, as that they shall operate, in all ages, and in all places, so as may best answer his benevolent designs in the moral government of his intelligent creatures. What I mean is, he may have settled such laws, with respect to natural causes, may have so proportioned their force, sphere of action, degree and manner of operation, as that, under his all-powerful and all-wise concurring influence, they shall conspire together to produce those effects, at such times, and in such places, which may be suited to  
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their moral state, and serve for warning, or correction, or ruin, as he should judge most expedient. It is from these laws of nature, that tempests, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, and the like evils, take their rise. And they may reasonably be viewed as the *great instruments* of providence. It is by these, at least in part, that God keeps this degenerate world within restraint. Were it not for the displays he makes, at proper times, and in proper places, of his being, perfections, and governing providence, in these ways of terror, mankind might, at length, forget there was a God, or live as though there was none.

But it will, perhaps, be said here, why should beings be made so imperfect as to need a constitution of things, in consequence of which there would unavoidably be these *evils*? Could not the Deity have made mankind, in particular, more perfect, and placed them in a world, in which, conformably to established laws, they might have enjoyed good without any mixture of evil? And if he could, would he not have done it, if infinitely benevolent? These questions, and all other of a similar kind, are only so many vague, unsupported suggestions, importing, that a world, so constituted as our's is, could not, upon the supposition of infinite benevolence, have been brought into existence. But this is so far from being a truth, that, had not the Deity created such a world as this in which we live, he would not have manifested so  
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much benevolence, as he might have done, and actually has done. It has been already said, and largely proved, that there may be the communication of more good by the creation of a diversity of beings, variously capable of happiness, from the greatest conceivable height, quite down to the lowest. It is therefore no objection against infinite benevolence, that all beings are not alike perfect, but rather a proof of it; because the less perfect, in all their gradations, so long as they are at all capable of enjoyment, instead of diminishing, increase the sum total of good. Why then should they be excluded the creation? Why should not our world, imperfect as it is in comparison with other worlds, have been brought into existence, with all its inhabitants, animal and rational, however low some of them may be in their capacities for the perception of happiness? They are all, according to their several ranks, capable of pleasure, and actually enjoy it, and an over-balance of it, notwithstanding all the evils they are liable to. If therefore they had not been made, nor the world in which they live, because so constituted as sometimes to be the occasion of evil, the place they now sustain in the creation would have a vast void. And what a mighty chasm in nature would this have been the means of? How much lessened must have been that good, which might have been communicated? None of that happiness would have been possible, which is now enjoyed, has been, and may hereafter be enjoyed.

joyed, by innumerable beings which have existed, and may in future time exist, on this earth. And is it not more for the honor of the benevolent Deity, that this happiness should have been communicated, than that he should have withheld it? In a diversified creation, there must be a diversity in the displays of goodness, should they proceed even from an infinitely benevolent being. If the displays of goodness, therefore, in the constitution of our world, and the innumerable various creatures in it, are *less* than in the constitution of other worlds, and the creatures in them, it is no other than might reasonably be looked for. There is, beyond all controversy, more benevolence discovered in making such a world as our's, than if the place it occupies in the creation had been a blank? And what is more, for aught any man living can prove to the contrary, or pretend without arrogance to prove, it may be a fit link in that chain of existence, which God may have intended for as full a manifestation of his benevolence, as, in his infinite wisdom, he has judged proper.—But, instead of enlarging any further here, I shall rather proceed

To a more direct answer to the objection against the infinite benevolence of the Deity, as fetched from those *natural* evils, which all the percipient beings in our world, and mankind in special, are, from their very make, and the laws of nature, subjected to. And here I shall be *particular* in enumerating the principal of these

these evils, and endeavor to account for them, in consistency with goodness, should it be supposed to be infinite, but guided, at the same time, by unerring wisdom.

The first evil complained of is *pain*. This indeed is nearly connected with most of the other evils, and constitutes so great a part of them, that it might be considered in general, and the answer to it, if just, esteemed a full reply to them all. But I chuse rather to speak to it distinctly, and particularly, as one of the evils objected to. It is supposed in the objection, that it is in itself an evil, and such an one as there was no occasion for, and could not have had existence from an infinitely benevolent Being. But this may be a great mistake. Pain, in a relative view, and as introduced into such a world as our's, may lose its nature as an absolute evil, and be rather worthy of being called a real good.

Some have endeavoured to account for pain, so as to make it consist with goodness, by saying, that it gives a quicker and stronger relish for pleasure; and that pleasure could not have been felt, at least in many cases, and with so high a gust, had it not been for preceding experience of the thing meant by the sensation of pain. But it is evident, beyond all reasonable dispute, that there may be the perception of pleasure without any previous perception of pain; because this is the real truth with respect to him, who is God over all  
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bleſſed forever more. It will not be pretended, that the perfectly and infinitely happy Being ever knew what pain was, from any experience he ever had, or could have, of it within himſelf. And it is poſſible, I might rather ſay highly probable, that there are created beings of a ſuperior order to the nobleſt in our world, who never felt pain; having never had occaſion, or reaſon for ſuch perception.

