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M O R A L P H I L O S O P H Y ,

AND OF

C H R I S T I A N E T H I C S .

BY

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

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PREFACE.

IN the following Treatise I have confined myself to the ethical department of Moral Philosophy. But as ethics cannot be explained without some knowledge of Natural Religion, that is, without some acquaintance with the character, perfections, and providence of God, the first book is wholly occupied with the consideration of these momentous subjects.

The usual method is, to treat first of the active powers of man, and afterwards to discourse concerning the being and attributes of God. I have reversed this order; because I conceive that we can study the principles of moral obligation, and the various classes of our duties, with greater advantage when we have previously attended to the character and government of Him who has constituted us what we are, and of whom, and to whom, and through whom, are all things.

I have styled this work Elements of Christian Ethics and of Moral Philosophy, because I have throughout assumed the Divine authority of

Revelation, and have uniformly availed myself of its light. “Such as reject the Christian Religion, are to make the best shift they can to build up a system and lay the foundation of morality without it. But it appears to me a great inconsistency in those who receive Christianity and expect something to come of it, to endeavour to keep all such expectations out of sight in their reasonings concerning human duty.”

To this course it will, perhaps, be objected, that it is encroaching on the province of the Divine. The objection, however, is quite unfounded. While the moral philosopher does not professedly treat of divinity, or give a system of christian theology, he is bound always so to conduct his course of morals, that it may be, as it is designed, an useful preparation for the study of Revealed Truth. He is to treat of moral science, but not to the neglect of the sanctions of Christianity; not to speak and write on themes of the deepest moment, as if “the day-spring from on high” had not visited us. “The morality of the gospel,” says Locke, “doth so exceed them all, that, to give a man a full knowledge of true morality, I shall send him to no other book but the New Testament*.”

* Locke's Thoughts on Reading and Study.

Without the light of Divine Revelation, we know very little of the moral government of God, and of the duties and the final destiny of man. Let us, by all means, ascertain to what length reason alone will lead us in our inquiries into such subjects: but why should we refuse to receive instruction from Christianity, when the light of nature fails us? "Some authors," says Paley, "industriously decline the mention of Scripture authorities, as belonging to a different province; and others reserving them for a separate volume; which appears to me much the same defect, as if a commentator on the laws of England should content himself with stating upon each head the common law of the land, without taking any notice of acts of Parliament; or should choose to give his readers the common law in one book, and the statute law in another."

There are two classes to whom, I trust, this work may be useful:—First, to students of Moral Philosophy, and more especially as preparatory to their entering on the study of Sacred Theology. I flatter myself that they will here obtain hints which may be of advantage in enlarging their views of the moral government and law of God: which are essentially necessary to their entertaining just conceptions of the several parts of Divine Revelation. Without a

thorough understanding of the principles and grounds of moral obligation, we shall be ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Secondly, to Christians generally, I hope, this work may be useful; by enforcing the obligation of practising the things that are true, and just and honourable, and lovely, and of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise.

I have, in the first book, enlarged at greater length than some may deem necessary, on the being and perfections of God. I have done so, however, under the impression, (and this must be my apology,) that it is of infinite importance to the virtue and happiness of mankind that just and comprehensive views should be entertained on these fundamental subjects. "All religion," says Archbishop Tillotson,—whose name must always be venerated by all who value the high interest of morals,—“is founded on right notions of God and his perfections, insomuch that Divine Revelation itself does suppose these for its foundations*.” A similar remark has been made by Dr. Butler, one of the most distinguished metaphysicians and moralists that England has produced. “If we are constituted such sort of creatures, as,

* Serm. 41.

from our very nature, to feel certain affections or movements of mind, upon the sight or contemplation of the meanest inanimate part of the creation;—*certainly there must be somewhat due to Himself* who is the Author and cause of all things; who is more intimately present to us than any thing else can be, and with whom we have a nearer and more constant intercourse than we can have with any creature: there must be some movements of mind and heart which correspond to his perfections, or of which those perfections are the natural object*.”

I had intended to furnish additional illustrations of some of the subjects discussed in these volumes by appending to each a series of notes. But as the work has gone considerably beyond the length which I had originally designed, I have not thought it expedient to extend it further.

Glasgow, April 13, 1826.

* Butler's Works, vol. ii. p. 82.

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MORAL PHILOSOPHY.

INTRODUCTION.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE ADVANTAGES ARISING FROM THE STUDY OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY.

WE receive pleasure from the contemplation of nature only as it suggests in one way or other, some attribute of mind; and when the natural philosopher is most deeply engaged in his researches, the high satisfaction which forms the stimulus and the reward of his labour, is the result either of the successful exercise of his own faculties, or of observing the continual manifestation of that Supreme and Eternal Mind which gave matter its being and its laws. The forms of nature, however beautiful or sublime, are only interesting as they suggest some pleasing images with which they are directly or remotely associated, and as they awaken in us the thoughts of the power, and the wisdom, and the goodness of an Almighty Creator. What were a universe of matter but shapeless magnitude, without the living spirit of such a Being to beautify and arrange it, or without the existence of intelligences capable of deriving pleasure from the view

of its varied aspects of grandeur, and loveliness, and sublimity?

————— For what are all
 The forms which brute unconscious matter wears,
 Greatness of bulk or symmetry of parts?
 Not reaching to the heart, soon feeble grows
 The superficial impulse; dull their charms,
 And satiate soon and pall the languid eye.
 Not so the moral species, nor the powers
 Of genius and design; the ambitious mind
 There sees herself: by these congenial forms
 Touch'd and awaken'd, with intenser art
 She bends each nerve, and meditates well-pleas'd
 Her features in the mirror*.

Such is the interest connected with the subjects of our inquiry in metaphysical and moral science. To every mind capable of reflecting in any degree on its own operations, it possesses attractions of a high and permanent order.

That it tends, in a high degree, to improve and elevate the mind, will, I am persuaded, be universally admitted. It may, I am aware, be urged, that the same remark holds true of every branch of science, and that the mere exercise of our mental faculties, either in the acquisition or communication of knowledge, tends to their improvement; and that, on this ground, the study of natural philosophy, or history, or chemistry, has precisely the same claim on our attention. I am cordially willing to concede that even, in this view, the physical sciences, and especially astronomy, which raises the mind to the consideration of the movements and the laws of other worlds, should occupy a distinguished place in every system of

* AKENSIDE'S *Pleasures of Imagination*.

education;—that the varied and magnificent objects which they bring within the range of observation cannot fail to enlarge and invigorate the intellectual powers; and that by accustoming the mind to continued processes of reasoning, to compare and arrange its ideas, they are most conducive to the evolution of all its faculties. But it requires a still greater degree of abstraction to reflect on the subjects of our consciousness, to mark the different operations of our mind, our trains of thought, and the laws by which they are regulated; and to analyze and classify the various workings of the immaterial part of our nature. The habits of clear discernment and close reasoning on all subjects, and especially on subjects connected with moral and political science, must be greatly confirmed; and the very niceties of speculation to which metaphysical science, more than any other, will always give rise, must communicate a facility of embodying in language and in reasonings, the silent reflections of the mind. That such a faculty is of the first importance to all who are called to the high situation of communicating the benefits of knowledge to others, is sufficiently obvious.

The next advantage which I shall mention as resulting from the study of moral philosophy is, an enlarged acquaintance with human nature; and who is there possessing any share of liberal curiosity for whom such a subject has no interest? or, in what situation of life is it possible to be placed where its advantage is not very obvious? If the proper study of mankind is man, if that branch of knowledge which closely concerns the usefulness and the happiness of every one,

and especially of such as are appointed to direct the views and the prejudices of others, consist in an extended acquaintance with the operations of the human mind, and the habits of human nature, there cannot, in this case, be too much attention bestowed on that science whose object it is to consider man as a sensitive, an intelligent, a moral, and a social being. How very different in its effects on the understanding and the heart is the knowledge of human nature acquired in the exercise of those liberal views and kind dispositions which are congenial to youth, from that which is the result of a partial acquaintance with the worst part of the species, and which so generally sours the temper, and dries up the springs of generous affections! The Philosophy of the Human Mind leads us to study the elements of morals, to view the principles and tendencies from which the complex phenomena of the moral world proceed, and to teach us to regard with benevolence and candour a nature whose endowments and whose weaknesses are our own, and on which the Deity has so visibly impressed his image. Whilst it gives us the knowledge of ourselves, and of mankind, it gives us that which is of still higher value, an affection and reverence for that common nature which we inherit; and by fixing our thoughts on the powers and susceptibilities of man, we are reminded of the immortality to which, by his Creator, he has been evidently designed.

Though the Philosophy of the Human Mind conferred no greater benefit than this, it would be well deserving of our attention; since it would prevent us from being misled by those partial, and consequently

erroneous views of the nature of man, which render the writings of certain authors so injurious to the best interests of mankind. "As man (says Addison) is a creature made up of different extremes, he has something in him very great and very mean. A skilful artist may draw an excellent picture of him in either of these views. The finest authors of antiquity have taken him on the more advantageous side. They cultivate the natural grandeur of the soul, raise in her a generous ambition, feed her with hopes of immortality and perfection, and do all they can to widen the partition between the virtuous and the vicious, by making the difference betwixt them as great as between gods and brutes. It is impossible to read a page in Plato, Tully, and a thousand other ancient moralists, without being a greater and a better man for it. On the contrary, I could never read any of our modish French authors, or those of our own country who are the imitators and the admirers of that trifling nation, without being for some time out of humour with myself, and at every thing about me. Their business is to depreciate human nature, and consider it under its worst appearances. They give mean interpretations and base motives to the worthiest actions; they resolve virtue and vice into constitution; in short, they endeavour to make no distinction between man and man, or between the species of man and that of brutes*."

That the useless disquisitions of the schoolmen, which went under the denomination of metaphysics, have little tendency to afford the student correct and enlarged views of human nature, has been observed

* *Tatler*, No. 108.

by every one who has given the smallest attention to the subject. They answered some important purposes, however, in the ages of barbarism and of darkness; they preserved awake some share of attention to literary and scientific pursuits; and by the powerful, though ridiculous, contentions which they occasioned, they may be regarded as the means of transmitting the acquirements of Greece and Rome to future times. That knowledge is not altogether profitless which elevates the mind above the grossness of mere animal enjoyment, and which prevents it from sinking into that state of total inactivity, which while it continues, renders amelioration, either in the savage of the wood, or in the vassal of the tyrant, hopeless. "Whatever," says Dr. Johnson, "withdraws us from the power of our senses; whatever makes the past, the distant, or the future, predominate over the present, advances us in the dignity of thinking beings." Viewed in this light, the quibbles of the schoolmen, and the trifling disputations of a Thomas, and a Scotus, have not been without their use.

That science, however, which is known in modern times by the Philosophy of the Human Mind, is founded, not on hypothetical reasonings, but on a careful induction of facts; and while its study is attended with the incidental advantages of the scholastic disquisitions, it puts within our reach the means of obtaining a just and extended acquaintance with the nature of man. We are, in truth, engaged in ascertaining, not what were the opinions of Aristotle, or what were the theories which in succeeding ages amused the idle disputants who bowed to the authority of so great a

Master ; but in reflecting on the structure of our intellectual and moral frame, in analyzing the operations of the mind, in obtaining a knowledge of its powers and susceptibilities, and in rendering our inquiries subservient to the practical improvement of society.

“ Truth,” says D’Alembert,—“ truth in metaphysics, resembles truth in matters of taste. In both cases, the seeds of it exist in every mind ; though few think of attending to this latent treasure, till it is pointed out to them by more curious inquirers. It should seem that every thing we learn from a good metaphysical book, is only a sort of reminiscence of what the mind previously knew. The obscurity of which we are apt to complain in this science, may be always justly ascribed to the author ; because the information which he professes to communicate requires no technical language appropriated to itself. Accordingly, we may apply to good metaphysical authors, what has been said of those who excel in the art of writing, that, in reading them, every body is apt to imagine that he could have written in the same manner.” The same author points out, in the following sentence, the necessity of much reflection, in order to arrive at truth in this department of human knowledge. “ In this sort of speculation, if all are qualified to understand, all are not fitted to teach. The merit of accommodating easily to the apprehensions of others, notions which are at once simple and just, appears, from its extreme rarity, to be much greater than is commonly imagined. Sound metaphysical principles are truths which every one is ready to seize, but which few men have the talent of unfolding ; so diffi-

cult it is in this, as well as in other instances, to appropriate to one's self what seems to be the common inheritance of the human race."

It is an advantage peculiar to this science, that it renders every other tributary to it,—that it may be studied wherever there is a developement of the intellectual or moral faculties,—that the productions of the poet, the orator, and the mathematician indirectly contribute to its progress, and may often be employed in analyzing some of the most intricate and complex operations of the human mind ; and that in reviewing the history of error as well as of truth, of speculation and of action, we have before us the phenomena on which many of our metaphysical reasonings are founded, and from which the deductions which we had previously made, receive additional confirmation. The library, which to the natural philosopher presents little that bears any relation to his pursuits, is full of instruction to him who makes man the subject of his study ; and its varied volumes, as they are the record of human folly and of human wisdom, may furnish him with the means of extending his inquiries, and of enlarging the boundaries of moral science. Nor is the knowledge thus acquired so different in its practical utility from that of the man of the world, as some would persuade us to believe ; it is equally susceptible of being applied to the purposes of life ; and as it is the result of general, and not partial views of the intellectual and moral endowments of the species, it is surely far more likely to be conformable to truth, even when the individuals by whom it is possessed are destitute of those active habits which are only formed

in society. If they cannot, in every case, account for the varied aspects of the world, and trace to their legitimate causes the perplexing phenomena which continually claim their attention; they are, at least, amply furnished with the means of prosecuting their favourite inquiries, and of forming the most important maxims for the regulation of their own conduct, and for the general improvement of mankind.

Thus the powers of reflection and observation, by which alone the study of man can be successfully prosecuted, are united. "It is only by retiring within ourselves that we can obtain a key to the characters of others; and it is only by observing and comparing the characters of others, that we can thoroughly understand and appreciate our own*."

A science which affords such continued discoveries, must be accompanied with a large share of enjoyment. The same feelings of surprise and admiration which were awakened when the world of mind first displayed its wonders to the view, are kept alive, in some degree, through the progress of life, by the ever-varying aspects of the mental phenomena, and by the gradual developement of the hidden windings of the human heart. The almighty and beneficent Creator who willed that the chief happiness of man should consist in the acquisition of knowledge and virtue, has given him, in the consideration of his own moral and intellectual frame, a subject of vast variety, and which furnishes materials not only for the exercise of his faculties, but for the laborious research of philosophers of succeeding generations. After digging deep

* Prof. D. Stewart. Diss. First.

into the mine, and enriching ourselves with its treasures, there will remain more than sufficient to excite and to reward the labours of those who are to follow us on the stage of being; and the same unconfined regions of truth and loveliness, in which the sages of the past have delighted to roam, and in which they acquired those high honours that have associated their names with the history of the species, will ever be the means of affording fresh discoveries and new enjoyment to the busy and inquiring mind of man.—The Philosophy of the Human Mind, then, so far from being uninteresting, presents to the student, at every step of his progress, new and unexpected results; it renders every branch of knowledge subservient to the elucidation of its principles; it analyzes that which seems, at first view, scarcely susceptible of an accurate investigation; and the surprise which is felt when the elements and the laws of human thought are reduced to a system, and the apparently unconnected phenomena of the moral world traced to their origin, and subjected to established rules, cannot but form a stimulus to exertion, and a source of high satisfaction.

Another advantage attending the study of the Philosophy of the Human Mind is, that it gives us clearer and more enlarged views of moral obligation. This I conceive to be one of its leading designs; and as it is a design which so closely affects the highest interests of the human race, no one to whom Providence has granted the opportunity can exempt himself from the duty of giving the subject his most serious consideration. Revelation, indeed, has not left unnoticed

any point which essentially concerns the moral improvement and happiness of man; it has diffused its cheering and steady light over the darkness of nature, and has given to the doctrines of theological science a splendour of evidence all its own; but as this unspeakable gift of heaven has not been given to supersede the use of reason, in cases where reason alone is sufficient, or, at least, where its exercise is of the highest utility, it may well be maintained that our knowledge of moral obligation becomes more definite and enlarged by an attentive study of the faculties of man. We must believe with Melancthon, “that those precepts which learned men have committed to writing, transcribing them from the common reason and common feelings of human nature, are to be accounted as not less divine than those contained in the tables given to Moses; and that it could not be the intention of our Maker to supersede, by a law graven upon stone, that which is written with his own finger on the table of the heart.”

Obvious as this truth may appear, it was neglected and denied during the dark ages, and the Reformer, whose opinion I have now quoted, was one of the first who contended for its authority and importance, in opposition to the doctrine that all moral distinctions are created by arbitrary appointment. This tenet was not only false, but was actually productive of the most pernicious consequences; since its influence gradually prepared the way for transferring the homage due to the eternal obligations of morality, to the unmeaning rites of superstition; and insensibly induced mankind to act in defiance of the plainest dictates of

reason and of common sense. The progress of juster views has discovered to mankind, at least to a considerable portion of the human species, the magnitude of this error; yet, it may safely be affirmed, that even in Protestant countries it still continues to affect the opinions and the conduct of many individuals.

This is not the place for entering into any detailed discussion as to the grounds, or the extent of moral obligation: but I cannot help remarking, even here, that our views on this subject will be much more accurate and enlarged by a close examination of the active powers of our nature;—that our impressions of the unalterable distinctions between virtue and vice will be strengthened, and have a greater influence on the habits of thought and conduct;—and that we shall be much more prepared to examine with candour the doctrines of revealed religion, when we are thoroughly taught to do homage, in every instance, to the high authority of God. When it is observed, for example, that in every part of the world, human beings entertain the same moral feelings and the same moral tendencies; that, though some of them may be modified by peculiarity of circumstances, they are in every place essentially the same:—we are surely entitled to infer that principles thus united to the nature of man, in all ages, and in all nations, are to be regarded as an expression to us of the will of the Deity. When we observe that in every situation the child loves his parent and the parent his child, we justly conclude that filial and parental affection forms a law of human nature; and that independent of the fifth precept of the decalogue, children are laid under moral obligations to love and honour

their parents. When we find a susceptibility for religious worship inherent in man, and contradistinguishing his nature from the inferior animals, we feel an irresistible conviction that he has been formed for contemplating the perfections and obeying the will of the Creator; and we observe in the first commandment of the law only the explicit statement of a truth, which, while the constitution of human beings remains unchanged, must continue for ever unalterably the same. Thus, we might proceed in our investigation of all the moral tendencies essentially connected with our nature, and discover that the elementary principles of moral obligation are indelibly impressed on the heart; and that the duty of yielding a full obedience to their requirements is so far from being the creation of arbitrary appointment, or of political arrangements, that it can only cease to be with the extinction of our being. That the advantages resulting from such discoveries are of the first importance to the interests of mankind, is sufficiently obvious. I shall only observe, that revelation itself assumes the fact, that from the moral feelings of our nature, though often perverted by ignorance and corruption, we may infer many of our obligations; that its doctrines and its precepts are proposed to us on the supposition that the duty of yielding a ready compliance with the will of our Maker is founded on the inherent principles of our constitution; and that the same integrity of mind requisite for a candid examination of the one, is conducive to the full reception of the other.

There is yet another advantage resulting from the study of the Philosophy of the Human Mind, which

I must mention; the striking proofs which it affords of the beneficence and wisdom of the Creator. On this point I am the more disposed to lay stress, because I feel persuaded that in no department of nature are there clearer or more impressive indications given of the boundless goodness and intelligence of Him that formed us; and though the phenomena of the material world be more frequently appealed to on this subject, it is only because external objects are familiar to the thoughts of every one, and require less abstraction of mind to discover in them a continued illustration of the divine perfections. After tracing the goodness of the Deity in the various kingdoms of nature,—in the air, the earth, the sky,—more especially in the mighty and harmonious movements of the planetary worlds, the metaphysician returns to survey regions which are, indeed, concealed from vulgar view, but whose phenomena afford the most affecting proofs of that tender mercy that pervades and gladdens the universe. He can perceive in the constitution of the human mind—in the balance which is established between its intellectual and moral powers,—in the admirable adaptation of its various tendencies to the circumstances with which it is surrounded,—and in the growth of affections corresponding to youth, to manhood, and to old age, the wisdom and the goodness of a Being who is not only himself infinitely perfect, but who, in communicating life to his intelligent offspring, has given them, with this blessing, the essential elements of happiness.

Were it my object to enter into details on this subject, it were easy to multiply illustrations. I might

refer to the benign and salutary influence of that parental, filial, and relative affection which forms the tender tie of all our endearing connexions, and which is productive to man individually, and to society in general, of most valuable blessings. I might hold up to your view the operations of this principle or affection of mind, as exhibited in the lovely scenes of domestic life; as influencing all the duties of that sacred retirement from the busy occupations of the world, where the holy tranquillity of earth approaches nearest to the rest of heaven, and where alone the greatest felicity which has survived the loss of paradise is to be enjoyed. Who has ever witnessed the serene happiness of the family, the tender affection by which its members are united to one another,—the pleasure that is felt in meeting, and the pain in separating,—the fondness and the tender solicitude of the parents, and the love and the gratitude of the children;—who has ever mingled in such scenes, and yet relinquished them without emotions of painful regret, or refrained from admiring the wisdom and beneficence of Him who has rendered the most permanent affections of our nature subservient to the gracious purposes of his Providence, and which, by their influence on all our moral habits, are evidently designed to prepare us for a higher and a nobler state of being? If, then, these affections are so necessary to our happiness and to our very existence—so necessary that, without them, the human race must soon perish,—must it not be obvious that a Being of boundless intelligence, who has acted with a reference to futurity, has conferred them upon us? This is the more evident,

from the fact that some of these feelings do not exist till we are placed in those circumstances which require their operation. Thus, for example, we see the gay and effeminate female becoming the tender and anxious mother, cheerfully relinquishing those pursuits with which she formerly associated much of her happiness, and sacrificing her time and her repose to the comfort of her infant, with no other reward than the exquisite pleasure she enjoys in cherishing her offspring. For my part, I can never contemplate this lovely display of tenderness and affection, without marking in it the hand of that Heavenly Parent who has called us into being, and who has made provision for the happiness of the unnumbered millions who are dependant on his bounty.

The study of a science which furnishes us with such proofs of the goodness of God, and which opens up to us such interesting views of the power that renders the thoughts of the heart subservient to its gracious designs, cannot be in vain. I know not any other branch of human knowledge more calculated, when thoroughly examined, to impress upon the mind a pleasing conviction of the established order of Providence, or, to teach it the important lesson, that happiness may be secured independent of the wealth or the honour of fortune.

In any enumeration of the advantages of Moral Philosophy, the enlarged conceptions which it leads us to form of the destiny of man should not be forgotten. This has a most favourable influence on elevation of sentiment and conduct; it accustoms the mind to dwell chiefly on the contemplation of objects

that are vast and sublime; and, by fixing its views on the mighty powers and achievements of man, on the designs which he has already accomplished, and on those still greater designs which he is capable of accomplishing, it associates with his nature the grandeur of immortality. It was because Socrates and Cicero entertained such enlarged notions of the intellectual and moral powers of man, and studied his nature under every aspect which it presents, that their writings possess a charm for every reader, and leave that impression on the mind which stimulates to virtuous and lofty exertion. When we rise from the perusal we feel, not that we have been reading a libel on the species, composed by the profligate wit of an acute but vulgar mind,—we feel that there is a principle within us which cannot be mortal, which rises to an ideal standard of beauty and loveliness and moral perfection, far above the realities of the present scene, and that we have been destined by the Power which formed and which sustains all things, for nobler ends than any which terminate on this side of the grave. With such impressions we allow our thoughts to be carried forward to a period of greater improvement in the history of the human race—when philosophy and religion will shed still happier influences on the world—when the beneficent arrangements of Providence will make truth and virtue finally prevail over falsehood and error, and when the happiness of the species will be removed from every thing that might hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain.

These are the pleasing views of the future fortunes of our race, which we are led to entertain by a fami-

liar acquaintance with the Philosophy of the Human Mind. They are, like any other class of opinions, susceptible of abuse, by leading, when carried to an extreme, to paradox and inconsistency; they are, however, liberal and noble, and closely allied to all that is great and virtuous in mankind: and it is no slight presumption in favour of their truth, that “the system which represents them, even when stated with due limitations, as altogether groundless and visionary, leads by a short and inevitable process to the conclusions either of the Atheist or of the Manichean.” It is an evidence of their conformity to sound reason, that they are in perfect accordance with the intimations of that pure religion which breathes peace and good-will to man; which confirms our previous convictions of the ends for which he was formed, and of the immortality through which he is to live; that inspires us with anticipations of future good, far higher and more comprehensive than ever could have entered into his heart to conceive; and that fills us with admiration of the mysterious ways of that benignant and omnipotent Being who is yet to crown him with glory and honour.

While the study of Moral Philosophy is thus accompanied with many general advantages, it has peculiar claims to the attention of the divine, the teacher of youth, the statesman, the orator, and the legislator. To the preacher, who must gain access to the hearts of his audience, before he can promote their religious and moral improvement, an accurate acquaintance with the powers, and susceptibilities, and workings of the human mind is of the greatest utility.

Though he be provided with the instructions which he is to communicate in the volume of inspiration, it is his duty to study the means by which these instructions may be rendered effectual: to ascertain with precision the various affections of that immortal spirit whose ultimate happiness it is his professed object to attain, and to acquire the faculty of so unveiling the hidden windings of the heart, as to bring the doctrines he delivers to bear on the consciences of those that hear him. In the whole range of science, I know of no branch of knowledge more necessary for his discharging with fidelity and success the important functions of the sacred office, than the Philosophy of the Human Mind; and were this a fit place to introduce illustrations in support of my opinion, I could refer to Barrow and Butler, Gisborne and Witherspoon, and to many others, whose usefulness as preachers has been universally allowed.

I am not ignorant of an opinion which generally prevails, that a metaphysical turn of thinking is unfavourable to that warmth of feeling which is essential to the orator, and without which, the most profound sermons will have little effect on any audience. This opinion, I am persuaded, is erroneous; at least, so far as it regards that noble science founded on the most rigorous induction, and which we denominate the Philosophy of the Human Mind. That the disquisitions of the schools which have no relation to the phenomena of nature, and which, consequently, possess nothing to awaken the finer susceptibilities of the heart, must have had a tendency to narrow the range of the faculties, and destroy the harmony of their

operations, is highly probable, if not fully certain; and it will also be admitted, that wherever there exists an extreme degree of mental insensibility, whether it proceed from original constitution, or from an improper system of education, it may even be increased by an exclusive study of intellectual philosophy. But with these limitations, I cannot think that a science which directly leads us to contemplate the dignity and the grandeur of human nature—which affords us the most pleasing proofs of the wisdom and goodness of the Deity—which corrects and enlarges our views of moral obligations, and which refines the mind, and almost fixes its abode in unconfined regions of beauty and loveliness—that such a science should have any tendency to injure the finest, the most evanescent feelings of the heart, is a supposition which cannot be admitted. Should we not expect, on the other hand, that the gradual unfoldings of the world of mind, exhibiting the order and variety of its wonderful phenomena, would kindle into rapture the thoughts of one who is not quite insensible to the objects that are placed before him, and who is capable of receiving pleasure from whatever is beautiful or sublime in nature. Observation bears us out in the justness of this expectation; since three of the most eloquent men whom modern times have known,—men whose varied and extensive acquirements have done honour to the species, and whose memory will live through the revolutions of time, are distinguished as metaphysicians: I need scarcely say, that I allude to Burke, Stewart, and Brown. “It is the Philosophy of the Mind alone, which, by furnishing us with a general mass of the

field of human knowledge, can enable us to proceed with steadiness, and in an useful direction; and while it gratifies our curiosity, and animates our exertions, by exhibiting to us all the various bearings of our journey, can conduct us to those eminences from whence the eye may wander over the vast and unexplored regions of science.”

CHAPTER II.

ON THE MORAL QUALIFICATIONS NECESSARY FOR PROSECUTING MORAL PHILOSOPHY.

THE nature of those qualifications requisite to the study of moral philosophy, as well as their vast importance to the lover of wisdom, are suggested to us by the history and the attainments of that immortal man who united in himself, to a degree unexampled by any other individual of the species, the sublimest genius and the profoundest humility. That which a living critic has said of Bacon, may with equal truth and justice be applied to Newton, who, with such fearless and persevering fortitude, followed the path which his illustrious predecessor had marked out: “he is probably a single instance of a mind, which, in philosophizing, always reaches the point of elevation whence the whole prospect is commanded, without ever rising to such a distance as to lose a distinct perception of every part of it. It is perhaps not less singular, that his philosophy should be founded at

once on disregard for the authority of men, and on reverence for the boundaries prescribed by nature to human inquiry ; that he who thought so little of what man had done, hoped so highly of what he could do ; that so daring an innovator in science should be so wholly exempt from the love of singularity or paradox ; that the same man who renounced imaginary provinces in the empire of science, and withdrew its landmarks within the limits of experience, should also exhort posterity to push their conquests to its utmost verge, with a boldness which will be fully justified only by the discoveries of ages from which we are yet far distant."

Newton possessed all the moral and physical qualifications requisite to the successful discovery of truth. To that humility which is characteristic of original genius, he united a boldness in speculation, and an intrepidity in the pursuit of his object, which rose from difficulty to difficulty, till they attempted and executed the measurement of the heavens. And it is to be recorded to the honour of this great man, that while the schools and the universities of Europe regarded him as an innovator, and branded his thoughts as wild and fanatical, he, as if regardless of the frown or applause of his cotemporaries, held on his godlike course, advancing from one discovery to another, till the tide of his fame bore down all opposition, and till the whole civilized world looked towards him as the first benefactor of the species.

Newton, and men of his high character and attainments, are the examples which we should propose to ourselves. Nor should we be deterred from copying

after such examples by the splendour of their acquirements, and the great distance at which we are placed from the elevated path in which they trode. There was a period when they also were subject to all the helplessness, and all the ignorance of infancy and childhood;—when they had to learn the first elements of human knowledge, when they had to surmount all the prejudices of sect and system, and of their own species, and rise over all the obstacles that opposed their progress to the possession, and to all the rational enjoyment of truth; and the result of their successful efforts affords their successors this ground of encouragement, that no difficulty can long stand in *his* way, who adds to his love of knowledge, patience in inquiry, and intrepidity in his perseverance. Sir William Jones remarks of himself, that he entered on his studies with this maxim deeply engraven on his mind, that whatever was attained by others was attainable by him, and that he found this conviction of great utility in keeping alive that ardour for learning which enabled him to accomplish all that he had ever begun. If another man was capable of acquiring this branch of knowledge, why, said he to himself, why may not I? This eminent individual had, no doubt, from nature, and from a favourable combination of circumstances, every advantage that could contribute to his rising above the standard of ordinary men; but without the continual influence on his active mind of the principle to which I have referred, he probably, notwithstanding his physical and moral strength, would have been known to posterity only as a respectable judge, and

not as the scholar of the greatest and most general acquirements of modern times.

The first moral qualification which I shall mention as useful in all our researches, more particularly in connexion with moral science, is a just estimate of our own attainments and capabilities. It is right, on the one hand, that we appreciate the high value and noble ends of the faculties which God has given us, that we may be excited to an assiduous improvement of them in a manner suitable to their worth, and to their proper objects : but, on the other hand, we should reflect, that while our mental capacity fits us for an indefinite progress, the measure of knowledge of which we are now in possession, or, indeed, can be in possession, while in this imperfect state, is extremely limited ; and that the actual acquirements of the most accomplished philosopher, though great when contrasted with the ignorance of the multitude, are trivial when compared with those of higher intelligences, and even with those which he himself will make during that long and bright career of improvement that is yet before him. It is impossible thus to reflect without feeling, perhaps painfully, how little we really know, and how much we have yet to learn ; or, without imbibing a portion of that humble and unassuming spirit which animated the illustrious men who have been honoured in handing the lights of science from their own to future ages.

The humility of true genius is proverbial ; and perhaps one reason why persons thus gifted succeed in showing their great superiority to others is owing to their great humility. Sir Isaac Newton used to

say of himself,—such was the modesty that adorned his elevated character,—that if his labours had in any degree benefited mankind, it was owing, not to any extraordinary endowments, but to patience and perseverance in his studies. And I know not a greater obstacle to success in our philosophical inquiries than a spirit of arrogance and presumption. When a young man fancies himself wiser than his teachers, or, when his desire of knowledge proceeds from vanity, and not from the love of truth, he may indeed acquire those superficial notions of things which will enable him to make a figure among those who are as frivolous and superficial as himself, but he can never reach great excellency, nor rise above the unsteady and borrowed light of others. He has not only imposed on himself, but unhappily the delusion is of such a nature, as to give it a permanent influence over his thoughts; and, in place of extending his views to all the grandeur and majesty of truth, his mind is darkened and narrowed by the pride and the superficiality of his reasonings. If men think justly or otherwise, in proportion as they think profoundly,—and of the truth of this remark those only will doubt who are ignorant of the progress of knowledge,—then the greatest barrier that can come between us and true wisdom, is the conceit that we are already wise*. “My son,” says the wise man, “let not truth forsake thee: bind it about thy neck; write it on the table of thine heart: so shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man. Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine

* *Multi ad scientiam pervenissent si se illuc pervenisse non putassent.*

own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes." Thus we shall advance in the dignity of thinking beings; and all our knowledge will be an instrument of greater usefulness, and a source of the greater happiness, that it is the possession of a mind which is lowly in its own estimation, and which has been purified from the evil influences of error.

I am aware that one chief cause of the dogmatical spirit of young persons is owing to the good opinion which they wish others to entertain of their understanding. It is certain, however singular it may seem, that men in general would rather have an imputation directed against their moral feelings and conduct, than against their intellectual character. This is particularly the case with the young;—they often affirm through ignorance that which they afterwards maintain from a false opinion of the excellency of their judgment. It were well if this precipitancy always terminated in speculation. It too frequently happens, however, that from mistaken notions of themselves and of what is due to their opinions, they are hurried along to such imprudences of conduct as affect the whole of their future respectability and happiness; and it is not till the calm hour of sober reflection return, that they can observe with unavailing regret the false steps they have taken. The voice of friendship had long warned them of their danger; they had themselves half suspected they were wrong; but that proud and unbending loftiness of spirit which cometh before a fall, urged them onwards in the course which

they had chosen, lest their understanding should be implicated in the acknowledgment of their errors. Ignorance and inexperience have no small influence in producing this self-confidence. It is natural for those whose minds are beginning to open to be somewhat intoxicated with the new pleasures which they feel in the exercise of their faculties, and to be apt to think that in following their boldest conceptions, they will acquire to themselves the honour and the reputation of genius. They overlook the fact, that their judgment is not yet matured,—that it is for the greater part under the impulse of their feelings,—and that men of wisdom and of age are diffident on those topics on which they so fearlessly dogmatize. The imagination throws its own illusive light over all the prospects that open up before them, and the friendly counsel of experience that would dispel the charm, so far as its influence is injurious, is too often regarded as the stern voice of years, proceeding from the absence of all generous and kindly affection. They are little aware how much this rashness prepares them to embrace the most dangerous errors, and how much it exposes them to a thousand perplexities which the experience of a friend could prevent, but which their own ignorance and pride of understanding render it impossible to avoid.

Let me not be understood by these remarks as if I intended in the slightest degree to discountenance freedom of inquiry. I only wish to show that our inquiries cannot be free, unless accompanied with humility and an habitual love of truth. In pursuing any branch of knowledge these accompaniments are

desirable; but they are essentially necessary when we attempt to ascertain those laws by which the Creator of the universe conducts his operations. We then place ourselves in the very attitude of scholars, prepared to receive all the communications of eternal wisdom: and our reason can never be more nobly employed, nor exercised more agreeably to the ends for which it has been given, than when contemplating with profound reverence the counsels and the works of Him whose judgment is unsearchable, and whose ways are past finding out. Our reason forms one of the fairest gifts of the Creator to the beings that he has formed after his own likeness, and to allow it to remain fettered by the prejudices of folly and of superstition, and not to place a due confidence in its cautious and enlightened deductions, is to treat ourselves with injustice, and the Divine Giver with ingratitude.

In the second place, I may observe that in the successful prosecution of our philosophical pursuits in connexion with moral science, it will be of great use to us to take enlarged views of the boundaries of human knowledge. The possible boundaries of human knowledge are so widely distant, and so much removed from our present conceptions, that the ages are yet far distant that are to fix them. There is so much comprehended even in one branch of science, that a whole life-time is necessary for its thorough attainment. Astronomy forms but a very limited portion of natural philosophy; and yet how much study does it require to know all that astronomy teaches, and how numerous and continuous are the advances that must be made

before a man is entitled to the reputation of an accomplished astronomer. What a wide field does even one of the branches of moral philosophy open for the labours of the most industrious and persevering student;—a field which extends into infinity, and on which our researches are bounded only by the points of view in which we consider it. The speculations connected with either logic or belles lettres, or natural religion, or ethics, or political economy, seem to be interminable; and one of these divisions of the philosophy of mind will afford more than ample scope for all the energies and the application of the most laborious student.

But though the limits of human knowledge are placed far beyond the reach of our present attainments, there are many advantages resulting from our taking a wide and comprehensive view of all the sciences to which the progress of actual discovery has given rise. We can afford many of them only a superficial glance; but there is an useful expansion and elevation communicated to the mind by the exercise of its surveying the treasures of wisdom which the efforts of successive generations have amassed; and while raised above the level of other men, we look beyond their horizon, and satiate ourselves with the goodly prospects that on every hand surround us, we become more deeply impressed with the littleness of vulgar pursuits, and are led away with the charms of those lovely regions whose glories lie all before us. “*Quid enim ei videatur magnum in rebus humanis, cui æternitas omnis, totiusque mundi nota fit magnitudo?*”—It is thus that the thirst for knowledge is

created and kept alive in the mind: we see how much we have yet to acquire, and the desire of making the acquisition becomes more ardent and habitually operative; and by prompting us to aim at a higher and a more distant standard than that to which we would otherwise conform, we are able by a sure, though gradual advancement, to make attainments which at one period it might be deemed presumption in us to anticipate.

A wide survey of human knowledge is useful in this and in many other respects, after we restrict our attention to the study of one branch. It gives so much enlargement to the mind as sets it free from the influence of prejudices; and as prevents it especially from giving way to that fruitful source of error, to which professional men are peculiarly liable, of deducing important conclusions from slight and fanciful analogies. The proneness of men to judge of things of which they are perfectly ignorant, from the rules that are applicable to subjects with which they are familiar, has been one of the greatest obstacles to the progress of science; and its universal prevalence, embracing men of every order and of every profession, has rendered it a matter of common remark. To this disposition of human nature may be traced nearly all the hypothetical systems that from the remotest ages downwards have been substituted for knowledge; and it is to this copious source of error more especially that we ascribe the attempts of physiologists to materialize the affections of mind, and to maintain that there is nothing but matter in the universe. We smile at the ancient chemists who were accustomed to ex-

plain all the mysteries of nature, and of religion, by salt, sulphur, and mercury ; and at the musician, mentioned by Mr. Locke, who believed that God created the world in six days and rested the seventh, because there are seven notes in music ; but there are mistakes committed every day in common life, of still greater consequence, arising from the same prejudice. Hence the aphorism, that all men judge of others by themselves. “ The selfish man thinks all pretences to benevolence and public spirit to be mere hypocrisy or self-deceit. The generous and open-hearted believe fair pretences too easily, and are apt to think men better than they really are. The abandoned and profligate can hardly be persuaded that there is any such thing as real virtue in the world. The rustic forms his notions of the manners and characters of men from those of his country village, and is easily duped when he comes into a great city.”

“ When men of confined scientific pursuits,” says Bacon, “ afterwards betake themselves to philosophy, and to general contemplations, they are apt to wrest and corrupt them with their former conceits.” The same remark has been made by all our most distinguished philosophers. “ Let a man,” says Locke, “ be given up to the contemplation of one sort of knowledge, and that will become every thing. The mind will take such a tincture from a familiarity with that object, that every thing else, how remote soever, will be brought under the same view. A metaphysician will bring ploughing and gardening immediately to abstract notions ; the history of nature will signify nothing to him. An alchemist, on the contrary, will reduce divinity to the

maxims of his laboratory, explain morality by sal, sulphur, and mercury, and allegorize the scripture itself into the philosopher's stone. It is of no small consequence to keep the mind from such a possession, which, I think, is best done by giving it a fair and equal view of the whole intellectual world, wherein it may see the order, rank, and beauty of the whole, and give a just allowance to the distinct provinces of the several sciences in the due order and usefulness of each of them." "The same reason," says Berkeley, "that bids me trust a skilful artist in his art, inclines me to suspect him out of his art. Men are too apt to reduce unknown things to the standard of what they know, and bring a prejudice or tincture from things they have been conversant in, to judge thereby of things in which they have not been conversant. I have known a fiddler gravely teach that the soul was harmony; a geometrician very positive that the soul must be extended; and a physician, who having pickled half a dozen embryos, and dissected as many cats and frogs, grew conceited, and affirmed there was no soul at all, and that it was a vulgar error."

These observations might be confirmed by a reference to the history of science. Before the time of Newton, the greatest hindrances in natural philosophy arose from men applying to it their previous notions. They confounded and mingled the phenomena of nature with their metaphysical speculations. Des Cartes, being a great mathematician, endeavoured to reduce nature to geometry, and so considered nothing in body but extension. The celebrated Dr. Hooke, whose genius was so strongly inclined to mechanics, and to

whom the art of watchmaking had, from his earliest years, been a favourite study, applied his notions to the explanation of the phenomena of the human mind, and endeavoured to account for its operations on the principles of mechanics. There is a curious fragment of this sort of physiologico-metaphysical speculation quoted by Professor Stewart, in his *Philosophical Essays*, in which the author speaks of a continued chain of ideas coiled up in the repository of the brain, the first end of which is farthest removed from the centre, or seat of the soul, where the ideas are formed, and the other end is always at the centre, being the last idea formed, which is always the moment present when considered. Hartley and Darwin being, from their profession as physicians, familiar with some of the phenomena and laws of matter, when they began to speculate on the human mind, reduced its faculties and its phenomena into materialism. In truth, the number of individual cases is endless, which might be adduced in illustration of Lord Bacon's remark already quoted; "that when men of confined scientific pursuits afterwards betake themselves to philosophy, and to general contemplations, they are apt to wrest and corrupt them with their former conceits."

"The propensity which all men have to explain the intellectual phenomena, by analogies borrowed from the material world, has its origin in an error, differing from that which misled Hooke and Darwin, only in this, that the latter, being the natural result of the favourite, or of the professional habits of the individual, assumes as many different shapes as the pursuits of mankind; whereas the former, having its root in the common

principles and common circumstances of the human race, may be expected to exert its influence on the theories of philosophers, in every country and in every age. The one prejudice would have been classed by Bacon with the *idola species*; the other with the *idola tribus*."

Now, as in practice this narrow way of judging is only to be cured by an extensive intercourse with men of different ranks, and professions, and nations; so in speculation we cannot promise ourselves an exemption from innumerable prejudices and mistakes, but by taking an enlarged view of the different branches of human knowledge. For though our acquaintance with many of them must after all be extremely superficial, yet it is sufficiently extended to keep it in continual remembrance, that what holds true in one science may not at all be applicable to another; and that therefore we cannot be sure of the accuracy of the judgments which we form, on subjects that are beyond the line of our pursuits.

Though it is not my intention to point out all the advantages to be derived from a general knowledge of science, I cannot but notice the important benefit which it affords us in that particular study to which we give our chief attention, by presenting it in new relations and under new aspects. It is this which gives a power to the man of general acquirements to bring a richness and variety of original illustration to the discussion of his subject, and to place it in such different lights as to surround it, even after it has been hackneyed by others, with all the air of novelty and freshness. This talent is, no doubt, accompanied with boldness of conception, and vigour of understanding;

but I believe it is very rarely possessed excepting by those who have enlarged their minds by various and comprehensive study ; and who have added to their physical strength of intellect the treasures of wisdom which the industry of ages, and the phenomena of nature, place within their reach. They discover in their subject many points of resemblance and of contrast to other subjects, which, while they would never occur to persons of less cultivated minds, furnish them with the most copious and the most interesting elucidations ; and thus, from the stores of their knowledge, which is ever growing and ever new, they pour forth from the high eminence to which they have been raised, the light in which others, less gifted, or less industrious, are doomed to walk.

We can easily conceive, that the knowledge of a being formed like ourselves, and placed in similar circumstances, if his life were sufficiently extended to afford him uninterrupted opportunities for the exercise of his faculties, would increase to a degree, not only beyond the limits of our present comprehension, but which, when considered in relation to our present attainments, might be denominated infinite ; for, if he were to live a thousand years in the possession of his powers, the progress which he would make during the second century of his life would not only be the double of that which was made during the first, but in a much greater proportion ; so that his acquirements in each of the following centuries would more than equal the knowledge that had been attained in all the preceding. “ Our knowledge,” says Maclaurin, “ is vastly greater than the sum of all its objects separately could afford ;

and when a new object comes within our reach, the addition to our knowledge is the greater, the more we already know; so that it increases, not as the new objects increase, but in a much higher proportion."

A third qualification, of essential importance in our philosophical inquiries, is a constant regard to the moral state of the heart. This has a much greater influence on our success in the discovery of truth than is commonly imagined. If, indeed, it were our object, in the studies to which we attend, to prepare ourselves for being accomplished disputants, it might be a matter of little consequence with what feeling we pursued them: it would, in this case, be our chief business, as it certainly would be our highest attainment, to know what was said, and the best manner of again saying it, rather than what is true.—But when it is our object to investigate the structure of our own frame, and the constitution of our mind,—to consider the nature of those duties which we owe to the Creator, to our fellow-creatures, and to ourselves,—and to carry our researches into the darkness of that futurity which lies beyond us,—we cannot expect that our judgments should be accurate on subjects so elevated and so important, unless we cultivate a pure and devout state of heart. How different are the impressions which a growing acquaintance with the wonders of nature will produce on such a mind, from those that are felt by the man who never raises his thoughts to Him whose spirit lives through all his works; and who, while enslaved to vicious habits, is a stranger to the sublime pleasures of devotion! There is in this pleasure an ennobling influence which is not less favourable to the

vigorous exercise of the understanding than it is to the improvement of the heart.

And here I must notice the profound reverence with which we should speak of all sacred things. If we are to judge either from the nature of things, or from the character of the most illustrious men of antiquity and of modern times, there is a close connexion between great depth of research and a spirit of piety. Bishop Burnet mentions, in his funeral sermon for Mr. Boyle, that his piety was always fervent, and that he did not allow himself to mention the name of God without preceding it by a short pause. The man who thus feels towards the perfections of Him whom revelation designates as the High and the Lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, is in the best state of mind for judging with candour and justness on those interesting but intricate subjects that offer themselves to our inquiry in the pursuit of knowledge; while that sceptical and impious turn of mind which it has been the fashion of late so much to indulge, is not only far beneath the dignity, and I had almost said, sanctity of true science, but is subversive of the first and the noblest purposes for which it is studied. In examining, therefore, the works of the Almighty, let our investigations be conducted with reverence to Him whose spirit has given us understanding, and who in surrounding us with the works of his goodness and power, requires of us a grateful and a rational homage. It is only thus, that those noble lines of the poet receive their fulfilment in man.

There wanted yet the master work, the end
Of all yet done; a creature who, not prone

And brute as other creatures, but endued
 With sanctity of reason, might erect
 His stature, and upright, with front serene,
 Govern the rest, self-knowing; and from thence,
 Magnanimous; to correspond with heaven;
 But, grateful to acknowledge whence his good
 Descends, thither with heart, and voice, and eyes,
 Directed in devotion, to adore and worship God supreme,
 Who made him chief of all his works.

“*Sic vivendum est,*” says Seneca, “*tanquam in conspectu vivamus; sic cogitandum, tanquam aliquis in pectus intimum inspicere possit. Et potest aliquis.*”

In connexion with these remarks, I do not conceive it improper to observe, that in our studies we should earnestly supplicate the teaching of the Spirit of God. Let all our powers be employed under the direction of prayer for the divine blessing and illumination, of the necessity of which they are most sensible who are the most enlightened. We should humbly and fervently ask the guidance of our Father in Heaven, who has promised his holy spirit to those who will avail themselves of his teaching; and in the devout expectation of his aid we may fully and freely exercise our understanding in our inquiries after truth, persuaded that the God of knowledge, who has respect unto the lowly, will not allow us to remain in any dangerous error. “How easily and how insensibly,” says the pious Watts, “can the Father of lights, by one turn of thought, lead you into a large scene of useful ideas! He can teach you to lay hold on a clue which may guide your thoughts with safety and ease through all the difficulties of an intricate subject. How easily

can the Author of your being direct your motions by his providence, so that the glance of an eye, or a word striking the ear, or a sudden turn of the fancy, shall conduct you to a train of happy sentiments. By his secret and supreme method of government, he can draw you to read such a treatise, or to converse with such a person, who may give you more light into some deep subject in an hour, than you could obtain by a month of your own solitary labour. Think, with how much ease the God of spirits can cast into your mind some useful suggestion, and give a happy turn to your own thoughts, or the thoughts of those with whom you converse, whence you may derive unspeakable light and satisfaction in a matter that has long puzzled and entangled you." These observations explain and enforce the important meaning conveyed by that adage which has been left us by the wise and the virtuous of other ages. *Bene orasse est bene studuisse.*

A fourth qualification which we shall find of essential use in the study of Moral Philosophy, is industry and application. Without persevering industry in the pursuit of knowledge, all our other talents are of little avail. I have said, *persevering industry*, because industry derives nearly all its ultimate utility from perseverance. It is not uncommon for many persons to apply diligently to whatever branch of knowledge they are acquiring, for a few hours, or for as many days; but they give way so often and so long to indolent habits, that these acquire an entire dominion over them; and at length they lose the information they have acquired, and their mental faculties, from the want of exercise, become enfeebled. It is by con-

tinued action that our powers are improved, while, on the other hand, they are deteriorated by continued repose. It is on this law of our nature that Rousseau's remark is founded—"The man who should live ten years without reflection, will never again be capable of it as long as he lives."

Our progress in knowledge, and our success in applying it, will depend on the continuous attention which we give to its acquirement. It is in our intellectual as it is in our moral habits; both are formed by an exercise regular and constant; so that whatever we wish to practise easily, we must make habitual; and that it may become habitual we must be unremitting in its performance. The time, therefore, that is spent in indolence, is not only spent without making any advancement in intellectual improvement, but is productive, in proportion to its duration, of habits that are hostile to it. Our motion—for such is the appointment of the Author of our nature that we can never remain stationary—our motion is all retrograde; and when we relinquish our efforts to go onwards, the stream, without any effort of ours, will carry us rapidly backwards.

Sic omnia fatis

In pejus ruere, ac retrò sublapsa referri;
 Non aliter, quàm qui adverso vix flumine lembum
 Remigiis subigit, si brachia forte remisit,
 Atque illum in præceps pronò rapit alveus amni.

Who, among the illustrious persons who have become the benefactors of the species by their writings and discoveries, attained to their high eminence by inactivity? There is no branch of knowledge, and

there is no department of life, in which a permanent reputation can be secured, without that ardour of mind which leads in the pursuit of its object to the exercise of self-denial, and to the contemplation and the execution of enterprises of difficulty and labour : and he who has never had his hours of thoughtful musing, and whose fancy has never been warmed by his visions of future attainments, and of high achievements, is not likely by his intellectual power to add to his own fame, or to benefit society. We must begin and continue in the path of knowledge with the determination to overcome all the circumstances, whether seen or unforeseen, that can offer resistance to our progress ; to acquire gradually such an entire dominion over ourselves, that our habits will at length urge us onwards ; and never to allow any of the thousand obstacles that obstruct our passage to turn us aside from the accomplishment of our original design. Nor should we desist in our application, after considerable successes, but continue to go on from strength to strength, adding to the acquisitions which we have already made, that we may fill, with growing honour and usefulness, the sphere which Providence has assigned us.

It was not by vile loitering in ease

That Greece obtain'd the brighter palm of art ;

That soft, yet ardent Athens, learn'd to please,

To keen the wit, and to sublime the heart,

In all supreme ! complete in every part !

It was not thence majestic Rome arose,

And o'er the nations shook her conquering dart :

For sluggard's brow the laurel never grows ;

Renown is not the child of indolent repose.

“ It was said of Hannibal, that he wanted nothing to the completion of his martial virtues, but that when he had gained a victory he should know how to use it.” It unfortunately happens, that men, in their literary pursuits, resemble too often, in this respect, the Carthaginian General. It is not uncommon for those who, at their first entrance on their studies, or into the world, were distinguished for their abilities and their ardour, to disappoint the hopes which they had raised, and to end in neglect and obscurity that life which they began in celebrity and honour. Such a change as this, as well as indolence in general, in those whose duty it is to put forth all their energies, must, I fear, be traced to the influence of improper motives in the outset, or at least to the absence of such as are powerful and efficient. “ These errors,” says Johnson, “ all arise from an original mistake of the true motives of action. He that never extends his view beyond the praises or rewards of men, will be dejected by neglect and envy, or infatuated by honours and applause. But the consideration that life is only deposited in his hands to be employed in obedience to a master who will regard *his endeavours*, not his successes, would have preserved him from trivial elations and discouragements, and enabled him to proceed with constancy and cheerfulness, neither enervated by commendation, nor intimidated by censure.”

I know not how I can better conclude these observations, than in the words of that memorable answer which Sir Isaac Newton gave to the illustrious foreigner who complimented him on the greatness of

his genius, and the wonderful extent of his discoveries. "Indeed, sir, you are in a mistake on both points; the objects are, indeed, vast and magnificent, and therefore I made a choice fortunate for my reputation; but they are comprehensible by the most ordinary genius, if he will take my method,—*never to hurry*. If I have any advantages over other naturalists, it is only in a more patient thinking, in which I perhaps exceed many of them. To this I am indebted for all my success."

The man who distinguishes himself from others, stands in a press of people: those before him intercept his progress; and those behind him, if he does not urge on, will tread him down. He is the man who is most likely to rise to eminence, and to benefit mankind by his labours, to whom the language of the poet is applicable—

"Nil actum reputans si quid superesset agendum."

CHAPTER III.

EXPLANATORY OBSERVATIONS.

THE habit of attaching definite notions to our words is of the first importance to clearness of thought. This is a fact which has been the subject of remark in every age; and while its importance to the progress of science is universally allowed, it is peculiarly felt in studying the operations of mind. From the constitution of our nature, we are long familiar with the

objects of sense before we begin to reflect on what we feel ; and when we do begin to reflect, we attempt an explanation of the phenomena of mind by analogies derived from the phenomena of matter ; and in consequence of this application we transfer the language of that which we already know to denote the processes of a substance altogether dissimilar, and which comparatively we do not know. This circumstance renders it the more necessary for us carefully to ascertain the notions which metaphysicians affix to their words ; to use these words ourselves as nearly as possible in the same acceptation ; and to have clear ideas of the things which our expressions are employed to denote.

“ The sure and only way,” says Locke in his *Conduct of the Understanding*, “ to get true knowledge, is to form in our minds clear and settled notions of things, with names annexed to those determined ideas. These we are to consider, and with their several relations and habitudes, and not amuse ourselves with floating names, and words of indetermined signification, which we can use in several senses to serve a turn. It is in the perception of the habitudes and respects which our ideas have one to another that real knowledge consists ; and when a man once perceives how far they agree, and how far they disagree one with another, he will be able to judge of what other people say, and will not need to be led by the arguments of others, which are many of them nothing but plausible sophistry. This will teach him to state the question right, and see whereon it turns ; and thus he will stand upon his own legs, and know by his own un-

derstanding. Whereas, by collecting and learning arguments by heart, he will be but a retainer to others ; and when any one questions the foundations they are built on, he will be at a non-plus, and be fain to give up his implicit knowledge.”

It often happens that the names which have been employed to denote certain phenomena either of mind or of matter, from their having been employed at a time when erroneous views of these phenomena were entertained, contain within themselves, and transmit to posterity, the errors of other ages. There is no science from which we might not derive examples to illustrate this position. In astronomy, the philosopher, in conformity with popular language, must still speak of the rising and setting of the sun ; and in metaphysics, we are obliged to use many words connected with theories long since exploded. Such terms may be employed without any inconvenience, when they no longer convey the notions of which alone they were originally expressive, and are used in a new and restricted acceptation. This period, however, does not arrive till science makes considerable advances ; and, in the Philosophy of Mind, owing to certain peculiarities to which I have in part alluded, the difficulties of establishing a correct and unambiguous phraseology are greater than in any other branch of human knowledge. We must, therefore, employ a proportionably greater degree of care and industry in analyzing the words which we use, in ascertaining not only their received acceptation, but in always affixing to them the same precise and definite meaning.

The want of a copious diction to express the dif-

ferent operations of mind has been the subject of common remark. It cannot, indeed, be thought that the infinitely various and evanescent affections of which we are conscious can be in any adequate degree expressed by language, since words, in every case, are but imperfect symbols of our internal feelings and operations; they often convey to the understanding of another our meaning indistinctly, by seeming to denote either too much or too little, or by awakening ideas not immediately connected with those which it is our object to excite. For that state of the mind in which it is affected with the feeling or emotion of love, we have a specific term,—by the aid of some qualifying epithet we can even define some of its modifications; but how many varied aspects does it assume, and how numerous are the degrees of intenseness by which it is really characterized, for which there are no words in any language? The same remark holds true of all the other affections of the mind; human speech, in its most perfect form, and when used in its most definite acceptations, can give but an incomplete view of their diversified changes and combinations; they can only give, as it were, their leading outlines and classifications: the varied feelings and trains of thought that mark the intellectual history of one individual, even for one day, are only fully known to the omniscience of Him who sees through the foldings of the heart, and who understandeth our thoughts afar off.

I offer these remarks, with a view of exciting attention to the very great importance of an accurate examination of language; especially of the words which

we employ in our moral and metaphysical reasonings. “ We may be assured of this,” says Dr. Reid, “ that the ambiguity of words, and the vague and improper application of them, have thrown more darkness on these subjects than the subtilty and intricacy of things. When we use common words, we ought to use them in the sense in which they are most commonly used by the best and purest writers in the language ; and when we have occasion to enlarge or restrict the meaning of a common word, or to give it more precision than it has in common language, the reader ought to have warning of this, otherwise we shall impose upon ourselves and on him.”

While we are to affix a distinct and appropriate idea to every term we employ, we must beware of thinking that all the words in language admit of a logical definition. We may perfectly understand the meaning which we attach to certain terms when, in consequence of the simplicity of the objects they denote, it may be impossible to render that meaning more obvious otherwise than by the use of synonymous words. Definition, indeed, in every case, supposes that the acceptance of a word is explained by other words whose meaning is already known. We are only required, therefore, to define words that are uncommon, or that are used in an uncommon sense.

A little reflection will convince any one that the words of which we can give a proper and logical definition are not numerous. If, on the one hand, the things which they signify are perfectly elementary, or, on the other, expressive of the most enlarged and comprehensive ideas, they cannot, for reasons suffi-

ciently obvious, admit of explication. “No word,” says the eminent philosopher to whom I have already alluded, “can be logically defined, which does not denote a species, because such things only can have a specific difference; and a specific difference is essential to a logical definition. On this account there can be no logical definition of individual things, such as London or Paris. Individuals are distinguished, either by proper names, or by accidental circumstances of time and place, but they have no specific difference; and, therefore, though they may be known by proper names, or may be described by circumstances or relations, they cannot be defined. It is no less evident, that the most general words cannot be logically defined, because there is not a more general term, of which they are a species. Nay, we cannot define every species of things, because it happens sometimes that we have not words to express the specific difference. Thus, a scarlet colour is, no doubt, a species of colour; but how shall we express the specific difference by which scarlet is distinguished from green or blue? The difference of them is immediately perceived by the eye, but we have not words to express it.

“There is no subject in which there is more frequent occasion to use words that cannot be logically defined than in treating of the powers and operations of the mind. The simplest operations of our minds must all be expressed by words of this kind. No man can explain by a logical definition what it is to think, to apprehend, to believe, to will, to desire. Every man who understands the language has some notion of the meaning of these words; and every man

who is capable of reflection, may, by attending to the operations of his own mind, which are signified by them, form a clear and distinct notion of them; but they cannot be logically defined*.”

Of what importance it is to be familiar with these very obvious and elementary truths, the history of science sufficiently shews. How frequently have men of eminence perplexed and darkened the subjects they discussed, by pretending to give demonstrations of things which were self-evident, and by attempting to define that which admits of no explication! They have often presented to us the first principles of human knowledge in the form and language of mathematical demonstration; and we have found, after following their reasonings, that our ideas respecting them were not more accurate, nor our impressions of their truth stronger, than before. Nor can I help remarking in this place, that the mode of arraying moral science, whether elementary or otherwise, in the dress appropriated to pure mathematical truth, is worse than puerile, since it tends to confound, especially in the minds of the uninitiated, kinds of evidence so very different, and to impair, it is probable, in such cases, the impressions which moral evidence alone makes on the human mind. I proceed now to make a few observations on some terms which frequently occur in inquiries connected with Moral Philosophy; and which, though they may already be familiar to us, require, from the important facts and truths with which they are connected, a clear elucidation.

1. The word law very frequently occurs in the

* Reid's Essays, vol. i. ch. i.

sciences both of matter and of mind. Philosophers speak of the law of gravitation, and of the laws of thought; when they only mean to state certain established facts connected with the intellectual and material phenomena. In the proper sense of the word, a law is a rule given to an agent, according to which he is to act; which implies a power of conforming to the particular mode required;—without this agent, and this power, a law is obviously nothing, and can do nothing. There can be no objection, however, to the use of the term, as applied to the order of nature, whether in matter or in mind, provided we always remember that in such an acceptation its meaning can only be, that uniform mode of acting by which it pleases the Deity to govern the world. When we find, wherever our observation extends, that matter invariably gravitates towards a given centre, we are in the possession of a fact, which whether it be produced immediately by the efficiency of the Creator, or by some intervening cause, must be regarded as the result of his appointment, and which must, therefore, be that particular species of arrangement which is most conducive to the harmony of the universe. When we denominate such a fact by the term law, it is understood that we refer it to the appointment of God.

2. The word nature merits our notice, on account of the frequency of its occurrence, and the extreme vagueness and ambiguity of its application. It usually means the constitution and appearance of things: it is sometimes used to denote universal existence, as, when we say that it is not in the compass of nature

In a more restricted sense it is employed to signify the native state or properties of any being or substance; and by philosophers it is frequently used to denote the almighty Being, by whom the universe is governed. The plea which has been urged for its use in this latter acceptation is, that it prevents the frequent repetition of the name of God; and that scientific men may, therefore, allude to his attributes and his efficiency, as displayed in the formation and appearance of the world, without seeming irreverence in the use of those sacred appellations by which, in revealed religion, he has made himself known. How far this plea is valid, I shall not take upon me to determine: the principle upon which it is founded—profound reverence for the name of the Creator,—cannot be too strongly recommended, or too closely adhered to by those who direct their attention to philosophical inquiries. At the same time, the practice which it defends is so liable of abuse, and so capable of being employed in diverting the mind from the great Author of all things, that it should be followed, not only with much caution, but with some limitation.

3. Induction is a word which is in frequent use in modern science: that operation which it is employed to signify is one of the most essential to the furtherance of knowledge. We have a notion of its nature, sufficiently accurate, in the following words: when from a comparison of a number of facts known from experiment or observation to be true, the existence of a more general fact is inferred, the inference is said to be made by induction. That it is from induction alone that all certain and accurate knowledge

of the laws of nature is derived, is now fully admitted; so much is this the case, that the physical sciences, which have made such rapid progress within the two last centuries, are entirely indebted for their present state of improvement to the established authority of this mode of prosecuting philosophical inquiries. It has, however, been doubted whether the method of induction can be adopted with the same advantage in the philosophy of mind. It has been alleged, that as metaphysical and moral science is conversant with objects that are removed from the observation of the senses, it is, therefore, incapable of being conducted after the mode of experiment and induction;—that though probity, justice, and benevolence are more obtrusive than gravitation and motion, they are more easily obscured by prejudices and sophistry;—and that because the moral aspects of man are ever varying, and mingling into each other with so much rapidity, it has been concluded that they were subjects in which repeated observations or experiments, could not be instituted. Supposing natural historians had acted on this hypothesis, and had conducted their inquiries on the principle, that animated or vegetable productions admitted not of experiment, because their subjects were different from mechanical philosophy, would either Harvey or Linnæus have benefited mankind by their important discoveries?

The truth is, there existed the most powerful prejudice against Newton himself when he fearlessly proclaimed himself the scholar of experience, and took her along with him into the field of natural science: he had to combat the prepossessions of

generations, and was, in fact, traduced as an ignoble sectarian, for many years, in the highest school and university of Europe. While this great man was successfully employing his efforts in measuring the heavens, and in ascertaining the laws of other worlds, he was loudly defamed as a presumptuous innovator by those who paid more regard to what Aristotle said, than to what nature revealed. The number of objectors gradually diminished as experimental philosophy advanced; and the successors of Newton, adhering closely to the example of their illustrious master, in pursuing steadily the method of induction, in opposition to human authority and misleading associations, have raised the science of physics to that high eminence from which it now commands the admiration of mankind. To say that they have enlarged indefinitely the extent of our knowledge, and that they have essentially contributed to the happiness and prosperity of the species, is only acknowledging a small portion of their merit; since the example which they have left to others in every department of science, as to the only successful method of augmenting the power of man by the discovery of truth, is of itself the most valuable, as it certainly is calculated to be the most permanently useful, benefit they possibly could communicate.

There can scarcely be a single objection advanced against the application of the method of induction to the philosophy of the human mind, that was not urged against Newton and his immediate successors. After allowing that there is greater difficulty in arresting the trains of our thought, and in reflecting on the subjects of our consciousness, than in observing the facts that

come within the reach of our senses, we may surely maintain that the operations of the human mind, and the laws of their connexion and succession, may be ascertained with as much accuracy as the phenomena of the external world, and the order in which they are conjoined. We cannot, indeed, in one sense, subject the phenomena of mind to the test of experiment, but we can do that which amounts to the same thing, we can carefully examine the operations, not only of our own intellectual and moral faculties, but observe the result of these operations, in the history of man, as delineated in books, and as it is presented to our view in the diversified circumstances of society. If the phenomena which fall within the province of the chemist and natural philosopher are almost infinite in number and variety, they cannot be less so in a science whose object is the ever-varying aspect of human thought, and the aggregated products resulting from it. This great variety, united to the frequency with which the same phenomena, in precisely similar circumstances, may be investigated, affords the same advantage to the moral philosopher which experiment gives to him who confines his attention to physical science.

No science, not even chemistry, is more susceptible of analysis than the philosophy of the human mind. It is not analytic in the same sense as chemistry, which decomposes and reduces substances to their elementary parts. We cannot in the same manner divide the affections of the mind; but we can at all times trace the associated aggregations of which our feelings and passions are composed, to the simple

and elementary principles and affections in which they have their origin. It is quite possible for us to separate the combinations of thought and feeling which exist in our mind into what may be truly called their elementary parts; and by repeating this analytic process, to arrive at conclusions of equal importance and certainty as those which are obtained in the physical sciences by the most rigorous induction.

