



AN ESSAY  
ON THE  
**PLAN OF SALVATION:**

IN WHICH THE SEVERAL SOURCES OF

**EVIDENCE**

ARE EXAMINED, AND APPLIED TO THE INTERESTING DOCTRINE OF

**REDEMPTION,**

IN ITS RELATION TO THE GOVERNMENT

AND MORAL ATTRIBUTES

OF THE

**DEITY.**



✓  
BY ASA SHINN, MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.  
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" Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."  
*John* viii. 32.

" In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."—*Eph.* i. 7.

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**DISTRICT OF MARYLAND, ss.**



**BE IT REMEMBERED**, that on this fourteenth day of September, in the thirty-eighth year of the Independence of the United States of America, Asa Shinn of said district, hath deposited in this office, the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as author, in the words and figures following, to wit:

“An Essay on the Plan of Salvation, in which the several sources of Evidence are examined, and applied to the interesting doctrine of Redemption, in its relation to the government and moral attributes of the Deity. By Asa Shinn, minister of the gospel.”

“Truth never was indebted to a lie.”—*Young.*

“Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”  
*John* viii. 32.

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In conformity to the act of the Congress of the United States, entitled, “an act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned;” and also to the act entitled, “an act supplementary to the act entitled, “an act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned,” and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints.

**PHILIP MOORE,**  
*Clerk of the District of Maryland.*

## PREFACE.

THE following Essay was written, and is now offered to the public, from a full and deliberate conviction that *truth*, rightly understood and believed, tends to the general and permanent happiness of mankind;—that the doctrines therein contained *are true*;—and that they are truths in which we are all particularly interested, and which cannot be too attentively examined, or too generally understood. If either of these positions be erroneous, it must be confessed that error has had an influence in giving birth to the present publication. But admitting them to be correct, they are deemed sufficient to furnish justifiable motives for publishing this book, notwithstanding its defects, or the obscurity of its author.

The general design of the Essay, as signified by the title, is to point out and ascertain, with some tolerable degree of accuracy, the rules of evidence by which alone the human mind can be successful in the search of truth;—in order especially, to apply those rules, or to use them with attentive regularity, in the investigation of the important and great principles of christianity, concerning the redemption of mankind, and the general plan of saving them from sin and misery, by our Lord Jesus Christ. It is entitled an Essay on the Plan of Salvation, because the design of it was, not to investigate precisely and exclusively, the doctrine of the atonement, but to view that interesting doctrine in its connexion with the general plan of restoring fallen creatures, and in its relation to the moral attributes and government of the great Creator. The reader will find that one whole chapter was written before the subject of atonement was introduced; and that chapter may be considered, by some, to be totally foreign from the plan of salvation, and to contain matter which cannot, with propriety, be included under such a title. It may be necessary, for the sake of such readers, to obviate the objection in this place, lest an unhappy prepossession should cause them to stumble at the very threshold, and to cast the book by with indifference, before they come to the main subject to which their attention is solicited.

It must be acknowledged by every reflecting mind, that a clear view of the method by which truth is to be discovered and ascertained, is of great advantage in the pursuit of it; and that confusion in our conceptions of the proper grounds of credence, is a very general and fatal source of error. A man is in little danger of taking his enemy for his friend, or his friend for his enemy, who has a clear and steady conception of the constituent principles of friendship and of enmity; because he can apply those principles to each particular case, without much danger of being mistaken; but he who is at no pains to regulate his view of this subject, is liable to take

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that for a proof of friendship which is a proof of the contrary, and thus to expose himself to the insidious arts of intrigue and deception. In like manner, while we remain unacquainted with the rules of evidence, or have but an indistinct and obscure view of them, we are liable to take that for a sign of truth which is a sign of falsehood, and to wander in the wilderness of delusion, till our adherence to sophistical evidence will become habitual; and then surely we shall be in a fair way to take *bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter;—darkness for light, and light for darkness.*

It cannot therefore be justly considered a matter of indifference; much less of censure, that in an Essay upon the great doctrines of religion and morality, on which our present and eternal happiness depends, an attempt should first be made to distinguish between true and false evidence; for how can truth be discovered or proved, but by the use of sound and genuine rules of proof, and by carefully guarding against those which are false and delusive? And how can this be done, if we be at no pains to distinguish the one from the other?

Nor can it be justly said, that such an examination of evidence belongs not to the plan of salvation: for is it not God's method of saving sinners, to bestow his spiritual blessings upon them in consequence of their *embracing the truth*? And how can truth be discovered or believed, but by means of that *evidence* which distinguishes it from falsehood? All men will agree surely, that truth cannot be embraced *without* being distinguished from falsehood: and how can this be done, if we are indifferent to the *method* by which they are to be distinguished? As the plan of saving sinners implies, therefore, our understanding, believing and obeying the truth; and as truth cannot be understood, believed, nor consequently obeyed, but by means of proper evidence, this first chapter, upon the nature and rules of evidence; and the distinction between the sound and the unsound, properly belongs to an Essay on the plan of Salvation.

It is true, that in illustrating this subject, notice has been taken of our intellectual or judging faculties, and some may perhaps object, that a disposition has been manifested to wander too far into the regions of philosophy; but when we consider that some philosophers have done more to involve the evidence of truth in confusion and obscurity, than almost any other men, it can hardly be thought improper to follow them in their ingenious speculations, so far at least, as to detect the stratagems, by which they have laboured to conceal the evidence of religious truth, and of moral obligation, from the human mind. Infidelity, it is well known, affects to come forth under the sanction of philosophy: It eagerly embraces the ingenious theories of some acute metaphysicians, as the ground of its opposition to christianity; therefore we cannot disarm our unbelieving opponents, without attacking the hypotheses of that *science, falsely so called*, on which they take their stand, and by means of which they have imposed upon the understandings of the unwary, have made a plausible defence against the dictates of conscience and reason, and have been but too successful in the establishment of a pernicious scepticism.

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But it is vain to hope, that all the objections can be obviated in a preface, which will be apt to occur against the doctrines of this Essay; for it is extremely probable, not to say morally certain, that there will be some hundreds. And for this plain reason, that the author, from the beginning to the end, has been governed by a conviction that he ought to follow evidence wherever it should lead, without ever suppressing or departing from any part of it, through the fear of deviating from the sentiments of any man, or any number of men in the world. Hence one part of the subject may differ from one sentiment, long sanctioned by authority; another part from another; and upon the whole, every denomination of christians may peradventure find something that will be esteemed objectionable.

Indeed, there is reason to presume that some who entirely approve the leading doctrines here advanced, and whose friendship the writer of these pages has long had the happiness to enjoy, will be obstructed in their progress through the Essay, by some considerable objections. Without attempting to predict what particular points will be considered erroneous, it may suffice to notice objections that are more general. These may perhaps be the following: (1.) That the subject is treated in a manner too abstruse and metaphysical, and (2.) that the peculiar boldness and novelty of several parts of it, are of a suspicious character, and indicate a strong presumption, that some very serious errors have been adopted.

In answering the first, it may be sufficient to say, that great care and pains were used to make the subject as simple and intelligible as its nature would possibly admit of; and though some things have been introduced that are abstruse in their nature, because it was impossible otherwise to do any justice to the subject, yet it is presumed, there are few things introduced, but such as may be understood by common minds, provided their method of reading and understanding subjects be that of *attention* and *diligent thinking*. And I hope no person would request a man to write a book that may be understood *without* thinking. Must it not be a very superficial and frivolous performance, that can be comprehended by a careless inattentive glance, that is hardly sufficient to keep the reader from falling into a profound sleep? And however intelligible, conclusive, or important a treatise may be, it will contain nothing clear, convincing or interesting, to an *unthinking* mind: because his intellectual supineness renders him incapable of entering into a subject, or of properly relishing any truths it may contain. The discourses of our Saviour and his apostles are remarkably simple and perspicuous; yet the man who presumes he has a right understanding of them, without close and habitual meditation, is in a greater error, perhaps, than those of whom he is disposed to complain.

As to the second objection, the candid and friendly reader is assured, that great solicitude occupied the mind of the writer, through the whole of this Essay, to guard against error: if the reader will devote an equal degree of attention to discover and point out erroneous opinions, that was employed to avoid them, he will doubtless be entitled to a fair hearing; and whatever aid his

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friendly strictures may afford, will be received with gratitude.—But as to those persons, if any such there be, who upon the first careless glance are entirely prepared, and think themselves fully qualified, to fix the charge of heresy upon a publication, their sovereign and masterly decision, I think, is beneath the attention of every reflecting mind. Their great and capable minds, it would seem, are under no necessity to submit to the drudgery of close and laborious thinking, in order to distinguish truth from falsehood; but are at once prepared, with intuitive infallibility, to judge of every book and of every subject, without the pains of examination, or even almost without reading or hearing them.—What is the evidence on which they decide? Such as the following: the thing is a *novelty*:—I never heard it before:—my father never believed it:—It is not believed by our party:—I am sure it is false.—Hoping the reader will pardon me for supposing it possible, that there may be persons of this sort in the world, I drop the present allusion, and proceed to notice a few other particulars.

It is not impossible, that some persons, into whose hands this book may chance to fall, will be grievously offended, because so little deference appears to be given to creeds, established by the authority of divines, or to the opinions of the learned; especially to those of philosophers and doctors of law and divinity. They may perhaps think this performance, however destitute of the grace of novelty in other particulars, affords a new species of impudence and self-sufficiency.

It is indeed a very pleasing reflection to an enlightened mind, that there are many men of learning in the world:—men who have a complete knowledge of the different languages, as also of science in general;—it would be a blessing if their number was increased ten-fold;—and every friend to human improvement must consider it desirable to be possessed of their advantages:—but though a degree of deference is due to their authority, yet if any one should conclude that authority *alone* is a sufficient ground for all our opinions, it might not be improper to propose to him a few plain queries.

1. Are divines and philosophers the only men to whom God has given the right to think and judge for themselves?
2. Must all persons who have been unhappily deprived of their advantages, either hold their peace, or frame all their opinions according to the exact model furnished by their learned superiors, however the clearest evidence may seem to lead to a contrary conclusion?
3. Is a man incapable of reasoning or judging correctly, because he is not a critic in foreign languages, or has not become master of astronomy or navigation?
4. If any person were charged with having no independence,—of framing all his opinions according to the fashion or authority of great men, without having any opinion of his own,—would he not consider it a reproach, and be disposed to repel the charge?
5. Is it not very inconsistent then, for any person to complain of another, for using that freedom of thought and independence, the want of which cannot be imputed to himself, without being received as a reproach, or even as an insult?

The reader, it is hoped, bearing these queries in mind, will peruse the following sheets with some indulgence, and will not be



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hasty in attributing that to a want of respect for great men, which originated only from a desire to avoid the unreasonable prepossessions of fashion and authority.

As to the manner, or execution of this work, it is not to be doubted that the judicious reader will meet with many deficiencies; some from errors of the press, some from the inability of the author, and others from the peculiar disadvantages under which he laboured. A candid and liberal indulgence is solicited; and if any harsh or uncharitable expressions have been permitted to pass, it is hoped, that, being imputed to inadvertency, more than malevolence, by impartial and generous minds, they will be forgiven.

This book may be thought by some to copy too much after the modes of expression used by moralists, philosophers, or even Socinians; and though the sentiments may be true, yet the *expressions* may be thought not sufficiently evangelical. Instance, the frequent use of the words *virtue, rectitude, morality, &c.*

This has been done for the sake of precision and perspicuity: Those words, though sometimes limited to external conduct only, are frequently used to signify the whole of christian *righteousness, obedience and holiness*. Does not the law of God enjoin perfect holiness? And is it not truly denominated the *moral law*? Then does not the word *morality*, comprehend the whole of that law which enjoins the perfect love of God, and of all mankind? And why should christians, or men of reason, dispute about words, and be offended at each other for particular modes of expression? To reject truth on this account, is like a person refusing to partake of the common sustenance of life, because it is not served up in that kind of table furniture which is most agreeable to his fancy.

And suppose there should be a considerable deficiency of style, or even a few serious errors of opinion, if the doctrines are true in the general, and worthy of all acceptance, they surely ought not to be rejected with disgust or indifference, because a few errors escaped attention, and unhappily found their way into this publication. To reject a treatise in this way, is to act like those persons who reject or despise a whole religious community as hypocrites, because a few of its members have been found to be deceitful. Would such an objector be willing his own character should be treated in this manner, and be unequivocally exploded as a bad character, because a few blemishes had been discovered? Reader, wilt thou *slay the truth with the error, and that the truth should be as the error? That be far from thee. Shall not every candid person imitate the judge of all the earth in doing right?*

But if Dr. Brown be correct in his views of mankind, this will be a very unfashionable, and therefore unpopular book: "As few men have the courage" says he, "to sacrifice their interest, their pleasure, or their fame to their regard for truth and justice, the great concern is, to speak and act, not as reason and virtue dictate, but as interested views, in conforming to the opinions, humours, and manners of others, may require. For, how is the favour of the greater part of men to be caught, but by adulation and servile respect? And what so efficacious for incurring their displeasure, as that manly and generous conduct and conversation, which indicate less solicitude to secure favour, than to enjoy self-esteem, a greater

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love of mankind than respect for individuals? Hence, most men have an opinion for every company they frequent, and change their sentiments oftener than their dress.—Politeness is making constant demands—propriety imposing new laws—men are always the slaves of custom, and seldom follow the bent of their own genius and temper. Society is a species of stage, on which the actors appear in their turns, and play their parts. He is most applauded, and bears the highest price, who appears least himself, and personates most successfully the assumed character.

“The man who presumes to think, to speak, or to act, differently from the generality, even in matters of singular importance to the common good, is looked upon as an unsocial savage being, who, separating himself from his species, is entitled to no share of their regard and affection. It is well, if he is not exposed to the severest effects of resentment and hatred.” *Brown's Natural Equality of Men*, page 130 and 134.

According to this bold representation, which Dr. Brown has had the assurance to make, it would appear, that an honest man is not to expect much esteem in this world; but that, in order to be popular, a man's chief concern must be to conform himself to the fashion. Such a concern had little influence in producing the present Essay, and therefore, judging by the above representation, it is not difficult to foresee its fate.

THE AUTHOR.

*Baltimore, September 12, 1813.*

## INTRODUCTION.

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LEAVING the busy multitude to pursue their momentary schemes, I sit down, thoughtful and retired, to consider myself, my origin, my Author and my end. I live in the world, possessed of various faculties to think, and feel, and remember, I know not how. I want to know *what* I am, *whence* I am, and *whither* I am bound.

I find I am a creature capable of being either happy or miserable, and that happiness and misery are within my power, and, in a considerable degree, depend upon my voluntary actions. There are many objects around me, some of which are calculated to hurt me, and others to minister to my wants. There are millions of creatures in the world, beside myself, some possessing similar faculties to those which I possess, and others of another kind. They also are capable of happiness or misery, and it depends upon my choice, whether I act in a way calculated to injure them, or to promote their felicity. Our nature, our feelings, and our wants are common; and the question presents itself, whether I should consider my own convenience alone, and gratify myself in every particular, however others may be injured; or, whether I ought to regard the general welfare, and sacrifice some of my private gratifications, to promote the native liberty and enjoyments of my fellow men? The latter appearing to be self-evident, I feel bound to use my thinking powers, that I may learn, not only the means of happiness and misery to myself, that I may pursue the one and avoid the other; but also what is calculated to guard others from misery, and to promote the tranquillity of universal society.

Happiness is the end of general knowledge; and any part of knowledge that has no tendency to this end, (if any such there be) is altogether useless and insignificant. I find that I desire happiness by an uncontrollable necessity in my nature: I need no increase of knowledge to stimulate me to pursue this end; but the means of it are as diversified as the works of God, and my ignorance of them is such that there is need of perpetual meditation to discover them; and I presume there would still be great room for improvements, were my life protracted for ten thousand years.

As the means of happiness, when known, must be applied or reduced to practice, I conclude that in all my reflections I should have a reference to the regulation of my conduct; and that which shews me immediately how to act right, is the most important of all knowledge. He who pursues knowledge without any regard to practice, is like a man sitting by the way side, enquiring of every one, that he may learn the road to any certain place, in order to sit still and never follow the directions he receives with so much apparent solicitude.

In vain may he pretend that disinterested benevolence influences him to acquire knowledge, that he may direct others into that path of right conduct, in which he refuses to walk himself; for his own supine indifference refutes this pretension and evinces to every attentive spectator, that his benevolence is so very superficial that it only recommends that which he esteems not worth pursuing. It is some selfish principle, and not a genuine love of truth, which influences the empty speculations of such an individual; and it is well if he does not spend more time in learning how to excuse and justify his own indifference to virtue, than he does in teaching others how to pursue and enjoy the benefits thereof. Believing, as his conduct proves he does, that he can be more happy in the neglect of right conduct than in the practice of it, he will directly or indirectly recommend the same immorality to others, and will excuse or defend the delusion, by all the insinuating sophistry in his power.

I am not only ignorant, I find, of many things which it concerns me to know; but I am perpetually liable to fall into error, which is worse than ignorance. If I use my intellectual faculties as I ought, I may through Divine assistance, I conclude,

acquire all that knowledge which my Maker has made necessary for my present state of being, as well as to prepare me for eternal happiness hereafter; but there are many things which I cannot know, because the Almighty has not given me the means and the power to know them. If I believe nothing concerning them, but live contented in a state of ignorance, in matters which God has put beyond the reach of my understanding, I shall continue safe and happy; but if I form hypothesis, and resolve to believe without evidence, I shall fall into delusions that may have a pernicious influence upon my virtue and tranquillity.

Hence it appears necessary for me to be at due pains to distinguish between those things which may be known by mankind, and those which surpass the limits of human understanding, lest I should spend my time in fruitless endeavors to comprehend that which is incomprehensible. In so doing I should weary myself in vain: I should *darken counsel by words without knowledge*, bewilder the understanding of others, as well as my own, and involve truth in the shades of impenetrable obscurity. I should waste and abuse the time and talents which the Parent of goodness has lent me for a season, and should remain ignorant of truths which might be known, by preposterously neglecting them to pursue those subjects which God has reserved for the contemplation of superior intelligences.

To distinguish between things knowable by me, and those which are not so, I purpose to regulate my studies chiefly by this single rule: When a subject of apparent difficulty presents itself, if the impossibility of conceiving it more clearly do not appear self-evident, I must give it a full trial; I must avail myself of the most happy season, when my thinking faculties are in the best order, and labor to understand it with all necessary attention and perseverance: if in this attempt my conceptions become more clear and distinct, I receive it as evidence that I am not out of my proper sphere; but if every attempt be fruitless—if my pains and labors serve no other purpose than to weary my spirit, and involve the subject in greater obscurity, I take for granted that this is a subject beyond the grasp of my understanding, and must immediately give up the pursuit.

Among the vast variety of subjects within the compass of human thought, I ought to select those for my most serious and attentive investigation, that appear to have the most essential relation to the solid and perpetual happiness of mankind. Those of secondary importance should have but a secondary degree of attention, especially as our stay in this world is so short, that we must necessarily remain ignorant of many particulars for want of time to examine them.

By the study and communication of truth, I hope to glorify my Creator, and to promote the welfare of my fellow creatures, as well as my own, by exhibiting those amiable and august perfections of the Deity, which are the foundation of all felicity in every part of the universe. I hope, through the mediation of my Saviour, to answer, in some degree, the end of a rational being, and to stand approved before Him whose vast intelligence scrutinizes the secret thoughts of every creature. I hope to contribute my mite to the support of truth and righteousness among the descendants of Adam, and to assist, as I may be able, the benefactors of mankind, in defeating the dark designs of malevolence, which have appeared in all ages, and which have sometimes threatened to banish all truth and virtue from the world, and to fill it with the intolerable darkness of superstition, or of open atheism.