Others, in vindication of the Divine benevolence, have ſuppoſed, that the conſtitution, particularly, of man, is ſo exquisitely nice, that a touch upon his nervous ſyſtem will occaſion pleaſure, or pain, according to the degree and manner in which it is done; and that the bodily mechanism is ſuch, that it could not have been otherwiſe. But this, perhaps, is going too far beyond the ken of human underſtanding. We know not, nor is it poſſible we ſhould know, the height, or depth, of that contriving ſkill which is a glory peculiar to the Infinite Mind.

The true and proper answer to the objected difficulty we are conſidering is this, that all the perceiving beings in our world, whether rational or irrational, of an higher or lower order, were ſubjected to the ſenſation of pain, not for its own ſake, but in wiſdom and kindneſs, that it might be an excitement to their care in providing for the ſupport and comfort of life, and that it might alſo keep them upon their  
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guard against whatever might be hurtful to them. We men, though the first order of beings on this earth, are, comparatively speaking, but low creatures, perhaps the lowest among all the moral existences in the creation of God; and as we are such imperfect creatures, and live in a world wherein we are surrounded with dangers, and liable to innumerable disasters, and attacks upon our health and life, *pain* appears to be a wise and benevolent provision of the God of nature for our holding existence with any tolerable degree of safety. This has been already illustrated, Part II. to which I shall only add, the sphere of our understanding is so limited; and such the danger of our being exposed, in thousands of cases, to the loss of health, limbs, and life itself, that our greatest security is this sensation of pain. It supplies the deficiencies in our make, and assists our feeble powers, by being a constant, alarming monitor, calling upon us in time to provide for our well-being, and to guard ourselves against wounds, bruises, distempers, and whatever might be disadvantageous, or destructive to us.

It may be said here, what need of so troublesome a sensation as this of pain to guard us against dangers, and disorders? Might not this have been done in a more easy way, and yet as effectual an one? And if it might, how comes it to pass that it was not? Would not an infinitely benevolent Being have been thus kind to his creatures?

The answer is obvious. The making such an order of imperfect beings as we are, has been already accounted for, and shewn to be consistent with infinitely wise benevolence. This being so, a more kind expedient could not have been contrived, for such creatures as we are, so far as we are able to judge, than the sensation of pain, for our security from danger, and hurt, and to promote our real welfare. Most certainly, no one is able to point out a better, or to make it evident there could have been a better. Was it not for this expedient, mankind, notwithstanding the utmost efforts of their reason, wisdom, and foresight, would, in innumerable instances, run into danger, and expose themselves to thousands of difficulties, and inconveniences, they are, by this contrivance of the Divine skill and goodness, in a great measure freed from. It is indeed so useful, I might more justly say so necessary, an ingredient in the human constitution, that it would be scarce possible life should be preserved without it. To be sure, it could not with that comfort and safety it may now be.

Besides all which, it ought to be considered, that we men are moral, and not meerly animal, beings; and it might be in the view of our benevolent Creator, by means of this sensation of pain, he has made us capable of, to restrain us from luxury, intemperance, lewdness, and debauchery, an indulgence to which would be hurtful to our souls as well as bodies, debasing  
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our nature, and bringing us down to a level with the very brutes; than which nothing would be more dishonourary to the God who made us, or greater reproach to ourselves as moral and intelligent agents. By this expedient also, so useful in so many other respects, occasion is offered, especially in certain cases, and at certain times, for the formation and improvement of the virtues, patience, meekness, contentment, and resignation to the all-wise, righteous, and holy Governor of the world, which may be greatly serviceable to us here, and abundantly more so in some future state of existence.— To go on to other evils complained of.

Such are hunger and thirst, toil and labor, to all which we are subjected. But these, if considered as they ought to be, are so far from being designed evils, that they were necessarily contrived for good, tend to good, nor could such imperfect creatures as we are have possessed existence so well without, as with them.

The way in which the wisdom of God has thought fit to manifest his goodness in preserving the lives he has bestowed on us, is by the use of *food*. Our bodies are so constituted as that, even, their solids are daily upon the waste, and their fluids in a perpetual flux; so much that new accessions of matter are necessary to supply what fails off, and wears away. Death must otherwise soon, and unavoidably, be the effect. Now this supply is made by eating and drinking; and to this we are urged, partly by  
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the satisfaction we naturally take in what we eat and drink, but principally by that hunger and thirst, which, though, sometimes heightened to a degree that may be greatly troublesome, are yet necessary, and bring far more pleasure, than pain along with them. Was it not for the implantation of this expedient in our nature, we should be in danger of dying before our time, through negligence in providing, or throwing in, the recruits that are continually necessary for the support of our bodily system. Hunger and thirst are what nature has made, and intended to give us warning of this danger, and to push us on to a due care, to prevent, in time, those inconveniences that would befall our bodies, if not supplied with food and drink to strengthen and uphold them.