In connexion with this subject, I may notice an objection which has been more recently made to the utility of moral philosophy. It has been said that this is a science in which no discoveries can ever be hoped to be made, since the rudest clown, in every age of the world, could tell us what it is to know, and feel, and think, and hear, and see, as well as the most skilful and accomplished metaphysician can. This objection, however, proves too much, since it may be said of all sciences that its elementary principles are known equally to all. Are not the numbers and the figures that form the basis of the mathematical sciences understood by many, who cannot tell either the nature or the objects of mathematical reasonings? And is the study of these to be regarded as useless, because the elements of which they are composed are known to the multitude almost as well as to the philosopher? It is so far from being true that the human mind is so narrow in the range of its phenomena as to render an investigation of its operations, with the hope of augmenting the sum of our knowledge, an abortive undertaking, that there is no branch of science more extensive, or which presents more pleasing and useful results than that which it offers to our contemplation.

If we were to follow the history of one passion, from its earliest workings in the mind through the whole progress of life, how numerous and diversified are the circumstances which we should find resulting from it! We should observe the same passion producing dissimilar effects, according to the different situations in which it is developed. The child who wished to be distinguished in the domestic circle, and whose very love of distinction seemed to be the pleasing omen of future eminence, cannot be viewed with the same feelings, when, at a future period, he is impelled by the same passion to all the atrocities of lawless ambition. The human character, in both situations, is influenced by the same common principle of our common nature; but that very principle, when modified by a change of circumstances, and stimulating to the attainment of dissimilar objects, as in the present case, exhibits phenomena extremely different.

With the inductive method of philosophizing, as taught by Lord Bacon, and exemplified in the school of Newton, we cannot be too familiar; since it bears as close a relation to the acquisition of real knowledge, as the characters and grammar of any language to an understanding of its idiom and use. To know accurately the best means which we should employ for the attainment of a particular end, is in any case a useful attainment. But in the present instance this acquisition is the more valuable, since the experience of the dark, as well as of the enlightened ages, affords incontestable proof, that the only way of advancing in our acquaintance either with the phenomena of matter or

of mind, is by a careful and patient comparison and observation of facts, and by a cautious induction of inferences.

4. Having noticed the process of analysis, it may be proper in this place to make a few observations on the nature of synthesis, as contrasted with it. Analysis* simply signifies, unless it be in geometry, where its meaning is somewhat peculiar, a resolution of any combination, whether of matter or of thought, into its component parts. There is no science in which we have more beautiful illustrations of this process than in chemistry. A single experiment in which any substance is decomposed, and resolved into its constituent elements, impresses its nature and its use upon the mind more effectually than any other mode whatever. Here we see the several substances existing in a compound, which no mechanical force can separate, passing through a certain process by which they are as perfectly removed from each other as if they had never been combined. It is by an analogous process, also called analysis, that we must proceed in every branch of philosophy in ascertaining the simple and general laws on which the complicated phenomena of the universe depend. Before we can come

* The word is derived from *αναλύω*, *resolvo*: in mathematics it denotes that process "by which a proposition is traced up, through a chain of necessary dependence, to some known operation, or some admitted principle. It is alike applicable to the investigation of truth in a theorem, or the discovery of the construction of a problem. Analysis, as its name imports, is thus a sort of inverted form of solution. Assuming the hypothesis advanced, it remounts step by step, till it has reached a source already explored. The reverse of this process constitutes synthesis or composition, which is the mode usually employed for explaining the elements of science. Analysis, therefore, presents the medium of invention, while synthesis naturally directs the course of instruction."

to a conclusion, for example, as to the universality of the law of gravitation, we must previously be satisfied as to the universality of the facts on which it is founded; if the facts are precisely similar in similar circumstances, to the utmost extent of human observation, the most rigid induction entitles us to refer them to the same cause, whose operation is as general as its effects. Analysis, then, is to be considered as affording the means, in certain cases, and in reference to some sciences, of examining more fully the phenomena of nature, and of making the inductions of its laws more perfect.

The method of synthesis, as its name imports, is the opposite of analysis. As the latter consists in the solution of any thing, whether corporeal or mental, into its first elements, so the former, agreeably to its etymological signification, simply means the act of joining together, or combining into one, substances which were before separate. Of this process, also, chemistry affords us the most striking illustrations. When any two bodies, such, for example, as water and common salt, are united together in consequence of chemical attraction, so that neither of them can be separated from each other by any mechanical force, the chemist denominates the process, which has accomplished this result, synthesis.

Having obtained by analysis a knowledge of the general laws on which the phenomena of nature depend, we may safely proceed to carry on our reasonings in the way of synthesis, as to the effects resulting from any given combination of them. One of the chief advantages of this method is, to confirm the convictions

obtained by analysis. The peculiar use of the latter, is to aid our inquiries in the acquisition of knowledge ; of the former, to facilitate the attainment of our designs in its communication. In proceeding according to the method of synthesis, we must be careful, in the first place, that our propositions be expressed in terms that are clearly and distinctly understood ; that the words of our definitions be clearer than those they are brought to explain. Of what importance this rule is to reasonings in general, and especially to the synthetic mode of ratiocination, a slight acquaintance with the controversies that have engaged mankind, and with the way in which they have been conducted, will sufficiently convince us. Even when the matter in dispute does not consist in a verbal ambiguity, the obscure and ill-defined language employed, exciting ideas that are only remotely, if at all, connected with the subject, diverts the mind from the avowed object of inquiry, and renders it far more difficult of clear apprehension, than at the commencement of the discussion. There is, therefore, no source of fallacy more dangerous, because more apt to be unperceived, than this, and against which it behoves every lover of truth to be constantly on his guard.

There is a second rule which we ought to observe in proceeding according to the way of synthesis ; and that is, that the general truth on which our reasonings are founded be so clear and convincing, as to force the assent of any reasonable man. The general point which we assume as the basis of our discussions must be self-evident, otherwise all our reasonings must be fallacious.

The third, and only other rule which I shall at pre-

sent notice, as of essential importance in synthesis, is, that all the consequences we deduce be necessarily implied in the premises from which we set out. That it is only by rigidly prescribing this rule to ourselves, in our synthetic reasonings, we can hope to keep free of error, is very obvious; and yet, owing to misapprehension, or to ignorance, or to inattention, it is often left out of view, and a chain of reasoning is formed, the strength of which is greatly impaired by the slender ties by which many of its parts are held together. We cannot expect to escape this source of fallacy without clearness and accuracy of thought, and without cultivating habits of close attention.

5. The next mode of expression in use among philosophers, of which I shall take notice, is, *the explanation of a phenomenon*. It is generally supposed to be the peculiar advantage of philosophy, that it enables its votaries to ascertain the causes of things. How far this notion is correct, I shall not here stop to determine. It may be observed, however, that when we are said to explain any fact or appearance of nature, we mean no more than that we shew it to be necessarily included in some phenomenon or fact already known, or supposed to be known, and we consider one phenomenon as the cause of another, when we conceive the existence of the latter to depend on some power residing in the former. According to this observation, the limits of human knowledge are fixed, the real object of philosophy is ascertained, and we are the more likely to prosecute our inquiries with success, when we are previously aware of the extent to which it is allowed us to carry them.

6. When a fact which has no other evidence of its

reality than the explanation which it affords of certain appearances, is assumed for the sake of explaining these appearances, it is called an hypothesis *. That extreme fondness in the human mind for assigning the causes of the phenomena with which it is surrounded, has, in all ages, been the occasion of substituting hypothetical reasonings for patient experiment and observation. It is, besides, more flattering to the pride and vanity of man, as well as more agreeable to his indolence, to be able to account for phenomena by an ingenious hypothesis, than by an appeal to facts. And, accordingly, there is no lesson which he is more slow to learn, than that mere ingenuity can go but a very little way in explaining the phenomena of the universe; that before he can acquire sound knowledge, he must become the scholar of experience, and carry her along with him into all his researches, and that without the humility requisite to make this practical attainment, the more lofty the exertions of his genius, the more injurious will they prove to the progress of real science.

“I would,” says Dr. Reid, in a letter to Lord Kaimes,—“I would discourage no man from conjecturing, only I wish him not to take his conjectures for knowledge, or to expect that others should do so. Conjecturing may be an useful step even in natural philosophy. Thus, attending to such a phenomenon,

* Newton simply defines that to be an hypothesis which is not deduced from an observation of facts: while he maintains that conjectures should have no place in experimental philosophy. “*Quicquid enim ex phaenomenis non deducitur, hypothesis vocanda est. Et hypotheses seu metaphysicæ, seu physicæ, seu qualitatum occultarum, seu mechanicæ, in philosophia experimentalium locum non habent.*”

I conjecture that it may be owing to such a cause. This may lead me to make the experiments or observations proper for discovering, whether that is really the cause or not ; and if I can discover, either that it is, or is not, my knowledge is improved, and my conjecture was a step to that improvement. But while I rest in my conjectures, my judgment remains in suspense, and all I can say is, it may be so, and it may be otherwise."

This is a very just view of the stress which ought in any case to be laid on hypothesis, and of the uses to which it may be applied. When it is employed simply as the means of stimulating our efforts in the pursuit of truth, urging us forward to the regions of certainty and knowledge, and not rested on as an ascertained and established fact, it cannot do injury, and it may do some good. It is melancholy to think, however, that this, more than any other cause, prevented the progress of reason and science during many ages, and that nearly all the labours of the most distinguished metaphysicians of modern times have been occupied in removing the rubbish which fanciful and fertile hypotheses had associated with the philosophy of the human mind. From the nature of this science, its remoteness from the comprehension of many of the species, and the facts which it analyzes, not being subjected to the evidence of our senses, it must be allowed, that it is more difficult to rescue it from the abuse of hypothesis, than chemistry or natural philosophy ; but it forms no slight ground of encouragement, that even these branches of knowledge were once as full of absurd and fanciful conjectures as this ;

and that the same rigid attention to the methods of analysis and induction, the only safe and successful way of pursuing philosophical inquiries, which has carried them to so high an eminence, may give the same commanding attitude to the study of our own intellectual and moral frame. Truth is one, and those who are animated by the love of it, have no cause to fear that in any department of nature it is entirely removed beyond the reach of the human faculties, or that humility and industry, connected with definite notions of the proper objects of inquiry, will not be rewarded with more just and comprehensive views of the structure and operations of the human mind.



THE ELEMENTS
OF
MORAL PHILOSOPHY

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

THE BEING, PERFECTIONS, AND PROVIDENCE OF GOD, MADE
KNOWN BY THE CREATION.

GOD is a spirit, and is therefore invisible to us. No man hath seen God at any time. In his nature and essence he is hid from us; and his perfections also would have been for ever unknown to us, had he not been pleased to give a manifestation of them. While this manifestation is unquestionably given in his word, some have doubted whether it has been afforded in his works, at least, with such clearness as might furnish the mind of man with distinct apprehensions of the being, unity, and attributes of God.

It is affirmed, however, by an inspired Apostle, that that which may be known of God is manifest without the light of revelation; and that the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead. Had we been destitute of the sacred volume, this would still be a question of the deepest personal interest; and even as it is, it

possesses considerable practical importance, both as it regards our views of the moral government of God in general, and as it relates to the evidence of divine revelation. All the sources of our information, and all the pursuits of life, are valuable only as they can be subservient to an increase of our knowledge of the character and glories of the Creator and Preserver of all; and if a survey of his works and of his ways tends to render our conceptions of him more accurate, or, should it merely serve to shew how greatly we are indebted to the light of the written word, the labour which we undergo, and the attention which we give, are not bestowed in vain.

I shall, therefore, attempt briefly to ascertain what may be known of the character and government of God from the works of creation and providence, or without the light of revelation.

But before entering on the elucidation of these particulars, it may be proper to make a remark or two on the language of the Apostle to which I have referred. The phrase, "that which may be known of God," refers, of course, not to his essence, which is invisible, but to his properties and attributes. That which may be known of a person is that which distinguishes him from all other objects, whether it be his form, or some other characteristic qualities; and that which may be known of God are the qualities and perfections that are peculiar to him. These, we are told, are manifest, or may be ascertained, by those who have not the light of revelation; for God hath shewed them unto them. The accuracy of this interpretation is confirmed by the phraseology of the following verse. By the words,

“the invisible things of him,” some would understand, the being and perfections of God, in contradistinction to the heathen deities, the attributes of which were visible. But, without supposing that the Apostle has any reference to the corporeal deities of the heathen, we know, from the current language of revelation, that the living and true God is not, and cannot be, the object of our vision. No man hath seen God at any time; and hence he is styled, “the King eternal, immortal, invisible; the invisible God; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto: whom no man hath seen, nor can see.”

But his being, perfections, and government, are not on this account the less evidently reflected from his works. “They are from the creation of the world,” says the Apostle, “clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.” The same doctrine is taught in several other parts of Scripture, more especially by the Psalmist, when he discovers, in the grandeur and magnitude of the planetary worlds, the glorious majesty of the eternal God. “When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” Here the Psalmist tells us that the contemplation of the heavenly bodies suggested this reflection to his mind; and, consequently, that they are calculated and intended to awaken this train of thought in all who behold them. He enlarges, in the nineteenth Psalm, on their design and tendency to proclaim the Creator’s glory. “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his

handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race." Let us now proceed,

Briefly, to ascertain what may be known of the character and government of God from the works of creation and providence, or, without the light of revelation. In the outset it may be urged, by way of objection to our inquiry, or, rather, to our capability of bringing it to a successful issue, that no man, born and educated in a Christian country, can place himself in the situation of a mere disciple of reason and nature; that he cannot possibly divest himself of notions with which he has been familiar from his earliest years, and stand precisely on the footing of Socrates or Plato; that he is walking in the light of heaven, even when he disowns its existence, and is vainly ascribing to his own understanding those elementary truths which unaided reason would not discover. I am so far from denying the truth of this position, that I own it to be my opinion, that much of what is termed natural religion, is itself the effect, partly, of that early revelation which existed in the family of mankind before its dispersion over the globe, and, partly, of that clearer revelation which has since poured its light on the human mind.

Yet, surely, as we are so explicitly taught by the sacred volume, as well as by many other considera-

tions, that the Godhead, that is, the unity, the being, and perfections, of the living and true God, are clearly seen in his works, we must ascribe the circumstance of their not having been justly and distinctly recognised to the state of mind of the beholder. In as far as nature reveals the character and government of God, the revelation will of course correspond to the manifestation which he makes of himself in his word. As he is the Author of both alike, our diligent study of both, with the view of knowing more of God, and of our relations and duties in regard to him, must be highly advantageous. Revelation presupposes the exercise of reason and of moral feeling, and the investigation, in proportion to our opportunities, of the great and marvellous works of the Almighty. It addresses man as a being endowed with understanding, gifted with the powers of judgment and reflection, which are adequate, in many cases, for his direction, for pointing out to him his duty by the aid of general principles, by a comparison of circumstances, and by an induction from particulars.

Besides, it is a source of satisfaction to discover, that, on some of the most momentous of all truths, the suggestions of reason and the doctrines of revelation entirely agree. When I find that an analysis of the principles and moral feelings that are inherent in my mind leads to the same conclusion as the requirements of scripture, it may be presumed that my conviction of moral obligation, as unalterable and eternal, will be strengthened. By this means our views of duty, if not enlarged, become more definite. We are more capable of following out the general principles of morality contained in revelation, and of applying with

readiness the rule, as well as of specifying the exceptions. It should also be remembered, that the rule of our conduct, both in religion and morality, in so far as it is discoverable by the light of nature, rests on the same divine authority as that laid down in the written word. The same Being of infinite perfection is the Author of both ; and therefore, the precepts which he has written with his own finger on the heart, cannot be less binding or important than those which were written with his finger on tables of stone. They are derived from the same source ; they are invested with all the authority of conscience ; and they are all illustrative of the universality and unchangeableness which are the peculiar characteristics of piety and virtue.

That the being and perfections of God may be clearly seen by the light of nature, is proved, I think, by the universal consent and acknowledgment of mankind ; by the circumstance that this fundamental truth is involved necessarily in the exercise of our mental faculties ; and by the order and government of nature and providence.

First, that the light of nature clearly shews us the being of God, and that he is entitled to our homage and adoration, is proved by the universal consent and acknowledgment of mankind. If it be allowed that a devotional susceptibility, or a capacity of worshipping God, be co-extensive with human nature, it surely seems reasonable to conclude, that this capacity has not been given without some end, and that the design for which it has been conferred is, to lead us to the devout contemplation of the wisdom and goodness, love and power, of the Being of all perfection. The design of a faculty is discovered from the end

which it serves. The primary use of reason, all acknowledge, is to direct us in our intellectual and moral pursuits; and of affection and feeling to stimulate us to the accomplishment of that which reason approves, and in some cases to supply its lack. But what is the intention of implanting in our nature a religious susceptibility, of connecting indissolubly with the mind of men, in every age and country, a capacity for devotional sentiment, if there exist no Supreme Being, in the contemplation of whose perfections this power may be employed? There is here an original principle, as characteristic of human nature as is reason or understanding, without any obvious utility, without any end to be answered by its exercise.

That it is an original principle, and not the result of peculiar circumstances, as are local prejudices and prepossessions, is evident, from its being common to man in every age of the world, co-extensive with his being in every part of the globe, and felt in all its force by those who have most successfully employed and improved their reason. It is common to man, I have said, in every age and country. If, in support of this position, we appeal to former times, we have the express testimony of the most distinguished philosophers, and through the medium of their writings, the opinion of the remotest ages. In their estimation the universal existence of a devotional susceptibility formed so striking a circumstance, that they deduce from it one of their strongest arguments for the being of God:—an argument which the founder of the Epicureans considered as possessing greater force than any other. The greatest of the Romans, when speaking of the general consent of mankind as to the existence of a Divinity,

maintains that it is the voice of nature itself; and that it is scarcely possible for any one to contemplate the glories of the heavens, without feeling convinced that there is a most excellent mind by whom these things are governed.

The argument here adverted to was noticed by the ancient philosophers, and some of them have presented a very forcible statement of it in their writings. "Multum dare solemus præsumptioni omnium hominum, apud non veritatis argumentum est aliquid omnibus videri; tanquam Deos esse sic colligimus, quòd omnibus de Diis opinio insita est; nec ulla gens usquam est adeo extra leges moresque projecta, ut non aliquos Deos credat*." Cicero, in his *Tusculan Questions*, remarks, "Firmissimum hoc afferri videtur, cur Deos esse credamus, quod nulla gens tam fera, nemo omnium tam sit immanis, cujus mentem non imbuerit Deorum opinio. Multi de Diis prava sentiunt, id enim vitioso more effici solet, omnes tamen esse vim, et naturam divinam arbitrantur.—Omni autem in re consensus omnium gentium lex naturæ putanda est." To the same effect he says in his work, *De Natura Deorum*, "De quo autem omnium natura consentit, id verum esse necesse est. Esse igitur Deos confitendum est."

Had the belief in superior and divine power, so universal in its extent, been a mere traditionary opinion, neither derived from, nor coinciding with, an original tendency in human nature, nor impressed upon the mind by the order and appearances of the world, it would probably have been lost, however useful it may be, in the revolutions of ages. This has

* Sen. Epist. 117.

happened in other cases ; and ages, as Milton remarks, do not recover the loss of a rejected truth, for the want of which whole nations fare the worse. But religious feelings, and the sentiments of divine power involved in them, so far from being wanting in any age, or whole nation, have prevailed and operated at all times, among every people, and in every stage of civilization. We are forced, therefore, to conclude that no sufficient account can be given of so universal a consent, unless it be supposed to be a dictate of nature. A common and universal effect must flow from some common and universal cause.

Besides, this consent has been given by those who have most improved and exercised their reason. With the exception of a very few individuals, the truly great men of ancient and modern times, who have either ascertained the laws of other worlds, or, who have given imperishable interest to the annals of their own, have not only left their deliberate and decided testimony in favour of the being and perfections of God, but seem to have considered their studies important and useful, as they were calculated to render this truth clearer and more efficacious. How unreasonable is it to allege that their views on this subject were the effect of education and custom. Rather, ought we not to conclude that their belief in the existence and attributes of the Deity is a dictate of nature, confirmed by a patient and extended investigation of her laws. " As those fruits which grow from the most generous and mature stock, in the choicest soil, and with the best culture, are most esteemed ; even so, ought we not to think those sublime truths which are the fruits of mature thought, and have been rationally deduced by

men of the best and most improved understandings, to be the choicest productions of the rational nature of man. And if so, being in fact reasonable, natural, and true, they ought not to be esteemed unnatural whims, errors of education, and groundless prejudices, because they are raised and forwarded by manuring and cultivating our tender minds*.”

It has been attempted to weaken the force of this argument, if not altogether to destroy it, by denying that the consent of mankind regarding the being of God or of divine power has been universal. Some savage tribes, it is alleged, have been discovered destitute of any notions of religion. The ground upon which this seeming objection rests is far from being well established. Though it has been said by travellers, that some tribes in North America and in New Holland have been found living without any conceptions of superior power, we are far from being certain as to the truth of the fact. Indeed, when we recollect the peculiar circumstances in which all savage tribes are placed, and the difficulty with which the few opinions they possess are gathered, it becomes us to hesitate before we conclude that they are totally destitute of all religious notions. But, admitting this were the case, it only proves, what, indeed, may readily be allowed, that it is possible for the human mind to become so degraded and merged in brutish ignorance, as to be unacquainted with the first principles of morality.

If, in the extreme of savage life, some of the powers of the human mind, acknowledged to be original, are totally dormant, and are therefore unknown, need we

* Berkeley's *Minute Philosopher*. Dial. i.

wonder that the capacity for religious sentiment and truth should be among the number? There must be some degree of mental activity before the primary principles of the most obvious subject are discovered. It is possible for some tribes to exist in a state so savage as not to be capable of any intellectual exertion. It has been remarked as a matter of common observation, that persons of little reflection, who are chiefly occupied about sensible objects, and whose mental activity is in a great measure suspended, as soon as their perceptive powers are unemployed, find it extremely difficult to continue awake, when they are deprived of their usual engagements. Savages, like the lower animals, have their time completely divided between sleep and their bodily exertions. Beings in such a situation form an exception to the general, and in my opinion, to the natural, condition of mankind: their ignorance, therefore, of principles regarding which the other part of the human race are agreed, can furnish no objection to invalidate their truth. Ignorance, it has been justly observed, is no argument against the certainty of any thing. There are many nations and people almost totally ignorant of the plainest mathematical truths; and yet these truths are such that the mind cannot but give its assent necessarily and unavoidably, as soon as they are distinctly proposed to it. All that this objection proves, therefore, supposing the matter of it to be true, is only this: that men have great need to be taught and instructed in some very plain and easy as well as certain truths; and if they be important truths, that then have they need also to have them frequently inculcated, and strongly enforced upon them.

But while the universal consent of mankind respecting the being of God is admitted, it is alleged that the different opinions which prevail in different nations as to his worship and perfections, destroy the force of any argument that can be derived from them, since opinions so various cannot have truth for their foundation. Are we then to admit that a principle or doctrine ceases to be true when men form various notions respecting it? Have not some of the best established facts, as well as the most certain deductions of human reason, been sometimes made the subject of disputation? Might we not as well argue that no historical account of a matter of fact can be true, when different relations are given of it; or, that because the different sects of philosophers maintain different opinions, none of them can be in the right?

Truth, indeed, is simple and uniform, and various and contradictory opinions cannot all be true; but they are not therefore all necessarily false. Had there been no truth in religion, there could have been no superstition; and if the heart of man did not naturally recognise the existence of the great Lord and Ruler of all, divine worship would never have received a name in any language. It is not for the purity of religion in the heathen world I contend, for we know that it was sunk in the grossest idolatry;—but for the inherent existence in human nature of those feelings which prompt to the acknowledgment of the Deity, and from which every form of religious worship has been derived: and the multiplicity of these forms is the strongest possible proof that the feelings that give rise to them are not owing to adventitious circumstances, but are fixed in the mind of man. We dis-

cover in the superstitious observances of the different nations of the earth, in the complicated and cruel ceremonies of the Brahmin of the east, and the dark and mysterious worship of the Druid of the west, the uniform, though perverted, operation of that principle, by which man was originally formed to adore the Great Author of his being. Thus does it appear, without the light of revelation, that man has been formed with a capacity or power by which he is enabled to trace the appearances of the world to the wisdom and power of God ; and is led to give to him, or to those imaginary deities which he substitutes in room of him, religious homage and adoration. The innate principles of his mind afford the most indubitable evidence of his being designed for the love and contemplation of infinite excellency ; and that there is a tie which he cannot break, without doing violence to his nature, that binds him to the service and the worship of the living God.

But, further, in the second place, that the light of nature clearly shews us the being of God, and that he is entitled to our homage and adoration is proved by the circumstance, that this fundamental truth is necessarily involved in the exercise of our mental faculties. But this argument, usually called the argument *à priori*, which exists independent of the consideration of the works of nature, is more difficult of being understood by the great body of mankind, and is, therefore, less adapted for general use. It is the less necessary to employ it as a weapon of defence, since, in the warfare which the present question involves, we are quite independent of its aid. The great Lord and Ruler of all has not left us to search for metaphysical arguments to prove that he exists : he has rendered it impossible

for us to look on the heavens above, or on the earth around, without perceiving the magnificent effects of his infinite perfection. Few are capable of abstruse speculation, or of receiving permanent impressions from the truths which it evolves; but all are able to understand what should be inferred respecting the great Artificer from the exquisite skill displayed in the mechanism he has formed; what conclusion should be deduced concerning his wisdom, from the intelligence and design which his operations discover*.

Let us, therefore, notice, in the third place, how clearly the being and perfections of God are proved from the appearances, the order, and government observable in nature and in providence. The clear marks and signatures of wisdom, power, and goodness, in the constitution and government of the world, are a demonstration stable as the mountains in proof of the being and universal presence of God; and it is an argument that has this peculiar advantage, that it gathers strength as human knowledge advances. If Galen, when he had examined the formation of the human body, at a period when its structure was less understood than it is now, saw such marks of design and skill in it as led him to renounce the atheistical system in which he had been educated, and to write a book for the very purpose of convincing others of the truth which had irresistibly forced itself on his own mind, can we, with the numerous discoveries of modern times before us, and with the heavens and the earth visibly presenting to us the signatures of infinite wisdom and power, fail to be convinced that God has never left himself without a witness, that all his works

* See Note A.

have constantly proclaimed him the eternal, immortal, invisible God?

We are so formed, that we are irresistibly led to ascribe efficiency or power to that which produces change; and intelligence to the author of any work that indicates intelligence and contrivance. We cannot conceive any alteration to take place in the position or qualities of any thing without a cause; nor can we perceive a designed subserviency to a particular end, without inferring the existence of wisdom and knowledge in the contriver. In other words, every thing which begins to exist must have a cause; and design and intelligence in the cause, may be inferred with certainty from the effect. These are intuitive principles, and as such are, of course, universally admitted. Were we to reject them, we have no means left by which we can distinguish a rational being from the lower animals, or a man of understanding from a fool.

The same kind of evidence, then, that carries conviction every moment to our minds that others exist beside ourselves in the world, proves the being and perfection of God. For, in the works of man, no less than in the works of God, we discover only effects. We see the hands and the instruments of the artist, indeed, and we see the wonderful result which the application of these hands and instruments has produced; but we observe nothing more. It were a self-evident absurdity to say, that the designing cause, or principle, whose wisdom is seen in the effect, lies in the hands of the artist: for there is no more intelligence or power of contrivance in them than there is in the tools and instruments which are placed in them. Thus, it also holds, in regard to the works of God; whose—

Wonder-working hand,
— in majestic silence, sways at will
The mighty movements of unbounded nature.

In the mechanism of the animal frame, we discover the most skilful adaptation of instruments to the accomplishment of certain ends. In the eye, for example, we have a most beautiful and admirable piece of mechanism, adapted with exquisite wisdom for the important purposes which it is designed to serve. In this single organ we have the combined effect of almighty power, and infinite intelligence,—of a power that can create, and an intelligence that can render the creative energy subservient to purposes of the greatest utility; but the Being to whom these attributes belong is himself concealed from our view. His power, wisdom, goodness, are not, on this account, the less manifest; while they furnish evidence far more striking and palpable of his universal presence and operation, than the works of our neighbour afford of his existence. When we consider, that this organ is fully formed before there is any use for its exercise, and adapted to the properties and action of an element with which it has no communication; and that its fabric shews it to be made with a designed reference to the qualities of that element hitherto entirely excluded, but with which it is to hold hereafter so intimate a relation, we have a proof, of the most convincing nature, of the intelligence of the Creator.

This argument, which arises from an observation of the works and ways of God, is of mighty cogency, is continually in our view, and addresses itself to the heart, as well as to the understanding. If we should ask a sign in the heaven above, or in the earth beneath, what could we desire more for our conviction than what God

has already done, or, than he is constantly doing? Could we wish him to work a greater miracle than to create and uphold a world? What more impressive illustration of divine power, and wisdom, and beneficence, can we reasonably desire, than is afforded us in the continued existence of the vast fabric of nature, with its innumerable orders of organized and intelligent beings? Or, if the original act of creation be deemed too remote to furnish ground sufficient for impressing this conviction on our heart, let us look to that, which, but for its commonness, would awaken the surprise and astonishment of the most inattentive observer; let us look to the order, the harmony, the efficiency, the adaptation of means to specific ends, which mark all the works of God, which pervade the heavens and the earth, and be convinced of the universal presence, agency, and perfection of the Almighty. This is the language in which the Great Lord and Ruler of all speaks to the affections, not less than to the reason of the creatures which he has formed in his own image, and which is so well calculated to excite the emotions of awe, veneration, and gratitude.

It is the language which nature speaks in her beautiful, as well as in her sublime, aspects. Who has felt the freshness of the morning, and witnessed the glories which the sun on his appearing above the horizon diffuses over nature? Who has not sympathized with the happiness of the glowing scene, and acknowledged the goodness of that Eternal Power, to whose beneficence it is referable? Who has seen the bright and animated scene which the re-appearance of the heavenly luminary seemed rather to create, than

merely to unveil to our view, and has not been impressively reminded of Him who dwells in inaccessible and uncreated light, who made and preserves the world by his power and goodness,—“ whose glory no eye can behold, whose majesty no thought can comprehend, whose power no strength can resist, from whose presence no swiftness can flee, from whose knowledge no secret can be concealed, and of whose beneficence every creature partakes ? ” Who can observe the varied appearances of nature, and the admirable adaptation of all things to the circumstances in which they are placed, as well as their designed subserviency to the happiness of the human race, without marking the universality of His vital presence who fills all space and gives being to all worlds ? Who can witness the sublime scene in the bosom of which the Creator has placed us, and mark the consequences that follow from the diurnal revolution of the earth in relation to the sun,—notice the renovation of a world as often as the seasons go round,—observe in the air, on the earth, and in the sea, the adaptation of the instincts and wants of the inhabitants to their respective elements,—the millions that in close succession rise into life, and receive more than the enjoyment that can render this gift worth the possessing,—and perceive the skilful accommodation in every part to the harmony and the happiness of the whole,—who can observe this, who is not forced to acknowledge, that “ in God he lives, and moves, and has his being ? ”

In proof of this great and fundamental truth, the instincts of animals alone furnish evidence the most pleasing and powerful. They have this peculiar ad-

vantage also, that they are the subject of our familiar observation. When we observe the inferior animals, though destitute of reason, acting, in some cases, with as much regularity as reason would prescribe, proceeding in the same uniform order to the attainment of certain ends, and frequently exercising self-denial, that they may minister to the preservation and comfort of their offspring, can we refuse to own the clear indication of a supreme and intelligent Creator and Governor presiding over the affairs of the universe? When we see the common fowl gathering its brood under its wings, zealously hazarding its own safety in their defence, shewing unequivocal symptoms of the tenderest affection, and giving them the food required for its own sustenance,—we witness the employment of means to the accomplishment of certain ends, the peculiar characteristic of reason and understanding. But as the reason and understanding are not in the animal, on what principle can we account for its conduct being invariably regulated in this respect by the dictates of wisdom, unless we admit that it arises from the intelligence of the Creator? Admitting that those actions of animals which we refer to instinct are not gone about with any view to their consequences, but are attended in the animal with a present gratification, and are pursued for the sake of that gratification alone; what does all this prove, but that the prospection which must be somewhere, is not in the animal, but in the Creator?

In this way the being, wisdom, and goodness of God are visibly placed before us. It is the Deity himself, through the medium of instruments, making

provision for the helplessness and the wants of the beings to whom he has given existence. By the gratification of that affection which is implanted in all animals to their young, are they led to discharge with alacrity and fidelity, the parental ministry which Heaven has assigned to them. In nursing them, and in providing for their security, no pains are too great, and no dangers too appalling. How carefully do they lead them into safety, and carry them into places of retreat! How do they caress them with their affectionate notes, and lull them to repose with their tender voice; put food into their mouths; suckle, cherish, and warm them. In a word, they perform the part of those deputed by the sovereign Lord and Preserver of the world, to help such young and shiftless creatures till they are come to that maturity as to be able to shift for themselves. The power of this natural affection is not less remarkable in our own species. It produces a transformation of the mind and habits, rendering her who had been little accustomed to exertion, willing to spend nights in ministering to the comfort of her infant; and only anxious for strength that she may waste it in attending to the wants of her child. The importance of this change in the feelings of the mother,—a change which, while it continues, suppresses every selfish affection, and creates, while its influence is required, the most generous tenderness,—its importance to the very existence of such helpless creatures as the offspring of man, is most manifest. Nor can we hesitate in ascribing it to the goodness of God, whose tender mercy is thus seen to pervade and surround all his works.

If we turn our observation to the mind of man, and to some of the leading principles implanted in it, we shall be furnished with numerous additional proofs of the being, wisdom, and goodness of God. It is no doubt easier for the majority of mankind to examine and perceive the inductions of design in the formation of a machine; or, to behold in the external world the power and intelligence of the Creator,—but the demonstrations of his being and perfections are not less numerous and complete in the operations of the human mind. Out of a variety of cases, we may select, as an example, the parental, filial, and relative affections, which are the source and the tie of all our endearing connexions, and which are productive to man individually, and to society in general, of the most valuable blessings. These are the principles which give rise to all the lovely scenes of domestic life, and to all the duties of that sacred seclusion from the busy occupations of the world. In no case have we more touchingly displayed the goodness of God, and the happiness and high destination of man, than in the influence of that affection by which the members of the family are united, the pleasure which is felt in meeting, and the pain in separating, the fondness and tender solicitude of the parents, and the love and gratitude of the children. If this class of affections be so necessary to our happiness, and even to our existence,—so necessary that without them the human race must soon have perished,—is it not the obvious conclusion, that as they have been conferred for wise and salutary purposes, their divine Author must himself be wise and good?

In a word, and to bring the illustration of this argu-

ment to a close, the agency and presence of God are seen in every thing, and every where ; in the least as well as in the greatest, in the blade of grass, the formation and descent of the drop of rain,—in every thing in the universe of minds, and in every atom of the universe of matter. He

Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
Glowes in the stars, and blossoms in the trees.

He hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance. He makes the winds his messengers ; and darkness his secret place : his pavilion round about him are dark waters and thick clouds of the sky. He thundereth marvellously with his voice ; He holdeth the winds in his hands ; He sendeth lightnings with rains ; looketh on the earth, and it trembleth ; causeth the outgoings of the mornings and evenings to rejoice ; and maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good. We ourselves, and every thing that surrounds us, live, and move, and have our being in God. If we are not admitted to the place where his glories are more fully and clearly unfolded ; if the curtain which conceals the Divine Being, who directs and controls the various changes of the scene before us, be not yet withdrawn, we are allowed to witness the awful and sublime phenomena which, though unseen, he every moment produces. So full is the universe of God, so clearly seen are the invisible things of Him, being understood from the things which are made, that the atheist himself, while enlarging

the boundaries of human knowledge by extending his inquiries into nature, becomes unconsciously a fellow-worker with Newton and Boyle in accumulating the evidence for his own refutation. Even he is thus instrumental in pouring into our minds the light of heaven, and of truth; and while he continues in darkness himself, he contributes to unfold to our view the glories and perfections of the Omnipresent and Almighty Being whose existence he denies.

In persisting in this denial how great is the absurdity, contradiction, and misery in which the Atheist is involved! His is a resistance to reason, to conscience, to the voice that proclaims the glories of the Creator from earth and heaven. That universe of matter and of mind on every part of which the self-existent, ever-present God has fixed the impression of design—the legible signatures of his own perfections—owes its being in his view to fate or chance, and is carried along in the dark and cheerless career of necessity. He and the other beings by whom he is surrounded, according to his view, can have nothing to console them in looking forward to the future, and are now without a father and a guide. He is surrounded by the operations of the Almighty; he possesses proofs of his power and wisdom in the mechanism of his own frame, and in all that he beholds, and yet he passes on to eternity without recognising his existence, or doing homage to his perfections. Scripture and experience warrant us in affirming that the reason is to be found in the state of his heart—in the wish that there may be no God—in the effort to convince himself that to believe that he exists is an error,

and in the deliberate preference which, from his inclinations and habits, he gives to darkness rather than light.

Thus do we see that in no part of his vast empire does the great God leave himself without a witness ; that his being and perfections are clearly seen in all the operations, in all the productions, in all the atoms of nature, and in all the events, agencies, and dispensations of Providence ; that the structure and organization of our bodies, the laws, faculties, and affections of our minds manifestly reflect his power, wisdom, and beneficence ; and that like the poor Indian, whose untutored mind sees God in clouds, and hears him in the wind, we also must recognise his vital presence in all that is around and above us. Even as far as the light of philosophy illuminates—in the movements of distant worlds, we discover that every thing is formed and arranged with the matchless skill, power, and benevolence of the only wise God. If, with the philosopher, we could examine the courses of the planets, and the order and harmony with which their motions are regulated ; if we could examine the varied and numberless objects on the globe we inhabit, with their properties, uses, and admirable adaptation to the circumstances in which they are placed ; if we could attentively survey the ever-recurring proofs that are afforded us in the ordinary course of life, of the existence and established laws of a supreme moral government, to which we are accountable ; if we could consider the nature and design of the powers and passions of the human mind, and their effects in all the ramifications and relations

of society; whatever or wherever we contemplated, throughout the works and dominions of the Eternal God, we should have cause to be astonished at the displays of his incomprehensible intelligence and wisdom, the grandeur of his mighty operations, the never-ceasing and unbounded effects of his goodness and love. For

He is ever present, ever felt
In the void waste as in the city full.
We cannot go
Where universal love not smiles around.

“These are thy works, parent of good. Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name, for thou only art holy?”

How great and awful, and far surpassing our conception must be the perfections and the majesty of God. On him every thing in the animate and inanimate creation is depending every moment for its being, its properties, its continued existence; the sparrow, that cannot fall to the ground without his permission, not less than the bright assemblage of worlds that move in harmonious order throughout the range of illimitable space. He is present himself, in all the perfection of his being, with the atom, to give it its formation and direction, with the insect to preserve it, not less than with man to continue each pulsation of his heart, or with the archangel to pour lustre and beauty around him by the reflection of his own glories. How dark and inadequate must be all our thoughts of Him who does all this by his will and his word; who

commands the heavens, and they rain not; who speaks to the elements, and they obey him; who bids the universe fulfil its destination; and who will hereafter roll together the heavens as a scroll, and make the earth retire from his presence! “Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding.”

CHAPTER II.

ON THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

On the Spirituality and Unity of his Nature.

WHEN we look around us we perceive a substance whose qualities are extension, divisibility, and impenetrability. When we observe what takes place within us, we are conscious of the operations or acts of reflection and volition, of the states of mind in which we are affected with joy or sorrow, hope or fear; and because these latter qualities are different from the former, we justly conclude that the substances to which they respectively belong, are also essentially different. Of these substances we cannot know any thing but by their properties. The one we call matter, and the other immaterial, or not matter. As intelligence is the attribute of the immaterial substance, and as the Creator and Preserver of all things possesses this attribute in an infinite degree, we are led to infer that his nature cannot be material, but spiritual. The testimony of revelation confirms this conclusion; it tells us that God is a spirit.

To this conclusion we are led by a variety of considerations. The Deity, as possessed of self-existence, eternity, and infinity, must, in his nature, be simple and incorruptible. He cannot have the attributes either of figure, or parts, or motion, or divisibility, or any of the properties of matter, since these convey the notion of finiteness, and cannot belong to him who is infinite

in all his perfections. From the powers which he has communicated, we infer the spirituality of his nature and essence. Every attribute negative of imperfection of which he is the author in his creatures, necessarily belongs to himself. The Almighty Creator not only displays his wisdom and understanding in the phenomena of nature, but because he is the Creator, has produced a substance which is susceptible of perception, of comprehension, and of judgment. The mere act of bestowing properties such as these, implies that he himself possesses them, and his possession of them again implies the spirituality of his nature. He that planned the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see?

Assuming that God is one, is infinite, unchangeable, omnipresent, and all perfect, we might easily prove that He who is possessed of these attributes is a spirit. We can say little of what a spirit is. We know that angels and the souls of men are in their nature and essence spiritual. We know this not only from revelation, but from a variety of other sources to which we cannot now allude. But it is in a far higher sense that we say of the self-existing and eternal God that he is a spirit. The highest order of beings, whatever be their essence, have been created by him, are depending upon him, and are, therefore, finite in their power and faculties. But his nature is necessarily spiritual, uncreated, independent, and infinite in all his perfections. He is the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only living and true God.

It is true, bodily parts are ascribed to him in scripture. He is spoken of as having eyes, and ears

and a mouth, and hands. But this is in condescension to our weakness. Our opinion of what is comparatively unknown, is formed from its supposed relation or resemblance to what we do know. And when He makes himself known to us, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see,—when he makes his character and perfections known to us, he addresses us in the language which we already understand, and which is best adapted to aid our conceptions on a subject on which the conceptions of all created beings, however just, must remain inadequate. Besides, those acts which God is said to perform by the parts of the human body ascribed to him, are somewhat analogous to the same acts which man performs by the use of similar parts. So that when God is thus spoken of, we are to understand his visible operations, and not his invisible nature. Thus, the wisdom of God is called his eye, because he knows that with his mind which we see with our eyes. The efficiency of God is called his hand and arm, because it is with our hands that we act, and it is by them that men generally exert their power. When God is said to have eyes and ears, we are to understand his omniscience; by his face, the manifestation of his favour; by his mouth, the revelation of his will; by his heart, the tenderness and sincerity of his affections; and by his feet, his omnipresence. We exercise attributes, and perform works somewhat similar, by means of bodily organs and faculties; and God, in condescension to

our weakness, speaks as if he performed his visible acts by similar instruments. And it is to be remarked, that those faculties only that are expressive of the dignity of human nature, and are the instruments of the noblest actions, are fixed on to convey a notion of the acts and attributes of God to our mind, as the eyes, the heart, and the hands.

This being figurative language, it is obvious that we are to understand it according to its design ; just as when Christ is called a sun, a vine, a rock, we are at once led by the metaphor to the thing which it signifies. If we keep our view fixed on the design of the metaphor when used in regard to God, we shall be aided in forming our conceptions of the attribute and the ways of him who is a spirit. Nor shall we see any reason for supposing, that because figurative language is employed on a subject on which no other could consistently with our weakness be employed, he to whom it relates is not, and in a sense far different from that in which it can be declared of any creature, in his essence and nature spiritual.

It has been a question, whether this describing of God by the members of a human body, were so much figuratively to be understood as with respect to the incarnation of our Saviour, who was to assume the human nature, and all the members of a human body. That the second person of the glorious Trinity did appear to the patriarchs in a bodily form,—that every economy since the fall of man has been conducted by his ministry,—and that in the fulness of time he was born of a woman, and made in the likeness of men, are things most surely believed by us. But if it was

at all on this account that the figurative language which describes the Deity was used, it must also have been employed for the reasons which I have already assigned, reasons that are illustrative of the great condescension and loving-kindness of God.

As the perfection of the divine nature implies its spirituality, so its spirituality involves in it its infinite perfection. The excellencies of his nature are all infinite in him. We form a conception of some of these excellencies from the shadowy resemblance to them which exists in ourselves: but all excellency in the creature is limited; the perfections of the Creator are unlimited. It also follows, from the spirituality of the divine nature, that the perfections of God are nothing different from his nature, and are only the different modes in which the Divinity acts. His wisdom, and power, and goodness, and other perfections, are not additions to his nature, but that nature itself acting in different ways:—just as the powers of understanding and of will in the human mind are not any thing different from the human mind, but the various states of the same intelligent mind. So true is it that the attributes or perfections of the Deity are only the Deity himself, that his perfections are necessarily involved in our notion of God. They are not only essentially included in the divine nature, but they are that nature itself in its several excellencies and actings. Thus, when we speak of the almighty power of God, we mean, that whatever God wills to be done, is accomplished,—when we speak of his unerring wisdom, we mean that he has a perfect knowledge of all things, and can therefore adapt in endless variety the

means to the endless variety of ends;—when we speak of the goodness of God, we mean that he wills the happiness of his creatures, and that this happiness is communicated.

His excellencies being thus his own nature, existing necessarily, immutably, and from eternity, it is obvious that nothing can ever be added unto God, and that he can never possibly sustain any diminution of his perfection and blessedness. He is in His supreme perfection essentially one and indivisible. The attributes which we find it necessary to contemplate separately, exist in him in the most absolute oneness and simplicity. As they are not any thing different from the divine nature itself, so they cannot differ from one another in their exercise. Our very limited understandings, indeed, can view at the same time but parts of the indivisible and boundless perfection of the Deity, and cannot form conceptions of his nature and character but by little and little. In order to acquire knowledge, we find it requisite to analyze, to consider all the properties of a being or substance, each after each, as if they not only differed from one another, but were things different from the being or substance to which they belong, and we proceed in the same way when we attempt to know any thing of the ever-blessed God. Of him we cannot know any thing but by his works and his word; and of his character there revealed, we study so many distinct portions apart from one another, till we have surveyed the whole. The difference which we consider as existing between these separate aspects in which the divine character is contemplated, exists only in our

mind, and as the consequence of the mode in which we acquire our knowledge, and not in the infinite excellencies of the divine nature. These excellencies are in God one and the same thing, forming the boundless and indivisible perfection of his nature, in its state of entire and inconceivable simplicity. We are, therefore, far from being correct, when we speak of infinite wisdom and infinite power, if we mean that these things differ one from the other, or are any thing else from the oneness of the perfection of the divine nature, which is not only inclusive of all excellency, but is in itself one undivided and infinite excellency.

From what is thus implied in the spirituality of the divine nature, it follows also, that when the creature possesses any faint image of any excellency in the Creator, such as wisdom and goodness, it must be understood as belonging to God in the highest degree. When even negative attributes are ascribed to him, such as immortality, invisibility, and eternity, they are to be understood as implying something positive in him—and as expressing an undecaying fulness of life, and such glorious and unbounded perfection as no created being can even look upon. And hence the distribution of the divine attributes into two classes, the incommunicable, and communicable; or, as they have otherwise been termed, the natural, and the moral. Some of the perfections of the divine nature cannot in any degree be communicated, and are so exclusively God's, so appropriate to the glory of his nature, that they are not so much as common in name to him and to us; such are his self-subsistence, his all-sufficiency, his eternity and immensity. There are

others of the divine perfections which are said to be communicable, because the images of the same attributes exist in the creature, and are spoken of under the same name, such as his power, wisdom, and goodness.

As I have shewn that the unity of the divine perfections is necessarily involved in the spirituality of the divine essence, so does the unity of the Godhead necessarily follow from the same doctrine. If God be a spirit, he is essentially one in his nature, attributes, and counsels. If he possess all attributes that are negative of imperfection, and such as imply infinite excellence; if he is self-existing, immutable, and eternal, then does it most surely follow that there is one only living and true God. The same truth is rendered highly probable from the uniformity of design observable in the appearances of nature and government of the world. I say this truth is rendered highly probable; for it is admitted, that the harmony of the universe is so far from conclusively proving the unity of God, that it does not even prove a unity of counsel. It is, indeed, certain, that there does exist in nature an uniformity of plan; that amid the greatest diversity all things proceed according to established laws; that similar causes produce similar effects in every place and period; that day and night, summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, return with the most exact regularity. And this argument unanswerably proves, that there cannot be two infinite Beings, opposite in their character and design. But it does not afford proof that there may not be two infinite Beings agreeing in character and in counsel.

Besides, the force of this argument will depend on the degree of knowledge possessed by those whom it is designed to convince. Those appearances of nature from which the philosopher justly infers a harmony of design, are not understood by the great multitude of mankind, and cannot therefore suggest any such notion. There is not wanting proof sufficient to carry conviction to the hearts of the rude and illiterate of the being and providence of supreme and overruling powers; but the evidence of the unity of God arising from nature is very far from being so decisive. It is not complete in any case; and in the view of the vast majority, especially when unenlightened by christianity, it does not seem to exist. With minds indisposed to retain God in their knowledge, at least the God of all holiness and perfection, and in the midst of pagan darkness, the mixture of good and evil in the present life, and many appearances in nature for which they could not account, would lead them to believe in the existence of a plurality of Gods. Hence, the origin of the sect called Manicheans, who held the existence of two Deities, the one benevolent, the other malevolent. Hence, also, the origin of the polytheism and idolatry which have prevailed over so great a portion of the world. A few ages after the flood, and after the dispersion of mankind, when the traditionary knowledge of the character and attributes of the living and true God, originally obtained from revelation, began to disappear, idolatry commenced.

A slight survey of the progress and history of idolatrous worship may satisfy us that reason, as exercised by fallen and guilty man, is unable, from

the light of nature, to discover the unity of the Godhead. It was in proportion as reason was cultivated that this doctrine was lost, and that polytheism prevailed. When, in consequence of the dispersion of mankind, after the confusion of tongues, they were removed from the depositories of revelation, and were left to discover religious truth by the exercise of their understanding, they soon became as ignorant of the character of the true God as they were of the unity of his being. They worshipped the host of heaven, regarding them either as the visible representatives of the Deity, or as inhabited by beings of a superior order, who had mediatorial influence with the supreme Governor of all things. From offering adoration to the Deity through these representations of his power and goodness, the transition was easy of offering worship to themselves. And in a few ages more the picture drawn by the Apostle was fully realized: "professing themselves to be wise they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things; who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever." The number of deities multiplied in proportion as the light of reason and of science advanced; and, as if to shew more clearly the blindness of reason in the things of God, the errors of polytheism were far more gross and absurd in those states in which philosophy flourished, than among rude and savage nations. The crude notions of barbarous tribes concerning God and Deity were far less

involved and remote from the truth than were the doctrines of Greece, Rome, Egypt, Persia, and Hindostan. According to the general estimation in those countries, there were deities that presided over every distinct nation, over every town and city, over every grove, every fountain, and every river. Athens and Rome were full of statues dedicated to different deities. If, so early as the days of Hesiod, the number was thirty thousand, it was probably afterwards much greater among the Greeks, and it was certainly much greater among the Romans before the end of the Republic. If, in addition to these facts, we keep in remembrance that which an ancient historian* has recorded, that the religious rites of the Romans were far purer in the earlier than in the later ages of the commonwealth; that while they built temples, during the first hundred and seventy years they did not place in them any image or figure of any kind, persuaded that it was impious to represent things divine by what is perishable; we must be convinced that the mere light of reason, unaided by that of revelation, has never led men to the knowledge of the unity of God.

But wherever the light of revelation has been enjoyed, this doctrine has been maintained. When the Holy Scriptures announce the existence of one only living and true God, and describe his character as infinitely perfect, the doctrine seems so accordant with the lesson which is taught us by the uniformity of design visible in the universe, we naturally suppose that it might be learned from this source alone; but the prevalence of polytheism and idolatry during so many

* Plutarch, in his *Life of Numa*.

ages, and in those countries where reason was cultivated most, is a sufficient proof that we owe our knowledge of the unity of God to that revelation which he has given of himself. This doctrine is there not only announced as one of its fundamental truths, but it is assumed throughout. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. There is none other God but one. There is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." The truth of these declarations is proved by the perfect uniformity of design throughout revelation—by the full accordance between the promises of God and their performance; between his predictions and their fulfilment; between his precepts and the most absolute rectitude; between his doctrines and truth. In these and in other ways the existence of one self-existing, unchangeable, and infinitely-perfect Jehovah, the creator, the preserver, and the governor of all, is proved. This unity of nature and of perfection he claims as his own, and made it known to patriarchs and prophets, and by all his inspired servants till the canon of revelation was complete. All that has being is represented as nothing in comparison with him, as being held in existence by his word, as being under the control of his power, and as formed to shew forth his glory. "I am the Lord, and there is none else; there is no God besides me. They have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a God that cannot save. There is no God else besides me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing and vanity. To

whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal, saith the Holy One? Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names, by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power, not one faileth."

Behold the one great and adorable object of your hope, and trust, and fear,—the living and the true God. He is one in his perfections, one in his nature, and one in his design; and it is only by loving him with all our heart and soul, and pursuing in our sphere the end which his government proposes, that we can rest in peace. It is by reflecting on the unity of God that we shall clearly see the important meaning of that part of Christ's intercessory prayer, which says, "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me; and the glory thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one."

In connexion with the spirituality and unity of the divine nature, I must take notice of its fulness and immensity. He fills without any vacuity or mutation the illimitable extent of space, and the endless duration of eternity. He is not only present everywhere, but he is present in the whole perfection and unity of his nature. He not only possesses every possible perfection to an infinite extent, but he fills in the unity of this inconceivable perfection every point of space, and every moment of duration. It is a fulness of being, of perfection, and of blessedness; including all power, and knowledge, and wisdom, and goodness,

every thing that is valuable and desirable ; existing by itself, and of itself, and the only cause of existence in the universe. It is a fulness to which nothing can be added, because it is already infinite, and which cannot be impaired, because it is immutable. It was the same before the creation that it is now ; and if the creation were annihilated, it would remain unchanged. “ He is without variableness or shadow of turning. From everlasting to everlasting thou art God.”

How consoling is it for us to know, that it hath pleased the Father that in Christ all this fulness should dwell. It is with peculiar propriety that those who are united to the Saviour are said to be complete in him, since there is a fulness of life and grace, power and love, treasured up in him for their necessities. This is the fulness with which believers are to be filled, by which they are sustained and preserved through all the temptations, and conflicts, and trials which they endure, and by which they are kept through faith unto salvation. It is because this fulness dwells in Christ that he is an all-sufficient Saviour, and has spoiled principalities and powers, making a shew of them openly ; and is able to save to the uttermost. It is the enjoyment of this fulness in eternity that will constitute heaven a place of unbounded and eternal happiness ; a fulness of joy from whence spring up pleasures for evermore. From this subject, I remark,

I. That as God is a spirit, we are bound to give him a spiritual worship. This is the inference which an infallible teacher has deduced from the spirituality of the divine nature. “ God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth,”

We are not only to refrain from worshipping God in a false manner, or by means of visible representations, but we are to give him in sincerity the love and adoration of the heart, and in the way which he has required. In addressing ourselves to God, our worship must be agreeable to his nature. Would it not be absurd and irrational to act towards our fellow-creatures as if they were void of reason and of understanding? Is it not as foolish to act towards God as if his nature were not spiritual? Is it not worse than mockery to act towards him as if he were not possessed of every perfection, and as if every perfection were not in him infinite? And is it not in those who live under the gospel dispensation, which presents the most powerful and spiritual motives to obedience, and with which is connected the influence of the Holy Spirit, a sin of the most aggravated nature to withhold this worship from God? Was it not to restore our alienated hearts to the love and the worship of God that Christ became a Saviour? The sacrifice of his death and his mediatorial offices are without effect in all who refuse to give God any worship, or who rest satisfied in the outward forms of religion.

That is spiritual worship which proceeds from a spiritual nature; and our nature before it can be spiritual must be so rendered by the renewal of the Holy Spirit. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit is spirit." Before we can pass from the state of carnal-mindedness and of spiritual death, into a state of heavenly affection and of heavenly life, we must undergo that change in which "old things are said to pass away, and all things

to become new." Our worship will then be spiritual, because it proceeds from a spiritual mind ; a mind in which the Holy Spirit dwells ; a mind whose affections and desires are towards God and towards the remembrance of his name ; a mind impressed with awe before the divine majesty, and concerned for the divine glory ; a mind whose prevailing habits are formed under the influence of faith and love, of reverence and humility ; and a mind that has a constant regard to Christ as the only medium through which sinful creatures can approach unto God. If all this be requisite to the acceptable worshipping of that God who is a spirit, what reason have the most spiritual, in reflecting on the frequent state of their hearts, to be deeply humbled ! And how precious should he be in our estimation, who is the great High Priest with the Father, and who presents our prayers and praises with the much incense of his own merits ! I observe from this subject,

II. The great depravity and apostacy of mankind. But for this depravity, the revelation which had been originally given of the spirituality and unity of the divine nature would never have been lost. There must be something wrong with the mind when it is willing to forget the most glorious and perfect object of thought and of love. And yet when we look at the history of the world, we see that this willingness to forget the living and true God, and to substitute all that an evil heart could suggest in his room, must have been powerfully and constantly felt by man. So early as the days of Abraham it had succeeded in shutting out the Creator from a great portion of the

world which he sustains, and of directing worship to idols. And though one of the leading purposes for which that patriarch was selected from the nations was, that the knowledge of the nature and character of the true God, and of the way in which he is to be worshipped, might be preserved among men, how prone were his descendants to turn to idolatry. Amid the peculiar advantages which they enjoyed, and immediately after they had witnessed the interposition of Jehovah in making a way for them through the sea, and in miraculously supplying their wants in the desert, so much were they bent on having some visible and idolatrous representation of Deity, that they gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, "Up, make us gods which shall go before us." This tendency to apostacy and idolatry continued to shew itself, and to bring down on the children of Abraham the severity of punishment, till after their return from the Babylonish captivity.

And what was the condition of the world in this respect when christianity was first promulgated? With the exception of the Jews, mankind over the whole earth were in a state of the grossest ignorance and superstition, and idolatry, dwelling in darkness and in the region and shadow of death, without God, and having no hope. Paganism was supported by the pomp and splendour that could make it imposing to the senses, shielded by the power of princes, and by the no less formidable power of the priesthood. But the Saviour, who came to destroy the works of the devil, sent forth, shielded by his own almighty power,

his apostles, to call men to repent, and to turn from dumb idols to serve the living and true God. He who gave them their commission made them successful in fulfilling it; and through their instrumentality founded his own pure and heavenly kingdom over the greater part of the world. But soon did this kingdom begin to suffer from the enmity of man to the spirituality, and unity, and perfection of God. Julian the apostate, learned, accomplished, and artful, employed his learning and accomplishments, and artifices, backed by the whole power of Rome, to subvert the kingdom of Christ, and to bring over his subjects to idolatry. And what he was unable to perform was in a great measure afterwards achieved by the professed ministers of the church. Idolatry, through their influence, was openly maintained and inculcated in the eighth century—the period from which we date the commencement of that anti-christian system which is fundamentally opposed to the doctrine of the prophets and apostles; which has assumed to itself the prerogatives of God; which has placed itself in opposition to the glorious gospel; and which enforces the worship of images by law and authority. This is that wicked whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming. In the mean time, it is by the special providence of God that the knowledge of his being, and of his perfections, of his mercy, and of his salvation, is preserved among men. And were this knowledge altogether left to itself, the history of the past, and a view of the present, may convince us that

it would soon be lost by the prevalence of human depravity, by the influence of that carnal mind which is at enmity against God. I observe,

III. The necessity of divine revelation. It may seem surprising that this should be so necessary to make known to us doctrines which, because we think they are discovered to us by the light of nature, are termed the doctrines of natural religion. Yet I think it must have appeared, that revelation is as necessary to give us information of these, and to preserve the knowledge of them among men, as it is to make known to us the doctrines of grace and salvation. If the ignorance and depravity of mankind render it so difficult to preserve this knowledge pure and incorrupt, where the light of divine revelation is enjoyed, how deplorable must ever be the condition of those on whom this light does not shine! Unaided and undirected by it, reason, the most cultivated, will only lead to error, to atheism, and infidelity. Without this day-spring from on high, we should have remained in ignorance of the character, the unity, and perfections of the true God, of the duties which we owe him, and of the immortality which awaits us. If this light were suddenly withdrawn from us, the inhabitants of our favoured land would soon be in the same state with the people who dwell in the regions where once the Asiatic churches stood; or in that condition of idolatrous superstition from which our ancestors were rescued a first and a second time by christianity. "Blessed are your eyes, for they see. Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound, for they shall walk,

O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day ; and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted." Without this light we should have been for ever without the delight which we now feel in the knowledge of the divine character and perfections ; without that comfort and peace which we now enjoy in beholding the glory of God in the person and work of Christ ; and without that good hope derived from the cross, of obtaining, when this life has terminated, a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

IV. Let us rejoice to contemplate God, who is a spirit, self-existing, infinitely perfect, unchangeable, and eternal, as he is brought near us in the person, and offices, and work of Christ. Great, indeed, is the mystery of godliness, that God should be manifested in the flesh. Yet this is the mystery on which the whole truth of Christianity is founded,—a mystery essentially connected with the only ground of our acceptance and justification before God, and with our redemption from the guilt and the power of sin. For our sakes, and to accomplish our salvation, he who is God, made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Let us draw near, and view the character and glory of the invisible God in the person of his Son, as he unites the nature of man with that of God ; and as he exhibits in his work as a Saviour, and in all the offices which he exercises as a mediator,

the wisdom and the love, the grace and the power, the truth and the faithfulness, of the Father. Here we see in the most awful, and at the same time, in the most inviting form, the glory of God; that glory into the image of which we are changed, and which will be the object of delightful contemplation to angels and to saints for ever.

CHAPTER IV.

THE OMNIPRESENCE AND OMNISCIENCE OF GOD.

THE infinite knowledge of God is intimately connected with his omnipresence, and, therefore, I shall enter on the consideration of both in this chapter. They are often spoken of as united by the sacred writers. "Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord? The heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee. Great is the Lord, his understanding is infinite." The attribute of knowing all things, as necessarily resulting from the omnipresence of God, is stated as an obvious and elementary truth in that sublime address of the Psalmist: "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compasses my path and my lying-down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or, whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy

right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee."

The same evidence which proves the being of God, shews that he is present everywhere in the undivided perfection of his nature. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge." We see the agency of God in the air, the earth, the sky; in all the kingdoms of nature, and in all the blessings of domestic enjoyment. All above and around us will lead us to believe that God is ever present, ever felt, "in the void waste, as in the city full;"—that he pervades, sustains, surrounds, and fills this universal frame. He who possesses necessary and self-existence, must be everywhere and always the same, and must fill, without any variety or mutation, every point of infinite space.

He fills all space, not merely by knowing all that it contains, all that is done in it, and all that can be done in it,—he fills it not only by his authority and power directing all things, and accomplishing all the divine purposes without any to control them,—but he fills it with his essence and being. God not only fills all places, and at the same time, but he is present in every place, in his nature, and in all his perfections. At the farthest verge of the universe to which our imagination can reach, there is a boundless void beyond which the King eternal, immortal, and invisible fills, and beyond this, still there is an infinite space

which cannot limit his being and attributes. Nothing can exclude the presence of his essence ; for he is not only near us, but in us. " In him we live, and move, and have our being." In consequence of his filling all space, he is not only nearer us than the air that surrounds us, but far nearer us than it is possible for us to conceive. All creatures have their being in him, and at the same time his essence remains unmixed with that of any creature. As no place can be without God, so no place can compass and contain him. It was his influential presence that gave being to the universe at first, and it is his influential presence that sustains it. While all things exist in him, the space which all existences occupy is but a point in the vast infinitude which he fills. What is the wide creation to him " who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?"

It was this idea of the immensity of God, and of his being present unmixed and undivided in every part of the boundless extent of space, that made Solomon admire his condescension in deigning to make the most magnificent temple the place of his glory. " Will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee ; how much less this house that I have builded!" Being spiritual and uncompounded in his nature and essence, he is without parts, and cannot be divided : he is present everywhere, in the world and beyond it, not by diffusion, but himself in his all-perfect nature and attributes. In his omnipresence, he is " high as the

heaven, what canst thou do? Deeper than hell, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea."

The omnipresence of God is necessarily implied in his infinite perfection. If there be no perfection wanting in a being who is infinitely perfect, and if it be a perfection to be present everywhere, and at the same time;—to be present everywhere, not successively by motion, but without motion,—then it follows that the all-perfect God is omnipresent. Infinite in himself, what power is there without him to bound his nature and essence to time or space; or can we conceive that he would voluntarily place any restraint on himself? Immutable in his being and perfections, it cannot be said of him, that there is any place in heaven or in earth, or in the boundless void of space from which he is absent; or, that he moves from one place to another. Almighty in his power, what is there to limit him in creating and in peopling many millions of worlds through an eternity to come? And must not he who forms be present at the formation of the works which he makes, and continue to be present to direct and uphold them? This was the induction of the Apostle, when persuading the Athenians of the omnipresence of God. He is not far from every one of us; "for in him we live, and move, and have our being. If we have life, and breath, and all things, he from whom we receive them, must be in us and around us." We are placed on a theatre on which we, and every thing about us, are exhibiting the presence of God in all the power and benignity of his nature—and if we are not yet admitted into the place of his peculiar glory,

we are allowed constantly to witness the excellence of his working, and the wisdom of his counsels.

The idolatrous heathens were ignorant of the omnipresence of God as they were of his other perfections : the phenomena of nature they ascribed to the influence of their local deities ; they were supposed to preside over certain regions of the air, or the earth, or the sea, over hills and valleys, over groves and fountains, and rivers. Nor did they think it derogatory to conceive that they might be occasionally absent from those very places to which their power was confined. Hence, the keen irony of the prophet addressed to the worshippers of Baal,—irony founded on the notions which the worshippers entertained of their deity. “Cry aloud: for he is a God ; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked. And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. And it came to pass, when mid-day was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.” Hence, also, when the Syrians were defeated by the Israelites, they ascribed the superiority of their enemies to the local influence of the deities which they supposed them to worship. “Their gods are gods of the hills, therefore, they were stronger than we ; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they.” Nor were some of the Jews much more enlightened, who conceived that the presence of God was confined to the land of Canaan, or to the temple at Jerusalem. To

them the reproof was administered: "Thus saith the Lord, the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; where is the house that ye build unto me? And where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord."

Thus does it appear that God is everywhere present—present in the full and indivisible perfection of his nature to uphold all things—present in heaven to communicate higher degrees of happiness and glory—present with his church and people on earth to impart the blessings of his grace, and present with the wicked in his justice and power. Nor is this doctrine at all opposed by the expressions in scripture which ascribe a local residence to God, and which represent him as moving out of his place, departing from us, or coming towards us. Heaven is called his dwelling-place, on account of the glorious representation which he gives of himself to the angels and the spirits which there surround him; because of the unmingled love and happiness of the worshippers; and because it is from thence he sends his messengers to announce his counsels and his will. Zion of old, because it was consecrated to his worship, and the spot on which the visible tokens of his gracious presence and glory were constantly to rest, was called the habitation of his house, and the place where his honour dwells. "The Lord hath chosen Zion, he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell; for I have desired it." He dwells gloriously in heaven in the full perfection of his nature, and he dwells graciously with his church on earth with the

same fulness of perfection, though not with the same manifestation of it; and with equal fulness, though not for the same ends, nor with the same discoveries of himself, does he fill, in the infinity and indivisibility of his essence and attributes, every part of boundless space.