But how shall I guard against splitting upon the rocks or running upon the shoals which stand threatening on either hand? How many good men have fallen into great mistakes? In attempting to steer our vessel upon the calm and unruffled current of reason and revelation, that we may reach our desired haven, much caution is needful to guard against the dangerous whirlpools of passion and of prejudice. Many, alas! have missed their course in a dark and a cloudy day, and having run a ground were unable to get forward and have long stood exposed to the waves of prejudice and passion; while others to avoid a similar fate, have unhappily kept at too great a distance, and thereby have fallen on the rocks upon the other shore. "Nothing is more common," says Mr. Fletcher "than for men to run into one extreme under the plausible pretence of avoiding another."

Shall I presume then, that I will be able to avoid all dan-

ger, and to keep constantly on the even channel? I dare not presume so. Yet I cannot believe that all men are destined to run into dangerous errors of necessity, without charging my Maker foolishly. And "to run away" from the search of truth, on account of danger, "is but a coward's trick:" the examples which history affords, of the multiplied and dangerous errors of mankind, ought indeed to make us wary; but they ought never to cause us to fold up our hands and do nothing, under the whimsical imagination, that we shall mend the matter by laying an embargo upon our rational faculties.

God gave us talents that we might improve, not bury them; and I must be permitted to presume that a right use of them will lead to the end intended: and unless that end was to deceive mankind with various delusions, I conclude we may avoid all dangerous mistakes, provided we move cautiously, after having taken due pains to set out right. If we take a wrong direction when we first set out upon a journey, the farther we advance, the more we wander out of the way. To avoid this, let us begin by examining what method God has established to lead his creatures to the knowledge of his truth. Let us labor to conceive and ascertain the proper method of distinguishing truth from falsehood, that we may trace out the causes which have led thousands so far into the wilderness.

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[The text in this section is extremely faint and illegible. It appears to be a multi-paragraph document. Discernible words include "The", "in", "the", "and", "of", "is", "to", "for", "with", "under", "by", "on", "at", "from", "after", "during", "before", "between", "through", "out", "of", "in", "the", "and", "of", "is", "to", "for", "with", "under", "by", "on", "at", "from", "after", "during", "before", "between", "through", "out", "of".]

CONFIDENTIAL



AN ESSAY  
ON THE  
PLAN OF SALVATION.

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CHAPTER I.

UPON THE METHOD ESTABLISHED BY THE CREATOR, THROUGH WHICH MANKIND ARE TO DISTINGUISH TRUTH FROM FALSEHOOD.

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SECTION I.

*A general view of truth and evidence.*

**G**OD has given us power, by means of various faculties of our nature, to conceive many things, to distinguish between them, to compare them together, and to notice their connexion or repugnance to each other. The exercise of these faculties produces in us an immediate belief or conviction that some things are true and others false. Of all this we are conscious, as of our own existence; and if we discredit the evidence of consciousness, we may at once abandon all farther inquiry and resign ourselves to "the great profundity obscure" of universal scepticism. I know my own existence; I find by consciousness alone; and if I cannot have a sure knowledge of this it is certain that I can know nothing else. If I exist not, I have no faculties, and of course no capacity of knowing; otherwise knowledge is acquired and truth discovered, by the intellectual faculties of nothing.

By the word *truth*, in its general application, I understand those propositions, or decisions of the judgment, which accord

with the real existence, properties and relations of all things: those which do not thus accord with real existence, properties and relations, are false.

The ground on which all truth rests, or the criterion by which it is to be ascertained, is called by the general name of *evidence*. This may appear in all possible degrees, from the slightest probability to the most absolute certainty: and that judgment which is according to truth, is regulated by the degree of evidence appearing in the subject on which it decides. If I judge that to be certain which is only probable, my judgment is erroneous: it is equally so, if I judge that to be only probable or doubtful, which is accompanied with evidence that is certain and indubitable.

A falsehood is to be known or ascertained by its repugnance or opposition to all evidence. As truth is known by its connexion with evidence; and as truth and falsehood are opposites, it follows that falsehood and evidence stand in contradiction to each other.

A doubtful proposition or hypothesis, is known by its entire want of evidence. If evidence appear for it, it is found to be a truth; if against it, it is found to be a falsehood; and in either case it no longer remains a doubtful proposition, or hypothesis. I will suppose a proposition is advanced *that there are elephants and crocodiles in the moon*. Is this to be received as a truth or as a falsehood? It cannot be ascertained as a truth, because there is no evidence for it; nor as a falsehood, because there is none against it: therefore to receive it for a certain truth were to espouse an hypothesis, and till some proof be produced either for or against it, I feel disposed to conclude that it is beneath a rational being to believe any thing concerning the matter. This conclusion must stand, or else the following one must fall, namely that *it is the part of a rational being to regulate his belief by evidence, and by nothing else*. If we deny this, we say it is right and proper for men to believe without evidence, and if so, how ridiculous and vain are all our demands for testimony, arguments and demonstrations, before we will consent to receive every thing we hear as a proper object of our belief?

But as all truth is to be known in this way, it appears very desirable to understand what this certain something is, which

we call evidence. If truth is known by this, and by nothing else; and if we have no power to discover evidence or to conceive any thing concerning its nature, it is plainly impossible for us to know any thing concerning what is true and what is false.

But am I able to give what is called a logical definition of evidence? I think I am not. And shall I thence conclude that I have no conception of it, and that it is a word which has no meaning? If I conclude so, I find many similar conclusions will follow. No such definition can be given of existence, of time, of space, of power, of agency, thought, or intelligence. And must I therefore conclude that men have no conception of these things, and know nothing about the distinction between existence and non-existence? If so, I must contradict my consciousness, give up my own existence, and lay by my pen and paper for the moles and the bats.

Not being willing so speedily to abandon my pursuit, I repeat the enquiry, what is evidence? shall I answer that it is testimony, argument and demonstration? This is only giving the names of different kinds of evidence, without explaining what the thing is in itself, demonstration is one thing; testimony is another; but that certain thing we call evidence is common to them both. I know there is a city in England called London, and another in France called Paris; but I never saw either of them, and their existence was never demonstrated: yet I am as certain of their existence, from human testimony, as I am of any other truth by demonstration. And my belief in the existence of those cities is founded on evidence, as well as in those truths which are contained in Euclid's Elements.

What is it in human testimony which we call evidence? Will it be said we believe the testimony of men so far as their veracity has been ascertained by experience? I still pursue the subject, and ask, what is it in our experience which we call evidence? Why must I believe a thing to be true, because it accords with my experience? And why must I believe a thing to be true because it is demonstrated? How do I know but demonstration is the very thing that supports falsehood? I suspect no rational answer can be given to these questions, but that there is something in testimony, experience, and clear demonstration, that is naturally calculated to produce belief or conviction in an intel-

ligent being that the thing thus proved is true: and this certain something which naturally tends to produce belief or conviction is what we mean by evidence. We find that experience, human testimony, consciousness, the external senses, and the decisions or operations of memory, have all the same tendency to produce conviction. It is the united judgment of mankind, that however these sources of knowledge may differ in many particulars, there is something common to them all: and that something is denominated evidence. A man believes that he thinks; that there is solid ground beneath his feet; that a great general once lived called GEORGE WASHINGTON; but none of these things have ever been demonstrated; and yet his belief is founded on evidence from three sources: from consciousness, sensation, and human testimony.

Although the nature of evidence cannot be fully comprehended or logically defined, yet it frequently shines as the beams of light, to which it is often compared in the Holy Scriptures. I may be unable to define light, or to comprehend its essence; yet I have no difficulty in perceiving objects while it shines around them. As light is something which enables me to discover the existence of things about me, so evidence is something which illuminates my understanding, whereby I discover many truths, and am able to distinguish them from falsehood. If I shut my eyes and refuse to admit the light till I can completely comprehend its nature, I may grope in darkness at the blaze of noon: in like manner, if I refuse to admit the light of evidence till I completely comprehend how it enables me to discover truth, I may walk in unbelieving darkness to the end of life.

I know it is true that I am now thinking. But how do I know this? I know it by consciousness. But what is this consciousness? All I know of the matter is that it is some kind of illumination in my mind, or whatever else you may please to name it, that produces an immediate and invincible conviction, that I now think. If the evidence of our thinking be doubtful, that of demonstration is equally so, because demonstration depends upon thinking, without which it could afford no evidence at all.

Can any man give a reason why we should yield to mathematical demonstration, any more than other kinds of evidence? Will he offer this for a reason, that it is stronger than any other

kind? I know not what he means by its being stronger, unless it be that it is naturally calculated to produce a stronger or more firm belief in a rational nature, than any other kind; and if this be his meaning I must dissent from him, or give up my consciousness: for the evidence I have of my existence, and the existence of this paper before me, is as strong and naturally tends to produce as firm a conviction as any demonstration ever did or can do.

Will he say it is a more reasonable kind of evidence than any other? This is easily said, but what proof will he condescend to give us of its truth? Has it ever been demonstrated that no other kind is so reasonable as this? If not, he obtains the knowledge of this truth (if it be a truth) from some other source of evidence less reasonable than that of demonstration. And if so, is it not as unreasonable to receive this truth from that inferior source of knowledge, as any other? Is he conscious that demonstration is the most reasonable kind of evidence? If so, consciousness has furnished him with a discovery that his boasted demonstration could never furnish, and he has no reason to give a preference to the latter, but what he professedly derives from the former.

Will he say it is more intelligible, more clear, than the testimony of sense, of consciousness, or any thing else? How does he know it? Has it ever been demonstrated? If not, he is indebted to one of the less reasonable sources of knowledge, for one of his most unshaken principles of faith; namely, that our belief ought to be regulated by demonstrative reasoning, in preference to every thing else. And just as much reason as he has to give this the preference, so much he has to admire that source of knowledge without which he would never have made the discovery. This conclusion will remain undeniable till it be demonstrated that demonstration is the most reasonable kind of evidence.

It will perhaps be said that mathematical truths are more clear and certain than any other kind, because they are necessary, and it is impossible for them to be false. How do we know it is *impossible* for them to be false? In vain may it be answered that they have been demonstrated; for the first principles of necessary truth are taken for granted, as well as all

other first principles. Has it ever been demonstrated that "a part is less than the whole," and that "equal quantities added to equal quantities will make equal sums?" No: every mathematician knows that these principles are taken for granted without proof, and if they be denied, all demonstration is at an end. I repeat the question, how do we know that these principles are true, and that their contrary is impossible? The only answer is, that God has given us faculties whereby we perceive their truth with immediate conviction, as I now immediately perceive this paper lying before me. In like manner, by the faculties God has given me, I perceive this truth, with immediate conviction, that I now exist, and that it is impossible for me to exist and not exist at the same time. The first principles of mathematical truth are seen no less immediately, and in a manner no less unaccountable: and I will wait patiently to hear what reason can be given why we should discredit those faculties God has given us, in their immediate decision of what is true, any more than in their decision of what must necessarily be so.

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## SECTION II.

*Concerning the several sources of our knowledge; and first, of those principles which are self-evident.*

Perhaps all the sources of human knowledge may be reduced to this general division, first, intuitive certainty, comprehending all truths that are self-evident: secondly, the evidence of reasoning: and thirdly, the evidence of Revelation. I do not conclude absolutely that all evidence is comprehended in this division, or enumeration of the general sources of it; but I presume there will be few exceptions found, if any, and till they appear, I must confine my remarks to the different members of this division.

And first, we will consider the principles of intuitive certainty, that are self-evident. By their being self-evident, I mean

that their evidence is contained in themselves, and the mind perceives it immediately, independent of all external proof or argument.

Such principles are the foundation of all rational conclusions or deductions in every science, and we cannot begin to reason, till we first perceive some truth immediately, on which to take our stand; for all reasoning consists in inferring one truth from another, and we must be in possession of the first truth, before we can reason or draw an inference from it, otherwise the inference is not drawn from truth at all; and if the premises be not true, how can the conclusion be so?

Some first principles have been mentioned already, and examples might be given in every science or branch of human knowledge. This has been done by Dr. Reid and others; and all that is necessary for our present purpose is to present a few examples before the reader, and appeal to the immediate dictates of his judgment, as well as to the common judgment of mankind.

Concerning truth in general, there are some self-evident principles, that are perceived by intuitive conviction, and borrow not their evidence from any external proof. The first principle of this kind is, that there is a distinction between truth and falsehood. This is self evident, and if it be contradicted, nothing in the world can be proved by any argument: for after the clearest demonstration is laid before a man; how easy is it for him to reply, " your argument proves nothing to be true, any more than the most trifling sophism; and it is impossible it should, seeing there is no distinction between truth and falsehood." Truth and falsehood are the same thing; therefore demonstration and sophistry are both alike, for they both support something; and whatever it be, it is all falsehood and all truth, because there is no manner of difference between them.

Now if I were disposed to turn sceptic, and to shelter myself in this strong hold, how in the name of reason and common sense should I be beaten out? Would you undertake to convince me by argument that there is a distinction between truth and falsehood? What is the argument by which it is to be proved?

Will it be said that reason, or the human faculties, perceive some things to be true and others false; that those faculties are correct in their decisions; and therefore there is a distinction between truth and falsehood? And what is this but merely affirming the thing to be proved, namely, that God has given us power to perceive, with immediate conviction, that some things are true and others false? This is taken for granted because it is self evident; and if we conclude God has given us deceitful faculties, and refuse to believe the contrary till it be proved by argument, we may remain forever in our unbelief; for no argument can be given but what depends upon the exercise of those very faculties which have before been supposed to be deceitful. For us first to suppose that our faculties are deceitful, and then to prove by arguments, produced by the exercise of those very faculties, that they are not so, is like our suspecting a certain man to be a thief and a liar, and then proving by his own testimony that he is an honest man. The veracity of our original faculties is taken for granted in every argument we use, and in every belief we form, from the beginning to the end of life; while we refuse to credit them, we must discredit every thing in the world; and if we resolve to believe that God has stamped a lie upon the human intellects and senses till our reason is able to muster up some argument for their veracity, besides that immediate conviction of it that exists in every rational being; we may at once give up all our knowledge, lie down in the profound and universal ignorance of scepticism, and believe nothing that ever was presented to the human understanding, excepting this one proposition, that our faculties are deceitful.

Another self-evident principle is, *that truth and falsehood are opposite to each other, or in other words, that it is impossible for two contradictory propositions both to be true.*

Every man possessing the human faculties, excepting him who is in a state of insanity, immediately perceives the truth of those principles, and a thousand metaphysical arguments would not make them more clear, or more evident, than they are without them.

Indeed, all such principles are incapable of being proved by any direct argument; except, perhaps, where two such truths are so related that one may be inferred from the other; because



every true argument is built upon something more evident than the thing to be proved, otherwise it brings no additional evidence to the subject it was brought to support; and it is irrational to give any more credit to the principle, after the pretended support of such an argument, than we did before it was brought forward. And if two truths equally evident, are inferred the one from the other, this may serve for illustration; but no additional evidence is brought to either of them. But what principle can we find, on which to found an argument that is more evident than this, that truth and falsehood are opposite to each other, or that he who contradicts truth speaks that which is false? If we can find no other principle more evident than this, with which it stands connected, and from which it may be logically inferred, how is it possible for its evidence to be increased by any argument?

Another self-evident proposition, connected with the former, is, that it is possible for truth and falsehood to be distinguished from each other by the human mind. If this be not believed upon its own evidence, it will never be believed at all: for it is impossible to prove it by any argument but such as will take for granted the very principle itself as its foundation. For whatever the argument be, its premises must be true, before a true conclusion can be drawn; and therefore the man takes for granted that he distinguishes truth from falsehood in the premises, before he comes to his conclusion: and to say the conclusion proves the premises to be true, when itself has no evidence but what it derives from the premises, is to reason in a circle, and to take for granted the very thing in question.

We need not here introduce the various principles belonging to the different sciences; but a few thoughts upon the subject of morals, or of right and wrong, may not be improper, because the value of truth consists chiefly in leading us to pursue that which is right, and to avoid that which is wrong. This is the more necessary, as the subject of right and wrong has been sometimes represented as being so loose and unsettled, that every man may draw the line for himself, and make right and wrong to suit his own taste, and may change them as he pleases. It has been said to depend entirely on education, and that which is right with one man, or with one nation, is wrong with another; and different

nations of men may if they please, form systems of morals directly opposite to each other, and the ultimate conclusion is, that they are all right, and there is no such thing as wrong in the world, only so far as men are pleased to frame such an imagination to themselves. This I suspect, has long been a pleasing theme of atheism; and I think it will stand firm to the end of the world, if it be indeed true, that there are no self-evident principles of morality; but if there be such principles; moral duty has as firm a foundation as mathematics.

I am far from supposing that all moral duties are self-evident; thousands of cases may occur, in which we will be at a loss to decide what is right, and we are liable to err in moral subjects as well as in all others: I am only disposed to contend that there are a few general principles that are self-evident, and which stand from age to age as the basis of all moral reasoning.

That our first conceptions of right and wrong do not depend solely on education, is evident from the following reflections:

1st. Our fathers could not teach us a system of morality, without first having conceptions of moral subjects themselves; otherwise you say they could communicate that to us, of which they themselves were entirely ignorant. How did they come by their knowledge of right and wrong? why to be sure from their fathers and instructors. And so we may trace it back to Adam, and the question still recurs, how did the first man receive the conception that one kind of conduct is right and another wrong? He must have received it from God, either by immediate revelation, or by the genuine dictates of his original faculties. Both are the voice of God in man, and I confess I cannot see why we might not as well believe that he gives a deceitful revelation, as to believe the genuine and immediate dictates of our original faculties naturally tend to deceive and lead us into delusion.

2d. Adam's children must have had some conception of the distinction between right and wrong, before they could understand any of his instructions on the subject: otherwise you say one man can give another an original conception that is not the immediate dictate of any faculty of his nature. And if a creature can be instructed in those subjects, who has no original power to conceive of moral obligation, why do we not educate our horses and dogs to become subjects of moral government, and

proper members of civil society? They cannot understand our instructions upon right and wrong, for this reason only, that they have no original conception of justice or of right, and it is impossible for us to give it to them. Of course the reason why we can instruct our children in morality, and not our domestic animals, is that they have some faculty from whence the first conception arises, which brute animals have not: this conception they received, not from us, but from God their maker, in a manner best known to himself.

3d. Let it be granted, that a man's moral opinions depend very much upon his education, and that his faculties have been much assisted by it in arriving to that maturity which they have acquired: what then? Will it follow that his conception of the first principles of morals was as much received by education as any other opinion? If we conclude there is no real distinction between right and wrong, merely because our moral judgments may be warped by education, we might with equal reason conclude there is no distinction between *true* and *false*; for surely our reasoning faculties are dependent on education as well as our conscience, and our belief of true and false is as much received from our fathers, as our views of *right* and *wrong*. And if the latter affords just ground to conclude that men may draw the line of justice where they please, the former affords the same ground to conclude that they may draw the line of truth where they please: and thus while with one hand we give up all righteousness in favour of atheism, we give up all truth, with the other, in favour of that "sceptical philosophy" which teaches that all things are equally doubtful, and of course, that there is no such thing as knowledge in the world.

4th. If the human soul has no original conceptions of right and wrong, it would be as easy and natural for men to believe one doctrine of morality as another, and we might reasonably expect to see whole nations of them seriously believing and instructing their children, that barbarity to a man's dearest friends is the most lovely virtue he could possibly practise, while every species of kindness is immoral and wicked to the last degree. Did any savage in the wilderness ever believe this, and teach it to his children? And why not, if it be as natural for us to receive one notion of right and wrong as another?

But while we renounce this flimsy plea of the libertine, shall we run into another extreme, under pretence of supporting revelation, and maintain that the Bible is the only source from whence man-

kind have derived all their knowledge of right and wrong? Some christians appear to think that we discredit revelation, whenever we admit of any other source of knowledge, especially the knowledge of duty. Who can tell us what is our duty, say they, or what is the will of God concerning us but God himself? This he has done in the Holy Scriptures, and they are the only sure guide for us to follow in matters of morality.