But it will be said, what need of labor in order to procure the things needful for the body? Could not the earth, without the toil of man, have yielded a sufficiency for his bodily support? And would not this have been the constitution of nature, if an infinitely benevolent Cause had been at its head, as its Supreme Director? I answer, Had the constitution of nature been thus altered, there must have been an analogous alteration in the make of man; otherwise greater inconveniences would have taken place, than those that are now complained of, that is, the Deity would not have manifested so much benevolence, as he has now done. Had the earth been so made as that it should spontaneously

rancously have yielded its produce, and man's labour by this means, have been rendered needless, what would have been the consequence but indolent inactivity? And what the consequence of that, but the loss of health, the want of vigor and spirit, and a general tediousness accompanying life? And what is more, the bringing on death much sooner, and with more distressing anxiety and pain, than would otherwise have been the case. Inaction, and no exercise, naturally and powerfully tend to relax the solid parts of the body, to weaken the circulation of the fluids, and so to disorder the secretions intended for the smaller vessels, as that, instead of affording them a proper supply, they would fill them with obstructions, which, if not removed, would effect a dissolution of the bodily machine, either suddenly, or in a more slow and lingering way. With respect, therefore, to beings constituted as we are, labor is highly expedient; and it is a proof of benevolence, rather than an objection against it, that we are subjected to it. Mr. Addison has set this in a beautiful, as well as clear and strong point of light. His words, which none will think unworthy of transcribing, are these.—“ I consider the body as a system of tubes and glands, or to use a more rustick phrase, a bundle of pipes and strainers, fitted to one another, after so wonderful a manner, as as to make a proper engine to work with. This description does not only comprehend the bowels, bones, tendons, veins, nerves, and ar-  
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teries, but every muscle, and every ligature, which is a composition of fibres that are so many imperceptible vesicles or pipes, interwoven on all sides with nerves and strainers. This general idea of a human body, without considering it in the theories of anatomy, lets us see how absolutely necessary labor is for the right preservation of it. There must be frequent motions and agitations to mix, digest, and separate the juices contained in it, as well as to clear and cleanse that infinite of pipes and trunks of which it is composed, and to give their solid parts a more firm and lasting tone. Labor, or exercise ferments the humors; casts the veins into their proper channels, throws off rednesses, and helps nature in those secret dislocations, without which the body cannot subsist in its vigor, nor the soul act with clearness. I must here mention the effect which this has upon the faculties of the mind, by keeping the understanding clear, the imagination unobscured, and retarding those spirits that are necessary for the proper execution of our intellectual faculties, during the present laws of union between soul and body. It is to a neglect in this particular that we must ascribe the spleen, which is so frequent in men of a stolid and sedentary temper, as well as the vapors to which those of the other sex are so often subject. Had not exercise been absolutely necessary for our well-being, nature would not have made the body so proper for it, by giving it such an activity.

activity to the limbs, and such a pliancy to every part as necessarily produces those compressions, extensions, contractions, dilatations, and all other kinds of motions that are necessary for the preservation of these millions of tubes and glands as has been before mentioned. And that we might not want labour, as exercise us in such an exertion of the body as is proper for its welfare; it is to obtain, and nothing valuable can be procured without it. Not to mention riches and honor, even food and raiment are not to be come at without the toil of the hands, and sweat of the brows. Providence furnishes materials, but expects that we should work them up ourselves. The earth must be labored before it gives its increase, and when it is forced into its several products, how many hands must they pass through before they are fit for use? Manufactures, trade, and agriculture, naturally employ more than nineteen parts of the species in twenty; and as for those who are not obliged to labor, by the condition in which they are born, they are more miserable than the rest of mankind, unless they indulge themselves in that voluntary labor, which goes by the name of exercise."—I shall add here, if it was fit such an order of creatures as we men should have had a place in a scale of beings indefinitely diverse from each other, which no one, without high arrogance, will pretend to say, no reasonable complaint can be made on account of that labor we are called to. It

was indeed, for a species of beings constituted as we are, nearly and necessarily connected with the welfare both of our souls and bodies. If we may pay any regard to the sacred books of revelation, Adam, even in paradise was obliged to labor; for he was put into the "garden of Eden to dress it." The exercise he was called to might be different, in kind and degree, from that which falls to our share; as it is our lot to live on the earth since it was doomed to "bring forth thorns and thistles," that it might be an occasion of that toil and "sweat of face," without which we cannot earn the bread we eat. And, as the moral state of the world has been, from the time of the lapse of the first of our race, it may be best it should be thus, more conducive to the honor of God, and our own good, than otherwise it would have been.