The expressions in scripture which ascribe motion to God, are used, not only in condescension to our weakness, but with a peculiar significancy in reference to us. What can be more calculated to impress us with a sense of the mighty power of God, and of his omnipresence, than the description of the Psalmist? "He bowed the heavens also, and came down, and darkness was under his feet. And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly; yea, he did fly on the wings of the wind. He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. At the brightness that was before him, his thick clouds passed, hail-stones, and coals of fire." When he is said to be far from the wicked—to hide his face from his people—to be near unto all that call upon him—to rend the heavens and come down—to come down to see the city,—the meaning of the expressions is obvious to every one, and especially to every one who is in the least acquainted with revelation.

We are every moment, then, wherever we go, in the presence of the God of infinite perfection. We cannot look on the firmament with all its glories, without beholding his living agency guiding and sustaining unnumbered and distant worlds amid all their movements. We cannot survey the changes of nature, the

racess of living creatures around us, the adaptation of their instincts and habits to the circumstances in which they are placed, and the subserviency of all to the happiness of mankind, without feeling the universality of that divine and vital presence which pervades all space, and gives being to all worlds;—which, while it holds in the compass of its power the infinitude of systems, overlooks not the wants of any one of the beings that are in succession passing over the stage of existence. We cannot witness the sublime scene before us,—mark the renovation of a world as often as the seasons revolve—observe the air, the earth, the sea, full of life, and all things proclaiming the presence and the power of God, without the deep impression of our living, and moving, and having our being in him.

To him no high, no low, no great, no small ;
He fills, he bounds, connects, and equals all !

The God of all perfection, who is everywhere present, must know all things. His omniscience we infer from his omnipresence. Hence his own declaration ; “ Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him, saith the Lord ? Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord ? ” He who is unchangeably present in every part of space, and in every part of his creatures, to whom the world is but as a point, must be acquainted perfectly with all the thoughts of all the beings in the universe, because they arise in his sight,—nothing can be hid from him, since all things are naked and open to him.

How great is the difference between created beings, and even individuals of the same species, as to the

extent of their knowledge! How superior does he appear who is able to predict, by the aid of scientific acquirements, the aspect and the position of the planets, long after he himself is removed from our world, to the man whose habits are little elevated above the savage life, and who has not the power of forming probable conjectures of the future from the experience of the past! Nor is he less elevated whose close and continued observation of human nature has put him in possession of a faculty, which, like an additional sense, greatly enlarges the field of vision, and enables him to discern the different motives which operate on the human mind, and to foretel the influence which religion, and philosophy, and political institutions will have on the future prosperity and happiness of nations. We can conceive, that the knowledge of a being formed like ourselves, if his life were sufficiently protracted, to afford him opportunities for the exercise of his faculties, would increase to a degree not only beyond the limits of our present comprehension, but which, when considered in relation to our present attainments, might be denominated infinite. Were he to live a thousand years in the full possession of his powers, his progress in knowledge during the second century of his life, would be far more than double that which was made during the first, so that his acquirements in each of the following centuries would more than equal what had been attained in all the preceding.

But how little do our reflections on the possible attainments of man enable us to comprehend the extent of his knowledge who is omniscient!—Who sees all that exists, or will exist, in time and in space—

Who knows all the events with all their consequences, that can take place in this mighty compass!— I observe, then,

i. That as God is omnipresent and omniscient, nothing can happen without his appointment or permission. As he is everywhere present in the infinite perfection of his nature, nothing can happen without his knowledge, nothing that is beyond the control of his power. All things are his own work—all are the object of his care, and he only has the attributes necessary for universal rule. He inhabiteth eternity, and therefore he is king always; he is omnipresent, and therefore his reign is universal. His will is the only reason why any thing exists, and whatever he chooses should not be, can never come into being. He can only will and appoint the existence of that which is good; but if evil does exist, it cannot be without his permission. As nothing can escape his knowledge—as nothing can overcome his power, we must believe that as sin and misery exist, he has not seen meet to prevent their existence. He is the Author of good, and of good only; but as evil does exist, its existence could only have taken place by his permission. The certainty of the fact comes within the painful experience of us all; to assign the reasons why it is so, is far beyond the reach of our understanding. “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out. For of him, and through, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever.”

ii. The omnipresence and omniscience of God form

a never-failing source of hope and of joy to those who are in a state of friendship and of reconciliation with him. They are individually as much the objects of his compassion and his care, and all his attributes of wisdom, love, and power, are as much exercised in regard to them, as if there were no other being. It is the same God who is present with distant and unnumbered worlds to direct all their movements, who is as much present with me as if there were no other being to enjoy his goodness. His workmanship is as perfect, the superintendence of his providence as complete and unembarrassed, in forming and in preserving the minutest, as in forming and preserving the greatest, productions of his power. "He feeds the fowls of the air, he clothes the grass of the field, and the hairs of our head are all numbered."

If, in the deepest affliction, the sympathy of a friend alleviates our sorrows, and enables us to bear our trial with greater patience and cheerfulness, how much more consolation may we enjoy from the presence of the God of all power and compassion, who himself declares concerning his church, "I the Lord do keep it: I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it I will keep it night and day." Our earthly friend may be unable to afford us the aid and the sympathy which we require: but the Divine Friend who is always around us, and He who neither slumbers nor sleeps, is intimately acquainted with the peculiarities of our condition; with all the ingredients of the portion of our cup; with the extent of our helplessness, and has the compassion and the power to relieve us. It is not till the hours of health and prosperity are suc-

ceeded by the night of adversity that we begin to feel ourselves alone; that the feebleness of all human efforts to minister to our relief is forcibly impressed on our hearts; and that, amid the loneliness to which we are necessarily left, we receive unwonted consolation from the belief that thou, God, seest us. How many are there possessing the same sensibilities, the same hopes and fears with ourselves, who are removed from the sympathies of their fellows, and called to endure, without the soothing presence of a friend, the languor of sickness and the bitterness of death! If, in such circumstances, they know the truth, how delightful is the conviction, that they are not alone; that an Almighty Friend is present to witness their tears, and to hear their complaints; and that all the tender interest felt by a mother, when watching the dying breathings of her only child, cannot be equalled to the compassion of Him who is not only always present, but always present to bless them and to do them good. When passing through the valley which is solitary to all, through the darkness of which no friend can accompany us, they advance from time into eternity in the presence of that God who is to be their everlasting light and glory.

A belief in the omnipresence and omniscience of our Heavenly Father is calculated to give us a superiority to the trials of life. In a world where we are surrounded by those who partake of the sinfulness of our common nature, and where our acquaintance with each other's motives and character can in no case proceed from a knowledge of the heart, circumstances will frequently occur, in all situations, to impair our

happiness. Where the intention is good, the action that proceeds from it may be unaccompanied with the prudence that deprives the tongue of malice and slander of its appropriate employment. How consoling is it, when thus falsely accused, to possess not merely the testimony of an approving conscience, but to be able to appeal to the God who has been with us all our lives long, to refer to the omniscience of the Governor and Judge of the Universe. The true Christian may retire from the noise of the people, from the tongue of strife and detraction, and enjoy amidst the solitude of his own reflections, more than the happiness of which the world would deprive him. If he cannot have the sympathies of his fellow-creatures, which is in itself so great a source of satisfaction, he is animated by the delightful persuasion, that the God of boundless mercy and compassion looks on his heart, is acquainted with all his weaknesses and wants, will guide him through the difficulties of life to a more peaceful land, and own him on that great day when the approbation of God alone will decide his everlasting condition. Hence the confident language in which the righteous of other ages appealed from the presumptuous decision of man to the tribunal of God and of their own conscience: "Till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live."

What is the situation in which we may not increase our happiness by recognising the universal presence of God? Do we not enjoy prosperity itself with a higher and more refined pleasure under the immediate view

of Him from whom all our happiness flows? Do we not share with more exquisite delight the bounty of the Creator, when we know that he himself presides over the feast, and when, amid the pleasures of this liberal entertainment, we can say, thou, God, seest us. Thus the divine presence is associated with all the expressions of divine goodness; the gifts of Providence are received as coming from the hand of our Heavenly Father; and all the loveliness of nature assumes a more interesting aspect by its presenting to us the glories of that Almighty Friend, from whose omniscient view we cannot be separated. When we appeal unto God, either in the extreme of sorrow or in the height of prosperity, we call upon a Being who is acquainted with every thought that has ever arisen in our mind; who has accompanied us with more than the compassion of a parent through every step of the journey of life; and whose boundless goodness gives us confidence to hope, that he will never abandon us to the feebleness of our own efforts, nor leave us till we are surrounded with the light of his glorious presence.

Are we called in providence to any peculiar service, requiring in its performance an extraordinary exercise of all Christian graces, how great is our encouragement in knowing that the all-seeing and omnipresent God is with us! It was thus that Moses was encouraged to go unto Pharaoh, when God said unto him, "Go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say." It was thus that he was afterwards emboldened to conduct the children of Israel through the wilderness, when God said unto

him, " My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. And he said, if thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." Jacob also, in the solitude of the wilderness, when travelling towards Padanaram, was comforted from the same divine source. " The Lord appeared unto him, and said, Behold I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land ; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." And when Christ sent forth his Apostles on that mission, in the discharge of which they hazarded the loss of all things, they were supported by the promise, " Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." It was this divine presence, in the peace and joy which it afforded, and in the immovable ground of confidence which it formed, that made them fearless and safe in the midst of danger, rich in the midst of poverty, joyful under multiplied afflictions, successful in the face of the power and policy that were leagued against them, and more than triumphant in death. The same gracious presence is continued with us—the presence of God in his whole essence and perfections ; in his wisdom to guide us—his power to protect and support us—his mercy to pity us—his fulness to refresh us, and his goodness to relieve us. We have good ground, from the promises of the Gospel, to expect its manifestation in observing the instituted ordinances of his worship. " In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee. Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. I will dwell in them, and walk in

them ; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

iii. The omnipresence and omniscience of God form a strong incentive to holiness of heart and of life. He who has a deep impression of the continual presence of God, has the most powerful motive to deter him from sin, to guard against temptation, and to aim, both in thought and in action, at conformity to the divine will. It was because Moses endured seeing him who is invisible, that he preferred suffering “ affliction with the people of God than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” It was because Job felt that all that he did was done in the immediate view of God, that he was enabled to preserve his integrity ; “ Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps ?” David was not moved, because he set the Lord always before him, and believed that he was at his right hand. Are we not sensible that our character is affected, either for the better or the worse, by the views we entertain of the character of those who habitually surround us ? And is it possible for the man who has been trained up with the conviction that he is continually in the presence of a holy and righteous God, to whom he is accountable for all his actions, not to feel its influence in leading him to live soberly, righteously, and godly ? If it be difficult to live long in immediate contact with piety without imbibing a portion of its spirit, can we pass the journey of life in the immediate view of the God of holiness, surrounded every moment by his nature and perfections, and not grow into his likeness ? We stand in a peculiar relation to the Great and Holy Lord God, who is the witness of our conduct : we

know him not only as infinite in wisdom, and knowledge and power, but as our supreme Ruler and Judge, requiring perfect love and obedience. He has prescribed the race we are to run; and as he is now the witness of the manner in which our course is accomplished, he is hereafter to judge us in righteousness.

Remember, besides, that He in whose presence you live and move, and have your being, is your father and your friend; who, in his love and in his pity, sent his Son to die the death of the cross for your salvation; and who has given so many great and precious promises to animate you in the way of holy obedience. With this impression engraven on your hearts, while you feel happy in contemplating the universality of the divine presence, and your enjoyment of life greatly increased by the pleasing contemplation, you cannot consider yourselves as if you were solitary in the world, and had no other check than the knowledge of your fellow-creatures to deter you from sin. Though you should be slow in reaching the heights to which you aspire, and are often intimidated by the feebleness of your efforts in rising to the glorious elevation of Christian holiness, still persevere, animated by the presence of the omnipotent God; and in your greatest weakness, when no eye sees your sorrow but his who will never leave you, lighten the burden of your affliction by appealing to his boundless compassion, and say, under the deepest impressions of unworthiness, "thou, God, seest me."

iv. The omnipresence and omniscience of God may awaken terror in the hearts of the impenitent and unbelieving. They are relieved in a great measure from

this misery by excluding God from their thoughts, and living as though he were not. But, in the moment of serious reflection, the consideration cannot but be alarming, that those actions which they are as anxious to hide from their own view as from the notice of others, are well-known to God; and that all their sins, with all their aggravations, are marked by the Omnipotent Being, whose arm they cannot resist, and whose judgment of their character will fix their state of unchanging existence. The sinner, indeed, is willing to forget, that while gratifying his desires, and pursuing the course of guilt and of crime which he has voluntarily chosen, there is a witness whom no art can elude—who is present with him in his most solitary hours—who sees his perversion of infinite goodness—who hears all his imprecations—whose eye is on his heart when polluted with thoughts of pride or envy, or malice, or deceit, or injustice, or impurity; who observes his opposition to his truth—his dishonour to his name—his reviling of his Son—his despite to his Spirit, and his profanation of his ordinances, and before whose awful tribunal he must give an account of all the deeds done in the body. What an affecting spectacle to behold a being, who was once formed after the image of God, beginning the exercise of his powers by frustrating the design for which they were bestowed—advancing through time regardless of his nearness to eternity—perverting the gifts of his Creator, slighting his holy presence, and flattering himself that God will not regard his conduct, and will not bring him to judgment!

The wilful sinner scarcely ever thinks about God ; or, should he at any time happen to give to the thought a moment's consideration, his reflections are overpowered by the returning tide of iniquity, and he again runs in the way of disobedience. Though for the present he may avoid the punishment of his guilt he cannot shun its recollection ; and this, like the presence of that God whose law he contemns, accompanies him to his most secret retirement, imbitters all the sources of his enjoyment, reminds him that he cannot be sinful, and far less persist in being so, with impunity, and when no human eye is upon him, forces him, through the agony of his conscience, to say "Thou, God, seest me." In the loneliness of the night, in the most retired recesses, in circumstances where detection from men is impossible, how little does he think that he is not alone, that there is beside him an invisible witness of all his thoughts and actions, who knows him far more intimately than he knows himself, who sees with abhorrence all his iniquity, and who is the only Being whose decisions can permanently affect his happiness ! How soon, in the character of an impartial judge, will God display his perfect knowledge of the thoughts of the hearts of all men ; while he will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and fix in equity the everlasting condition of the righteous and the wicked. This omnipresence, and this omniscience, as they are necessary to judge the world, so will they be shewn by presenting to our view every thing in its reality, by bringing to remembrance what was forgotten, by unveiling what had been concealed, and

by forcing every heart to confess, in the several awards that are given, that God is just when he judgeth, and clear when he condemneth.

It is not merely to the openly profane or to the infidel that the doctrine of the omnipresence and omniscience of God is fraught with the most awful and arousing admonitions: it is not less alarming to the man, whatever be his profession, or his external conduct, who remains a stranger to the grace and to the holiness of the Gospel. The greatest sin is the scornful rejection of the greatest blessing; and he who has never with penitence and faith, sincerely embraced the gift of everlasting love, nor applied its holy influence to the renovation of his heart, however much he may succeed in imposing on himself, by the exterior semblance of devotion, is ranked in the estimation of Him whose view he cannot elude, with hypocrites and with unbelievers. Are *they* impressed with the sense that God sees them; that he is intimately acquainted with the thoughts of their hearts, who presume to offer the worship of the lip merely to their Creator and Judge!—whose conduct is at variance with the spirit and the precepts of the holy religion which they profess, and who are, towards their fellow-creatures, guilty of fraud, and injustice, and oppression? Do *they* recognise the universality of the divine presence, who can allow themselves to participate in all the gifts of providence without any thankful acknowledgment to their Author; who pass through life without ever once, in reality, addressing their supplications to the God from whom all that is holy in man can proceed; and who, with the name of Christians,

are living in ignorance of almost all that the Bible contains, and in the neglect of every saving benefit which the Son of God died to procure? Do *they* believe that God is ever around them, and ever sees them, who enter into his house with thoughtlessness of heart, and with irreverence of manner, and who, amid the solemnities of his worship, are careless and trifling, and whose affections all the while are busied in going after the creature, to the entire neglect of the Creator, who is blessed for evermore? “Be not deceived; for God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. His eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings. There is no darkness nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.”

CHAPTER IV.

THE ETERNITY AND IMMUTABILITY OF GOD.

THE eternity of God implies his immutability, while his immutability pre-supposes his eternity. They are not so much attributes of the divine nature, as modes in which the divine nature and all its attributes exist. The sacred writers generally state them together, as being necessarily involved, the one in the other, and as belonging essentially and exclusively to God. “Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the works of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no God with me: I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever.”

That something has existed from eternity, it seems impossible for even atheism to deny. That that which has existed from eternity is the all-perfect, independent, and glorious God, is not less certain, from the evidence both of reason and of revelation. His existence is an eternal duration—an eternal duration which had no beginning, and which can have no end. All that is now in being, has either received its being from some external cause, or has been produced from nothing, or possesses necessary and self-existence.

But no being that derives its existence from another can be eternal, since the cause from which its origin proceeds must be antecedent to itself. The absurdity of supposing that what now is, has been produced by chance, or accident, or nothing, is self-evident. We are, therefore, reduced to the conclusion, that there has been from eternity an independent Being, who has received his existence from no one; who has originally and necessarily life in himself,—whose being is the only reason why any thing exists, and the only source of life to all that lives,—who is the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto: whom no man hath seen, nor can see.

Time, which is a section of eternity, has a beginning and an end: eternity has neither. It is an infinite and immutable duration, comprehending in itself all years, all ages, all periods. Time is like a river, constantly gliding along, and swallowed up in the sea: eternity is like an ocean that never changes its place, and is always one water. This eternity is so filled by the ever-blessed God, as to be inhabited by him. As by his presence he fills all space, so by his presence he fills all eternity. His essence and nature are boundless; his duration is always. His creatures may obtain immortality, as they obtain their being from him, but such an immortality is neither necessary nor essential to them, and may be taken away, when the God, from whom it is received, designs it; but he who exists by himself, must exist always and necessarily the same. The duration of God, existing

always, without beginning and without end, is his eternity; and eternity is the glory of each of his perfections as well as of his being.

The eternity of God implies that he is without beginning. This, indeed, follows from his existing necessarily, and of himself: it also follows from his being the creator of all things. The wisdom and power displayed in his works must, of course, have existed before these works were made; they existed, therefore, when there was nothing in being but God. However far we may stretch our thoughts into the duration that is past, we find that it is impossible for us to imagine a period when this duration began, or to date from thence the being of God. As we cannot know the Almighty unto perfection, when attempting to form adequate conceptions of his omnipresence in filling the immensity of space that has no limits; neither can we comprehend him, when we think of him without beginning, and as filling, in the glory and immutability of his nature and essence, the past eternity. Notwithstanding this difficulty, the Apostle states that the Eternity of God is an obvious inference from a slight survey of the works of nature. The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.

As the eternity of God implies that he is without beginning, so does it imply that he is without end. He continues always the same without variableness, or a shadow of turning. In his nature there is no weakness; there is without him no power to control

him—no wisdom to circumvent him, and therefore he remains, in his perfection and all-sufficiency from everlasting to everlasting, God. In condescension to our weakness, his eternity is represented in Scripture by days and years, the periods by which we measure time. All the ages of time are, to a duration without beginning and without end, infinitely less than a moment when compared to the life of man. “A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.” But there is no proportion between what is finite and what is infinite; between what is marked in its commencement and termination, and what has no limit in either. “Behold God is great, and we know him not, neither can the number of his years be searched out. He is the Lord God Almighty, which always was, and always is, and always is to come.”

The eternity of God is expressed by the name which God gives himself;—a name expressive of unchangeable and self existence, and by which he is distinguished from all his creatures. God said unto Moses, “I am that I am; thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel, I am hath sent me unto you.” We, and all creatures, are every moment subject to change; there is a succession of matter necessary to repair the waste of our bodies, and it is by thought succeeding thought in our minds that we acquire wisdom: and, thus, as our time passes away there is to us a real distinction between the past, the present, and the future. But God is always and immutably the same, possessing the same perfection and blessedness which he had from everlasting, and continuing invariably to

possess it through eternity : in him there is no succession—no succession of days and of years as with us—no succession in regard to his knowledge ; for known unto God are all his works, all that is, all that shall be, all that can be!—no succession in regard to his purpose ; “ for the counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.” As he perfectly fills by his being and essence a boundless space, so does he fill, without any such changes as are signified to us by the past and the future, a beginningless and endless eternity. Hence his own description of his being ; “ Thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy ; I dwell in the high and holy place.” How awful is the view which this gives us of the perfections of the living and true God,—filling without any kind of succession, in his own infinite duration, the eternity which according to our conceptions is past, and the eternity which we conceive is to come !

Hence the perfect immutability which belongs to God,—immutability so perfect in its nature as to surpass our understanding. The highest angels, though unchangeably fixed in their holy and happy condition, as they are capable of advancing in improvement, have a succession in their thoughts, and are subject, in regard to their knowledge and in regard to their feeling of a passing duration, to change : but the eternity of the being and perfections of God renders any kind of mutability impossible with him. As he fills all eternity at the same moment, there is no past, and no future to him. He does not inhabit portions of eternity in succession, but is present in the

whole at once, from everlasting to everlasting God. We exist only in the present moment, and we therefore estimate the length or the brevity of duration by our feelings, as well as measure it by the terms of hours, and days, and years. But to him who fills all duration at once, who is always, and everywhere present, who knows all things, who sees things that are not as if they were,—to him one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. These portions of duration are unequal in themselves as well as in relation to our feelings, and of course this inequality is known to God, but they are to him exactly the same. To him there is nothing fleeting, nothing successive, nothing short or long. In him there is no capacity, no possibility of change; he is the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

The eternity and immutability of God imply that he has life in himself, and that he is the only source of life. The Father hath life in himself;—with him is the fountain of life. When we say that his being and perfections are without beginning, and without end, we assert that from everlasting to everlasting, he is in the possession of boundless life and happiness—possessing it everywhere and always,—communicating it to others, but receiving it from none. His eternal and unchangeable life is an infinite fulness, which remains the same after conferring being and enjoyment on all the creatures that are made in an endless duration. Hence God alone can be the first cause and last end of all things. “Of him, and to him, and through him are all things. I am alpha and

omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which was, and which is, and which is to come, the Almighty.”

Though all the perfections of God be infinite, there are faint resemblances of some of them, such as his power, and wisdom, and goodness, in the creature: but the attributes of eternity and immutability belong to him exclusively. The souls of men are by the appointment of God immortal, but neither they, nor angels, nor any created being, can be either eternal or immutable. As they have been brought from nothing into being, so may they again be brought from being into nothing. The whole creation, with all the orders of intelligences which it contains, may as easily be annihilated as upheld in existence. But He who is the cause of all things, whose being is underived, whose attributes are all perfect, is without beginning and without end, necessarily the same always, and everywhere, from everlasting to everlasting, God.

How glorious is the character of that ever-blessed God, to whom these perfections belong! Is he not entitled to our worship and confidence, who has in himself all excellencies, and whose excellencies are all immutable and eternal? Millions of years before there was any thing in space or in duration but himself, before the mountains were brought forth, or ever he had formed the earth and the world, was his happiness infinite in the possession of all perfection, of all sufficiency, of all excellency. His character and perfections he unfolded to the intelligent beings whom, in succession, and in countless numbers, he has called into being. The measureless void of space in which

there was nothing, his hand has filled with innumerable worlds. These he has adorned with beauty, has furnished with a rich variety of blessings, has fitted up as the abodes of countless myriads of creatures, and diffuses from the suns which he has lighted up amongst them, life, and warmth, and comfort. But the eternal God himself sits enthroned, without change, or the possibility of change, over this universe. He cannot be affected by any of its movements; the annihilation of suns and of systems can no more alter his plans, than the falling of a sparrow, or of a hair from our head. In himself, in his happiness and purposes, he is independent of all creatures, inhabiting eternity, and filling immensity, as if these worlds and their inhabitants were not. Amid the changes that are continually taking place throughout his dominions, amid the growth and the decay of life, nothing can happen to frustrate his designs, nothing to disappoint him, nothing to change his purpose. His counsel as himself is the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

I. The eternity and immutability of God suggest to us a train of the most consolatory reflections. These are the attributes of his nature which render his other attributes of goodness, and wisdom, and faithfulness, a source of comfort to us. For, what were his mercy and his goodness, if the God, whose perfections they are, were capable of change? Where is the foundation of our hope of eternal life, if the God who promises it were mutable? After surveying the emptiness of all human grandeur—the perishable nature of all earthly glory—the number of those generations of living beings, who, like ourselves, have thought, and

feared, and felt, and hoped, but who have passed away in succession over the stage of life—after reviewing these changes, while surrounded by the wrecks of time, and the desolations of the world, how pleasing is it to raise our thoughts to the uncreated glories of Him, who, because he is eternal, has everlasting strength! Even amid these desolations, the nature of man, in virtue of the immortality to which it is destined, is still, in its ruins, sublime; it is the nature of a being, who, amidst guilt and darkness, retains traces of former greatness, and to whom hopes are given of renovated glory; and the change and the death which surround him, like the storms of winter before the life and beauty of spring, are ordained to usher in a new heaven and a new earth, from which the present scene of sorrow and of agitation shall have passed away. But viewed apart from these high purposes, the changes and the tumults to which man is now subject, when contemplated in contrast with the stable and unchanging purposes of God, are of a character the most melancholy. The immutability of these purposes is seen in the permanency of those varying evils to which man is born, as well as in the fixed order of that world in which those evils are endured. Amid the unvaried regularity of nature, the memory of man is as perishable as his existence, and of the millions who take their turn in living their short hour on the surface of this earth, how few of even those who employ every art to have their names emblazoned and transmitted to future times, can survive that dark oblivion in which all are at length mingled,

and in which all are buried. Our fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live for ever?

From this scene of change and of vanity, let us turn away to the eternity and immutability of God. If God be eternal, the portion of his people must be independent of all the revolutions of time. "This God is our God for ever and ever, and he will be our guide even unto death." Ours is a life of change, and the most appalling of all changes is the dissolution of the body; but as He, whose years are throughout all generations, is the fountain of our blessedness, and the foundation of our hopes, our real inheritance, that alone which meets the desires of immortal beings, cannot be impaired by time or eternity. Happiness cannot perish so long as God lives. He is the first and the last, the first of all delights, nothing before him; the last of all pleasures, nothing beyond him. In his presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore. The God of perfect goodness and wisdom will have variety to increase our enjoyments, and eternity to perpetuate them.

Hence, the stability and permanency of the covenant of grace,—the covenant which is well ordered in all things and sure, and which is all our salvation and all our desire. It rests, together with all the promises it contains, on the eternity and immutability of God. He has pledged those awful attributes of his nature for its fulfilment. Willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, he confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God

to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us. It is for this reason that the grace conveyed in this covenant is termed the everlasting Gospel—the eternal life which God promised before the world began. Its stability is denoted by what is most fixed and permanent in nature, by the ordinances of heaven, by the strength of hills, and by the rainbow in the clouds. “God said unto Noah, the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.” He afterwards expressed, by the prophet, the immutability of this covenant arising from his own unalterable purpose. “As I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.” All the promises of the Gospel, therefore, because their foundation is not in the infirmity of nature, but in the grace of the eternal and unchangeable God, shall surely be fulfilled—fulfilled in securing peace, and life, and joy, to the soul—fulfilled in preserving all who are interested in them by the power of God through faith unto salvation. He who has begun the good work will carry it on; nor will he suffer the spiritual life which he has communicated to become extinct; for his gifts and calling are without repentance. “I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from

them to do them good, but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.”

How inconceivably great is the portion of him who fears God, and how sure and lasting is its enjoyment ! The God of all perfection, who changes not, is his by his own gracious promise—is his dwelling-place in all generations. He is now the sanctuary of our peace, to which we ever may resort amid all the evils of life ; and when those evils are no more, and the days of our mourning are ended, he will be our everlasting light and glory. While we contemplate the boundless mercy and love of the eternal God, even our Father, while our thoughts are engaged on the infinitude of his perfections, who is our exceeding great reward, and in surveying his goodness in the designs of his providence and grace, and especially in the unspeakable gift of his Son, are not our souls drawn closer and closer to him, who is the strength of our heart, and our portion for ever ? How delightful and animating is the thought, that to this place of refuge and of strength we can ever have recourse, and that those attributes of eternity and immutability, of omnipresence and omnipotence, to which the universe owes its being, and on which it depends, are exercised for our individual defence, for our present and everlasting good ! “ He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust ; his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee.” Is it possible that those who are thus the special objects of divine favour, and to whom God now communicates

spiritual life, shall fail in enjoying life in his presence for ever? The eternity of God is the security and the pledge of their eternal happiness. "Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One? We shall not die." We have laid up in store for us in the everlasting God, an infinite fulness of good against the time to come. When millions of years have passed away, our enjoyment and the source from which it flows, will be as full and as fresh as at the first. Hence,

II. The duty of making God alone the object of our entire trust and confidence. "Trust in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." As it is our duty to make the eternal and unchanging God alone the ground of our fullest confidence, so are we bound to cease from relying on weak and helpless man. "Put not your trust in the son of man, in whom there is no help; his breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish. Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God, which made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: which keepeth truth *for ever*." To put confidence in man, is to place our trust in a creature that is fallen and inconstant. We are mutable, and tending to our state of original nothingness, unless upheld by the arm that made heaven and earth:—in consequence of the depravation of our nature, we have become unstable in all good. The truth of God is like himself immutable; but how inconstant are we in regard to it, and how are we carried about with every wind of doctrine! How soon does it lose its hold on our hearts and conscience, notwithstanding our reso-

lutions and promises! How changeable are we in our will and affections, wavering between God and the world, between sin and holiness, looking sometimes with hope and spiritual desire towards heaven, but often thinking and acting with earthly minds. Like the Israelites who promised obedience when they heard the terrors of the law denounced, but who soon made a golden calf, and worshipped it, we now resolve to choose the Lord for our God, and to serve him only, but to-morrow our goodness is as the morning cloud, and the early dew, which passeth away. Like Peter, who denied his Lord a few moments after he had vowed allegiance to him, we now profess our subjection to his authority, and soon we act as if we had forgotten that we had named his name. The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that we cannot do the things that we would. If we do not always dishonour God, do we always glorify him; if we do not forsake the truth, do we make its attainment our chief business? When we would do good, evil is present with us. Our affections and thoughts soon quit the best objects, and wander with the swiftness of the wind in pursuit of vanity. If we are at all preserved in the way of truth and of righteousness, we owe it not to ourselves, but to the grace of the eternal and unchanging God. Without this renewing and sanctifying grace, man is altogether mutable and inconstant, like the chaff which the wind driveth away. How foolish, then, is it to make man in any condition, even the most honourable and exalted, the object of that unreserved and entire trust which

should be placed in Him who inhabiteth eternity, and with whom there is no variableness, neither a shadow of turning. To do so, is voluntarily to choose the path of disappointment and misery; it is to forsake our own mercies, and to pierce ourselves through with many sorrows. "Thus saith the Lord; cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land, and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

Behold, then, in the eternity and immutability of Jehovah, the only foundation of safety to the righteous. This immutability in him is most absolute, and therefore, their backslidings and provocations, great and numerous as they are, cannot alter his gracious purpose towards them. It is, because he changes not, that they can place confidence in him at all times,—confidence in his power to accomplish what may seem incredible in the vastness of his promises,—in his wisdom to bring order out of what may seem to us the greatest intricacy—and in his goodness and mercy to communicate the immortal happiness to which the Gospel raises our hopes. To the unchangeableness of God we are directed to look for our security against

the possibility of disappointment. "I am the Lord; I change not; therefore, ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

III. The perfect immutability of God is quite compatible with the repentance and the other affections implying change, which are ascribed to him in scripture. Thus it is said, that when God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually, it repented him that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And repeatedly are we told in the sacred volume of God's repenting of good he had promised, and of the evil he had threatened, and of the work he had wrought. But God speaks thus in condescension to our weakness. For repentance, as it implies a change of mind, cannot belong to him who sees the end from the beginning, who is so wise that he cannot err, so holy that he cannot do evil, and whose certain foreknowledge of all possible occurrences secures him against surprise. The parts of the human body are ascribed to him, though he be purely spiritual,—and he is said to rend the heavens and come down, though to him who is everywhere and always the same, motion cannot belong—and he is represented as being angry, and as repenting, though the immutable perfection of his nature renders it impossible he should have passions like ours. To accommodate himself to our understanding, he clothes himself, as it were, with our nature, feels as we would feel, and speaks in our language. In our own expressions does he make known the infinite excellency and majesty of God, and direct our

attention to something in him faintly analogous to something in us.

All such expressions refer rather to the visible acts of his government in regard to his intelligent creatures, than to his own nature. Thus, when God is said to repent—to repent of having made man on the earth, while it implies the very strongest abhorrence of sin, it signifies a changing of his conduct from kindness to severity. His providence assumed an awful aspect towards mankind, and soon brought on them the deluge which destroyed the world of the ungodly. As we, when we repent, alter the course of our actions, so repentance in God does not imply any change of purpose, but an alteration of a threatening denounced, or the substitution of merited punishment, for abused kindness. When joy and grief, anger and repentance, are ascribed to God, we are to understand that the things declared to be the objects of joy and grief, anger and repentance, are of that nature, that if God were capable of our passions, he would feel and discover himself in such cases as we do. Thus, when the prophets mention the joys and applaudings of heaven, earth, and sea, of the mountains and the valleys, and the trees of the forest, they only signify that the things they speak of are so excellent, that the whole inanimate creation, if capable of joy, would express it on such an occasion: so would God have joy at the obedience, and feel grief at the disobedience of men, and repent of his kindness when abused, and of his punishment when men reform under it, were the majesty of his nature capable of such affections.

It is in this way that we are to understand God's

turning from the execution of a threatening denounced. Isaiah was sent with two messages to Hezekiah, the one reversing the other. His message was, when first sent, "Thus saith the Lord, set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live:" it was, when sent the second time, "Go, and say to Hezekiah, thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, and I have seen thy tears: behold I will add unto thy days fifteen years." The judgment threatened by Jonah against Nineveh, was in like manner arrested. But of these, and of all similar cases, it may be said, that the execution of the threatened judgment is conditional, whether the condition be fully expressed, or only understood. The rule which regulates the divine procedure, in the reversing either a threatening of evil, or a promise of good, is laid down by the prophet Jeremiah. "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and pull down, and destroy it; if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them." When a change takes place in man from good to evil, it is just in God not only to threaten, but to execute; and when he indicates a change from evil to good by repentance, the goodness of God averts the judgment. Let it be remarked, that the promises and threatenings of future good and misery are all absolute, and shall therefore

be surely fulfilled. There is' nothing conditional in the promise of eternal life to him that believeth ; and there is nothing conditional in the threatening of everlasting destruction to those who know not God, and who obey not the Gospel. He is unchangeable in his abhorrence of all sin, and in his love of holiness ; and towards every one who is not redeemed from all iniquity, that abhorrence and displeasure must unalterably and for ever be expressed.

IV. The eternity and immutability of God furnish ground and encouragement for his worship. Were he mutable, or capable of change, we could have little encouragement to pray to him. His unchangeableness is a pledge to us, that if he has at any time constituted prayer our duty, it is always a duty ; if he has said of himself that he is the hearer of prayer, he remains immutably its hearer and answerer. It is this attribute that peculiarly fits him to be the proper object of worship ; since we know that the same excellences, the same gracious purposes which he possessed formerly, he possesses now, and will possess for ever ; and whatever promises were at any time made to encourage our hopes, are as unalterable as if we heard them renewed at every approach to his throne. How erroneous, then, is it to suppose, that because God is immutable, we need not worship him, nor pray to him ; since good will surely come if he wills it, and since evil cannot be averted by all our supplications, if he has ordered it to fall upon us. We should not reason so absurdly in regard to a fellow-creature. Were a prince to make us a promise of some great good on the condition that we would often ask its

fulfilment, would we decline making the request because we knew the word of the prince to be like the laws of the Medes and Persians, unalterable? God has given us the promise of a rich variety of blessings, but then, it is on the condition that we make supplication for them; and if we comply with the condition, the unchangeableness of his nature renders it impossible we should miss the obtaining of the blessings. The immutability of his nature renders the rule according to which he bestows the good that we need, of unspeakable importance. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."

Prayer neither implies nor requires mutability in God, but only asks him to bestow that which he has immutably willed to bestow on those who will use the means for obtaining it. The unchangeableness of God is seen throughout nature in its fixed and permanent order; but this is so far from operating as a discouragement to the efforts of man, that it is a most powerful incentive to active and well-directed exertion. The sun will surely give his light, but we must open our eyes to see it; and it is the ordinance of heaven, that while the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease; but the husbandman will expect in vain to fill his barns without industry and continued attention. In like manner, God, in addition to a variety of other blessings, has promised through the Saviour, life everlasting; and he is immutable in

his promises, in his mercifulness, in his disposition to hear and to answer prayer; but yet these blessings cannot be obtained without prayer, and the use of the means which God has appointed. He is unchangeable in his willingness to do us good; but he is unchangeable also as to the way in which he bestows it; and we may take encouragement from his immutability to believe, that if we come to him in this way, he will give us more than we can either ask or think. He is the same now as when he blessed the Patriarchs and Prophets, as when he gave to the Apostles and early Christians the abundance of his grace; he is as willing to communicate to us as to them, and he has the same power to do so. The strength of Israel will not lie nor repent; for he is not a man that he should repent. We cannot ask too frequently, we cannot ask too largely, since he is unchangeable in his purpose to bestow the greatest blessings on sinful men through the atonement and the mediation of his own Son. His ways are not as our ways, neither are his thoughts like our thoughts, and therefore are the wicked exhorted and encouraged to return to the Lord who will have mercy upon them, and to our God who will abundantly pardon.

V. The eternity and immutability of God bear the most awful aspect towards impenitent sinners. The infinitude of all the divine perfections, and of the God against whom all sin is committed, gives to every transgression an inconceivable extent of guilt and of aggravation. It is an attempt to change the truth of God into a lie,—to sully all his perfections, and especially his immutability and eternity—and to act

towards him as if he were only of yesterday, and possessed no more than the being and the glory of a creature. Hence the infinite evil of sin, and the justice of God in awarding to it an eternal punishment. But is it not a fearful thing thus to fall into the hands of the living God? Is not the thought overwhelming, of making him our enemy, whose omnipotence and being are for ever the same, and whose eternity is the pledge of his hereafter punishing sinners? "For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me." He cannot change in his love of holiness, and in his hatred to sin, in his purpose to make life and happiness the accompaniment of the one, and misery and death the accompaniment of the other. It was his immutability that occasioned the expulsion of our first parents from Paradise when they had sinned—that made him in his love transfer the punishment of our guilt to his own Son, when he gave him up to death—that has caused him to denounce everlasting destruction against all who do not repent and believe the Gospel. How affecting is the evidence afforded us by the whole history of the world of the immutability of God in his purpose to oppose and to punish sin! When I look back to the desolations of other years and of remote generations—to the millions that the flood overwhelmed in a moment—to the multitudes whom the fire from heaven only hastened to the "worm that dieth not, and to the fire that cannot be quenched"—to the successive and sweeping judgments of the Almighty over

the face of an afflicted and miserable world—to the dark and mysterious providences which marked the long and pre-eminent sufferings of his own servants—to the vial of wrath that was poured on the chosen people, and which has rested upon them, and upon their children in all the lands into which they are carried captive;—when I look to the various forms of oppression, and want, and disease and death, in which human misery has been transmitted to us—the sum of wretchedness which exists over the earth—the numerous diseases, bodily and mental, which no human skill can remove;—when I think of the sufferings which no human eye has ever seen, and of the inexpressible agonies which no human tongue can ever tell—and when I consider that, amidst this overwhelming tide of sin and of suffering, there stands One pre-eminent in dignity and in innocence; who stands pre-eminent and alone in the extent and bitterness of his sufferings—who, though he traces his origin to heaven, and exercises the power of the invisible God, appears despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and who, because he became the substitute and the representative of sinners, is treated as though he were guilty:—when I consider all this, I have the most impressive and appalling evidence that “the wages of sin is death;” that it cannot go unpunished, and that no one can harden himself against God and prosper. The judgments which he has, therefore, threatened to execute on the unconverted sinner, hereafter, will surely be accomplished, though their execution were put off to the years of many generations. If scoffers walk after

their own lusts, and say, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation, we can reply, that to the God whose habitation is eternity, one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

Between the holy and immutable God and sinful men there can be no reconciliation, no communion, without a change. Can this change be effected in God? In that God, who shall fold up those heavens as a vesture, and who shall remain the same when the heavens and the earth shall pass away? No: this great, this universal change from sin to holiness—from darkness to light, must be produced in us, or, otherwise we shall be excluded from the fellowship and favour of God for ever. “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Marvel not that I said unto you, ye must be born again.” The immutability of God, impressed upon all his attributes, on all his laws, on the heavens and on the earth, proclaims that it is in *us*, not in *him*, that a change must be wrought,—and that from our hearts must be taken away their aversion to true holiness and to the happiness of pure and spiritual beings. If circumstances of awful solemnity alone could overcome this aversion to spiritual things—this thoughtless unconcern about death, and what lies beyond it, we might suppose that the ruins of former ages—the oblivion that has buried the generations that are past, and the rapidity with which time hastens us also to the land of silence,—the grandeur of the prospects which rise before us, and the nearness of the

eternity in which they are to be realized—we might suppose that circumstances such as these would make us feel and act like persons anxious for salvation and eternal life. But while day and night, and summer and winter, heaven and earth, are continually reminding us how nearly we are approaching to the tribunal of our almighty and immutable Judge, we still have too much reason to ask, “Who hath believed our report, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”

VI. The eternity and immutability of God give us confidence in the power and all-sufficiency of Christ. To him these awful and incommunicable attributes of the Deity belong; for he himself claims them, and they are repeatedly ascribed to him. To him the Apostle applies that passage from the Psalms which I have already quoted as affording an impressive view of the eternity, and unchangeableness of God. “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands; they shall perish, but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.” The eternity and immutability of Christ give ample security to the Church for her safety and her ultimate triumph in the midst of her enemies. Distant as the period may seem to us of her universal extension over the whole earth, he who is eternal will surely accomplish it;—he will fulfil the predictions

of his word regarding her latter-day glory,—he will make her the joy and the excellency of many generations. “Thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever, and thy remembrance unto all generations. Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come: for thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof. So the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth thy glory.”

CHAPTER V.

ON THE POWER AND DOMINION OF GOD.

WHAT is power? In answer to this question much has been written, and by men of the first talents. In general, it may be described as the efficient cause of any effect. All power is God's; and in him who is eternal and self-existing, and from whom whatever is has received its being, power must be unlimited. The power, which can call an insect from nothing into life, is really as incomprehensible to us as that which creates and suspends in space a thousand systems of revolving worlds. The effect in the one case, indeed, is more astonishing and magnificent; but in the other, it is not less referable to omnipotence. The will of the Creator is power. His will is the cause why any thing exists; and why it does not exist differently from what it is. His willing that to be accomplished which he knows best to be done is the sole cause of its performance. To say that God wills a world to be, is the same thing as to say, that God creates a world. He speaks, and it is done; he commands, and it stands fast. The Mosaic account of the creation of light is not more simple and sublime in description than it is conformable to unadorned truth. "God said, Let there be light; and there was light." He wills the creation of the universe, and the universe is created; he wills the preservation and continued existence of the universe, and the universe is preserved

and continued. “He removeth the mountains, and they know it not; he overturneth them in his anger. He commandeth the sun and it riseth not, and sealet up the stars. He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing. The pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof. So these are parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him? But the thunder of his power who can understand?”

The almighty power of God is that attribute of the divine nature which is most obvious to reason, and which, therefore, has been always acknowledged. To admit that God is the creator of all things, and to deny him the possession of unlimited power is contradictory. To him that made all things, must of course belong all the power which anywhere exists. There is no activity in any agent, no influence in any cause, but what depends on the principal agent, but what has proceeded from the first of causes. Can there be any bounds to his power, who performs all that he wills, and whose will cannot be resisted? He doth according to his will, in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him what doest thou. The Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back? We cannot conceive of such a power otherwise than as adequate to the creation of every possible existence. However splendid and magnificent are the effects which have already resulted from it, they are only as a drop of the bucket, or the small dust of the balance, in comparison of that which the Almighty can produce. His is a

mighty power, able to do above all that we can ask or think.

The infinity of the divine power may be argued from the infinity of the divine essence. Power in God is not any thing distinct from his nature, but is his nature or will acting in a certain way, doing whatever he pleases without difficulty and without resistance. It is only to aid our conceptions that revelation ascribes hands and arms to him; as we exert our power by such instruments; but his will is power; it executes without either matter to work upon, or means to work by; and his works stand forth when, and as, he wills them. Though the effect must be finite, the cause is infinite: it is co-eternal and extensive as the essence and being of God. As his power is not any thing different from himself, but is his own will acting according to the boundless perfection of his nature; and as he is everywhere, and always the same, his power is of course everywhere and always infinite.

If we only bear in mind, that power in God is power in a Being of infinite perfection, exercised in union with absolute wisdom and goodness, we shall feel no difficulty in deciding in what sense, and with what limitations, divine omnipotence is to be understood. It reaches to the limit of possibility; but it cannot go beyond it without involving a contradiction. What the measure of possibility is we know not. According to some, it is our power of conceivableness. But it may be asked, are there not many things possible and true, respecting which it may be said, that it never entered into the heart of man to conceive; and which, if proposed for our consideration, might seem

inconceivable and incredible? Are there not many facts which the philosopher knows to be true, that are above the conceptions of a common mind, and which to such a mind must seem incredible and impossible? If we received the maxim as true, and as the rule of our belief, that conceivableness is the measure of possibility, ought we not to reject as absurd whatever is beyond our reason, and to believe that what we cannot comprehend must be incomprehensible and impossible. If some have gone too far in darkening the light of reason from a mistaken view of doing honour to revelation, we must beware of going to the opposite extreme: if we are not to admit what is obviously repugnant to the first principles of reason, we are not, therefore, to set up reason as an infallible standard of what is possible or impossible, of what is true and false.

But though our conceivableness cannot be the limit of the divine power, as it cannot be the limit of any of the other attributes of God, yet we are sure that this power cannot perform what is in itself contradictory; such as to make any thing to be, and not to be at the same time, and that a whole may be no greater than one of its parts;—we are sure it cannot do this, because the supposition is in itself, and independently of our conceptions, absurd. It is equally impossible for God to do any thing unsuited or opposed to his moral perfections. He cannot lie,—he cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man,—he cannot act or conduct his government without a constant regard to the wisdom and righteousness of his nature. He who is infinitely perfect cannot do

any thing from caprice, cannot do any thing but what has reason and right for its support, cannot exercise his power but in harmony with the adorable perfections of his nature. While he is excellent in power, he is excellent also in judgment, and in plenty of justice.

It may be useful to consider, further, the displays which God has given of his power, that our convictions of its greatness may be deepened. And let us consider,

I. The wonderful manifestation of it in the creation of all things. How vast and incomprehensible must be the power that “made the heavens, and all the hosts of them, the earth and all things that are therein, the sea and all that therein is!” Let us look attentively to the innumerable things that are made, and we cannot fail to believe that God can do infinitely more than he hath done, or will do. “Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.” Some of the ancient philosophers, while they proposed to believe in the existence and eternity of one supreme God, contended, at the same time, that matter was also eternal;—and that the power of the Deity was shewn, not in calling into being that which formerly was not, but in arranging and beautifying the materials which were already in existence. But we, whose reason is enlightened by the light of revelation, must at once see that this notion is irreconcilable with the full admission of the self-existence and infinite perfection of the divine nature. We know

that we ourselves had a beginning ; and we can believe that He by whose power we have been so fearfully and wonderfully made, could as easily give to matter also its beginning.

The creation of all things from nothing is in Scripture declared to be the prerogative of God : a prerogative by which he is distinguished from all pretended deities. “ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” He is great above all gods ; for he hath done whatsoever he pleased in heaven and in earth. The prophet Jeremiah speaking of the vanity of idols, says ; “ Be not afraid of them ; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good—But the Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king.—The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion.”

The operation of secondary causes we fancy we can more easily understand than the act of creative power which brings a world from nothing into being. We are familiar with the wonderful effects resulting from the influence of bodies on each other both at a distance, and in immediate contact. We know the astonishing works that are produced by the ingenuity of man. But in all these there is nothing at all analogous to the creative act of omnipotence.

Behold the greatness of the divine power in the innumerable variety of things to which it at once gave being. ! It formed them, not out of any pre-existent

matter, but from nothing. In an instant it produced beings, and endued them with different natures, different powers, different capacities of enjoyment, and appointed them for different uses. The omnipotence of God formed and lighted up the sun which we behold, and millions of suns, at an immeasurable distance from us, to give light and warmth to revolving worlds. By the same almighty power he made the earth on which we dwell, and adorned it with hills and valleys, and rocks, and seas, and flowers. He made it in beauty and in fruitfulness for to be a fit habitation of the innumerable tribes of living creatures, who were in uninterrupted succession to possess it. These he formed of different sizes, some immensely large, others invisibly minute; with bodies adapted in their organization to the elements in which they live, and to their different kinds of food; but all subservient, though in various ways, to the use and the pleasure of man. He surrounded every part of the globe with the air we breathe, which is necessary to the existence of animal and vegetable life, composed of two elastic fluids, united in a definite and exact proportion: a proportion so precisely suited to those for whose respiration it was intended, that any difference in the quantity of either ingredient would prove injurious or destructive. The same air which supplies life and health to the human race, is equally and alone salubrious to every other race of animals. That portion of it which is expired from the lungs, after having performed its service, though insalubrious to man, affords grateful nourishment to the plants by which he is surrounded; according to which provision

nothing is lost, and the constant purity of the atmospheric air preserved.

It was after the parts of the visible creation were thus formed, that God said “ Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness ;—so God created man in his own image ; in the image of God created he him ; male and female created he them.” How wonderfully is the omnipotence of God displayed in creating and in fashioning the human body ; but how much more impressively is it shewn in forming the soul, with powers of understanding, memory, imagination, and will—with a capacity to receive true knowledge, and a disposition to relish and retain it—with a judgment free from any corrupt bias, a will disposed to obedience, and with affections regulated in regard to objects according to their real excellency. Thus did man proceed from the hand of the Creator, in the possession of natural, rational, and spiritual life, exhibiting in himself, and still exhibiting though fallen, in the successive myriads of his offspring, the mighty power of God. The power that has made each of us capable of receiving enjoyment in such a variety of ways, has given, and continues to give, from age to age, the same capability to each of the family of mankind ;—and has communicated it in a much higher degree to angels, and to the different orders of intelligences, who occupy the several portions of the universe. Extend your thoughts to the innumerable worlds that God has made, far surpassing this in beauty and in fruitfulness, moved by his hand through the measureless void of space, and all peopled by intelligent beings, who proclaim in the excellency and happiness which they

enjoy, the Creator's praise,—think of them only as possessing that of which we are conscious in ourselves, a living principle of thought, and activity, and feeling, which according to its own emotions clothes the heavens with light or with darkness, and which whether it be in the human face divine, or in the written record of its operations, awakens a more lively interest than all the glories of that universe in which we are placed,—think of the power that called these spirits into being, and that gives an individual and immortal existence to each, and then are you prepared for uniting with these celestial inhabitants in the acknowledgment: “Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty: thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

This mighty power is seen in the creation of every thing, of an atom, an insect, a world, a system of worlds, in universe succeeding universe to an endless extent; but it appears to me more gloriously displayed in the creation of the human soul, by which alone we are capable of considering the heavens as the work of God's fingers; the moon and the stars which he has ordained, and of saying in admiration of his condescension, “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” Without this living soul, what were all nature but a blank—the form which brute unconscious matter wears,—and in which we should be incapable of discerning the eternal power and godhead of the Creator? What were an universe of matter but shapeless mag-

nitude, without the Living Spirit of such a Being to beautify and arrange it, or without the existence of intelligences capable of deriving pleasure from the view of its varied aspects of grandeur, and loveliness, and sublimity? Such intelligent creatures did God make in angels and in men, and he has shewn the greatness of his power, not only by the faculties which he has given them, but by also rendering them capable of increasing improvement through eternity.

Omnipotence is also shewn in the manner in which all things were made. If we are astonished at the magnitude of its effects, our admiration will be increased by contemplating the ease with which they were produced. God created all things by an act of his will: by the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them. He called those things which were not, and they came forth into his presence in the form, and in the variety, which accorded with his wisdom and his will. At the same instant, and with the same ease, were the heavens and the earth, things visible and invisible, made. The Almighty, after creating this world, occupied six days in arranging it for the abode of man, that we might learn from hence to note more carefully the glories displayed in each successive period, and so minutely to survey the wonders of divine power rising progressively superior to all that went before, that we might be suitably affected with admiring gratitude. But when he uttered the command, every thing obeyed his call. He said, "Let there be light;" and the light surrounded the world. "The waters retired to their place; the dry land appeared; the mountains rose; the heavens

were garnished ; living creatures, with their different qualities, clothing, and faculties, came into being ; and he from whose will the whole proceeded with equal ease, saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good."

Lo these are parts of his ways ; but how little a portion is heard of him ? The thunder of his power who can understand ? How great must that power be which is the source of all the being, of all the activity, which any where exist, and which is of course far superior to the power that has proceeded from it ! Do we behold power impressed on every object and element around us—the sun sending forth his influences to communicate light, and warmth, and fruitfulness,—the smallest seed growing into so large a tree that the fowls of heaven may lodge in its branches,—the inferior animals in their degrees possessing strength, and capable of progressive motion,—man with an understanding that enables him to measure the heavens, and to navigate the globe, and to be the blessing or the curse of his race through many generations,—and are we told that there are created beings of a still higher order, angels who excel in strength,—and how can we form a conception of the omnipotence of God, who has united in himself all the power which exists separately in the creatures ? All the strength which is in the elements, and that also which is in the creatures, are only streams from him who is the fountain. But if all the strength of all substances and beings were united—if the power of all angels, of all men, of the whole universe, were in one person, how far would the extent of his power still surpass our comprehension !

Yet, this would give us but an imperfect notion of the omnipotence of God ; since all that he has made, is as nothing before him, and is counted to him less than nothing and vanity. The things that are made are so far from being the measure of his power, that they do not bear a fractional proportion to what he is able to make. And what is all the power existing separately throughout the universe, though united, to the almighty strength of his arm, who can remove the creation by his word into non-existence, and restore the whole of that space which he fills, to the same state in which it was before the heavens and the earth were made? “ To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.”

II. The omnipotence of God is shewn by his upholding and governing all things. In these his power is as impressively displayed as in the original act of creation. His power, in whatever way it is exercised, whether in creating or in governing, is accompanied with all the perfections of his nature. Among men it is possible for a powerful prince to lack wisdom ; and for a poor man in his cottage to have prudence to advise, while he wants power to execute. But the exercise of one attribute in God, who is infinitely perfect, is accompanied with the exercise of all that is requisite to the end for which it is employed.

In no way, perhaps, is the power of God more visibly displayed than in preservation. Hence the admiration of the Psalmist : “ O Lord, thou preservest man and beast. How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God ! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.” The preser-

vation of all things by divine power, if not a continued act of creation, is not less wonderful, since every thing would return to its state of original nothingness, if not upheld by omnipotence. The creature depends as much upon God for the preservation of its being as it did for its creation. Nothing more is necessary for its annihilation than the withholding of the divine influence. While this supporting influence is continued, we live and move, and have our being; when it is withdrawn, we decay and dissolve. "Thou hidest thy face, and they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust." Now, when we consider what it is to preserve in life a single creature during many years—what it is to renew and regulate the motion of the lungs and the heart,—what it is to make the earth continue its fruitfulness, so as to produce food for the sustenance of life—and when we further consider, that the power which is requisite in regard to one individual, is actually employed in ministering to a corresponding extent to the unnumbered millions over the earth;—that it is performing the same offices for all the living beings that people the wide dominion of God—that it alike directs the rapid revolutions of suns and systems, and the slower motion of rivers in their course, of clouds in the air, and of every drop of rain, have we not ample reason for admiring and adoring the omnipotence of God,—the wonder-working hand, that, in majestic silence, sways at will the mighty movements of unbounded nature? Are we not every moment sustained and surrounded by an interposing power, as great in itself, and proceeding as

much from God, as that which has been displayed by the most stupendous miracles? How soon would the elements devour us, but for the restraint, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther!" What is there in the earth we tread to give us corn, but for the ever-present power of the Deity to give efficacy to his own appointment? What is there in herbs, or in other substances, to heal us, if God had not infused into them a medicinal virtue? Is it not his power as manifestly as if exercised by miraculous interposition, that gives us life, and breath, and all things?

But further, the same power is obvious in his moral government. This is in itself a wonderful display of his omnipotence: as it shews that with him is strength and wisdom; that the deceived and the deceiver are his; that he leadeth princes away spoiled, and overthroweth the mighty; that he removeth away the speech of the trusty, and taketh away the understanding of the aged. What idea can we form of the mighty power that restrains the passions of those evil spirits who have opposed themselves to the government and purposes of God? The hints given us in scripture of their strength individually, of their strength collectively, of their number, their malice, their unceasing efforts to injure and destroy mankind, may teach us the greatness of that power which preserves us in the midst of such enemies. Nor is this restraining power in regard to the corruption of men less visibly displayed. This corruption is in all the children of Adam from the womb; "for man drinks iniquity like water,—his mouth is full of cursing and bitterness, and his feet are swift to shed blood." If this corruption could have its

natural course, how soon would it sweep before it all that makes man like him that made him, and triumph over the earth in its unbridled licentiousness and fury! But like the floods, when they lift up their voice, it is restrained by the Lord on high, who is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.

How wonderful is that power that is at the same moment present with all the intelligent creatures, whether good or bad, in the wide universe;—that restrains the passion of wicked men, and fallen spirits, and makes their devices further his own glory—and that frustrates their purposes, or turns their hearts like the rivers of water. And that our minds might be more impressed with the exhibition of this power in the moral government of the world, it has often miraculously interposed for the punishment of the wicked, for the protection of the righteous, and the vindication of divine holiness and truth. It has shewn that the energy which it has communicated to all the beings and elements in nature, it can arrest and control. The sun which moves swifter and further in one hour than a cannon-ball in five thousand, it has suspended. Fire, the most devouring element, it deprived of its consuming quality, both in the case of the three children, and that of the burning bush. By a word or a touch, the blind were made to see, the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, the dead were raised. At the command of God, the sea opened up to afford deliverance, and returned for the purpose of destruction. In one case he called for rain, and the waters poured themselves on the face of the earth, till the highest mountains were

covered: in another case, he commanded fire to descend from heaven on the cities of the plain, to turn them into ashes, and make them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly. Thus hath he shewn, both by special and ordinary interposition, “strength with his arm, and scattered the proud in the imaginations of their heart; he hath put down the mighty from their seat, and exalted them of low degree.”

Could any thing further increase our admiration of this mighty power, it would be, that it gives no indication of diminution or decay. The system of nature, so varied, so complicated, which it at first created, it has during thousands of years preserved; and will continue to preserve, with the same beauty, and life, and regularity, till the appointed period of its dissolution arrives. At that period the changes which it will undergo will furnish fresh manifestations of the omnipotence of God. “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God:—then the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up.” Behold, then, in the magnitude of the universe, in its original creation from nothing, in the force and motion communicated to its several parts, in the fruitfulness and life of which it is full, and in its preservation without effort through unnumbered generations,—behold the mighty power of God! “Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?”

I shall here omit noticing the power of God as displayed in the work of redemption—in the mysterious constitution of the Redeemer's person,—in the propagation of the Gospel in the face of opposition, and by unlikely means and instruments,—in converting, pardoning, and preserving the soul unto life everlasting. I remark,

I. That we learn from the doctrine that has been stated, that the omnipotence of God is the almighty power of a Being who is perfectly free and independent. Power of acting in him does not proceed from necessity, but is accompanied with intelligence and free agency, and is exercised with the most absolute liberty. If the Divine Being be self-existent, he is necessarily eternal and omnipresent; if he be eternal and omnipresent, he is infinitely intelligent, powerful, and wise; and if, in consequence of his necessary existence, he possesses the attributes of eternity, omnipresence, omniscience, wisdom, power, and volition, it follows that he is the only independent Being in the universe, and as such, is a Being perfectly free. But for his will, there never would have been any thing in being but himself; and his omnipotent will, because it has given existence to the universe, can have no other restraint, than what may be supposed to proceed from the infinite wisdom and goodness to which it is allied, and by which it is regulated. As there is nothing which his power cannot accomplish, as nothing can resist his power, nothing can ever deprive him of what he is, or hinder his happiness. His all-sufficiency is in himself, without limit, without origin, and without end. Whatsoever he pleases must

come to pass, just because he wills it. His counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. At the head of this fair creation of almighty power he sits enthroned, the creator of all things, the only fountain of being and of blessedness, the only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords ; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto ; whom no man hath seen, nor can see : to whom be honour and power everlasting, Amen.

· II. The omnipotence of God affords ample security for the fulfilment of all his promises. These are numerous and various, as they are adapted to the different circumstances of our being in time and in eternity ; and divine power is necessary to the accomplishment of the least of them : but there are some, which, because they refer to events the greatest and most extraordinary, seem to human reason incredible. We feel less difficulty in believing that omnipotence does make all things work together for good to them that love God—that it can easily prevent either “ death or life, or angels, or principalities, or powers, or things present, or things to come, or height, or depth, or any other creature, from being able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord ;”—we feel less difficulty in believing, that the soul, when renewed, pardoned, and impressed with the lovely image of God, shall be admitted into glory and happiness, the extent and the duration of which it hath not entered into the heart to conceive, than that the body, after its dissolution into dust, and after its dust has been far separated, and mingled with other substances, should be raised to life and beauty. Con-

cerning a subject so incomprehensible to our understanding, how natural is it to ask, how are the dead raised, and with what body do they rise? Can bodies that have mouldered away into multitude of atoms; that have been resolved into the elements; have passed through varieties of changes; have sometimes assumed the form of vapour in the clouds, or of plants on the earth; have been scattered by the winds, and carried into places far distant;—can they again be brought together, and restored to their former consistency?—To this inquiry our reply is, nothing is impossible to God. Why, therefore, should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?

Viewing the promise of God, and looking to his omnipotence to give it effect, we believe that there will be a resurrection both of the just and the unjust. To remove our doubts, and to deepen our convictions, let us often look to what this mighty power has already accomplished;—to the universe, clothed with beauty, as it rose from nothing into being at its call,—and to its continued preservation with all the races of living creatures which it contains. Can it be conceived more difficult for omnipotence to repair that which has been, to collect the scattered particles of which the human body is composed, and to unite them in their former consistency, and with far more than their former life and beauty,—can this be conceived more difficult, than to create the dust of the earth, and out of this dust to make a body with flesh and bones, such as we possess? To him who willed the universe into being, it is easy to do that which to human reason seems impossible—to make the dead hear his voice, and come forth. That

he will do so, we have the earnest and the pledge in the resurrection of Christ; and to this he has added the declaration of his word. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." Since the mighty power of God shall accomplish promises so wonderful, we may securely trust to it for the fulfilment of such as relate to the most unbounded happiness, in that new heaven and new earth, hereafter to be prepared. Of his willingness we cannot doubt, since he spared not his own Son, but gave him up to the death for us all; and surely we need not question his strength, since our own being proves it, and shews that he can fulfil his word, and do to us more than we can either ask or think. It follows,

III. That the omnipotence of God is a constant source of strength and of rejoicing to those who love and fear him. The God whose attribute it is, and who gives such astonishing displays of it, is their God for ever and ever; and, therefore, they may say concerning him, "In Jehovah have we righteousness and strength." To the christian, all the varied scenes of nature, all the effects of divine power, may be contemplated with joy, as the operation of his Father's hand, and as suggesting to him an inheritance still more lovely, and still more peculiarly his own.

He looks abroad into the varied field
Of nature, and, though poor, perhaps, compared

With those whose mansions glitter in his sight,
Calls the delightful scenery all his own.
His are the mountains, and the valleys his,
And the resplendent rivers. His to enjoy
With a propriety that none can feel,
But who, with filial confidence inspir'd,
Can lift to heaven an unpresumptuous eye,
And smiling say, My Father made them all.

In all his afflictions and distresses he has recourse to the omnipotence of God, to which the righteous always run and find safety. This is his present help in every time of trouble : his help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth. In the midst of enemies and temptations which would otherwise prove far too successful against him, it is his privilege to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. And with that power around him which commanded the light to shine out of darkness, which called all things into being, which is in all, and above all, what resistance may not he surmount, what strong hold may not he pull down, what enemy either within or without may not he overcome? Who, or what, shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. Why should we not humbly but confidently believe that we shall be holden up, since God is able to make us stand? What reason have we to trust and to rejoice in that omnipotence that brings to our aid the kind and measure of help which we require—that brings a fulness of mercy to succour us, and infinite wisdom to guide us, and that gives to the promises of un-

changing truth their utmost fulfilment? Whatever be the trials or the darkness through which we are called to pass, let us not entertain a doubt of its sufficiency in due time to relieve us; but rather let us believe with the heroic sufferers of other times, that our God whom we serve is able to deliver us. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you. Let your faith acquire strength by resting continually on the omnipotency of God, and let it thus encourage you to corresponding zeal and perseverance in the path of duty, to a noble elevation above the fear of man, who has no power but what is given him from above, and to a firmer reliance on the Almighty God who performs all things for you. Seek unto God, and unto God commit your cause; who doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number.

IV. The omnipotence of God, more perhaps than any of the divine perfections, presents to the ungodly and the sinner an object of terror. It is because this mighty power is not fully contemplated, is not really believed in, that it is so much disregarded and contemned in the world. Though preserved by it every moment, how insensible are they to its existence, how apt are they to abuse it, and how prone to trust in themselves or in their fellow-creatures, rather than in it! But there are moments even on earth, when the slumbers of the conscience are disturbed, when the arm of God is revealed, and when the sinner, trembling and astonished, asks, Will he plead against me with his great power? When the soul is thus

awakened, the slightest consideration of omnipotence will impress it with the conviction that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. The wrath and omnipotence of God give to eternity an awfulness which it is impossible for the mind fully to contemplate. But these are the attributes which are to be exhibited for ever in that place where the wicked shall have their portion. And who knoweth the power of his anger? Who can tell what it is when the omnipotence that planned and built the heavens, begins to punish? "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker. Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. There is no darkness or shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves from his sight." How overwhelming the thought, that to all such there is a period approaching when the strength of numbers, when the confidence of human power, when all the distinctions of earth will disappear, and when no other covering but their sins shall come between them and the omnipotence of Him who sits upon the throne! Should not the consideration of this mighty power awaken your anxieties, and lead you now to seek reconciliation with him who would rather exercise it in fitting you as vessels of mercy unto glory, than in displaying it in your just condemnation and punishment. Of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do, you have no cause to be afraid; but I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: fear him, which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him:

CHAPTER VI.

THE WISDOM OF GOD.

WISDOM consists in the pursuit of a good end, by the use of the best means. It therefore requires both benevolence and knowledge; and the combined exercise of both these attributes is essential to the existence of wisdom. There may be knowledge without wisdom, because knowledge is the mere apprehension of the understanding; and there may be benevolence without wisdom, because benevolence merely regards the rectitude of the will and the intention; but in wisdom, the understanding and the heart, the intellectual and active powers, are united.

The power, the omniscience, the goodness of God being infinite, it follows that his wisdom also must be infinite. He alone is originally, and perfectly, and unchangeably, the only wise God. The highest created beings, however exalted in intelligence, and upright in their designs, may err in their counsels, and may come short of what they aim at; but he, because he knows all things, and can accomplish all things, must always compass his end. There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord. The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, "Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand. For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it; and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?"