I answer, if the Bible be our only guide, I would be glad to know where it teaches the doctrine now under consideration: where is there a passage from Genesis to the Revelation, that says *the Bible is the only source, whence man derives his first conceptions concerning right and wrong?* If this be a truth, and if they have learned it either from the Old or New Testament, I confess it is a perfectly new discovery to me; for I have never been able to find any such declaration in all the scriptures. And if they have learned it from any other source, and not from the writings of the prophets or apostles, then they have violated their own rule, and have gone to another standard to learn something concerning morality.

It is true the Bible says, *If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God, and if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them:* 1 Pet. iv. 11. Isa. viii. 20. And I very readily admit that if we hold any opinion that is not according to, or which contradicts this rule, it is an error, and is neither received by intuitive conviction, nor by the right exercise of reason: because God will never give one kind of evidence to contradict another. But those passages only affirm that the Bible is a true rule, and therefore that which is not according to it, is false, because it is impossible for truth to contradict itself.

Do the inspired writers set out, by teaching us first of all, that there is a difference between right and wrong? It is surely necessary for us to know this in the first place, and then we are ready to hear what is right, and what is wrong; but there is no such passage in all the Bible: it is every where taken for granted, without so much as being mentioned, because God knows that man had an immediate conviction of it by the original faculties of his nature.

If we had no other conviction of right and wrong but what we derive from the inspired writings, the precepts thereof would, to us, be perfectly arbitrary, and we should have nothing in ourselves to correspond to their fitness and righteousness; whereas one of those writers himself declared that they addressed themselves

*to every man's conscience in the sight of God.* 2. Cor. iv. 2. The Bible itself is an address to our reason and conscience; and if we did not perceive its connexion with the genuine dictates of our rational and moral faculties, we should have no evidence of its divinity.

Supposing a bible had been given, containing ten such commandments as these:

1st. Thou shalt hate the Lord thy God with perfect detestation and abhorrence.

2d. Thou shalt blaspheme his name perpetually, and encourage others so to do.

3d. Thou shalt murder every upright man thou canst find in the world.

4th. Thou shalt loathe and abhor thy parents, and take every opportunity to torment them to distraction.

5th. Thou shalt steal all thy neighbour's goods, and do thy uttermost to starve him to death.

6th. Thou shalt frequently put coals of fire in thy childrens' bosom, and keep them in lingering torment, as long as there is any life in them.

7th. Thou shalt debase thy reason by drunkenness and do every thing in thy power to ruin every faculty of thy nature.

8th. Thou shalt avoid all truth as deadly poison, and establish thy soul in lying and hypocrisy as perfectly and thoroughly as possible.

9th. Thou shalt encourage and reward all murderers and assist them to destroy all mankind, but themselves, from the face of the earth.

10th. Thou shalt pull out the eyes of thy horses and cattle and cut pieces of flesh from their bones, till they are gradually tormented to death. And lastly, thou shalt cut thine own throat, with all the rage of an infuriated devil, and thus put a finishing stroke to animal existence, and to all happiness under the sun.

Now let me ask any man that has a conscience, to lay his hand upon his heart, and say if a bible containing such commandments would not be contradicted by the invincible dictates of his nature, and cause his soul to shrink back with horror! But if we have no conception of what is right and wrong, but what we derive from the inspired writings, it would be as perfectly natural and easy to believe these precepts to be right as any others, and nothing more would be necessary to convince us that we ought to practise them as our sacred duty, but to find them in the bible.

Whereas if a bible had been given, as a book of inspiration, containing such precepts, however artfully it might have been brought forward, and under whatever specious appearances, I presume its morality alone would convince every rational man that it originated from the devil.

But if we had no conception of the nature of morality from any other source, if no conviction of the kind arose from the constitution of our nature, one kind of morality exhibited in revelation would be as readily received, and as much adapted to produce conviction as another.

If no conviction, on these subjects, arises from the native dictates of our conscience, or moral judgment, the purity of christian morals would afford no evidence in favour of the Gospel: for with what sense could I appeal to the purity of the scripture precepts, as evidence to convince a man that they came from God, if there was nothing in his soul to dictate that one kind of morality is more pure, or more worthy of God than another?

The two principal sources of argument in favour of revelation, are, first, that it recommends itself and its credentials, to the plain dictates of our rational faculties; and secondly, that it appeals to *every man's conscience in the sight of God*. But if reason and conscience are to be laid aside, or entirely distrusted, as some would seem to insinuate, under pretence of exalting revelation; we should thereby sap the very foundation of every argument by which Christianity is supported, shake hands with the sceptic, and acknowledge that the Gospel can be proved by no rational evidence. But while some of us are vainly supposing we do honour to revelation, by undervaluing our intellectual faculties, and almost insinuating that the Gospel cannot prosper while reason or conscience is tolerated; there are others, with no such fondness for revelation, but equally willing to lampoon conscience out of the world, who maintain, under pretence of exalting reason, that all true conceptions of morality are discovered and proved by argument.

I am almost tempted to suspect that such persons do not fairly understand what an argument is: for how can an argument be formed till some truth is first known as the ground or premises, from which the conclusion is inferred? I presume every logician in the world will tell us that sound reasoning consists in drawing consequences or conclusions from premises that are true. They will tell us that if the premises be false, the conclusion must be equally so: and how, I ask, did we discover that the premises were true? Were they regularly and logically drawn from other premises? Then

how did we discover that those others were true? Thus we may trace the matter back till we come to the first link of the chain, the truth of which must have been discovered by some other means before it was possible for any argument to be formed.

All our moral reasonings therefore, must rest upon some first principles of morality, discovered by the human mind, independent of such reasoning. Let us specify a few principles of this kind, and examine whether they have been discovered by argument.

1st. There is one kind of conduct that is right and another kind that is wrong.

2d. Right and wrong are opposite to each other, and it is impossible that they should be the same.

3d. All mankind ought to do that which is right, and to avoid doing that which is wrong.

4th. That conduct which tends to promote general happiness is right, and that which tends to promote general misery is wrong.

These principles are no where expressly laid down in the scriptures, but are every where taken for granted; and I presume they have never been proved by argument since the world was made; yet there is no point in revelation, or that has been proved by reasoning, more evident than these, because they are the clear and immediate dictates of our moral faculty, and are discovered as independently of all reasoning, as the first principles of mathematics.

The principles just stated are so far from being discovered by argument, that they themselves are the foundation of all reasonings in moral subjects, and it is impossible for any point in morality to be proved without them. Let us give an example, that the matter may be plainly laid before the reader.

I propose to prove, by argument, that hypocritical lying is wrong:

First, I take my stand on mathematical principles:

A part is less than the whole;

All the parts taken together are equal to the whole;

Therefore hypocritical lying is wrong.

If the reader receives no conviction by this argument, we will try another from astronomy:

All the planets move round the sun;

But this earth is one of the planets;

Therefore lying is wrong:

Take a third from metaphysics:

All things which we perceive are ideas;

But we perceive our friends and relations;

Therefore lying is wrong.

Another from intellectual philosophy:

Whatever is perceived by the immediate dictates of our original faculties is true; but they immediately dictate that there is solid ground beneath our feet; therefore lying is wrong.

All this may appear like trifling; but I presume it is far worse trifling to impose upon the souls of men, by persuading them that they or their fathers had no moral conception till it was first discovered by argument. Let me suppose myself in this condition in which I am able to reason, but at the same time have no conception of any thing belonging to morality: I must certainly begin to reason, then, from something which I know; and having tried four kinds of premises, I find their regular conclusions would leave me as profoundly ignorant of all moral subjects as I was before. Where then shall I take my stand? I may run through every other branch of human knowledge to form my premises, with no better success, till the premises themselves are formed of moral principles: the reason is, that no sound argument can contain any thing in the conclusion but what is contained in the premises and is derived from them: therefore if the conclusion be of a moral nature, the premises must be equally so.

Let us now try what success we can have, when we begin to build upon the right foundation.

*That conduct which injures mankind, and tends to promote general misery is wrong; but hypocritical lying has this tendency; therefore hypocritical lying is wrong.* Now the conclusion stands clear and can never be overturned, unless it can be made to appear that one or both of the premises are not true. If this can be made appear, the conclusion must fall; for it has no evidence but what depends upon their truth, and upon its connexion with them.

If a free-thinker should take it in his head to deny the minor preposition, and declare that lying and hypocrisy do not tend to the general misery of mankind: he thereby proves himself a fool for uttering so many complaints against the dreadful evil that has been done in the world by hypocrisy and priest-craft: and if he deny the major, and insist that it is not wrong to do that which tends to general misery, he equally excuses all priests and hypocrites, and proves himself to have less regard to morality than a barbarian.

If he is forced to acknowledge that it is wrong to do that which tends to the general misery of mankind, I must repeat the enquiry, how did he come by the knowledge of this truth? Has it ever been proved to him by argument? If so, what were the premises,



from which this conclusion was drawn? They must have been as evidently true, as the principle which he says has been proved by them, otherwise it has as much evidence without their assistance as with it. And if he has deduced this conclusion from some other principle of morals, more evident than this, how did he come by the knowledge of that? was it inferred from principles still more evident? from what then were they inferred? Thus we may run him back *ad infinitum*, and he is absolutely forced to confess that all rational argument begins upon principles that are self-evident, or upon such as have no evidence at all. If the former, the point for which I contend is gained; if the latter, all the principles of true reasoning are contradicted, which are founded on this axiom in logic, *that the conclusion can never be more evident or more true, than the premises from which it is drawn.*

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### SECTION III.

#### *Two objections answered.*

It may be objected, first, that the general principles of right and wrong here laid down are not self-evident to the human mind, otherwise all men would agree in them: whereas many have disbelieved them, and whole nations have contradicted them in practice. I answer:

1st. It is true, that all sinners contradict them in practice; but if we conclude no rule of right can be self-evident to a man while he has power to violate it in practice, we make the rule of right consist in doing what a man is forced to do of necessity. And if we suppose a man's doing wrong, is a proof that he knows no better, we suppose that all sinners perpetrate their crimes from a suspicion that they are right, and if they were fully convinced of the wrong they would not do it: whereas their acting in opposition to that conviction is the very ground of their criminality, and without it they would be no more accountable than a beast.

2d. A man's professing to disbelieve first principles is no proof against them. Many have professed to disbelieve them, and tried hard to do it, in order to quiet their consciences and rest satisfied in their inexcusable vices: and wishing to conquer their natural convictions of justice, they are fond of professing their unbelief, and gladly offer what arguments they can in defence of it, that they

may influence others to do so, and thus they hope to gain numbers on their side, and strengthen themselves by the soothing influence of authority.

Some sceptics have professed to discredit their senses, and to believe the present existence of the world is not self-evident: yet they will as cautiously avoid the fire and the water as other people.

In like manner some libertines may profess to have no evidence to convince them of the first principles of morals: yet when they themselves are injured, they immediately resent it; and manifest as full a conviction of right and wrong as their neighbours. They may purposely stifle the dictates of conscience, respecting their own duty, and then pretend they have no evidence of what is right: and so a servant may stop his ears when his master is giving directions, and afterwards excuse himself by saying, "Sir, I did not hear you:" but *Be not deceived, for God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*

3d. If men labour for a long while to do violence to their nature, and at last ruin their faculties, till they are lost to the plainest dictates of common sense, is this deception produced by the genuine dictates of their faculties? or by the great pains they have taken to subdue them? shall I put out my eyes, and suppose I have thereby produced a very clear argument, that the eyes God has given to mankind are not naturally calculated to enable us to see? or that seeing is not accompanied with a self-evident conviction that the objects before our eyes do actually exist? If I am now blind, who is to blame? Is God to blame for not giving me better eyes, or I myself for having pulled them out? And if a man debases his rational faculties till he is no longer able to distinguish between sense and nonsense, who will offer this as a serious argument that the reasoning powers of mankind are naturally deceitful? We might as well say that the case of a man, who through long and habitual melancholy has been led to believe that his head is made of glass, might justly be produced as a powerful reason to convince us that the dictates of common sense are all fallacious, and that it is impossible for us to distinguish, with any certainty, between a piece of glass and a man's head.

4th. I would be glad to know what evidence has been produced of an instance, I will not say of whole nations, but of a single individual of the human race, Jew or Gentile, savage or barbarian, that ever seriously questioned, or doubted, whether right conduct is that which tends to the general happiness, or that which tends to the general misery of mankind.

We have often been referred to those persecutors who murdered the upright and thought they were doing God service, as instances in point; as also to those heathens who burnt their own children in the fire, from a conviction of its being their sacred duty.

But I hope it may be made appear that these instances afford no manner of evidence against the principle which, with so much confidence, they are brought to disprove. Why did those persecutors murder the upright? was it not because they believed them to be a nuisance in the creation, and that they would render an essential service to mankind by putting them out of the way? if so, they were so far from disbelieving the principle, that it is right to do that which tends to general happiness, that they acted upon it in those very actions which are produced to prove that it was not acknowledged by them. Their error consisted, not in taking for granted *that a man ought to promote general happiness rather than misery*, which is self-evident to every savage in the wilderness, but, *in supposing that the general welfare would be promoted by the murder of those men*. They were led into this wickedness, not by the genuine dictate of their conscience, which produced a conviction of the former principle, but by the influence of their prejudice and malice, which influenced them to espouse the latter.

And why did those heathens sacrifice their own children? Was it from a conviction that it was right, to do every thing in their power to banish all happiness from the face of the earth? not at all: They believed, as well as we, that it is right to promote general happiness, and wrong to do the contrary; but from the phrensy of their superstition, they were led to suppose that the sacrifice of their children was necessary to secure the general welfare, by averting the judgments of their angry Gods. In this their error consisted, and this was no dictate of their moral faculty; but they espoused it through passion and false reasoning, which led them to multiply their deities at pleasure, as imagination should suggest, and then to attribute to them the malevolent affections of devils and wicked men.

And because the heathens abused their reason, by yielding themselves up to their wicked passions, we are disposed to apologize for them, are we? and are not for attributing any of their absurdities to the inexcusable indulgence of abominable passions; but the whole must be resolved into the deceitfulness or deficiency of the original faculties which God Almighty had given them! In this manner, I fear, some christians think they do God service, and

support the honour of revelation, by supposing the heathens have no certain knowledge of right and wrong, and of course that they are perfectly excusable, in the midst of all their crimes!

Revelation declares the contrary, in the most unequivocal terms: "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 mean while accusing or else excusing one another." Rom. 1. 14.

And were they perfectly excusable in that superstitious idolatry which led them to burn their own children? Was it plainly impossible for them to know any better? It was not: "Because that which may be known of God, is manifest in them: for God hath shewed it unto them. For 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 God-head; 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 hearts were 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 four-footed beasts, and creeping things." Rom. 1. 19. &c.

Thus the Apostle declares positively, that their barbarous idolatry did not arise from any deficiency in either their reason or conscience; but from their pride—professing themselves to be wise: and from reasonings built upon their vain imaginations, or hypotheses.

The second objection is, "that if we admit that there are first principles, which are to be taken for granted without proof, men may receive what they please for a first principle, and shelter themselves very securely from all argument, by pretending that their opinions are too evident to admit of reasoning. By what criterion are your self-evident principles to be ascertained? and how will you make it appear, that we are in no danger of being deceived in these matters?" I answer:

1st. If we are to conclude there are no self-evident principles, because it is possible to receive that for self-evident which is not so; the very same argument would drive all kinds of evidence out of the world. Let us try the virtue of this formidable objection, and trace its invariable application:

Men may be mistaken, and take that for a first principle which is not so; therefore there are no principles that are self-evident.

Men may be mistaken, and take that for a sound argument which is not so; therefore there is no sound argument in the world.

Men may be mistaken, and take that for the true meaning of scripture which is not so; therefore the scripture has no true meaning.

Men may be deceived, and take that for true christian experience, or immediate inspiration from God, which is imaginary; therefore no christian experience, or inspiration from God, is deserving any credit.

Thus we have a plain and short road to scepticism, infidelity and atheism.

2d. It is a vain thing to attempt to muster up any other *criterion* of truth and certainty, than the plain dictates of those faculties which God has given to man; for none other can be had; and if we refuse to credit these, I presume our unbelief is more perfectly incurable than the lunacy of any man in Bedlam.

Suppose a man, being afflicted with the gout or pleurisy, tells us he is in great pain or misery: is this true or false? if true, how does he know it? not by scripture, argument, or demonstration: he knows it, because it is *self-evident*. You ask him, by what *criterion* he knows that he is in a state of misery: he immediately answers, "I know it is so, because I *feel* it." Now if we should wander through the wilderness of metaphysics to eternity, I presume we should never give a better answer, or a better criterion.

A witty philosopher might reply, "You say you know it is so, because you feel it; but how do you know that your *feelings* are not fallacious? By what criterion do you determine when they are according to truth, and when they are not? Can you make it appear that it is *impossible* that you should be deceived?"

I suppose the man of common sense to reply: Sir if you will not allow me to believe any thing, till I can make it appear that it is *impossible* for me to be deceived, I must not believe you are any thing different from a quadruped; for it is surely as possible for me to be deceived in taking you to be a man, as it is in believing the reality of what I feel. This, if I have right conceptions of it, would be answering a fool according to his folly; and I leave the reader to decide which evinces the most solid reason and judgment, the philosopher's queries, or the sick man's reply.

3d. The man that rejects all first principles, because he may possibly be mistaken, and may receive something for self-evident,

which is not so, manifests almost as much wisdom as he, who having received a number of eagles or guineas, casts them all into the sea, because some of them may happen to be counterfeit, and because he may possibly be mistaken in judging some of them to be pure metal when they are not so. Or the wisdom of such a person may perhaps be considered to equal his, who refrains from all food until he starves himself to death, for fear he might partake of something poisonous, or might possibly be mistaken in judging that to be wholesome food which was not wholesome. And indeed if it be true, as some philosophers appear to imagine, that our senses are very deceitful, and we never know when they are to be trusted, we are all foolish, for supposing that we can distinguish, with any certainty, between gold and iron, bread and poison: for it is by means of our senses only, that the understanding is able to judge of these matters.

Permit me to suppose that two philosophers have each received a certain sum of money: one of them belongs to the old academy, and the other is a genuine disciple of Dr. Reid. They sit down, and reason together, upon the proper disposal of their treasure.

They both agree, first, that more or less of their coin may be counterfeit. They agree, secondly, that it is possible for them to err, and to take a counterfeit piece to be genuine.

They agree, thirdly, that it is a matter of great importance to distinguish the precious from the vile.

But though there is this perfect harmony between them, concerning the premises, yet they differ very widely in their conclusions.

The sceptic concludes, his wisest course is to cast his money into the sea, without farther ceremony, lest he should be deceived. The other concludes, the wisest course is to examine each piece by itself, in a clear light; and after comparing them together, form the best judgment he can. If any one appear evidently to be base metal, and if there remain no room for reasonable doubt concerning it, he consents that it may be cast into the sea; but he will not cast any away, upon the first appearance of their being suspicious, but will reserve them for farther examination. Those which he finds to be evidently good, he applies to their proper use, and resolves, that where he can see no good reason to doubt, he will not doubt.

The sceptical gentleman addresses his companion in these terms; "you, sir, have admitted, that there may be base metal in your possession, how little or how much you know not: you have granted also, that you may possibly be mistaken in your judgment, when

you attempt to distinguish the precious from the vile: now you ought to consider, that your counterfeit coin, will go into circulation, and deceive others as well as yourself: therefore I counsel you to lay aside your dogmatical spirit and cast your treasure at once into the ocean, lest the whole should prove to be counterfeit." His friend replies, "If sir, I cast all this money indiscriminately into the sea, on account of the abstract possibility of my retaining some peices that are counterfeit, I might as well cast all my food into the sea likewise; for it is equally possible for me to mistake its quality: and if all mankind should adopt your short method of avoiding poison, and should abstain from all kinds of aliment till they starve and perish, would you receive it as a demonstration of their wisdom and profound philosophy? This would indeed reduce them to the state, in which your philosophy supposes them now to be; for, provided they had no existence after death, all things to them would be equally uncertain and unknown: but while mankind are permitted to live, and to enjoy their present faculties, I must presume, that your metaphysical refinements will never be able to shake their firm conviction in the plain dictates of common sense."