It may properly be subjoined still further; had it not been for the contrivance of *labor*, this earth would have been a rude wilderness: Nor should we have seen those curious productions of art, which are so beautiful, and, at the same time beneficial, and delightful. How could we, without labor, have had houses accommodated to the convenience and comfort of life, and other structures both ornamental and serviceable? The world indeed is filled with a variety of works, innumerable in their kinds, adapted to gratify the senses, and answer many valuable purposes, which could not have  
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been brought into effect without labor of body or mind, or both. And in vain, comparatively speaking, were we formed with hands, and eyes, and various mechanical turns, had not the Creator intended we should labor : Nor would he have intended this, if a variety of wise and benevolent ends might not have been answered hereby ; some of which we have pointed out, and might easily have mentioned many more.

There are yet other evils complained of ; among which are bodily disorders in innumerable kinds, especially those in consequence of which some are idiots, and others distracted, and by this means not only objects of pity, but the occasion of no small trouble to their relations, and sometimes to the communities in which they live as individuals.

The existence of these evils, in our world, in its present state, is not denied. But it may be justly questioned, whether they would have been either so multiplied, or heightened in their malignity, had it not been for the prevalence of folly and vice, which is chargeable on us as its author, and not on God. Such indeed is our constitution, and such the established laws of nature, that, aside from the wrong conduct of mankind, there might have been some of these evils ; but, without all doubt, they would have been far less in number, and far lighter in degree, in comparison with what they now are. But be this as it may ; as they are the effects of established natural laws, intended

for good, and productive of it in innumerable instances, they ought not to be complained of; especially, if it be remembered, that pre-established general laws, for such a world as our's; are preferable to immediate, unrelated exertions of the Divine agency; and inconveniences may have been lessened, rather than increased thereby. Were there no general laws, but every thing was effected by immediate, unrelated acts of Divine power, the bad consequences arising herefrom would be at once obvious. "There would be no arts and sciences, no skill or industry; no regular methods of providing for our bodies, or improving our minds in the knowledge of things; all which evidently presuppose, and are entirely founded on some settled, certain laws of the universe discoverable by us." The reader, if he pleases, may turn to Part II, where he will find this point largely considered.

It may be further said here, as mankind are brought into existence, not by immediate exertions of Divine power, but in consequence of the general law of propagation, they are, in virtue of this law, subjected to evils; which would not have been prevented, but by an extraordinary interposition of heaven, which, if common, might be followed with more inconveniences, for aught we can say to the contrary, than it would guard against. By a variety of ways, and means, this law of nature may be obstructed in its operation, or such a turn given



to it, as that children may come into the world with a bodily machine, unfitted for the soul to work by; in consequence of which some might be idiots, and some naturally turn wild. These cases, indeed, are comparatively rare. It is more common for children to derive from predecessors, and as the effect of their vices too, bodily constitutions subjecting them to infirmities, and diseases, various in kind, and sometimes greatly afflictive in degree. And, perhaps, most of the disorders mankind groan under, especially as to the malignant degree of them, are owing to this cause. But these inconveniences notwithstanding, it is better, beyond all comparison better, this law should have been established, than otherwise. For it is by succession, and not a continued existence of the same individuals, that the human species is preserved in being. And as this is not done by a constantly created supply of individuals, how could it have been better effected, than by this law of propagation? Especially, if it be considered, that it has made way for the manifestation of riches of wisdom, as well as goodness, in the formation of different sexes, in the adjustment of a different bodily organization, and the contrivance of natural propensions, all which are admirably fitted to bring into event the intention of this law. And it is so closely connected with other laws, good in themselves, and productive of good; such as the law of love, particularly, between the sexes, which  
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gives occasion for many reciprocal services greatly beneficial, of which we could otherwise have had no idea; and the law of growth from infancy and childhood, to a state of maturity with respect to both mind and body, which makes way for thousands of kind offices in parents towards children, as also for the trial and improvement of many important virtues: Such, I say, is the connection between the law of propagation, and other laws of nature, that the present system must, in many respects, have been altered, if this had not been established; that is, in other words, this world must have been another world, and not the world it now is: While yet, such a world as this is must have been brought into existence, or the Divine benevolence would not have been so amply manifested, as, by this means, it might be, and really has been.

There are two other evils still particularly complained of; the shortness of life, and the unavoidable necessity of death.

As to the first, the brevity of life; it might be enough to say, in general, it was ordered by unerring wisdom, and, at the same time, argues benevolence; as life, short as it is, is much preferable to non-existence.—But we shall be more particular in considering this complaint.