The proofs of the infinitude of the divine wisdom are so numerous, so striking in nature, and in providence, and in grace, as to render any thing like a full survey of them impracticable. But a few of the more remarkable examples are sufficient for deepening our convictions, and for enabling us to say with a grateful and admiring heart, How manifold are thy works, O Lord—in wisdom hast thou made them all!

Before looking over the works of the Creator for proofs of the perfection of his wisdom, we must previously fix in our minds the test by which we are accustomed to judge of the highest efforts of wisdom in man. That theory we regard as the best which accounts for the phenomena it treats of by the fewest possible principles; and that practical art we consider as coming nearest to perfection which attains the end proposed by the least complicated means. This is our standard of judging in estimating the wisdom of man: let us by the same standard examine the wisdom of God.

In so far as science has made us acquainted with that universal system of which our world forms only a part, we find the greatest variety produced by means the most perfectly simple. The single principle of gravitation determines the planets in their orbits, and the descent of bodies to the ground. The sun, in consequence of this principle, and of its being luminous, communicates to the bodies which surround it, motion, light, heat, regularity, and harmony; and to their inhabitants, food and raiment, usefulness, activity, and enjoyment. To this principle, occasioning the annual circuit of the earth, we owe the revolution of the

seasons, summer and winter, seed-time and harvest ; and we all know that it is by means of this revolution that God opens his hand, and satisfies the wants of every living thing. To the same principle of gravitation, producing the diurnal rotation of the earth, we are indebted for the vicissitude of day and night,—a vicissitude by which man enjoys alternate seasons for pursuing the business of life, and for furnishing himself with refreshment and repose. It is gravitation that retains together the different parts of our globe;—that prevents the sea from leaving its channel and overflowing the land,—that forms the chief cause in raising water in the form of vapour to the clouds, and in returning it to the earth as rain, to render that fertility universal which would otherwise be extremely limited. Thus, the single principle, whose governing influence extends to all worlds, is the means of attaining such numerous and important ends in our own ; and which, as a means, is the cause of diversifying a few elements into the endless variety of beautiful forms which the world and the things in it are constantly assuming.

The same perfect simplicity is observable in the provision which is made for the continued existence of the animal and vegetable world. The air we breathe, and without a supply of which animal life cannot exist, is composed of elastic fluids, so exactly proportioned, that a difference in the quantity would prove injurious. This air also, in some of its proportions, is essential to afford nourishment to the plants which surround us ; is necessary to the combustion of the fuel from which we receive

so much warmth, and which, in a variety of ways, ministers to our enjoyment. The same elastic fluids which form the atmospheric air, are, in a different state of composition, the chief constituents of water; and thus, in different forms and proportions, supply the principal wants of the animal and vegetable world. Nor is any portion of the air by which so many effects are produced, lost in the production of these effects. The original mandate of the Creator has provided that by various natural processes, a constant equilibrium shall be preserved, so that from age to age, till all the purposes for which the earth is sustained are completed, the same ends will be accomplished by the very same agency.

Again: how numerous and beneficial are the purposes accomplished by means of water alone. In the form of mists and of clouds it is the source of varied beauty and of universal fertility. Water furnishes nourishment to all vegetable and animal bodies, and is the chief component part of them. It furnishes the means of easy and frequent communication between countries the most widely separated from each other. While it performs many other purposes, it is an essential material in most of the processes that are necessary to the health and the sustenance of man.

The slightest survey of the constitution of the natural world will convince us that all the purposes required to render it a habitable system, are attained by the simplest conceivable means. Our admiration of this comprehensive wisdom will be heightened when we consider the unceasing variety, which, by means so simple, is continued in the Creator's works. Of the

myriads of beings by which the world is ever peopled, and of the events that are constantly taking place around us, perhaps no two are perfectly similar. A diversity is seen in the leaves of trees, in the blades of grass, and in all the productions of the mineral, the vegetable, and the animal kingdoms. For beneficial purposes, this variety obtains in the human race, and is shewn in the countenance, the figure, the voice, the handwriting of man. This endless diversity which the hand of the Creator produces without, gratifies that love of novelty and desire of knowledge which by the same hand are awakened within ; while it furnishes the means of distinguishing between one individual and another, which is so necessary to the order of society.

The wisdom which, for these and many other important ends, has produced this endless variety, has, at the same time, and for ends not less beneficial, produced certain kinds and degrees of resemblance. It is in virtue of this resemblance which so universally prevails, that we are enabled to arrange all the objects of knowledge into kinds and classes ; and to arrive at those general truths in which, by means of one proposition, we express our judgment concerning the properties of innumerable individuals. There is a prospective, provision in nature to accelerate the progress of reason and knowledge. But for this provision, we should always remain conversant with individual things only ; that is, we should always remain as children, and incapable of reaping great advantage from the experience of former generations. In place of being able, as we now are, of pronouncing concerning any new object that is presented to us to

what class it belongs, and of thus deciding at once as to its qualities, we should, had the resemblances which pervade the system been entirely wanting, be under the necessity of examining separately the nature and properties of every individual thing. With the faculty of reason, mankind would thus be deprived of the principal means of its improvement; and must remain in ignorance of the nature, the qualities, and uses of by far the greater number of the objects which surround us. Thus, by means of diversity on the one hand, and of uniformity on the other, the most varied and beneficial purposes are attained, and a foundation is laid for that endless progress in intellectual improvement to which immortal man is destined.

It would be improper not to notice how greatly the attainment of this end is facilitated, and other useful designs accomplished, by the communication of language to mankind. The resemblances and uniformity in nature by which we are enabled to arrange and classify objects would be of little use, had we not words to express them when thus classified. The words, accordingly, which we so easily acquire when children, are those that denote all the individuals of a kind or class; and thus, by means of a few terms, are we able to express correct judgments concerning an infinity of beings and events. Who does not see, that it was the same comprehensive wisdom which devised the admirable provision in nature to which I have alluded, that endowed man with the gift of language, by which he is rendered capable of turning this provision into its highest use,—the perfection of human reason and the progressive and boundless ac-

cumulation of human knowledge. How varied and important are the other designs, which immediately or remotely connected with this, the single instrument of language is the means of accomplishing! It is this which enables us to make known to each other our thoughts, and emotions, and designs; to treasure up the results of our experience and observation for the benefit of posterity; and it is this which constitutes the medium through which the blessings, temporal or spiritual, enjoyed by any people, become the common property of mankind.

The same simplicity of means is further observable in the provision which has been made to ensure the progressive improvement of the human race in reason and in virtue. On the supposition that man in every situation is endowed with the faculty of improveable reason,—that this, in fact, chiefly distinguishes him from the inferior animals,—ought we not to expect that he would be placed by the Creator in circumstances favourable to its exercise and developement. Man is certainly not entitled to that pre-eminence which he holds over the other inhabitants of this lower world, in consequence of what he is as he is born, but of what he is capable of becoming. The same faculties which the philosopher by exercise has so highly improved, and which are in him susceptible of higher and of indefinite improvement, exist latent in the helpless infant, and in the roaming savage. But for what other purpose has this noble gift been conferred, than that it should by exercise be matured and enlarged? And it cannot be that this maturity should by the comprehensive wisdom of the Creator

be ensured to it with a view to this world alone. The powers and capacities of man furnish a presumptive argument for his being formed for a future, a more glorious, and a never-ending state of living. This anticipation has been confirmed by the Saviour, who has abolished death, and has brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel.

Now, these being the ends which God has evidently in view by the present life of man, namely, the progressive improvement of all his powers, whether intellectual or moral, and his being furnished with a course of discipline preparatory to that higher life which awaits him,—the question is, in judging of the divine wisdom, what are the means by which these ends are attained? Unless we keep in view the object which the skill of any contrivance is designed to effect, we may mistake the wisest arrangements for disorder. We must, therefore, estimate the skill of the Supreme contriver, not from any opinion which we might be led to form of the circumstances of man, considered as an inhabitant merely of this world, but from the influence which these circumstances are calculated to have in developing his powers, in exercising his virtues, in displaying his character, and in making him meet for the glories and happiness of eternity. And from what we have seen of the Creator's wisdom in the constitution of the natural world, we might expect that the order of things thus required, would be effectually secured by laws simple and comprehensive. This accordingly is the case.

The circumstances requisite for maturing the powers, and for exercising the virtues of man, are

secured chiefly by that inequality of condition, which, by the operation of a single law, is the inevitable lot of mankind. It is superfluous to prove that this lot is inevitable, or to point out the law, universal in its operation, from which it so surely and permanently proceeds. But it may be useful briefly to shew the way in which an inequality of rank and of fortune, and its collateral effects, operate in attaining the great ends which God has so manifestly in view in regard to man. These ends are in themselves worthy of the divine beneficence; and if we find that the contrivance by which these ends are attained is simple but comprehensive, and most aptly suited to the object in view, we are entitled to give to it the admiration due to infinite wisdom.

We are to judge of the aptitude or inaptitude of any given circumstances to accomplish these designs, not by our own previous conjectures concerning them, but by recorded experience and observation. It is from this recorded experience and observation that we maintain that the inequality of rank and of fortune which the providence of God has rendered inevitable, is most aptly suited to awaken the mental energies, and to accelerate the intellectual improvement of man. Scarcely is there any people found in a state of absolute equality, except the American Indians, and in them we see human beings little elevated above the inferior animals, and whose highest enjoyment consists in indolent repose. Under a climate which would overspread them with plenty, they are often suffering the misery of scarcity and want. Nor do they learn from the experience of former distress to use measures

to prevent future evil. In them the active and intellectual spirit of man is dormant; and one of the most marked characteristics of its activity, curiosity, is totally wanting. Traverse the globe, and the nearer you find any people approach to equality of rank and condition, the less are the faculties of the human mind developed or exercised; and the reason is obvious. Every stimulus, and especially the stimulus of a living example of successful industry, so necessary to overcome the natural apathy and indolence of human nature, is wanting. But when a division of property is introduced, and the law is established, that whatever each may obtain by his labour or his skill shall be exclusively his own, a powerful excitement is given to industry; and with industry reason will be exercised, and intelligence advanced; and industry and intelligence will in their turn give rise to literature and refinement, and to all the arts which either adorn human life, or minister to its enjoyment. Thus, what we might fancy prior to experience to be an evil, namely, the inequality of rank and condition, turns out to be a means wisely adapted by Providence for exercising and enlarging the powers and capacities of man as a rational being.

But that which is favourable to the progress of intelligence furnishes, at the same time, to man the means of moral discipline, and of improvement in virtue. Though it were possible to reduce all conditions to a state of perfect equality, we should only remove the great occasions and incentives to virtue, without any corresponding deduction on the score of vice*. It is

* See Sumner on the Records of the Creation, vol. ii.

by multiplying the relations, and diversifying the circumstances of man, that we multiply the motives to virtue, and raise him in the same proportion in the scale of moral agency and of accountable beings. His principles are invigorated, and his character, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is formed, not in a state of stagnant repose, but in situations that awaken his energies, which exercise his judgment and prudence, which try his fidelity and uprightness, which place the temptation before him, but which, by a powerful motive, prevent him from yielding to its influence. Judging from the experience of mankind, we must believe, that it is in such circumstances alone that either the social or the spiritual virtues of man are exercised and matured; and that it is in them the brightest ornaments of humanity, whether in the heathen or Christian world, have appeared and shone.

If such be the effects which the inequality of rank and of condition is most fitly calculated to produce on the intellectual and moral history of mankind, we may expect that this inequality will accompany the progress of the race,—that an ordinance of Heaven, simple but comprehensive, will secure its permanency, and place it beyond the reach of human efforts to prevent. It is unnecessary to say that this is actually the case. By the operation of a single law, those circumstances are maintained over the world, into the midst of which man is placed as soon as he is born, which tend to develope and to fix his character, to furnish him with constant occasions to exercise his faculties, both intellectual and moral, and which form the discipline, often painful though salutary, designed to make him

meet for his true and immortal destination. Who can witness effects so varied and so important,—effects which remain in that unseen and never-ending existence of which man is heir,—resulting from the operation, not of a complicated and cumbersome contrivance, but of the mandate of heaven accomplished by a single law,—who can witness effects such as these, and by means so simple, without admiring the infinite wisdom of God?

But after all, it will be said, that man is guilty and depraved; and requires something to make him meet for eternity, which no outward circumstances can effect. And it is to the admirable contrivance which infinite wisdom has devised for expiating his guilt, and for renewing his nature, that I would now direct the attention of my readers. This is fitly denominated hidden wisdom, and wisdom in a mystery, on account of its surpassing excellency, and because it cannot be fully comprehended by any created being. Till revealed, we could not have conceived it; and now that it is made known by the Gospel, how little of it can we understand! It is the manifold wisdom of God, embracing in itself a variety of counsels, employing the most wonderful means, securing the attainment of the most glorious and excellent ends, and necessarily involving in the fulfilment of these ends the eternal salvation of man.

How gloriously is the wisdom of God displayed in the work of redemption, by devising a way in which interests apparently irreconcilable are made to unite! The honour of God seemed to be opposed to the salvation of man—the claims of his justice to the communi-

cation of his mercy. Man by his disobedience had become a rebel against God, and had incurred the penalty of the law. The justice of God had, therefore, become his enemy, and pleaded for his punishment. Where, it might ask, are the honours of God's government, if the offender who revolts from his government is received into favour, and treated as if he were innocent? Where are the justice and the judgment which are the habitation of his throne, if the authority of their mandates is not upheld by the impartial awards of righteousness? This might be the case with a sovereign of inadequate power; but the power of the Eternal King is omnipotent, and none can stay his hand from working, or say unto him, What doest thou? Or it might be the case with a sovereign, who had not the same impartial concern for the order and the happiness of all the inhabitants of his empire; but the Great Parent of all has an equal regard to the good of all the parts of that great universe over which he presides, and cannot, therefore, suffer the benignity of his nature to flow towards those who have joined the standard of revolt; or, it might happen with a sovereign devoid of regard to purity of moral character, and to a righteous administration of government; but the great and adorable Being with whom we have to do is a just God, and glorious in holiness, and cannot compromise, were it to save from destruction all the millions of worlds to which he has given existence, the honours of the Godhead.

Here, then, was the woful condition of mankind. The heavens above and around them gathered darkness. They had placed themselves by their revolt in

a condition in which he that formed them could not, consistently with his justice, show them any mercy. The unimpeachable veracity of Him who had said, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die," was pledged for the fulfilment of his word;—the holiness that shines pure as the light inaccessible in which he dwells, around the eternal God, shut out the sinner from the reach of his compassions, and forbade his contaminating approach; the awful justice that frowned in terror over him, formed the flaming sword which turned every way to guard the way of the tree of life. But for the disclosures of the Gospel, we do not discover any thing in the character of this Holy Lord God to afford any encouragement to believe, that it was possible for our sinful race to escape punishment, far less to be reinstated into the divine favour. His attributes formed a canopy of wrath above them, and seemed for ever to leave them under the malediction of the law of an omnipotent and righteous God. His goodness, it is true, is infinite, but that could not be goodness which would annul his veracity, and holiness, and justice; could not be worthy of the name of mercy, which would put the guilty on a level with the innocent, and which would in a moment lay prostrate in the dust all the enactments of the divine government? If mercy might be extended to our race irrespectively of the exercise of the other attributes of God, why were the angels that sinned excluded from hope, and precipitated from their high eminence of glory, and shut up in darkness till the judgment of the great day? And if justice had its full course in

their case, on what ground was there an exception to be made in ours?

This is the fearful situation, then, in which mankind were placed. The loftiest spirits of heaven were utterly incapable of unravelling the difficulty, and of finding out the wondrous way of reconciling infinite mercy with inflexible justice,—of satisfying the demands of the one, and of yielding to the requests of the other. In these circumstances of utter hopelessness, the wisdom of God devised the plan by which the fullest pardon might be offered to all, while the rights of his government were vindicated, and his law magnified and made honourable. By this plan a sacrifice is provided to satisfy justice, and the virtue and the fruit of this sacrifice delight mercy. The rights of both are preserved, both are made to meet in a great propitiation,—justice in transferring the punishment of our sins to our surety, and mercy by this means conveying life and salvation to us. Thus does God exercise mercy without being unjust, and the strictest purity and righteousness in accordance with his mercy. He hath set forth his own Son to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God, that he might be just, and the justifier of Him that believeth on Jesus.

How gloriously does the wisdom of God appear in the Person appointed in the counsels of eternity thus to reconcile these interests, and to open up the way of salvation to man by his Cross! The Son of the Highest was chosen to give obedience in the room of

man, and to bear on himself the penalty of transgression. That he might be capable of both obeying and suffering, he united to his divine nature that of humanity; and thus he is constituted such an high priest as we required, merciful as well as faithful. In his person as God and man he finished the work of redemption; in his natures as united he was our instructor, our pattern, our guide, and he will for ever continue to be the ground of our confidence in our approach to God. His life gave as perfect an obedience to the commandments of the law, as his sufferings and death formed an atonement for its violations. There was thus an ample provision made for the display of justice in its most perfect inflexibility, and for the communication of mercy in its munificent and godlike abundance. The undivided dignity and glory of the Substitute of sinners,—his being equal with God, and possessing the praises of eternity, and his voluntarily undertaking the mighty task of bearing the sins of a fallen world; his making himself of no account, and taking upon him the form of a servant, and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;—formed a spectacle so impressive and sublime as to draw towards it the attentive regards of all God's intelligent creation. He appeared in our world in a state of lowly abasement,—he submitted to the greatest privations,—he endured the contradiction of those whom he came to seek and to save; he gave, in their room, and as their representative, a sinless obedience to all the commandments;—and at length, through the eternal Spirit, he offered himself without spot unto God.

When we think of all that he endured from the agency of man,—of the derision of Herod, and the unrighteous judgment of Pilate,—of his being scourged and condemned and crucified, and that this death of pain and of ignominy was endured between two malefactors;—and when we think also of all that he suffered when the iniquity of us all was laid upon him;—when, being in agony, his soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death—and when under the withdrawalment of that gracious countenance which till then had ever smiled upon him, he exclaimed, “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me !” When we think of this, we must believe that it was no light thing to open up a way in accordancy with justice for the free and eternal exercise of mercy. But though his sufferings were inconceivably great, it was his nature and character that gave them all their merit and efficacy: it was because he was the Son of God that he triumphed by the agonies and abasement of his death; and it was because he was his equal that he was capable of bearing the stroke of that avenging justice which would have overwhelmed us in irremediable woe. The work is now completed; and the servants of the Great King are sent out unto the highways to invite as many as they find, and to assure them that all things are ready. It is not necessary in holding out this offer to inquire into the different degrees of criminality of the persons to whom it is made; we need not in announcing the offer of pardon, first ascertain what is the exact measure of their guilt; for the words of the Supreme Sovereign make no exceptions; the mercy they convey is communicable

to the very lowest degrees of wretchedness and sin; and the saying is faithful, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the chief. Here then we behold far more luminously and gloriously than in either the constitution of the natural world, or the government of Providence, the comprehensiveness and perfection of the divine wisdom.

But if the wisdom of God is thus manifest in contriving the plan of redemption, it has been also shewn in the manner in which redemption has been made known. The revelation of it at first contained in a promise, and afterwards shadowed forth by types and ceremonies, became gradually brighter as it approached the day of the Son of man. This gradual development, so analogous to the ordinary course of nature, seemed likely to prepare the way for the easier and the more general reception of the doctrine of salvation. At length, in the fulness of time—the time fixed on by the divine wisdom, and pointed to by the accomplishment of prophecy, the Saviour appeared as the light and the life of the world. When he had completed the redemption of his people, he commissioned his Apostles to make it known; and the divine wisdom peculiarly appears in the time and circumstances of its publication. The first audience to whom it was addressed consisted of Jews from all nations, as well as proselytes of the Gentiles, who carried the glad tidings to their respective homes, and who thus widely scattered the seed of the word. The men employed in publishing the doctrine of salvation were destitute of all human advantages, without authority, without

interest, without literary accomplishments ; they were so, that it might manifestly appear that the doctrine was the wisdom of God, and that it was by the influence that accompanied it that they were instrumental in overcoming the world.

The wisdom of God further appears in the mode in which the salvation of Christ is personally applied, and in which it is rendered personally effectual. The ends here in view are the conversion and sanctification of the soul, and the means employed for its attainment are the word, the Spirit, and the providence of God. These ends are attained by shedding the love of God abroad in the heart, by a renewal of the will, by such an illumination of the understanding as enables us to see the infinite excellency and worth of spiritual good. While it is peculiarly the work of the Spirit of God to produce these effects, the providence of God as a means operates along with it. It does so by suiting the chastisement which it inflicts to the dispositions of the persons, and the nature of their sins ; and by visiting with afflictions at the fittest season. It does so by overruling the trial for spiritual and lasting good. The Christian and the Church are more pure and lively when suffering persecution. The integrity of Job appeared clearer, and his patience more distinguished, as he rose out of affliction. The bonds of the Apostle, by the divine wisdom, were made to contribute to the confirmation of believers, and the furtherance of the Gospel. The trial is either altogether prevented, or it is employed as the means of good. The disciples of Damascus were saved from the calamity which Saul intended to

bring upon them by a merciful and miraculous interposition in his own favour. The Lord preserves his own people as the apple of his eye, so that neither the fire which is ready to devour them, nor the snares of their enemies that are laid for them, can at all affect them. "The Lord is their keeper; the Lord is their shade upon their right hand. The Lord shall preserve them from all evil; he shall preserve their souls." He will keep them by his mighty power through faith unto salvation.

I. We learn from this subject the entire confidence which the pious ought to place in the procedure of divine wisdom. When, in addition to the admirable display of this wisdom in nature and in grace, they have so many promises of its having a special reference to them, in supplying the means of their protection, of their safety, and of their happiness, may they not have perfect peace in trusting to it? If they stand in need of counsel and direction, let them look to the promises in which these are afforded; "the meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord; and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand." If they are involved in difficulties from which their own wisdom cannot extricate them, let them trust to the promised interposition of the wisdom of God. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation. There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also

make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." Are they anxious that all their trials and sufferings should be over-ruled for their real and everlasting good? how comprehensive is the promise which assures them that divine wisdom will fulfil their desire: that all things shall work together for good to them that love God!

How remarkably in every age have the people of God enjoyed his wisdom to guide, to counsel, and to work out deliverance for them! This divine wisdom has been constantly working for them in providence, by turning the devices of their enemies into foolishness. What plans could be more prudently laid than those of Ahithophel; what subtilty could be deeper than that of Herod; what human skill could surpass that of the artful and accomplished Julian; what extent of metaphysical acumen, expressed in the most mellifluous language, could exceed that of Hume; what designs of man could be better adapted for gaining their purpose than were those of Voltaire and Gibbon; and yet how easily has that wisdom which is from above brought them to nought! Does not the whole of providence furnish an impressive illustration of those words of Scripture; "there is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord. There is no darkness nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves." Man may plot, and may form the wisest human plan for overwhelming the people of God in destruction; but that wisdom that never sleeps makes use even of a trivial circumstance to bring the ruin which he meditated for others on himself. Of how little avail is all

the policy of man, even when directed by the full force of his enmity against God, to frustrate or to retard the plans of infinite wisdom and goodness !

How rich is the comfort conveyed by this doctrine ! What settled peace may we not derive from it in difficulties, and in distresses, and in death ! Let us not lose this consolation by the thought that we have enemies artful and powerful engaged against us. Thus was David troubled, when one told him, saying, " Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom ; and David said, O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness." How often are we perplexed by allowing our own reason to dictate, and to say how can such a thing be ! When, if we looked to the wisdom of God, we should believe that all things that are within the limits of the promise are possible. " Commit thy way unto the Lord ; trust also in him ; and he shall bring it to pass. The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord ; he is their strength in the time of trouble." Let this consideration animate our faith when the answers to our prayers are delayed. He will surely give us grace and glory ; but, then, his wisdom must prescribe the time and the way in which these great blessings are bestowed.

II. We learn from this subject the infinite suitability and excellency of the Gospel. Its Author and itself are pre-eminently styled the wisdom of God. It is the harmony of all his attributes conveying a free salvation to man. His glory is reflected by the display of his wisdom in all his works ; but the highest glory of his wisdom is exhibited in the person, and offices, and work of Christ. It must, therefore, be a scheme perfectly adapted to the fallen, and helpless,

and guilty condition of man ; suited to his wants, and capable of giving him the blessings which he needs. And, accordingly, it is announced to us as “ glad tidings of great joy, declaring that God has so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life :—that God is in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, and not imputing unto men their trespasses.” Its statements have been verified, in the delightful experience, and in the salvation of thousands. They have found in the Gospel a Saviour from sin, from guilt, from death, and from ruin. They have put the truth and faithfulness of the saying to the test, that “ Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the chief ;” for they found in it, that which all the knowledge of man cannot communicate, an assurance of peace and reconciliation with God, and the earnest and the hope of everlasting blessedness. It still continues widely to convey the same blessings, and to produce the same effects. To them that are called of every kindred, and of every condition, its great and wondrous theme, Christ crucified, is the power of God, and the wisdom of God. If in many cases it fails in producing these effects, the cause is not in it, but in the unbelief, the impenitence, and pride of the heart. For, if our Gospel, in its unspeakable glory, in its transforming grace and power, be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them.

III. We learn from this subject the extreme depravity of man. This depravity is shewn in the effort,

so constantly and universally exerted, to oppose the wisdom of God. What murmurings and rebellions are there on the part of sinful man against the arrangements of this wisdom in providence? Do those who acknowledge so readily that God does all things well, and who profess to believe in their own case, that he makes all things work together for their good,—do they cheerfully and thankfully, without complainings, resign themselves to his disposal. Do they acquiesce in the dispensations that are painful, as well as in those that are pleasing? Do they practically, when reason is disposed to offer its discouraging interpretation, confide in the wisdom of God, and believe that he will make light to arise for them out of obscurity, and that in the end they will find that all his ways are mercy and truth towards them that fear him? How awfully is the corruption of man exhibited in the rejection of the Gospel! What must be the blindness, the unbelief, the insensibility of the heart, that shuts out from it the light of the wisdom of God, mysteriously displayed in the cross of our Lord Jesus! And, yet, how natural is this blindness, this unbelief, to us all, and how clearly and fatally are they shewn in those who are yet unregenerate, and who have no relish for the word of life, and no interest in its blessings! Consider, that the end of this neglect of a great salvation will be an everlasting separation from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power*.

* 2 Thes. i. 9.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TRUTH AND FAITHFULNESS OF GOD.

THE truth of God signifies the entire conformity of his word to his will, of his declaration concerning what either is or shall be, and reality. As he is the only living and true God in opposition to the imaginary gods of the heathen, so is he essentially and necessarily the God of truth, whether this term be understood as signifying reality, in opposition to that which is fancied or visionary ; veracity, or a disposition to speak according to the actual state of things ; faithfulness, or a disposition to fulfil promises and engagements. Truth, in these significations, or in whatever other meaning it can be applicable to a being of perfection, must belong to God to an infinite extent. These, in reality, are but different manifestations of the same attribute.

The truth and faithfulness of God may be fully proved from his character and attributes,—from his word, contained in divine revelation—and from his works, in the different departments of his government.

I. Let us consider his character and attributes, as they furnish proofs of the truth of God. It may be alleged that this source of evidence is liable to objection, since it is nothing more than presuming on the existence of an excellency from our knowledge of the existence of certain other excellencies in the character. It is by a similar induction, however, that we often

judge of the veracity and trust-worthiness of our fellow-creatures. We argue from the known benevolence, integrity, and general virtue of the man, in favour of his fidelity. We presume that he who possesses otherwise so much moral worth, cannot be wanting in that which gives to moral worth its highest respectability. We, therefore, repose confidence in the truth of his declarations, and do not question the fulfilment of his promises. In like manner are we entitled to reason from those attributes of God which we know to belong to him, in favour of his truth and faithfulness.

Each of the attributes of God, the existence of which has been amply proved, furnishes unanswerable evidence in support of his truth. We cannot suppose it possible, that he by whose will alone the present and future state of all things is fixed, should give to his creatures a representation different from the reality. All things have been framed after the counsel of his will ; for he hath created all things, and for his pleasure they are and they were created. All his declarations, therefore, must be a just annunciation of the real state of things ; for, were they otherwise, that is, were they different from the truth, they would oppose his pleasure. This argument is irresistible, when we take into account the independence and immutability of God. These attributes, which render his character unvariable, and his purposes unalterable, remove him beyond the possibility of entertaining a desire to vary them. His declarations and his plans must always be in entire accordance ; and since his power to fulfil both is for ever the same, there cannot exist a temptation to deviate. A single falsehood

uttered by him in the long duration of eternity would imply mutability, and this is inconceivable and impossible in a Being of boundless perfection, who is from everlasting to everlasting, God.

But this argument acquires still greater strength, when we consider the goodness, holiness, and righteousness of God. Imperfect as we are, we can discern the excellency of truth, and the baseness of falsehood. How much more clearly must the excellency of the one, and the turpitude of the other, appear to the Holy and Omniscient God! "He is the rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he." Man as a creature is mutable, and as a sinner is corrupt, and is, therefore, capable of deceit and of treachery; but the nature of God is necessarily and unchangeably pure and holy, and there cannot be any unrighteousness in him. "He is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent; hath he said, and shall he not do it, or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" The perfect holiness of God renders it impossible for him to lie. Even we, his intelligent creatures, fallen and degenerate as we are, esteem and respect truth, and disesteem and despise falsehood; and were our nature as pure as it originally was, our practice would in this respect accord with our feelings. But he whose name is holy is incapable of doing but what he loves, or shunning but what he hates; and as his views of truth and of falsehood are the same as ours, he cannot but invariably act consistently with that character which he has taught us to adore,—the

character of the God of truth. Even were it otherwise possible for him to deviate from this character, his benevolent regard to the happiness of his creatures—happiness which can only be secured by their entire confidence in him—his infinite goodness, would prevent him from this deviation. A single departure from truth in the moral governor of the universe would disturb the repose, and destroy the happiness of all his intelligent creatures. It would subvert their trust, and darken all their prospects. It would thus frustrate one of the important designs of his creation, the communication of a large share of enjoyment to beings formed in his own likeness.

In addition to all this, the regard which God has to the glory of his own name, gives us full assurance of his truth and faithfulness. Whenever he makes known a design at some future period to be accomplished, his honour is a pledge for its fulfilment. Hence, Moses uses this as an argument with God, why he should still further exercise his patience and forbearance towards a rebellious people. “And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people which thou hast brought out of the land of Egypt, with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did he bring them out to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.” We may confidently conclude, then, that he who is a jealous God, and who will not give his glory to another, will never allow this glory to be tarnished

by any deviation from the truth, or by the non-fulfilment of his declarations. This, which the honour of every attribute of his nature requires, the all-sufficiency of his power is able to perform. Difficulties great as mountains, and, to human appearance, insuperable, may be in the way of their performance; but he who looks like Abraham to the divine power, will not stagger at the promise of God through unbelief, but will be strong in faith, giving glory to God; being fully persuaded that what he has promised he is able also to perform.

II. Let us attempt to prove the truth and faithfulness of God from his word, as contained in divine revelation. In this word God claims to himself the character of the God of truth. He is said to keep truth for ever:—his counsels are styled faithfulness and truth. The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness. All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies. Though the mere declaration of sincerity on the part of any being, apart from the consideration of his character, furnishes no evidence that he is sincere, yet the simple declaration of it on the part of God, viewed in connexion with the excellences of his nature, is sufficient proof of its truth. He whom we know from personal experience to be infinitely good, whose holiness and righteousness we learn from the whole procedure of his moral government, and of whose power and immutability we are most deeply convinced, is surely entitled to the entire confidence

of his intelligent creatures, when he declares himself to be the God of truth.

But this character which he claims is amply proved to belong to him ; and it may be proved from those records which contain the revelation of his will.

In the first place, we have in those records many predictions which have been exactly fulfilled. These predictions have a reference to things in themselves contingent, depending on the freedom of the human will, or on the sovereignty of divine grace, and having, to obstruct their accomplishment, great difficulties and seeming impossibilities. Of this description was the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt four hundred and thirty years after the promise had been given, and the restoration of the same people seventy years after they had been carried captive into Babylon. Hence, also, the exact fulfilment of those prophecies which respected the advent, the character, the atoning suffering and death of the Messiah, as well as of the predictions which foretold the unbelief and consequent rejection of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles, together with the progress of the christian church over the world. The fulfilment in every particular of these, and of many similar prophecies, while it attests the omniscience of God, illustrates and confirms his truth, and shews, that though heaven and earth shall pass away, his words shall not pass away. Comparing the large volume of prophecy with the sure and the successive accomplishment, we have evidence continually accumulating, to prove that the sayings of God are all faithful and true.

In the second place, the truth of God is further con-

firmed by the fulfilment of promises and threatenings contained in his word. In the course of his providence, God has bestowed the promised blessings, and inflicted the threatened punishment. Of his faithfulness in keeping his promise his people have had experience, and to this they have given their testimony in all ages. Hence, Joshua, when about to die, appeals to the Israelites: "Ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof." At a subsequent period, Solomon makes a similar appeal to the congregated people of Israel. "Blessed be the Lord that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant." The same testimony to the faithfulness of God, in performing his promises, is given by David: "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God, which made the heaven and earth, the sea, and all that therein is, which keepeth truth for ever." With this accords the united testimony of prophets and apostles, of martyrs and of confessors, and of the church of Christ in all generations. And the glorified inhabitants of heaven are also witnesses for the truth of God. They sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and *true* are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only

art holy ; for all nations shall come and worship before thee ; for thy judgments are made manifest.” And shall not we bear the same evidence to the faithfulness of our heavenly Father ? If you have been in situations of peculiar trial and difficulty, where human probabilities only depressed your hopes, did you not enjoy a fulfilment of the promises ? “ As thy day is so shall thy strength be : fear thou not ; for I am with thee : be not dismayed ; for I am thy God : I will strengthen thee ; yea, I will help thee ; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Call upon me in the day of trouble ; I will deliver thee.” The Lord has promised to blot out your transgressions for his own name’s sake—to be your security and encouragement under all your sufferings—to preserve, support, and direct you,—and to make all the occurrences of his providence work together for your good ; and from your personal experience of the fulfilment of his promises, you are ready to bear testimony to the faithfulness of God.

Should it be said, that this testimony to the truth of God is borne only by those who are predisposed to believe in his truth, that is, by a part of mankind only, I reply, that a similar testimony may be adduced from the known and acknowledged experience of the wicked in support of the fulfilment of the divine word. God has said in this word, “ While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease ;” and does not the voice of mankind testify that the declaration has been verified ? He has said

in his word, that the way of transgressors is hard ; that it shall be well with the righteous, but ill with the wicked ; for the reward of his hands shall be given him ; and all must own that the fixed course of the world exactly accords with the annunciation. The most forgetful of God and heedless of his ways, cannot but observe that the order of providence is in favour of integrity and industry, while those who attempt to go in opposition to this order, sooner or later, involve themselves in difficulties, misery, and disgrace. While God has declared his hatred against all sin, and his love of holiness, he has strongly expressed his abhorrence of falsehood, and his approval of truth. “ Thus saith the Lord God, because ye have spoken vanity and seen lies, therefore, behold I am against you, saith the Lord. These things doth the Lord hate, yea, are an abomination unto him. A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that deviseth wicked imaginations,— a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.” And has not the Lord verified his declaration, by often interfering, in his providence, awfully to punish the crime of falsehood ? The Lord has told us in his word, that the present is a state of sin, and that, therefore, to all it is in many respects a state of suffering ; and does not the experience of all accord with the declaration ? It is not any one class, but the whole human race who are able individually to bear testimony to the truth of that representation,—“ Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a

flower, and is cut down ; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not." At present you have health, but soon will it be wasted away in sickness ; and you have life, but soon will it terminate in death ; and you have enjoyment, but soon will the days come in which you will have no pleasure in them. You, and all around you, are now subjected to suffering ; you are in the midst of the dying and the dead ; and the place which now knows you, will soon know you no more for ever. Thus far the experience and observation of all mankind go to prove the truth and the faithfulness of God. If in every case his threatenings are not speedily and fully executed, it is because the present is a state, not of exact retribution, but of trial, and because the Lord is long-suffering towards us, and not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to the knowledge of the truth.

In the third place, the truth of God is further proved by the doctrines of his word. These are emphatically styled, the truth. This is the testimony of their divine author, and it accords with the testimony of our heart, of our reason, and of our experience. Had the case been otherwise, had the evidence of the perfect truth of the doctrines of revelation been either defective or difficult of comprehension, it might be improper to adduce them in support of the veracity and faithfulness of their author. But many of these doctrines so entirely coincide with the natural suggestions of reason and conscience, as to call forth the evidence of our own conviction for their truth and obligation. When I am commanded to give unto God the love of my heart, I am under no apprehension of being deceived,

because I feel that the duty is one which I am bound to perform; and in addition to the testimony of miracles, I have the testimony of my own mind, that it is the will of him that formed me that I should obey this precept. I no sooner resign myself to the saving influence of the Gospel, than I am led from an experience of its efficacy, to regard its deepest mysteries as the power of God, and the wisdom of God. I see in the infinite value of the atonement of the cross, a remedy that is ample as the measure of my guilt,—that applies to the varying aspects of my misery and helplessness,—and which, in my saddest hours, brings to my heart its healing and tranquillizing balm. I know that the hope to which it has raised me is not visionary, for I see in it the harmony and the manifestation of the divine attributes; and feeling from my personal experience, that it possesses all the efficacy which the New Testament ascribes to it, I confidently regard it as a wonderful expedient of God's devising, and give to it the deference and the love due to the only way under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. When I think of the deep and mysterious facts connected with the incarnation of the eternal Son of God, it surprises me not that they far surpass my comprehension, and that it is only for him whose habitation is eternity to see all their bearings, and calculate with unerring certainty all their vast and distant results. It is enough for me that I can trace their connexion with the whole process of my recovery from guilt and apostasy; that by illustrating so fully the compassion and lowly humiliation of him who took our help upon him, they draw

towards him the flow of my tender and grateful affections ; that I experience their mighty operation as incentives to holiness, urging me onwards with a persuasiveness and an energy all their own ; and that they will furnish occasion, ever growing and ever new, in a higher world, of ascribing dominion and glory to him who has redeemed me to God by his blood. Thus have I evidence from my reason and experience of the truth of the doctrines of the glorious Gospel ; and surely he who is their author, and who has revealed them as his will to us, must be the faithful and true witness, even the God of truth. When I find that all the facts stated in his word, and the doctrines which arise out of them, in so far as they are capable of being examined by me, are perfectly consistent with each other and with reality, am I not bound to give my confidence to the entire veracity and faithfulness of him who has given them as a revelation of his mind and will ?

III. Let us attempt to prove the truth and faithfulness of God from his works, in the different departments of his government. From this field of observation, had we time to pass over it, we might gather many proofs of the truth of God.

In the first place, these are illustrated and confirmed by the uniformity of plan with which God conducts the government both of the natural and moral world. We behold an unvarying and established order pervading all nature ; the elements in the most distant provinces of the world regulated by the same laws which govern them in ours. Amidst an endless variety there is a perfect harmony, a fixed and certain

system, on the stability and universality of which we may rely with entire confidence. It is this permanency of the order of nature which puts it in the power of reason to turn to advantage the experience of former generations, and to use efforts and devise means for the improvement and the happiness of man. He who has given this fixed regularity to the ordinances of heaven, and by whom the world is established that it cannot be moved, has done so that man might not be disappointed or deceived ; but that whether tilling the ground, or navigating the globe, whether engaged in experiments for the advancement of knowledge, or in devising schemes of public good, he may calculate most surely on finding the laws of nature always and everywhere the same. Thus man is never mistaken in confiding in the regular succession of seasons ; the return of day and night ; the productiveness of the earth ; the efficacy of rain and sunshine ; and, generally, in the nature, qualities, and effects of the various things by which he is surrounded.

Though, for obvious reasons, the same perfect regularity does not pervade the moral world, yet a degree of regularity, sufficiently complete to answer all the great purposes of our being, evidently exists. There are exceptions, indeed, but the general laws are all strongly marked, and firmly established ; and these are in favour of honesty, integrity, and universal virtue, while they render misery in one form or other the necessary attendant of vice. He who is the Author of nature, is, at the same time, the moral governor of the world ; and his conducting his government in both cases according to an established plan, on the regu-

larity and permanency of which we may so confidently rely, is a most pleasing proof that his design is in no way to deceive us, but to invite us to trust him as a faithful Creator.

In the second place, he proves to us his perfect truth and faithfulness from his works, by making his government of the world co-operate with the designs of his grace in the conversion and sanctification of his people. When we read the Bible, we find great stress laid on the turning of a sinner to God,—on his being born again—on his being made a new creature in Christ Jesus. Now, ought we not to expect, that if God be sincere in the importance which he attaches to the change of heart and of nature implied in such declarations, he will shew it by making his providences co-operate with his grace in its accomplishment? And accordingly, in this way God often actually attests his sincerity and truth. It will no doubt form a part of the employment of the glorified inhabitants of heaven, to survey the outward circumstances which were the means of leading them to the knowledge of God, and to the belief and obedience of the Gospel. In the mean time, we know enough to raise our admiration of the sovereign grace and manifold wisdom of God. It was while the Ethiopian was reading the prophet Isaiah, and his mind was prepared to receive the knowledge of Christ, that providence placed an interpreter near him, and commanded him to join his chariot. The committing of Paul to the prison of Philippi was the method employed by providence for making his keeper spiritually free. Persecution, as in the first age, when directed against the church at

Jerusalem, has often been the means, by scattering ministers and christians, of extending the knowledge of salvation, and of bringing souls to the Saviour. Paul and Timothy, in place of being allowed to go into Bythynia, as their minds inclined, were directed in a vision to go into Macedonia, and while there, the Lord opened the heart of Lydia and of others. How often has the loss of a dear friend, or a personal affliction, been the means of procuring for the word of life a ready and a cordial reception! And how generally are providences, sometimes painful, instrumental in restoring backsliders, and in reviving the things that remain, that are ready to die! Thus does God, by making the government of the world co-operate with the designs of his grace, prove his truth and faithfulness in the declarations of his word.

But, in the third place, the truth of God is farther shewn from his works, by the general accordance which takes place between the statements of his word and the operations of his providence. He tells us in his word that the way of holiness and of obedience is the way of wisdom and of happiness, and that he who walketh uprightly walketh safely and surely. And what is the language of his providence? Is it opposed to this, or does it harmonize with it? Ask the prodigal, the intemperate, the profane, and they can tell you of the loss of property, of health, of reputation, of peace, and almost of hope. They will bid you look to their example to see that the way of transgressors is hard, and that their way is their folly. If you ask, who hath woe, who hath sorrow, who hath contentions, who hath babblings, who hath wounds with-

out cause, who hath redness of eyes, the providence of God will tell you no less than his word, that it is they who tarry long at the wine, who go to seek mixed wine; "for the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty; and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags." God tells you in his word, that no crooked and sinful policy, by a departure from the way of simplicity and integrity, shall ever profit you, or deliver you; and is not the language of his providence in unison with this statement? How did it fare with David when he adopted a sinful policy to conceal his wickedness? Did not the Lord in his providence, and by painful dispensations, expose and punish his guilt? It is possible by sinful means to obtain wealth, but generally it is of little avail to the possessor. Treasures of wickedness profit nothing: but righteousness delivereth from death. The word of God tells us the guilt and misery which he entails on himself who relies on the creature more than upon God; and you see how constantly is God proving the truth of his declaration by the events of his providence. He conducts the government of the world so as to deprive his people of their idols, and make them impressively feel that he alone "is the strength of their heart and their portion for ever." If in our prosperity, and in the spirit of self-confidence we say, I shall never be moved; we shall soon have occasion to adopt different language, while we say, "Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong; thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." The word of God assures us that none shall ever ultimately lose for suffering in his cause, and for his sake; and the order

of his providence makes good the declaration. Thousands have experienced that if they have left houses, or land, or brethren or sisters, or any other earthly object for Christ's sake and the Gospel's, they have received an hundred fold in this time, if not in outward comfort, at least in inward peace and joy. It has often been observed, that Providence has doubled even in temporal good what has thus been parted with for Christ's sake. It is in this way that the seemingly paradoxical words of Scripture are more than verified. "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth ; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." God assures us in his word that the surest method of ultimately securing the favourable judgments and regards of our fellow-creatures is, by directing our ways so as to please the Lord ; and the order of providence speaks in similar language. Thus it was with the three who, rather than relinquish their fidelity to God, allowed themselves to be cast into the fiery furnace ; and thus it proved with him who, rather than commit an idolatrous act, preferred being put into the lions' den ; and thus it always is with those who make it their chief duty to honour and obey the God in whose hand their breath is. Finally, God tells you in his word that the only way of enjoying settled peace and tranquillity of mind under the cares and afflictions of life, is to commit ourselves, and all that is ours, into the hands of the Lord. "Delight thyself in the Lord ; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord ; trust also in him ; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and

thy judgment as the noon day. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him." And does not your experience, as well as your observation of the order of providence, perfectly accord with this statement? In the midst of difficulties, and disappointments, and afflictions, have you not noticed how abundantly in this way the people of God enjoy peace and comfort? When we thus find throughout, that the operations and order of God's providence so entirely agree with the statements of his word, and that in every particular the harmony is complete, we have the strongest grounds for confidently relying on his veracity and faithfulness..

But in the fourth place, the truth of God is farther shewn from his works, by his rendering them, in the different departments of his government, subservient to the advancement of that great object, which in Scripture he has avowed as the ultimate design of all things. This is, the glory of Christ in the salvation of his people. We are told that all things were created, not only by him, but for him. We learn that all events are to make way for his dominion,—that mountains are to be made low, and valleys exalted, that his glory may appear, and that all may see it together. The Scriptures abound with intimations as to its being the purpose of God to make every dispensation illustrative of his glory, and all events subservient to the progress and the ultimate triumph of his kingdom. "I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him: but my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him; and in my name shall his horn be exalted. I will set his

hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers. He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation. Also I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him." Has God manifested his truth and his faithfulness by fulfilling this engagement to his Son? The design of God, as expressed in his word, is to honour Christ by widely extending his kingdom, and by conveying through him spiritual blessings to every people: and looking to the conduct of providence in the history of the world, have we ground for saying that this design is fulfilling? Even on a slight survey of the procedure of God in the government of mankind, we cannot but answer this question in the affirmative. Extending our view to the earliest ages, and investigating downwards the page of history, with the endeavour to ascertain how far the primary and avowed design of revelation has been attended to and promoted by providence, we observe, that with the gradual developement of the one there has been a gradual preparation made for the other; we see that kingdoms have been called into being, or swept away in subserviency to it; that mercies and judgments, that bad men as well good men, that divisions and persecutions have been overruled for its furtherance; that, for the purpose of adding to its final triumphs, the people of Israel, while scattered among all nations, have, during eighteen centuries, been kept in a state of entire separation from them; and that the Gospel, whenever it is preached, is adding to the Saviour's glory by in-

creasing the number of his subjects. We see not yet all things put under him, and there is therefore room for the exercise of our faith and patience; but if we have reason from the past to believe that the design of Providence regarding the Saviour's glory is the same as the avowed design of revelation, ought we not to rest assured that in the progress of ages this purpose shall receive its fullest completion? And surely the rendering of the events of the natural and moral world—the most trivial, as well as the most unlikely, subserve the advancement of one great end;—when we see God in his works carry on the same design which forms the theme of his word, we have evidence, the highest and the most unquestionable, of the perfect truth and faithfulness of God. Thus, nature and grace, providence and revelation, harmonize in bearing testimony to the unity of God's purposes, and to the implicit confidence which is due to his veracity and sincerity in every declaration which he makes concerning them.

I. We learn from this subject a reason for the stress which is laid on faith as essential to acceptable worship. Without faith it is impossible to please God; for he that cometh unto God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. He that believes not God, and who believes not the testimony which he has given in the Gospel of his Son, is said to make God a liar. In discrediting the truth of his word, he offers an affront to every attribute of the Divinity, and is guilty of conduct towards the God who cannot deceive, that would be held most insulting by a fellow-creature. Hence the condemna-

tion to which unbelief exposes,—a condemnation far more fearful than if a Saviour had never been given, nor a salvation provided. “ God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

II. The perfect truth of God furnishes matter for serious alarm to every deceitful and ungodly man. It announces to the hypocrite that his hope, being founded on falsehood, shall perish. It tells the votary of a religion that is not derived from the truth of God’s word, that his sincerity in its profession, and his laborious efforts to perform its ceremonies, will profit him nothing. It forms a pledge that the judgments of God, however slow, will surely be accomplished on every impenitent and ungodly person. It is an ample assurance for the fulfilment of the threatening as well as of the promise, and that all his sayings shall be verified, who has told us that “ the wicked shall be driven away in their wickedness—that they shall go away into everlasting punishment from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.”

III.- The truth of God is a continual source of encouragement, and hope, and joy to his people. This assures you that the promises of his word, which respect either your temporal or your spiritual state, shall be accomplished. It is a pledge to you that he

who has begun the good work will carry it on,—that he will never leave you, and never forsake you,—that he will be with you in trouble to support and deliver you,—and that he will make all the circumstances of your lot work together for your good. How comfortable in the hour of affliction, and in the hour of death, to have the truth and the faithfulness of the God of all grace to rely upon; and to hear from this God the animating promise, “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.”

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE GOODNESS OF GOD

No question can be so interesting as that which concerns the benevolence of Him who made all things, who possesses the awful attributes of omnipotence, eternity, and immutability. The question is not the less deeply interesting that there are many appearances in his works, and many things which fall within our own experience, that seem to be irreconcilable with the infinite goodness of God. What is the life of man but a series of sorrows and afflictions, of cares and disappointments? And though he may occasionally have some hours of sunshine, when enjoyment makes him forget the many ills to which he is born, yet, on the whole, may it not with truth be said, that his days are few and evil? "If we behold any thing irregular in the works of man, if any machine answer not the purpose it was made for, if we find something in it repugnant to itself or others; we attribute that to the impotence, ignorance, or malice of the workmen; but, since these qualities have no place in God, how come they to have place in his works*?"

To this question, perhaps, no answer entirely satisfactory can be given. The subject is attended with difficulties—difficulties which may not be altogether removed in the present life. In every attempt to illustrate the goodness of God in regard to our world, we must remember throughout that man is guilty, and that he is deserving of punishment in consequence of

* King's Origin of Evil, p. 72.

sin. If the question were, can you prove from the procedure of God toward our world, that he is infinitely benevolent, on the supposition that mankind are now, as to purity and innocence, what they were when they at first came from the hand of the Creator, I must answer in the negative. But if the question be, what that procedure ought to be, on the supposition that man is in a state of apostacy, rebellion, and guilt, can you shew from the conduct of God in regard to him, that he is infinitely good, I answer in the affirmative; and shall now proceed to state the arguments suggested by reason and revelation for the goodness of God. I shall afterwards more fully state the objections to his goodness, and endeavour to obviate them.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

HERE it may be proper to ascertain what we mean by the goodness of God. While the essential holiness and blessedness of God are included in the term, we particularly understand by it his benevolence and bounty. His goodness is his inclination to deal well and bountifully with his creatures; to diffuse happiness; to delight in its contemplation. It is not a blind instinct, but the disposition and will of a free, wise, powerful, and independent God. And how pleasing and consolatory is the thought, that this is the character of the true and living God,—the God in whose hands our breath is, and whose are all our

ways. If he has not called the universe into existence for the sole end of communicating happiness to its living inhabitants, this at least appears to have been one of his main designs in its creation ; and in the scene which surrounds us, full of life and enjoyment, we see the result of divine benevolence, and the best illustration of the truth of that retrospective judgment, which God is said to have uttered respecting his works ; “ and God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good.”

In considering the divine benevolence with any degree of accuracy, we must take for granted the holiness, justice, and wisdom of God,—that is, that he possesses moral as well as natural perfections, and that, therefore, he governs his intelligent offspring with an ultimate reference to their moral as well as to their physical good. This view of the subject accords with the uniform course of providential arrangement, which evinces the existence of a supreme moral government, of the free agency and accountableness of man, and which forces us to regard the invariableness with which virtue is productive of happiness, and vice of misery, as an expression of the will and appointment of the Creator. In communicating happiness, therefore, we must believe that he imparts it in the order, and to the extent, which his wisdom and his moral excellences prescribe. His beneficence, indeed, like his nature and attributes, is unbounded ; but if we can suppose that its unmingled communication in any case were incompatible with the attainment of moral good, and opposed to the designs of his righteous govern-

ment, we must surely conclude, that, if such a case were to exist, the divine goodness in regard to it would not be fully exercised.

Such a case does exist in our world, in the apostacy, rebellion, and guilt of man. Why it has been permitted to exist, is another question, and one to which we may afterwards attend. But what I at present contend for is, that the continued exercise of the divine goodness towards beings in such a state of blameworthiness, and displayed in securing to them so much enjoyment with so little suffering, is a most affecting proof that the goodness of God is infinite in its nature, unwearied in its active exertions, and that it can assume the form of compassion and mercy to the sinful. The Holy Scriptures assure us that God is good, that he is love, and that he commendeth his love towards us while we are sinners; and the more we extend our survey of his works and his ways, the more satisfied we become of the truth of this impressive statement.

Our conviction will, no doubt, in this, as in every similar case, be influenced by our own individual experience. The youthful and the happy, whose life is a succession of pleasing sensations, will have little difficulty in admitting the position, that God is good, infinitely good. On them, all nature smiles: they live but to enjoy; they move amid the profusion of delights which the bounty of Providence has afforded them, ignorant of the extent of evil which others of their fellow-creatures are doomed to suffer. How natural is it for such persons, especially if they possess much moral excellency, to ascribe infinite benevolence

to the Author of such unvaried enjoyment ! How different are their views and happiness from his, whose earliest impressions are at variance with the conclusions of his understanding, whose fancy, under the influence of such impressions, continues to veil the heavens in darkness, and whose imagination, especially in hours of retirement, presents to the mind the image and the attributes of a Deity opposed to those which belong to the God of all perfection ! Has the orphan, whose dispositions have been formed under the most adverse circumstances ; or the widow, who has been left to struggle with want and sorrow, no tendency to judge unfavourably of the goodness of God ? But if, in place of fixing our view on particular instances, we take an enlarged survey of the works and the ways of the Almighty, we shall see enough to produce the conviction, that the Lord is essentially good, that he is good to all, and that his tender mercies are over all his works : that he is the Lord God, merciful and gracious, and abundant in goodness. The goodness of God, as evinced by the light of nature, is shewn by such considerations as the following.

I. That God, who is self-existent, eternal, immutable, omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent, can have no possible motive to be malevolent. He cannot desire any thing which he has not ; because in him all fulness dwells. He cannot be made wiser, or happier, or more powerful than he essentially is. He cannot, therefore, like finite beings, have any possible motive to envy or to hate those who are in his hands, as the clay is in the hands of the potter.

II. The creation has evidently proceeded from his benevolence. That it should have been called into being by any feeling of malevolence, is as inconceivable in itself, as it is irreconcilable with our actual experience. The goodness of God is seen throughout; but it is seen more especially in the being and nature of man. Had the Creator, when he formed us, willed and designed our misery, he certainly would have accomplished his design; but in this case, conscious existence would not be felt as desirable. Life, however, is felt as constituting a ground of thankfulness to God; and it is only in circumstances of the deepest depression that it is relinquished without regret. The convictions and practical acknowledgments of all men thus accord with the fact, so fully established by the general course of nature, that the chief design of every particular thing appears to be benevolent. This is plainly seen in the formation of our bodies;—in the eyes, by which we behold objects that delight as well as instruct us;—in the ears, by which enjoyment as well as information is communicated;—in the gratification which is yielded by the sense of taste,—and in the structure, position, and use of every part. The divine goodness is not less clearly seen in the nature, the endowments, and destination of the soul; which, even in its fallen state, gives ample indications of its former greatness and glory. How vast are its capacities of knowledge, of reflection, of invention, and of government,—possessing an understanding to contemplate its own Creator, a judgment to discern the differences between good and evil, virtue and vice, and a desire for improvement and

happiness. In the mere exercise of each and all of the faculties bodily and mental, how much pleasure has man, pleasure not at all necessary to the exercise of these faculties, and which, as it is gratuitously bestowed by the Creator, is in a high degree illustrative of his benevolence. Thus do we see that the design for which God created man is carried into execution not by the operation of pain, but generally, I might say always, unless for reasons which to our own understandings justify the exceptions, through the medium of pleasure.

The same remark is also true of the inferior animals. Wherever we direct our attention, we see creatures innumerable exulting in the consciousness of living energy and enjoyment. It is only a Being of supreme goodness, who bestows on the lowest animals the capacity of receiving pleasure from so many sources, and who, in their case, as well as in ours, inseparably connects it with the use of the means by which life is supported and prolonged. It is, indeed, the infinitude of the divine goodness which prevents us from admiring more fully and frequently its extent. It is the commonness of our blessings that makes them be undervalued or overlooked. Hence it is, that we seldom think of advantages which every one enjoys in common with ourselves;—of the daily use of all our faculties, and of the pleasure with which their exercise is accompanied;—and of the pleasing emotions and sensations awakened by the ordinary occurrences and relations of life. Our pleasurable feelings, in the great majority of cases, are so close and constant in their succession, that we never think of no-

ticing their number, and are only prompted to observe their continuity over the whole extension of our being, by the occasional experience of such as are painful. It is only when our neighbours meet with affliction, or unexpected affluence, that our curiosity is roused to observe the unusual circumstances in which they are placed. For one hour that has been passed in pain or sorrow, how many have we spent in the possession of health and enjoyment. How often has the sun which has left us in the midst of our friends, and surrounded by innumerable blessings, found us, on its return to our world, in the possession of the same blessings !

That some considerable share of this enjoyment should be continued to man, even in a state of privation and suffering, the goodness of God has provided that the mind should anticipate greater happiness yet to be enjoyed. Accordingly, hope ministers consolation to man in any situation. To the virtuous exile, to the persecuted martyr, to the afflicted saint, it brings immediate relief, by elevating the soul above the darkness of the present to the brightness of the future, and presenting the land clearly to view that has fulness of joys, and pleasures for evermore. Is not he who has endued man with this susceptibility, from which he has some share of happiness in any circumstances, himself infinitely benevolent ? But the evidence of his benevolence accumulates by the consideration of whatever is great or minute in nature, and in proportion as our survey of the works and the ways of God extends itself. The researches of the philoso-

pher, whether these are directed towards regions that are concealed from ordinary observation, or towards objects already laid open to our view, only add to the innumerable proofs of divine benevolence, and furnish additional illustrations of the apostolic aphorism, that "God is love." Even the electrician, whose hazardous experiment brought from the clouds a specimen of the lightning of heaven, has taught us to regard the fluid whose sublime phenomena alarm and agitate the world, as a necessary agent in completing the purposes of paternal kindness, and as the minister of good to man. What is there within us, around us, or above us,—in the constitution and instincts of all who live on the earth, in the sea, or in the air,—what is there in the uses and relative position of the animate or inanimate creation, that does not attest the delightful fact, that the main design of the Creator in communicating existence was to communicate happiness?

This remark holds true of man in particular, for whom chiefly the earth, with all its beauty, and variety, and fulness, was made. He, the noblest creature upon it, was formed in the image of God, to shew forth his praise, and had given to him a delegated authority over nature. His being, his wants, his enjoyments, were contemplated in the laws and constitution originally given to the world, and to its numerous inhabitants: "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet; all

sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field ; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.”

This evidence of the goodness of God is strengthened by the consideration, that all the goodness exercised towards mankind is bestowed on *sinful* creatures. When we think that it is on beings of this character that God has been lavishing his bounty during six thousand years ;—that it is for *them* that he continues to crown the year with his goodness, and that his paths drop fatness, and that he ceases not, amid their multiplied provocations, to send rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness ;—how greatly is his benevolence enhanced, how greatly must we admire his wonderful loving-kindness ! This rich and unbounded goodness is continued to creatures who were originally formed in his image, and capable of reverencing, loving, and obeying him, but who are now in a state of active revolt ;—to creatures who have alienated their affections from him, and who have worshipped and served the idols of their own hearts instead of the Creator who is blessed for ever more. Their ingratitude towards him, and their hostility against him ; their injustice, rapacity, and cruelty to one another, have not been able to shut against them his liberal hand, or to stop the current of his bounty. He makes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust : he not only endures the wicked with much long-suffering, but he unweariedly loads them with his benefits, and crowns them with loving-kindness and tender mercies. Behold the infinitude of the divine

goodness in this procedure of the God of all power and perfection, towards those who have merited his displeasure, and concerning whom he himself has declared that there is none righteous, no not one! Does not this furnish stronger evidence that the Lord is good, and that his tender mercies are over all his works, than if this goodness had been exercised towards beings in a state of perfect innocence and holiness?

III. The benevolence of God is shewn in providence; in his upholding and governing the world which he has formed. While he confers life, and no inconsiderable share of happiness on all his creatures, he preserves that uniformity in the order of his natural and moral government, which is necessary to the existence and improvement of the human race. Is it possible to observe that harmony of arrangement which prevails throughout the animate and inanimate creation,—that reciprocal adjustment of plan between instinct and the object of its gratification—that provision which is continually made for the wants and the enjoyments of every living creature, without gratefully admiring the goodness of God. Behold a constant succession of living beings coming on the stage of existence, acting according to the peculiar habits of their different tribes, possessing the same susceptibilities of enjoyment with the same means of gratification, and urged on, not by pain, but by pleasure, in fulfilling the mighty and beneficent designs of providence. Who can witness this spectacle—this scene of infinite complicacy and unvaried regularity, in which God is presenting to our view in uninterrupted suc-

cession the immediate results of creating power, and the contrivances of wisdom and love, without feeling impressed with the extent of that goodness which pervades all his operations, and on which all his purposes are founded. The elements are the ministers of his will, and are carrying on the designs of his government. "Fire and hail, snow and vapour, and stormy wind, fulfil his word," and are the necessary agents in completing the scheme of paternal kindness. "The Lord is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works. The eyes of all wait on thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing."

Further; the goodness of God is shewn in his providence, by his rendering all his dispensations in relation to the happiness and improvement of each individual, a subject of gratitude and praise. We are taught in the Scriptures, that the minutest circumstances are under his direction and control; that even a sparrow does not fall to the ground without his permission; and that the hairs of our head are all numbered. We learn that the bounds of our habitation are determined; that our days on earth are appointed; and that all things work together for good to them that love God. If each of us will take a survey of his own history, what illustrations will it afford of paternal goodness, and what grounds for thankfulness to our heavenly Father. It was he who provided for us the tender food that first nourished us, that implanted in the bosom of the mother that affection which made her sacrifice her own ease to our enjoyment, and whose

endearing fondness awakened and cherished the kindly feelings of our infant hearts.

His providence our life sustain'd,
 And all our wants redress'd,
 When in the silent womb we lay,
 And hung upon the breast.

Have not each of the years that have intervened been marked with innumerable blessings? May not each of us say, in the recollection of all the way through which the Lord our God has led us, My Father, thou hast been the guide of my youth? While on looking back we see the woeful extent of our disobedience, we cannot discover any abatement of the goodness and compassion of God. Even in the visitations of his providence which have been most painful,—when deprived of parents, or friends, or sources of happiness, to which we had attached peculiar importance, have we not had reason afterwards to mark in these bereavements the kindness of God, the salutary chastisement of the Father of our spirits, correcting us for our profit, that we might be made the partakers of his holiness? Does not the experience of each justify him in saying, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes; before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word.”

Nor is it merely in affliction in general that the goodness of God is manifest, but in its peculiar adaptation to our individual circumstances. Our chastisements have had a designed reference to the dispositions which they are intended to improve, and to the faults in our character which it is their object to correct.

Whatever be the idol that withdraws our heart from God, and which engages those affections that should be fixed supremely on Him, the divine providence, which makes our moral and religious improvement in connexion with our happiness the object of its care, will sooner or later remove from us. And why should we repine at the pain which its removal may inflict, when it is the means of saving us from far greater evils, and forms a part of the discipline necessary for fitting us for the kingdom of our Father? The chastisement, while it is in all cases less than our iniquities deserve, is mercifully intended for our individual improvement. For though the Lord cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men. "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies."

Further; the goodness of God is shewn in his providence, by his preserving from age to age the order and happiness of society. In illustration of this we might notice the restraints which he lays on the passions of the people, not only by human government and laws, but by his invisible operation. We might also notice the way in which he promotes the good of the whole, by giving to the different members of the community different inclinations, and by allowing each to act according to the peculiar turn of

his own mind. Nor can we help observing his regard to society, by the uniform testimony which his providence bears against the sins which disturb it. While he, for the greater part, reserves the punishment of those who sin immediately against himself to a future world, he generally interposes in this life, and visits with the marks of his displeasure, such as attempt to overturn the order and happiness of the community. Many have been as guilty in the sight of God, as Korah, or Adonijah, or Zimri, or Ahithophel, or Absolam, and who notwithstanding came to a good old age; but these were conspirators, or the abettors of conspiracy, and therefore came to a violent end. On the other hand, God often owns with richer temporal blessings those who contribute by their talents, or their labours, or their sufferings, to the safety, the happiness, and the prosperity of human society. These, and many other instances of a providence interposing for the good of mankind collectively, should surely lead us to admire the benevolence of God, whose tender mercies are seen in every relation, and in all the circumstances of life.

But his goodness is further manifest in providence by conferring on us so many religious advantages. These are not the less illustrative of the divine goodness that they are partial in their distribution. In our case they are numerous, diversified, and long continued; commencing with our being entrusted to religious parents who made it their business affectionately to teach us the way of salvation; and prolonged in a faithful ministry of the Gospel by which God has been entreating us to be reconciled to himself. We

have that volume which has been given by inspiration of God, which exhibits an exhaustless treasury of mercy for a fallen and a guilty world, which extends the promise of everlasting life to the penitent and believing, and which irradiates with its light the darkness through which it conducts us to glory. We have uninterrupted access to the throne of grace, and the promise of divine influence to give warmth to our devotions, and efficacy to our prayers; and in such invaluable privileges must we not see the goodness of Him who is long suffering to us ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance? May not He justly say of us, who makes our spiritual and eternal happiness the object of his care, "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"

CHAPTER X.

ON THE DIVINE GOODNESS.

I FORMERLY noticed, that unless we admit the moral corruption and the blame-worthiness of man, and that the present state is a state of imperfection preparatory to a higher dispensation, we cannot prove that God is infinitely good. But with this admission we have traced the infinitude of his benevolence through his works of creation, of providence, and of redemption, and have seen especially in the Cross of Christ a most

wonderful manifestation of his benignity and love. In the atoning sacrifice of his own Son, he has provided a remedy for the evil of sin, by which all who repent and who believe the Gospel, are made free from its condemnation, and are made meet for a state where they are freed for ever from its effects.