Leaving the reader to judge of the logic of those minute philosophers, I return to the objection.

4th. I am far from supposing, that all first principles so impress themselves upon the human soul, that every man is absolutely forced to perceive their evidence whether he will or no. We may hold it self-evident that mankind have eyes, by which they are enabled to see, without supposing that every man is compelled to see by some fatal necessity. A person may shut his eyes if he be so disposed, or may put them out and remain in total darkness.

A self-evident principle may long be concealed under the rubbish of sophistry, and men have not the opportunity to see it in a clear light: remove the rubbish, bring it out of the enormous temple of hypothetical metaphysics, set it before a man of common sense, in its own native simplicity, and he will immediately perceive its truth with self-evident conviction. It needs no foreign argument to support it; let it only be brought to open view, where it can be properly and distinctly understood, and it will shine by its own native lustre, like "the powerful king of day, rejoicing in the east."

First principles are like the sun, and the fixed stars of heaven: they scorn to depend upon a borrowed light; and for us to attempt to support them, by arguments drawn from some other quarter, is

like holding a candle to the sun, under pretence, that his own rays are not enough to satisfy our profound intelligence of his existence. Some of the brightest luminaries of truth have been long concealed, and almost totally eclipsed, by the thick fogs, of metaphysical dust, that have been raised to obscure their evidence: nothing more is wanting, to restore them to their native dignity, than a removal of the hypotheses and sophistry, which have interposed as a dark cloud, and obstructed their influence upon the human understanding.

And shall we conclude that they are not self-evident, because it is possible for them to be obscured? We might as well believe there is no such thing as light in the world, or that its existence is not self-evident, because it is possible for men to retire into a dark cave where its beams are excluded, and where all is silent and gloomy as midnight, in the "great profundity obscure."

When the woman lost her piece of silver, she immediately betook herself to sweeping and searching the house, in order that she might find it: let us suppose that a sceptical philosopher had purposely concealed it, under some rubbish in one corner of the house: after removing the rubbish she perceives it, takes it in her hand rejoicing, calls in her neighbours, and concludes, certainly, that she has found her money that was lost. But the philosopher comes forward, hoping to deprive her of her property, by mere dint of argument. "Madam," says he, "how do you know that you have certainly found your silver?" "I hold it now in my hand," says she, "and see it before my eyes." But you ought to consider (he rejoins) that it is but a very little while since this money was concealed from you, and you could not perceive it: therefore your present perception of it is not self-evident, because nothing is self-evident, but what is immediately present to the mind from the cradle to the grave: nothing can be self-evident but an *innate idea*, and as there is no such thing, nothing can be certainly known to be true in this way: therefore you ought not to believe that you have found your silver, till it be proved by argument. Your senses are very deceitful, and though you seem to see this money, very plainly, and to feel it in your hand, yet you ought not to receive such fallacious representations, or you will expose yourself to perpetual delusion. And besides, it is impossible for you to perceive any thing but an idea, and therefore the piece of silver you so much rejoice over, is nothing but an idea, and that, itself, is not contained in your hand, but in your brains. I therefore counsel you to drop this vulgar notion, and go again in pursuit of your lost treasure."



**Query.**—Would the neighbours conclude, that this gentleman was seriously employed, in striving to benefit the woman, by instructing her in the knowledge of truth, or that he had a secret design to wheedle her out of her money?

5th. Although self-evident truths, need only be seen, to be believed; yet several things are necessary to their being properly seen:

First, our faculties must have arrived to some degree of maturity; because, in a state of infancy, we are incapable of exercising that voluntary attention, which is necessary to the conception of some of the plainest and most evident truths. But if no truth is to be admitted as self-evident, because it is not perceived to be so by an infant, then no argument can be a sound one, because it is not perceived to be so by an infant.

It is an easy thing to suppose (1st.) that a self-evident truth and an innate idea are the same thing, and (2d.) that man has no innate ideas: the conclusion then very evidently follows, that man perceives nothing that is self-evident.

I confess it is beyond my power to comprehend whether men have innate ideas or not; for I cannot understand what an idea is, if it be any thing different from a thought: and I hope nobody will say, it cannot be self-evident to a man that he thinks, because he is unable to prove that any of his thoughts are innate. I know that I now think, and that I do not receive this truth by reasoning, but by self-evident conviction: if you could prove, by ten thousand arguments, that I have innate ideas, this truth, that I now think, would be no more evident to me than it now is; and if you prove by as many more, that I have them not, you will make it no less evident.

I know it is impossible for me to be in Europe and America at same time. How do you prove that says a philosopher? I answer I cannot prove it at all, because it is self-evident. But if it be self-evident, says he, then it must be an innate idea; but an infant has no such idea, therefore it cannot be innate: consequently you do not know any such thing, and ought not to believe it, till it be proved to you by some argument.

Thus am I brought to a point at once, and what shall I now do? I must appeal to the good sense of mankind to decide which would be the more reasonable course for me to take. To go in search of some argument to prove that I cannot live in Europe and America at the same time? Or to attempt to make it appear that the philosopher's doctrine concerning ideas is a mere fiction, invented to ac-

count for our perception of external objects, and which contradicts the plainest dictates of the human faculties, and ends in universal scepticism? The latter has been done effectually, by Dr. Reid, Dr. Beatty, Dr. Campbell, and others: and I suspect that those who still adhere to the old jargon, concerning ideas in the brain, have either never heard of those authors, or dare not read them, for fear of being convinced; or else they are very indifferent about the matter, and are willing to be content with any system, provided it have a sufficient number of votaries on its side.

Secondly, our faculties must be in a sound state, in order to judge of self-evident principles.

A crazy man may hold it very doubtful whether there be any truth in the testimony of his senses: and, as a proof that he does really distrust them, may walk carelessly into the fire; but when we examine the genuine dictates of the human faculties, I hope we will not go to Bedlam to draw our conclusions. If a physician should chance to find a man with a disorder in his eyes, which made him pur-blind, and should thence infer, that the human eye cannot distinguish objects, at the distance of fifty yards, would he not be justly suspected of insincerity, or of being more disordered in his understanding than the poor man was in his eyes?

Thirdly, The plainest truths may be unnoticed and undiscovered, merely for want of that attention and habitual thinking which is necessary to a clear conception of them. We have no immediate conviction of their truth at present, not for want of argument, but for want of such explanations as shall set them in a clear light before us, separated from that confusion in which our own obscure thoughts, or the sophistry of others, had involved them. Sophistry is often more disconcerted by such clear statements and familiar illustrations, as serve to take off every veil, and to set the truth in a fair light before the mind, than she is by direct argument: because, if self-evident truths be kept out of view, or the attention be diverted from them; and if her darling hypothesis can be kept from too close a scrutiny, she can put on the appearance of the most clear and conclusive reasoning. One conclusion is built on another, in the most exact order, until they grow into a system. The world is invited to behold the beautiful fabric: opponents are challenged to show any defect in the reasoning: and all is safe, so long as it can carefully be kept out of view, that a secret hypothesis is the chief corner stone of the building, and supports the shining castle in the air. An hypothesis too, which is not only destitute of any evidence, but which, if properly examin-

ed, will be found to be an absurdity, shocking to the common sense of mankind, and perhaps subversive of all human knowledge.

The longer this is kept out of sight, the greater numbers will be led into the delusion, till at last the mighty fabric becomes so venerable by age, and has received such support from authority, and at the same time has so many respectable names and authors to plead in its favour, who have been unhappily drawn into the snare, for want of due care and attention to distinguish between first principles and hypotheses, that it becomes a kind of heresy, presumption, or dogmatism, for a man even to suspect the foundation of this vast building, which has been reared by such able and ingenious hands. If you affirm that there are some first principles which are self-evident, and ought to be believed very confidently, you are branded with being dogmatical; but if you indulge the least doubt or suspicion concerning the hypothesis, which has been taken for granted without proof, and which has only numbers and authority to plead in its favour, you are entirely too sceptical. These are very ingenious stratagems, but I am a little inclined to think, that truth can do very well without them. Fourthly, another thing essentially necessary to the clear conception of first principles, is, that sincere love of truth, that candid honesty of mind, which will give every subject a fair and dispassionate hearing. "Prejudice is blind," says Mr. Fletcher, and I presume it will never be any thing better than a blind guide to the end of the world. Its influence on our minds is so pernicious, that instead of leading us to pursue truth by the pure light of evidence, it leads us to resist conviction, when the evidence almost overpowers us. By doing so for a long time, it becomes formed into a habit, the judgment becomes warped and enfeebled, the most evident truths are rejected with indifference, or perhaps with detestation, till we seem almost incapable of judging by any other rule, than that of our passions, our interest, or the opinions of our party.

We are all prone to this great weakness, to say no worse of it; and if each one of us would spend that time in examining its influence on himself, which is spent in casting the reproach on others, how would the shades of error fly before truth's illuminating rays! If every one would spend that time in cultivating a spirit of candor, which he spends in search of sophisms, or of something worse, to support the opinions of his party, or his pride, which he is resolved to defend at every hazard, how delightfully would truth and happiness flow in upon mankind!

But without pretending to decide who is most guilty of this evil, christian or deist, jew or gentile, another man or myself, I only mention it here, as it is a chief cause of our being often blind to the clearest evidence, whether that evidence be contained in an argument, or in a first principle, as the foundation of it.

6th. Lastly, if there be a doubt concerning any principle, whether it be self-evident or not, there are several tests by which it can be tried.

First, if it be self-evident, every man of common understanding, and in his right mind, is capable of judging of it; and needs only a clear statement of it, to perceive that there is something in it tending to produce conviction that it is a truth: of course there will be a general agreement among men concerning it, so far as they understand it, and are unbiassed by partiality. Who can doubt that men generally agree in such truths as these:—There is a material world of earth and water, on which we live—There are men in this world, and other living creatures—these are living creatures, have power to walk, and some of them to fly—Men have power to think, and to make known their thoughts to each other. Many of them that once lived, are now dead—There is a difference between a dead man, and a man that is alive.

Does any person want arguments to prove the truth of these things? No: it is more likely that many will almost suspect me of a partial derangement, for gravely laying such things before them. But they ought to be informed, that some of those very propositions have been denied by several of our philosophers or wise men, while others have been seriously employed in search of arguments to prove them.

Secondly, when a proposition appears at the first view to be a truth, and yet we cannot prove it by any argument, but such as will take for granted the very thing in question, this is an evident mark of a first principle. Several examples of this kind have been given, to which we may add the following:

I lay this down as a first principle: *a sound argument always contains evidence of truth.* Now if I refuse to take this for granted, how will I prove it? Let me offer what argument I will in its support, I take for granted the very thing in question; otherwise I suppose my argument, whatever it is, to have no evidence, though a sound one; and, therefore, the principle is left just as destitute of evidence as it was before I produced my argument. Thus all men are forced to admit first principles, and take them

for granted, or their boasted reasoning itself, falls lifeless to the ground.

Thirdly, though self-evident truths cannot be proved by direct reasoning, yet they may be supported by arguments *ad absurdum*: I mean, that we may suppose the contrary to be true, and shew its consequences to be a chain of manifest absurdities. This method of reasoning is often used by mathematicians, and it may be applied with equal force to any other subject, when self-evident principles are contradicted, which, alas! is but too common.

For an example, we will propose this as a first principle: *A degree of credit is due to human testimony.* Now if this be denied, we can suppose the contrary to be true, and trace its consequences, which the objector is forced to take along with him, or give up reason as well as common sense.

If no regard is due to human testimony, then it is unreasonable to believe the testimony of any man in the world, otherwise you say it is reasonable to believe that which is incredible. It follows, also, that no man in the right exercise of his reason, will believe any thing he reads in history concerning Alexander, Sir Isaac Newton, General Washington, or any other man.

He will not believe in the existence of any nation, country or city, until he sees it himself, nor even then, if his senses are not to be trusted.

When he is informed of immediate danger from savages, or other hostile enemies, he will not believe it, so much as to move from his seat, until he sees them with his own eyes, and thus he will become an easy prey to their barbarity.

Children, to act reasonably, should never believe the testimony of their parents, or of any others; that there is danger in poisonous drugs, or any thing else, till they make the trial by experience, and thus would the race of men soon perish from the earth.

These and such like absurdities, are inseparable from the principle, *that it is unreasonable to give any credit to human testimony*: and hence the opposite is self-evidently true.

I shall frequently have occasion to use this method of reasoning, perhaps, through the present essay, because I may find it necessary to rescue some of the most interesting truths from the sophisms under which they have been concealed.

For a farther account of these matters I refer to Reid's Essays on the Intellectual and Active Powers of Man. I might support the sentiments here advanced, by many quotations from his works, but I will close the present section by the following quotation from Dr. Watts.

“Intelligence relates chiefly to those abstracted propositions which carry their own evidence with them, and admit no doubt about them. Our perception of this self-evidence in any proposition is called intelligence. It is our knowledge of those first principles of truth, which are, as it were, wrought into the very nature and make of our minds: they are so evident in themselves to every man who attends to them, that they need no proof. It is the prerogative and peculiar excellence of these propositions that they can scarce either be proved or denied: they cannot easily be proved, because there is nothing supposed to be more clear and certain, from which an argument may be drawn to prove them. They cannot well be denied, because their own evidence is so bright and convincing; that as soon as the terms are understood, the mind necessarily assents; such are these, whatsoever acteth hath a being; Nothing has no properties; a part is less than the whole; nothing can be the cause of itself.”

“These propositions are called axioms, or maxims, or first principles; these are the very foundations of all improved knowledge and reasonings, and on that account these have been thought to be intimate propositions, or truths born with us.”

“Some suppose that a great part of the knowledge of angels and human souls, in the separate state, is obtained in this manner, namely, by such an immediate view of things in their own nature, which is called intuition.”

*Logic; or the right use of reason. page 162.*

#### SECTION IV.

##### *Of the evidence of reasoning.*

Having spoken of reasoning in the preceeding section, to show its connection with first principles, there is the less occasion to dwell largely on it in the present.

All true reasoning consists simply in tracing the connexion of one truth with another, by direct argument; or in tracing the connexion of one falsehood with another, not to establish errors, but to exhibit their absurdity, and thereby to establish the opposite truth.

All *direct* reasoning must stand or fall with these two propositions: (1st.) that the premises of every true conclusion are either

self-evident, or may be regularly deduced from principles that are so. (2d.) That every regular and sound argument contains evidence of truth.

All *indirect* reasonings, or arguments *ad absurdum*, must stand or fall with this principle, that truth and falsehood are necessarily opposite to each other: for if this be denied, it is vain for us to attempt to support any thing as a truth, by shewing that its opposite leads to an evident absurdity, because the whole force of the reasoning rests upon the axiom, that truth and falsehood stand in necessary and invariable opposition to each other.

That a true conclusion will never follow from false premises, is not only so evident in itself, that the contrary is ridiculous to any man of common understanding; but it is a matter in which all logicians have agreed, from the days of Aristotle to the present time; and if all treatises on logic would distinctly exhibit the simple rules of reasoning, and separate them from the obscure and unmeaning jargon of the schools, I presume the art of logic, or the right method of reasoning, would become an art of great respectability among mankind.

If the arts and sciences are disgraced and filled with perplexity, by those who delight to darken counsel by words without knowledge, truth and reason are not to blame; for simplicity and perspicuity are the strong hold of both; while error and sophistry gladly retire from the light, and derive great advantage from the most impenetrable and profound obscurity.

A few short quotations from Dr. Watts, who is acknowledged to stand among the most approved logicians, may be necessary to set the matter in a proper light, and to confirm the view of it for which I contend,

“The third operation of the mind,” says he, “is reasoning, which joins several propositions together, and makes a syllogism, that is, an argument whereby we are wont to infer something that is less known, from truths which are more evident.

“Axiom—Particular propositions are contained in universals, and may be inferred from them; but universals are not contained in particulars, nor can be inferred from them.”

“Rule II. The terms in the conclusion must never be taken more universally than they are in the premises.”

“Rule IV. If one of the premises be negative the conclusion must be negative.”

“Rule V. If either of the premises be particular, the conclusion must be particular.”



“These two lost rules are sometimes united in this single sentence: The conclusion always follows the weaker part of the premises.”—*Logic, or the right use of reason; page 251—258.*

Now if all sound reasoning consists in argument, whereby we are wont to infer something that is less known, from truths which are more evident; and if the conclusion always follows the weaker part of the premises; it is very obvious not only that both the premises must be true, but that they must be more evident in themselves, than the conclusion to be supported by them. If either of the premises be a falsehood, the conclusion certainly is not proved to be a truth. If either of the premises be doubtful, the conclusion is doubtful. If either of the premises be an hypothesis, the conclusion is an hypothesis.

Consequently, in every good argument the premises are either self-evident, or must themselves be proved by some other premises, before any true conclusion can be inferred from them. If they are to be proved by other premises, then those others must be self-evident, or they also stand in need of proof: thus by tracing the matter back, we clearly perceive that all true conclusions of reasoning ultimately resolve themselves in those axioms which stand as the foundation of all human knowledge.

Let us illustrate this matter by one or two examples from the same author.

“Every human virtue is to be sought with diligence; prudence is a human virtue; therefore prudence is to be sought diligently.”

*Logic p. 257.*

Now every reasonable man at once perceives that this conclusion depends upon the truth of the foregoing propositions, and if either of them be false, they afford no evidence of the consequence inferred.

That every human virtue is to be sought with diligence, is an immediate consequence of a self-evident truth before stated; namely, that all mankind ought to do that which is right, and avoid doing that which is wrong. For we must know the right in order to do it, and therefore every virtue is to be sought with diligence. If the first truth be contradicted, it can never be proved by direct argument, but only by shewing the absurdities which would follow from a denial of it. That prudence is a virtue, is evident, because it tends to general happiness, and the contrary to misery: it is therefore clearly deducible from another axiom, which has been before examined.

Again: “No liar is fit to be believed;

Every good christian is fit to be believed;

Therefore no good christian is a liar.”—*Logic p. 261.*



The first proposition in this argument is a clear deduction from the axiom, *that truth, rightly understood and believed, tends to the happiness, and deceit and falsehood to the misery of mankind.* This principle has indeed been questioned by Mr. Hume, as well as the other branches of human knowledge; but his authority has but little weight when we consider that he questioned the existence of God, of angels, of earth and water, of sun, moon and stars, of human souls and bodies, and believed that there is nothing in existence but ideas and impressions. Whether the ideas were spiritual or coporeal, I have never been informed: and as to the impressions, it seems, there is supposed to be no agent to make them, and no soul or body on which the impression can be made.

The second proposition is a clear principle of revelation; for a christian is a man who follows the precepts and example of Christ; all deceit and lying are by him forbidden, and therefore no good christian is a liar; or, which is the same thing, no liar can be a good christian.

From what has been said, it is plain that all our reasonings must ultimately be founded, either upon *self-evident truths*, upon *manifest falsehoods*, or upon *hypotheses*, which have been invented by the flights of imagination and conjecture. It is easy to affirm, that such things cannot be immediately distinguished from each other; and if such a declaration is to pass for truth, we are at once at a full stand: but I presume a better method, though not so short an one; would be to produce examples of each kind, and appeal to the dictates of common sense. The examples follow:

*Axiom*—The soul of all virtue consists in a perpetual will, to honor God and promote the general happiness of man.