It is readily allowed, the general limitation of life, with respect either to the human species, or any of the classes of inferior creatures, cannot be accounted for upon philosophical principles;

principles ; but must finally be resolved by repairing to the all-wise pleasure of Him, who is infinite in understanding, as well as goodness. All the species of percipient beings, in our world, are subjected to the same general laws of nature ; and yet, the time of the duration of their existence is, notwithstanding, greatly various. Some of the brutal kind are confined within the period of twenty or thirty years ; others seldom reach beyond fifteen or twenty ; others still are quite old at about ten or twelve. The like difference there is between the continuance of being in the animals of more inferior classes. A single year completes the time of existence as to some of them ; a few months as to others ; and life may be much shorter, with respect to many of those species which are visible to us, only by the help of glasses. This variety in the duration of life is, no doubt, effected by the operation of general laws, but then it must be by the operation of those laws, conformably to a *peculiar difference of constitution* in these different species of creatures ; and this, as allotted to them by God, and not to be accounted for, but by recurring to his all-wise good pleasure.

This is eminently true, with respect to man. Notwithstanding the general laws of nature, and their tendency to bring on a dissolution of our bodily structure, no good philosophical reason can be given, why this dissolution should be effected within such a general, limited time. If we may give credit to the Mosaic history,  
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the Anti-Deluvian patriarchs lived, some of them at least, till they were six, seven, eight, nine hundred years old : and it is particularly remarked of Methuselah, that " his days were nine hundred and sixty nine years : " Whereas, the life of man, from the time of the flood, has been confined within much narrower limits. About " seventy years," according to the computation of king David, was the general period of life in his days ; and so it has been ever since.

Some have attempted to assign the philosophical reason of this difference in the period of human life. And, in order hereto, they have recurred to the natural firmness and vigor of the human constitution, which, at first, was propagated without those contracted weaknesses, and decays, which have been gradually increasing ever since, and descending from parents to children. And, together with the original strength of the human structure, they have taken into consideration the peculiar aptitude of the productions of nature to afford nutriment ; which, they suppose, were in their greatest perfection at first, but have been continually upon the decline. And, adding to these reasons, the *kind of food*, the first generations of men lived upon, which, they imagine, was not *flesh*, but *the fruit of the earth* ; they think it not strange, that their lives should be protracted to a period so much longer, than the common term of life at present.

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But however plausible this account may appear to any, it is far from being satisfactory ; and insuperable objections might easily be made to it, if it would not occasion too great, and, what some may think, a needless digression. The truth is, after all that has been said by learned men to solve this difficulty, it still remains a mystery in reason and philosophy. Nor can any thing be offered, with reference to its solution, that may more reasonably be acquiesced in than this, So it pleased the sovereign good God ; who, as he is the Creator of man, and of all the orders of inferior beings in our world, may assign to him, and to them, what time of existence he shall judge fit. And the periods of life, however various in the various orders of creatures, were doubtless ordered in goodness, as well as wisdom. There is evidently an analogy between this diversity, and the diversity that takes place in the several classes of beings ; and it might be as fit there should be both these diversities, as either of them, in order to a wise and benevolent constitution of the links in the chain of existence. Nor may any one, unless endowed with a larger share of understanding than belongs to the order of men, presume, without vanity, to assert, much less to prove, that it was not better things should have been thus, than otherwise.

There are, most certainly, good reasons; with respect to us men, why our years should not be lengthened beyond the general period

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of seventy or eighty. Our present life, as we are intelligent moral beings, ought; in agreement with philosophy as well as divinity, to be looked upon, not as intended for the enjoyment of the greatest happiness, we are made capable of; but rather as a probation-season that will finally issue in it; in consequence of an acquired meetness for it. This is the light, in which it is reasonable we should view our life here on earth; and if the period, assigned for its continuance, is a duration sufficiently long for the attainment of that perfection and happiness, which is the grand design of God; it is, in true reason long enough: Nor would it be desirable it should be protracted to a greater length. In short, our existence, and continuance in it, in this world, were designed by our all-wise benevolent Creator for a quite different purpose from what we are too commonly apt to imagine. He intended both, not so much for the enjoyment of our highest happiness here, as to prepare us for it in a better state. This is the true and proper idea of life. And the limitation of its continuance is admirably well adjusted to this notion of it. Those who are formed to a preparedness, by a wise and right improvement of their time, and talents, for an admission to the joys of God's presence, will not complain of the shortness of life. And as to others, who chiefly employ themselves to the purposes of this, and not the coming world; who make no provision

sion for another state, but walk in the way of their hearts, and in the sight of their eyes, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and mind, the period of life is full long enough for their continuance here: Nor would it answer any valuable end, if it were of a still greater length. In all probability, they would grow more bold and daring in iniquity, more hardened in vice, and more ripe for inanced degrees of the Divine vengeance. Besides, the present term of life is, one would think, a space full long enough for such persons to be continued nuisances to the world. And it is really a kindness to mankind in general, that they are limited, by the law of their nature, to threescore or fourscore years.