We fully admit that man, at present, is so far from being in the best possible or conceivable state, that his nature is corrupt and his state sinful, and that he is exposed to temptation and suffering. Yet we know that this was not the condition in which he was originally placed; for he was created after the image of God, in knowledge, in righteousness, and in true holiness. That he might have been preserved in this holy and happy state, without any such absolute restraint as would have destroyed his free will, we believe to have been quite possible. We know it to be possible, from the example of the man Christ Jesus, who, after he took human nature upon him with all its infirmities, remained holy, and harmless, and undefiled. And we know it to be possible, from the representation given us of the unchanging happiness of the glorified inheritors of heaven. Why man was placed in a situation in which he was liable to sin and to error, and in which it was known to the Creator he would yield to this liability, and fall, is a question much deeper than our faculties can fathom. The incomprehensibility of this fact, however, should not be allowed to operate as any derogation from the divine perfections of justice and goodness, the proofs of which are derived from so many other sources; and especially as the Scriptures reveal to us the rich provision which God has made for

removing the sin and the suffering of man, and how graciously he has designed the state of trial and of imperfection as a state of moral discipline, of progressive improvement, and of preparation for everlasting happiness. For the purpose of removing the guilt of man, God has provided an atoning sacrifice, and has laid his help upon One who is mighty ; for purifying his nature, he communicates the gift of the Holy Spirit ; and to enable him to exercise those affections and habits, the possession of which is necessary to fit him for the enjoyment of heaven, he converts the sorrow and affliction that have proceeded from the Fall into means of moral trial.

The benevolence of God thus overrules evil for promoting good ; and renders all the ills of human life,—disease, and sorrow, and death, as well as the inconveniences to which the inequalities of rank and of fortune are supposed to give rise, subservient to the improvement of man. It is evidently the design of God that in his present state of imperfection his faculties should be developed, and his character formed under the direction of heavenly influence ; and it is abundantly proved from the universal experience of mankind, that the inequalities of rank and of fortune which necessarily arise out of the circumstances in which he is placed are the most favourable for attaining these ends. When we consider the various purposes answered by the present permission of evil, the manifesting of the righteousness of the divine government in its retributions, and the moral trial and discipline which it forms, we shall not wonder either at its extent, or at what we are accustomed to regard as

its unequal distribution. This inequality is more in appearance than in reality; and it may confidently be maintained, that whatever may be the outward condition, the providence of God allots to each nearly the same sum of happiness. There is not in this world a complete scheme of retribution, because this world is a state of trial, and is only introductory to another; but with an enlarged view of the dispensations of God, we shall be satisfied that there is a much closer retribution, even in this life, than we are generally apt to suppose.

The best often suffer much here, because the best possess the renovated character of holiness but in part, and may be surpassed in those accomplishments to which Providence has affixed a present reward, by the very worst of mankind. Does it not happen, for example, that a man of christian integrity may be negligent in the management of his affairs; while another, totally void of probity, may be active and industrious in conducting his concerns? Now, in the ordinary course of things will not the man of integrity be involved in embarrassment, while the person who is void of it will escape this calamity? Do we observe persons without virtue and without character raised to situations which we would assign to different men? Let us recollect that the men to whom we would assign such situations, not infrequently, want the abilities and the activity most necessary for those who occupy them; while there are others destitute of morality, but possessing the kind of talent required, and who secure to themselves, therefore, the advantages annexed to its exercise and use. "The in-

dustrious knave cultivates the soil ; the indolent good man leaves it uncultivated. Who ought to reap the harvest ; who starve and who live in plenty ? The natural course of things decides it in favour of the knave ; the natural sentiments of mankind in favour of the man of virtue." Thus, in the great majority of cases, the sufferings and privations of men proceed immediately from themselves—from the strength and prevalence of corruption—from their committing sin, or neglecting to perform duty—from their indulging evil dispositions, or their deficiency in the exercise of such as are good—from the abuse of talents already in their possession, or their inattention to such as are within their reach.

The inequality of rank and of fortune, which has been loudly complained of as an evil, I would ascribe generally to the appointment of God, suited to the state of sinful and imperfect beings, and made conducive to their present and their future good. This inequality of station and circumstances must be regarded as the appointment of God, because it arises from the operation of the laws which he has established ; and a very slight survey of the valuable effects resulting from it, in the intellectual and moral improvement of mankind, will satisfy us that this ordinance of Heaven is, in regard to imperfect and sinful beings, at least founded in wisdom and in goodness.

We maintain, then,—and our argument has a sole reference to the present world, and to human nature in its present fallen state—we maintain that the inequality of rank and of fortune, which obtains in social society, is necessary to the progressive intellectual

improvement of man. This affirmation is made while we have in our view the ancient and modern history of man, and the present state of the nations on our globe, in so far as travellers and voyagers have made us acquainted with it. Scarcely is there any people found living in a state of absolute equality, unless it be the Indians of North and South America. And in them we see human beings little raised above the inferior animals, whose highest enjoyment is indolence. Under a climate which would overspread them with plenty, they are often suffering the misery of scarcity and famine. Nor do they learn from the experience of former distress to use measures to prevent future evil. In them the active and intellectual spirit of man is almost dormant; and one of the most marked characteristics of its activity, curiosity, is totally wanting. Traverse the whole globe, and the nearer you find any people approaching to equality of rank and condition, the less are the faculties of the human mind developed or exercised; and the reason is obvious. Every stimulus, and especially the stimulus of a living example of successful industry, is wanting, to overcome the natural apathy and indolence of human nature. But introduce a division of property among them, and let the law be established that whatever each of them shall hereafter obtain, shall be considered as his exclusive possession, and from that hour industry and intelligence will advance; and industry and intelligence will in their turn give rise to literature and refinement, and to all the arts which either adorn human life, or minister to its enjoyment*.

* The reader will remark that the sentiment, and nearly the same words of this paragraph, occur in the illustrations of the wisdom of God,

But that which is favourable to the progress of intelligence in man is also favourable to his virtue. It is so far from being true, as the patrons of equality assert, that if we would reduce all conditions to equality, the great occasions of crime would be cut off,—we should only cut off the great occasions and incentives to virtue without any corresponding deduction from the score of vice. Multiply the relations of man, and you multiply the motives to virtue; you raise him in the same proportion in the scale of accountable beings. His character is formed, not in a state of stagnant repose, but amid circumstances which awaken his energies, which exercise his judgment and prudence, which try his fidelity and uprightness, which place before him the temptation, but which present him with a powerful motive to rise superior to its influence. If we judge from the experience of mankind, we must believe that it is in such circumstances alone that man attains any high degree of virtue; and the providence of God has therefore ordained that it should be in such circumstances that mankind should necessarily be placed. This is the field on which the brightest ornaments of humanity, whether in the Heathen or Christian world, have appeared and shone*.

It is easy to fix on the evils incident to civil society, and to impute them to that inequality of property and rank which arises unavoidably out of the present circumstances of man. It is not recollected, that to a being fallen and corrupted, evil is the effect, not of his outward situation, but of his inward habits of mind, and that whatever change is made on his external

* See Sumner's *Records of the Creation*.

circumstances, till there be a change within, evil will exist. Many of the evils complained of, as prevailing in civil society, are solely imputable to the improvidence and corruption of man. The poor, in such a state of things, we shall always have with us, because the order of providence renders it necessary that some should be poor; but this order does not render it necessary that any should be in indigence. "These conditions, it must ever be remembered, are essentially distinct and separate. Poverty is often both honourable and comfortable; but indigence can only be pitiable, and is usually contemptible. Poverty is not only the natural lot of many, in a well-constituted society, but is necessary, that a society may be well constituted. Indigence, on the contrary, is seldom the natural lot of any, but is commonly the state into which intemperance and want of prudent foresight push poverty; the punishment which the moral government of God inflicts in this world upon thoughtlessness and guilty extravagance. It is one of the moral advantages of civil society, that every condition has a tendency to sink into the degree immediately below it, unless that tendency is counteracted by prudence and activity; and the descent which from the higher ranks becomes degradation, from the lower becomes indigence." The poorest man in a well-ordered society has not only many conveniences and comforts that are unknown in a state where all are on a footing of equality, but he may possess all the means of present happiness, health, and peace, and the good hope of eternal life.

But after deducting from the sum of human evil the

very large proportion which is justly referrible to the folly and the corruption of man, and which should be, therefore, kept out of view when forming our estimate of the benevolence of God, there remains much which man cannot by any forethought or prudence prevent. And it is remarkable, that those who have been chiefly distinguished by the divine favour, have been not less distinguished by the extent of their trials and their sufferings. Of this we have an example in the characters which the Apostle enumerates to the Hebrews, and in the early converts to Christianity, whose faith and sincerity were tried by persecutions which continued with few intermissions during the three first centuries. Here, it is alleged, we have a striking instance of the partial distribution of good and evil—evil allotted to men in proportion to their piety and excellence, and good communicated to others almost in proportion to their impiety and moral worthlessness. Now, whatever is the explanation of this fact, and before I attempt to offer any, let us recal to mind the observations which I formerly made in support of the opinion, that there is in this life a much greater degree of just retribution than we are apt to suppose. It should also be noticed that though the sufferings of the righteous often enduring adversity be more observable, the sufferings of the prosperous wicked are not less real, and because seated in the mind, are far more intense and poignant. The feelings which God has connected with our nature inflict that punishment on the guilty now, which, in a far higher degree, he himself will hereafter judicially award. These feelings, for the present, become the

avenger of his law; and their influence is often sufficiently powerful to darken the splendours of a court, and to impart additional honour to the gloom of a prison. No external circumstances can deprive the humble expectants of happiness through the Gospel of many sources of enjoyment; and no distinction of rank, and no elevation of honour, can always suppress in the wicked a sense of wretchedness and degradation.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CONSIDERATION OF THE GOODNESS OF GOD, *CONTINUED.*

THE question returns, how can we reconcile with the infinite goodness of God, those evils which man cannot possibly by his wisdom or his conduct prevent, and a large share of which the servants of God are always called to endure? They are foretold by Him whose servants] they are, "that in the world they shall have tribulation,—that it is through much tribulation they must enter into the kingdom of God,"—and that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." And in accordance with this testimony, the sublimest representation which is given us of glorified redeemed in heaven, holds them forth to our view as "having come out of great tribulation, and having washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

It is a sufficient reply to this question, though not

the only reply that can be given to it, that man is guilty, and therefore deserves to suffer ; and that, though all who believe and obey the Gospel are relieved from this guilt, and delivered from exposure to future punishment on account of it, it perfectly accords with boundless benevolence and mercy, that God should make temporary sufferings, due to them on account of sin, the means of trial and preparation for a state which is sinless. The sufferings, which no forethought and no integrity of man can prevent, are natural to a state of apostacy and revolt ; and they to whom the largest proportion of them is allotted, however exalted may be their piety, will ever acknowledge, that they are far less than their iniquities deserve. Those sufferings are, besides, through the tender mercy of God, converted into means of moral discipline, which operate not merely in checking the progress of transgression, but in correcting, improving, and purifying the heart, and in adapting the whole inner man to a higher and a happier state. He who appoints us to suffer and to endure, in thus converting evil into means of good, has a regard to the chief and the eternal happiness of his creatures, and shews by the very afflictions which he calls us to feel, the exercise of his compassion as well as of his wisdom. If, indeed, the existence of man were limited to the present life, it might be doubtful with some, whether this spiritual improvement could be considered an adequate compensation for the suffering of positive evil—the endurance of pain, and disease, and sorrow. If man be only to exist for a moment, we should be apt to say, let that be a moment of unmixed enjoyment. But

when reason suggests, and revelation assures us, that an existence of an endless duration is assigned to man, that the course through which he is passing in this life is preparing him for the enjoyment of another, and that the happiness of immortality will bear some proportion to the holy and spiritual attainments made in this his earlier state of being, every doubt is removed; and on the bed of sickness or of death, we can believe in His infinite mercy and love, who makes our "light affliction, which is but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." To deepen our conviction of this important truth, and to be satisfied that all things under the direction of the moral government of God, are made to work together for good to them that love Him, let us see how fully trials and afflictions, of whatever kind, conduce to this end.

I. These trials and afflictions exercise and strengthen our best affections and habits. There are certain of our virtues that could scarcely have been formed, but for the scenes of trial and moral discipline through which we have to pass. How could we have patience, at least, how could we ascertain its existence and strength, without affliction to exercise it; or fortitude, without dangers and difficulties to encounter; or resignation to the will of God, if our condition required no acquiescence; or the necessary and commanding habit of self-denial, if our circumstances were greatly different from those in which we are placed? If these, as well as other christian graces, are strengthened by exercise—graces which are so essential to the happiness of heaven, does it not shew that the loving-kind-

ness of our heavenly Father surrounds us with means, however painful, calculated to improve them? Is there not in the influence of sorrow, and especially when accompanied with the diviner influence of religion, something which has a tendency to soften the human heart? It is on this account that it is better to go to the house of mourning than to that of gladness. We cannot remain thoughtless while we visit the abode of disease, and misery, and despair; while we witness the bereavements of the widow and the orphan; while we see the friend of our heart suffering the bitterness of death; or while we bid a final farewell to the guide of our youth, the tender parent, whose privilege perhaps it was to make knowledge and piety the happiness of our lives. Will not the dominion of pride, and vanity, and worldliness be weakened, amid scenes where all human hopes become fallacious, and where the mind, deprived of every other source of consolation, seeks relief in that pure religion which is the only abiding companion of helplessness and sorrow? Do we not learn from experience, that it is in such circumstances that spiritual and devotional feelings are peculiarly cherished—those feelings and affections which fit us for the society of the spirits of the just made perfect, and for the immediate presence of God? “Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth; therefore, despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty.”

Perhaps, to the view of angels, our world affords not a spectacle of greater interest and moral loveliness than a truly christian family overtaken with affliction, assailed by disease and poverty, but animated under

them by the hope of the Gospel,—and long cast as a burden on the kind and constant ministry of one of its inmates. There are affections here awakened and cherished that will find their noblest exercise in the heavenly world; where those afflictions, to which, under the Holy Spirit, they owe their strength, will be no more. What spirituality of mind, what fortitude, and patience, and trust in God are kept in exercise in a situation where the lingering trial is scarcely noticed by the world, and in a solitude where the sympathy and support of an unseen and almighty Friend are the only source of consolation!

If, then, true holiness be essential to real happiness, and if, under the dispensation of divine grace, affliction be made the means of promoting it in the soul, he surely must be in the best situation for obtaining a meetness for heaven, who must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God. In place of repining at the severity of the discipline by which we are prepared for future happiness, it becomes us rather to adopt the triumphant language of the Apostle, and say, “We reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.”

II. The pressure of affliction is greatly lessened by the views which the Gospel gives of future happiness. Revelation has clearly shewn the connexion between this state of being and a future, and the sub-

serviency of all the divine dispensations in time to the glories of eternity. It tells us that this is only an introductory state of existence,—a state of moral discipline, of probation, and trial. As a christian, I am called to believe that the afflictions which I endure are the necessary corrections and trials of my heavenly Father, of whose grace and goodness I have had so large an experience, and who chastens me for my profit, that I may be the partaker of his holiness. The providence of God has appointed us to pass through much tribulation, but is not the burden greatly lightened by being made acquainted with its gracious design, and knowing that its end will be everlasting life? It was this confidence as to the high purposes which all suffering subserves, this knowledge of its temporary duration, and of its being the means of making meet for eternal happiness, that made the Apostle on the confines of another world, utter the language of exulting anticipation: “I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

Had we been doomed to suffer the evils of this life in a state of painful uncertainty as to another, there would have been nothing alleviating in our condition. But now there is a state of undecaying purity and felicity revealed to our view; and we are assured, that our present afflictions, whether proceeding from

the folly and corruption of our fellow-creatures, or from causes over which our fellow-creatures have no control, are the means of preparing us for a state of endless happiness, where all the evils to which we now are liable are succeeded by a fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore.

III. The Son of God himself was appointed to enter on immortal happiness and glory through suffering. "It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." This, indeed, is a peculiar case, the case of a being perfectly innocent, and highly exalted, suffering as if he were guilty; and the reason is obvious. He became the representative, and substitute of sinners; and he was viewed and treated by the divine government as though the character of those, whose substitute he was, really belonged to him. While he bore the sin of many, he was numbered with transgressors. He was made sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

It behoved this divine person, in becoming the deliverer, the guide, and the pattern of his people, to enter on the same course of trial and affliction. If Christ had not suffered, we should have wanted those lessons of humility, of self-denial, and of universal holiness, which stoicism could not teach, and which it never entered the heart of the loftiest moralist of the heathen world to conceive;—those lessons of patience, and resignation, of fortitude and meekness, and devotedness to the will of God, which the life of the Saviour

presents. By becoming poor, he made poverty honourable; by shunning the grandeur of human elevation, he lowered its value; by bearing our griefs and carrying our sorrows, he has made affliction an instructive monitor; and by becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, he exhibits this last enemy as despoiled of dominion. In his cross we have a spectacle most deeply calculated to humble the pride of human glory, to shew us the utter insignificance of the world, and the worth of that holiness which he designs us to regain, and of that eternal happiness which it fits us to enjoy. This sublime object of contemplation teaches us, not that pain is no evil, and that external things are indifferent; but that pain, and suffering, and death, are the attendants on the narrow and sanctified path to heaven, and are made conducive, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, to our meetness for the glory in which they terminate.

The chief end, it is true, for which the Saviour suffered, was to make an atonement for the guilt of man. "He suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring sinners to God." But in his afflictions he was our pattern; and he has left us an example that we should follow his steps. If it was necessary for him to learn obedience by the things which he suffered, how much more necessary is it for creatures so erring and guilty as we are, whose progress in holiness is so slow, and who require to be weaned from this world by painful dispensations! Does it become us to repine at the gracious appointment of God in prescribing so rugged a course to immortality, when his own Son, the Saviour of our race, has trod the same path

to glory? He tells us, that the way cannot be otherwise than safe that he has consecrated; he bids us look to his example and be encouraged; and to the crown and the kingdom prepared for us, and to persevere. He, the forerunner in tribulation, and the thousands who have followed after him, have made the path of suffering the path of true dignity and honour. They have shewn us that God rewards his faithful servants in this life, not by giving them repose, and affluence, and unclouded prosperity, but by placing them in situations of difficulty and trial,—situations in which they are required to struggle with adversity and to overcome it,—situations in which they are called to endure affliction, but to rise above it—and to leave their example for the instruction and encouragement of others, to teach them that wisdom and happiness consist in the favour of God, in obedience to his will, and in meetness for heaven.

Thus have I attempted to vindicate the goodness, and to shew the infinite benevolence of God, in his government of the world. His benevolence is shewn in the creation of all things, and in the providence by which all things are conducted. It has been especially shewn to man after he had sinned, and fallen from his original holiness and happiness. His mercy was revealed to the first transgressors in the promise of a great deliverer. It was afterwards more fully made known to Abraham, and to his posterity, among whom the ministry of the prophets and the typical rites of the law were established. In the fulness of the times the promised deliverer came, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be for salvation to the end of the

earth. He, by his atoning death, has obtained the pardon of sin, reconciliation with God, grace to renew and to sanctify our nature, and happiness that will never end in a glorious kingdom of which he is the head. In virtue of his mediation we are now placed in a state of trial, and have all our afflictions and distresses converted into means of religious improvement. He raises our hope, if we indeed believe on him, and follow him, to an eternal state of happiness in which the evils of this life will be altogether unknown, where God shall be our everlasting light, and the days of our mourning shall be ended. Then shall the present economy terminate, when "the heavens shall pass away with great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up." The love and mercy of God in all his dispensations to man will be then fully displayed and vindicated. A voice will be heard out of heaven, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

CHAPTER XII.

THE CONSIDERATION OF THE GOODNESS OF GOD, *CONTINUED.*

HAVING directed our attention to the goodness of God, as discovered by the light of reason, and in the works of creation and providence, let us now consider the manner and the extent in which it is made known to us by the Scriptures. We may indeed expect that a revelation from God will diffuse a light on all the conduct of his providence, as superior to that of nature, as the glories of the meridian sun are to the meteor, whose splendour is chiefly indebted for its brilliancy to the darkness that surrounds it.

The mere act of conveying to mankind a revelation of himself, of his counsels, and of his will, is of itself a proof of the kindness and benevolence of God towards us. The necessity of such a revelation is implied, not merely in the acknowledged weakness and imperfection of human nature, but in the doubts and difficulties that are felt concerning the divine goodness. God has in infinite condescension met this necessity by giving us in the sacred Scriptures that very knowledge which we require, and which is most essentially connected with our duty and happiness.

He has given us this knowledge, in the first place, respecting his own perfections and character; and especially concerning his goodness. All nature, indeed, proclaims the infinite beneficence of its Author: but all history tells us, that without revelation this beneficence is obscurely recognised; that the notions

which in this situation have been actually entertained have led to superstition and cruelty. The general prevalence of this painful apprehension of divine wrath is no doubt chiefly owing to conscious imperfection and depravity : the fact, however, is incontrovertible, and so obvious to every one who has attended to the subject, that it is maintained there is no nation mentioned in history, which we cannot reproach with having more than once made the blood of its citizens stream forth, in holy and pious ceremonies to appease the Divinity when he appeared angry, or to move him when he appeared indolent. The universal prevalence of human sacrifices throughout the Gentile world, is a decisive proof of the light in which the human mind, unaided by revelation, is disposed to view the Divinity; and clearly evinces, how little likelihood there is in the supposition, that unassisted reason could discover the sufficiency of repentance to regain the favour of an offended God*. The Ethiopians, the Phœnicians, the Egyptians, the Persians, the Chinese, the ancient Indians, and all the nations of whom we have any record, made the blood of human victims copiously flow to appease the wrath of avenging deities. How false are the conceptions, as to the goodness of God, of the mildest and the most civilized of the Heathen nations at the present day, judging from the religious rites that are practised among them. The sanguinary superstitions of the Hindoos, attested by the most respectable eye-witnesses, are so cruel and degrading, so repugnant to what those who enjoy the blessings of Christianity denominate natural feeling, that the

* Macgee on the Atonement.

most sceptical can scarcely fail to acquiesce in the opinion, that a state of nature is a state of ignorance, of moral debasement, and of painful uncertainty, as to any knowledge of the character of the Deity and the final destinies of man.

The truth of these statements is confirmed by the testimony of the Apostle. Alluding to the discoveries which God had made of himself in the works of nature, and to the guilt of mankind in reference to those discoveries, he says; "That the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead; so that they are without excuse; because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and to four-footed beasts, and creeping things:—who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever, Amen *."

Thus, a revelation from heaven was necessary to make known to us the character, and especially the goodness, of God. Such a revelation has been given us;—a revelation which assures us not merely that God is essentially benevolent, but of his peculiar kindness to us; which discloses this kindness operating in regard to us in the contrivance and in the accomplishment of a great redemption;—a revelation which con-

* Rom. chap. i. ver. 19—24.

tains the promise of pardon commensurate with the extent of our apostacy, and misery, and guilt; and which conveys this promise in such endearing language, and unfolds this mercy by such unequivocal proofs of abounding liberality, as to leave us no feelings to express but those of gratitude, and no language in which our feelings can be uttered but that of praise. The Creator has graciously revealed himself as our protector and governor, and as the God of our salvation; he has made known to us the relations which he bears to us, and the love and duty which we owe to him. The connexion which subsists between this world and the next is now clearly disclosed; and that the present dispensation is to terminate in a state of endless happiness on the one hand, or, of misery on the other. Light is shed on all the conduct of providence; the evils which exist in the present life are accounted for without impeaching the divine beneficence; and the certainty of a future state of rewards and punishments, which was the object of hope, rather than of firm belief, is now fully established. We are not only shewn what shelves and rocks we must escape, but the particular course we must steer; what star we must have in our eye, what compass we must observe, what winds and gales we must pray for, if we would arrive at last at eternal bliss.

But as it is in the work of redemption that God has particularly shewn the benevolence and benignity of his nature; it is to this that I would at present direct my attention. The disclosure of this astonishing work, were it not for our long familiarity with it, could not fail to fill us with grateful admiration of the

riches of the divine goodness, freely extended to the helpless and guilty, and abounding where sin has reigned unto death. “ 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. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” The love of God is manifested in the origin of human redemption, in the manner and in the means of its accomplishment, and in its everlasting efficacy.

Let us first consider its origin. This is to be traced to the source of all goodness, and is itself the greatest proof that this goodness is boundless. “ God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son, that whoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life.” The redemption of man is entirely of undeserved favour. While it presents a way in which sin may be pardoned, the consequences of transgression are held forth to our view through the medium of an awful atonement. This atonement, though fully coinciding with the natural suggestions of the human mind, as to the necessity of something intervening between Him who is infinitely holy, and pure, and a guilty creature, could only have proceeded from the boundless wisdom and compassion of God. Were the objections to the divine goodness, arising from the existence of evil, much more powerful than they are, the doctrine of forgiveness and reconciliation through the death of Christ, is more than sufficient to refute them. In opposition to every seeming reason to the contrary, he surely must be considered as infinitely benevolent, who, by the sufferings and

death of his own Son, has procured eternal redemption for us.

Let us farther consider, in the second place, the nature of the atonement, and the manner in which it has been made. The Scriptures uniformly represent the person by whom the great sacrifice for sin was offered, as in a peculiar sense the Son of God; and the divinity of his nature, and the elevation of his character, are justly considered as enhancing and developing the goodness of God toward mankind. He, who was the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. This was the mighty Deliverer to whom the accomplishment of man's redemption was assigned; and that he might finish a salvation for all people, it was necessary, according to divine appointment, that he should offer himself a sacrifice on the cross. That his sufferings and death were designed as an atonement for sin, we have the unequivocal testimony of the sacred word. An inspired Apostle affirms, that the sacrifices of the Levitical law were merely intended to shadow forth, or prefigure, the sacrifice of the Messiah, and that they had neither meaning nor efficacy but what was included in their typical signification. The same language which is used in reference to the sacrifices of the law, is applied both by Prophets and Apostles to the sufferings of Christ;

and are we not entitled to conclude from the unvarying use of this phraseology, that the death of Christ should be viewed as a full and proper atonement for sin? “ He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him ; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way ; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He poured out his soul unto death ; and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

There is, indeed, much in the work of redemption that is mysterious and incomprehensible to us. But it is enough for us to know that the means employed for its accomplishment were of divine appointment, and that these means, even to our limited apprehensions, seem to possess a moral fitness for answering the end for which they were designed. Can we view the sufferings of Christ, without feeling impressed with the evil of sin, the fearful circumstances in which the offender against the divine government is placed, and the boundless compassion of that God who has not spared his own Son, but who has delivered him up for us all ? And is not this impression necessary to awaken man from the insensibility which sin induces on the mind, and to elevate all the affections of the heart to the love of what is spiritual and holy ? Where do we learn so impressively the guilt which sin entails, and the punishment which sin deserves, as at the cross of Christ ? Where can we witness the greatness of the divine mercy more affectingly dis-

played than in the atonement which was made by the sufferings and death of the Son of God? Had the end been attained without the same means, we must still have admired the goodness of God; but the display of his goodness would, in this case, have been unaccompanied with so full a disclosure of holiness and mercy, of justice and benignity, as is given us by the humiliation and death of our Redeemer. It is amid the darkness of that night when the illustrious Friend and Benefactor of mankind was despised and rejected of men; when, with cruel and impious indignity, he was mocked, scourged, and condemned to be crucified; when in the garden of Gethsemane, he was in agony, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground, that we learn by the most awful example, that the wages of sin is death, and that the gift of God, which is eternal life, can only be bestowed through Jesus Christ our Lord.

It is only by a personal participation in this atoning sacrifice that any are made free from the consequences of sin. He who formed us, and who is so soon to judge us, has given satisfactory proof that it is not contrary to the goodness of his nature to permit us to be miserable; and if it be not contrary to his goodness in this world, what good ground have we for concluding that it will be contrary to it in that which is to come? Has not the Christian revelation told us, in language which cannot be misunderstood, that the sorrows of this life, to those who are not washed from their sins in the blood of the cross, terminate in evils still more insupportable, in a punishment of an endless duration? It is the atonement of Christ alone that can

protect any of us from the wrath to come. Jesus has been sent forth as a propitiatory sacrifice through faith in his blood, to declare the righteousness of God in the remission of sins, that he might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. This is the sacrifice in which God is well pleased, by which his attributes are exhibited and glorified, by which his boundless mercy extends to the lowest depths of guilt and wretchedness, and by which he is reconciling the world to himself, not imputing unto man their trespasses. Whether we regard the nature of the sacrifice, the dignity of the sufferer, or the extent and efficacy of the sufferings which were endured, we cannot conceive how the benevolence of God could be more fully or more affectingly displayed.

Let us now, in the last place, consider the efficacy of the atonement. It has been divinely appointed to atone for the guilt of sin, and by introducing human beings again into the favour of God, to secure for them a state of existence totally free from sin and from suffering. "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive."

That the atonement of Christ is infinitely efficacious, we learn from the fact of its being fully adequate to the attainment of the ends for which it was made. The laws of nature were arrested in their course, as a proof to every succeeding age, that the illustrious Visitor of our world, who died on the cross, was its sovereign, and that the object for which he became obedient unto death has been attained. Jesus was laid in the tomb; but on the third day he rose again, and shewed that he had obtained dominion over death

and the grave .In testimony of the divine acceptance, he was raised up to the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens ; exalted a prince and a Saviour, above all principalities or powers, or any name that is named whether in this world or in that which is to come. The great efficacy of the atonement and sacrifice of Christ appears in the number of blessings which it has procured for them that believe on him,—blessings which are co-extensive with the spiritual necessities of man. There is here no restriction by considerations of moral worth, of rank, or country, or circumstances,—there is no restriction but that which man imposes, no partiality but that which proceeds from the narrowness of our own apprehensions. The language of the Redeemer is, “ Preach the Gospel to every creature.” The healing rays of the Sun of Righteousness are not to be confined to any particular region of the globe ; but like those of the natural sun, they are designed to illuminate every part of the world ; to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide their feet into the way of peace. The atonement becomes a pledge of the extent and perpetuity of the divine grace and goodness ; and like that sign which was of old established in the heavens, it forms an unambiguous proof to all ages and to every kindred and tongue that Jesus is the only and the all-sufficient Saviour.

Here is a solution of those difficulties respecting the benevolence of God, which we are unable to remove by any considerations derived merely from nature. It is allowed that goodness predominates around us ; but why such a fearful mixture of evil ! Why is there

a transition so appalling, and I would add, so unnatural, as that of death from time into eternity? To say that the evil which exists in the various forms of sorrow and death is rendered subservient to the moral improvement of man, is only informing us of one of the beneficent uses to which it is applied, and not accounting for its introduction into the world. Was it not possible to confer on man a constitution by which he might attain to the highest degrees of holiness without enduring the most painful sufferings, and undergoing the most violent privation? It is revelation alone that can fully explain the origin of evil, and it is the atonement alone that can fully remove it. The one informs us that death entered into the world by sin, and the other, that without an expiation the dominion of death would remain undiminished. The Son of God has made the expiation which was required, and in consequence of its eternal efficacy, has become the Author of salvation to them that obey him: "that as sin has reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

The reign of death, indeed, still continues, but it is the reign of a vanquished enemy. In this sense Christ has abolished death, and has brought life and immortality to light. On our path to glory we are allowed to be occasionally harassed by the foe; but it is only that the ultimate triumph may be more splendid and complete. The prospect has become bright before us; heaven, whither our illustrious Forerunner has for us entered, is open to receive us; and, according to his promise, we look for an everlasting habitation,

where there shall be no more sorrow nor death. The consummation of the merciful economy under which we live, by the removal of sin, and misery and pain, through the efficacy of means so remote from human reason, and yet so worthy of infinite wisdom, will furnish the fullest and an enduring exposition of the apostolic aphorism, "That God is love."

Thus it appears that the work of redemption, considered merely as the means of removing human guilt, forms a most affecting discovery of the grace and the goodness of God. If from the works of nature and of providence we learn that the Creator is good, we behold in the mighty scheme of redemption, from its first devolopement to its final consummation a tenderness of compassion, and an extent of benevolence, the height and the depth of which eternity cannot fully disclose. To endow us originally with the powers and susceptibilities of our nature, which elevate us so highly in the scale of being, and which shew us to have been made only a little lower than the angels—was a glorious display of the divine beneficence; but after these powers and susceptibilities were perverted, and employed in opposition to the holiness and authority of Him from whom they were obtained, to devise and execute our restoration from the guilt and ruin of the fall, was the greatest manifestation that can be either given or received of the love of God toward us. Hence the peculiar mode of expression which the sacred writers employ in speaking of the grace and compassion of God to guilty men. "God so loved the world, as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not

perish, but have everlasting life. Scarcely for a righteous man would one die, yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die; but God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.”

In what an affecting manner is this love displayed in the means that have been employed in expiating the guilt of man, and in averting from us that wrath which is the punishment of sin. Behold in the first promise of a future deliverer the source of that ray of light, which amidst the darkness of ages animated the hopes of the faithful, brightening with increasing splendour in the clearer horizon of the prophetic æra, till it was blended and lost in the effulgence of the Sun of Righteousness. Though the great salvation was predicted by all the prophets that have been since the world began; though the Levitical priesthood by its typical observances prefigured the great and the only adequate oblation; yet, it was in the fulness of the times that the sacrifice was offered which has given meaning to every preceding dispensation, which has reconciled earth to heaven, which has brought down the tabernacle of God among men, and which has procured for us an everlasting righteousness. In every part of this grand scheme of mercy and reconciliation,—in the means which were employed for its gradual development,—in the value and efficacy of the atonement on which it rests,—in the painful and bitter sufferings by which this propitiatory offering was made,—in the dignity and glory, as well as extent, of his humiliation, who came into the world for its accomplishment,—and in

the vast amplitude of its designs respecting the happiness of man,—in every light in which we can contemplate this subject, we discover in it an infinitude of benevolence and compassion to the human race.

How great is the comfort to know and to be assured, that by the sacrifice of the cross full atonement has been made for iniquity,—that Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us; and that there is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit. There is here an extent of efficacy which precludes despair, because it reaches to all peculiarities of guilt, and justifies freely all those who repent and who believe the Gospel: “for the blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God cleanseth us from all sin.” He who knew no sin, was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. This is the sure foundation on which the penitent sinner may build all his hopes of eternity; on which all the perfections of the Almighty unite in sanctifying and saving him who looks to it alone as his refuge, and in which he who humbly and sincerely trusts will be accepted on that day, when every pretension to human merit will vanish before the splendours of spotless and everlasting purity. Is not that God rich in mercy, who, in circumstances of apostacy and humiliation, devised and executed a plan by which mercy may triumph in our everlasting recovery,—is he not the Father of mercies, and the God of love? It is while viewing this love which passeth knowledge that the Apostle regards all evil as only momentary in its duration, as furnishing the

occasion of the fuller discovery of divine mercy, and as incapable of delaying his approach to a state of unmingled and eternal happiness.

How fully is the love of God shewn to us in the work of redemption, considered as the medium through which spiritual blessings are communicated ! As sin could not be removed without the atonement of Christ, so those spiritual benefits which it is the design of God to confer on his people are conveyed exclusively through this medium. It is from this alone that the Christian derives peace and joy in believing. It is by looking through faith to the cross that the penitent becomes acquainted with those relations to God and to eternity which before were overlooked, and that he discovers more clearly the extent and the purity of that law which is a transcript of the divine will, and according to the sentence of which he finds himself guilty. The designs of this atonement gradually unfold themselves to his view ; he perceives in it an adaptation to his case as a sinner which elevates his mind to the joy and confidence of hope ; it exhibits to him a glory in the character and perfections of God with which there is nothing to compare in the loveliness of nature ; and as his knowledge of the redemption of Christ increases, it becomes to him the pledge of forgiveness, and the source of peace and felicity. His experience thus accords with the remark of the Apostle ; “ If any man be in Christ he is a new creature ; old things are passed away, and all things are become new.”

But time would fail me to trace through the whole course of the Christian life the influence of the atone-

ment as the source of happiness, and the medium of spiritual blessings. It is those only who know the weakness of the human heart, and the deceitfulness of sin, who can fully appreciate the value of a never-failing fountain of purity and joy. They only know what it is to rest on the sacrifice of the cross as an unchanging ground of hope; a ground of hope that becomes dearer to their hearts, as they grow in acquaintance with themselves, and as they draw nearer to the tomb; and the glory of which, as the charm of every other object and pursuit gradually decays, becomes brighter and brighter, till it issues in the splendours of an everlasting day.

On this view of the character of God, so full of benevolence and benignity, the heart delights to dwell; and this is the view which the atonement of Christ strongly and peculiarly exhibits. I turn even from the loveliness of nature to contemplate the reign and the triumphs of mercy through the cross of Christ; and I anticipate the glory and the extent of these triumphs, when men shall be blessed in Jesus, and all nations shall call him blessed. Nor can I stop here, but taking the light of revelation for my guide, I behold, as the fair creation of almighty power, a new heaven, and a new earth, rising into being, where God himself shall dwell with men, where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying. This will be the end of an economy which has its origin in mercy, and its termination in immortal happiness and glory. In place, therefore, of dwelling with a discontented mind on the extent of suffering as it exists in the

world, let us rather think with gratitude and admiration on the goodness and love of God, who, by the obedience and death of his own Son, accomplished our redemption.

Let me now guard against the misunderstanding and the abuse of the doctrine which I have thus endeavoured to illustrate. Though the goodness of God is now extended to the evil and the unthankful, to the impenitent and unbelieving, his displeasure at the same time rests upon them, and the exercise of his goodness towards them will terminate with the present life. If we ask the profane and the irreligious, those who live without prayer and without God, whether they expect to be safe and happy in eternity, they will answer in the affirmative, and assign as the ground of their expectation, that God is good. The multitude of thoughtless persons who are unconcerned for their souls, and who neglect the great salvation, and whose religion, though it bear the Christian name, is nothing more than a refined system of deism, are supported by the same hope, and look to the goodness of God as the ground of it. Now, it is only necessary to read the New Testament to be satisfied that this is a fatal delusion. That God, whom we vainly imagine to honour by imputing to him a species of goodness suited to our own views, and adapted to our irreligion, regards the imputation as a foul affront offered to his nature and government. He has himself told us,—and he has done so with a frequency and solemnity which may well awaken our anxieties and our fears, that the period of his patience and long-

suffering towards the unconverted is confined to the present life,—that now is the season of merciful visitation—“that now is the accepted time, and that now is the day of salvation,—and that the Lord Jesus Christ will be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, to take vengeance on those who know not God, and who obey not the Gospel; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance. But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.” Hence it appears,

I. That God in his character is infinitely lovely and amiable. This is the obvious conclusion to which we are led by the consideration of his goodness. In comparison of his, what is the goodness or the excellency of the highest intelligences? How great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! It is this which gives to the character of the Divinity its highest glory, and which presents His character as an object on which the soul may for ever delightfully repose. Whatever happiness is enjoyed through the universe flows from this unmixed, unlimited fountain. If the principle of active, unwearied, persevering benevolence in a fellow-creature raises its possessor in our affection and esteem, can we withhold from Him the love of our heart and soul, to whose overflowing kindness we, and all who live, owe our being, and whose

benevolence, while it renders him altogether lovely, opens up before us prospects of unbounded and eternal happiness? There is goodness in him to an infinite extent, in all its possible modifications,—as supreme moral excellency, as good-will to all intelligent creatures,—as grace to the guilty and the undeserving,—as mercy to the miserable—as bounty to the necessitous—and the attributes of truth, and justice, and faithfulness. How encouraging the thought, that this goodness dwells in him who is almighty, unchanging, and eternal, under whose government we live, in whose hands our breath is, and whose are all our ways!

II. The goodness of God is a perpetual source of comfort. Of this goodness we have largely experienced during a greater or less number of years; and though we are not entitled to infer, from its bounty during the past, that it will continue bountiful in future, yet we are not without grounds for concluding, that if we receive it in the only way in which it is offered to sinners, it will communicate the richest variety of blessings in time and in eternity. We may go to the divine goodness, in the sure and certain hope of finding relief in it from all our necessities. Are we in poverty? How cheering is it to direct our thoughts to the goodness that feeds the ravens when they cry, and that supplies the want of every living thing. Are we in affliction, and tried with temptation? Let us turn to that compassion that does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men; and view it converting our sufferings into blessings, and making all things

work together for our good. Are the shades of death closing around us? We have no cause to fear, while looking with believing hearts to that boundless love by which the Saviour destroyed death and him that had the power of it, and has opened to his followers a glorious kingdom, from which death, and sorrow, and pain, shall be for ever excluded.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DOMINION AND SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD.

THE perfections which we have endeavoured to prove must essentially belong to God, render it evident that his dominion over all things is supreme and unalienable. To whom can the sovereignty of all things belong, but to him who has given being to all things, and who alone is capable of upholding and of governing the universe over which he presides? Ought not he to bear the supremacy, both because his wisdom, goodness, and power, are infinite, and because he is the creator of all things, and the final end for which all things exist? The Scriptures accordingly abound with statements concerning the sovereign dominion of God, founded on the perfection of his nature, and on the relation which he bears to all things as creator, preserver, and benefactor. "The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations. The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine; as for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them."

The term sovereignty, when applied to God, is not to be understood as signifying any thing arbitrary, any thing capricious, or that he ever does any thing without a reason founded in infinite wisdom and goodness, for its accomplishment. But God is sovereign,

inasmuch as he is Lord of all, and acts according to his will, independently and irresistibly, without giving any further account of his matters than seems good unto him. His government, while it is conducted with justice and with judgment, is at the same time conducted with the high authority which it becomes him to exercise, whose right and dominion are as universal as they are uncontrollable, who is the only Potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords. We may find in the blindness and corruption of man, a reason why a doctrine in itself so unquestionable as that of the Divine Sovereignty should be so frequently disputed, so generally resisted and denied. Even those who believe it, seem, in some instances, ashamed to acknowledge it, and shew the difficulty which is felt to act fully and practically on the admission of its truth. That all things, both beings and events, exist in exact accordance with the divine purpose, is a conclusion which necessarily follows from the scriptural representation of the dominion and sovereignty of God. Yet the doctrine involved in this conclusion is strenuously denied by some professing christians, as injurious to the divine character, and as incompatible with moral agency. Before attempting to give any explanation of this, let us consider more fully, in the first place, the nature and properties of the divine dominion and sovereignty ; and, secondly, the manner in which they are shewn in the government of the world.

SECTION I.

ON THE NATURE AND PROPERTIES OF GOD'S DOMINION AND SOVEREIGNTY.

Let us consider the nature and properties of the divine dominion and sovereignty. These terms are nearly synonymous, and, therefore, I shall often use only one of them as sufficiently denoting all that is included in both. The sovereignty of God is, in its nature, independent and absolute. He is God himself alone, and beside him there is none else. He possesses the most perfect freedom either of acting or of refraining from action,—of creating in the manner and at the time in which it is his pleasure to create,—of preserving the world and its inhabitants in being, or of allowing all things to return unto nothing,—of extending mercy to the fallen angels, and of leaving mankind for ever in a state of sin and misery; or of reversing this order, and passing by the angels that sinned, while grace is proclaimed to the human race. He may simply prescribe laws to his rational creatures, without any promise of reward to obedience, or he may prescribe laws accompanied with the most powerful motives to their observance. He may remove whatever good he bestows when it pleases him, without doing us any injustice. The reason, the life, the friends, the honour, and the happiness which he gives, he has an unquestionable right in a moment to withdraw. In judgment he may cause the clouds of heaven to refuse their rain, or in mercy he may command them to drop in fertilizing showers, and produce

abundance. To his own children he may allot poverty and affliction, while in the exercise of his patience as well as of his sovereignty he may give to wicked men riches and honours. To one nation he may communicate literature and arts, and all the institutions of a free and civilized people, while another nation may be suffering from ignorance, from barbarous institutions, from the misrule of its governors. In one family there may be a series of afflictions which no foresight nor prudence on the part of men can prevent, while the neighbouring family is generally prosperous, and exempted from the same visitations. "Cannot I do with you as this potter, saith the Lord? Behold as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. I know, saith Job, that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee."

The sovereignty of God being independent and absolute, cannot be limited, controlled, nor resisted, by any other being. He acts according to the plan of his own infinite wisdom, and worketh after the counsel of his own will. He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and compassion on whom he will have compassion. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom from generation to generation: "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" Unlike to all who rule by a mere delegated authority, God possesses an infinite right to act according to the purpose of his will, and infinite

strength to accomplish all his pleasure. All power is feebleness opposed to omnipotence, and all the contrivances of created intelligence are folly when running counter to the decrees of infinite wisdom. He who fills heaven and earth with his presence, may, for reasons unfathomable by us, allow his creatures to violate his laws ; but where can there be any thing to check that will which is in itself the source of all power, and which can remove into a state of nothingness that universe to which it has given being? “Thou wilt say, then, unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?”

We must beware of imagining that, because the dominion of God is independent and absolute, it is in any way arbitrary or tyrannical. It is conducted according to the infinite perfection and excellency of his own nature ; and is founded on righteousness, and wisdom, and goodness. Possessing these attributes to an infinite extent, it is impossible that any law or act of his government should not be holy, and just, and good. If he had conducted his government by absolute power only, then might he have removed the guilt and the impurity of his creatures without an atonement ; but his justice required a satisfaction, and therefore he could not. If power alone were the rule of his conduct, might he not reject the innocent and favour the guilty ; but the righteous Lord loveth

righteousness, and therefore he cannot but approve the upright and condemn the wicked. Though God, as the supreme Sovereign, has a right to act without giving any account of his matters, it does not therefore follow that no account can be given, or that any thing is done without the most profound wisdom. It is after the Apostle had been discoursing concerning the procedure of God in rejecting the Jews and in gathering in the Gentiles, in choosing one, and in leaving another, that he exclaims, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out?" In referring those dispensations of God, which are inscrutable to us, to the divine sovereignty, we thus acknowledge, not that there is anything arbitrary in these dispensations, but that God has an unquestionable right to conduct his government, without communicating the counsels by which its procedure is directed to us. But without any such communication, we know that justice and judgment are the supporters of his throne;—that he cannot, in virtue of the supreme excellency and perfection of his nature, but do what is right, and hate what is wicked and unjust;—that however hidden and deep his wisdom may be from the surface of those mighty works which at once strike the mind with the idea of omnipotence, it is, notwithstanding, the unerring rule according to which those works have been framed;—and that though his ways be dark and mysterious in regard to us, they are all founded on mercy as well as on truth and righteousness. His power, indeed, is absolute; for none can resist his will, or deliver out

of his hands; but his goodness is equal to his power, and furnishes a pledge to the universe that he, in the exercise of his sovereignty, will never inflict on his creatures any thing unjust, or ask from them any thing incompatible with their real honour and happiness.

How vast, then, and boundless is the dominion of God! "I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded." All the inhabitants of heaven are the ministers of his will. All the celestial worlds move by his word: "he telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names. Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and in all deep places. He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings for the rain; he bringeth the wind out of his treasuries." His dominion is felt, as a God of power and of justice by the rebels who inhabit the place of his wrath: as they cannot flee from his presence, neither can they cease to be subject to his control; nor to be the unwilling instruments of advancing his glory. Mankind have revolted from his authority, and have alienated from him their hearts, but they cannot withdraw from his dominion: not only does their obligations to love and to serve God remain unalterable, but in their state of deepest revolt and criminality God alone is their Lord and sovereign, and displays the exercise of this high sovereignty over them, in shewing his wrath, and in making his power known, though he endures with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and makes known the riches of his glory

on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory. In this world of rebels, into which suffering and misery have been so widely introduced, the thoughts of every heart, the movements of every individual, the counsels that are formed, the powers that are exerted, the objects that are pursued, are altogether under the control, and ultimate direction of God. The deceived and the deceiver are his. He leadeth counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools. He removeth away the speech of the trusty, and taketh away the understanding of the aged. He poureth contempt upon princes, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty. He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them; he enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them again.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MANNER IN WHICH THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD IS SHEWN IN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE WORLD.

THE ways in which God shews his sovereignty in conducting the affairs of the world are so numerous, and so clearly seen in the history of every individual, that we must confine our attention to a few of the more obvious and striking. Does not the character of God as our king and lawgiver, exhibit his right to command, and his dominion over us? Is not he the supreme Sovereign, “by whom kings reign, and princes decree justice,”—and by whose sentence the eternal

happiness or misery of every intelligent creature must be fixed? Does not he declare the extent of his dominion and sovereignty by fixing his law in the conscience, and conferring on every man the capacity of distinguishing between good and evil, and of feeling the obligation of rendering obedience unto God? And the more fully to illustrate his sovereignty, how often has he given laws to his creatures, which are binding upon them, not as unalterable principles of moral obligation, but solely in virtue of the will and the authority of Him by whom they are enacted. Of this description was the commandment which allowed our first parents freely to eat of all the trees in Paradise, excepting the tree of knowledge, of good and evil: a commandment for which no reason is assigned but the pleasure of the only Creator and Legislator, and which seems, therefore, designed to try man's obedience to the absolute sovereignty of his Maker and Lord. This commandment, unlike the precepts of the moral law, which obviously approve themselves as holy, and just, and good, to the understanding of man, was, in so far as we can see, neither good nor evil in itself, but received its authority solely from the will of God. He who illustrated his dominion and sovereignty by issuing such enactments, as well as by the splendour and majesty with which he promulgated the moral law from Sinai, has shewn the same high prerogatives of his nature and government, by arresting, and altering, and repealing, his own institutions. He cannot, indeed, command any creature, formed in his own image, to cease from loving and serving him; because this were to change

from being what he necessarily is, the God of infinite and immutable holiness and righteousness; neither can he reverse any of his own ordinances and laws, from any alteration in his counsels, or from any attempt to improve his original plans; but he effects changes in his procedure, in the exercise and for the manifestation of his sovereignty, and in mercy to the varying circumstances and wants of his creatures.

Thus, has God shewn his dominion over the constitution of the natural world by arresting its laws. In obedience to his command the sun stood still, or moved backward; the clouds retained their vapours, the earth refused its produce, the sea divided itself into an heap, and all the miracles of mercy and of power recorded in the Scriptures were performed. The whole ritual law given to the Jews, and binding on them in virtue of the will of their sovereign, was repealed by the same authority which enforced it, when its chief design in prefiguring the character and work of the Messiah was fulfilled. In the exercise of his high sovereignty he has made material alterations on the procedure of his government in regard to man after the fall, mercifully adapting it to the circumstances of apostate and guilty creatures, by revoking the law as a covenant of works, by transferring the penalty from the sinner to the chosen and appointed surety, and by proclaiming a new way of acceptance through a mediator. But for the indisputable right of God freely and independently to exercise his sovereignty, man would have remained for ever under the denunciations of the first covenant, unredeemed from the guilt, and unrenewed from the corruption of sin, and in a state of everlasting exclu-

sion and punishment from God's gracious presence. And can any good reason be given why he who had a right, in virtue of his sovereignty, thus to revoke one covenant, and to institute another, and so to alter the procedure of his government toward mankind, as to place them under an economy of hope and of mercy, placing within their reach his own appointed means of salvation;—can any reason be given, why in virtue of this same right he may not have selected the very number and persons to be saved, concerning whom he hath purposed that they shall never perish, but obtain everlasting life? Who can say that such an exercise of sovereignty would be unjust to those that are left without saving grace, when, if sovereignty had not been at all exercised, all must have inevitably perished? The right, in virtue of which God might have provided salvation for all, for fallen angels as well as for fallen men, may have been exercised, without any impeachment of the divine perfections, in procuring salvation only for a certain number.

But we shall be better prepared to acquiesce in this conclusion, when we have considered the ways in which God shews his sovereignty in our own individual history, and in his providential government of the world. How much of divine sovereignty is seen in the variety of circumstances in which all men are introduced into life, and in placing those circumstances altogether beyond their own control! The circumstances in which a child is born, determine, in a great measure, his future course and character; whether he is to be a prince or a peasant, rich or poor, learned or illiterate; whether he shall be civilized or savage, a

free man or a slave, a christian or a heathen. How different is the lot, and the probable destination, of the child born of christian parents in Britain, and that of the child born of heathen parents in Africa, or in the wilderness of America! In the one case he is surrounded from his infancy with the character, the objects, the usages of savage life, and the moral certainty is, that his own character will be formed in accordance with the same mode of living: in the other case he possesses as his birthright, the advantages and privileges of a native of the British Isles, is early made acquainted with some of the elementary principles of true religion, and is trained up in the midst of a free and civilized people. Without contrasting cases so remote from each other, we cannot but notice the diversity of allotment of children born under the same government, and ushered into life in the immediate neighbourhood of each other. One is born in a family of rank and of wealth, to inherit the rank and the wealth conveyed to him by his ancestors. From the hour of his birth is he surrounded with attendants to anticipate his necessities, and to furnish him with enjoyments. To the forming of his person, the opening, the instructing, and the strengthening of his mind, constant attention is shewn, and no expenses spared. From his youth up, his hereditary advantages secure for him the marked respect, and the ready obedience of many of his fellow-creatures. To these superior privileges of a temporal nature, are added others still more valuable, because they are religious and spiritual. By every persuasive motive is the great duty inculcated of remembering the Creator in the days of youth: of realizing his presence everywhere and at all times;

to regard the working of his hand in every event and circumstance of his lot ; of feeling while he renders to God his best obedience, his sinfulness and unworthiness, so as to look for acceptance altogether to the atonement and merit of the Redeemer ; of watching against the beguiling influence of sin, and of praying for deliverance from temptation ; of using with dependence on divine teaching, all the appointed means for growing in grace and in spiritual knowledge ; and throughout the whole of life of remembering that an account must be given at the judgment-seat of Christ, of all the deeds done in the body. From the earliest dawn of reason is he taught thus to believe, and feel, and practice.

Another child is born in a neighbouring cottage, of parents in poverty, in ignorance, and in vice. From the hour in which he is capable of feeling any want, is he accustomed to penury, and cold, and nakedness. He has been introduced into being, but he is left in a great measure unacquainted with its Author, its uses, and its end. In place of being qualified by a virtuous education to raise himself above indigence, he is taught to beg, and to steal, and to pass his life in vice and in idleness. Of his own character as a sinful and immortal being he knows little ; of the way of salvation through the Lord Jesus he is totally ignorant ; and of the awful realities that follow death he has scarcely heard, and never thinks. How different is his allotment, as well as his character, from the person born to temporal prosperity, and to spiritual privilege and enjoyment ! No one can doubt the exercise of divine sovereignty in determining that human beings should enter into life in circumstances so greatly diversified—

circumstances over which they have no controul, and which so generally, without the operation of any physical necessity, fix the future character and destiny.

The same divine sovereignty is farther shewn in the providence of God so frequently appointing to men a course of life very different from that which they intended to follow. How different often are the places of our residence, the duties assigned us to perform, and the friends by whom we are surrounded, from those which we originally contemplated! The great majority begin life in the pursuit of the same objects, wealth, honour, and enjoyment; but very few of the competitors ever reach the goal, or gain the prize to which they aspire. The merchant, after being almost within reach of the competency which he wished, sees, by circumstances over which he has no control, by the violence of the elements, or by an extraordinary depreciation of property, his wealth disappear, and himself, and his family, and his hopes, ruined. The husbandman, after having arrived at a comfortable independence, finds himself gradually involved in serious difficulty, and in irretrievable loss, by the great and unexpected fall in the price of his farm produce. The family of rank and fortune, proud of its hereditary distinctions, and guarded from dissolution by all the protection which legislative enactments can render, might seem certain of being conveyed with its honour and wealth to remotest generations; but in spite of all that human laws can do to prevent its extinction, it gradually decays, and is at length lost in the family of mankind.

Of the children in the same family, or in the same

seminary, how different in the course of life are the pursuits, the honours, the destinations, from those which were designed for them by their parents, or which they had confidently looked for themselves! Some were ushered into the world in what were deemed the most favourable circumstances, well educated, well connected, and well furnished; but became self-confident, bold in speculation, ambitious of soon being rich, till at length their property was lost by imprudence, their character by licentiousness, and they sunk into a premature grave before they had lived half their days. Others, with fewer advantages, without influence or friends to recommend them, but with the possession of talents, of industry, and perseverance, advanced to their object with a steadier and more successful aim, and found the wealth and distinction attained to which they aspired. But while they have reached to these, they are as far as ever from the happiness which they had promised themselves: this happiness at every succeeding step has eluded their grasp, and now that they are on the very summit of worldly greatness, they feel themselves destitute of real good. Does not all this shew us that the way of man is not in himself; that it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps? Does it not teach that God reigns as Sovereign among men, and that it is to his will we are to look for the knowledge of our duty, as the source of our happiness, and as that which is to fix the course we are to run, and also the bounds of our habitation?

The entire dependence of man upon God as the supreme Sovereign is farther seen in His holding the

life of man at his own disposal. The wishes of man, and the designs of God, are, in regard to life, extremely different. All are desirous of living, and flatter themselves with many years; but death is daily disappointing their hopes, and telling them how false is their security. How large a proportion of those who are born into the world never come to mature years: and how many in the midst of their designs, and of their usefulness, are suddenly cut off! Why is one man permitted in health and in honour to live to a good old age, while another dies in infancy, and another in youth, and another in the midst of his days? To what else than the sovereignty of God, "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," are we to refer this procedure of providence? Might we not expect that a sovereignty which is so manifestly exercised in the different allotments of mankind in regard to this world, would also be visible in its distribution of those blessings that are requisite to make men meet for the happiness of another*?

Accordingly we learn, both from the history of former generations, and from the actual circumstances of the world in our own times, that the means of grace are sent to some, but not to all. These have not been enjoyed at any one time by all mankind since the original separation of the human race into tribes and nations. To the Jews they were specially conveyed, while the surrounding nations were living in idolatry. To them were committed the oracles of God, and to them were communicated the ministry of the prophets,

* The train of thought which is here suggested, is very ably pursued and illustrated by Dr. Dwight.

and the ordinances of religious worship, while every other people was left to the light of traditionary revelation, and to the lessons furnished by creation and providence. There was nothing in the people who were thus selected to make them more deserving of the inestimable privilege of selection than others. I do not know any reason which could be urged for the preference which might not be urged with equal propriety in behalf of any other nation. He who made the choice disclaims all righteousness in them as the ground of it, and refers it to the exercise of his own sovereignty. "Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is; only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day."

This same people afterwards, on account of their rejection of the Messiah, were punished, and cast off. The Gospel at the same time was sent to the Gentiles, who were sunk in idolatry and in moral debasement; who were without God, and without hope in the world. What reason can be assigned that does not resolve itself into the sovereignty of God, why Chorazin and Bethsaida should enjoy means of grace that were not granted to Tyre and Sidon? Why the light of the Gospel should have so clearly shone during so many ages on Britain, while the majority of mankind are sitting in darkness, and dwelling in the land of the shadow of death? Or why so small a portion of the world should be illuminated with divine truth, and so great a number of mankind should still be enveloped in Mahomedan or in heathen darkness?

The sovereignty which is shewn in this disposal of the means of salvation, is also displayed in the various influences which attend them. The Gospel in one congregation or city produces a general awakening, and is experimentally felt by many as the power of God and the wisdom of God, while in another congregation or city, though it be preached with equal ability and faithfulness, scarcely are there any effects resulting from it, except a greater decency of moral conduct. In some cases thousands are converted by it, while in others its renewing and saving power is rarely known. On one part of the vineyard of God the dew of his grace copiously descends, while on another the blessing does not come down. In some instances God seems to work as it were without means, while in others little good is seen to follow from their use. He honours some of his servants by crowning their labours with great success, while others as able, as diligent, and as faithful, have reason to say, in surveying the effects resulting from their efforts, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

His sovereignty is also seen in the selection of the persons on whom his grace is bestowed. This grace is given, not in virtue of any previous moral excellency in the recipient. For from Ephesus, and Corinth, and Colosse, cities distinguished even among idolatrous nations for their licentiousness, he chose for himself a people made willing in the day of his power, who were justified, and sanctified, and washed, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God. Neither is his grace bestowed in virtue of any out-

ward distinction; for “not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence.” If grace is communicated, not in virtue of any worthiness in the creature, it cannot be in consequence of any obligation on the part of God to bestow it, and it must therefore be the effect of his infinite benignity and goodness, exercised in sovereignty towards sinners of mankind. This is the only reason which can be assigned why it was given to Abel and not to Cain, both being equally the offspring of fallen Adam, and both equally requiring renewing grace and pardoning mercy. To his sovereignty we must refer as the ground of his procedure, in separating Abraham from his idolatrous kindred, to be the progenitor of the Messiah. Has he not the same unquestionable right to select whom he will out of a world of rebels, to confer on them forgiveness, which he had to make man at first, and to endow him with the powers of a rational and immortal being? Why may he not bestow his grace in godlike munificence on the chief of sinners, on Saul, and Manasseh, and a dying malefactor, while others possessed of far greater external decency, are passed by, and allowed to perish? Why may he not give to some of his children treasures of wisdom and knowledge, distinguished gifts and graces, and call them forth to eminent services in the church

and in the world, while others of them are left in obscurity, and with fewer spiritual attainments? May not the King eternal, whose dominion extends over all things, allow justice to have its course in regard to every soul of man that doeth evil, or extend his free and unsolicited mercy, in the manner, and to the persons whom it pleases him? In acting thus, can we ascribe the imputation of unrighteousness to God? God forbid. For he saith unto Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." If God had been acting in all this as a Judge, it would be highly proper to consider how far his awards corresponded to the merits or demerits of his creatures; but in acting in sovereign mercy towards rebels in a state of revolt, he assigns no other reason than his right to exercise his dominion, and fulfil his will. To every objection offered to his procedure in the use of this high prerogative of the Godhead, the sovereignty of his nature and government, we must answer simply in the language of the Apostle: "O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the

riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory.”

Thus, have we considered some of the ways in which the sovereignty of God is most clearly and impressively exhibited : Hence,

I. The duty of a thankful acquiescence in all the allotments of providence. The dominion and sovereignty of God must render this a duty in any situation, even with the fewest advantages, and the scantiest enjoyments. But consider how numerous are your grounds for gratitude to God, and for resignation to his will. He is the owner of you and of yours, of your spirits and your bodies, of your time and your talents, and your property. By his appointment you have been born in a land of gospel-light, amidst a free and a civilized people, enjoying the blessings of the British government, and reaping in innumerable advantages the lessons acquired by the experience and sufferings of former generations. You have been trained up in connexion with the church of Christ, having had its ordinances regularly administered to you, and its blessings strongly urged on your acceptance. In place of being taught to worship the host of heaven, you have been enlightened by the oracles of truth to know that these are but the workmanship of God, and that of him, and to him, and through him, are all things. Instead of being born in Africa or in China, to be left in ignorance of the new and living way of access to God through the Saviour, you have been early made acquainted with the character, the offices, and the work, of the Redeemer, and with the way that

leads to life everlasting through him. And if these outward means of grace, which you have so richly enjoyed, have been made effectual to your conversion to God, and to your saving interest in all the benefits of the Saviour's purchase, have you not the most ample ground, for all things, and in all circumstances, to give thanks to God through Jesus Christ? All your advantages, whether civil or sacred; all the temporal and spiritual good which you have in possession, are all purely the effect, not of any merit on the score of righteousness, but of free and gratuitous mercy, exercised in sovereignty by that God who will have compassion on whom he will have compassion. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and thy truth's sake." By the grace of God we are what we are, and to God, therefore, would we continually ascribe, with all our powers and opportunities, dominion and praise. While we would adore his sovereignty in all his dispensations, we would feel resigned to his will under trials and disappointment, under the loss of our property, the bereavement of friends, and in the hour of personal affliction and of death. "The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away, and blessed be the name of the Lord. It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth good unto him." In mercy he will not afflict us more than we are able to bear, and in all cases our afflictions are less than our iniquities deserve.

II. We learn from this subject the duty of continually asking by prayer and supplications the counsel and direction of the Lord. How fully does the course of the world, and the order of providence shew us,

“ that the way of man is not in himself, and that it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps.” How impressively may our own experience teach us, “ that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” and that they only have understanding who obey his commandments, and who walk in his ways. How constantly are we, during every moment of the day, and during every moment of our life, depending upon God, and how easily can he by a single event of his providence, by suggesting a thought, by raising up a friend, by awakening good affections in the mind, or by leaving it to the influence of the bad,—how easily can he, and by what a variety of means, affect our temporal, spiritual, and eternal happiness. Let us then feel more sensibly our dependance upon the wisdom, and power, and goodness, of God. Let the young, in particular, be assured that in order to their future happiness, and their real dignity and honour, they must live in the exercise of frequent and of fervent prayer to God, to lead them in the ways of righteousness and of true holiness. Should you be left to your own wisdom, and to preserve what you regard as your interests in a state of separation from God, disappointment, and misery, and everlasting shame and contempt, will be the consequence. “ Seek the Lord, then, with your whole heart and soul, and lean not to your own understanding ; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your steps. Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord ; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light,

and thy judgment, as the noon day. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him. Be persuaded, then, continually to look to that Almighty Saviour through whom all guilt and defilement may be for ever removed; who is the way, and the truth, and the life, and through whom alone we can come to the Father.

III. We learn from this subject the aggravated guilt, and the certain misery, of impenitent and unbelieving sinners. All sin is a rebellion against the dominion and the sovereignty of God. Ever since it entered into our world, there has been war carrying on against the authority, the laws, and the government of God. It was because they had returned to their allegiance, and were resolved to adhere faithfully to his government, that the servants of God, redeemed from among men, "have had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented. Of whom the world was not worthy; they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens, and in caves of the earth." This contest between God and fallen man and fallen spirits, is at present advancing under the direction of the Captain of salvation; and he will vindicate the honour and the dominion of God, in the punishment and everlasting overthrow of his enemies.

CHAPTER X.

THE HOLINESS AND JUSTICE OF GOD.

THE holiness of God is the absolute purity of his nature, the essential and infinite rectitude of his will. It is a fulness of moral excellency inseparable from his essence, or from the exercise of any of his attributes. It is that which removes all evil to an unapproachable distance from the Divinity, and which renders it impossible for him to look upon iniquity. "God is light, and with him is no darkness at all. The righteous Lord loveth righteousness; and hath no pleasure in wickedness."

Holiness, as the highest perfection, and as the glory of his nature, must necessarily belong to God. He is as necessarily pure and righteous as he is necessarily God. He is holy and just, not merely because he wills it, but he wills it because holiness and justice are essential to his nature. Compared with his, the purity of all created beings is dim and imperfect; for there is none holy as the Lord; the heavens are not pure in his sight, and his angels he charges with folly. They are limited and mutable in their nature and faculties, and are, therefore, liable to sin; but God is unchangeable as well as glorious in his holiness, and can never have its spotless brightness overshadowed. Hence the delight with which He beholds holiness, whether in himself or in his creatures, and the abhorrence with which he views

the wickedness of the wicked. "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright; but he hates all workers of iniquity."

We are to conceive, then, of the holiness of God, as that infinite purity and rectitude which essentially belong to him, and as the fountain of all moral excellency. It is not the effect of the divine will: nor are we to suppose that this will could make that which is right to be wrong, or that which is wrong to be right; or change the obligation which rests upon every intelligent creature to love God as the chief and the highest good. His will is the expression of his nature and attributes,—of his infinite wisdom, and holiness, and truth, and therefore, all his works are done, not arbitrarily, but according to the counsel of his will. And because, on account of his unchanging truth, he cannot lie, so on account of eternal and unchanging holiness he cannot either do or enjoin but what is right. Even those appointments which seem to us to be arbitrary, and to have no other reason for their having been enacted than the good pleasure of God, have all proceeded from boundless perfection; "for the Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works."

The justice or the righteousness of God, I consider as necessarily emanating from his holiness, or, rather, is this very holiness as manifested in his procedure towards his intelligent creatures. Accordingly, the term justice carries our thoughts to the acts of his government in regard to the subjects of his kingdom. It is used in different acceptations; it is called commutative when employed to denote the exchange of

one thing for another, of equal value ; it is called distributive, when applied to the conduct of a magistrate towards subjects, in awarding a treatment exactly proportionate to their merits ; and it is sometimes termed general ; and in this sense it signifies that which in any circumstances is fittest and most useful to be done, and is synonymous with virtue.