*Absurdity*—The soul of all virtue consists in a perpetual will to disbelieve and abhor the Creator, and do our uttermost to destroy all human felicity.

*Hypotheses*—Jupiter was created twelve hours sooner than our earth. The philosophers of Europe will be ten times wiser at the beginning of next century, than men have ever been since the world was made. There are many robberies and murders committed by the inhabitants of the moon.

From the *axiom*, many interesting conclusions may be drawn, concerning the duties of mankind in the various relations of life.

From the *absurdity*, a string of consequences may be regularly deduced, sufficient to shock an inquisitor, and to insult the good sense of every savage in the world.

From the *hypotheses*, we might build many castles in the air, to allure and impose upon the human mind; but though we should draw our conclusions with as much logical regularity as ever appeared in any mathematical demonstration; and though we should rear the mighty fabric into a system that would fill twenty volumes, and should engage, in its defence, the most sublime geniuses of the age, yet would every conclusion remain as destitute of all rational evidence, as the hypothesis on which it was founded.

And will any man, but an idiot or a lunatic, seriously profess to be incapable of perceiving any more evidence in one of those positions than in another? Will any man affirm, in the face of Heaven, that, to him, they all appear equally evident, and that he needs proof or argument to satisfy his soul of the truth of any one of them, as much as another? To such a man, I have nothing more to say. It would be far more agreeable for me to spend my time in casting straws against the wind, than seriously to reason with him, or to enter into the amazing depths of his philosophy.

It is true, that a great deal depends upon confounding hypotheses with first principles, and upon promoting a general persuasion, that it is very difficult, or altogether impossible, for the human mind, with any certainty, to distinguish between them: for if men in general can be prevailed on to neglect the plain and immediate dictates of their intelligence, and to take for granted, that their faculties are incapable of furnishing immediate evidence of any proposition, and that all truth must be proved by philosophical arguments:—what an easy matter is it for an ingenious man to impose upon them by forming a conjecture, and by artfully concealing it from public inspection, to put on the appearance of most masterly reasoning? His conclusions are drawn with beautiful regularity, and in a form the most scientific and plausible; the hypothetical foundation is overlooked, because our attention is diverted from it by the symmetry of the superstructure; and who can suspect any deficiency in reasonings so conclusive and philosophical? I grant the reasoning may be unexceptionable, as to the regularity of inferring one consequence from another; but let it be remembered that the principle whence they set out, was a mere conjecture, destitute of evidence, and therefore the consequences deduced from it, are a string of fanciful opinions, drawn from an unsupported fiction, and imposed upon the world as the genuine productions of sound and unadulterated reason.

One or two examples may suffice to illustrate and confirm this view of the subject.

“Are we to suppose,” says Mr. Paine, “that every world, in the boundless creation, had an Eve, an apple, a serpent, and a Redeemer? In this case, the person, who is irreverently called the Son of God, and sometimes God himself, would have nothing else to do, than to travel from world to world, in an endless succession of death, with scarcely a momentary interval of life.”

*Age of reason, part 1. page 69.*

Thus it would appear, if revelation be true, respecting our need of a Redeemer, that Christ *must have suffered often since the foundation of the world.* And it equally follows that all the other worlds, “in the boundless creation,” must have a bible for their instruction: they must have ministers, magistrates, and physicians: they must have representatives, governors, lawyers and judges: they must have penalties, prisons, penitentiaries, and hangmen: and they must have swords, muskets and great guns, to carry on their wars, and acquire “military glory.” In this way, it would be easy to multiply our conclusions, until we should form a political and military system for the inhabitants of Jupiter. We might amuse ourselves with the philosophical ideas of men chasing foxes in the moon, and almost fancy we can hear the report of the enormous guns discharged by the armies of *Georgium Sidus!*

But let not imagination fly too high; let her pliant wings be restrained a little, till we pause a few moments, and enquire, whence are all these wonderful conclusions? Common sense gives a secret whisper to the soul, and says, All these interesting matters are built upon this solitary unsupported hypothesis: that every world in the boundless creation, is inhabited by just such men and women, and other animals, as we see walking up and down upon the face of our world.

I doubt not but many of Mr. Paine’s jovial and tame disciples have not only been convinced and established by such flimsy arguments, but have been highly delighted at such a masterly display of philosophical genius, as they see exhibited in this humorous argument, concerning “An Eve, an apple, a serpent, and a Redeemer:” but I hope there is good sense enough left in our country, as well as in other parts of the world, to see through the veil of sophistry, and to decide that an age of reason, and an age of ridicule and conjecture, are very different things.

Let us produce another example of more magnitude, and one which has made a great noise in the philosophic world.

We will state two propositions, which stand against each

other, and let the reader judge which appears most like a self-evident truth.

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|---|---|
| <p>1. God has given us the sense of seeing and hearing, and other senses, whereby we immediately perceive many external objects, with an immediate conviction of their present existence.</p> | <p>2. By the sense of seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting and smelling, we perceive nothing but <i>ideas in our brain</i>; and all the knowledge we can have, of any thing in the world, is by <i>inference</i> from the ideas which we perceive.</p> |
|---|---|

Which of these positions are we to receive as an axiom of truth, on which to build a system? Which of the two appears to stand most in need of argument to prove it? Is it enough for a man to tell us, very gravely, that the first is a vulgar error, and the other is altogether philosophical? So would his holiness, in St. Peter's chair, inform us, that we must contradict our senses, and believe that a piece of bread is really a god, otherwise we are vulgar heretics that have no just ideas of the true divinity.

"It seems evident," says Mr Hume, "that men are carried by a natural instinct, or prepossession, to repose faith in their senses; and that without any reasoning, or even almost before the use of reason, we always suppose an external universe, which depends not on our perception, but would exist, though we and every sensible creature were absent or annihilated.

"But this universal and primary notion, of all men, is soon destroyed by the slightest philosophy which teaches us, that nothing can ever be present to the mind, but an image or perception, and that the senses are only the inlets through which these images are received, without being ever able to produce any immediate intercourse between the mind and the object."

This philosophy has been very fully examined by Dr. Reid, to whom I must again refer the reader. *See his Essays, vol. 1. p. 205.* All I have to do with the matter, is to illustrate the difference between a first principle and an hypothesis, as the proper ground of reasoning.

If "this universal and primary notion of all men" be really true, that there is "an external universe" which we perceive by means of our senses, then the science of astronomy has a solid foundation;—then navigators and surveyors of land are really measuring the parts of an external universe, and are not employed in marking the distance of one idea from another in their *brains*. If this "natural instinct," by which we are led "to repose faith in our

senses," be permitted to stand firm, then mechanical employments, merchandise, and agriculture are preserved from metaphysical annihilation, and the husbandman, when following his plow, is really making a furrow upon solid ground, and not upon an idea in his brain. When he returns from the labours of the day, he finds a real house, composed of certain parts of "an external universe;" his wife and children are all real beings, and he is enabled to enjoy an "immediate intercourse" with them. But if he had "the slightest philosophy," it seems, this universal and primary notion of all men would be soon destroyed; and he would immediately make the astonishing discovery that the house, which sheltered him from the storm, was nothing but an enormous *idea* that contained his whole family in its bosom! Being fully instructed in the metaphysical transubstantiation, he would understand that on his wedding day he was married to an idea, and that his children are all young ideas, growing up like olive plants around (the idea of) his table.

Mr. Hume, or others, would perhaps reprove me for descending to such vulgar illustrations, and inform me that these are matters too serious and important to be trifled with in this manner; and I suspect that some learned doctors of divinity, would be apt to give a similar rebuke, in defence of the Holy Eucharist; but if I have drawn any wrong conclusion it must be imputed to my ignorance, for I really thought these consequences would follow, if it be really true, *that we see, and hear, and feel nothing but ideas*. But perhaps I do not understand the subject rightly: let us attend to those views of the matter "which philosophy teaches us."

"But this universal and primary notion of all men is soon destroyed by the slightest philosophy, which teaches us, that nothing can ever be present to the mind, but an image or perception."

Is Mr. Hume right in saying that philosophy teaches this? Dr. Reid says he is right, and that this had been taken for granted as a first principle of philosophy, for more than a thousand years. And it appears that Mr. Locke, though a man of a most amiable, candid, and penetrating mind, unhappily received the same theory, and took it for granted without examination. When speaking of the word, *idea*, he says, "I have used it to express whatever is meant by *fantasm*, *notion*, *species*, or whatever it is which the mind can be employed about in thinking, and I could not avoid frequently using it.

"But what shall be here the criterion? How shall the mind, when it perceives nothing but its own ideas, know that they agree

with things themselves? This, though it seems not to want difficulty, yet I think there are two sorts of ideas that we may be assured agree with things." *See the introduction to Locke's Essay on Human Understanding.*

Thus is Mr. Hume right when he informs us what philosophy teaches, and his position, "That nothing can ever be present to the mind but an image or perception," is explained by Mr. Locke, when he says "The mind perceives nothing but its own ideas."

Let the question stand clear of every embarrassment, as truth delights to stand. I am now sitting on this chair, with the paper before me; on my right hand I see a number of books of different sizes: Now I want to know, whether I really perceive this chair and paper, that table and those books, or not.

Answer: "Nothing can ever be present to the mind but an image or perception." I do not ask whether the books be present to my mind, but whether I now perceive them, and am now thinking about them? Answer; the word idea signifies "whatever it is which the mind can be employed about in thinking. The mind perceives nothing but its own ideas." While I hold this book in my hand; then, and look at it, am I to suppose that I perceive the book and the idea at the same time, and am thinking about them both? If it be granted, that I really perceive the book, and am now thinking of it, this is all I ask: the thing which I now see and feel I perceive to be a real book, containing the Holy Evangelists of Almighty God, composed of solid paper, leather, and printed letters variously arranged.—Grant me this, and I find no occasion for the idea of a book, to enable me to see it; and could I perceive the idea as clearly as I now perceive the book, I would not ask for arguments to prove its existence. And if it be said that the idea is the instrument or medium through which, or by means of which, I perceive what I now hold in my hand, this I feel willing to concede, provided it be granted that it is really the book which I now perceive, and about which my mind is now employed in thinking. The idea may serve as an instrument or medium of perception, as well as the eye and ear, or any other organ of sensation; and no harm is done, so long as I am permitted really to perceive and behold this external universe which God has created; but if ideas should usurp the place of other things, and obstruct my sight, so that I can perceive nothing but themselves; my soul! come not thou into their secret, but be content to walk the old beaten path of common sense.

But suppose we understand the philosophers really and literal-



ly to mean, that the mind perceives nothing but its own ideas, and that every thing is an idea and nothing else, about which it ever can be employed in thinking: are we permitted to take the consequences along with us? or must we sacrifice our reason to the goddess of philosophy, and espouse a number of palpable contradictions?

If I perceive nothing but ideas, it is plain that this pen, which I perceive, is an *idea*; held by the idea of a hand, belonging to the idea of myself, and making the idea of writing, upon the idea of paper, in order to form the idea of a book. But I am told that I form the idea of a book, whenever I *think* about it: strange then, that after studying and writing so long, I only form the same idea which can be formed in a moment. I am now thinking of Mr. Hume's, history of England: is that history nothing but an idea? If so, why did not Mr. Hume form the idea by *thinking* of the English history for a few moments, without so much expense of thought and labour, to bring forth this great work, that the ideas of men might read it, after the idea of death should take him to the idea of eternity.

I do not mention these things to cast any unfair reproach upon the subject, but because I cannot understand it in any other way; and I hope philosophers will not blame me for speaking about various kinds of ideas, since they declare it is impossible for me to think about any thing else.

What more does philosophy teach us? Answer: "That the senses are only the inlets through which these images are received." But what are the *senses* themselves? and what is it that receives the images through them? Are they all ideas? One idea receives another, through another; and I do not see why they might not as well have continued asunder, and wandered through the glooms of chaos, with the atheistic *atoms*, which have long wandered through the fathomless abyss, till they luckily met together to form the idea of a world.

And if images come not through the inlets of the senses, from whence come they? from the "external universe." It seems then that they had a separate existence before they came through those inlets, unless you say, that which has no existence can move from one place to another, through certain channels, till it seats itself in the human brains. And if ideas had a separate existence before they came through the channel of our senses, millions of them might have floated about the atmosphere, or some where else, if no living creature had been ever made.

"The senses are only the inlets through which these images

are received, without ever being able to produce any immediate intercourse between the mind and the object."

Is Mr. Hume right in this last conclusion, or is it an unjust inference which he drew from the doctrine of ideas? I think his conclusion is perfectly correct; for if "The mind perceives nothing but its own ideas," and if the word idea is to stand for "whatever it is which the mind can be employed about in thinking," it is plain that the mind cannot perceive or think about any object but its own ideas: and what immediate intercourse is there between my mind, and an object, which I can neither perceive nor think about?

I see a candle standing before me: but the thing which I perceive and think about, is not a candle, you say, but the *idea* of a candle. The idea, it is said, came from the candle, through the inlet of my senses; but how do I know this? did I perceive it coming from the candle? if so, I perceived the candle as well as the idea, otherwise I could not see the one coming from the other.— And if I perceived the candle, as the idea was leaving it, I no longer stood in need of the idea, to enable me to perceive it. But if I perceived nothing but the idea, how do I know that there is in fact any thing else? did the idea bear witness that it came from a real candle, of which itself was the image? if so, it enabled me to *think* about a real candle, otherwise you say it brought me this testimony, and yet did not enable me to think about it, and of course, I was left as much in the dark as ever.

When an object is before me, and I look at it, I am told that I perceive nothing but an idea; and when it is absent, and I think about it, it is not the object itself that I think about, but its *idea*, or *image in my mind*: consequently, it is impossible for me to have any manner of evidence for the existence of any thing else but ideas, otherwise I may have clear evidence for the existence of what I can neither perceive nor think about.

If I may be permitted to trust my senses and consciousness, I never perceive an object double: when my friend stands before me, I see him very clearly to be one and undivided; and if philosophy should teach me, that I, at the same time, perceive two objects, one being the real body of my friend, and the other his image, in my brain, this is a new discovery, and a secret for which I can find no evidence in nature, but the *ipse dixit* of my learned instructor.

When my friend is absent, I distinctly remember how he appeared when present, and can recollect even the features of his countenance: here also the object of my thought is one and no



more. I am not thinking of two objects, precisely of the same figure and appearance, one of which is really my friend, and the other his image; and if the single object of which I am now thinking, be nothing but an image or idea, it is plainly impossible for me to think of the *man* at all. When he was present, I perceived him standing before me; the object I now conceive or think about, is the very same I then perceived by means of my senses: and if it was nothing but an idea I then perceived, it is nothing but an idea I now remember, and of course, my knowledge of what is present, and of what is past, consists in the perception of ideas, and in nothing else.

I do really perceive my friends, when they are present, and think about them, when they are absent, or I do not; if I do, the world stands firm against the encroachments of metaphysics; if I do not, then ideas and images are all the friends I ever had—at least all I have ever seen or thought about, since the first moment of my existence. And unless you can prove the existence of that to me, a single thought of which cannot possibly enter into my mind, I remain solitary and alone, in this imaginary universe, with only ideas for my companions, from the beginning to the end of life.—Thus are we handsomely conducted to universal scepticism, by a chain of consequences, clearly deduced—from what?—from a hypothetical fiction, that denies the plainest dictates of common sense, and overturns all human knowledge.

“Mr. Locke had taught us,” says Dr. Reid, “that all the immediate objects of human knowledge, are ideas in the mind:” Bishop Berkeley, proceeding upon this foundation, demonstrated very easily, that there is no material world. And he thought, that, for the purposes, both of philosophy and religion, we should find no loss, but great benefit in the want of it. But the Bishop, as became his order, was unwilling to give up the world of spirits. He saw very well, that ideas are as unfit to represent spirits, as they are to represent bodies. Perhaps he saw, that if we perceive only the ideas of spirits, we shall find the same difficulty in inferring their real existence from the existence of their ideas, as we find in inferring the existence of matter from the idea of it; and therefore, while he gives up the material world, in favor of the system of ideas, he gives up one half of that system in favor of the world of spirits; and maintains, that we can, without ideas, think, and speak, and reason, intelligibly about spirits, and what belongs to them.

“Mr. Hume shows no such partiality in favour of the world of

spirits. He adopts the theory of ideas in its full extent: and, in consequence, shows that there is neither matter nor mind in the universe; nothing but impressions and ideas. What we call a body, is only a bundle of sensations; and what we call the mind, is only a bundle of thoughts, passions, and emotions, without any subject.

“Some ages hence, it will perhaps be looked upon as a curious anecdote, that two philosophers of the 18th century, of very distinguished rank, were led by a philosophical hypothesis; one, to disbelieve the existence of matter; and the other, to disbelieve the existence both of matter and of mind. Such an anecdote, may not be uninteresting, if it prove a warning to philosophers to beware of hypotheses, especially when they lead to conclusions which contradict the principles, upon which all men of common sense must act in common life.”—*Essay II. Chap. XII. p. 191.*

When I consider that these are the natural productions of hypothetical reasoning, I no longer wonder that men of common understanding, are suspicious of that thing called philosophy. I am no more surprised that the term, *metaphysics*, is a word which carries something gloomy to the human mind; or that men in general should be reluctant to enter into a fantastical wilderness, where they will be in such imminent danger of losing body and soul together, in a fog of species, fancies, ideas, images and chimerical impressions.

This, together with the fancies of Popery, has given birth to that reproach, which has sometimes been cast upon “the noble faculty,” as Mr. Fletcher terms it, “which chiefly distinguishes us from brutes.” This has caused many to undervalue the noble gift of reason, and to discourage the regular and diligent improvement of our intellectual powers. But let it be remembered, that those ideal conjectures, and atheistic conclusions, are as opposite to true reasoning, as darkness is opposite to light, and truth to hypotheses and absurdity.

“When we find philosophers maintaining,” says Dr Reid, “That there is no heat in the fire, nor colour in the rainbow: when we find the gravest philosophers, from *Des Cartes* down to Bishop Berkeley, mustering up arguments to prove the existence of a material world, and unable to find any that will bear examination: when we find Bishop Berkeley and Mr. Hume, the acutest metaphysicians of the age, maintaining that there is no such thing as matter in the universe; that sun, moon, and stars, the earth which we inhabit, our own bodies, and those of our friends, are

only ideas in our minds, and have no existence but in thought; when we find the last maintaining that there is neither body nor mind; nothing in nature but ideas and impressions, without any substance on which they are impressed; that there is no certainty, nor indeed probability, in mathematical axioms; I say, when we consider such extravagances of many of the most acute writers on this subject, we may be apt to think the whole to be only a dream of fanciful men, who have entangled themselves in cobwebs spun out of their own brain. But we ought to consider, that the more closely and ingeniously men reason from false principles, the more absurdities they will be led into; and when such absurdities help to bring to light the false principles from which they are drawn, they may be the more easily forgiven." *Essay 1. chap. vi. page 73.*

If all lovers of truth would consider the matter according to this just and candid representation, they would find no cause to indulge that misplaced indignity which has sometimes been cast upon the exercise of our reason, in the pursuit of truth, merely because our rational faculties may be abused or misapplied. We should hear no more complaints of the great uncertainty there is in all subjects relating to the mind, and its intellectual powers. What subject will not be uncertain, if men suffer themselves to beat the air with wild and fanciful conjectures, that are repugnant to truths the most evident that can be presented to the human understanding?

The theory of ideas, has not only proved metaphysical subjects to be very uncertain; but it has proved every branch of human knowledge to be equally so, "mathematical axioms" not excepted; and if we are to judge by this rule, we must conclude that religious doctrines themselves, are as uncertain as any others; for where shall we find a greater jargon of nonsense and contradiction, than has been passed upon the world, under the name of Christianity.

The truth is, there will never be any regularity or consistency in our systems till we agree to lay the foundation in first principles, carefully examined, before we raise our superstructure. All probable reasoning, as well as any other, is founded on principles that have a self-evident probability. This matter has been fully explained by the author last quoted, and we may have occasion to notice it more particularly in a subsequent section.