The other evil, I mentioned as complained of, and the last I shall mention, is the unavoidable necessity of death. And this is common to all the percipient beings in our world, from the highest to the lowest class of them. And their subjection to death, in consequence of the operation of the laws of nature, is a wiser and better contrivance for the production of good, and a stronger proof of the benevolence of the Deity, than an establishment the reverse of this.

As to the creatures inferior to man, in all their degrees of subordination, it is obvious, upon the slightest attention, that more benevolence may be manifested by their succeeding one another in life, than by their continuance

in being without death. In the former of these ways of communicating life, there may be inconceivably more of it, and consequently more enjoyment of good, so far as life is at all a basis for such enjoyment, than in the latter. There can be no reasonable room for doubt as to this. Should as many species of percipient beings, and as many individuals in each of these species, be brought into existence, as this world of our's could contain without unavoidable inconvenience; if there was no death to make way for a succession in life, there would be but a very small pittance of life, in comparison with what there might be, conformably to the method in which heaven has contrived to communicate it. Upon the supposition of no death, in the case proposed, there could be no multiplication of life. It would always continue precisely the same with respect to the numbers that enjoyed it: Whereas, upon the present plan, there may be the continuance of every species, with a like number of individuals, in thousands of successions. And should a calculation be made of life multiplied in this way, it would amount to a sum inconceivably greater, than it could otherwise have been. Millions of animals, in every class, are capable, in this way, of being brought into life, and made percipients of enjoyment, which must have remained in non-entity, had it not been for this contrivance of death, and its being made an establishment of nature.



nature. In short, by means of the present scheme of God, there has been, and may yet be, as much more life, and enjoyment, among the inferior ranks of animals, than there would have been, without the introduction of death, as there already have been, and may still be, successions in their life ; for, in every succession, there may be as much life, and enjoyment, as in the first class that had existence.

It ought to be considered yet further here, that, had it not been for death, the law of propagation still continuing in force, there would not have been, long before the present day, room in our world for a millionth part of the animals that might be brought into existence ; yea, the increase of a very few of the classes of these animals would have so filled the earth, that the rest must have been shut out.

And what has been thus said of the inferior animals is equally true, should it be applied to us men. Was it not for death, there must have been, beyond conception, less life, and consequently enjoyment, than there has been, and still may be, upon the present plan of nature. If we take into consideration only those of our race, who, in successive generations, have had existence, there would not have been room on this earth for a thousandth part of them, at one and the same time ; much less would there have been a possibility of this, if all that have died, before their arrival to a capacity of increasing their kind, should be taken into the number  
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and they had all gone on multiplying to this day, conformably to the law of propagation. Perhaps, an hundred worlds, as large as this, would not have been sufficiently extensive for their existence, and comfortable support, in the way they are now provided for. Instead therefore of objecting against the benevolence of the Deity for the introduction of death into the world, we have reason rather to admire and adore that wisdom of his, which has contrived and established this effectual way for the fuller illustration of that infinite goodness, which is so amiable an attribute of his nature.

Some, that they might keep at the utmost distance from reflecting dishonor on the Divine benevolence, on account of the law of death, have supposed it was in itself a matter of necessity, and could not have been otherwise; as the bodies of all animals, from the lowest to the highest class of them, being compounded of heterogeneous parts, are naturally corruptible, and must unavoidably, in time, undergo that dissolution, which is the thing meant, by death. Whether it be true, or not, that animal bodies must have been subjected to such corruptibility, as that a dissolution could not have been guarded against, and prevented, I shall not dispute at present. But thus much is unquestionably true, that the time of existence, without the coming on of a dissolution, is different in different classes of the inferior animals; which cannot be accounted for, by the operation

ration of any of the laws of nature, without recurring to that wisdom of God, which so formed the bodily constitution of all animals, and so differenced it with respect to the different classes of them, that the laws of nature should be unable, unless by accidental interference, to effect a dissolution in any of them, but in conformity to that *special difference*, as to the general time, that had been previously allotted for their continuance in being.