With regard to the first of these uses of the term justice, it is inapplicable to God. It is from him that all the good which anywhere exists in the universe proceeds. “ Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again ? For of him, and through him, are all things.” In the other two senses of the term, justice is continually exercised by the Creator and Governor of all things towards his intelligent offspring. For the sake, indeed, of the glorious ends to be attained by that economy of mercy under which we live, there is not exhibited a perfect and immediate retribution ; but we are assured that at the termination of this economy God will judge the world in righteousness, and give to every man according to his works.

His holiness and justice are shewn in regard to his own character and government. All his acts are becoming his glorious character ; and his throne is founded in justice and in judgment. He exhibits himself to the view of his universe an object supremely excellent and lovely, as worthy of confidence, love, reverence, worship, and obedience, and his law as the only perfect and immutable rule of conduct to every intelligent being. To his law, which is the expression of his infinite holiness and righte-

ousness, he requires all to give obedience, as necessary to their own happiness, and the honour and authority of which he will never allow for a moment to be lowered. The rights of his government, and the high prerogatives of his nature he cannot, because he is holy and just, but maintain; since their maintenance, in the various dispensations in which they are unfolded to intelligent creatures, he cannot forego, without denying himself, and ceasing to promote the good of the universe.

God is perfectly just also to all his creatures. As their father and friend his rectitude will render all his dispensations towards them, however diversified, productive of the highest good. Under his righteous and holy administration every wrong must be rectified, and every inequality adjusted. It is as the supreme moral Governor of the Universe that we are called particularly to consider the character of God, while we meditate on the perfect display of his justice, which in this character he has given. From a variety of considerations we may arrive at the fullest conviction that he is a God of infinite holiness—a God of truth and without iniquity, and that just and right is he. This we infer,

I. From what we know of his character, and from the declarations he has made respecting it. Independent of the moral attributes of his nature, his absolute independence renders it impossible that he should have any motive to wrong the creatures that his power has formed. But if, in addition to independence, he possesses infinite benevolence—benevolence that leads him to do far more good to others than justice demands, he cannot be unjust. He, whose mercy has

interposed to save sinners, and who devised the sacrifice of his own Son to effect their salvation, cannot wish to do less good to his creatures than justice requires; and, consequently, in regard to them he cannot be unjust. How greatly is this conclusion strengthened by the declarations of the divine word, which ascribe the most perfect holiness and righteousness unto God! “Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praise, doing wonders? Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory. The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth.” He requires us to love, reverence, worship, and serve him as the just God, as a God of truth and without iniquity; and he surely does not ask us to reverence him for that which he does not most perfectly possess.

II. We infer the infinite holiness and justice of God from the character with which man was created, and the circumstances in which he was placed. From the very brief notices given us in Scripture on these topics, we learn that God made man upright, in his own image, and after his likeness; that is, he was formed, not only with powers of reason and understanding, but with knowledge, and in righteousness, and in true holiness. His nature was perfectly free from every stain, and his affections from disorder. There was such an entire rectitude in his heart as disposed him to exercise his faculties according to their uses and ends. There was a law written on his heart, which it was his delight to obey, and which led him to love the Lord God, and to rejoice in him as

the God of holiness. There was thus a complete conformity between man and his Creator—a harmony which constituted his happiness. And surely He who formed man holy and righteous must himself be infinitely holy and righteous. Nor does it derogate from his justice that he placed him in a state of trial—a state in which he might forfeit his happiness by voluntarily ceasing to be holy. There was strength sufficient given him to resist the temptation; and on no claim of equity could he expect, that He who had so richly endowed him would grant him more. The holiness and righteousness of God shone forth in the powers and enjoyments of man while he stood; and his justice could not be impeached when, through disobedience, he fell. He gave him an ability to stand—a capacity of loving and of continuing to love God as his chief good, and of moving to him as his last end; so that to remain in obedience seemed easier than to depart from it, and to adhere to God than to yield to the allurements of Satan. The direction of his will to other objects and to other ends is to be ascribed altogether to himself; and the justice of God, since it was in no way bound to prevent his apostacy and fall, cannot, merely because this fall was permitted, be questioned.

But granting that his justice is fully vindicated, may it not be asked, how is the permission of sin consistent with the infinite holiness and purity of God, and with the very strong expressions of his abhorrence in regard to it? If this were the proper place for answering this question, I would begin my reply by frankly acknowledging the difficulties with which it is

encumbered. Without professing to remove all these difficulties, I think we may arrive at a satisfying conviction that the purity of God is not implicated, and that no objection remains against it, in consequence of the permission of sin, and of all the evils to which sin has given origin.

It is allowed that, on the score of justice, the holy Lord God was not bound to prevent the man whom he had formed after his own image from falling into sin. The spirit of reason and of understanding, the candle of the Lord, had been lightèd up within him. It was sufficient that God had given him strength equal to any temptation, and had warned him against giving way to it. And as the justice of God stands unimpeachable by the permission of sin, so does his holiness. His permitting the creature to revolt from him, does not imply any tolerance to sin, or indifference concerning it. This he has since fully evinced in a variety of ways, and particularly by placing restraints on the evil passions of men, so as to hinder the overwhelming progress of corruption. And he has also shewn it, by taking occasion from the introduction of sin through the fall of man, to display the holiness and righteousness of his government in new and in more impressive aspects, and in glorifying his mercy in accordance with his justice. The reign of sin made way for the reign of death; but it also opened a door through which to discover the riches and triumphs of mercy; so that "as sin has reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord."

III. We infer the infinite holiness and justice of

God from the character of the laws which he has given us. These laws are allowed to be holy, and just, and good, and to possess the purity and perfection which the divine word ascribes to them. The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. Can the purity of this law be surpassed or equalled in regard to that which it prescribes? Exhibiting in the first table the love, the reverence, the worship which we owe to God, and in the second, the charities and the duties which we owe to man. Is not the purity of his law maintained by the ground on which it rests, and the awful motives and sanctions by which it is enforced? Is not its perfect holiness illustrated by its spiritual extent? Referring not merely, like the decrees of man, to the external acts, but to the inward thoughts and affections; requiring love to God, hatred to sin; prohibiting the evil intention no less than the evil work; frowning no less on a pollution in the imagination than on a pollution in the life; and commanding an entire conformity of the whole man to the unbending and eternal rule of righteousness. In accordance with the purity and extent of the divine law, is the perpetuity of its obligations. As it commands only those things that are intrinsically and essentially good—that are good irrespective of every enactment, it of course cannot be altered. Its authority cannot be lowered, its claims cannot be com-

promised, and participating in the immutability of its great Author, it endures for ever. "Ye shall not add to the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it. Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

While it is allowed that the holiness and righteousness of God are fairly deducible from the purity and equity of his law, it has sometimes been questioned, how far it is just to make this law binding upon fallen men. This objection supposes that there is injustice in making a law which is perfect, the rule of life to a creature which is imperfect. The objection would be well founded, could we suppose that the imperfection of the creature, which forms such an obstacle to his obedience, had proceeded from him who has enjoined the law. But we know that the imperfection of man is attributable to man alone; and that the corruption which disinclines, and, therefore, disables him from rendering obedience, is entailed on his nature by sinning against God. Because he has turned away his heart in rebellion against God, does the obligation cease of loving the Lord God with the whole mind and strength? Can the justice of God be impeached by continuing the same law to man in his fallen state which was enjoined when his nature was untainted, and perfect obedience his delight? If the moral law must of necessity be the expression of what God is, can this law ever be changed, seeing that with God there is no variableness, or shadow of turning. The inability of man perfectly to obey, arising from the enmity of his heart against God and holiness, does not

diminish the extent of his obligations, and forms no reason, even if it were possible, why any alteration should take place in the just and holy law of God. This law required no more from man in Paradise than what was perfectly just; its claims are still founded in the same equity and justice; and to suppose that it can descend from those claims in accommodation to the weaknesses and deviations of sinful creatures, is to suppose it ceasing to be what it is, the law of the God of infinite goodness and holiness. Had there been no way of escape from its fearful denunciations but a sinless obedience on our part, and had there been no way of reconciling the unalterable claims of this high standard of rectitude with the communication of mercy to the sinner, there would remain for us but a certain and fearful looking-for of judgment. “But what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.”

IV. We infer the holiness and justice of God from his providential and moral government of the world. These were early shewn in the treatment of the first transgressors,—in their expulsion from paradise, and in the judgments which soon succeeded the fall of man. The earth which had been cursed for our sake lost its original beauty and fertility, and still exhibits proofs of the just severity of God. Traces of that deluge which swept away the world of the ungodly are to be found in every part of the globe. The cities of the plain, Sodom and Gomorrah, were, for the wickedness

of their inhabitants, destroyed by fire from heaven. The proudest as well as most powerful nations of antiquity, when the measure of their iniquity was full, were visited with the desolating and righteous judgments of heaven, and by these judgments were utterly destroyed. From the destruction of Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea, down to the memorable siege and destruction of Jerusalem, and from that event to the present hour, the judgments of war, and famine, and pestilence have been going over the world. The justice of God has been displaying itself in these its awards to guilty nations, as well as in its procedure towards individuals and families.

Man is in every condition sinful, and, therefore, though placed under an economy of mercy, the justice of God, in many respects, treats him as a sinner. "He is of few days and full of trouble; he cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not." Trial in some form or other succeeds trial; and one bereavement follows another, till death receives its commission to dissolve the body into the dust from whence it came, and to convey the spirit unto God that gave it. This is the appalling evil to which the race of man is doomed to submit; for it is appointed unto all men once to die; this is an evil that has already reached some of our friends and families, and that will soon reach ourselves. And common as it is, and slightly as it impresses us in virtue of its commonness, there is something awfully illustrative of the justice of God—of his severity against sin, in the fact, that during some thousands of years a death has taken place on our

globe in every successive moment ;—and that there has not been an hour in which mourning, lamentation, and woe have not been found in some of its dwelling-places. If these unwelcome visitants have not yet reached our abode, they will soon be there; drawn thither by some of the diseases that introduce the last enemy ; and the bodies that are now so full of health and enjoyment will be cold and pale in death. It is when we draw near the bed on which is stretched the shrouded corpse of our dearest friend, and see already in the hue of the countenance the process of dissolution begun, and in the features which beamed with life and affection, the likeness and the insensibility of that dust into which they are soon to be turned,—that we learn, by an impressive example, the hatred of God against sin, and that his justice leads him to punish it.

While the holiness and justice of God are thus generally displayed in his moral and providential government of the world, it is objected that this justice is not impartial in its retributions ;—that the wicked prosper, while the righteous suffer. This, at an early period of the world, was noticed, and felt as a serious difficulty. It formed the subject of inquiry with Job ; “ Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power ? Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them.” To the Psalmist also it formed the ground of complaint and of stumbling. “ My feet were almost gone ; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They are not in trouble as other men ; neither are they plagued

like other men." To this objection it may be answered, that the wicked sometimes enjoy prosperity, on account of the work which they are the unintentional instruments in accomplishing ; and also that the divine goodness and forbearance may be exercised, and lead them to repentance. The wicked, though often prosperous, are not always so. Even the Psalmist, with whom their prosperity was the ground of complaint, noticed that they are snared in the work of their own hands. And how often has the justice of God been displayed, as in the case of Pharaoh and Sennacherib, in making the punishment of sin immediately follow its commission, and in holding up the workers of iniquity as awful monuments of wrath to those who should live ungodly. This is not done in every instance, because this is not a state of perfect retribution, but of trial and of moral discipline ; justice is now slow, and seems unwilling to inflict its punishment ; but in the day of the righteous judgment of God, and in the eternity which is to follow, it will give to every one according to his works.

With regard to the other part of the objection to the justice of God in providence, arising from the numerous afflictions of the pious, it may be remarked, that as the best have a sinful nature, and though free from immorality of conduct, are often guilty of pride, and passion, censoriousness, worldliness, and other evil affections, they, therefore, both merit and require severity of correction. Their sufferings are in every case less than their iniquities deserve : for God doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. It is the avowed plan of his providence to visit with a

large share of affliction the persons whom he renews by his grace, and designs as the inheritors of his glory ; to correct them for their backslidings, and to make them meet for the enjoyment of higher and more enduring happiness. These only, of all the families of the earth, has he known, that is, brought into the near relation of sons and of daughters ; therefore will he punish them for all their iniquities. " I know, O Lord," says the Psalmist, " that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me." Without speaking at all of the justice of God, is not his mercy shewn in the sufferings of his people, when these sufferings are the means of keeping them awake to the great interests of eternity, and in stimulating them ever onwards to seek and to prepare for the rest that remaineth for them in their Father's kingdom ?

V. We infer the infinite holiness and justice of God from the work of redemption, and especially from the obedience and sufferings of Christ. It is unnecessary to dwell at any length on a topic to which we cannot allude without the conviction that God is holy, and that his government is founded in justice and in judgment. Had not the rectitude of God been immutable and eternal, and had not the authority of the law that has proceeded from it, been alike incapable of change, it could not be necessary for the purpose of attaining the salvation of man, that he who is equal with God should make himself of no reputation, and take upon him the form of a servant, and humble himself, and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Where else do we behold such an impressive display of the holiness and righteousness of

God? When we consider the dignity of the Redeemer's person, and the relation which he bore to the Father, and observe that when he appears in the room of the guilty, there is no mitigation of the requirement or penalty of the law,—that God as the moral governor arrays himself in justice, and lays judgment to the line in dealing with the friend and substitute of sinners,—that he acts towards him as one rejected by the divine purity and tenderness, and to whom unmingled sorrow and suffering were to be allotted,—and that his love to his own awful character of holiness and justice seems to rise higher than his love to his own Son,—we surely cannot but be struck with the inconceivable, the eternal rectitude of the divine character and government? For the purpose of glorifying this high attribute, of magnifying the law and making it honourable, the divine nature of the Redeemer was disguised and veiled, and in his person he was smitten of God and afflicted. Before the boundless compassion of God could reach fallen man, the law was to be fulfilled in the obedience, and its penalty borne by the sufferings, of Christ. And it was because the Saviour had a view in all that he either did or endured to the holiness and justice of God, that he was afterwards advanced to glory and honour, and had power given him over all flesh, that he might freely communicate eternal life. “Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.”

Behold, then, in this glorious scheme of redemption, mercy reaching Man in a way, which, in place of

feel no hesitation in saying, that the hypothesis which would remove Him from the immediate superintendence and government of the works which he has made, is founded in the ignorance of man;—and proceeds from a secret tendency to measure the divine understanding by the feeble efforts of the human mind. Can it derogate from the majesty of a Being, who is omnipresent, and whose will can instantaneously accomplish all that comes within the limit of possibility, to suppose that he effects by his own immediate efficiency whatever is in space or in duration? Wherever he is, there must of necessity be an almighty and uncontrollable efficiency; for his will is that which ushers a universe into being; and to say of him, that he wills the creation of a world, is to say that a world is created.

“ All things that are done in the world, are done either immediately by God himself,” says Dr. Samuel Clark, “ or by created intelligent beings: matter being evidently not at all capable of intelligence, excepting only this one negative power, that every part of it will always and necessarily continue in that state, whether of rest or motion, wherein it at present is. So that all those things which we commonly say are the effects of the natural powers of matter and laws of motion; of gravitation, attraction, or the like, are indeed the effects of God’s acting upon matter continually and every moment, either immediately by himself, or mediately by some created intelligent beings. Consequently, there is no such thing as what men commonly call the course of nature, or the power of nature. The course of nature; truly and properly

speaking, is nothing else but the will of God, producing certain effects in a continued, regular, constant, and uniform manner: which course or manner of acting being in every moment perfectly arbitrary, is as easy to be altered at any time, as to be preserved*.”

In every department of human knowledge we only see certain phenomena preceding or following other phenomena. We may by habits of closer research and observation accumulate facts; we may ascertain some of the intermediate phenomena by which the events that are already known to us are connected: but our increased knowledge will only amount to an enlarged acquaintance with events joined, indeed, by the will of the Deity, but which of themselves are not necessarily connected;—to a fuller view of the mode of acting which the Creator has been pleased to prescribe to himself in governing the universe.

All power is God's, and whatso'er he wills,
The will itself, omnipotent, fulfils.

We might with as much truth and propriety consider the several events recorded in the first chapter of the book of Genesis as the causes of one another, as ascribe the efficiency of causation to the phenomena of nature. As in the most perfect mechanism produced by man we see not the volition and the intelligence of which it is the product,—those being inherent in the mind which is invisible,—neither can we witness amidst the works of God any thing but the effects of his power and wisdom. Sound philosophy, no less than genuine piety, will lead us to trace all events to his will

* Evid. of Nat. and Rev. Religion.

and agency. He wills the creation of a world, and a world is created ; he wills the continued preservation of the universe, and the universe is preserved. He speaks, and it is done, he commands, and it stands fast. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without his appointment.



BOOK II.

ON THE ACTIVE AND MORAL POWERS OF MAN.

CHAPTER I.

ON MAN.

THE dignity and destination of man are intimated by the language in which his original creation is recorded. "God said, Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth on the earth. So God created man in his own image: in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life: and man became a living soul." It was after the materials of the chaotic mass had been reduced to order and beauty;—it was after the world was replenished with the stores of the divine goodness, and the heavenly bodies had been fixed in the firmament to give light and warmth and comfort to every living creature on the face of the earth, that man was called into being. How lovely and magnificent was the abode which the hand of God had prepared for him, in which he might immediately enjoy a profusion of divine bounty, and

in which he might behold, in the glorious characters of his residence, the dignity of his own nature, and the high and immortal career of virtue and of happiness which was before him ! “ Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands ; thou hast put all things under his feet.”

What the nature of man is, its original glory and dignity, its properties and destination, we learn from the words of the Creator ; “ Let us make man in our image, after our likeness :” and also from the historical fact afterwards mentioned, “ The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life : and man became a living soul.” In this language, I conceive, are implied the material frame, the intellectual and spiritual constitution, and the glorious and immortal destination of man. Man is composed of substances that have nothing in common, and that exhibit properties altogether distinct. The body, which was formed of the dust of the ground, is a structure of exquisite skill, fearfully and wonderfully made. Its erect form, the symmetry of its parts, the dignity and gracefulness of its motions, and the power of the countenance to express the emotions of the mind, are illustrative of the wisdom and beneficence of the Creator, and of the elevated rank which he has assigned to man. We should be still more deeply impressed with these views, did we consider the number, the nature, and the uses of its parts ; the harmony with which they discharge their functions ; the admirable order in which they are arranged into a

system; the organs of sensation, of seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and feeling attached to it; its susceptibility of enduring pain, or of enjoying pleasure; and its wonderful power of self-restoration. This corporeal frame is associated with a spiritual substance, and was originally incapable of decomposition or decay, and designed to live in youthful beauty, unaffected by disease or death through eternity.

The soul of man is an immaterial, spiritual substance, the seat of thought, intelligence, and volition. This is not only taught us by the language which refers to its creation, but throughout revelation. It is also necessarily involved in the exercise of those attributes which we know the mind of man to possess. Thought, affection, active power, are not the properties of matter in any of its forms or in any of its combinations. The attributes of the soul, or of that which thinks, and wills, and loves, in man, are not only different from the properties of matter, but they are so totally and absolutely different in kind as necessarily to imply, that the substances to which they respectively belong are also totally and absolutely different. It would be as just and philosophical to maintain that the body is a spiritual substance, as that the soul is material.

In entire accordance with this view are the statements and the assertions of revelation. The thinking and intelligent beings, concerning whom it gives us information, are declared to be spirits. No one has ever questioned that God is a spirit, and that his nature is the highest sense in spiritual. So obvious is it that angels are immaterial beings, and so universally is

this truth admitted, that the celebrated advocate for materiality, Dr. Priestley, thought it easier to prove their non-existence, which he attempted, than to disprove their spirituality, which he did not attempt. The nature of the human soul is like the nature of angels, and though created and limited in its faculties, its substance, as spiritual and un compounded, resembles the ever-blessed God. Whatever objection is brought against the immateriality of the soul, which thinks, and wills, may be brought with equal propriety and force against the immateriality of God or of angels. The circumstance of the soul's being associated with matter has no more force as an objection against its immateriality, than the acknowledged fact, that God and angels have power over matter, may be adduced to prove that their nature is material.

But the language of Scripture everywhere implies the immateriality of the soul. When the dust shall return to the earth as it was, the spirit shall return to God who gave it. "Into thine hands," says David, "I commit my spirit." "Lord Jesus," says Stephen, "receive my spirit;" language which implies, and which clearly teaches, that the soul is totally distinct from the material part of man. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were dead more than four hundred years, before God appeared unto Moses in the bush; and yet the declaration of God respecting them is quoted by our Lord, as evidence of the future and the separate existence of spirits; "Have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but

the God of the living." The same doctrine is taught in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus ; and in the answer which our Lord gave to the prayer of the dying malefactor, " To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." The plain meaning of these words, the only meaning indeed which the person to whom they were addressed could attach to them, certainly is, that though his body should soon be in its grave, his soul would still live, and be with Christ in a state of everlasting blessedness. The same doctrine is maintained by the apostle Paul, when he says, " We are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. To me to live is Christ, and to die gain. I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ ; which is far better." How could the Apostle, when absent from the body be present with the Lord ; or how could his departure to be with Christ be deemed far better, if his soul was not distinct and different from the body, and if it was not to exist when separated from it ?

Did not Moses and Elias actually exist when they appeared with Christ on the mount of transfiguration, and talked with him, and spoke of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem ? Are we to believe that there was in reality no such thing when an inspired Apostle tells us that he beheld a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, and uniting with angels in

ascriptions of glory and praise? How minutely are their former condition, and their present employments and situation described! They came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; they are, therefore, before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and lead them to fountains of living waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Thus, the testimonies of reason, scripture, and common sense, in all ages, and in every country, prove that the soul is a substance totally distinct and different from that of the body, and that it is capable of living in the exercise of all its powers when the body is dissolved. This being considered as proved, the immortality of the soul is most conclusively inferred from it. There is in each of us an undying principle of thought, feeling, and intelligence, which alone imparts interest and beauty to the inanimate creation around us, which, according to its own emotions, clothes the heavens with light or with darkness, and which enjoys and interprets the glories of that universe in which we are placed. Not that I mean to assert, that it is physically and necessarily immortal because it is immaterial; since the highest archangel is as dependent upon God for his being as an insect. But the fact of its being spiritual and immaterial proves that it may exist, and exercise all its powers, though separated from the body. Revelation informs us that

it does so exist ; and its having been originally created in the image of God, and after his likeness, shews that the Creator designed that it should enjoy a happy and an immortal existence. He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life ; and man became a living soul.

The separation which takes place between the soul and body at death, is the effect of sin ; and the commonness of this occurrence, as the inevitable lot of all men, may perhaps at first view seem to indicate the extinction, not only of that which think and feels, but also of matter. Yet the supposition is certainly at variance with all that we know of the continuous existence of every thing around us. While matter is constantly assuming new forms, I see not the extinction of a single atom ; and even in those cases in which there is an apparent extinction, chemistry informs me that the substance is not annihilated, but has passed into an aërial state. If that substance, then, which thinks and feels, cease to exist with the dissolution of the body, the case is anomalous, and forms a total deviation from all the phenomena that come within our observation. Viewing the subject simply in this light, I might deem it unnecessary to prove the immortality of the soul, since it rests with those who deny this doctrine, to prove the contrary. And in attempting such a proof, it becomes them to remember that the analogy of nature is against them ; that all the discoveries of the telescope and microscope, while they give evidence that every thing is in motion, and subject to change, afford not a single instance of annihilation in a single atom ; that the lights of science

lead us to the conclusion, that all to which the Creator has given existence during the eternity that is past, is in existence at the present moment, and will probably remain in existence during the eternity to come ; and that if the human soul be annihilated at death, its ceasing to exist is an event which has no parallel in any of the acts of the government of God.

That the soul undergoes a mighty change when its tabernacle is dissolved, and the organs by which it holds intercourse with material things are turned into dust, is most certain. But does not natural history inform us of changes, not altogether dissimilar to those of death, in which substances assume new forms, while they are still identically the same? With regard to unorganized matter, we know that its condition is never stationary ;—that the water which we drink has gone through many states before it allays our thirst ;—that it has risen from the sea in the form of vapour, and descended again on the earth in the form of rain, has there become a solid, and is now again a liquid ; and that amid all these changes nothing has been lost, and not a single particle has gone into non-existence. Why, then, should we suppose that the soul of man, in undergoing a change of state and of circumstances, is annihilated in the course of the process? When we have the most indubitable evidence, that not a particle of inert matter, though passing through a succession of changes, from the distant period of its creation to the present moment, is ever destroyed, on what ground can we imagine that a much nobler substance,—the substance which thinks, and feels, and acts, and which alone can see in the

appearances of nature their author and their end,—on what ground can we believe that this is annihilated when the body is dissolved?

But may we not derive the strongest evidence from the consideration of the nature of the soul and its faculties, that he who formed it, has designed it for an immortal existence?

I. The human soul is possessed of a capacity of endless improvement; whereas the inferior animals soon attain to the utmost perfection of their nature. It is not so much reason which distinguishes man from the other inhabitants of the globe, as the capability of growing, and of indefinite advancement in knowledge and in understanding. The progressive improvement which is going on in the species, is founded on that susceptibility of improvement in reason and in virtue possessed by the individual. But it is obvious, that the present state of things is in many respects unsuited to the intellectual and moral powers with which man is endowed; and that in particular instances, the highest gifts seem to be communicated for little purpose, if there be not a more elevated sphere of being for their exercise. It is often at the moment, when the faculties of the christian philosopher, or christian preacher, are in a state of high improvement;—when, by the reach of his understanding, he is bringing truths to light that have been hid from ages and from generations, and which, in connexion with his name, are to be incorporated with the treasures of human knowledge,—it is often at such a moment of high pre-eminence that death overtakes him, and leaves the survivors to wonder at the mysterious-

ness of a Providence which seems to call into existence the most valuable of its productions, merely to show with what ease and celerity it can destroy them.

But on the supposition of a future and an endless existence, we can account for the purposes to be accomplished by the capacity of indefinite improvement in man ; and we may also see reasons, why at a certain stage of its progress, the soul should be removed to a higher sphere of exertion and enjoyment. Considered in this view, how sublime is the elevation to which the nature of man is raised, endowed with an immortality of being, advancing on the bright career of endless improvement, enlarging immeasurably its capacities and enjoyments, and constantly assuming higher glories and diviner aspects, from the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

II. May we not regard the desire of happiness, so strong in the human soul, as an intimation of the Creator's design to confer it in an everlasting state of existence? Why has he that formed us connected with our nature a susceptibility which leads us to form friendships the most tender and endearing, if it be not his design to leave room for its eternal gratification? Why has he rendered us capable of deriving so much enjoyment from his own favour and presence, if this enjoyment is only to be of momentary duration?

III. Ought we not to consider the desire of immortality, so strong and universal, as an indication that the soul of man is endowed with this capacity? This desire is inherent in the human mind, and is found in men of all nations, and under every possible diversity

of circumstances. Man in every situation is in pursuit of something fairer and more lovely than he ever actually attains: in all the stages of his being, and in the exercise of the varied professions of life, there is a secret hope, that the future will be far more agreeable than the past, and that the evils which have been endured, will be compensated by the pleasures that are to be enjoyed. This principle of human nature is so powerful in early life, as scarcely to allow the mind to view the events of this fleeting scene, otherwise than as they appear through the medium of the bright but false colouring which it presents. In circumstances where we should have conceived all hope to be extinguished, where the lonely sufferer is secluded from every blessing that can render life an object of desire, there is a world of unmingled happiness with which tyranny cannot intermeddle, that opens to his view, reflecting its light across the darkness of his affliction, leading him almost to forget the sad reality of his destiny, and reminding him of the goodness of that almighty Being who has connected sources of enjoyment with his nature, which no power but sin can possibly destroy. Is not this the voice of the Deity, directing the views of man to that immortality of which he has constituted him the heir?

'Tis the Divinity that stirs within us,
'Tis Heaven itself that points out an hereafter,
And intimates eternity to man.

But though we see in the natural endowments of the human soul, a feeble resemblance to the image of God; in the operations of the understanding a faint

shadow of the divine wisdom and knowledge ; in the will, as exciting and directing our active powers, a similitude to the divine volitions ; in its immateriality, something to remind us that God is a spirit ; and in its immortal existence, that which is weakly analogous to the being of Him who is eternal : still there is much more meant by man's being made in the image of God, and after his likeness. As we only see the nature of man in its fallen state, we can only ascertain what it was in its state of original innocency and glory, by considering what are the moral attributes of God ; by contemplating the character of him who is the image of God ; and by examining the moral law which describes, and the properties of the renewed man which exemplifies, this holy image. He who is the subject of the regenerating and sanctifying operation of the Holy Spirit, is said to be renewed in the spirit of his mind, and to have put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. The new man is elsewhere said to be renewed in knowledge, after the image of Him that created him.

This likeness to God, then, consists, in the first place, in knowledge, or in spiritual understanding. This Adam enjoyed in his state of innocency ; and it is the great design of the Gospel to restore it to his apostate offspring. While they possess in their fallen state the capacity of receiving knowledge, they are void of the desire to know God, or to observe his agency and his attributes in his ways and in his works. It is not till he who gave to Adam at his creation a spiritual and enlightened understanding, shines into the heart, and communicates the light of

his own glory in the face of Jesus Christ, that the soul begins truly to discern, and keenly to relish, the things of the Spirit. Man originally had not only the power to know, but his heart was turned in holy desire to that very knowledge which concerned him. He was ever ready to listen to the communication of the divine will, and willing to give to it a full obedience. He beheld in God his father and his friend; and he had none in heaven but him, nor on the earth that he desired beside him. Perfectly free from every bias of heart and will against God, he delighted in the contemplation of his glories, and he walked in the light of his countenance. He had the knowledge of the divine law, and the disposition constantly to obey it. Nor is it possible for us, in our present state of ruin and darkness, fully to estimate the actual attainments of man as to knowledge in his original state, and his capacity to receive it.

In the second place, man was created in the image of God, in regard to the righteousness of his nature. There was an entire conformity between all his powers, and the pattern according to which he was formed, and the law which he was to obey. The superior faculties of his mind were exactly conformed to the divine mind and will; and all the inferior powers of his nature were in subordination to these. The law was not only put into his mind, so that he might have the perfect knowledge of it, but it was written in his heart, so that he had the disposition to love and obey it. He had not only a quick discernment of moral excellency, but also the will and the power

to act according to his discernment. He was made upright; mutable, indeed, as a dependent creature, but free from every defect, with a soul enlightened and spiritual, and with all his powers, both of the outward and inner man, in a state of entire accordance.

In the third place, he was made in the image of God, in regard to holiness. The new man is said to be renewed in true holiness, or in the holiness of the truth. This especially implies that the dispositions and affections with which the soul was originally formed, were all directed to their proper object. They were drawn forth, not as they are in fallen man, after the mere shadows of good, the fleeting vanities of a moment, but were excited by realities, and rested supremely upon God. Adam, with the glories of a new heaven and a new earth to contemplate, had his affections chiefly moved by the glories of his Maker: as he looked upon these with infinite complacency and delight, he was changed into the same image. His heart rose spontaneously in filial affection to the God who had given him his being, and who had in addition to this gift given him richly all things to enjoy. His whole affections promptly took the side of God, of holiness, and of whatever tended to the advancement of the divine glory.

In the fourth place, man was made in the image of God by the pure and perfect felicity which he enjoyed. He was happy in the exercise of all his faculties, according to their true ends, and in regard to objects worthy of his love; and he was happy in beholding

the glory of God, and in the constant access which he had to his presence. He had also the title to have this happiness confirmed to him, and to his posterity for ever. With a mind full of spiritual knowledge, and with a heart full of holy affections, with a world of beauty, stored with the goodness of the Creator, with angels to converse with him, and with God as his father, his friend, and his portion, how elevated beyond our conception must have been his enjoyment.

In the last place, he had dominion given him over the lower animals. He had the capacity of governing in the holy and rational nature with which he was endowed, and this capacity he was allowed to exercise by the special grant of the Creator. Thus was man formed, and thus was he situated as he came forth from the hands of God ; pronounced by the all-perfect Being that made him, to be very good. How glorious, how dignified was man in this state of innocency ; and how wonderfully was his nature designed for indefinite advances in knowledge and in holiness through eternity ! He was made but a little lower than the angels, and crowned with glory and honour ; far removed from sorrow and death, the head and parent of countless myriads of intelligent creatures !

CHAPTER II.

ON PRINCIPLES OF ACTION.

THAT power of the mind by which it determines to act or not to act, in those cases which depend on its own determination, is called the will ; and the act of the mind in determining, is denominated volition. The will is the power which the mind has to act or not to act ; and volition is the mind's determination to do or not to do whatever is conceived to be in its power.

All power, properly speaking, is active ; and the mind can only exert any power over itself or others through the medium of the will. The will, therefore, must be influenced before any active energy is put forth. It becomes, therefore, an interesting consideration to ascertain those principles of our nature which on account of their exerting this influence have been termed active, and to the operation of which we trace every virtue and every crime, from the deeds of beneficence by which the names of patriots and legislators have been consecrated, to the guilty ambition which treads in blood to the attainment of its object.

But though the will in its exertions must be influenced by motives and principles, there are some actions which are performed independently of the will, and are termed involuntary. There are others, which because they partake of the nature of voluntary and involuntary actions, are called mixed : they are under the power of the will, but they are generally performed

without it. Voluntary actions may be distinguished from all others by this, that they are done with a view to some object ; and proceed from the volitions of a being possessing reason and intelligence: whereas, those that result from the principles of our nature, denominated instincts, are generally, if not always, performed without any previous conception of them. Thus, a child will suck and swallow its food a few hours after its birth, and will proceed as directly and with as much accuracy to the accomplishment of this operation, on which its sustenance depends, as if it were guided by the understanding of Newton. The same remark applies to things which, though originally done by conscious volition, are afterwards performed by habit. Thus we often shut and open our eyes without the consciousness of any such operation.

For the sake of distinctness in our subsequent observations, it may be proper to notice the difference between the acts and feelings of the mind denoted by the terms will, desire, command. Will and desire agree in this, that both must have an object of which we must have some conception. But they differ in several particulars ; what we will must not only be an action, but it must be our own action ; whereas what we desire may not be our own action, and, indeed, it may be no action at all. We may desire what we do not will, and will what we do not desire, nay, that to which we have a great aversion. “ A man athirst,” says Dr. Reid, “ has a strong desire to drink, but for some particular reason he determines not to gratify his desire. A judge, from a regard to justice, and to the duty of his office, dooms a

criminal to die, while, from humanity or particular affection, he desires that he should live. A man for health may take a nauseous draught, for which he has no desire, but a great aversion. Desire, therefore, even when its object is some action of our own, is only an incitement, to will, but it is not volition. The determination of the mind may be, not to do what we desire to do. But as desire is often accompanied by will, we are apt to overlook the distinction between them."

There is also a difference between what is called command, and will, and desire. The immediate object of our will, properly speaking, is an action of our own, whereas the object of command is the action of another person over whom we claim authority; while the object of desire may be no action at all. But though there be this difference, the acts of the mind called volition and desire, are implied in the exercise of command. There is also another difference; command is a social act of the mind, and can have no existence but by a communication of thought to others; whereas desire and will are solitary acts.

Whatever incites the mind to act is called by philosophers a principle of action. And though the number of primary principles of action be small, it is difficult to give a complete enumeration of the various exciting causes by which all men are influenced. This difficulty is occasioned by the number and variety of principles which exert an influence on the will, and by which it is so wrought upon as to act or to refrain from acting. It is also occasioned by another circumstance, namely, that the same train of

actions may proceed from different principles. Actions may be similar, and yet flow from very different sources. And finally, the difficulty may partly be owing to this, that actions which seem to spring from one or two principles may proceed from many. There cannot be a stronger proof given of the difficulty of tracing actions to their source, and of being able clearly to point out and enumerate the affections and tendencies of the human mind from which they take their origin, than the different and even opposite systems, which have been formed with a view to their explanation. “During the age of Greek philosophy, the Platonist, the Peripatetic, the Stoic, the Epicurean, had each his own system. In the dark ages, the schoolmen and the mystics had systems diametrically opposite; and, since the revival of learning, no controversy hath been more keenly agitated, especially among British philosophers, than that about the principles of action in the human constitution. They have determined,” says the philosopher, whose language I quote, “to the satisfaction of the learned, the forces by which the planets and comets traverse the boundless regions of space; but have not been able to determine, with any degree of unanimity, the forces which every man is conscious of in himself, and by which his conduct is directed. Some admit no principle but self-love; others resolve all into love of the pleasures of sense, variously modified by the association of ideas; others admit disinterested benevolence along with self-love; others reduce all to reason and passion; others to passion alone; nor is there

less variety about the number and distribution of the passions.”

It is not surprising that there should be this variety of opinion on a subject so remote from the apprehensions of the multitude. Few ever think of analyzing their own pleasurable or painful emotions ; and fewer still are capable of arresting the objects of consciousness, and of making them subjects of continued reflection. And perhaps the analysis of our active principles is more difficult than that of our intellectual powers ; inasmuch as we are less disposed when under the influence of any emotion to turn our attention inwardly, and to trace our feeling of joy or of sorrow to its source, than when merely exercising the powers of reason. If this be a difficult attainment with regard to our own mind, how much more so in regard to the minds of our fellow-creatures. We know, or at least we may think we know, the principles from which we would act in certain circumstances,—in the circumstances in which we see them placed: but these may have little influence on their determinations, and they probably have no share in producing the actions which we ascribe to them. The real motive may be very different from that which is avowed ; and even when the individual thinks he is acting under certain principles, others, and those of a very opposite description, may have given rise to that line of conduct which he is pursuing.

Different enumerations have been given of our active principles ; and these principles have obtained different appellations in the writings of philosophers.

Dr. Reid says that there are some principles of action which require no attention, no deliberation, no will, and these for distinction sake, he proposes to call mechanical: which, he thinks, may be reduced to two species, instincts and habits. Another class he calls animal, as they seem common to man with other animals. A third class he calls rational, being proper to man as a rational creature. Some plausible objections might be advanced against this division; and certainly the word mechanical, in this connexion, is far from being the happiest term that might be employed. As suggesting the notion of a machine, of which in its literal acceptation it is expressive, it has a tendency to mislead by representing some of our actions as proceeding from no higher power than the mere mechanism of our animal frame. Dr. Reid, however, does not use this term in its literal sense, but only to denote certain principles of our nature, which, because they generally operate without volition, seem to bear some analogy to the results of mechanical contrivance.

Without pretending to any thing like a complete classification, I am of opinion that nearly all our active principles may be reduced under the following heads. First, our animal principles of action. Secondly, principles which are connected both with our animal and intellectual frame. Thirdly, our intellectual principles of action. Fourthly, those principles that are properly and strictly called moral. And, Fifthly, the power which man has over his emotions and desires, or his free agency.

CHAPTER III.

APPETITES.

I BEGIN with the consideration of our animal principles, or bodily appetites. Of these our appetites are the chief, and are distinguished by the following circumstances:—1. They are common to us with the brutes. 2. They are accompanied with an uneasy sensation, which is weak or strong in proportion to the desire we have of the object. 3. They are not constant, but periodical. The remarks which were made on instinct in general, are also applicable to our appetites. They are characterized by the uniformity with which they operate in all individuals; and by the unerring certainty with which they perform their office prior to all experience. Our appetites are three in number; hunger, thirst, and the appetite of sex. Of these, two were intended for the preservation of the individual; the third for the continuation of the species; and without them, reason would have been insufficient for these important purposes.

It has been a question among moralists, whether our appetites, considered in themselves, are to be regarded as social or selfish principles of action. I think they can with no propriety be called social; since they lead us to their gratification without any concern for the good of others. And with as little propriety can they be called selfish, for they are directed to their respective objects, as ultimate ends;

and they must all have operated, in the first instance, prior to any experience of the pleasure arising from their gratification. Self-love, too, as has been remarked, is often sacrificed to appetite, when we indulge ourselves in an immediate enjoyment, which we know is likely to be attended with hurtful consequences.

Though our appetites are possessed by us in common with the inferior animals, yet, their operation is exalted and modified in consequence of the other principles with which in our nature they are allied. In a savage state, indeed, man gratifies his bodily appetites, nearly in the same way as the brute; and their gratification is sought after as an ultimate end irrespectively of consequences. But in a state of advanced civilization, when the moral and intellectual principles of the human mind are called into exercise, the appetites are restrained in their indulgence by considerations of duty and expediency, and even their indulgence is accompanied by other and higher sources of enjoyment. The passion between the sexes has given occasion to the exercise of the most ennobling affections; and even in the capricious tyrant it has often been the cause of moments of overcoming tenderness. It has been implanted in human nature for the wisest purposes; and much of what is daring and enterprising in human life, may be traced to its powerful operation.

Passion's fierce illapse
 Rouses the mind's whole fabric; with supplies
 Of daily impulse keeps the elastic powers
 Intensely pois'd, and polishes anew
 By that collision all the fine machine;

Else rust would rise, and foulness, by degrees
Incumb'ring, choke at last what heaven design'd
For ceaseless motion and a round of toil.

It is impossible not to notice the great influence of this class of our animal principles in giving regularity and permanency to the course of human affairs. Our appetites are the same in all circumstances; and though they may be somewhat modified by other feelings, yet no situation, and no progress in knowledge, can extinguish them. Education enlightens the mind, and excites the desire of wealth and honour, but it cannot change the passions and appetites implanted in human nature, and which are necessary to the continued existence of the species. Knowledge will certainly make even the poor rational and intelligent, sober and thoughtful, but cannot possibly make them forget to eat and to drink, nor to neglect those avocations by which the means of gratifying the imperious desires of animal nature are obtained. Even though it were possible to make them all philosophers, yet, since philosophy cannot satisfy the returning importunities of hunger and thirst, nor supply the other necessities of nature, the great business of life would continue to go on as at present: there would still be ploughmen and artificers, farther removed indeed in point of intellect from the brute creation, but not less industrious and persevering in their employment. How preposterous is it then to suppose, that nature has left her great operations, her directing and impelling powers, to be changed or mutilated by the pleasure or caprice of man! These operations, and these powers, are equally constant amid the varied forms which society assumes,—whether its state be

learned or ignorant, rich or poor, refined or barbarous.

But though education cannot eradicate any passion or appetite in human nature, there is a desire, which if it does not wholly create, it most powerfully invigorates ; I refer to the desire of improving the condition. Where the people are grossly ignorant, this principle has much less force than in a country where intelligence is equally diffused, and where freedom of thought and of action is allowed ; and, perhaps in circumstances of this last description, it might, if not attended with some counteracting forces, occasion some evil. The impelling power of this desire, and the force by which it is regulated and restrained, may not improperly be compared to the centripetal and centrifugal forces in the philosophy of Newton ; and the former are not less necessary to the prosperity of the moral world, than the latter are to the existence of the physical. While the desire to improve the condition may be considered as a constantly operating power, acting in a certain direction, the passions and appetites of human nature form another, and an opposing power, by which the impetus of this is regulated and rendered useful. If, indeed, it were optional with the poor, whether they performed the drudgery of their station or not, or, if they attended to their employment, merely because they were ignorant, then it might be inexpedient to afford them that knowledge by which they become indolent : but since every man, whether lettered or unlettered, stands in need of bread ; and since, therefore, if poor, he is impelled to labour by a force which is regular in its operation, and which has more efficiency than

any that human ingenuity can put in its place, the danger which is apprehended from the most extensive system of education, is a mere dream of the imagination.

Though in a certain sense, there is neither virtue nor vice in acting merely from appetite, yet it is most certain that their proper regulation is the triumph of religion and of civilization. Many circumstances clearly point out that it is the intention of nature, that our appetites should be indulged with moderation, and under those restraints which reason prescribes. With regard to sensual gratification, the inferior animals have the advantage over men. Their senses, in many instances, are more acute, while they are exempted from any disagreeable check to the indulgence of appetite. Cicero observes, that a person addicted to a life of pleasure, if he be not quite sunk into the beast,—if he be but a degree more erect than his brethren of the field,—will, from a natural modesty or shame, conceal or dissemble his inclinations—a plain indication that bodily pleasure is unbecoming the dignity of human nature. Besides, all inferior gratifications occupy but a small portion of the life of man, and the recollection of their enjoyment, unconnected with any higher principle, affords no pleasing reflection; a circumstance which forms a presumptive proof that the cultivation of reason and religion, and the exercise of those elevated duties which their improvement requires, are designed to constitute the chief source of human happiness. If any additional consideration were necessary on this head, it might be observed, that the most impious and worthless are

often in the possession of the greatest share of sensual pleasure ; they are at least surrounded with a large proportion of the means by which such inferior gratifications may be secured ; a fact which leads us to the conclusion that the Deity puts little value on gifts which he allows his enemies pre-eminently to enjoy, and that he intends higher and more enduring rewards for those who sincerely obey him. The whole, indeed, of natural and revealed religion, whilst it allows us temperately to use all the sources of enjoyment of which our nature is susceptible, urges upon our attention the duty and necessity of habitual self-command.

“ Every one knows,” says Reid, “ that when appetite draws one way, duty, decency, or even interest, may draw the contrary way ; and that appetite may give a stronger impulse than any one of these, or even all of them conjoined. Yet it is certain, that, in every case of this kind, appetite ought to yield to any of these principles when it stands opposed to them. It is in such cases that self-government is necessary. The man who suffers himself to be led by appetite to do what he knows he ought not to do, has an immediate and natural conviction that he did wrong, and might have done otherwise ; and therefore he condemns himself, and confesses that he yielded to an appetite which ought to have been under his command.”

It is unnecessary to take any notice here of our acquired appetites, since they owe their existence to casual circumstances. Moral and political causes have no slight influence in increasing or diminishing their number ; and to these causes it is not difficult in many

cases to trace the appetite for tobacco, or for opium, but especially for intoxicating liquors. It is generally, I believe, to moral as well as to physical causes, that a prevailing habit of dram-drinking owes its origin ; and when several such causes unite in its formation, its power is increased by that law of our nature according to which every thing that stimulates the nervous system produces a subsequent languor, which gives rise to a desire of repetition.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE AFFECTIONS.

I PROCEED to consider those emotions which are both animal and intellectual. These are the affections. It may seem unusual to consider this class of our active principles as allied to the intellectual powers of our nature. Dr. Reid places them among the animal principles of our nature, because they are such as operate upon the will and intention, but do not suppose any exercise of judgment or reason ; and are most of them to be found in some brute animals, as well as in man. But I consider them in a somewhat more elevated point of view ; first, because they are of a higher order of active principles than our appetites, which are properly called animal ; and secondly, because some of them are peculiar to man, and all of them, in consequence of the nobler principles with which they are associated in his nature, are exalted in their exercise and in their ends.

Under the general head of our affections are comprehended all those active principles, whose direct and ultimate object is the communication either of enjoyment or suffering, to any of our fellow-creatures. Affection, in this sense, is to be distinguished from appetite and desire; for these have always things, and not persons, for their objects; whereas, strictly and properly speaking, the immediate objects of affection are persons only. Affection is likewise distinguishable from passion. They are the same, indeed, in kind; but they are different in degree. Affection is exercised with decency and moderation; but passion is affection carried to such excess, that it disturbs our reason, lessens, or entirely takes away from us our power of self-command, agitates even the body, and hurries us to action, by an almost irresistible impulse. Dr. Reid thinks that the malevolent principles, such as anger, resentment, envy, are not commonly called affections, but rather passions. And he takes the reason of this to be, that the malevolent affections are almost always accompanied with that perturbation of mind which we properly call passion; and this passion being the most conspicuous ingredient, gives its name to the whole.

Though something like this distinction may obtain in popular language, there is not the slightest occasion for its introduction into philosophical arrangements. I shall, therefore, with Professor Stewart, consider under the head of affections all those feelings and emotions, by which we are led to communicate to others, either pleasure or pain, enjoyment or suffering.

These emotions, then, may be divided into the benevolent and malevolent. The benevolent affections are various, and it would not, perhaps, be easy to enumerate them completely. The parental and filial affections, the affections of kindred, love, friendship, patriotism, universal benevolence, gratitude, and pity, are some of the most important. Besides these, there are peculiar benevolent affections, excited by those moral qualities in other men, which render them either amiable or respectable, or objects of admiration. The malevolent affections are hatred, jealousy, envy, revenge, and the like.

The exercise of all our benevolent affections is accompanied with an agreeable feeling or emotion. This law of our nature, which was noticed by moralists at an early period, shews that the design of the Creator is to communicate happiness to his intelligent creatures in connexion with the exercise of virtuous dispositions. It is obvious that much of the pleasure which we feel in reading works of fiction may be traced to this source; and accordingly it has been noticed, that those authors whose object is to furnish amusement to the mind, avail themselves of these affections as one of the chief vehicles of pleasure. Hence, the principal charm of tragedy, and of every other species of pathetic composition. And hence it is that he possesses the greatest share of the happiness of human life whose affections are warm and virtuous; because he is not only in the possession of the chief source of human enjoyment, but of one which is little affected by casual circumstances.

There let thy soul acknowledge its complaint,
How blind, how impious ! There behold the ways
Of Heaven's eternal destiny to man,
For ever just, benevolent, and wise :
That virtue's awful steps, howe'er pursued
By vexing fortune and intrusive pain,
Should never be divided from her chaste,
Her fair attendant, pleasure. Need I urge
Thy tardy thought through all the various round
Of this existence, that thy softening soul
At length may learn what energy the hand
Of virtue mingles in the bitter tide
Of passion swelling with distress and pain,
To mitigate the sharp with gracious drops
Of cordial pleasure ?

Ask the crowd

Which flies impatient from the village walk
To climb the neighbouring cliffs, when far below
The cruel winds have hurl'd upon the coast
Some helpless bark ; while sacred pity melts
The general eye, or terror's icy hand
Smites their distorted limbs and horrent hair ;
While every mother closer to her breast
Catches her child, and pointing where the waves
Foam through the shatter'd vessel, shrieks aloud
As one poor wretch that spreads his piteous arms
For succour, swallow'd by the roaring surge,
As now another, dash'd against the rock,
Drops lifeless down ; O ! deemest thou indeed
No kind endearment here by nature given
To mutual terror and compassion's tears ?
No sweetly melting softness which attracts,
O'er all that edge of pain, the social powers
To this their proper action and their end ?

Say, does thy secret soul repine to taste
The big distress ? Or would'st thou then exchange
Those heart-ennobling sorrows for the lot
Of him who sits amid the gaudy herd
Of mute barbarians bending to his nod,

And bears aloft his gold-invested front,
And says within himself, " I am a king,
And wherefore should the clamorous voice of woe
Intrude upon mine ear ?"

The pleasure which accompanies the kindly affections of our nature, by being too eagerly sought after as an end, has often proved a snare to inexperienced youth. That reward which the Author of nature has connected with virtue, has, in this way, been mingled with criminal indulgence; and the charms of pure emotion have been transferred to vice and folly. This perversion, however, is evidently contrary to the design of the Deity in the constitution which he has given us, whose object in connecting the agreeable emotions with the exercise of benevolence is, to induce us to cultivate with peculiar care a class of our active principles so immediately subservient to the happiness of human society. We are thus drawn on to virtue by the enticement of mental gratification; and the enjoyment of pleasure is made subservient to our progress in moral improvement.

The connexion of pleasure with the benevolent affections has given rise to a question among moralists, whether these affections are not selfish in their origin, and indulged for the sake of the pleasure connected with them. It is quite unnecessary to enter here on a serious refutation of the theory of selfishness founded on the opinion implied in this question. This has been already done by several writers of eminence; and the conclusion which they have fully established, though opposed to the views of many ancient and modern philosophers, is not only agree-

able to the obvious appearance of the past, but is strongly confirmed by the analogy of the other active powers of the mind. The selfish system, like every other system which substitutes analogies for facts, and traces many classes of dissimilar phenomena to one principle, takes its rise from a superficial view of the facts to be accounted for; and inasmuch as it is an attempt to degrade the nature of man, possesses not the beauty even of a plausible speculation.

CHAPTER V.

THE CONSIDERATION OF AFFECTIONS *CONTINUED*: THE PARENTAL AND FILIAL AFFECTIONS—GRATITUDE—PITY—SYMPATHY—LOVE—PATRIOTISM.

I CANNOT enter at great length into the consideration of each of our benevolent affections. Nor is this at all necessary, since we rather require knowledge for their proper direction and regulation than information concerning their nature and effects. Some of them are more particularly called natural, because the want of them is regarded as an extraordinary deviation from nature, revolting to our feelings. And on this ground their existence and operation are assumed in the legislative enactments of all nations; which are framed on the principle that nature has provided the parental and filial affections to supersede in a great measure the utility and necessity of laws as to the duties implied in such relations.

Towards offspring, there is in man, as in other

animals, a peculiarly strong affection, and a tender solicitude for their preservation and happiness. In mankind this affection continues during life, as parents may always do some good to their posterity. It descends to grand-children, and their children, with almost undiminished strength. In the brutes it is found where the young need assistance; where they do not, it scarcely exists. It lasts till the young can support themselves, then generally ceases. All this carries with it manifest evidences of design in the Author of nature. Similar affections, though weaker, are found generally to attend the ties of blood among collaterals. These tender affections are the springs of more than one half of the labours and cares of mankind: they rouse the mind to things great and honourable. By their means the heart is rendered more susceptible of every kind, and tender, and social affection.

Next to the affections of kindred, perhaps, the strongest and most universally operative principle of our nature is gratitude for favours received. So confident are we of the existence of this principle, that in the intercourse of society, its influence, nay, its active influence, is pre-supposed; and, accordingly, the offence committed against a benefactor, for the commission of which in other circumstances we could suggest many apologies, shocks us as indicating an unusual degree of depravity. The obligation conferred, and the gratitude which is due, must bear some proportion to the circumstances in which the favour is communicated. Thus, the feeding of an enemy in any circumstances is an act of virtuous kindness calculated to awaken the more generous feelings of the human

heart. But what should we think due to the person, who, while enduring himself all the privations of a siege, could rise at the moment of his greatest extremity above the cold and unkindly workings of his mind towards his avowed enemy, and divide with him his last morsel, in opposition to the cravings of the most powerful instinct of his nature ?

On mere indifferent objects, common bounty
Will shower relief; but when our bitterest foe
Lies sunk, disarm'd, and desolate, then! then!
To feel the mercies of a pitying god,
To raise him from the dust, and that best way
To triumph o'er him, is heroic goodness.

“ Whether there be, or be not,” says Dr. Reid, “ in the more sagacious brutes, something that may be called gratitude, I will not dispute. We must allow this important difference between their gratitude and that of the human kind, that, in the last, the mind of the benefactor is chiefly regarded; in the first, the external action only. A brute animal will be as kindly affected to him who feeds it in order to kill and eat it, as to him who does it from affection. A man may be justly entitled to our gratitude, for an office that is useful, though it be at the same time disagreeable; and not only for doing, but for forbearing what he had a right to do. Among men, it is not every beneficial office that claims our gratitude, but such only as are not due to us in justice. A favour alone gives a claim to gratitude; and a favour must be something more than justice requires. It does not appear that brutes have any conception of justice. They can

neither distinguish hurt from injury, nor a favour from a good office that is due.”

Though some savage tribes appear to be destitute of pity to the distressed, I agree with the most distinguished moralists in regarding it as an original principle of the human mind, conferred by the Author of nature for the most valuable ends. It may, indeed, be modified by circumstances, as may all the powers and tendencies of our nature; but its characteristic is to prompt us to give all the aid in our power to our suffering fellow-creatures, independently of our reflection, and without any reference to our enjoyment. Several considerations might be mentioned in support of this opinion. The first is, that it is as necessary for the happiness, and even the virtue of mankind as any other of our active principles. In a world where there is so much physical evil, and where the sufferer is so much dependent on the sympathy and benevolent aid of others, have we any reason to conclude, from what we know of the benevolence of the Deity, that he would intrust our relief to the slow deductions of reason, or to the operations of fancy? If there have been implanted in our nature, affections and desires for the attainment of other ends, why should we suppose that there is no original affection in the human mind, whose ultimate object is the relief of the distressed; especially as this object is so necessary to the circumstances in which mankind are placed.

But the originality of this principle is farther confirmed by the fact, that its operation is co-extensive with the human race. The exceptions are easily

accounted for, and only exist in appearance. It is not because savages do not feel the emotion of pity, that they devote to a cruel death part of their prisoners of war, but because they have another and a more powerful passion to gratify, which, for the time, suppresses every gentler affection of humanity. When this passion is gratified, these affections begin to operate; and accordingly, the remaining prisoners are kindly used, and adopted as brethren. Besides, the circumstances in which these savages are placed confer a superior value on the virtue of fortitude; and from the estimation in which they are accustomed to hold this virtue, the man becomes an object of contempt who has not the hardihood to defy his tormentors, and sing his death-song in the midst of the most cruel tortures. The moment, however, in which contempt acquires an ascendancy over the mind, compassion to its object is extinguished. And perhaps regular government and civilization communicate no greater advantage than the restraints which they impose on passions which naturally shut up the heart against pity, and which give the prowling savage of the wood all the ferocity of the untamed and the irrational animals with which he is surrounded.

There may, even among a civilized people, be certain cases in which their pity to the distressed may not be allowed to operate, in consequence of the superior control of the hostile feelings. False views of religion have a greater influence than any other cause in perverting or in entirely suppressing the natural sympathies of the human heart; and there are many instances recorded in the history of every nation in

Europe, to shew how effectually such a cause can dry up all the springs of compassion, even in those who are considerably removed above the level of savage life. The period is not distant, when the heretic who was condemned to be burnt passed on to the place of execution, and even struggled with his torments, without exciting compassion in the multitude. The number is almost incredible who have been shut out from all the sympathies of their fellow-creatures, and doomed to all the agonies of a cruel death, only because some enemy happened to direct against them the imputation of witchcraft. But examples of this kind only show the extent to which our feelings may be perverted, and not that these feelings owe their existence, or rather their origin, to adventitious circumstances.

The phenomena to which our sympathy gives rise, may be better accounted for by allowing that they proceed from an original principle of our nature, than by any other cause which can be assumed for their explanation. On the former supposition every thing is natural; and the universality of the phenomena is easily traced to a cause which is co-extensive in its operation as human nature: but in the latter hypothesis we see the spirit of system strongly at work, connecting by a single principle many classes of facts, and giving them that construction which will support and adorn a favourite theory. According to this theory, the imagination places us in the situation of the sufferer, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him,

and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them. His agonies, when they are thus brought home to ourselves, when we have thus adopted and made them our own, begin at last to affect us, and we then tremble and shudder at the thought of what he feels. For, as to be in pain, or distress of any kind, excites the most excessive sorrow; so, to conceive, or to imagine that we are in it, excites some degree of the same emotion, in proportion to the vivacity or dulness of the conception. "That this is the source of our fellow-feeling for the misery of others, that it is by changing places in fancy with the sufferer, that we come either to conceive or to be affected by what he feels, may be demonstrated by many observations, if it should not be thought sufficiently evident of itself. Whatever is the passion which arises from any object in the person principally concerned, an analogous emotion springs up, at the thought of his situation, in the breast of every attentive spectator. Our joy for the deliverance of those heroes of tragedy or romance who interest us is as sincere as our grief for their distress, and our fellow-feeling with their misery is not more real than with their happiness. We enter into their gratitude towards those faithful friends who did not desert them in their difficulties; and we heartily go along with their resentment against those perfidious traitors who injured, abandoned, or deceived them. In every passion of which the mind of man is susceptible, the emotions of the by-standers always correspond to

what, by bringing the case home to himself, he imagines should be the sentiments of the sufferer.”

Such are the views of the author of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*; and few writers are more deserving of deference from those who may differ from his opinions. His views, to a certain extent, are just, and are erroneous only in consequence of their being carried to an extreme. For the reasons which have been already assigned, as well as for several others which might be mentioned, I am satisfied that compassion to the distressed is a principle whose operation does not depend on the influence of fancy, or the slow deductions of reason, or on the promptings and refinements of self-love; but is an original tendency of our nature, spontaneous in its actings, and not resolvable into any other fact more general. We see this principle strongly working in children, where there are the fewest distant views of interest; so strongly sometimes, even in some not of the softest mould, at executions, as to occasion fainting and sickness. After all, I am ready to acknowledge, that the question concerning the origin of this or of any other of our affections, is of very subordinate importance to those inquiries, which relate to their nature, and laws, and uses.

Before leaving this particular, it may be proper to notice the difference between the meaning of the words compassion and sympathy. The former is used to denote the emotion of pity which we feel towards the distressed; the latter, though its meaning was perhaps originally the same, may now, however, without much impropriety, be made use of to denote our

fellow-feeling with any passion whatever. According to a law of our nature, the faithful representation of any passion excites in us a corresponding emotion. In other words, when we observe the infallible signs of any emotion in others, we sympathize with that emotion. It is in consequence of this original law of our constitution that the passions, upon some occasions, may seem to be transfused from one man to another, instantaneously, and antecedently to any knowledge of what excited them in the person principally concerned. "Grief and joy, for example, strongly expressed in the look and gestures of any person, at once affect the spectator with some degree of a like painful or agreeable emotion. A smiling face is, to every body that sees it, a cheerful object; as a sorrowful countenance, on the other hand, is a melancholy one."

Sympathy extends to all our affections and passions. They all seem naturally contagious. We not only sorrow with the distressed, and rejoice with the prosperous; but admiration, or surprise, discovered in one, raises a correspondent commotion of mind in all who behold him. Fear raises fear in the observer, before he knows the cause; laughter moves to laugh; love begets love; and the devout affections displayed, dispose others to devotion.

It is impossible not to notice the wisdom and beneficence of the Deity in this admirable provision for the happiness of the species:—we are thus reminded by an original principle of our nature, that we have not been formed for our own gratification merely, but to be the ready instruments of conferring happiness

on our fellow-creatures. And to ensure the beneficial operation of this principle, we are so constituted, that our distresses are alleviated, and our enjoyments enhanced, by the cordiality with which our friends and neighbours sympathize with us.

Among the benevolent affections, the passion between the sexes holds a prominent place, and has been the theme of poets in all ages. Nor does it present a less interesting object of contemplation to the philosopher than to the poet, in all the aspects which it assumes, from the vehemence of youth to the gentler fondness of old age. The wisdom of nature is manifest in making provision for the continuance of this affection, amid all the varied trials and changes of life, and long after those attractions of form by which it was originally called into existence have been worn away. It is in consequence of this provision, that in the conjugal state, its tenderness remains and often increases without its vehemence or its passion; and that by the influence of that virtuous affection which conceals a multitude of failings, and sees or imagines only beauties, the loved companions in each other's joys and sorrows associate with each other all the emotions that gladden or depress the heart. To how many tender solitudes for the happiness of its object does this conjugal affection give rise! And perhaps these tender solitudes were never more touchingly described than by Lucan, when alluding to the flight of Pompey to the island of Lesbos, after the battle of Pharsalia.

Here the kind partner of his every care—

His faithful, loved Cornelia languish'd there :

At that sad distance more unhappy far,
Than in the midst of danger, death, and war.
There on her heart, even all the live-long day,
Foreboding thought a weary burden lay :
Sad visions haunt her slumbers with affright,
And Thessaly returns with every night.
Soon as the ruddy morning paints the skies,
Swift to the shore the pensive mourner flies:
There lonely sitting on the cliff's bleak brow,
Her sight she fixes on the seas below ;
Attentive marks the wide horizon's bound,
And kens each sail that rises in the round ;
Thick beats her heart, as every prow draws near,
And dreads the fortunes of her Lord to hear.

The purest and the most perfect earthly happiness is surely theirs who, blessed in each other's love, have no joy nor sorrow, no hope nor fear, but what they possess in common, and whose mutual affection is heightened by all the trials and the pleasures which occasion an interchange of sympathy and of feeling. The labour and vexation which are endured by the one in the busy employments of human life, are almost forgotten by the endearing tenderness of the other ; and the same difficulties are again encountered for the sake of ministering to her happiness whose love can soften every sorrow, and in whose presence every joy is heightened.

But happy they ! the happiest of their kind !
Whom gentler stars unite, and in one fate
Their hearts, their fortunes, and their beings blend.
'Tis not the coarser tie of human laws,
Unnatural oft and foreign to the mind,
That binds their peace, but harmony itself,
Attuning all their passions into love ;
Where friendship full exerts her softest power,
Perfect esteem enlivened by desire

Ineffable, and sympathy of soul ;
 Thought meeting thought, and will preventing will,
 With boundless confidence : for nought but love
 Can answer love, and render bliss secure.
 Let him, ungenerous, who, alone intent
 To bless himself, from sordid parents buys
 The loathing virgin, in eternal care,
 Well-merited, consume his nights and days :
 Let barbarous nations, whose inhuman love
 Is wild desire, fierce as the suns they feel ;
 Let eastern tyrants, from the light of Heaven
 Seclude their bosom slaves, meanly possess'd
 Of a mere lifeless, violated form :
 While those whom love cements in holy faith,
 And equal transport, free as nature live,
 Disdaining fear. What is the world to them,
 Its pomp, its pleasure, and its nonsense all !
 Who in each other clasp whatever fair
 High fancy forms, and lavish hearts can wish ;
 Something than beauty dearer, should they look
 Or on the mind, or mind-illumin'd face ;
 Truth, goodness, honour, harmony, and love,
 The richest bounty of indulgent Heaven.
 Oh ! speak the joy ! ye, whom the sudden tear
 Surprises often, while you look around,
 And nothing strikes your eye but sights of bliss,
 All-various nature pressing on the heart :
 An elegant sufficiency, content,
 Retirement, rural quiet, friendship, books,
 Ease and alternate labour, useful life,
 Progressive virtue, and approving Heaven !
 These are the matchless joys of virtuous love ;
 And thus their moments fly. The seasons thus,
 As ceaseless round a jarring world they roll,
 Still find them happy ; and consenting spring
 Sheds her own rosy garland on their heads :
 Till evening comes at last, serene and mild ;
 When after the long vernal day of life,
 Enamour'd more, as more remembrance swells
 With many a proof of recollected love,
 Together down they sink in social sleep ;
 Together freed, their gentle spirits fly
 To scenes where love and bliss immortal reign.

The only other of the benevolent affections to which I shall allude is patriotism, in which I include a regard to the community to which we belong. This is one of the most powerful and universally operative of the benevolent emotions. In rude nations it shews itself toward the clan and to the country which the clan inhabits. When it shews itself to the community, it is called public spirit, and it acquires the name of patriotism when it manifests itself in an attachment to country. Its object, in the former character, extends as our connexions extend; and a sense of the connexion carries the affection along with it to every community to which we can apply the pronouns *we* and *our*;

Friend, parent, neighbour, first it will embrace,
His country next, and then all human race.

When we analyze the patriotic affection, we find it may, for the greater part, be resolved into that power which material objects have of suggesting former feelings and sensations. The objects, and especially the rural objects, with which we have always been surrounded, we cannot but regard in the light of old and familiar friends: they seem to possess a part of our own life and intelligence, and the interest with which we view them is not the less that they recall to our remembrance those early associates whose presence made them most dear to us. To the eyes of strangers these objects may seem devoid of beauty; bleak and barren, they may seem incapable of attracting towards them a single look of fondness; but the mountaineer has never left the bosom of his mountains without regret; and the sight of his blue hills, even from afar,

and especially after a long absence in other lands, has never failed to give that buoyancy of spirits which is felt when we meet with an old and an intimate friend. The love of country, indeed, seems to bear a proportion to its dreariness and its trackless solitude; acquiring strength, not in the ratio of its abundance and population—its cultivated fields and its soft and luxuriant landscapes, but in proportion to the grandeur of its mountains, and the number and rapidity of its torrents, and the depth of its glens, and the wide expansion of its lakes, and the kindliness and simplicity of its inhabitants.