## SECTION V.

*Of the evidence of Revelation.*

By the term, revelation, we understand certain truths made known to the human mind, by the supernatural influence of the Divine Spirit, with a clear conviction, not only that the matters thus made known are true, but that the knowledge of them is immediately from God.

They are accompanied with self-evident conviction, as first principles are, with this difference only, that intuitive principles are immediately known to be true, and those which are revealed, are not only known certainly to be true, but are also known to be immediately from God, by a supernatural communication. Let us consider Paul on his passage to Rome: he had certain evidence of the truth of these two propositions: 1st, *That they were then driven and tossed upon the rolling billows, by a dreadful storm.* 2d, *That the ship would be destroyed, but, that the men would all escape with their lives, to the shore of a certain island.* His knowledge of both these truths was immediate and self-evident; it was impossible for him to be more certain of the latter than the former, though the latter was received by immediate revelation, and the other was a truth discovered in a natural way, and was as well known by every man on board as by himself.

God was as truly the author of his knowledge of the former, as of the latter: he gave him a natural conviction of the one, by means of his senses; he gave him a supernatural conviction of the other, by means of a divine influence upon his consciousness; and the only difference of the cases consisted in this, that in the latter case he received his knowledge by an immediate communication from his Maker; in the former, by that constitution of his mind, which God had established in his original formation. And had Paul believed that God stamped a lie upon his original constitution, on purpose to deceive him, he might with equal reason have received the present revelation as a lie that ought not to be regarded; for its truth was so essentially connected with the veracity of his senses, that a denial of the latter would be an equal contradiction of the former. If it was not true that they were then tossed upon the ocean, it could not be true, that they would be directly removed from the

ocean to a certain island. So that the man who discredits his senses and other natural faculties, gives the lie to God, as immediately as the prophets and apostles would have done, had they refused to believe the truth of those revelations which they received.

The ridiculous objection of scepticism will hold good in both cases alike; for in neither case can the absolute impossibility of being mistaken be made appear, in any other way than by taking for granted the truth of the very faculties in question. And for us to refuse to give them any credit, until other faculties are given by which to judge of their veracity, and of the abstract impossibility of their being fallacious, is nothing more nor less, than to say to Almighty God, "our profound and ingenious philosophy refuses to give thee any credit, till thou shalt give us other faculties whereby we may sit in judgment upon those which we now possess: and as there will still be an abstract possibility that those others may also be fallacious, we shall require another set, whereby we may judge of them: and as the third set may also be fallacious, we must require a fourth and so on *ad infinitum*." Such whimsical and inveterate unbelief, is not only a ridiculous insult to all reason, but it is a principle of deep and hateful immorality, and is, I presume, a main pillar of all the wickedness that ever prevailed in either earth or hell.

That God is able to make such a supernatural communication to any human mind, is acknowledged even by Thomas Pain, and the fact of his having done so, is not absolutely denied by him; nay, it is admitted, for the sake of a case, that such revelations have been given; but the evidence of it, he says, can never be communicated from one man to another. His words are these: "But admitting, for the sake of a case, that something has been revealed to a certain person, and not revealed to any other person, it is revelation to that person only. When he tells it to a second person, a second to a third, a third to a fourth, and so on, it ceases to be revelation to all those; it is revelation to the first person only, and hearsay to every other, and consequently, they are not obliged to believe it." *Age of reason, part. 1. page 8.*

That it is immediate revelation to the first person only, is granted; and it can never become such a revelation to any other mind, till a similar communication from God shall give him a similar conviction of its truth, and not of its truth only, but of the divine influence by which it was revealed.

But the question is, whether a true revelation made to one man, will become false by his declaring it to another; and whether no

evidence ought to convince the other, but a new revelation to himself, to prove the reality of the one attested by his neighbour? That mere *hearsay* is not sufficient evidence, we freely acknowledge; and I presume our adversaries will acknowledge as freely, that a truth communicated from God to a certain person will not become a falsehood, when he declares it to another; of course, the only question which remains, is, whether sufficient evidence can be given to one man, that a revelation has been made to another, without his having it confirmed by another revelation exactly similar?

To answer this in the negative, as Mr. Paine has done, is to contradict, 1st, all the evidence of common sense; 2d, the evidence of reasoning; and 3d, the evidence of revelation itself.

1st. The evidence of *common sense*. From the signs of power, wisdom, and goodness, in the effect, we may infer with certainty that those attributes exist in the cause which produced it. This is a first principle, self evident to every rational being. Deny it, and all evidence is gone, of the power, wisdom, and goodness of the creator, as exhibited in the grand and intelligent arrangements of the works of creation. Deny it, and all evidence is gone, of there being an intelligent creature upon the face of the earth, excepting the consciousness a man has of his own intelligence: for it is impossible for me to see another man's soul, or to know any thing concerning his power, wisdom or goodness, but what I learn from the signs of those qualities that I perceive in the effects which he produces. I read the works of Milton, and sir Isaac Newton, and infer with certainty that the authors were men of uncommon penetration: but I never saw the bodies of those ingenious men, much less their spirits, and if the axioms above stated, be denied, there is no evidence left that the authors of those works were wise men, or even that they had any author. The letters might have jumbled themselves together by chance, and formed the beautiful poem called *Paradise Lost*, and the same mysterious goddess might have made all the philosophical discoveries attributed to sir Isaac Newton!

The same may be said of a friend standing before me: I perceive the signs of intelligence in his countenance, actions, or language, and infer with certainty that the cause of this peculiar cast of countenance, action, or language, is an intelligent being. I cannot see that intelligence, but by the signs of it in the effects produced; these signs I perceive with intuitive conviction; and if I resist this conviction, till I can see my neighbour's soul, inde-

pendent of these signs, or till the qualities of his mind be proved by some other argument, I may live and die in the persuasion that there is not a being in the world possessed of intelligence beside myself: and such a persuasion, I presume, would prove that I possess but a very scanty share of it.

Now unless it can be made appear, that *God is not able* to exhibit signs of power, wisdom and goodness, in proof of an immediate revelation given to some of his creatures, for the general benefit of all, equal to those which appear in the visible creation, nothing can set aside the conclusion, that such a revelation given to one man, may be proved to another, but a denial of the axiom above mentioned: and a denial of that, saps the foundation of all human knowledge, and at once precipitates us into the dark chaos, among the atoms and blind goddesses of atheism.

2d. The evidence of reasoning is equally abolished by our author's logic: for as first principles are the foundation of all sound reasoning, if they be denied, the superstructure must of necessity fall in ruins to the ground. All our reasonings concerning the wisdom or folly, the virtue or vice, of this or any former generation, are sophistical delusions, if the axiom be not true, *that the signs of such qualities appearing in the effect, affords certain evidence of their existence in the cause.*

When the Lord Jesus calmed the roaring elements, by saying, *peace, be still*, and evinced by other immediate acts of power, that the laws of nature were at his command, in proof of that revelation which he brought from Heaven, this, according to our author's philosophy, would afford no evidence of divine power, and therefore no proof of a revelation. Then the creation and preservation of the world affords no such evidence; and the building of houses, and other common effects produced among mankind, afford no evidence of human power.

3d. As the original dictates of our faculties are thus denied, our author, it seems, would be as far from conviction as ever, if an immediate revelation were given, to prove the truth of our scriptures; the kind of evidence which he professes to believe alone sufficient: for, as a sceptic can say, how do I know it to be impossible for my senses to deceive me? how do I know but the world sprang into being by chance? So might Thomas Paine have said of such a revelation: how do I know it to be impossible for me to be deceived in this matter? Does God address himself to my senses, by declaring with a voice from Heaven, that the Bible is true? but I must remember that my senses are deceitful, and are



not to be trusted. Does he address himself to my consciousness, and produce a supernatural conviction, that the Bible is true? but is it not possible for this to be enthusiasm? And suppose it is not, by what argument can I prove that my consciousness is not fallacious. And suppose it is not, how can I prove it impossible that God should communicate a falsehood to me?

And besides, if Christ could calm the boisterous ocean, either by imposing upon the people's senses, or by the agency of devils, how do I know but this immediate communication to my mind is from some devil that intends to deceive me?

Thus it is evident, that a new revelation itself, would be insufficient to convince those who are resolved to reject every other kind of evidence, and our boasted champion of reason, in his "*Age of Reason*," has *contradicted reason*, and boldly defied every kind of evidence by which truth is communicated to the human mind.

Such pitiful unbelief is perfectly incurable, and *if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.*

The next question is, whether God has in fact exhibited sufficient evidence for the truth of revelation?

It is an easy thing, I know, for a person to *affirm* that he has not; and so it is for an atheist to affirm that the earth and starry Heavens afford no proof of a Deity; or for David Hume, esq. to affirm that "the slightest philosophy will soon destroy the universal and primary notion of all men, that there is an external universe:" but as those philosophers affect to be so very unwilling that any thing should be taken for granted without support of argument, I hope they will excuse us from taking their *assertions* for granted.

The arguments in support of christianity are various and abundant: so much so, that my present plan will not admit of a full enumeration of them; but, as I have made the assertion, I must mention some of the grounds on which those arguments are built.

The doctrines of christianity exhibit the wisdom of God; its precepts exhibit his holiness; the benevolence of its design and tendency exhibits his goodness; and the miracles wrought by our Saviour and his apostles, displays his power and authority, as the fulfilment of his promises and prophecies does his veracity and infinite knowledge.

For the two first classes of evidence, we must appeal the Bible itself, especially the New Testament, where alone the doctrines



and precepts of christianity are to be found, and not in conclaves, creeds, or confessions of faith.

For the third, we must appeal to the nature of man, and to the nature of those motives, enjoyments and prospects, which the religion of Jesus proposes, to guard him against misery, to subdue his vices, to sweeten his earthly comforts, to console him in calamity, to disarm the king of terrors, and to ensure him a happy existence forever.

For the fourth, we must appeal to human testimony, and for the fifth to the Bible, in conjunction with the general history of the world.

As the premises of every argument must first be known to contain evidence, either as axioms or as regular deductions therefrom, before they can give any strength to the conclusion; so revelation must be known to be true, by its correspondence with the human faculties, before it can be consistently received as a ground of evidence to support any other truth whatever.

Several revelations have been proposed to mankind, as being inspired from Heaven; but that contained in the Bible is the only one, that has been able to stand the test of a candid and rational examination. It has been examined by Jews and Gentiles, by friends and enemies, by priests and infidels, by the learned and the unlearned, by rustics and philosophers, by fools and wise men. Its evidence shines forth as it goes through the crucible, and it has carried conviction to a Bacon, Boyle, Newton, Hale, Addison, Locke, Littleton, Reid, Beatty, Campbell, Watts, Wesley, Fletcher, and an innumerable company besides, of the wisest and best of men.

Mean time it has been contradicted by a Hobbes, Bolingbroke, Gibbon, Hume, Voltaire, Paine, Palmer, and other metaphysicians, who would give us to understand, that, however this priestly revelation may carry away the vulgar, it has not been able to stand the test of philosophy. And no wonder, since earth and sea, animals and vegetables, the bodies and souls of men, and the very heavens themselves, have been unable to stand this test. We must have a revelation made up of nothing but ideas and impressions, before it will stand the test of the metaphysical philosophy.

But let self-evident principles resume their native dignity; let reason be delivered from the shackles of hypothesis and metaphysical sophistry; let conscience retain her authority in the human bosom; let prejudice, pride and malice be laid aside: let

every man think for himself, without being biased by priestly infallibility on the one hand, or philosophical authority on the other; then let his mind be regulated by the calm influence of humility, reflection and candour, and christianity has nothing to fear.

As the diligence of his enquiry increases, the beauties of revelation will shine around him, like stars in the expanded concave of heaven. Let him compare the doctrine of man's apostacy, with matter of fact, and daily observation; let him compare the doctrine of redemption with the responsibility of man, and with the nature and moral government of God; let him compare the dignified simplicity of the Lord Jesus and his apostles, with the nature of truth, reason, sincerity and moral goodness; let him compare the common objections of infidels to the objections urged by atheists against the wisdom of God in the creation; let him compare the great prospects held forth in the bible, with his native desire and need of an immortal life to come; finally, let him compare the pure morality of the gospel, to his own consciousness of obligation to God and man; and if this holy religion, as it has been sometimes scoffingly termed, does not recommend itself to his reason and conscience in the sight of God, he may then, as an intelligent being, and not before, give up the Bible and go some where else to seek the proper knowledge of his Maker.

I can do little more at present than suggest some of the general sources of evidence, without pursuing them; but as infidels have one argument which they consider most masterly, it may be necessary to dwell upon it a little more particularly.

“The chief support of this revelation, it may be said is that of miracles; of course miracles are a very essential part of the evidence on which it is to be believed; but we have seen no miracles wrought in its defence; therefore we are destitute of the very evidence on which your bible itself professes chiefly to rest its authority.” Answer:

It is true that miracles are essential to the giving of a revelation from God to man, because the very act itself is truly miraculous; it is also necessary that it should be delivered to others by proof of miracles, in order that Divine *power* may be manifested in its support: but this is only a part of the evidence in favour of our religion, and the other parts are so essential, that this alone would not be sufficient: for if there were no displays of wisdom, goodness and holiness, in the christian religion, I presume a mere exhibition of power alone would only serve to confound and astonish us.

Suppose there were no signs of wisdom or goodness in the visible creation, but merely of power, would this be a sufficient proof of the god whom we worship? An Almighty God without wisdom and goodness, would be an object of terror and dismay, and his presence would be sufficient to cause men and angels to long for an immediate end of their being. Rather than live under a mere government of *might*, where there was no moral attribute to regulate the destinies of creation, every intelligent creature would loathe his existence, and wish to drop into the unconscious regions of annihilation. But as the power of our Almighty Father, is unchangeably employed in subserviency to perfect goodness and infinite wisdom, we glory in his omnipotence, and rest securely under the shadow of his wings.

Now a revelation from such a God must bear his *image and superscription*: miracles are necessary to display his power; but the revelation given must also illustrate his wisdom, and correspond with every moral attribute of his nature, in order to carry conviction to the soul of man, that it came from that benevolent and Almighty Being, who created *the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land*. Miracles cannot be spared, any more than the signs of power can be spared, that are exhibited in the creation; but it is as improper to say they constitute the chief part of the evidence, as it is to say the *omnipotence* of God constitutes the chief part of his nature, or that the signs of omnipotence are the principal part of the evidence given of his nature, in *the heavens* which declare the glory of God, and the firmament which showeth his *handy work*.

Thus we rectify the first proposition of the deistical argument, that miracles are the *chief* support of revelation. But as our statements imply, nevertheless, that the evidence of miracles is a part of the evidence which cannot be spared, we must now notice their second proposition, which affirms, that all men in these latter ages are destitute of this kind of evidence. I hope this proposition may be shown to be a falsehood, and if so, their conclusion is good for nothing.

In the days of our Saviour and his apostles, the evidence of miracles was conveyed to the minds of men, through the medium of their senses; in all succeeding ages the same evidence has been conveyed through the medium of human testimony. That a degree of credit is due to human testimony, has been already established as a first principle, by showing the palpable absurdities that will follow from a denial of it; and as some philosophers have spur-

ed at this channel of communication, so they have equally denied the veracity of our senses, and set all human knowledge at defiance.

What a despicable figure will that man make who shall undertake to demonstrate that Christ might have imposed upon the senses of the thousands of mankind, in the performance of those great miracles attributed to him in the New Testament! or to demonstrate that the accounts of those matters might have been written in the days of Augustus Cesar, at the time when the facts are said to have transpired; without affording the world any opportunity to detect such fraudulent and pitiful pretensions, which thousands of living witnesses could contradict in the face of heaven.

Most of our objectors, I suspect, are beginning to be ashamed of this method of philosophical demonstration, and fondly hope to obstruct the channel of human testimony, by another subterfuge.

The history of Jesus Christ say they, was not published to the world till some hundreds of years after those great events are said to have occurred: it was invented in after ages, and has succeeded in imposing upon the natural credulity of the vulgar; but philosophers can see through the fraud.

And what but hypothesis can philosophers give for this bold assertion? They affect to be very fond of demonstration, and insinuate that no other kind of evidence is to be trusted; but when the secret is out, we find they are only fond of demonstration, when something is to be proved by their opponents: when proof is called for, in support of their own assertions arbitrary conjectures and professions of superiority to the vulgar, appear to be altogether sufficient.

Those great events are said to have transpired in the reign of Augustus Cesar; and their own historians have informed the world that the Christian religion was spread through the Roman empire in less than half a century afterwards: the history of those events, as narrated by the evangelists, declares that this religion took its rise from Jesus Christ, who proved its divinity by astonishing miracles wrought in the presence of thousands: this account is true, or it is not; if it is, all infidels are fighting against the truth; if it is *not*, then the christian religion rose from something else, as the world very well knew; therefore, whenever this pretended history came out, no matter when it was, every man acquainted with christianity would know it to be a falsehood.

If these accounts were not published, till some centuries after the facts are said to have taken place, every man that would open his eyes and read them, would see falsehood upon the face of

them, far more clearly than any man ever saw images upon his brain; for the authors agree to declare that they were eye witnesses of the facts that they relate, which they could not be if the facts occurred some hundreds of years before they were born. And moreover, they not only declare they were eye witnesses, but that they wrote their history and their epistles, and published them in their own time: Peter, who was one of the chief apostles and followers of Jesus Christ, declares that his *beloved brother Paul* had then published several of *his epistles*, which some had already begun to *wrest, as they did also the other scriptures, to their own destruction*. Luke informs us, in the introduction to his history, that several accounts of those matters had been published by others before he began his account; and many other references might be enumerated in proof that the New Testament writers openly profess *to be eye and ear witnesses; to have lived in the days of Jesus Christ, and to have published their accounts to that generation*. But if those accounts never made their appearance in the world till some hundreds of years afterwards, in all these particulars they would carry conviction of their being the production of deceivers, to every man that had eyes and ears to see and hear them.

Thus, if our objectors theory be admitted, with all their contempt of the credulous vulgar, they involve themselves in a credulity similar to that which they so much explode; and prove clearly that the great Roman philosophers and historians have failed in the detection of a fraud that might be detected by the common sense of a Hottentot.

According to the character and extraordinary actions, which the New Testament ascribes to the Lord Jesus, no person ever lived whose history is of such importance to mankind: he must have been the greatest and the best personage that ever appeared in mortal flesh, or else christianity must be a fraud the most amazing and unparalleled, of any thing that has ever yet appeared among the human family. This religion, if true, was not hid in a corner, but blazed out in the face of open day: and if false, it must have been somehow hid in a corner, more secret, deep and obscure, than the fantasies of Aristotle, or the unexplored and secret dwelling place of the philosopher's stone. If the Lord Jesus was in fact controlling the elements of heaven through the land of Judea, and his apostles through the Roman empire, the Gospel is true; if they were only attempting to do such things by slight of hand or the art of magic, were the people's eyes, or the historian's pen, that such frauds should succeed and silently glide down to poste-

rity? If the history of those great matters was invented and published two or three hundred years afterwards, why did not the wise men of that age cast it at once into the fire, or favour the world with some account of the hypocritical stratagem? And if the New Testament was really written by the apostles and evangelists, but never made its appearance till some centuries after they were dead, in what secret corner of the world did it lie concealed?

Suppose a certain person, or three score of them, united if you please, should some centuries, say four or five hundred years hence, publish a history of general Washington, professing themselves to be the authors of the history, and that they were officers of the United States army, acting for years under his immediate command: suppose this history should state that general Washington professed to be the Son of God, and, in proof of it, raised several dead men to life, conquered thousands of the British troops, by merely pointing his sword to heaven, and led his own army across the Delaware bay on dry ground; having first caused the waters to stand as walls on either hand: would this be really such a puzzling case, that all the wise men of America and Europe together must necessarily fail in attempting to detect the imposture, and would be obliged to yield to the mighty torrent, and let the delusion descend to the latest posterity.