And with respect to the race of men, in particular, so far as we may receive for truth what Moses has related, the *time* of their bodily dissolution, the same general laws of nature still subsisting, and in operation, has been greatly varied. Men live now, generally speaking, but seventy, or eighty years : Whereas, in the Anti-Diluvian ages, they lived some hundreds of years ; and they might, had God so pleased, have gone on living as many thousands : Yea, their special constitution might have been such, for aught any one can prove to the contrary, as that they should not have seen corruption.\* But, in the plan of God,  
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\* According to the new-testament writings, there will be no death, among the true servants of Jesus Christ, in the resurrection-world. They will have bodies there, as they have here. Their bodies may be there more refined, and with greater skill organized, so as to be sifter machines for the soul to act by ; but they will be bodies still, and yet not subject to mortality. Hence that emphatically strong declaration of the apostle Paul, "This corruptible must put  
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it has been ordered otherwise. He has so constituted our bodily structure, that it shall, within such a general period, naturally fall to pieces. And this general period he has fixed, not from any necessity there was for it by reason of the corruptibility of the materials of which it is formed; but by so contriving the continuance of

an incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So, when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "death is swallowed up in victory." It is likewise evident, that material bodies may, by the will of the all-wise and all-powerful Architect, be so formed, that, under his over-ruling guidance and protection, they may continue in existence without death forever. According to the same writings also it is evident, that man-kind would not have been subjected to death, had it not been for the lapse of the first man, Adam. But it is evident likewise, that it could not have been the intention of God, that Adam, together with all that might proceed from him, should have lived on this earth at one and the same time; and for this very good reason, because it was plainly impossible that they should. This world could not have contained and subsisted them; unless their bodies, and the manner of supporting them, had been quite different from what they now are. If therefore they had not died, some other way must have been provided to make room for those who would have been brought into being. Perhaps, in certain periods, numbers of those who had been fitted for it, might have been translated to some other place of abode, to enjoy happiness there, in some superior mode of existence. But be this as it may, this non-subjection to death was not owing to a created natural incorruptibility, but to a special promise from Almighty God, that, while innocent, they should be so protected, and preserved, as not to see corruption. But, innocence being lost, the promise of immortality became vacated, and death of course took place: Only, it was left with God to fix the general period of life; which he has done with wisdom that discovers great goodness.

of one generation, as that the succession of another should be admirably adapted to manifest both wisdom and goodness in providing for the existence of mere life, and consequent enjoyment, than there would otherwise have been on this earth.

It might also be with a view to promote morally good purposes, that the law of death, especially as to its general time, has been established by God. It is not easy to conceive of any motive more strikingly adapted to excite to consideration, and such a behavior in life as may lay a just foundation for calmness and serenity of mind, when the time comes that we must depart out of this into another state. And it is, most certainly, a very powerful restraint from vicious practices, especially in those kinds, and degrees, which naturally tend to hasten death, and bring it on before its proper time. It is indeed one of the wisest and best contrivances for the government of men, and to keep them within the restraints of reason and virtue. As Dr. Sherlock, in his excellent treatise on death, expresses it, "Mortality and death are necessary to the good government of the world. Nothing else can give a check to some men's wickedness, but either the fear of death, or execution of it. Some men are so outrageously wicked, that nothing can put a stop to them, and prevent the mischief they do in the world, but to cut them off. This is the reason of capital punishments among men, to remove those

out of the world who will be a plague to mankind while they live in it. For this reason God destroyed the whole race of mankind by a deluge of water, excepting Noah, and his family, because they were incurably wicked. For this reason he sends plagues, and famine, and sword, to correct the exorbitant growth of wickedness, to lessen the number of sinners, and to lay restraints on them. And if the world be such a bedlam as it is under all these restraints, what would it be were it filled with immortal sinners !”

Upon the whole that has been said, in relation to natural evil, it appears, either that it could not have been prevented in such a world as our's ; or, that it is miscalled evil, being rather the contrivance of wisdom in order to the production of more good, than there otherwise would have been. It is conceded, a better world than this, more perfect, and more powerfully adapted to make happy, might be created by the Deity ; but then it ought to be remembered, such a better world may be already one of the links in the diversified chain of existence. The only proper question therefore is, whether the making such a world as this, is not a proof of more benevolence, than a chiasm would be in that part of the creation, which it now occupies ? If so, imperfect as it is, comparatively speaking, it is better it should be, than not be. And, for such an imperfect world as this ought to be, in an indefinitely variegated creation, in  
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order to its being a proper part in the chain of existence, no alteration, it may be, notwithstanding all the complaints that have been made of deficiencies, redundances, deformities, and evils, could be made without damage to the system. If in some things, absolutely viewed, an alteration for the better might be supposed, yet this very alteration, considered, as it ought to be, in its relation to other parts, which, as truly as these, go to the constitution of the whole, it might turn out greatly to its disadvantage. Arch Deacon Law, in his 42 Note, on Arch Bishop King's "origin of evil," has well expressed himself upon this head. Says he, "we may safely conclude, that there could have been no partial alteration of this system, but for the worse, as far as we know, at least not for the better. They who hold that there might have been a total one, that the whole scheme of things might possibly have been altered, or reversed, and that either the direct contrary, or a quite different one, would have been equally, or more worthy of God; the men, I say, that hold this, are obliged to show the possibility of conceiving of it, and to explain the manner how it may be, before we are obliged to believe them.—And when they have done this, and compleated their system, and made a total alteration of things, as they imagine, for the better, they are at last got only to the absurdity of putting this system into an higher class; whereas, all the different classes,