In our own land the Highlander, and especially the Highlander of other times, like the inhabitants of all mountainous regions, had a warm regard to his country and kindred. There was an ardent enthusiasm in his nature, originally inspired by the grandeur of the scenes which first awakened his fancy, and cherished by the sublime and expressive aspect which they assumed, as ground consecrated by the deeds of his fathers, and rendered still more awfully interesting as the occasional abodes of the spirits of other years. This enthusiasm, tender and lofty, was cherished also by his pursuits, and his connexions, but, above all, by the songs of the bards; and in the examples of exalted heroism which this poetry ever presented to his view, he had a powerful stimulus to attain the virtues which he was taught so warmly to admire.

It has, indeed, been contended, by those who study the character of man as it is delineated in books more than in the faithful exhibitions of nature, that it

requires a considerable share of refinement, of taste, and culture of understanding, to relish the beauties of mountain scenery; and that minds, untutored by philosophy and science, are incapable of receiving any favourable impression from the most striking and majestic phenomena of the universe. This hypothesis is as much at variance with sound philosophical theory as with fact. For might we not suppose that the contemplation of the operations of nature, in her grandest and most impressive scale of magnificence, is most calculated to awaken the sensibilities of the human heart? We are here in the school of nature, removed from the deadening intercourse of the world, and allowed to cherish in solitude those solemn and touching reflections which dullness itself can scarcely resist, when excited by the sublime manifestations of a power, which weighs the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance.

Whatever opinions may be entertained as to this point, there is no doubt that the natives of the most mountainous regions of Europe are distinguished for their love of country. The bleak and inhospitable mountains of Norway present beauties to the eyes of their inhabitants which they only can see; and so great is their fondness for the untrodden deserts which surround them, that they would not relinquish the pleasure of beholding them, and of being finally interred amid their solitude, for all the wealth and abundance of more genial climes.

Ev'n those hills, that round their mansion rise
Enhance the bliss their scanty fund supplies:

Dear is that shed to which their soul conforms,
And dear that hill which lifts them to the storms ;
And as a child, when scaring sounds molest,
Clings close, and closer to the mother's breast,
So the loud torrent, and the whirlwind's roar,
But bind them to their native mountains more.

The transference of affection from the territory to the institutions of our native land is natural ; and there is also a similar transference of affection from the institutions to the country in which they are enjoyed. Those institutions which are the inheritance of free men, and which form the bulwark of freedom, give interest to the land which they ennoble and adorn ; and such institutions confer beauty on the most inhospitable regions, and have rendered Attica, and Switzerland, and Britain, dear as their own, their native land, to all in every age who revere the principles which make man like Him that made him. The institutions of freemen cherish not only the love of freedom, but that public and patriotic spirit which causes the hero and the legislator to toil for the safety and the happiness of the commonwealth ; and which burns to shew itself in some act of generous sacrifice or of noble daring for the public good.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE MALEVOLENT AFFECTIONS.

THE feelings of hatred, of jealousy, envy, revenge, and misanthropy, are called malevolent. There is good reason for doubting both the propriety of the appellation, and the existence of such affections, as original principles of human nature. That their influence is co-extensive with the human race cannot be denied; but apart from the consideration of the extreme improbability that malignant passions should be implanted in the human mind by a Being of goodness and beneficence, I think it may be shewn that they all take their rise from that power of our nature which prompts us to punish injustice whether done to ourselves or to others. It matters little by what name we distinguish this power; whether it be resentment, or a sense of justice, and a desire to retaliate on the violator of its rules: since all our evil affections are either grafted upon this by our erroneous opinions and criminal habits, or result from the perversion and abuse of our other active principles. I can only agree to call resentment malevolent, on account of the evil affections that are usually allied to it, and because its excess or abuse is the source of the malevolence which is to be found among men. And though it must be maintained, that envy, and hatred, and jealousy, and revenge, are solely imputable to man; yet, the history of the species gives too ample evidence of the extent to which they have predominated

in the human breast, and of the powerful influence which they have exerted on society. When we consider the crimes of public and of private life which have directly proceeded from deliberate malevolence, the long and the desolating wars to which revenge or some other passion equally base has given rise, the propensity to detraction and slander which has been the subject of complaint among to moralists in every age, we cannot regard the description as coloured, which holds out the majority of our race as serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.

The evil affections, like the benevolent, are so closely allied to each other, that the indulgence of the one naturally gives rise to the indulgence of the rest. Envy prepares the way for malice, and malice produces guile, and guile is the parent of hypocrisy. Malice consists in either wishing evil, or in procuring evil, to another; and that it has a wide influence is evident from the ill-concealed satisfaction which is often felt, in giving currency to the tale of detraction, and in dwelling on the misfortunes of others. Guile and hypocrisy are its necessary products. Few persons, especially in civilized society, are willing to avow that they wish evil to others; and fewer still will openly shew the satisfaction which they feel in the calamity and humiliation of their fellow-creatures; they would rather persuade us, while in the very act of gratifying their malignity, that they are the objects of their compassionate sympathy, and would cheerfully put forth all their power to relieve them. They would have us believe, that they are under the

dominion of the most amiable and benevolent affections, when it is obvious to others, and when they might be conscious themselves, that they are under the ascendancy of malice and hatred. So closely and necessarily is hypocrisy allied to the indulgence of evil affections, that wherever we have indications of the prevailing influence of the latter, we may be certain that the former cannot be absent. The aspect of benevolence is hypocritically assumed even towards the person who is the object of malicious feelings, when his presence renders it expedient to employ the specious words of guile; but no sooner does he withdraw than the mask is dropt; and those affections which were restrained or rather concealed for temporary ends, are allowed to manifest themselves in all their naked deformity and hatefulness.

Envy is that feeling which repines at the good of others, and which induces us to detract from their merits. "This," says Dr. Reid, "is the most malignant passion that can lodge in the human breast; which devours, as its natural food, the fame and the happiness of those who are most deserving of our esteem." There cannot be a stronger proof of the truth of this remark, than the opposition with which this evil affection has uniformly assailed those who have been successful in the paths of honour and of virtue. "Where shall a man come," says the pious Leighton, "but his ears shall be beaten with the unpleasant noise of one detracting and disparaging another: and yet this is extreme baseness, and the practice only of false counterfeit goodness, to make

up our own esteem out of the ruins of the good name of others: real virtue neither needs nor can endure that dishonest shift: it can subsist of itself, and therefore ingenuously commends and acknowledges what good is in others, and loves to hear it acknowledged; and neither readily speaks nor hears evil of any, but rather, where duty and conscience not discovers, casts a veil on men's failings to hide them; this is the true temper of the children of God."

The fruit of envy is evil-speaking; and this is generally the vice of persons of idle habits, and of uninformed minds. They have the command of the time and the wealth which place them above manual labour; but they are destitute of the intelligence and the moral principles and sensibilities which would teach them how to employ those blessings without injury to themselves, or the violation of the obligations which they owe to the reputation of their neighbour. They use no effectual means to furnish their minds with any of the treasures of knowledge; religion is to them so totally a form, as never to have interested their affections, or awakened the powers of reflection; their thoughts are few, and these are mean, and sensual, and grovelling; and when they meet together, they feel as incapable as they are disinclined, to enter on any rational or innocent topic of conversation. Is it any wonder that such persons in such circumstances fasten on the failings of others as their appropriate prey, and that they take manifest pleasure in talking of the frailties, and in bringing down to the very level of their own littleness, the virtues and attain-

ments of that immortal nature of which they form the disgrace. Like the unclean birds which are said to follow in the rear of an army, that from the carcasses of the slain they may derive that species of food for which they have the keenest relish, they find their chief satisfaction in descrying the blemishes of human character, and in only selecting out of the thousand objects presented to their contemplation, the weaknesses and the corruptions of the species.

Dr. Reid considers emulation and resentment as the only two principles of our nature which can in any sense be called malevolent. These he takes to be parts of the human constitution, given us by our Maker for good ends, and, when properly directed and regulated, of excellent use. But as their excess or abuse, to which human nature is very prone, is the source and spring of all the malevolence that is to be found among men, he calls them on that account malevolent. Now, it appears to me, that emulation is no more connected with our malevolent feelings, than any other of our desires and affections; and that the desire of power and the desire of knowledge might, because they are susceptible of perversion and abuse, with as much propriety be placed in this class, as emulation, or the desire of superiority.

As to resentment, its essence consists in a desire to retaliate on the person who has done us an injury. This feeling is the same, or nearly the same, as anger. It has now, I apprehend, acquired a degree of strength far beyond its original design, and far beyond what any necessity requires; and the extent to which it hurries us, regardless of the dictates of reason and of

conscience, forms the ground of self-condemnation and of deep criminality.

Butler, whose merits are not sufficiently acknowledged even by those who owe their best thoughts to his writings, was among the first who noticed the distinction between sudden resentment, which is a blind impulse arising from our constitution, and that which is deliberate. The first may be raised by hurt of any kind; but the last can only be raised by injury, real or conceived. The one, properly speaking, is an animal sensation; the other, the result of reason and intelligence. We possess the former in common with the inferior animals, and it was no doubt given to us and to them for the same important end;—to guard both against sudden violence, in cases where reason would come too late to our assistance. The characteristic of this species of resentment is, that it subsides as soon as we are satisfied that no injury was intended. Deliberate resentment is excited only by intentional injury, and implies, therefore, a sense of justice, or of moral good and evil. When an injury is done to ourselves, the desire of retaliation directed against its author is called resentment; whereas, when the injury is done to other persons, as has been noticed by Professor Stewart, the feeling is properly called indignation.

When we analyze this feeling, and consider what is its ultimate object, we shall find that the term malevolent is far from being the most appropriate that might be employed to express it, and that it is only in a qualified sense that it can at all be applied. Is its object the communication of suffering to a sensitive

being ; or the punishment of injustice and cruelty ? A little reflection will convince us that the latter was its original and proper object.

That species of resentment, indeed, which we term instinctive, and which we possess in common with the inferior animals, is so sudden in its impulse, as sometimes to wreak itself on inanimate things, as if they had life and intelligence. For the moment, and before reflection comes to my aid, I regard the object of my resentment as capable of punishment. This may partly be accounted for by that prejudice of our early years which leads us to ascribe to the objects around us, the feelings of which we ourselves are conscious.

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE PASSIONS.

THERE are certain lively emotions, which, from their greater vivacity, are called passions. Nearly all our affections may become lively emotions or passions, in consequence of a greater degree of ardour and intensity ; and in this state they have more power in influencing the thoughts and determinations of the mind ; forcibly directing them into one channel, and presenting every object through the medium of their own colouring. The mind has less command over its perceptions and resolutions when under the dominion of passion ; the voice of reason and of conscience is feebly heard, and the most beautiful or the most hateful object, is seen either as beautiful or hateful only as it happens to accord with the ruling emotion.

When passion assumes its highest degree of violence, it acts like a temporary fit of insanity; trains of thought associated with the particular passion, and tending to increase its ardour, pass in rapid succession through the mind; and the man is hurried to the accomplishment of that which he knows will be the ground of shame and of self-crimination.

Some writers are of opinion that the only difference between an emotion and passion is, that while the former is never accompanied with desire, the latter is always followed by it. "Is passion in its nature and feeling distinguishable from emotion?" asks Kaimes in his *Elements of Criticism*. "I have been apt to think that there must be such a distinction; but, after the strictest examination, I cannot perceive any. In what consists the passion of resentment, but in a painful emotion occasioned by the injury, accompanied with desire to chastise the guilty person? In general, as to passion of every kind, we find no more in its composition, but the particulars now mentioned,—an emotion pleasant or painful accompanied with desire. What then shall we say? Are emotion and passion synonymous terms? That cannot be averred; because no feeling nor agitation of the mind, void of desire, is termed a passion; and we have discovered that there are many emotions which pass away without raising desires of any kind.

"How is the difficulty solved? An internal motion or agitation of the mind, when it passeth away without desire, is denominated an emotion; when desire follows, the emotion is denominated a passion. A fine face, for example, raiseth in me a pleasant feeling;

if that feeling vanish without producing any effect, it is in proper language an emotion: but if the feeling, by reiterated views of the object, becomes sufficiently strong to occasion desire, it loses its name of emotion, and acquires that of passion. The same holds in all the other passions. The painful feeling raised in a spectator by a slight injury done to a stranger, being accompanied with no desire of revenge, is termed an emotion; but that injury raiseth in the stranger a stronger emotion, which being accompanied with desire of revenge is passion:—envy is emulation in excess; if the exaltation of a competitor be barely disagreeable, the painful feeling is an emotion; if it produce desire to depress him, it is passion.”

This account of the distinction between emotion and passion is ingenious, and to a certain extent just. I am inclined to think, however, that the distinction will not, in every instance, hold good; and that some emotions, which are lively enough to be termed passions, are not immediately either accompanied or followed by desire. Of this description, I consider the emotions of astonishment, joy, sorrow, melancholy, and several others. Our passions are only emotions of a very lively nature, producing both on the body and the mind, in a greater or less degree, the effects already noticed; and as all our affections and emotions are susceptible of becoming very lively, they are of course susceptible of becoming passions. Mr. Hume, therefore, is not so far from the truth as some have supposed, when he gives the name of passion to all the principles of action in the human mind. He was wrong, undoubtedly, in deviating

from the received acceptation of the term, and in giving the several classes of our affections and emotions an appellation to which though they all on certain occasions may be entitled, is not proper to them in their ordinary state. There is also something like sophistry in reducing all our principles of action under the general term of passions; and in maintaining, as the consequence of this, that every man is, and ought to be, led by his passions.

Different opinions have been entertained by moralists concerning the utility of the passions. The Peripatetics contended, that though in themselves dangerous, they may be made most useful auxiliaries to virtue; while the Stoics, as is generally supposed, maintained, that as every degree of passion darkens the understanding, and is hostile to the exercise of reason, it is the duty of a wise man to attempt its utter extermination.

I apprehend that the controversy on this topic between these rival sects was owing more to an ambiguity of language than to any radical difference of opinion. The Stoics, in particular, were not happy in their selection of words; and the Greek epithet that denotes passion, having different shades of meaning, expressing the different degrees of feeling, from calm emotion to the height of its turbulence and vehemence, was well adapted to the purposes of disputation.

They understood the word in its worst sense; just as the term passion always suggests to the common people, the notion of anger or resentment. They did not mean to say that any principle of action implanted in our nature should be destroyed; but thought it

unworthy of a wise and good man to indulge any emotion to excess, especially a bad one. So far their views were agreeable to divine revelation, which enjoins its disciples to be anxious for nothing, and to be temperate in all things. Nor can we suppose, that if the ambiguity of language had been laid aside, there would have been any material difference of opinion between them and the followers of Aristotle. But while one considered passion only as the cause of those bad effects which it often produces, and the other regarded it as fitted by nature to produce good effects, when under subjection to reason,—it does not appear that what the one sect justified was the same thing which the other condemned.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE DESIRES.

THERE IS NO way in which we discover more clearly the wisdom of the Deity, than the manner in which our intellectual and moral powers harmoniously combine in the accomplishment of one end,—the virtue and happiness of man. Our appetites have been given us, as we have seen, to secure the existence of the individual, and the preservation of the species: our affections, which are still nobler principles of action, have been communicated to prompt us to pure and generous exertion; and our desires, which are principles of a still higher order, are intended to stimulate us in the pursuit of what is pure and lovely.

Our desires are distinguished from our appetites

and affections by various circumstances. They differ from our appetites in not taking their rise from the body—in not operating periodically, after certain intervals—and in not ceasing on the attainment of a particular object. While we are pursuing the objects of our desire we are, in the judgment of others, as well as in our own, acting a part more suited to our rational nature than when yielding to the dominion of indolence or of appetite; and it is not till we pervert them from their true end that we fall in the esteem of our fellow-creatures.

Our desires are classed by Dr. Reid among what he terms our animal principles of action; because, as he thinks, they require intention and will in their operation, but not judgment. This distinction he traces to the ancient moralists, who termed principles of this description blind desires. I see little propriety in this distinction; and, therefore, consider our affections and desires, especially our desires, as parts of our rational nature, to be employed under the direction of reason and understanding. The correctness of this opinion may be maintained, though we admit that the desire of superiority exists in a slight degree in some of the lower animals. It is said that in a herd of black cattle there is a rank and subordination. When a stranger is introduced into the herd, he must fight every one till his rank is settled. Then he yields to the stronger, and assumes authority over the weaker. This is the only known instance in which the slightest trace of any of our desires can be seen in the brute creation; and the difference between even this and the desire of power in man is so great, as to render it doubtful whether they are the same in kind.

“ To desire, it is essential that the object appear to us good ;—or rather, to appear to us good, and to appear to us desirable, are truly the same thing ;—our only conception of what is good, as an immediate object of desire, being that it excites in us, when considered by us, this feeling of desire. If all things had been uniformly indifferent to all mankind, it is evident that they could not have formed any classes of things as good or evil. What we do not desire may be conceived by us to be good, relatively to others who desire it, but cannot seem good relatively to us. To enumerate the objects of our desire would be to enumerate almost every object which exists around us on earth, and almost every relation of these objects ; without taking into account the variety of wishes more fantastic, which our wild imagination is capable of forming, a complete enumeration of all the possibilities of human wishes is almost as little to be expected, as a complete gratification of all the wishes of man, whose desires are as unlimited as his power is bounded*.”

The chief of our desires are, 1. The desire of knowledge, or the principle of curiosity. 2. The desire of society. 3. The desire of esteem. 4. The desire of power, or the principle of ambition. 5. The desire of superiority, or the principle of emulation. 6. The alternate desire of activity and repose ; and, 7. The desire of happiness, or the principle of self-love. To these some writers add, the desires of continued exist-

* Lectures on the Philosophy of the Human Mind, by the late T. Brown, M. D.

ence—of pleasure, considered directly as mere pleasure—and of glory.

SECTION I.—*Of the Desire of Knowledge.*

There is no principle more powerful in human nature than this, though its operation is very different in different individuals; and there is certainly no principle more useful in its results to the community. It may bear different names in the different stages and ranks of life—it may be called curiosity in the child, and a desire to know the causes of things in the sage, but it is the same original tendency of the mind. It appears in children at a very early period, and is commonly proportioned to the degree of capacity they possess. The wisdom of nature appears in giving it that peculiar direction which is best adapted to the necessities of every different stage of life,—leading us in youth to give our exclusive attention to the properties of the material objects with which we are surrounded—and in maturer years to the pursuits of society, to politics, and science, and to the endless variety of studies and professions which are comprehended in the avocations of mankind. “The desire of knowledge discovers itself, in one person, by an avidity to know the scandal of the village, and who makes love, and to whom; in another, to know the economy of the next family; in another, to know what the post brings; and in another, to trace the path of a new comet. When men shew an anxiety,” continues Dr. Reid, “and take endeared to us on account of the ministry which he

pains to know what is of no moment, and can be of no use to themselves or others, this is trifling, and vain curiosity. It is a culpable weakness and folly; but still it is the wrong direction of a natural principle, and shews the force of that principle more than when it is directed to matters worthy of being known."

It is a prominent characteristic of this desire, that it is gratified only in the *acquisition* of knowledge. When its novelty has passed away, the pleasure which knowledge communicates is greatly diminished; and it is for this reason that the attainments which we made years ago are less valued now, than at the time when we were toiling for their acquirement. Nor is this concomitant of the desire of knowledge without its important use; since it prompts us to examine still farther into the myteries of nature, and to advance with a more rapid progress in the pursuits of science; and as if the knowledge of realities were insufficient to gratify our large desire, we rise above the world we inhabit, to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge as it grows in other and in fairer regions. So necessary is novelty to the full gratification of this desire, that the most important truths, if very familiar, can scarcely command any interest; while another class of truths, which are either new, or made to appear as if they were so, are listened to with delight and attention.

At no period, perhaps, is this desire more highly gratified than in early life, when either listening to the tale of wonder, or when surveying for the first time the delightful prospects which science unfolds, and when he who is the instrument of unfolding them is

discharges. Is there any moment in which the feelings are more interested than when the enchanted castle is opening to us its unearthly scenes of mystery, and when we are allowed to witness the transmutations which the spells of its lord are so easily accomplishing? Next to this is the satisfaction which we feel when we either in after life make discoveries of our own, or understand the discoveries of others, and are capable of sympathizing with the philosopher of Syracuse*. It is this desire, in addition to the desire of fame, which prompts the youth to go in quest of knowledge to distant lands, and from the gratification of which the philosopher receives a compensation for that life which he consumes in retirement. The pleasure which he enjoys in adding to his treasures of knowledge, is his immediate reward for depriving himself of those other sources of pleasure which he voluntarily foregoes; and the sickly aspect of the midnight taper is unnoticed in the exquisite consciousness of advancing in the rank of a thinking being.

————— What need words
 To paint its power? For this the daring youth
 Breaks from his weeping mother's anxious arms,
 In foreign climes to rove: the pensive sage,
 Heedless of sleep, or midnight's harmful damp,
 Hangs o'er the sickly taper: and untir'd
 The virgin follows, with enchanted step,
 The mazes of some wild and wondrous tale,
 From morn to eve; unmindful of her form,
 Unmindful of the happy dress that stole
 The wishes of the youth, when every maid
 With envy pin'd. Hence, finally, by night,
 The village matron round the blazing hearth
 Suspends the infant audience with her tales,

* It is scarcely necessary to remind any of my readers that the allusion is to Archimedes' "Ευρηκα."

Breathing astonishment! of witching rhymes,
And evil spirits; of death-bed call
Of him who robb'd the widow, and devour'd
The orphan's portion; of unquiet souls
Risen from the grave to ease the heavy guilt
Of deeds in life conceal'd; of shapes that walk
At dead of night, and clank their chains, and wave
The torch of hell around the murderer's bed.
At every solemn pause the crowd recoil
Gazing each other speechless, and congeal'd
With shivering sighs: till, eager for the event,
Around the beldame all erect they hang,
Each trembling heart with grateful terrors quell'd.

The desire of communicating our knowledge is so closely connected with the desire of acquiring it, that few writers have given it a separate consideration. Though the pleasure accompanying it may be traced to the lively exercise of our social affections, or to the feeling of superiority which accompanies the conscious possession of knowledge, it is not the less true that it forms a powerful motive to perseverance in the most laborious study. It might seem, indeed, that the philosopher, whose labours are to benefit future ages rather than his own, is not acting under the influence of this stimulant, and that his only incentives are the desire of knowledge, the wish to do good, and perhaps the ambition of posthumous reputation: but even he would not think it worth his while to pursue his studies with so much steadiness and application, if he enjoyed not in hope the satisfaction of enlightening and benefiting his fellow-creatures. He anticipates the future; and by an illusion not unnatural to man, he spreads his conscious existence over it, as he converses in his writings with the people of succeeding generations.

That the pleasure which we receive from the communication of our knowledge has a most important influence in stimulating us to its acquisition, is a fact which might be illustrated and confirmed by many considerations. There is no man appointed to be the teacher of others who does not feel anxious to acquire the information requisite to his office; and he entertains this desire not only on account of his own reputation, but because he is gratified by the communication of what he knows. This, I conceive, is a happy provision of our nature, intended to increase our enjoyment and our virtue; and evidently designed to render the blessings of knowledge the common inheritance of the species.

SECTION II.—*The Desire of Society.*

The next of our desires is the desire of society. That this is an original principle of our nature, is proved by the universality of its operation. It is closely connected with the desire of acquiring knowledge; and still more so with the desire of communicating knowledge; though it is different from both. "Abstracting," says Professor Stewart, in his *Outlines*, "from those affections which interest us in the happiness of others, and from all the advantages which we ourselves derive from the social union, we are led, by a natural and instinctive desire, to associate with our own species. This principle is easily discernible in the minds of children; and it is common to man with many of the brutes." There is a great difference, however, between the way in which this principle

exists in man, and in the inferior animals ; in him it is a social feeling closely allied to his rational nature, and accompanied in its exercise with the powers of the understanding and the affections of the heart ; in them it is only a gregarious tendency, prompting them to herd together. Man has many feelings to gratify by associating with other beings possessing intelligence and thought, and the pleasure connected with their gratification would lead him, independently of any original desire for society, to seek for the means of this enjoyment ; and hence some authors have been induced to display their ingenuity, by disputing its existence. Whatever opinion we form on this speculative question, the desire of society is equally entitled to be ranked among the natural and universal principles of our constitution.

Entire solitude, it might be said, is disagreeable to man, because man sensibly feels his weakness and dependence. Subject to so many necessities, and endowed with so many different susceptibilities of enjoyment, man feels himself helpless and wretched alone ; and to avoid this feeling of helplessness and wretchedness, he seeks society : and when he cannot have society in the individuals of his own species, he strives to fill up the void of which he is conscious by making companions of the lower animals, or by attaching himself to inanimate objects. And as an additional proof that his desire of society takes its rise from his sense of weakness and dependence, he is much more anxious for company, and feels himself more secure when he enjoys it, when in the dark, than on other occasions. This view of the matter is not

destitute of plausibility ; and accordingly some ingenious writers have attempted to trace the origin of society chiefly to that regard which every man feels for his interest and security.

But plausible as this view may seem, I cannot agree to it, were there no other consideration to prove its fallacy than this ;—that the objects of the strongest desires can only be fully enjoyed in the society of those we love. What is rank, or wealth, or fame, if we have no friends to share these advantages with us, and to sympathize with us in our joy ? I do not remember a more forcible illustration of the truth of this remark, than is contained in the memorable words of Dr. Johnson, addressed to the nobleman who had left him to struggle with difficulties during the compilation of his Dictionary ; but who began to court a renewal of his acquaintance in the expectation of the work being dedicated to him on its appearance : “ The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind ; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it,—till I am *solitary*, and cannot impart it,—till I am known, and do not want it.”

SECTION III.—*The Desire of Esteem.*

The next of the desires which I shall notice is the desire of esteem. Of all our principles of action, this is among the first which discovers itself.

“ No other branch of the human constitution,” says Lord Kaimes, “ shews more visibly our destination for society, nor tends more to our improvement, than the

desire for esteem; for as the whole conveniencs of life are derived from mutual aid and support in society, it ought to be a capital aim to secure these conveniencs, by gaining the esteem and affection of others." Reason, indeed, dictates that lesson: but reason alone is not sufficient in a matter of such importance; and the desire mentioned is a motive more powerful than reason, to be active in gaining esteem and affection. That desire, at the same time, is finely adjusted to the other parts of our constitution, by promoting all the moral virtues; for what means are there to attract love and esteem so effectual as a virtuous course of life?

This desire shews itself in many different ways. That it is a powerful auxiliary to the practice of virtue there can be no doubt; and that it is extremely useful to the community, not only in restraining from the commission of crimes, but in stimulating to the exercise of probity, and justice, and to the attainment of all those accomplishments by which the community can be benefited, is not less evident. It is owing to this principle chiefly, that the mere possession of the most honourable or lucrative office does not satisfy the mind, without some of the talents, at least, which are requisite for the discharge of its duties; and no sooner are our hopes directed to any important profession or employment, than it becomes the object of our ambition to prepare ourselves for its respectable exercise. We are anxious to obtain the approbation of others; we seek this by a law of our nature anterior to the pleasure which we feel in its possession; and we are naturally stimulated to deserve that approbation which

it is our wish to obtain. We are early taught by experience, how much satisfaction is derived from the esteem of those around us ; and knowing that the most likely way to obtain this esteem is to deserve it, we are prompted, even when higher motives are absent, to attain those virtues and that reputation to which society attaches the greatest value. “ Man naturally desires, not only to be loved, but to be lovely ; or to be that thing which is the natural and proper object of love. He naturally dreads, not only to be hated, but to be hateful ; or to be that thing which is the natural and proper object of hatred. He desires, not only praise, but praiseworthiness ; or to be that thing which, though it should be praised by nobody, is, however, the natural and proper object of praise.”

It must be recollected, however, that though the desire of esteem prompts in general to that line of conduct by which esteem is merited, yet that the love of praiseworthiness is by no means derived altogether from the love of praise. These two principles, though they resemble one another, though they are connected, and often blended with one another, are yet, in many respects, distinct and independent of one another.

It is from the desire of esteem that the love of fame has its origin ; and the love of fame is one of the strongest passions in the youthful and generous breast. This passion is no doubt strengthened by ambition and emulation : but it is chiefly derived from the desire of standing high in the opinion of the public, and of being the object of general acclamation. It is to the love of glory that we may impute much of what is useful, and what is hurtful in the history of man-

kind;—this was the animating principle, which in other ages assembled the multitudes of Greece to the Olympic festivals; and the aspiring candidates who here entered the lists, felt as if the eyes of the civilized world were turned upon them, and as if the possession of the wreath of laurel in the view of so many spectators, gave to this perishable emblem of victory a value which no other object of ambition could possess. The desires of esteem, and power, and superiority, were here all combining to produce an appetite for glory, and to make the attainment of fame the first and the dearest end of existence. And many a generous youth, in every age and among every people, whose imagination had been kindled by the splendours of its own creation, has secretly breathed his desire for distinction in the words of the poet :

O rather, rather

Had I ne'er seen the vital light of heaven,
Than like the vulgar live, and like them die!
Ambition sickens at the very thought.—
To puff and bustle here from day to day,
Lost in the passions of inglorious life,
Joys which the careless brutes possess above us,
And when some years, each duller than another,
Are thus elaps'd in nauseous pangs, to die,
And pass away like those forgotten things
That soon become as they had never been ;
Who, who would live, My Narva, just to breathe
This idle air, and indolently run,
Day after day, the still returning round
Of life's mean offices and sickly joys ?
But in the service of mankind, to be
A guardian god below : still to employ
The mind's brave ardour in heroic aims,
Such as may raise us o'er the grovelling herd,
And make us shine for ever—That is *Life*.

I cannot but notice here, that there is more said by the Divine Author of our religion concerning the abuse of the desire of esteem, than about any other of the original desires of the human mind. It is to this abuse that the following passages of Scripture refer: "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only." "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward." So far as I can observe, we are not in a single instance allowed to make the approbation or applause of our fellow-creatures the *ultimate* end of moral actions. The doctrines of our religion permit us to seek this as a means; they even enjoin us to please our neighbour for his good to edification; and, in inferior matters, it is not only lawful but highly commendable to desire, in subordination to higher ends, the esteem of the wise and good. In this restricted sense, the desire and the enjoyment of the applause of man are allowable. But as this desire, in the various modes in which it influences the human mind, has a much greater power over the affections than perhaps any other principle, it is productive of the worst consequences when it acts without any reference to religion or to the will of God. Even in such cases, it cannot be denied that it may form a motive to the attainment of social virtue—to the culti-

vation of those exterior habits which will render the intercourse of life more agreeable. The mere love of reputation, where the standard of morality is somewhat elevated, will produce much of that regularity of conduct which is conducive to the order and the happiness of society; and wherever exertions for the public good meet with the highest applause, the desire of obtaining this applause will form a powerful stimulus to the accomplishment of those actions on which it is so liberally bestowed. So far its effects are highly favourable to the interests of the community.

But we are to consider man not merely as a member of society, but as a moral agent, accountable to God for his conduct, and bound to make a regard to that will the ruling motive of his conduct. And in this point of view, the principle in question cannot be recognised as a safe and elevated principle of action. It not only diverts the judgment, when it is the predominant feeling in the mind, from regarding purer and higher motives to virtue, but it disinclines the heart from following the course to which they lead. The individual under its control may have no objection to the authority of heaven as a rule of action, when it happens to correspond in any point with his inclinations; but when it departs from this point of accidental union, the authority is overlooked and disregarded:

Besides, it should be remarked, that there is a love of praise which is altogether the effect of vanity,—a desire of praise, not on account of merits which are well entitled to obtain it, but in consequence of the accidental possession of some of the advantages of

fortune, or rank, or beauty. Personal beauty attracts admiration; praise is lavishly bestowed, while its object can lay no claim to it on the ground of desert. There is, perhaps, no case in which indiscriminate praise is more injurious to the intellectual and moral cultivation of the mind, than when it is given to personal beauty irrespectively of the excellences with which it may be allied; and while the conscious beauty can so cheaply procure an ample gratification to her vanity, there can be little reason to hope that she will direct much of her attention to the attainment of those virtues which form the only lasting ground of esteem and approbation.

“Wonderful that a creature,” to use the words of an eloquent preacher, “naturally so defenceless, so weak in conformation, so timid in her ways, so unambitious in her pursuits, so humble in her destination; born, I may say, to serve; should yet, under certain circumstances, possess an empire that nothing can resist, that renders her very silence eloquence, her entreaties law, nay, her presence alone superior to the most awful considerations in the control of licentiousness and vice.”

The desire of esteem is, on the whole, highly favourable to the order and virtue of society. Of this there can be no stronger proof than the pretensions to virtue advanced by men of loose morals, from a regard to their own reputation. If we had been constituted without any wish to obtain the favourable opinion of others, the semblance of moral worth would never be assumed where its reality is

totally wanting; and in this view, the aphorism of Rochefoucault is strikingly just, that hypocrisy itself is an homage which vice renders to virtue.

A man that is not quite abandoned must behave so in society as to preserve some degree of reputation. This every man desires to do, and the greater part actually do. In order to this he must acquire the habit of restraining his appetites and passions within the bounds which common decency requires, and so as to make himself a tolerable member of society, if not an useful and agreeable one. It cannot be doubted that many, from a regard to character and to the opinion of others, are led to make themselves both useful and agreeable members of society, over whom a sense of duty exerts but a small influence.

Hence it is that a life of entire seclusion is unfavourable to virtue. There is wanting in such a state at least one powerful incitement to its practice; and though there is the absence of many temptations to vice, there is also the loss of strong inducements to self-government, as well as opportunities of exercising the social virtues.

Before concluding the consideration of the desire of esteem, I must notice the very injurious effects which the excess of this desire, or which the exercise of it as an ultimate end, produces on the individual. It is obvious that great and severe disappointments must often be experienced, and that consequently happiness is proportionably diminished. The homage which is so extravagantly claimed will often be withheld, and especially by those who have the best opportunities, and who are most capable, of discern-

ing the great disparity between the extent of the pretensions that are made, and the actual merits possessed. “The man who neither ascribes to himself, nor wishes that other people should ascribe to him, any other merit besides that which really belongs to him, fears no humiliation, dreads no detection, but rests contented and secure upon the genuine truth and solidity of his own character. His admirers may neither be very numerous nor very loud in their applauses; but the wisest man who sees him the nearest, and who knows him the best, admires him the most. He may say with Parmenides, who, upon reading a philosophical discourse before a public assembly at Athens, and observing that, except Plato, the whole company had left him, continued notwithstanding to read on, and said, that Plato alone was audience sufficient for him.”

On the whole, then, the desire of esteem, or the love of praise, is useful and commendable, when it is indulged under the restraints which duty and conscience impose,—when it is pursued, not for the sake of gratifying vanity, but as a means for promoting our own virtue and that of others; and above all, when it prompts us to seek His approbation who is infinitely good, and whose judgment is unerring. In comparison of this approbation, the praise of our fellow-creatures is as nothing, and should be regarded as nothing, and should never, for a moment, be put in competition with the testimony of our consciences and the approval of our God. The praise of men may be disproportionate in its measure, and mistaken in its grounds, and transitory and capricious in its be-

stowal ; but the divine approbation is the result of knowledge and of equity ; and it will announce its plaudit, “ Well done, good and faithful servant,” after the honours of fame have died away, and “ the great globe itself, and all that it inherit, shall be dissolved.” How trifling in our estimation would seem the praise of man, did we allow ourselves more constantly to believe that to love it more than the praise of God is the greatest crime, and that its possession at a future period cannot prevent the wicked from rising to shame and to everlasting contempt.

If praise then with religious awe
From the sole perfect judge be sought,
A nobler aim, a purer law,
Nor priest, nor bard, nor sage hath taught.

With which, in character the same,
Though in an humbler sphere it lies,
I count that soul of human fame,—
The suffrage of the good and wise.

The basis of an imperishable fame must be the testimony of a good conscience, and the approbation of our great and moral Governor. This is to be obtained, not in the pursuit of the praise of men, but in the faithful performance of our duty : it is to be enjoyed, not by making the opinions of our fellow-mortals the rule of our actions, and the aim of our conduct, but by a constant regard to His high authority who has the first claim to the deference of our judgments, and to the obedience of our lives.

All must to their cold graves :
But the religious actions of the just
Smell sweet in death, and blossom in the dust.

SECTION IV.—*The Desire of Power.*

The next of our desires which I shall notice, is that of power. This principle has a wide influence over the thoughts and actions of man; and will sufficiently account for many parts of his conduct, the cause of which we cannot otherwise so easily trace. The existence of this principle discovers itself at a very early period of life. The first effect of which we consider ourselves the authors, gives us a sensible pleasure; and the pleasure is in general proportioned to the greatness of the effect, compared to the smallness of our exertion. The infant, while still on the breast, delights in exerting its little strength upon every object it meets with; and is mortified, when any accident convinces it of its own imbecility. The pastimes of the boy are, almost without exception, such as suggest to him the idea of his power; and the same remark may be extended to the active sports and the athletic exercises of youth and of manhood.

In some minds the love of power is so strong, that ease, and innocence, and happiness are sacrificed to its gratification. Wealth, and honour, and rank are pursued only on account of the influence or power with which their possession is attended. At length, this desire is cherished with all the ardour of passion; and the individual under its control, is hurried away from the attainment of one degree of influence to another, till he begins to aim at a point of elevation which he cannot reach without deep criminality. Nor is its powerful operation, even in this its darkest hue,

confined to our sex; never did the principle of ambition gain a more complete ascendancy over any heart, or more entirely subdue every suggestion of conscience, every gentler emotion of humanity, than in the poet's Lady Macbeth. The deliberate sacrifice of all other considerations to the gaining "sole sovereign sway and masterdom," by the murder of Duncan, is forcibly expressed in her invocation on hearing of his fatal entrance under her battlements :

————— Come all you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here :
And fill me, from the crown to th' toe, top-full
Of direst cruelty ; make thick my blood,
Stop up the access and passage to remorse,
That no compunctious visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
The effect and it. Come to my woman's breasts,
And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers,
Wherever in your sightless substances
You wait on nature's mischief. Come, thick night !
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
Nor heaven peep thro' the blanket of the dark,
To cry, hold, hold !—

There are some striking passages illustrative of ambition, and of the guilt and misery to which it leads in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. The gorgeous description which the poet gives of the daring of the arch-fiend, of his towering attitude above his peers, of his firm resolves, and of his sentiments as suited to a created being of the most exalted and most depraved nature, presents the principle of ambition to our view in connexion with all that is evil, and thus exhibits to the imagination a picture full of what is at once horrible and sublime.

————— Hail, horrors, hail,
 Infernal world, and thou, profoundest hell,
 Receive thy new possessor ; one who brings
 A mind not to be chang'd by place or time :
 The mind is its own place, and in itself
 Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.
 What matter where, if I be still the same,
 And what I should be ; all but less than he
 Whom thunder hath made greater ?
 Here we may reign secure, and, in my choice,
 To reign is worth ambition, though in hell.

It is interesting to trace the different ways in which different individuals acquire an ascendancy over others. And as all the gifts of rank, and fortune, and intellect, as well as of moral goodness, may be made in some way or other subservient to this end, they are all the objects of pursuit for the sake of the notice which they attract, and the power which they communicate. The boy who acquired the superiority over his fellows, by the performance of daring feats, and the exertion of muscular strength, gradually aims, as he arrives at manhood, at extending his influence over others, by the superiority of fortune and of situation, or by the still more flattering superiority of intellectual endowments ;—by the force of his understanding ; by the extent of his information ; by the arts of persuasion, or accomplishments of address. In no case is the power of man over man more wonderful, and in general more enviable, than in the influence which the orator exercises over the thoughts and passions of a great multitude ; while without the force or the splendour of rank, he moves their will, and bends their desire to the accomplishment of his own purposes. This is a power far more elevated than that which only reaches

to the bodies of men ; it extends to the affections and intentions of the heart ; and seems as if it were capable of arresting the trains of our ideas, and of awakening or of creating the feelings that are suited to its desigus. The conscious possession of a power so vast and so peculiar is accompanied with a degree of pleasure proportionably great ; and it may be supposed that the pleasure will prompt to the frequent and the more extended exercise of the superiority from which it springs.

It has been noticed, that our desire of power is closely connected with our desire of knowledge, and comes, in the progress of reason and of experience, to act as an auxiliary to this desire. " Knowledge is power ;" and by an accumulation of knowledge, or by acquiring a ready command of a great stock of knowledge to which we had not access before, our power becomes enlarged. Perhaps our desire of communicating our knowledge may in a great measure be traced to the combined influence of the desires of power, superiority, and society. Even in communicating to others intelligence of a very ordinary description, we feel that we have some ground of superiority, however trifling ; though it should consist in nothing more than the accidental priority of our information.

In this way it is easy to account for our attachment to property and the manner in which the love of money is created, and in which it gradually assumes an ascendancy over the mind. Money becomes the sign and the constant concomitant of the advantages which it procures, and the miser has dwelt so long on this

association, has given to it his most interesting thoughts, that he at length values the sign irrespectively of the thing which it signifies. He now gives to money those regards which he originally gave to the power which money usually brings along with it. In a game of chance there is a transference of value the reverse of this. The penny or the sixpence at stake is as eagerly contended for as if it were a hundred pounds : but in truth, the contest is not for the penny or the sixpence ; it is for that victory, or that superiority over others of which the penny is the symbol or sign. This trifling piece of money assumes a value in the minds of those engaged, as its possession is the mark of superiority, and awakens the consciousness of power, while its loss seems to indicate inferiority in skill, and consequently in power, to those by whom it is obtained. The same remarks apply to whatever becomes the sign of superiority over our fellow-creatures. The wreath of laurel with which the victor was crowned at the Olympic games was in itself nothing ; but regarded as the emblem of victory, and as conferred before the assembled Greeks, it possessed a value in the estimation of the competitors, which could not be surpassed by any of the gifts of rank or of fortune.

It is on the same principle of association that we are disposed so highly to value the houses, and equipage, and attire of the great. These have in our estimation been always connected with power ; they are its constant appendages in an elevated rank of society, and it is not unnatural for us to transfer to them the feelings with which we regard the thing which they

signify. In consequence of this illusion, the condition of the great seems to us to be a state of happiness, bordering on perfection.

There can be no doubt that the love of liberty, in part, proceeds from the love of power; from the desire of being able to do whatever is agreeable to our own inclinations. Slavery, in any degree, is a restraint upon our power; and in this way it is a constant source of mortification to us, in the exercise of one of the strongest principles of our nature. Hence, one reason why it degrades the unfortunate being who is subject to it in his own estimation; and makes him painfully feel that he is lowered in the rank of thinking beings. And hence also it is, that the land of slavery is the land of all that is sordid and base in human nature; all friendly intercourse between the inferior and superior orders is unknown; and the mass of the people is treated with indignity and scorn. When the lower orders are thus considered as degraded by those whom they are sufficiently prone to respect, it cannot be doubted that they will imperceptibly view themselves in a somewhat similar light; and it is unnecessary to say, that the influence of even such a conception, must have a debasing tendency on the whole character: For,

Jove fix'd it certain, that whatever day
Makes man a slave, takes half his worth away.

From sordid self shoot up no shining deeds,
None of those ancient lights, that gladden earth,
Give grace to being, and arouse the brave
To just ambition, virtue's quickening fire!
Life tedious grows, an idly bustling round,
Fill'd up with actions animal and mean,

A dull gazette ! Th' impatient reader scorns
The poor historic page ; till kindly comes
Oblivion, and redeems a people's shame.
Not so the times when emulation stung,
Greece shone in genius, science, and in arts,
And Rome in virtues dreadful to be told !

It is the remark of Rochefoucault, that "love is commonly succeeded by ambition, but ambition is hardly ever succeeded by love." It would seem to be one of the most powerful as well as one of the most permanent of all the passions that can influence the human heart. When once it has acquired the entire possession of the breast, it will admit neither a rival nor a successor. To those who have been accustomed to the possession, or even to the hope, of public admiration, all other pleasures sicken and decay.

It is the principle of ambition, which, in part, leads men to court the most imminent dangers ; because his passing so fearlessly through such dangers elevates him above others, and makes him the object of general admiration. "Great dangers," says the Cardinal de Retz, "have their charms, because there is some glory to be got, even when we miscarry. But moderate dangers have nothing but what is horrible, because the loss of reputation always attends the want of success." It is on this principle that any distresses can be endured more easily than the scorn of mankind. Human virtue is superior to pain, to poverty, to danger, and to death ; nor does it even require its utmost efforts to despise them. But to have misery exposed to insults and derision, to be led in triumph, to be set up for the hand of scorn to point at, is a situation in which its constancy is much more apt to fall.

Compared with the contempt of mankind, all other external evils are easily supported.

I have thus dwelt at considerable length on the desire of power, or the principle of ambition; partly, because it is one of the strongest of our instinctive principles of action, and partly, that I might by extended illustrations, shew its injurious effects when not regulated according to the laws of elevated virtue. This principle, like all our other principles of action, is very much changed from its original design by the corruption of human nature. It was intended by our Creator to aid our moral judgments, and to prompt us to the attainment of that which the purest heart would approve, and the acquisition of which would be conducive to the virtue and happiness of ourselves and others. But it is now often indulged to the disregard of the decisions of an enlightened conscience, to the neglect of the will of God, and the happiness of our neighbour.

SECTION V.—*On the Desire of Superiority—The Desire of Activity,—and the Desire of Happiness, or Self-Love.*

The next of our desires is the desire of superiority, or emulation. This principle is sometimes classed by ethical writers with the affections; but it seems more properly to fall under the definition of our desires. It is, indeed, frequently accompanied with ill-will towards our rivals; but it is the desire of superiority which is the active principle; and the malevolent affection is only a concomitant circumstance.—And, as

has been remarked, a malevolent affection is not even a necessary concomitant of the desire of superiority. It is possible, surely, to conceive, although the case may happen but rarely, that emulation may take place between men, who are united by the most cordial friendship; and without a single sentiment of ill-will disturbing their harmony.

When emulation is accompanied with malevolent affection, it assumes the name of envy. The distinction between these two principles of action is accurately stated by Dr. Butler.—“Emulation is merely the desire of superiority over others with whom we compare ourselves. To desire the attainment of this superiority, by the particular means of others being brought down below our own level, is the distinct notion of envy. From whence it is easy to see, that the real end which the natural passion, emulation, and which the unlawful one, envy, aims at, is exactly the same; and, consequently, that to do mischief is not the end of envy, but merely the means it makes use of attain its end!”

The desire of superiority, as it appears to me, is only a modification of the desire of power. We cannot, surely, have the superiority over others with whom we compare ourselves without possessing some degree of power over them. Superiority is nothing else but power; and the pleasure which arises from our consciousness of being superior to others, is the same in kind and in degree which arises from our conscious possession of power. Though, therefore, I have thought it proper in an enumeration of the desires to mention the desire of superiority separately,

his removal; or merely desire
abstract, nothing known enables

both because it is so noticed by our best ethical writers, and because it is an important modification of the desire of power, I am fully of opinion that it is radically the same as this desire.

I allow, indeed, that the desire of superiority differs in the following particular from the desire of power: it would appear that the desire of superiority, or the principle of emulation, is only excited by competition; whereas power is sought after in the absence of every kind of rivalship. The shepherd perceives no pleasure in his superiority over his dog; the farmer, in his superiority over the shepherd; the lord, in his superiority over the farmer; nor the king, in his superiority over the lord. Superiority, where there is no competition, is seldom contemplated.

With regard to the desire of action, it is almost enough to remark, that so closely is it connected with our nature, that the happiness of man mainly consists in the exercise of his bodily and mental faculties. Nor can we fail to observe, that the design of the Creator in this law of our nature is to remind us, that we are formed, not for inactivity, but for the discharge of most important duties. As it is the ordination of providence that no acquisition should be made without labour and effort, it is the kind appointment of heaven that this very labour should be a source of enjoyment. Whatever be our rank or fortune, therefore, we cannot be altogether idle, without being at the same time unhappy.

The desire of happiness, or self-love, is a very powerful principle in the human mind; so much so, that some writers consider a sense of duty to be only

another name for a rational self-love. I shall have an opportunity of noticing the influence of this principle, and the limits within which it should be circumscribed, when I come to speak of the duties which a man owes to himself.

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE MORAL FACULTY;—AND ON THE FUNDAMENTAL LAW OF MORAL FEELING AND BELIEF.

IT appears from observations already made, that man is endowed with a faculty, in the exercise of which he is led to perceive certain actions as right or wrong, as beautiful or the contrary, and as constituting their author virtuous or vicious, as meritorious or the opposite.

Hobbes, and certain writers since his time, have denied the existence of any such power as an original faculty of human nature, and have traced our moral sentiments to self-love or prudence. These views were opposed by Dr. Hutcheson, who referred our notions of right and wrong to a particular power of perception, which in conformity to the tenets and language of Locke's philosophy, he styled the moral sense.

We are so constituted, according to this author, that we receive involuntarily certain perceptions of external objects from the impressions that are made on our bodily organs; and, in like manner, certain qualities and actions of moral agents are the necessary occasions of agreeable or disagreeable feelings in us. He has not only shewn, in common with many others,

that we are endowed with a faculty which determines us immediately to approve or disapprove of actions, irrespectively of all views of private advantage; but he considers it as the effect of a positive constitution of our minds, by which a relish is given us for certain moral objects and forms, and aversions to others, similar to the relishes and aversions created by our other senses.

The sceptical conclusions which have been deduced from the hypothesis of a moral sense shew that the term has not been happily chosen. But it ought to be remarked, in justification of Dr. Hutcheson, as Professor Stewart observes, that those sceptical consequences do not necessarily result from it. "Unfortunately most of his illustrations were taken from the secondary qualities of matter, which, since the time of Des Cartes, philosophers have been, in general, accustomed to refer to the mind, and not to the external object. But if we suppose our perception of right and wrong to be analogous to the perception of extension and figure, and other primary qualities, the reality and immutability of moral distinctions seems to be placed on a foundation sufficiently satisfactory to a candid inquirer." As the term moral sense can only be used in a metaphorical acceptance, and as it is extremely liable to be misconceived, it would be better to avoid it in ethical disquisitions. My own opinion is, that as morality is a thing to be understood as well as felt,—and as its elementary principles are intuitive judgments, so simple that they cannot be made clearer, and so essentially involved in the exercise of our faculties, that their truth is assumed in all our reasoning on

moral subjects, we are entitled to refer the origin of our ideas of right and wrong to a combination of the understanding and what may be termed moral susceptibility. My reasons for so thinking are, First, that morality is at once the object of the understanding and the heart, the judgment and the affections. Secondly, though reason, if sufficiently enlightened, would lead us to the same conclusions respecting the moral qualities of actions, viewed in their tendencies to produce happiness or misery, as are forced on us by an original moral faculty, yet we know that in other cases the defects of reason are supplied by appropriate affections and desires, and it is natural to suppose that a similar provision has been made to quicken our moral judgments, and to impress the heart with a more vivid sense of duty. Thirdly, the proper exercise of all the faculties, according to their true and original design, consists in our employing them either mediately or immediately in promoting our own virtue and that of others; and, consequently, we might expect that there would be connected with our nature, in addition to reason, an active principle to prompt us to what is right, and to punish us in doing what is wrong.

For these reasons, and several others which might be mentioned, I am inclined to think, that there is superadded to our understanding a moral capacity, principle, or power, and that all our moral sentiments take their rise from the combined exercise of these two faculties of the mind. As the intuitive judgments of common sense have been termed the fundamental laws of belief, I would propose to denominate our moral judgments, the fundamental laws of moral feel-

ing and belief. They are involved in the exercise of the powers of the human mind, and are necessarily implied in all our reasonings concerning moral truth and obligation.

These views accord with the history of man as a moral agent, and with the testimony of our own consciousness. While the authority of conscience, that original power which the Creator has placed in the human mind, is felt more or less in every situation, it may, at the same time, be enlightened by moral and religious culture, or it may be darkened and debased by ignorance and vice. That it may assert that supremacy which it is designed to hold, its admonitions must be encouraged, and we must employ whatever means are in our power for becoming acquainted with our duty. While God has so formed our nature as to be capable of admiring and practising virtue, he has intrusted the culture of our moral powers to our own care, and has reminded us that for our diligence in improving this noblest part of our stewardship, we are to give an account at his tribunal.

How futile, then, is the objection, which has been urged by some philosophers, to conscience, as an original power of the human mind, namely, that we are not born with innate ideas or notions of any kind*. It is therefore inferred, that our moral notions and feelings are owing to accidental circumstances; and that were we entirely free from the prejudices of education, we should look with the same uniform and

* Even admitting with Dr. Smith, that the word conscience does not immediately denote any moral faculty by which we approve or disapprove, his own concession on this point is sufficient for our argument. "Conscience supposes the existence of some such faculty." *Theory of Moral Sent.* v. ii. p. 332.

equal indifference on the patriot and the assassin, the philanthropist and the parricide. "There are philosophers," as has been eloquently remarked, "and philosophers, too, who consider themselves peculiarly worthy of that name, from the nicety of their analysis of all that is complex in action,—who can look on the millions of mankind, in every climate and age, mingling together in a society that subsists only by the continued belief of the moral duties of all to all,—who can mark everywhere, sacrifices made by the generous to the happiness of those whom they love, and everywhere an admiration of such sacrifices,—not the voices of the timid and the ignorant only mingling in the praise, but warriors, statesmen, poets, philosophers bearing, with the peasant and the child, their united testimonies to the great truth, that man is virtuous in promoting the happiness of man ;—there are minds which can see and hear all this, and which can turn away, to seek, in some savage island, a few indistinct murmurs that may seem to be discordant with the whole great harmony of mankind*."

Because these few indistinct murmurs are heard, and because man comes not into the world with the notion of right and wrong, or with notions of any kind, such philosophers conclude, that a belief in the existence of an original moral faculty in human nature, and in the universality and immutability of moral distinctions, is a prejudice of education. We would reply ; "It is not contended, that we come into the world with a knowledge of certain actions, which we are afterwards to approve or disapprove ; for we enter

* *Brown's Lectures on the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, v. iii. p. 592.

into the world ignorant of every thing which is to happen in it; but that we come into existence with certain susceptibilities of emotion, in consequence of which it will be impossible for us in after-life, but for the influences of counteracting circumstances, momentary or permanent, not to be pleased with the contemplation of certain actions, as soon as they shall have become fully known to us, and not to have feelings of disgust in the contemplation of certain other actions. I am astonished, therefore, that Paley, in stating the objection, "that, if we be prompted by nature to the approbation of particular actions, we must have received also from nature a distinct conception of the action we are thus prompted to approve, which we certainly have not received," should have stated this as an objection to which it is difficult to find an answer, since there is no objection to which the answer is more obvious. There is not a feeling of the mind, however universal, to the existence of which precisely the same objection might not be opposed. "Four are to twenty as twenty to a hundred, wherever those numbers are distinctly conceived; but, though we come into the world capable of feeling the truth of this proportion, when the numbers themselves shall have been previously conceived by us, no one surely contends, that it is necessary for this capacity, that we should come into the world with an accurate knowledge of particular numbers*."

In consequence of that moral capacity, power, or sense,—call it by what name we please,—with which

* Brown's Lectures, &c., vol. iii. p. 606.

man is endowed by Him that made him, it is as impossible for us not to approve of virtue as such, and to abhor vice as such, as it is for us not to perceive that twice two are four, or, that four are to twenty as twenty are to a hundred. Our moral powers, like all our powers, may be influenced by education, by passion, by habit, by association, and by political arrangement; but by no circumstances can man be brought to view pure benevolence and deliberate malice with the same feelings, or to regard all the actions of voluntary agents with the same equal indifference. Through the weakness and corruption of his nature, he is indeed often led to desire what he knows is inconsistent with moral rectitude, and what his own heart, in his calmer moments, condemns.

Video meliora, proboque ;
Deteriora sequor :

but this circumstance, so far from proving him to be destitute of an original capacity to discern between right and wrong, furnishes the strongest evidence of its existence. If there were no such power, no such law, why should he approve of that virtue which he does not practice, and disapprove of that vice by which he is captivated and enslaved ?

These observations, viewed in connexion with the history of man, serve to establish the following positions.

I. That conscience is an original and inherent faculty in man, and is universal in its operation. Had the influence of this power been merely a prejudice of education, it would have been shaken off by men of strong

minds, and especially by those of the most enlightened and improved understanding. The effort to treat it as a prejudice has often been made, but with little success. Men have employed the various means by which they had hoped to silence its voice,—the sophistry of acute and powerful minds, “sporting with their own deceivings,” and the unrestrained indulgence of sensual pleasure; and they may perhaps for a time have succeeded in their aim,—but it has awakened to smite them with greater severity; and they have found it as impossible to command it to be still as to hush the thunders of heaven. They have felt themselves as incapable of fleeing from this criminating monitor, as to flee from their own nature. Even when seated on a throne, and elevated above the fear of punishment from man, they found in themselves an accuser whose testimony they could not controvert, and a judge whose sentence they could not escape. In all ages, and in all circumstances, when there has been no cause of fear from man, and when their wickedness was unknown to any but themselves, have men been found to feel that they cannot sin with impunity, since they have the avenger of the law in their own breast.

II. Though conscience is an original and inherent faculty in man, and universal in its operation, it requires, in order to discharge its office fully, to be enlightened by moral and religious truth. It is not to be denied that this power of human nature is affected with the corruption of the race; and that this corruption shews itself by moral insensibility. Hence, in the Scriptures, persons under the dominion of hardness and impenitency of heart, are likened to

the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear, which will not hearken to the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely;—and they are said to have the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart,—and who are past feeling.

If any doubt had remained as to the existence of the moral faculty, or conscience, as an original power in human nature, that doubt would be removed by the explicit testimony of the Apostle, which I am about to quote. The passage which contains this testimony must have escaped the notice of Paley, otherwise he would not have hesitated, as he has done, in admitting that man is endowed with a moral capacity.

“ For, when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another.” The argument of the Apostle is this,—If the Gentiles, who had not the written law, performed some of the duties which the law requires, under the direction of conscience, and of those moral principles in regard to right and wrong which are common to our nature,—they came nearer to the rule of righteousness with which they were favoured, than the Jews did to that law which was made known to them by divine revelation. The Gentiles who had not the law by revelation, shewed that its substance was engraven on their hearts, by the influence which conscience exerted over them.

That power, though darkened and weakened by sin, remonstrated with them when they did wrong, and encouraged and approved of them when they did right. Their own conceptions of right and wrong, under its influence and authority, formed the rule of their conduct; and in proportion as they approached this standard or deviated from it, did they feel self-reproach or self-approbation; their thoughts accused or else excused one another. They thus had the witness in themselves, and gave evidence to others, that they were the subjects of moral law and government, and accountable for their conduct to the Supreme Lord and Ruler of all. The voice of conscience intimated the certainty of a judgment to come, and seconded, by its approval or its condemnation, the sentence of the Eternal Judge. In this they had an earnest of the final decision which shall be passed on the character and condition of all men, in the day when God will render to every one according to his works.

“ The practical reason of insisting so much upon the natural authority of conscience is, that it seems in a great measure overlooked by many, who are by no means the worse sort of men. It is thought sufficient to abstain from gross wickedness, and to be humane and kind to such as happen to come in their way. Whereas, in reality, the very constitution of our nature requires, that we bring our whole conduct before this superior faculty; wait its determination; enforce upon ourselves its authority, and make it the business of our lives, as it is absolutely the whole business of a moral agent, to conform ourselves to it. This is the

true meaning of that ancient precept, *reverence thyself*. The observation that man is thus, by his very nature, a law to himself, pursued to its just consequences, is of the utmost importance ; because, from it will follow, that though men should, through stupidity, or speculative scepticism, be ignorant of, or disbelieve, any authority in the universe to punish the violation of this law ; yet, if there should be such authority, they would be as really liable to punishment, as though they had been before-hand convinced, that such punishment would follow : Because it is not fore-knowledge of the punishment, which renders obnoxious to it ; but merely violating a known obligation*.”

That this capacity of moral perception, judgment, and feeling, is inherent in human nature, has been maintained, with very few exceptions, by philosophers and moralists of all ages and nations. Cicero defines it, *Vera ratio, naturæ congruens, diffusa in omnes, constans, sempiterna*. This language applies to the eternal law of right and wrong, as well as to the power by which we are capable of perceiving it. It is of this power viewed in connexion with this law, that the same distinguished philosopher says, *Nec vero, aut per senatum aut per populum, solvi hac lege possumus. Neque est querendus explanator aut interpres ejus alius. Nec erit alia lex Romæ, alia Athenis—alia nunc, alia posthac ; sed et omnes gentes, et omni tempore, una lex et sempiterna, et immortalis continebit ; unusque erit communis quasi Magister, et Imperator omnium, Deus.*

* Butler's Preface to his Sermons on Hum. Nat.

CHAPTER X.

LIBERTY AND NECESSITY :—PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

FEW subjects have been the occasion of so much discussion, and few are attended with such great difficulties, as the celebrated question of liberty and necessity. It is highly probable that a difference of opinion will always exist in regard to a point so abstruse, and which at the same time involves considerations which interest the feelings of all men. There are, on both sides, men of great talents, learning, and worth,—a circumstance which admonishes us to exercise candour and humility in the discussion.

It was noticed in a former chapter, that the will is that faculty of the mind by which it chooses or refuses, and by which it exerts its active power. By the determinations of the will, we mean, the resolutions of the mind to act in one way rather than in another. These determinations must be occasioned by some power in the mind itself, or by something external, since they cannot exist without a cause. It is maintained by some, on the one hand, that the power which produces and which controls the determinations of the mind is inherent in the mind itself; and that, therefore, in place of being subject to motives, the mind can yield to them, or resist them at pleasure. It is affirmed by others, on the contrary, that the motive which appears strongest in the view

of the mind, is that which invariably determines the will.

By motive is to be understood either the external object which is presented to the view of the mind, and which influences the mind to act, or the state of the mind in which the external object is contemplated. Properly speaking, the motive in every case arises from the mind itself, since the external object has power to excite the will, or otherwise, according to the light in which it is viewed by the mind.

The term liberty is used in different acceptations. That state of mind in which its volitions are not irresistibly determined by any foreign cause, constitutes what is called natural liberty, or liberty of choice. When a person is free from hinderance to do what he wills, he possesses freedom in the common acceptation of the word.

This expression is used in a sense different from this by certain writers. According to their views, liberty includes, first, a self-determining power in the will, by which its acts and volitions are controlled and governed: secondly, indifference, by which is meant, that the mind previous to the act of volition is *in equilibrio*: thirdly, contingency, by which they signify that which stands opposed to any fixed and certain connexion with a prior ground of its existence.

The term necessity is used in three different acceptations.

I. It stands opposed to ineffectual resistance, and has a reference to some imagined opposition. This is the common notion of necessity; and, accordingly,

when we speak of necessity in relation to ourselves, the fruitlessness of every voluntary exertion is supposed. We say of things that they necessarily are, that it is impossible for them not to be, when they are, or will be, though we desire or endeavour the contrary. Hence the terms, necessity, possibility, impossibility, ability, inability, in their common acceptation, are expressive of a relation to a supposed will and endeavour of ours; and so firmly fixed is this association, that we never hear the words without having this idea suggested to our minds.

II. The terms necessary and impossible are used to denote the immutability of certain existences and relations. They are applied, in this signification, to God's existence; to some of his dispositions and acts, such as, his loving himself, his loving righteousness and hating iniquity, and his doing in all cases that which is best to be done.

III. Necessity is often used to denote the most perfect and absolute certainty. It is in this acceptation chiefly that the term is employed in the controversies concerning the freedom of the will. It is in this sense only, that all things which are yet future, or which will hereafter begin to be, can be said to be necessary. Had their existence been necessary in itself, they always would have existed. The only way, therefore, in which any thing that is to be hereafter, is, or can be necessary, is by a connexion with something that is necessary in its own nature, or with something that already is, or has been; so that the one thing being supposed, the other certainly follows.

Natural or physical necessity denotes the restraints

which are imposed by natural causes. Thus, men placed in certain circumstances, are, from necessity, the subjects of particular sensations: they feel pain when their bodies are wounded; and, involuntarily, have those feelings which the exercise of the senses occasion in the mind.

Moral necessity, on the other hand, is that inseparable connexion which exists between moral causes and their effects. Thus, the Deity, in consequence of the perfection of his nature, is under the moral necessity of acting from the best motives, and of always doing what is best.

We are said to be naturally unable to do any thing when we want the physical power of doing it. A blind man is physically unable to see, and a lame man to walk. The distinction between natural and moral inability may be illustrated thus: a servant has had his leg broken, and is physically prevented from doing his master's service: A fellow-servant has a grudge against his master, and cherishes the worst dispositions towards him; he is reluctant to do his master's will, and is, in a certain sense, unable to do it; but his inability consists in the want of inclination. In this way a drunkard may be incapable of forbearing to take strong drink; and a malicious man may be unable to desire or to promote the prosperity of an enemy.

But it is clear that the word inability, when applied in this way, is used in a sense different from its original signification. It cannot be literally and truly said, that a malicious man cannot hold his hand from striking, or, that he is *unable* to shew his enemy kind-

ness. Whatever a man has in his choice, he has, strictly speaking, in his power; and he cannot be truly said to be unable to do what, if he will, he can perform.

CHAPTER XI.

PRINCIPLES WHICH ARE ADMITTED ALIKE BY THE ADVOCATES OF LIBERTY AND NECESSITY.

It should be remarked, that there are many principles which, when divested of technical language, are admitted alike by those called Necessarians, and by those who contend for an unqualified freedom of the will. I see nothing to which either party can make any material objection in the following statement.

“Liberty supposes the agent to have understanding and will: for the determinations of the will are the sole object about which this power is employed; and there can be no will without, at least, such a degree of understanding as gives the conception of that which we will. The liberty of a moral agent implies, not only a conception of what he wills, but some degree of practical judgment, or reason.—For, if he has not the judgment to discern one determination to be preferable to another, either in itself, or for some purpose which he intends, what can be the use of a power to determine? His determinations must be made perfectly in the dark, without reason or motive, or end*.”

* Reid's Essays.

This statement of Doctor Reid substantially accords with the views of President Edwards, the most acute and powerful reasoner on the opposite side of the question. " A moral agent is a being that is capable of those actions that have a moral quality, and which can properly be denominated good or evil in a moral sense, virtuous or vicious, commendable or faulty. To moral agency belongs a moral faculty, or sense of moral good and evil, or of such a thing as desert or worthiness, of praise or blame, reward or punishment; and a capacity which an agent has of being influenced in his actions by moral inducements or motives exhibited to the view of the understanding and reason, to engage to a conduct agreeable to the moral faculty.

" The brute creatures are not moral agents: the actions of some of them are very profitable and pleasant; others are very hurtful; yet seeing they have no moral faculty, or sense of desert, and do not act from choice, guided by understanding, or with a capacity of reasoning and reflecting, but only from instinct, and are not capable of being influenced by moral inducements, their actions are not sinful or virtuous. They may be noxious, but they cannot be criminal.

" The essential qualities of a moral agent, are in God in the greatest possible perfection; such as understanding to perceive the difference between moral good and evil; a capacity of discerning that moral worthiness and demerit, by which some things are praiseworthy, others deserving of blame and punishment; and also a capacity of choice, and choice guided by understanding, and a power of acting according to

his choice or pleasure, and being capable of doing those things which are in the highest sense praiseworthy."