Or suppose they should make Martin Luther the hero of their tale, or invent some other name and attribute it to a man who never existed, declaring that in and about the city of London, Paris or Philadelphia, he fed five thousand men with five small loaves of bread, cured hundreds of the plague or yellow fever by the simple touch of his finger, and raised some of them to life after they had been four days in the grave; and finally, that he himself arose from the dead, appeared to more than five hundred of the inhabitants, and afterwards in open daylight ascended up into heaven:—would it be an easy matter to establish these wonders, and spread them over the earth to the latest generations? If it would, let deists make the experiment, and after carrying their project to a sufficient height, they can lay open the secrets and thereby produce a stronger argument against Christianity than the wit of philosophers has been able to muster from the days of Porphyry, or Julian, to those of the heroic *Thomas Paine*.

It being foreign to the present design to enter into a regular defence of Christianity, further than to take a view of revelation as one of the general methods whereby the *Father of the spirits of*

*all flesh*, conveys a knowledge of his truth to the human mind; I omit any farther illustrations of the present argument.

Any candid mind may perceive, by reflection, that the more closely the subject is examined, the more manifest it will appear, that although miracles are not wrought in our time, yet the *evidence* of them is conveyed to us, through the channel of human testimony, as well as to the ancient Jews and Gentiles, through the medium of sensation; and he who rejects one of these means of communication, might as well reject the other, for I presume as great a proportion of our knowledge, depends upon the veracity of human testimony, as upon the truth of our senses; and if we reject either of them, consistency will require an equal surrender of every other kind of evidence, and thus, we must abandon ourselves to the regions of universal doubt, or, which is the same thing, to universal ignorance.

If any should be disposed to make such a sacrifice, and give up all their knowledge to get clear of the restraints of reason and religion, we must leave them in quiet possession of their retreat, till something more powerful than argument shall rouse them from their strange and philosophical delirium. The gospel has been offered to their acceptance, to use the words of bishop Watson, and from whatever cause they reject it, I cannot but esteem their case to be dangerous.

I would not be understood to mean that the evidence of miracles is conveyed to us in its whole force, or in the same degree it was conveyed to the people in the days of our Saviour and his apostles: miracles, to them, were self-evident, being addressed immediately to their senses; to us they are ascertained by the deductions of reason. We take our stand on this axiom, that some degree of credit is due to human testimony; we reason concerning the degree that is due in this particular case; we find the number and character of the witnesses to be unexceptionable; we find their testimony accompanied with such circumstantial marks of veracity, that we cannot suppose it false without involving ourselves in several unaccountable absurdities; we find the system of truth attested by them accords perfectly with the holy nature of God, and with the unbiased dictates of our reason and conscience: Hence, we conclude that we are compelled to renounce our reason, or to believe that the miracles attested by the apostles were really performed by our Lord Jesus Christ, in proof of that revelation which the goodness of God has transmitted to mankind.

Will philosophers reject this evidence, merely because it is de-



rived through the medium of *inference* or consequential reasoning, and not through the immediate dictates of sense?

If so, it would seem that they change their ground as convenience may require: one while, they seem disposed to spurn at the dictates of common sense, as a vulgar kind of evidence, and must have *argument* for every thing; but (mark their inconsistency) when the subject of miracles is under discussion, they abandon their former ground, refuse to believe upon the mere evidence of consequential reasoning, and cry, Let us *see* miracles performed—let us have the sure evidence of sense, and we will then believe you, and not before. Let God establish the truth of revelation, by an immediate communication of it to my consciousness, says Thomas Paine, and I will be a christian; but this is the only possible way I can be convinced: the plainest deductions of reasoning will avail nothing, however obvious and incontrovertible: and nothing short of immediate inspiration to my own soul, shall ever overcome my infidelity. And yet this is the gentleman who came forward in such a pompous manner, and called his feeble, though angry and declamatory productions, *The Age of Reason!* But with all his affected fondness for reason, he holds the evidence of revelation to be so vastly superior, that no other kind of evidence can deserve any more regard than mere hearsay.

Now if no other evidence is to be regarded in the case, but immediate revelation alone, it evidently follows that if the utmost force of evidence were given, that reasoning was ever able to convey, it ought still to be rejected. Thus is reason discarded, in our age of reason, and declared to be utterly beneath the attention of mankind. “And consequently, they are not obliged to believe it.”

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## SECTION VI.

*The connexion of those three sources of evidence, and their dependence upon each other.*

AMONG the various mistakes and inconsistencies of mankind, perhaps none is of more serious tendency, than the practice of separating and tearing in sunder what God has joined together. If common sense and reason, and revelation, are really a three-fold method whereby truth is communicated to the human under-

standing, they all tend to the same end; and for a man to neglect and despise one, under pretence of exalting another, is like a person neglecting the use of his eyes, in order to devote more time to the faculty of hearing; or like one who despises the insignificant sense of smelling, under pretence of improving his taste.

We will suppose half a dozen men surround a table together, to partake of the blessings of providence for the refreshment and support of their nature: immediately they begin to dispute about the most proper method of eating, one contending that the use of a man's *eyes*, is most essentially necessary at table, to perceive the food before him, and to distinguish one part from another; a second observes, that a person's *hands* are most essential, without which his eyes can be of no service; a third insists that hands and eyes together might as well be neglected, and that eating depends chiefly, if not entirely, upon the proper use of a man's *mouth*.

While they are employed in this ridiculous contention, their companions, smiling at the metaphysical controversy, begin very deliberately to use their eyes, hands and mouth in the proper place, and thereby receive a sufficient supply, before the disputants have well adjusted the outlines of their mighty argument.

In this manner many infidels have warmly contended that reason is our only guide to truth and happiness; some christians have been disposed to conclude, with equal confidence, that revelation is our only guide: while both together have agreed to reject, or to devote but little attention, to the original dictates of those faculties which enable us immediately to discover all the first principles of truth, and without which we could neither reason nor receive any evidence of revelation.

While those persons appear to rest satisfied, on both sides, each one believing with great assurance that he is in the right and that his antagonist is a fanatic or a heretic, it may probably be worth while to enquire if they be not both in the wrong, and whether they will ever be in the right till they consent to lay by the dispute, and to meet each other on the harmonious medium where *mercy and truth have met together*, and where reason and revelation have kissed each other. I am resolved, says one, that "Righteous and immortal reason"\* shall be my only guide, without any of your dreams and ghostly revelations. I am equally bound, says another, to follow the holy scriptures, as explained by the infallible church, without bringing its mysteries to "The profane eye of human reason."†

\* Palmer.

† The Popish doctor of Hexham.

And I am equally resolved, says a third, to examine whether the three sources of evidence above explained, be not so united that they must stand or fall together, and whether the opposite parties who attempt to separate them, be not at open or secret war, both with reason and revelation. I am aware that this cannot be done, without my being stigmatized, by the one party, as a mongrel kind of deist, and by the other, as a dangerous enemy to "Righteous and immortal reason;" but when a person is reduced to the dilemma of either sacrificing truth to the favour of parties, or sacrificing their favour to the promotion of truth, law and gospel, reason, conscience and candour, all point out the path in which he should walk, and unanimously decide, that *We ought to obey God rather than man.*

It has already been evinced, that reason so depends on the dictates of common sense, or in other words, upon self-evident truths, that is impossible for it to exist without them: a few reflections may now convince us, that revelation depends no less upon first principles, than reasoning itself.

To exhibit this matter in the clearest point of view, it will be necessary to lay down three or four such principles, and appeal to the reader's understanding, whether revelation could afford any evidence of truth without them.

1st. *It is impossible for God to be deceived, or to deceive others.*

2d. *The scriptures of the old and new Testament have a real and true meaning.*

3d. *The revealed will of God consists in the doctrines which constitute the true meaning of scriptures, and not merely in the external letter, or any false construction of it.*

4th. *It is possible for the human mind, as it respects the essential doctrines of Christianity, to distinguish the true meaning of the scriptures, from all false interpretations of them, when its faculties are rightly exercised under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.*

These principles are self-evident, and to deny them, or any one of them, will be to assail the very pillars of revelation.

As to the first one it is the chief corner stone of reason as well as revelation: for if God was a deceiver, he could stamp a lie upon our original constitution, and give us deceitful faculties, as well as a deceitful revelation. A God that made every thing, knows the nature of every thing that he has made, and cannot possibly be deceived. Men deceive one another, in order to gain something from one another: but a God that is independently happy in himself can gain nothing from others by deceiving them. That lying

and deceit tend to the injury of God's creatures is self-evident; and to say goodness can designedly injure others is a contradiction. No God but a wicked one can ever be deceitful. The nature of God is exhibited in the creation, and we need nothing more than to understand that nature, to perceive with immediate conviction, that the Being possessed of it can do no wrong, and *it is impossible for God to lie.*

Attentive reflection may enable us to perceive this truth with more clearness and conviction; it may be illustrated or set more fully before the mind by arguments or explanations; but it shines with irresistible splendour from the nature of God, and every argument we use, and every truth we believe, takes it for granted, because they take for granted the veracity of those faculties which God has given us, and by which alone we reason or judge of any subject in the world. The more clearly we understand the nature of God, the more clearly we perceive this axiom; but though it may be illustrated, or set more fully before the mind, by showing its relation to other obvious truths, yet it is not supported by any other argument, but is itself essential to the support of all.

Nothing can be the cause of itself. Every thing that begins to exist, must have a cause, adequate to produce the effect. All signs of *power, intelligence and goodness* that appear in the effect result from those attributes which exist essentially in the cause. The signs of those attributes are manifest in the structure of the universe. The great and good Being who made this universe, must know perfectly the nature, properties and relations of all things he has made. Being infinitely happy in himself, he needeth nothing that he has made. He gave life to creatures, and made them capable of happiness, not for his own sake, but for theirs.

That conduct which tends to general happiness is right. God knows the nature of moral evil, and knows that it leads to misery. *God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.*

These principles stand closely related, and perhaps one may be inferred from another; but each one alone, when rightly conceived, has evidence in itself that must carry conviction to every sound and candid mind.

The second maxim, *that the scriptures have a true meaning*, is also self evident. It is impossible for it to be proved, or made more evident by any particular passage of scripture; for before that passage can be any proof to my mind, I must know its mean-

ing, and therefore, I prove that the scriptures have a true meaning, by taking it for granted, in the very passage which I produce for my proof.

That the mind or will of God, made known in the scriptures, is contained in their true meaning, and not in the mere letter without any meaning, or in that construction, which is false, I hope every person will acknowledge. To deny it, is to say that all the contradictory opinions in christendom are true: for a man may prove every one of them by some passage in the bible; and the letter or metaphor of the text, when torn from the context, may seem to support the point in question.

Our fourth maxim must also stand firm, or revelation is good for nothing: for to what purpose are the scriptures given to men, if it be impossible for them to understand their true meaning, or to distinguish them from falsehood?

Here the old atheistic objection again returns upon us; it is possible for us to mistake the meaning of scripture, and by what *criterion* shall we determine when our views of it are correct, and when they are not? The same has been said, and may be said, of reason, sense, consciousness, and every kind of evidence that has ever entered into the heart of man to conceive.

The proper and the only answer that can be given to this objection, whether urged against revelation or reason, is, that the criterion or method by which we distinguish truth from falsehood, is the sincere and regular exercise of those faculties and powers of mind which God has graciously afforded us; by such an exercise of our intellectual powers, we shall know the truth in all essential matters, because God is no deceiver, but is *a God of truth, without iniquity, just and right is he*; and as to trivial mistakes, into which we may fall through the feebleness of our faculties, they will never essentially harm us if we be followers of that which is good.

I am aware that such an answer as this is far from being satisfactory to the mind of his holiness at Rome, because it seems to undermine the sanctified prerogatives of St. Peter's chair. This blind heretic, would he say, imagines that the true meaning of scripture is to be sought out by his carnal reason; but he ought to know that unless he speedily and humbly yield up "the profane eye of human reason," to the infallible instructions of the Mother church, it will be necessary to subdue his obstinacy by the force of the holy inquisition. But tell me, gentle reader how does the pope, in conjunction with his conclave distinguish truth from

falsehood, and what is their criterion? Why, to be sure, the criterion of *infallibility*. But is their infallibility proved by the testimony of revelation? If not, it must be founded upon that carnal reason, which supports the delusions of infidels and heretics; and if so, does it not equally prove them to be infidels and heretics? If they learned from proof of scripture that they are infallible, by what criterion do they ascertain that they rightly understand that scripture? by their infallibility also? Then it seems they prove themselves to be infallible by taking for granted that they are so, independent of that proof; and besides, if we are sure to err in our judgments, are we not as likely to err in judging of the proof of their infallibility, as in any thing else? And suppose we take for granted that they are infallible, because they are pleased, very gravely to tell us so; how will this enable us to avoid mistakes any better than we can without them? for supposing their instructions to be infallibly true, as we believe the scriptures to be, are we not as likely to misunderstand their meaning, as the meaning of our saviour and his apostles? Were not all the inspired writers infallible teachers? they dare not deny it. Well, if Christ and his apostles were infallible teachers, and yet poor heretics may misunderstand them, they may equally misunderstand the decisions of the Holy Mother, notwithstanding her priestly infallibility. I rejoice that I am not in the power of the holy inquisitors, for if I were, their act of faith would consign my poor body to the torments of the inquisition, and my soul would be sentenced to depart, far beyond the regions of purgatory, to the dreadful "hell of the reprobates."

I do not wish to dwell upon this melancholy theme; but who can look back at the dark ages of persecuting bigotry without uttering a sigh of silent indignation, and dropping a tear of sympathy over the groans of bleeding humanity! Who can see the benign religion of the Lord Jesus, thus dishonoured by its professed ministers, without feeling for the insulted honour of our gracious master, and for the degradation of human nature! If any person wishes to be instructed in the secret mysteries of priestcraft, and the almost incredible extent of spiritual wickedness in high places, let him read the history of the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth, centuries. Were I to produce extracts in proof of all the abominations of those times my book would swell into volumes; but as I shall have occasion frequently to refer to their profound and cunning policy, it may be necessary, once for all, to give a few specimens of their religious hypocrisy, wickedness and cruelty, as exhibited and handed down to us by different historians.

And first let us produce the accounts of Du Pin, who himself belonged to the Mother church, and therefore cannot be suspected of a design to misrepresent her.

Speaking of *Ratherius*, who gave an account of the tenth century, he says, "In the second part of his treatise, *Ratherius* more particularly falls upon the immodesty of the clergy, which was at such a height in his time, that one could scarce find a man fit to be ordained a bishop, or any bishop fit to ordain others.

"After this treatise there are five letters of his writing. The first is directed to Martin, bishop of Terrara, wherein he acquaints him that his clergy laid several crimes to his charge, particularly that of ordaining several infants for money."

Speaking of one of the popes, he says, "He did not enjoy his dignity long: for that Sergius, whom we formerly mentioned, being come to Rome, seized on Christophilus, put him in prison, and stepped himself into St. Peter's chair. This man is esteemed a monster, not only for his ambition and the violent proceedings he was guilty of, but also upon the account of his loose morals. He had a bastard by Marosia the daughter of Theodora, who being a long time before highly in the favour of Adalbert, bore a great sway in Rome. This bastard son of his was afterwards promoted to the popedom by the intrigues of this Marosia, and took upon him the name of John xi. as we shall show in the sequel."

Again, a little after, he adds, "About this time Peter, archbishop of Ravenna, sent frequently to Rome a deacon of his church, called John, to pay his due respects to the pope. Theodora, that impudent whore, having seen him fell desperately in love with him, and prevailed upon him to maintain a shameful familiarity with her. While they lived thus lustfully together, the bishop of Bologna, dying, this John was chose in his place. But before he was consecrated, the bishop of Ravenna dies also, and Theodora prevails upon John to quit the bishoprick of Bologna, and to accept of this archbishoprick. He thereupon returns back to Rome, and was ordained archbishop of Ravenna. Within a while after, the pope, (namely Landon) who had ordained him, dies; God calling him to give an account of his unjust proceedings in ordaining John. Theodora upon this, that she might not be far from her lover, made him again to relinquish the archbishoprick of Ravenna, and to seize upon St. Peter's chair." see a "New Ecclesiastical history," vol. 8. London edition, page 7, 22. by Du Pin, doctor of the Sorbon.



Thus, if we credit this learned doctor, who was a person of high authority in the Romish communion, the bishops, archbishops and popes, who boasted of their being vicars of Christ upon earth and of their being holy and infallible, were really governed themselves by such as this author justly calls "impudent whores."

Let us now recur to another authority. In the Biographical and Martyrological dictionary, we find the following account, among many others of the same description:

"Another Auto de Fe is thus described by the reverend doctor Gedde, 'At the place of execution there are so many stakes set as there are prisoners to be burned, a large quantity of dry furze being set about them.

'The stakes of the protestants, or, as the inquisitors call them the professed, are about four yards high, and have each a small board, whereon the prisoners are seated within half a yard of the top. The professed then go up a ladder between two priests, who attend them the whole day of execution. When they come even with the forementioned board, they turn about to the people, and the priests spend near a quarter of an hour in exhorting them to be reconciled to the see of Rome. On their refusing, the priests come down, and the executioner ascending, turns the professed from off the ladder upon the seat, chains their bodies close to the stakes, and leaves them.

'The priests then go up a second time to renew their exhortations, and if they find them ineffectual, usually tell them at parting, 'That they leave them to the devil, who is standing at their elbow ready to receive their souls, and carry them with him into the flames of hell-fire, as soon as they are out of their bodies.'

'A general shout is then raised, and when the priests get off the ladder, the universal cry is, 'Let the dogs beards be made;' (which implies, singe their beards) this is accordingly performed by means of flaming furzes thrust against their faces with long poles.

'This barbarity is repeated till their faces are burnt, and is accompanied with loud acclamations. Fire is then set to the furzes, and the criminals are consumed.'

"Numerous are the martyrs who have borne these rigours with the most exemplary fortitude: and we hope that every protestant, whose fate may expose him to the merciless tyranny of papists, will act consistent with the duty of a christian, when they consi-

der the great rewards that await them." Biog. and Mart. Dictionary, page 292. Another description is as follows.

"First time of torturing."

"On refusing to comply with the iniquitous demands of the inquisitors, by confessing all the crimes they thought fit to charge him with, he was immediately conveyed to the torture room, where no light appeared but what two candles gave. That the cries of the sufferers might not be heard by the other prisoners, this room is lined by a kind of quilting, which covers all the crevices and deadens the sound.

"Great was the prisoner's horror on entering this infernal place, when suddenly he was surrounded by six wretches, who, after preparing the tortures, stripped him naked to his drawers. He was then laid upon his back upon a kind of stand, elevated a few feet from the floor.

"They began the operation by putting an iron collar round his neck, and a ring to each foot, which fastened him to the stand. His limbs being thus stretched out, they wound two ropes round each arm, and two round each thigh; which ropes being passed under the scaffold, through holes made for that purpose, were all drawn tight at the same instant of time, by four of the men, on a given signal.

"It is easy to conceive that the pains which immediately succeeded were intolerable; the ropes which were of a small size, cut through the prisoner's flesh to the bone, making the blood gush out at eight different places thus bound at a time. As the prisoner persisted in not making any confession of what the inquisitor required, the ropes were drawn in this manner four times successively.

"It is to be observed that a physician and surgeon attended, and often felt his temples, in order to judge of the danger he might be in; by which means his tortures were for a small space suspended, that he might have sufficient opportunity of recovering his spirits, to sustain each ensuing torture.