in every conceivable degree of perfection, were supposed to be entirely filled at the first. We must therefore take things as they are, and argue only from the present nature of them, collectively. In which view, we shall find no possible alteration of any thing, but what would produce greater inconveniences, either in itself, or others, to which it bears a strict relation." He goes on, taking occasion to borrow a section from Mr. Maxwell's general remarks on Cumberland, in these words. "The nature of things, in the natural world, is so exactly fitted to the natural faculties and dispositions of mankind, that were any thing in it otherwise than it is, even in degree, mankind would be less happy, than they now are, Thus the dependence of all natural effects upon a few simple principles, is wonderfully advantageous in many respects. The degrees of all the sensible pleasures are exactly suited to the use of each; so that if we enjoyed any of them in a greater degree we should be less happy: For our appetites of those pleasures would, by that means, be too strong for our reason; and, as we are framed, tempt us to an immoderate enjoyment of them, so as to prejudice our bodies. And, where we enjoy some of them in so high a degree, as that it is, in many cases, very difficult for the strongest to regulate and moderate the appetites of those pleasures, it is in such instances where it was necessary to counterpoize some disadvantages, which are the consequences of the pursuit  
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of those pleasures. Thus the pleasing ideas, which accompany the love of the sexes, are necessary to be possessed in so high a degree, to balance the cares of matrimony, and also the pains of child-bearing in the female sex. The same may be said of our intellectual pleasures. Thus did we receive a greater pleasure from benevolence, sloth would be encouraged by an immoderate bounty. And were the pleasures of our inquiries into the truth greater, we should be too speculative, and less active. It seems also probable, that the degree of our intellectual capacity is very well suited to our objects of knowledge, and that had we a greater degree thereof, we should be less happy. Moreover, it is probably so adapted to the inward frame of our bodies, that it could not be greater, without either an alteration in the laws of nature, or in the laws of union between the soul and body. Farther; were it much greater than it is, our thoughts and pursuits would be so spiritual and refined, that we should be taken too much off from sensible pleasures. We should probably be conscious of some defects or wants in our bodily organs, and would be sensible that they were unequal to so great a capacity, which would necessarily be followed by uneasiness of mind. And this seems to hold in the brute-creation. For, methinks, it would be for the disadvantage of a horse to be endowed with the understanding of a man: Such an unequal

unequal union must be attended with continual disquietudes, and discontents. As for our pains, they are all either warnings against bodily disorders, or are such as, had we wanted them, the laws of nature remaining as they are, we should either have wanted some pleasures we now enjoy, or have possessed them in a less degree. Those things in nature which we cannot reconcile to the foregoing opinion, as being ignorant of their use, we have good reason, from analogy, to believe are really advantageous, and adapted to the happiness of intelligent beings of the system; though we have not so full and complete a knowledge of the entire system, as to be able to point out their particularities. From these observations we may conclude, that all the various parts of our system are so admirably suited to one another, and the whole contrived with such exquisite wisdom, that were any thing, in any part thereof, in the least otherwise than it is, without an alteration in the whole, there would be a less sum of happiness in the system than there now is."

I have now said all that I intended to say in illustration of the supremely perfect benevolence of the Deity, as also in solving the objections which have been made against this attribute of his from the known appearances in nature. How far what I have offered, may be worthy of notice, must be left with those into whose hands it may fall, to judge. If any should think the arguing is inconclusive, finding themselves

selves, at the same time, unable to reconcile the manifestations of Divine goodness with the character of God, as infinitely benevolent, let them not, on this account, question in their hearts whether he is endowed with this most amiable perfection. For there is no way of reasoning, by which we can prove that he possesses any perfection, but it may in the same way be proved, that he is supremely benevolent. Nor would it be any thing strange should we, who are so low an order in the scale of intelligent beings, be unable to remove away these difficulties that may attend, in some instances, the display of this Divine attribute. Instead therefore of perplexing our own minds, or the minds of others, with seeming inconsistencies in God's manifestations of his goodness, let us adore before him as a Being infinitely benevolent; patiently waiting for the coming day of revelation, when it shall be made to appear with a meridian lustre, that nothing was ever done in the conduct of God towards our world but in harmony with wise goodness, accurate justice, and the most perfect consistency with all those moral qualities, which constitute the blessed God an infinitely amiable Being.

F I N I S.