It is proper to remark, that those who contend, that there is a self-determining power in the will of man, admit that this power is entirely dependent on Him by whom it has been given: that it may at his pleasure, whose gift it is, be enlarged, or diminished, continued or withdrawn. No power in the creature can be independent of the Creator. "His hook is in its nose; he can give it line as far as he sees fit, and, when he pleases, can restrain it, or turn it whithersoever he will. Let this always be understood when we ascribe liberty to man, or to any created being. Supposing it, therefore, to be true that man is a free agent, it may be true, at the same, that his liberty may be impaired or lost by vicious habits: it may, in particular cases be restrained by divine interposition."

That we are moral agents and accountable for our conduct, is maintained by the parties on both sides of the question. And the following considerations adduced in proof of the moral agency of man, will, I apprehend, be admitted alike by the advocates of the doctrines of liberty and by the Necessarians.

Man, by his constitution, has a conviction that he acts freely;—he is conscious of many voluntary exertions. His deliberating, whether to perform an action, or to refrain from it, implies a conviction that it is in his power. His promising or contracting to act at some future period agreeably to his engagement, shews that he himself believes it to be in his power to perform what he promises. He feels himself to be

blameworthy when he violates his word. But were he impelled by an irresistible necessity, why should he criminate himself. With as good reason might he blame himself for being a man, or for dying. Blame supposes a wrong use of power ; and when a man does as well as it was possible to do, wherein is he to be blamed ?

There are, besides, many proofs of the great self-command which it is possible for man to acquire. The Canadian savage can acquire the power of defying death in its most dreadful forms, and of braving the most exquisite torments. The martyr can look unappalled on the instruments of torture, and can say, "None of these things move me." The existence of this magnanimity in any case is a proof of its possible existence in all.

Further ; that man is endowed with moral liberty, is proved by those principles that are proclaimed by every man's conscience : such as, that there is a real and essential distinction between right and wrong conduct, between just and unjust ; that the most perfect moral rectitude is to be ascribed to the Deity ; that man is a moral and accountable being, capable of acting right or wrong, and answerable for his conduct to him who made him, and who has assigned him a part to act on the stage of life. These are principles upon which the systems of morality and natural religion, as well as the system of revelation are grounded, and which have been generally acknowledged by those who hold contrary opinions on the subject of human liberty.

Another argument adduced to prove that man has

power over his volitions and actions is, that he is capable of carrying on wisely and prudently a system of conduct, which he has before conceived in his mind, and resolved to prosecute. If man has the wisdom to plan a course of conduct, and the power over his own actions which is necessary to carry it into execution, he is a free agent. Should it be said, that this course of determinations was produced by motives, it may be replied, that motives have not understanding to conceive a plan, and intend its execution. We must therefore go back beyond motives to some intelligent being who had the power of arranging those motives, and applying them in their proper order and season, so as to bring about the end.

The principles which I have now stated are admitted alike by the advocates of the two great doctrines maintained concerning the freedom of the will. They decidedly differ, however, as to the following characteristics (as some call them) of free agency:—namely, a power in the mind by which it can control and determine its own volitions; liberty of indifference, or that state of the mind in which it is said to be in equilibrio; and contingency. The arguments by which the Necessarians attempt to prove that these are not properties of free agency will be noticed in a following chapter.

CHAPTER XII.

NECESSARIANS DISTINGUISHED INTO TWO CLASSES.

It should be carefully noticed, that there are two classes of Necessarians, whose opinions are extremely different. The doctrines of the one are avowedly at variance with man's accountableness, and are, consequently, most dangerous to society; while those of the other, however inconsistent they may appear to some with moral agency, are believed, by those who hold them most perfectly, to harmonize with this principle.

Of the former description are those who maintain that man acts by a physical necessity; and that as he only does what he is physically impelled to do, his conduct is neither virtuous nor vicious. They cannot accuse themselves of doing wrong, because they only yield to an irresistible impulse. They have nothing to do with confession, repentance, and pardon, since these are adapted to a fallacious view of things.

There are others, usually denominated Necessarians, who view this doctrine with abhorrence; and who, though they are classed with Necessarians, in consequence of their holding moral agency and accountableness to be compatible with moral necessity, or, as I would call it, moral certainty, contend that every accountable creature has physical power to the extent of his accountableness. Whether their opinions

on this subject are right or wrong, they are, at least, perfectly harmless; as will appear from the brief review which I shall take of them in the following chapters.

CHAPTER XIII.

A BRIEF STATEMENT OF THE DOCTRINES OF THE NECESSARIANS.

WHAT is the immediate cause of determining the mind's volition? To this question it is answered, on the one hand, that it is solely the self-determining power residing in the mind itself; on the other, it is affirmed, that the will is influenced in its determinations by what appears to be the greatest apparent good. But it is admitted that the apparent good may be different from the real good. The question returns, What is the cause of this difference? Few will deny that this is owing, generally, to the state of the mind. The elections of the will are always according to the existing dispositions of the heart. A mind in a pure and holy state perceives the objects that are presented to its moral choice as they really are, and its volitions will be accordingly. A mind fallen from its original rectitude will see objects as different from what they really are, in proportion to its deviation from the line of purity and holiness.

The question, What is the cause of the mind's departure from a sinless state? leads us directly to the origin of moral evil; but it would divert us too much from our subject to enter on that inquiry at present.

I may, however, remark, that some persons, from the acknowledged fact of much evil existing, and the high improbability that God should determine those volitions that are wicked, or, rather, the highest certainty that he could not, and perceiving no medium, between ascribing all determinations to God or to ourselves, have strenuously maintained, that the mind is determined by its own power, or by its own sovereign pleasure. According to them, we become criminal and wretched by a wrong choice.

A recent divine maintains, that man is possessed of liberty, but that this liberty is the cause of the mind's deviation from the line of perfect rectitude; and that the immediate cause of its maintaining its rectitude is, necessity. According to this hypothesis, all natural and moral good flows from the decree of God, which decree renders it necessary. He contends that the evils of imperfection and of sin are not of God, more than a shadow is an effect of the light, or a falsehood of truth; and that a tendency to defection is inseparably connected with the nature of every contingent existence; that this tendency to defection exists physically as to being, and morally as to well-being; and that this tendency, unless counteracted by the immediate agency of the Deity, gives rise in the creature to physical and moral evil. According to this author, the inclination in an intelligent being, to exercise his liberty between good and evil, indicates a deviation already begun from the line of perfect rectitude. A being perfectly pure wishes not the knowledge of evil as well as of good; and, according to this divine, the moment he begins to entertain such wishes, that is, to

exercise his liberty, he brings sin and ruin on himself. He conceives that it derogates not from his moral agency to believe that he is influenced in willing and in doing good by the over-ruling agency of God.

On this theory of the late Dr. Williams I shall here offer no opinion ; but proceed to notice some of the arguments adduced, to prove that the characteristics of moral agency formerly alluded to, and which constitute the chief ground of difference in the inquiry concerning the freedom of the human will, are unfounded.

In the first place, it is said, that human liberty respects only the actions that are subsequent to volition ; and that power over the determinations of the will is inconceivable, and involves a contradiction. To say that the will is possessed of a self-determining power is absurd, since will is an attribute of mind, and, as such, cannot possess power of any kind. What can we mean by the will but the mind itself, acting in a particular way ; or, by a power over its determinations, but the control which the mind is capable of exercising over its affections. That which has the power of volition is the man, and not the power of volition itself. He that has the liberty of doing according to his will, is the agent who is possessed of the will ; and not that which he is possessed of. We say with propriety, that a bird let loose has power and liberty to fly ; but not that the bird's power of flying has a power and liberty of flying.

If the will determines itself, either the will is active in determining its volitions, or it is not. If active, then the determination is an act of the will, and so

there is one act of the will determining another. But if the will is not active in the determination, then how does it exercise any liberty in it? If either part of this dilemma be taken, this scheme of liberty, consisting in self-determining power, is overthrown. If there be an act of the will in determining all its own free acts, then one free act of the will is determined by another; and so we have the absurdity of every free act, even the very first, determined by a foregoing free act. But if there be no act or exercise of the will in determining its own acts, then no liberty is exercised in determining them. From whence it follows, that there is no such thing as liberty consisting in a self-determining power of the will.

Secondly, in reply to the position that liberty consists in indifference, or in that equilibrium by which the will is without all antecedent bias, it is affirmed, that to make out this scheme of liberty, the indifference must be perfect and absolute; there must be a perfect freedom from all previous inclination. If the will be already inclined, before it exerts its own sovereign power on itself, then its inclination is not wholly owing to itself. If, when two opposites are proposed to the mind for its choice, the proposal does not find the mind in a state of indifference, then it is not found in a state of liberty for self-determination.

Does the human mind ever exert its will while it yet remains in a state of indifference? The putting of the question is sufficient to shew the absurdity of the doctrine against which we contend. How can the human mind choose one thing before another, when, at the same time, it is perfectly indifferent with re-

spect to each? This were to affirm, that it prefers one thing to another at the very time it has no preference. Choice and preference can no more be in a state of indifference, than motion can be in a state of rest, or than the preponderating scale of a balance can be in a state of equilibrium.

Thirdly, in answer to the position that the acts of the will are contingent; it is maintained that no acts of the will are contingent in such a sense as to be without the necessity of consequence or connexion; because every act of the will is connected with the understanding; and because the human mind always wills or chooses that which in the present view of the mind appears most agreeable.

The external action is determined^d by the will: the will by desire; and desire by what is agreeable or disagreeable. The agent cannot will but according to desire, and he cannot desire but according to what is agreeable or disagreeable in the objects perceived. We have no reason to believe that ever a man acted against his own desire, who was not compelled by external force. On the contrary, constant and universal experience proves, that human actions are governed by certain laws, and that man does not exert his self-motive power, but in pursuance of some desire.

Such, then, say the Necessarians, are the laws that govern our voluntary actions. Man is free to act according to his own will; greater freedom than which is not conceivable. As he is made accountable for his conduct to his Maker, to his fellow-creatures, and to himself, he is not left to act arbitrarily. Is it not desirable that the will of Him to whom we are sub-

jected should be under restraint? Could we wish that our own will should be under no regulation? According to the present system we are the fit subjects of moral government.

An argument, or rather another class of arguments, adduced in support of what I call the doctrine of moral certainty, but what is usually termed, necessity, is taken from the prescience of the Deity. The argument may be stated thus: God foresees all the determinations of the human mind; but whatever he foresees shall certainly come to pass; therefore all the determinations of the human mind shall certainly exist.

As this is a subject of very great importance, and closely connected with some of the fundamental doctrines of religion, I must be allowed to enter into its consideration at some length.

CHAPTER XIV.

EXPLANATORY REMARKS.

“THE decrees of God are his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his own will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath fore-ordained whatsoever cometh to pass.” To the doctrine thus explicitly stated, which maintains not merely the divine foreknowledge, but the divine plan in regard to all events, and to all beings that exist, objections have always been offered. The subject has certainly been often handled injudiciously and

rashly, apart from its scriptural simplicity and practical bearings. A doctrine in itself abstruse has been rendered repulsive, by the length to which it has been pushed by the zeal and presumption of disputants. But still, as a doctrine of revelation, when treated with the humility which it so eminently requires, it must be profitable for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.

What are we to understand by the terms, that the decrees of God are his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his own will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath fore-ordained whatsoever cometh to pass? The word decree usually signifies a public law or edict; whereas when it denotes, as in the present instance, the eternal purpose of God, in regard to all beings and events, it signifies that plan, as known to God only, according to which all things exist. The word counsel, also, as referring to the deliberations of finite creatures, implies imperfection. But it can have no such signification in relation to God, before whose all-seeing eye all things lie naked and open. His counsel is intuitive as well as perfect judgment; the unincumbered and comprehensive plan of divine wisdom. It is denominated the counsel of his own will, to signify, not any thing capricious or arbitrary, but the act and determination of the divine mind alone, in the exercise of all its attributes. "Who hath directed the spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?"

There are also certain distinctions to be attended to when we speak of the will of God. This term is sometimes used to signify the purpose or plan according to which all things exist, as well as the divine energy by which this plan will surely have effect. The will of God is justly distinguished into secret and revealed: a distinction not expressive of any thing like opposition or contrariety, but of what is known, and of what is yet unknown. The whole will of God at one time was secret, that is, was known only to himself, and must have remained so, had it not pleased him in part to reveal it. It is obvious that we are concerned only with what is revealed, and that this forms the rule to us of our obedience. The will of God is also distinguishable into efficient and permissive—a distinction between his will as bringing into being, and his will as permitting or not hindering things to be. He may, for reasons unfathomable to us, allow things to exist which are in themselves most hateful to him, and directly hostile to his authority and government. As we, therefore, conclude, that whatever God brings to pass, he did from eternity purpose should exist, so must we believe, that what he permits he never purposed to hinder. All his purposes are co-existent and eternal; and nothing can possibly happen in his dominions which he did not himself resolve to produce, or to allow others to be the means of producing.

We must also carefully retain in our minds, as essential to the right understanding of this important subject, and to the salutary influence which it ought to have on our lives, that the purpose of God invariably

connects the means with the end. If it is his will that certain objects should be attained, it is also his will that appointed means should be used for their attainment. When David was pursued by Saul, God had determined to preserve him, but as a means of his preservation he purposed that he should not remain at Keilah, whose inhabitants had secretly resolved to deliver him into the hands of his persecutor. When the Apostle of the Gentiles was in perils by sea, it was the purpose of God that both he and all who were in the ship with him should come safe to land; but it was, at the same time, his purpose that the mariners should abide in the ship with them, and be the instruments of their deliverance. When he purposed to bring the redeemed and glorified inhabitants of heaven out of the sin and ruin of the fall, and admit them to the high honours and happiness of his presence, he inseparably connected with these ends the varied means by which their redemption should be attained. If he purposed that the regions of the blessed should be peopled out of this world by a great multitude which no man can number, he purposed that they previously should be made holy, and that faith in Christ, and all its concomitants, should be the means of producing this holiness. If, therefore, we wilfully refuse to use the means, the revealed will of God assures us that we can never attain the end. The connexion in certain cases between the means and the end may altogether resolve itself into the appointment of God's will; while in other cases the connexion approves itself as natural and necessary to our understanding, independently of the divine appointment. Thus there is a necessary

connexion between sin and misery, between enmity against God and everlasting ruin; and we cannot conceive it possible for any appointment whatever to dissolve this connexion. While any being continues under the dominion of reigning and persevering wickedness, he cannot be otherwise than miserable, and the misery which he endures appears to be his due desert. To be carnally-minded is death; and this connexion is so close and so necessary, that by no enactment can the tie ever be broken. In the case of the redeemed the cause is removed, and the effect ceases to operate; sin is subdued, and loses its dominion over them; and their nature is renewed after the divine image in righteousness and true holiness. So complete is the renovation, that the divine power is represented as creating all things new. "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."

When we affirm, then, that all things exist according to the divine purpose and plan, we are maintaining a doctrine that is perfectly compatible with the free agency and accountableness of man. While every thing exists in accordance with the purpose of God, that purpose, when it refers to the actions of free agents, is accomplished without the intervention of any physical restraint or influence. It is the more necessary to keep this in our remembrance, as the doctrine in question is sometimes called that of necessity, and

those who maintain it are designated Necessarians. This epithet is far from being happily chosen, as the notion it conveys, in its usual acceptation, is not only repulsive to the common feelings of man, but remote from the truth. The primary and common notion of necessity is that which stands opposed to some imagined and insufficient resistance. We say of things, that they must be, or that they necessarily are, when they are or will be, though we desire or endeavour the contrary, or try to prevent their taking place. When we cannot prevent the occurrence of any thing, let us do what we will, we conceive it to exist necessarily, and irresistibly. The words necessary and impossible are also used to denote the immutability of certain existences and relations, and our being unable to suppose them otherwise than they are without a contradiction. When the terms are used in this acceptation, the idea of resistance or opposition is entirely excluded. They are applied in this restricted signification to the existence and attributes of God, and to all truth, the opposite of which we cannot conceive impossible. In so far as the word necessity merely signifies the most perfect and absolute certainty, it may be admitted to denote that doctrine which maintains that all things exist, and are brought into being in full accordance with the divine plan and purpose. But the phrase, absolute certainty, is preferable, since all things that have had a beginning, or that will hereafter begin to be, can in no sense be said to be necessary but as their existence is most certain. Whatever is to come to pass hereafter will most certainly exist, not in consequence of any necessity, but on account of

the connexion which it has with the will and the purpose of God. For the counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FOREKNOWLEDGE AND ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD
PROVED TO BE CONSISTENT WITH THE FREE AGENCY OF
MAN.

I SHALL attempt to prove the doctrine, that all things exist, and are brought into being, according to the purpose or counsel of God, and which purpose or counsel is eternal and unchangeable as God himself. I own I regard it as highly desirable that this doctrine should be found true. Is it not most encouraging to a weak and dependent creature, to know that he himself, and all events regarding him, whether they have already taken place, or shall hereafter exist, do exist in virtue of the eternal purpose of God? Nothing can proceed from him but what is worthy of the perfection of his nature. The purpose in accordance with which I have my being, which has fixed the bounds of my habitation, which has ordered all the events of my lot, and which extends to all that can possibly befall me in the range of an endless existence, is the purpose of infinite holiness, wisdom, and goodness. Its having been formed from eternity cannot surely diminish its characters of wisdom and beneficence. Nor can I for a moment doubt, whether it is better that this plan which embraces me and all the minutest of my concernments should have been formed

by the God of infinite understanding and love, or that I should be introduced into being without any plan, and entirely abandoned to the guidance of my own limited judgment and discretion. How desirable is it to be so fully the object of the divine counsel, as to have all things respecting me, even the outward circumstances of my lot, ordered by it !

Such must be our feelings and convictions regarding the purposes of the God of goodness and of wisdom, even on the supposition that these purposes had not been made known to us. But how greatly ought these convictions to be strengthened by the fact, that the counsels of God, in so far as they are revealed, recommend themselves to the understanding and conscience of every man. The sum of this counsel is, that God in infinite mercy has provided a Saviour for mankind, that he commands all men everywhere to repent, and to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, that they may be saved. And to give them strength to repent, and believe, and return to God, he sends down the influences of the Holy Spirit on all who ask them. He makes this offer of pardon and of reconciliation, without restriction or limitation, to every creature. He has given the promise, that "whosoever believeth on Christ should not perish, but have everlasting life:" while he has as expressly declared, that "he who believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Is not all this in the highest degree worthy of infinite wisdom and goodness? Or is it less worthy of his wisdom and goodness, or of our entire approval, because of its having been planned from eternity?

But I would further maintain the doctrine, that all things exist according to the divine counsel and foreordination, from the uniformity and certainty which characterise all things. In the natural world, this uniformity has always been observed. It may be seen amidst the greatest variety in the regular return of day and night, of cold and heat, of summer and winter, of seed-time and harvest. It is also to be seen in the conduct of free agents as well as in that of the inferior animals. The liberty which consists in acting without rule, and without end, would be no privilege to a rational creature. The ever-blessed God, who is most free, has the glory of his nature and attributes as his end. We may confidently pronounce that the acts of his government will be hereafter what they have always been, holy, just, and good. It is impossible that he can ever do any thing but what accords with the boundless perfection of his nature. He cannot lie,—he cannot deny himself;—he cannot but support the authority of his government and laws, because his throne is founded in justice and in judgment. Now, in proportion as any creature resembles the Creator in his moral attributes, will be the resemblance in his moral conduct.

The angels of light, because they are holy, are not at liberty to do evil, and are incapable of committing it. If we heard a deed of atrocity imputed to them, we should at once pronounce the imputation false, just because the high excellency of their nature gives us an unlimited confidence and an absolute certainty, that their conduct will be invariably holy and beneficent. We know that the fallen angels, on the other

hand, from the depravity of their nature, are predisposed to what is evil, and so strong is our conviction of their moral incapacity to do good, that we could not credit any testimony that would go to ascribe goodness to them. Mankind may be considered as holding an intermediate state between angels of light and those of darkness. They have fallen from their original state of holiness and innocency, but they have been placed under an economy of mercy, under which pardon and reconciliation are offered to the penitent through a Mediator. There is less uniformity in *their* conduct, especially in the earlier stages of the Christian life, just because there are opposite principles contending in their nature, and rendering them more variable as the one or the other predominates. But this variability is diminished in the aged saint, who has, during sixty or seventy years, been making progress in the graces and attainments of the heavenly life. We cannot suspect him guilty of the deed of atrocity committed in his neighbourhood, because we know that his habits of piety and virtue have been fully formed and confirmed. And the general surprise which is felt when any such person falls into open sin, is a proof how closely and inseparably, according to universal belief, the conduct of the life accords with the state of the heart. On the other hand, what is our conviction regarding the man who has been profligate in youth, hardened in wickedness in mature years, and remains under the unsubdued dominion of sin in old age? It is, that he is incapable of doing good, and will readily and most certainly commit evil. When this individual has reached the point of

hopeless and confirmed depravity, we can pronounce with absolute certainty beforehand, what will be the line of conduct he will follow.

Now, the conclusion I would deduce from all this is, that if we, whose powers and experience are so limited, can speak with so much certainty of the line of conduct which free agents will pursue, with what absolute precision does He foresee this conduct who knows perfectly the state of the heart, who can most accurately estimate the nature and the force of its desires, and whose judgment is according to truth. If we can say of a thousand individuals perfectly holy, or of a thousand individuals perfectly depraved, that they will yield to a certain motive when presented to them, just because the state of their hearts is alike, must not the all-seeing God, before whom all things are naked and open, have the most absolute foreknowledge of the conduct of his accountable creatures, and consequently have been capable from eternity of forming his purposes without any interference with their free agency? If our knowing, with undoubted certainty, that a man confirmed in wickedness will continue to do wickedly does in no way influence him, why should it be supposed that the perfect knowledge which God has of the conduct he will exhibit through an endless existence should in any way affect his moral agency?

But that the knowledge of God of all beings and events is most perfect, and that they exist in exact accordance with his pleasure, is further evident, from the consideration of the perfections of his nature. We have already seen that, as the being and presence of

God are boundless, so his knowledge is infinite: he is everywhere, and knows every thing. As inhabiting eternity, and as possessing every attribute negative of imperfection, he must have a perfect knowledge of all that can take place in an endless duration. He has created all things, and for his pleasure they are and they were created. His will alone has given existence to moral or voluntary agents, with all their powers and faculties, and with the full knowledge of all the actions which these beings in the possession of such powers and faculties would produce. To suppose that God acted without design in his works, is to suppose that he acted without wisdom; and to suppose that he was unable to secure the certain accomplishment of his design, is to deny his omnipotence, an attribute which the existence of the universe proves him to possess. The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary: there is no searching of his understanding. To say that the end which God had in view in his works was not eternal, that it is not so comprehensive as to reach to all beings and events, or, that it does not possess infinite value as being infinitely good, or, that there can be any difficulty in its accomplishment, is at once to deny the eternity, the omniscience, the goodness, the power, and the infinite perfection of God. We must either admit the doctrine, that all things exist in accordance with the divine plan and purpose, or be forced to acknowledge that God is limited in his attributes, and a being dependant and mutable.

But this doctrine will acquire additional proof from

the consideration of God's dominion and sovereignty. We have seen, on a former occasion, that this dominion is most absolute; that the difference in our several endowments, the circumstances of our lot, the means of virtue and of knowledge, of happiness here and hereafter, are all to be ascribed to the sovereign disposal of God. "He does in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of this world that which seemeth good in his sight; none can stay his arm from working, or say unto him, what doest thou?" "He is the supreme Lord and Governor, and all things must necessarily lie under his control. We are governed according to a certain plan, admirably adapted to our character and condition as apostate creatures; but this plan, which is as comprehensive as the objects to which it relates, must have been formed from eternity. Nothing can exist under his sovereign dominion which is new to him, or which he might not hinder had he chosen it, or for which his eternal purpose did not make provision. If we admit the supreme and uncontrollable dominion of God, and that he has a right to do with his creatures what seemeth good in his sight, we must then believe that it is not derogatory to any perfection of his nature, to order all things to take place according to his own previous purpose.

That this is actually the case, the prophecies and the promises recorded in Scripture furnish us with additional evidence. Whatever he foretells as what shall hereafter take place, shall certainly be, whether it depend on the voluntary actions of free agents or not. Now, he has foretold the moral conduct and qualities of men, their virtues and vices, their wickedness and

holiness: he has foretold events which were dependant on the moral conduct of particular persons, and were accomplished either by their virtuous or vicious actions; he has often foretold the conduct of nations and of successive generations, which could not be foreknown, if the volitions of men had not been foreseen. The cruelty of the Egyptians in oppressing Israel, and the calamities with which, as the punishment of their sins, they were visited, were stated long before they had taken place. Unless God foreknows the future acts of man's will, and his conduct as a moral agent, all the things which are foretold both in the Old and New Testament, concerning the gradual progress and universal extent of the kingdom of the Messiah, must have been predicted and promised while God was in ignorance whether any of those things would come to pass or not. The whole scheme of prophecy takes for granted that God has a perfect knowledge of all the actions of free agents; that he knows what are to be their volitions many hundred years afterwards, and what is the conduct which is to result from them. The Jews, in condemning and crucifying our Lord, certainly acted without any physical restraint, they acted from choice; and yet it is expressly declared that they acted according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. In this purpose Jesus is said to have been slain from the foundation of the world. All things are represented as sustained in being in consequence of this purpose; and the spiritual and immortal interests of men are said to be peculiarly its object. "We know that all things work together for good to them that

love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son," that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Thus the works of creation, and providence, and redemption, are but parts of one great plan, devised by infinite wisdom, designed to attain infinite good, and conducted according to the counsel of the will of God.

CHAPTER XVI.

OBJECTIONS TO THIS DOCTRINE ANSWERED.

I ATTEMPTED to prove the doctrine that all beings and events exist in entire accordance with the divine will and purpose. To this doctrine, which has often been handled rashly and injudiciously, numerous and weighty objections have been made. It will now be my business faithfully to state those objections, and fully to answer them. They resolve themselves into the following ; that the doctrine of the fore-ordination of all things supposes what is beneath the dignity of God ;—that it is incompatible with free agency ;—that it makes God the author of sin ;—that it precludes human prudence and exertion ;—that it renders prayer useless and unnecessary ;—that it is the stoical doctrine of fate ;—and that it is hurtful to morality.

SECTION I.—*The Doctrine in Question unsuitable to the Character of God.*

It is affirmed that the doctrine of the divine purpose concerning all things cannot be true, because it supposes what is beneath the care and the dignity of God. It is a sufficient answer to this objection, that it is founded on the supposition that God is mutable and dependent, that he feels, as we do, difficulty in attending to a multiplicity of concerns, and that such an attention would be unsuited to that dignified repose in which it is imagined the happiness of deity consists. Whoever would urge this objection, must have formed his notions of the perfections and character of God from the atheistical conjectures of heathen philosophers, and not from the statements of revelation. These statements have been made by God, who alone possesses a certain and intuitive knowledge of his own nature and character, and who, therefore, is alone capable of making it known. “To whom,” he asks, “will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like? For I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.” From the perfections which God necessarily possesses, and from the supremacy and universality of his government, we know that every being and event that shall ever have existed, cannot but be the object of his notice, and be under his direction and

control. Can He feel embarrassed with the magnitude and variety of the concerns of his vast empire, whose dwelling-place is eternity, and before whom the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance? If it be in him we live and move and have our being, must not our entrance into existence, together with the minutest events in our history, be all well known to him, and be all in accordance with his purpose? How minute and various are the concerns of one individual through a given period, or during an endless existence; but these are as much the object of the divine care and superintendence, as if there were only one individual in existence.

He who made, and who upholds all things, must know the properties and the actions of the various substances which he formed and upholds; and instead of being derogatory to his glory to have them under his constant direction, it would imply an imperfection could the case stand otherwise. "He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names. Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite." Whatever knowledge is in the divine mind now, must always have existed in it; for to him there can be nothing new, and in him there can be no succession of thought. We cannot, therefore, deny that all things take place according to the purpose which God formed from eternity, without denying his present knowledge, care, and superintendence. We must either admit that whatever he knows now he knew from eternity, that whatever he directs now he designed to direct from eternity,

and that whatever object he is accomplishing now he intended from eternity to accomplish, or deny the immutability, independence, omnipotence, and perfection of God.

SECTION II.—*Inconsistent with the Moral Agency and Accountableness of Man.*

It is objected to the doctrine, that all things exist according to the eternal purpose of God, that it is incompatible with the free agency and accountableness of man. How, it is said, can man be accountable for his conduct, when this was the object of the counsel of God? And the objection would be well founded, if the purpose of God laid such a restraint on man as to prevent him from acting according to his own free choice and will. But this cannot be admitted: the designs of God are accomplished, while angels and men, the spirits of light and of darkness, act agreeably to the unrestrained bias of their own will.

What are the qualifications requisite to render any being a free agent, and accountable for his conduct? A moral agent must possess a moral sense of good and evil; a capacity of being influenced in his conduct by moral inducements, exhibited to the view of his understanding, and a power of acting agreeably to his own choice. These essential qualities of moral agency exist in the ever-blessed God in the highest degree. They exist also, though in a far inferior degree, in every being that is formed after his likeness. So early and universal is the conviction in man

of his acting freely, that it is implied in every purpose which he forms, in every promise which he makes, in the blame which he attaches to himself when he does wrong, and in the tenor of his thoughts, resolutions, and conduct. The conscience of every man tells him of the distinction between right and wrong, and that he is accountable to God for the use of all his talents and opportunities. It tells him also that in what he does he acts voluntarily, and without any physical restraint whatever. But while he acts voluntarily, he is not left to act arbitrarily, without law, without motive, and without end. Neither does his acting freely, and from choice, imply, that his mind must be in a state of indifference as to good or evil, or inclined to the one just as much as to the other. Such a state of mind as this does not and cannot exist. The mind is in every case biassed either towards what is good, or what is evil, and according to the predominant state of the mind, will be its prevailing desires and volitions.

Of the ever-blessed God, who is most free in all that he does, we must affirm that he is so strongly inclined to what is holy and just and good, that though he is in the highest degree free, he can never do any thing but what accords with the boundless perfection of his nature. He cannot lie,—he cannot deny himself, he cannot but support the authority of his laws and government. And, as I formerly observed, in proportion as any creature resembles the Creator in his moral attributes, will be the resemblance in his moral conduct. The angels of light,

because they are confirmed in holiness, are not at liberty to do evil, and are morally incapable of committing it. If we heard a deed of atrocity imputed to them, we should at once pronounce the imputation false, because the high excellency of their nature gives us an unlimited confidence and an absolute certainty, that their conduct will be invariably holy and beneficent. We know that the fallen angels, on the other hand, from the depravity of their nature, are predisposed to what is evil, and so strong is our conviction of their moral incapacity to do good, that we could not credit any testimony that would go to ascribe goodness to them. Yet they also have a power of acting voluntarily, and according to choice. Mankind, as was noticed on a former occasion, may be considered as holding an intermediate state between angels of light and those of darkness. They have fallen from their original state of holiness and innocency, but they are placed under an economy of mercy, under which pardon and reconciliation are offered through the Mediator. There is less uniformity in their conduct, especially in the earlier stages of the christian life, because there are opposite principles contending in their nature, and rendering them more variable as the one or the other predominates. This variability is diminished in any one, just in proportion as he makes progress in holiness, and as all his powers and faculties are laid under the restraint of virtuous principles and habits. In proportion as man approaches to the holiness of heaven, or the dark and deep depravity of hell, does he act

with unvarying uniformity. Yet, in both cases, is he a moral agent, acting from choice, and accountable to God for his actions.

It is, thus, so far from being necessary to moral agency to have the power of acting without any fixed principle, that the exercise of such a power is incompatible with the endowment of reason and understanding. While any being continues holy, he will most surely obey without deviation the laws which the Creator prescribes. And if even we, whose powers and experience are so limited, can confidently predicate of any given number of beings, perfectly holy, or perfectly depraved, that they will follow a certain line of conduct, and yield to certain motives, because their hearts are alike, must not the all-seeing God have the most absolute foreknowledge of the conduct of his accountable creatures, and consequently have been able from eternity to form his purposes without any interference with their moral agency? Is the action of any creature the less free, because it is foreknown. I may confidently presume that the message of salvation will be rejected by many to whom it is sent, because I know that in many cases the heart is averse to it, and that in the great majority of instances men yield to this aversion; but surely my previous presumptive knowledge of the fact can have no influence on the agency or the guilt of those who thus reject the counsel of God? The foreknowledge of God, indeed, renders it most certain that what is foreseen shall exist; but this foreknowledge no more lessens or affects the freedom of the agent, than

my knowing beforehand that when a being reaches the point of hopeless and confirmed depravity, his conduct will be "evil, and that continually," impairs his liberty. If it be allowed that the foreknowledge of God would not affect the agency of his creatures, formed with the powers and capacities of accountable beings, had he left them to themselves without law and without government, on what principle can it be supposed that his foreknowledge lessens their freedom in acting, because he has placed them under a system of government suited to their rational nature? His having adapted the system of his government to all the beings and events that can possibly exist through eternity, only shews the comprehensiveness of his wisdom, but does not imply any thing at variance with the freedom of moral agents.

Of the numerous illustrations which might here be adduced, I will confine myself to the history of our blessed Saviour. None, I presume, will deny that he acted voluntarily in all that he did,—in his making himself of no reputation, and taking upon him the nature of man, and in humbling himself, and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. None can deny this without impeaching the veracity of our Lord. "Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life; no man taketh it from me; but I lay it down of myself. This commandment received I of my Father." It was because he acted freely, most freely, that his obedience and sufferings are so rewardable and meritorious,—that God has highly exalted him, and given him a name that is

above every name,—and that angels and the redeemed for ever celebrate his glories while they say, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and blessing.” But while it is thus evident that the Saviour was most free in all that he did and suffered, his doings and sufferings were rendered absolutely certain, not only by the foreknowledge of God, but by his prophetic declarations and unconditional promises. God promised so effectually to uphold him by his Spirit, that he could not fail in attaining the end for which he came into the world; that his kingdom would be established from the river unto the ends of the earth, and that all nations would become subject to him; that he would surely save a great multitude from sin and death, that he should see his seed, and prolong his days, and that the pleasure of the Lord would prosper in his hands; and that he should be great, and reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom, that there should be no end. All this the purpose and the promise of God rendered most certain: and yet He of whom it was promised and predicted was perfectly free in all that he did and suffered.

SECTION III.—*Makes God to be the Author of Sin.*

It is objected to the doctrine of the divine decrees, that it represents God as the author of sin. If all things come to pass according to the purpose and foreordination of God, then there is nothing in the

universe but what accords with that purpose and foreordination. But sin is in the universe: therefore sin exists in accordance with the purpose and will of God. That sin is in the universe in accordance with his permissive will, none can deny. And that he had sufficient power to prevent it, had it pleased him so to do, is not less undeniable. But that God in any way induces or constrains his creatures to sin it is surely blasphemous to suppose. He created man in his own image, in righteousness and true holiness, capable of doing good, or of committing evil. We cannot with reason lay it to the charge of the Great Author of human nature, that the noble faculties with which he has endowed it, and whose tendencies are to improvement and happiness, have been perverted and depraved. Can he, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, by his direct efficiency produce that which his soul hateth, and which has introduced disorder and misery into the universe? "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lusts, and enticed. Thus when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." The agency of God in regard to sinful men is full of benevolence and mercy, and prevents all the evil which would otherwise exist. Man, constituted a moral agent, is the sole and efficient cause of sin. God, who foresaw this, adapted the scheme of his government to its existence, and in infinite mercy applies restraints to its progress, and has provided a

remedy for its destruction. He purposed to take occasion from the entrance of sin to display the freeness and the fulness of his mercy. "He so loved the world, as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

At the same time I cannot agree with those who maintain that God could not have prevented the existence of sin without destroying the free agency of man. Philosophers in all ages have amused themselves, and exercised their powers, by tracing sin and suffering to the operation of general laws, or to the imperfection of matter, or to the inevitable consequences of human liberty, or to the inferior rank which we hold in the scale of being. But while revelation teaches us that man is altogether the author of sin, it teaches us at the same time, that the exercise of free agency in created beings does not necessarily lead to evil. The angels who kept their first estate were such agents, and yet they were preserved from sin. The Lord Jesus Christ was such an agent, and yet he was holy, harmless, and undefiled, and knew no sin. The spirits of the just made perfect are such agents, and yet they can never fall from their holiness and happiness. And the same means by which they are preserved from sin, might be used with the same effect in preserving all others. But God, for reasons infinitely wise, permitted man to become a rebel against him, to debase his own immortal nature by depravity, and to spread desolation and ruin over that world which God had pronounced to be very

good. That to man alone the blame is due is attested by his own conscience, by the providence and the revelation of God, and by that wrath which He has exhibited from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Every mouth must be stopped, and the whole world pronounced guilty before God.

SECTION IV.—*Precludes the necessity of Human Prudence and Exertion.*

But it is further alleged, that the doctrine of the divine decrees precludes human prudence and exertion. If there be a divine purpose about every thing which we can either enjoy or suffer, to what end should we consult or determine? But in this objection we forget that the same purpose which fixes the end, fixes also the means by which it is to be obtained. To say that a man will be saved, however persevering in his wickedness, or that he will be condemned, however zealous in his endeavours to please his Maker, is to impute to the only-wise God what is utterly unworthy of his wisdom and goodness. We find that many things are brought to pass by the agency of man,—by his foresight, his activity and exertion. How can I previously know, in any case, that my prudence and diligent use of the means are not inseparably connected with the end? Do I not perceive around me how constantly God works by second causes, and allows things to hold their natural course, so that even wicked men can generally bring their devices to

pass? And when he does interpose to restrain the malice, and frustrate the designs of the wicked, he does it in a way that lessens not their own personal agency, and that offers no violence to their rational nature.

Thus, by means of the counsel of Hushai was that of Ahithophel brought to foolishness; and by means of a lying spirit in the mouth of his prophets was Ahab deceived, and brought unto destruction. Should men in their plans oppose the purpose and counsel of God, no foresight, no prudence, no exertion can avail them: for there is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord. But if we employ our powers and the means within our reach in subordination to the known will of God, and in humble dependence on his grace, we cannot doubt of succeeding. We see how constantly the established order of providence favours the diligent,—how the farmer, the scholar, the philosopher, attain their respective ends by industry and persevering labour. Why in religion, in the awfully momentous concerns of eternity only, should the case be otherwise? Is it not, in reference to these concerns that it is said, “Seek, and ye shall find; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you? Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able. As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the sinner; but would rather that he would return and live.”

He who makes this declaration has given to each, in his own individual experience, too many proofs of his mercy and truth, to allow us to question either.

He has sent the offer of pardon and of reconciliation to us, and he entreats us to accept of it; and the circumstance of my eternal state having been fixed by the purpose of God, should have no more influence in discouraging me from a diligent use of all the means by which I can make my calling and election sure, than the circumstance whether I am to live many years or to die to-morrow, should make me hesitate whether I ought to employ those means which the appointment of God has rendered necessary to the prolongation of life. In proportion to the magnitude of the object should be my diligence; and in proportion to its magnitude is my encouragement to persevere, and my hope of success. Whatever encouragement I can take from the freeness and the fulness of the divine mercy, from the efficacy of the Saviour's atoning sacrifice, from the enlightening and renewing influences of the Spirit, from the frequency with which the gospel offer is made to me, is constantly within my reach, to animate me to go on in the strength of the Lord God, and to believe that I shall not seek his face in vain. In so far as I see the purpose of God revealed regarding me in the Gospel, it is a purpose of mercy—holding up to my view One who is mighty to save, and on whom my help has been laid, and most tenderly inviting me to place myself under him, that I may be saved from sin and condemnation and ruin. Why should I doubt that the part of this purpose, which is hid in the counsels of eternity, is as replete with mercy to me, as that part is which is revealed? If I remain in my present sinful and miserable condition I perish for ever: I will therefore arise and go to my

Father, and will gratefully accept the pardon and reconciliation which he offers to me. I will never leave him till I shall have obtained an interest in his love, and an earnest of everlasting blessedness in his kingdom.

SECTION V.—*Renders Prayer useless and unnecessary.*

It is alleged that the doctrine of the divine decrees renders prayer useless and unnecessary. Prayer, in its primary notion, is an act of adoration to God, and the acknowledgement of dependence upon him. But our adoration cannot be the less fervid, because we know his perfections to be infinite, and his government to be universal. Nor are we less earnest in our supplications, that we know that the things we ask are the very things which God has declared it as his purpose to bestow. On the contrary, we are animated and emboldened when we know that we are asking things agreeable to the will of God. Thus it was with Daniel, when he understood that the period appointed for the captivity of the Jewish people was drawing near to a close, he set his face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes. And if we at all possess the spirit of prayer, the circumstance that the government of God is over all, and that his purpose is fixed to communicate real good, both in time and in eternity, to those that ask him, will tend to awaken our desire, and encourage our hopes. Even should we be ignorant of the event, prayer is not the less useful to prepare our minds to acquiesce in the will of God. This is the appointed means of obtaining a thankful and

resigned frame of spirit, which will cordially submit to the will of God, however different from our own. It is an encouragement, and not a hinderance, to know that if we ask any thing according to the will of God, he heareth us. And how animating is it to be assured, that it is his declared will to give us in answer to prayer the greatest blessings—blessings which most deeply concern us, because they respect the soul and eternity! If we are left in uncertainty about any thing, it is what is of short duration, and what is not essential to our happiness. We have at least one promise that secures our safety in time, and renders all events subservient to our meetness for eternity: all things work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose.

It is the peculiar privilege of all the children of God, of all who pray aright, that they have an Intercessor within them who prays for them, and in them, by making intercession according to the will of God. It is thus that the Spirit helpeth our infirmities: “for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” We have thus an Agent within to produce feelings and desires corresponding to the blessings which it is our Father’s good pleasure to give us, who produces such a hungering and thirsting after them as cannot be relieved till they are obtained. The purpose of God to bestow mercy

through the Saviour on all who ask it, whatever be their sins, forms, from its immutability, the strongest possible encouragement to pray always and not to faint, and still to hope and wait for the salvation of God. It is the immutability of this purpose that animates me with the persuasion that the promises, which were fulfilled in answer to the prayers of patriarchs, and prophets, and apostles, will be fulfilled in answer to mine also.

SECTION VI.—*The same as the Doctrine of Fate, or blind Necessity.*

It is further objected to this doctrine, that it is the same as the doctrine of fate, or blind destiny. According to the stoics, fate is an eternal and immutable series of antecedents and sequences, within which all events are included, and to which the Deity himself is subject. All things were supposed to be under the control, and to be brought to pass by this blind destiny. The doctrine of fatality excludes every idea of justice and mercy; the attribute of wisdom does not belong to it, and it rests entirely upon power; but the constant, universal, and over-ruling agency of God, as represented in Scripture, gives rise to a grand system of government, in which all the attributes which we ascribe to the Almighty are united for promoting the best ends. Agreeably to this system, his justice invades not human freedom; his mercy and his grace subdue man's depravity and assist his weakness; his wisdom is engaged in plans of ultimate and eternal good; and his

power is exerted in their accomplishment. The notion of such a system of government differs from that of fatality, as the stern decrees of an inexorable tyrant differ from the tender mercies of a parent: a subjection to fatality chills every generous feeling of the heart, thwarts every fair and noble purpose, and blasts every hope; while the doctrine of the God of righteousness and of goodness, governing all things for his own glory, according to his eternal purpose and counsel, is full of consolation, imparting peace to those who know that all things, whether prosperous or adverse, work together for good to them that love God. What similarity can there be between this doctrine, so pleasing to the human heart, so accordant with enlightened reason, and so encouraging to the hopes and exertions of men, and an unintelligent something, denominated fatality, compelling by physical coercion, and controlling by inevitable necessity, the actions both of God and men?

SECTION VII.—*Unfriendly to the Interests of Morality.*

Finally, it is objected to the doctrine of God's decrees that it is unfriendly to the interests of morality. I apprehend that many of those who have urged this objection have confounded the doctrine which they oppose, with that of fatality, or of a physical though natural necessity. The charge must originate in a gross misconception of the real nature and tendency of a doctrine which has always been found in close alliance with practical religion. Can that be un-

friendly to morality, which, while it leads me to view the hand of God in every thing, teaches me to regard the diligent use of means as closely and inseparably united to the end? The history of the church bears us out in the assertion, that pure morality always prevailed most when this doctrine was most firmly believed. Who could have a stronger conviction of its truth, than he who, in the midst of privation and persecution, was supported by the consideration—"If God be for us, who can be against us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Such was the belief, and so strong were the consolations of the apostle to the Gentiles; and yet, how far has he left all other men behind in zeal for the glory of God, in benevolent concern for the salvation of mankind, and in the exercise of all the virtues of self-denial and of godliness! Who have been the most formidable opposers of this doctrine? The Jesuits:—the contrivers of courtly casuistry, and the founders of lax morality. What are we to think of the morality of the Reformers, and of the churches of the Reformation? By them this doctrine was taught as a part of divine revelation, and it long continued to

be inculcated and believed in all the churches which they founded—in Switzerland, in Holland, in England, in Scotland, and in the north of Ireland, and in some of the states of North America. Where are communities to be found of a more pure and active virtue? Perhaps we might with truth affirm, that in proportion as this doctrine, and the doctrines of grace connected with it, have been rejected in these communities, have they declined from the virtue of their forefathers.

In the mean time, let us derive from this doctrine the motives to holy exertion, as well as to resignation, which it is so well calculated to present. Let us rejoice, in knowing, that all things that can befall us, are directed and appointed by the counsel of our heavenly Father. Let us view his hand in all our temporal mercies, whether they proceed immediately from himself, or through the medium of our fellow-creatures. Let us also view his hand in our afflictions, whether they be personal or domestic, whether they be laid on us immediately by his providence, or be occasioned by the malice and unreasonableness of our fellow-creatures. They all come within the counsel of our heavenly Father, are all necessary for correction and reproof, and are made the means of promoting our growth in grace, and meetness for everlasting blessedness. When this glorious end is attained, the ways of Providence that are now unfathomable, and those dispensations which are dark and mysterious, shall be made plain. And with angels and the whole multitude of the redeemed, we shall give our approval to all the ways of God. With them we shall sing the

song of Moses and of the Lamb, saying, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest."

NOTES TO THE FIRST VOLUME.

NOTE A.—*The Being and Perfections of God.* p. 78.

THE argument *à priori*, as it is usually called, is developed with great power in the reasonings of Newton and Clarke, founded on our conceptions of space and time. An argument for the existence of God akin to this, is founded on the idea we are capable of forming of a perfect, self-existent, and eternal Being. This is generally ascribed to Des Cartes; but it is to be found in the writings of Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, who flourished so early as the eleventh century. It is contained in his discourse, entitled *Monologia*, concerning the existence of God, the Divine attributes, and the Trinity.

“ This great prelate,” says Mosheim, “ who shone with a distinguished lustre in several branches of literature both sacred and profane, was the first of the Latin doctors who dispelled the clouds of ignorance and obscurity, that hung over the important sciences of metaphysics and natural theology, as appears from two books of his composition, wherein the truths concerning the Deity, which are deducible from the mere light of nature, are enumerated and explained with a degree of sagacity which could not well be expected from a writer of this century. He was the inventor of that famous argument, vulgarly and erroneously attributed to Des Cartes, which demonstrates the existence of God from the idea of an infinitely perfect Being naturally implanted in the mind of man, and which is to be found without exception in the breast of every mortal.”—(*Ecclesiastical History*, v. ii. p. 466.)

Though Anselm was the inventor, to use Mosheim’s expression, of this argument, it does not appear that Des Cartes derived it from him. It is probable that he was

led to it by the plan which he proposed to himself for investigating truth. "He began," as D'Alembert has remarked, "with doubting everything, and ended in believing that he had left nothing unexplained." He was satisfied of the existence of his own mind, because, "to suppose the non-existence of that which thinks, at the very moment it is conscious of thinking, appeared to him a contradiction in terms. From this single postulatam, accordingly, he took his departure; resolved to admit nothing as a philosophical truth, which could not be deduced from it by a chain of logical reasoning.—Having first satisfied himself of his own existence, his next step was to inquire, how far his perceptive and intellectual faculties were entitled to credit. For this purpose he begins with offering a proof of the existence and attributes of God;—truths which he conceived to be necessarily involved in the idea he was able to form of a perfect, self-existent, and eternal Being.—His reasonings led him to conclude, that God cannot possibly be supposed to deceive his creatures; and therefore that the intimations of our senses and the decisions of our reason, are to be trusted to with entire confidence, wherever they afford us clear and distinct ideas of their respective objects.

"The substance of Des Cartes' argument on these fundamental points, is thus briefly recapitulated by himself in the conclusion of his third meditation. 'Dum in meipsum mentis aciem converto, non modo intelligo me esse rem incompletam, et ab alio dependentem, remque ad majora et meliora indefinite aspirantem, sed simul etiam intelligo illum, à quo pendeo, majora ista omnia non indefinite et potentia tantum, sed reipsa infinite in se habere, atque ita Deum esse; totaque vis argumenti in eo est, quod agnoscam fieri non posse ut existem talis naturæ qualis sum, nempe ideam Dei in me habens, nisi revera Deus etiam existeret, Deus, inquam, ille idem cujus idea in me est, hoc est habens omnes illas perfectiones quas ego non comprehendere sed quocunque modo attingere cogitatione

possum, et nullis planè defectibus obnoxius. Ex his satis patet, illum fallacem esse non posse: omnem enim fraudem et deceptionem à defectu aliquo pendere lumine naturali manifestum est.’

“The above argument for the existence of God (very improperly called, by some foreigners, an argument *à priori*) was long considered by the most eminent men in Europe as quite demonstrative. For my own part although I do not think that it is by any means so level to the apprehension of common inquirers, as the argument from the marks of *design* everywhere manifested in the universe, I am still less inclined to reject it as altogether unworthy of attention. It is far from being so metaphysically abstruse as the reasonings of Newton and Clarke, founded on our conceptions of *space* and *time*; nor would it appear, perhaps, less logical and conclusive than that celebrated demonstration, if it were properly unfolded, and stated in more simple and popular terms. The two arguments, however, are, in no respect, exclusive of each other; and I have always thought, that, by combining them together, a proof of the point in question might be formed, more impressive and luminous than is to be obtained from either when stated apart.”—(Dissert. First: On the Progress of Metaphysical, Ethical, and Political Philosophy; by Dugald Stewart, Esq. p. 90, 91.)

Æternus est et infinitus, omnipotens et omnisciens; id est, durat ab æterno in æternum, et adest ab infinito in infinitum.—Non est æternitas et infinitas, sed æternus et infinitus; non est duratio et spatium, sed durat et adest. Durat semper et adest ubique, et existendo semper et ubique durationem et spatium constituit. (Scholium annexed to Newton’s *Principia*.)

The fundamental principle of Clarke’s Demonstration is, that as immensity and eternity are not substances but attributes, which are irresistibly forced on our belief as necessary existences, “the immense and eternal Being whose attributes they are, must exist of necessity also. The ex-

istence of God, therefore, according to Clarke, is a truth that follows with demonstrative evidence from those conceptions of space and time which are inseparable from the human mind. These," says Dr. Reid, "are the speculations of men of superior genius; but whether they be as solid as they are sublime, or whether they be the wanderings of imagination in a region beyond the limits of human understanding, I am at a loss to determine."

"Although the argument as stated by Clarke," says Professor Stewart, "does not carry complete satisfaction to my mind, I think it must be granted that there is something peculiarly wonderful and overwhelming in those conceptions of immensity and eternity, which it is not less impossible to banish from our thoughts, than the consciousness of our own existence. Nay, further, I think that these conceptions are very intimately connected with the fundamental principles of Natural Religion. For when we have established, from the evidences of design everywhere manifested around us, the existence of an intelligent and powerful cause, we are unavoidably led to apply to this cause our conceptions of immensity and eternity, and to conceive Him, as filling the infinite extent of both with His presence and with His power. Hence we associate with the idea of God those awful impressions which are naturally produced by the idea of infinite space, and perhaps still more by the idea of endless duration. Nor is this all. It is from the immensity of space that the notion of infinity is originally derived; and it is hence that we transfer the expression, by a sort of metaphor, to other subjects. When we speak therefore of infinite power, wisdom and goodness, our notions, if not wholly borrowed from space, are at least greatly aided by this analogy; so that the conceptions of immensity and eternity, if they do not of themselves demonstrate the existence of God, yet necessarily enter into the ideas we form of his nature and attributes. To these various considerations it may be added, that the notion of *necessary existence* which we derive from the contemplation

of space and of time, renders the same notion, when applied to the Supreme Being, much more easy to be apprehended than it would otherwise be.”—(*Stewart's First Dissertation*, p. ii. p. 67.)

How very little the late learned and accomplished Dr. Thomas Brown valued the argument derived from the principles alluded to, appears from the following observations: “I conceive the abstract arguments which have been adduced to shew that it is impossible for matter to have existed from eternity,—by reasonings on what has been termed *necessary existence*, and the incompatibility of this necessary existence with the qualities of matter,—to be relics of mere verbal logic of the schools, as little capable of producing conviction, as any of the wildest and most absurd of the technical scholastic reasonings, on the properties, or supposed properties, of *entity* and *nonentity*. External existence,—the existence of that which never had a beginning, must always be beyond our distinct comprehension, whatever the eternal object be, material or mental,—and as much beyond our comprehension in the one case, as in the other, though it is not impossible for us to doubt, that some being, material or mental, must have been eternal, if *any thing exists*.”—(*Lectures on the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, vol. iv. p. 403.)

Notwithstanding the very respectable names of Reid and Brown, and the sanction which their opinions derive from their high authority, I must take the liberty of saying, that the argument in question, as it appears to me, serves an important use. If Clarke, and his illustrious associates, by their abstract reasonings in proof of the being and perfections of God, do not produce conviction in every mind, they have succeeded in the refutation of metaphysical objections, and in involving the patrons of atheism in contradiction.

I shall conclude this note with the following passage, the grandeur of which has been rarely equalled, from Maclaurin's account of the Newtonian discoveries. “The Great

Mysterious Being, who made and governs the whole system, has set a part of the chain of causes in our view ; but we find that, as he himself is too high for our comprehension, so his more immediate instruments in the universe are also involved in obscurity that philosophy is not able to dissipate ; and thus our veneration for the Supreme Author is always increased, in proportion as we advance in the knowledge of his works. As we arise in philosophy towards the First Cause, we obtain more extensive views of the constitution of things, and see his influences more plainly. We perceive that we are approaching to him, from the simplicity and generality of the powers or laws we discover ; from the difficulty we find to account for them mechanically ; from the more and more complete beauty and contrivance that appears to us in the scheme of his works as we advance ; and from the hints we obtain of greater things yet out of our reach. But still we find ourselves at a distance from Him, the great source of all motion, power and efficacy ; who, after all our inquiries, continues removed from us and veiled in darkness. He is not the object of sense, his nature and essence are unfathomable ; the more immediate instruments of his power and energy are but obscurely known to us ; the least part of nature, when we endeavour to comprehend it, perplexes us ; even *place* and *time*, of which our ideas seem to be simple and clear, have enough in them to embarrass those who allow nothing to be beyond the reach of their faculties. These things, however, do not hinder but we may learn to form great and just conceptions of Him from His sensible works, where an art and skill is expressed that is obvious to the most superficial spectator, surprises the most experienced inquirer, and many times surpasses the comprehension of the profoundest philosopher. From what we are able to understand of nature, we may entertain the greatest expectations of what will be discovered to us, if ever we shall be allowed to penetrate to the First Cause himself, and see the whole scheme of his works as they are really

derived from him, when our imperfect philosophy shall be completed.”—(*An Account of Sir I. Newton's Phil. Disc.* b. i. chap. i. p. 24.)

NOTE B.—*Liberty and Necessity.* p. 450.

“ There is one metaphysician of whom America has to boast, who, in logical acuteness and subtilty, does not yield to any disputant bred in the universities of Europe. I need not say, that I allude to Jonathan Edwards. But, at the time when he wrote, the state of America was more favourable than it now is, or can for a long period be expected to be, to such inquiries as those which engaged his attention; inquiries (by the way) to which his thoughts were evidently turned, less by the impulse of speculative curiosity, than by his anxiety to defend the theological system in which he had been educated, and to which he was most conscientiously and zealously attached. The effect of this anxiety, in sharpening his faculties, and in keeping his polemical vigilance constantly on the alert, may be traced in every step of his argument.” (*Dissertation, Part ii.* p. 166.)

I have examined, with the utmost attention, all that this distinguished philosopher (Professor Dugald Stewart,) and I would add, most amiable and excellent man, has advanced on what he very justly terms, the “endless subject of controversy,” and in regard to the side of it which he espoused, Dr. Jonathan Edwards is “indisputably the ablest champion,”—and I regret to say, that I am disappointed. While he refrains from any discussion of the important questions at issue, and scarcely distinguishes between those who hold very different doctrines, though styled (improperly I think) Necessitarians, he delivers his opinions with an air of confidence unusual with him, and in a way which, as it appears to me, is very much calculated to mislead.

I cannot, within the limits of a note, do justice to this subject ; but I cannot refrain from remarking,—

I. That the philosophical inquiry concerning human liberty, by Collins, and the inquiry into the freedom of the will, by Dr. Jonathan Edwards, ought not to be identified together. Though I by no means would have it to be understood that I agree with this latter Author in all his opinions, I feel persuaded that it is impossible to read his celebrated work with candour and discriminating judgment, without perceiving that it is widely different in many of its principles, and altogether different in its design, spirit, and tendency, from that work of Collins with which Professor Stewart compares it ; and respecting which, he affirms, that “ the coincidence is so perfect, that the outline given by the former, of the plan of his work, might have served with equal propriety as a preface to that of the latter.”

II. Neither can I conceive that physical and moral necessity should be identified. “ The distinction,” says Professor Stewart, “ between physical and moral necessity, I conceive to be not less frivolous than those to which the foregoing animadversions relate. On this point I agree with Diderot, that the word *necessity* admits but of *one* interpretation.” I have read this assertion with great surprise ; and cannot help thinking that I must attach a meaning to the words *physical* and *moral*, very different from Professor Stewart. The distinction between these expressions, as used in “ this endless subject of controversy,” is pointed out with sufficient clearness in the following passage ;—a distinction, which, as it is there defined, is so far from being “ frivolous,” that it appears to me to be of great importance.

“ The phrase moral necessity is used variously ; sometimes it is used for a necessity of moral obligation. So we say, a man is under necessity, when he is under bonds of duty and conscience, from which he cannot be discharged. Sometimes by moral necessity is meant that sure connexion of things, that is a foundation for infallible certainty. In this sense, moral necessity signifies much the same as that

high degree of probability, which is ordinarily sufficient to satisfy mankind, in their conduct and behaviour in the world. Sometimes by moral necessity is meant, that necessity of connexion and consequence, which arises from such moral causes, as the strength of inclination, or motives, and the connexion which there is in many cases between these, and such certain volitions and actions. It is in this sense that I use the phrase, moral necessity, in the following discourse.

“ By natural (or physical) necessity, as applied to men, I mean such necessity as men are under through the force of natural causes. Thus, men placed in certain circumstances, are the subjects of particular sensations by necessity; they feel pain when their bodies are wounded; they see the objects placed before them in a clear light, when their eyes are opened: so they assent to the truth of certain propositions as soon as the terms are understood; as that two and two make four, that black is not white, that two parallel lines can never cross one another; so, by a natural (or physical) necessity men’s bodies move downwards, when there is nothing to support them.”—(*The Works of President Edwards*, vol. i. p. 146.)

III. In consequence of Professor Stewart’s thus identifying moral with physical necessity, he has been led to speak of its tendency in terms which I humbly conceive are not warranted by facts. “ Whatever,” says he, “ may have been the doctrines of some of the ancient Atheists about man’s free agency, it will not be denied, that in the history of modern philosophy, the schemes of atheism and of necessity have been hitherto always connected together. I cannot help adding, that the most consistent Necessitarians who have yet appeared, have been those who followed out their principles till they ended in spinosism, a doctrine which differs from atheism more in words than in reality.”—(*Dissertation*, Part II. Notes, p. 231.)

If there were indeed no difference between moral and physical necessity, according to Professor Stewart’s belief,

I would readily admit that its tendency must be such as he has described it to be. But, conceiving as I do, that the distinction in question is fundamental, I most decidedly differ from him in my views as to its tendency. Let us observe what President Edwards says regarding this objection to the doctrine which he so ably advocated.

“ If any object against what has been maintained, that it tends to *atheism*, I know not on what grounds such an objection can be raised, unless it be, that some atheists have held a doctrine of necessity which they suppose to be like this. But if it be so, I am persuaded, the Arminians would not look upon it just, that their notion of freedom and contingency should be charged with a tendency to all the errors that ever any embraced who have held such opinions. Epicurus, that chief father of atheism, maintained no such doctrine of necessity, but was the greatest maintainer of contingency. The stoic philosophers were no atheists, but the greatest theists, and nearest akin to christians in their opinions concerning the unity and perfection of the godhead, of all the heathen philosophers.

“ And whereas it has often been said, that the doctrine of (moral) necessity saps the foundations of all religion and virtue, and tends to the greatest licentiousness of practice; this objection is built on the pretence, that our doctrine renders vain all means and endeavours, in order to be virtuous and religious. Which pretence has been already particularly considered in the 5th section of this part; (Part IV.) where it has been demonstrated that this doctrine has no such tendency; but that such a tendency is to be truly charged on the contrary doctrine, inasmuch as the notion of contingency, in its certain consequences, overthrows all connexion, in every degree, between endeavour and event, means and end.

“ That doctrine excuses all evil inclinations which men find to be natural; because in such inclinations they are not self-determined, as such inclinations are not owing to any choice or determination of their own wills: which

leads men wholly to justify themselves in all their wicked actions, so far as natural inclination has had a hand in determining their wills to the commission of them. Yea, these notions, which suppose moral necessity and inability to be inconsistent with blame or moral obligation, will directly lead men to justify the vilest acts and practices, from the strength of their wicked inclinations of all sorts; which at length will come to this, that men will justify themselves in all the wickedness they commit.

“ If it be, indeed, as is pretended, that these doctrines (namely, the doctrines which he advocated) undermine the very foundations of all religion and morality, and enervate and disannul all rational motives to holy and virtuous practice; and that the contrary doctrines give the inducements to virtue and goodness their proper force—I say if it be thus, it is remarkable, that virtue and religious practice should prevail most, when the former doctrines, so inconsistent with it, prevailed almost universally; and that ever since the latter doctrines, so happily agreeing with it, and of so proper and excellent a tendency to promote it, have been gradually prevailing, vice, profaneness, and wickedness of all sorts, and contempt of all religion, should proportionably prevail; and that these things should thus accompany one another, and rise and prevail one with another, now for a whole age together. If these things are truly so, they are very remarkable, and matter of very curious speculation.”—(*Edward's Works*, vol. i. p. 407—409.)

I shall only subjoin the following judicious remarks of an anonymous but able writer. “ If there were any hope of terminating that endless and fruitless controversy (that which relates to liberty and necessity), the most promising expedient would be a general agreement to banish the technical terms hitherto employed on both sides from philosophy, and to limit ourselves rigorously to a statement of those facts in which all men agree, expressed in language perfectly purified from all tincture of system. The agreement in facts would then probably be found to be much

more extensive than is often suspected by either party. Experience is, and indeed must be, equally appealed to by both. All mankind feel and own, that their actions are at least very much affected by their situation, their opinions, their feelings, and their habits; yet no man would deserve the compliment of confutation, who seriously professed to doubt the distinction between right and wrong, the reasonableness of moral approbation and disapprobation, the propriety of praising and censuring voluntary actions, the justice of rewarding or punishing them according to their intention and tendency. Every advocate of free-will admits the fact of the influence of motives, from which the Necessitarian infers the truth of his opinion. Every Necessitarian must also admit those attributes of moral and responsible agency, for the sake of which the advocate of liberty considers his own doctrine as of such unspeakable importance. Both parties ought equally to own, that the matter in dispute is a question of fact relating to the mind, which must be ultimately decided by its own consciousness. The Necessitarian is even bound to admit, that no speculation is tenable on this subject, which is not reconcilable to the general opinions of mankind, and which does not afford a satisfactory explanation of that part of common language which at first sight appears to be most at variance with it.

“The contending parties might at length discover that they had been only looking at opposite sides of the same truth. But the terms Liberty and Necessity embroil the controversy, inflame the temper of disputants, and involve them in clouds of angry zeal, which render them incapable not only of perceiving their numerous and important coincidences, but even of clearly discerning the single point in which they differ. Every generous sentiment, and every hostile passion of human nature, have for ages been connected with these two words. They are the badges of the oldest, the widest, and the most obstinate warfare waged by metaphysicians.

“ It is necessary to condemn the use of weapons which exasperate animosity, without contributing to decide the contest. Of this nature, in our opinion, are the imputations of irreligion and immorality which have for ages been thrown on those divines and philosophers who have espoused Necessitarian opinions. Mr. Stewart, though he anxiously acquits individuals of evil intention, has too much lent the weight of his respectable opinion to these useless and inflammatory charges. We are at a loss to conceive how he could imagine that there is the slightest connexion between the doctrine of necessity and the system of Spinosa. That the world is governed by a Supreme Mind, which is invariably influenced by the dictates of its own wisdom and goodness, seems to be the very essence of theism; and no man who substantially dissents from that proposition can deserve the name of a pure theist. But this is precisely the reverse of the doctrine of Spinosa, which, in spite of all its ingenious disguises, undoubtedly denies the supremacy of mind. This objection, however, has already been answered, not only by the pious and profound Jonathan Edwards*, an avowed Necessitarian, but by Locke, whose opinions about this question are not very distinct, and even by Dr. Clarke himself, the ablest and most celebrated of the advocates of liberty †. To these religious philosophers we need only refer our readers for a satisfactory vindication of the Necessitarians on this subject.

“ Let us appeal to experience, on the moral influence of Necessitarian opinions in their theological form. By doing so, we shall have an opportunity of contemplating the principle in its most active state, operating upon the greatest masses, and for the longest time. Predestination, or doctrines much inclining towards it, have, on the whole, prevailed in the christian churches of the west, since the days of Augustine and Aquinas. Who were the first formidable

* Inquiry into Free Will. part IV. c. 7.

† Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God, &c.

opponents of these doctrines in the church of Rome? The Jesuits,—the contrivers of courtly casuistry, and the founders of lax morality. Who in the same church inclined to the stern theology of Augustine? The Jansenists,—the teachers and the models of austere morals. What are we to think of the morality of Calvinistic nations, especially of the most numerous classes of them, who seem, beyond all other men, to be most zealously attached to their religion, and most deeply penetrated with its spirit? Here, if anywhere, we have a practical and a decisive test of the moral influence of a belief in Necessitarian opinions. In Protestant Switzerland, in Holland, in Scotland, among the English nonconformists and the protestants of the north of Ireland, in the New England States, Calvinism long was the prevalent faith, and is probably still the faith of a considerable majority. Their moral education was at least completed, and their collective character formed, during the prevalence of Calvinistic opinions. Yet, where are communities to be found of a more pure and active virtue? Perhaps these, and other very striking facts, might justify speculations of a somewhat singular nature, and even authorize a retort upon our respectable antagonists.”—(*Review of Stewart's Introduction to the Encyclopedia; Edin. Rev. No. 71.*)

THE END OF VOL. I.