"In all this extremity of anguish, while the tender frame is tearing, as it were, in pieces, while at every pore it feels the sharpest pangs of death, and the agonizing soul is just ready to burst forth, and quit its wretched mansion, the ministers of the inquisition have the obduracy of heart to look on without emotion, and calmly to advise the poor distracted creature, to confess his imputed guilt, in doing which they tell him he may obtain a free pardon, and receive absolution.

“Females who fall into the hands of the inquisitors, have not the least favour shown them on account of the softness of their sex, but are tortured with as much severity as the male prisoners, with the additional mortification of having the most shocking indecencies added to the most savage barbarities.” *Biog. and Mart. Dictionary*, page 293, 294.

Another account related by Du Pin, concerning pope John the twelfth, is worthy of particular observation. “This man,” says he, “was so far from having any of those qualities requisite for so great a dignity, that he was a monster in debauchery and irregularity. That John was not one of those, who being covered with sheep’s clothing, are inwardly ravenous wolves; but that he committed publicly and in the eye of the world, diabolical actions, without putting himself to the trouble of concealing them.—That he had abused the widow of Ranier, Stephania his father’s concubine, the widow Ann and her neice, and that he had made his court the very sink of debauchery. The clergy and laity then present [at Rome] cry’d out that they had seen him *drink a health to the devil, and swear by the heathen Gods in his play at hazards.*” *New Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 8, page 10, 11.

Such are the men to whom the laity are required to yield a tame and a blind submission. They must not presume to use their own judgment, because it is possible for them to err; and when they are informed that the popish priesthood possess infallibility, a distinguishing prerogative of Almighty God, they must receive the holy tidings, like dutiful children, without having the assurance to ask for any proof of this blasphemous claim. Human reason is very weak and deceitful, says the pope; therefore, lay it aside, and humbly receive the sure instructions of the church. The senses are very fallacious, says the sceptic, therefore, tamely receive what “philosophy teaches,” without presuming to call it in question. These gentlemen appear to agree remarkably well in their views; but I hope the world will learn that there is less danger of error in using the faculties of judging which God has given them, than in believing things merely because priests and philosophers are pleased to say they are true.

Let us next consider whether the evidence of *reasoning* be also inseparable from that of revelation.

Reasoning is necessary to enable us to perceive the evidence that our scriptures come from God, as has been shown in the case of miracles, and might be shown in other branches of the subject. And will any one say that there is no necessity for us to discover

this evidence, and that we ought to take for granted without any proof, that the bible is of God? If so, Mahometans ought to take the Alcoran for granted: and we ought all to take for granted that the church of Rome is infallible: for their infallibility is built upon this very principle. They know it is impossible for them to give us any *proof* of it, and therefore they think our carnal reason ought to take it for granted without proof. If we wish any man in the world to believe the scriptures without proper evidence, we of consequence sanction the grand principle of popery, and virtually declare that it is a righteous thing for them thus to impose upon their unsuspecting followers.

A point of doctrine proved by the scriptures, before the truth and divinity of those scriptures are ascertained, is exactly like a deduction of reasoning, built upon an hypothesis. As all rational belief in the conclusion, is proportioned to the degree of evidence we perceive in the premises; so our confidence in any point of doctrine proved by the testimony of revelation, is and ought to be in exact proportion to the evidence we perceive that the revelation is true, by which the doctrine in question is established: and if we encourage people to receive Christianity blindfold, without labouring to discover the evidence of its truth, we encourage the very principle which led philosophers to take certain hypotheses for granted, in the same blindfold manner, and to build conclusions upon them, till they proved that the heavens and the earth have no real existence.

I write thus, not from a suspicion that revelation is supported by slender evidence, but from a conviction that the evidence is abundant: I wish all men in the world to examine it, the more attentively the better; and when I see christians manifest a disposition, by indirect hints or otherwise, to discourage the diligent exercise of reason, and seem to think it unsafe to search the grounds of Christianity too closely, I cannot help thinking they secretly suspect our religion stands upon rather a sandy basis, and that it cannot well bear a close and impartial examination.

Perhaps in this I am too censorious: perhaps they perceive the evidence of revelation more clearly than myself; but knowing the blindness of the human heart, they are afraid to encourage the use of reason among the people in general, lest they should wildly abuse their reason, and run into infidelity. Alas, my brother! this is granting deists the very thing which they contend for: this is granting that the deists of our country have been led into infidelity, by reflection, or because they would think and examine for themselves,

and that the cause why others have not followed their example, is, that priests and parents have prevailed with them to guard against the danger of using their reason.

I am persuaded, on the contrary, that the best method to keep infidelity from becoming general in any country, is, to train the inhabitants from their youth, to close thinking and reasoning. If we endeavour to establish in them the habit of taking things for granted without evidence, and without examination, we may indeed preserve them for a while in a loose profession of christianity; but let it be remembered, that the wickedness and blindness of man's heart are not to be cured by the neglect of his rational faculties, but by the proper exercise of them, under the influences of divine grace. May a man resist the spirit in a certain method of using his reason? so he may in the neglect of it. Is he sometimes led astray through too much attention and thinking? and how much oftener through the want of it? Are some persons led into infidelity, who are of a reasonable turn of mind? and how many more who never reasoned for an hour since they were born? how many drunken infidels are cursing and blaspheming about the streets every day, who are almost as ignorant of the nature and grounds of christianity as a savage? And were these witty and jovial deists led to disbelieve and despise the religion of their country, by being too much indulged in the use of their reason? No; God knows if there was no other degree of reason among men, than the quantum of it possessed and exercised by such boasted free-thinkers, we should have but a very scanty pittance of it under the sun.

Let any man lift up his eyes, and take a survey of popish countries, where men for centuries have been trained up to implicit faith, and where "*ignorance was the mother of devotion,*" and "*reason the greatest enemy to faith.*" What fruits have been produced by those maxims? They produced a servile and barbarous superstition, under the name of christianity, far worse than paganism,\* and afterwards they produced a swarm of infidels or open atheists.

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\* Dr. Campbell, speaking of Spain, calls it "a country sunk in the most obdurate superstition that ever disgraced human nature." He adds, in a note, "This perhaps will appear to some to be too severe a censure on a country called Christian, and may be thought to recoil on christianity. I do not think it fairly capable of such a construction. That the corruption of the best,

Is it not notorious, that reason has been subdued, and implicit faith instilled into the people by the priests of Rome, more than by any other set of men upon earth? And is it not equally notorious that greater bodies of deists now exist in popish countries, than in any other countries in christendom? Why then do we vainly imagine that we shall obstruct the progress of infidelity by going back to the popish standard, and by persuading God's rational creatures that it is dangerous for them to use their reason? If we could persuade them to guard against pride, prejudice, hypotheses, and sophistry, and prevail with men in general to exercise their reason with all possible attention and regularity, I think it would appear, and the discovery would become more general too, that popery and infidelity are really supported by the same weapons, and that they are both as much under the necessity of sneaking into dark corners to avoid the light of reason, as a bird of night to cower down into some deep grove, or hidden corner of the world, to avoid the illuminating beams of the sun as he shines with brilliant grandeur through the heavens.

But man's reason, we are told, since the fall of Adam, has become so corrupt that it is a very deceitful guide.

Does this mean that our reasoning faculties, when used in the best manner in our power, naturally lead us into delusion? or that they are as likely to lead us into falsehood as truth? If so, I must dissent from the conclusion, and maintain that true reasoning will no more support falsehood than it did before the fall of Adam.

If man is greatly corrupted, and prone to run into error and wickedness, does it hence follow that his eyes and ears and other

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things produces the worst has grown into a proverb: and, on the most impartial inquiry, I do not imagine it will be found that any species of idolatry ever tended so directly to extirpate humanity, gratitude, natural affection, equity, mutual confidence, good faith, and every amiable and generous principle from the human breast, as that gross perversion of the christian religion which is established in Spain. It will not surely be affirmed, that our Saviour intended any censure on the Mosaic institution, or genuine Judaism, when he said, *Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.* Yet the words plainly imply, that even pagans, by being converted to the Judaism, that was then professed, were made children of hell, and consequently corrupted, instead of being reformed." See Campbell's dissertation on miracles, third edition, page 237.

natural faculties have become so corrupt that they are no longer to be trusted? It does not.

Was Adam's intellectual and moral faculties so destroyed, by his apostacy, that he could no longer distinguish truth from falsehood, or right from wrong? If so, wherein did he differ from a horse, or any other beast of the field? If he could no longer distinguish between right and wrong, it was surely impossible for him to have any conviction of the guilt or turpitude of his past actions, or any sense of obligation to his maker for the future. For how can a creature know he has done wrong, or that he ought to do right, after he has lost all capacity to distinguish between them?

Does God require of man to follow the dictates of his reason and conscience, or to depart from them? If to depart from them, it follows that it is contrary to the will of God for a man to be conscientious; and to act according to his requirements, we must all act as unreasonably as possible. If he requires us to follow them, then to say they are deceitful, is to say God enjoins on his creatures to follow a deceitful guide.

If it be objected that he has given the Bible as our guide, I answer, 1st, thousands are not in possession of the Bible; and 2d, those who are in possession of it cannot understand it without the exercise of their reason, which, if it be deceitful, will delude them as much in their judgments concerning the meaning of scripture, as in any other matters.

If it be said, the spirit is our guide, I would ask, does the spirit excite us to follow the dictates of reason and conscience, or to act in opposition to them? if to act in opposition to them, then we say the spirit will not allow men to be conscientious, and that it influences them to be unreasonable. But if it influences us to follow them, then we cannot charge our reason and conscience with being deceitful, without charging the Holy Spirit with being equally so, seeing it influences us to follow their dictates.

But if reason and conscience never deceive, how comes it to pass, says one, that men fall into so many delusions? answer, by neglecting or suppressing those faculties, and following some other guide. Does not the apostle affirm that the woman, being deceived, was in the transgression? To say Eve entered into this delusion by following her reason and conscience, is to say those faculties were originally made deceitful; but if it was by departing from them, to follow another guide, then rebellion against God was a violation of reason: and if sin then consisted in acting against reason and conscience, why suppose its nature has since altered?



But the apostles, words are often quoted to prove that a man's conscience may lead him into wickedness: *I have lived in all good conscience unto this day.* Does this mean that Paul had never, to that day, done any thing for which his conscience condemned him? That he had laboured with the utmost candour and attention to know his duty in all things, and had never in his life done any thing which he knew he ought not to do, or left undone any thing which he knew he ought to do? How could he then say that he *was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious?* 1. Tim. i. 13. How could he say (ver. 15) that he was *the chief of sinners?* Did Paul really believe, with the writings of the prophets in his hands, that it was his sacred duty to be a *blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious?* Can a man be conscious of leaving undone that which he knows to be good, and of doing that which he knows to be evil, as Paul did, and all the while have a good conscience? Can a man be *the chief of sinners,* and live in all good conscience through the whole of it? If so, the chief of sinners may assure himself that he is in the way to heaven, for the apostle John saith, *if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.* 1. John iii. 21.

The apostle's words, taken in conjunction with the context, evidently signify that he had regularly kept the Jewish law, by which they were then about to try him: as to this law, says he, for the pretended violation of which, you have bound me with this chain, *I have lived in all good conscience unto this day:* I have never transgressed one of those laws, upon which you hope to found a legal sentence against me.

*Touching the righteousness of the (ceremonial) law he was blameless,* because he had kept it *with the most scrupulous regularity.* And when did Paul, to the end of his life, ever blame himself for any violation of the Jewish or ceremonial law? Never. And why did he not? Because in that respect he had *lived in all good conscience.* But did he never blame himself for persecuting the followers of Jesus Christ? Yes, he reproached himself with it repeatedly, and it was principally on this ground that he pronounced himself *the chief of sinners.* And why? Because in this respect he did not live in all good conscience, as he did in respect to his keeping the law which they charged him with having violated. Did he ever say he killed the disciples of Jesus *in all good conscience?* So far from it, that he represent it as a crime so enormous, that nothing but the plea of ignorance could afford any ground for him to ever hope for mercy.

It is true, he said, "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth,"\* but he no where tells us that this thought arose from either his reason or conscience; but on the contrary, that it arose from the most furious prejudice and malice; "I compelled them to blaspheme," says he; "and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities."† If we are to conclude a man's reason and conscience lead him astray, because he departs from them to follow his furious passions, may we not as well conclude that the devil is still following the dictates of reason, and lives in all good conscience unto this day?

But we are to take it for granted, I suppose, that whenever a man thinks a thing is *right*, that thought arises from his *conscience*, and whenever he thinks a thing is *true*, that thought arises from his *reason*. If this be so, it is plain that all mankind have regularly followed their reason and conscience, and nothing else, from the creation of the world to the present hour, in judging of what is right and of what is true.

Did Paul say, or will any man say for him, that he sincerely and candidly used all the means in his power to know his duty, and that after the most serious and dispassionate reflection, he really felt in his conscience that it was his sacred duty to be *exceeding mad* against the saints, and compel them to blaspheme?

When a man calmly and candidly labours to know his duty, and after consulting his moral judgment, and striving to conceive the matter clearly, has an immediate conviction that the right or wrong of a certain thing is self-evident, this I understand to be a true dictate of an original faculty; call it *conscience*, or what you please. When he has recourse to such principles, to draw conclusion from them, and prove the right or wrong of some other point of moral conduct, this I understand to be *reason* brought into exercise, to enlarge the knowledge we derive from the first principles of morality. When a man uses his utmost endeavours to prove the right or wrong of a certain matter, and cannot find any evidence for or against it, with the help of revelation or otherwise, this I understand to be a matter beyond the reach of his faculties. And while this is the case, his doing it or leaving it undone is to him *indifferent*, because there is no moral evidence within his reach either for or against it. It is true, if there be any probable evidence, or any ground to *presume* that a certain action is wrong, a man ought to refrain from it, because where

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\* *Acts*, xxvi. 9.

† *Acts*, xxvi. 11.

there is ground to doubt the lawfulness of doing a certain action, there can be no hesitation as to the lawfulness of leaving it undone: but where no evidence can be had on one side or the other, not even the slightest degree of presumptive evidence, the thing is perfectly indifferent, and ought so to be considered by every man till some proof shall appear to command his belief.

Now if a man should espouse such an indifferent matter, as a very great *duty*, or abhor it as a dreadful *crime*, who will say he is led to this by the dictates of his reason or conscience?

The Pharisees thought they discharged a very great duty in "paying tithes of mint, anise, cummin, and all manner of herbs;" they thought the disciples of Jesus were guilty of a heinous crime in plucking ears of corn, and rubbing them in their hands, on the Sabbath day. Were they led to these conclusions by their conscience? or by their passions and superstitious bigotry?

History informs us that some of the heathens believed it their duty to practise debauchery, as an act of worship or devotion to their gods. Were they led to this belief by following the dictates of their moral judgment? or by following the influence of sensual appetites? It is an easy thing for a man to bring himself to believe that which he strongly wishes to believe. In doing so, he often does violence to the first convictions of his understanding, and thereby establishes himself in opinions directly opposite to some of its clearest dictates. To say every man's opinions of right and wrong are formed by following the evidence of his reason and conscience, is to say no man ever resisted their dictates in regulating his moral opinions, and of course every sinner in the world has lived in all good conscience unto this day. One persuades himself it is right to spend his life in gambling, which he calls an innocent amusement; a second believes it right to oppose all religion, as superstition and priestcraft; a third can see no harm in fornication and adultery, which he calls living according to our nature. Now if those persons have formed their opinions by following the dictates of conscience, and have acted in conformity to their faith, they have surely lived in all good conscience unto this day. And if they followed this evidence without deviation, informing their judgment of right and wrong; and then regulated their actions according to their best judgment, shall we blame them for it, and say they did wrong? If so, we suppose it right for men to resist their conscience and labour to subdue its influence; otherwise it cannot be wrong for them to do the contrary.

I see no way to avoid these consequences but to admit that men

often form their opinions, concerning moral subjects as well as others, by departing from rational and moral evidence, and following the blind influence of prejudice and passion. This being admitted, the consequence is clear, that the absurdities and abominations of the heathens, afford no proof of the deceitfulness of their reason; but, *becoming vain in their imaginations, their foolish heart was darkened* by yielding to the pernicious influence of lust and pride, vanity and superstition.

And are we disposed to excuse them entirely, and to lay the whole blame on those judging faculties, which God Almighty gave them, and the exercise of which he demanded of them, to subdue their passions, and to regulate their judgments concerning truth and falsehood, right and wrong?

Whence arises this sentiment which goes to apologise for human depravity? Whence this inclination to undervalue the reason of mankind, and represent it as being very deceitful and fallacious in its operations? Does it arise from the supposition that as reason is shown to be fluctuating and uncertain, that the truth and certainty of revelation will appear in an inverse proportion? Alas, if reason be a false guide, it is as likely to bear false witness concerning the evidence of revelation, as any thing else; for suppose you prove the truth and divinity of the scriptures to a man, by the most clear and conclusive arguments, how easy is it for him to reply, "It is true, sir, that you have proved this matter by very clear arguments; but you have often taught me to consider human reason as being so corrupt, that it is as likely to support falsehood as truth; and how do I know but this is one of its deceitful sallies, intended to impose a false revelation upon me?" Thus the person furnishes a weapon against himself, and evinces that every attempt to demolish the evidence of reason, equally militates against that of revelation.

Or, will it be said that Mr. Paine was in the right, when he declared that every man should have a new revelation, to confirm the old, before he is "obliged to believe it?" If so, Paine himself and every other deist in the world, is entirely excusable, unless it can be made appear that any one of them has resisted the light of a new revelation: they have had the deceitful evidence of reason; but this does not render them blamable for their unbelief, because reason is supposed to be as apt to bear witness to a falsehood as to the truth; therefore an exact attention to its dictates may have led them into infidelity.

And this is the way it seems, that we are to support the honour of revelation! we must degrade and undervalue the reason of mankind, under the cant names of human reason, carnal reason, and the like, and then to be sure revelation will shine forth, and bear down all before it! This poor, mean stratagem, first invented in a popish conclave, is so far from supporting christianity, that it has strengthened the hands of our enemies, and enabled them to make proselytes, by proving out of our own mouths, that a man cannot be a christian, without degrading and renouncing his rational faculties.

And suffer me to repeat the question, if our rational faculties are fallacious, why are they not as likely to lead us astray, when we use them to find out the true meaning of scripture, as in any thing else? If it be said the use of a man's reason is not essential to the right understanding of the scriptures, why do not our horses understand them as well as ourselves? The apostle tells us we are to *compare spiritual things with spiritual*, and it is a common maxim among us, that scripture is to be explained by scripture. Now what is this but proper and regular reasoning? we compare one passage with another, as our *premises*, and from the comparison, we draw our *conclusion* concerning the true meaning of scripture. But if reason be deceitful, the whole of that deceit is carried into our conception of the scriptures, whenever we attempt to find out their true meaning. In vain may you recur to the old objection, that it is *possible* for us to be mistaken, and to take that to be sound reason, which is altogether sophistical; for the same thing may be urged against inspiration, common sense, and every kind of evidence in the world. If we refuse to trust our faculties, till some criterion be produced, to prove the abstract impossibility of our ever being mistaken, our case is perfectly incurable, and we must wander into the regions of universal scepticism, or retire to the bosom of popish infallibility, where the danger of our being deceived is tenfold more manifest than it was before.

It will be equally unavailing to say "we must lay aside our uncertain reason, and depend entirely upon the light of the holy spirit;" for if the spirit is to give us an immediate direction in every thing, reason and scripture together are entirely useless. Why do I want a bible any more than my reason, if I have an internal guide that shows me on all occasions what is right and true?

The holy spirit is given to assist the faculties of our nature, but not to supersede the necessity of using them. Does God give

his spirit to reasonable creatures, that they may lay aside their reason? Does he give a Bible to mankind, and then give his spirit to enable them to do without it? Does he *enlighten the eyes of our understanding*, in order for us to lay our understanding by? Does he demand of us to exercise and improve our talents, and then give his spirit to excuse our hiding them in a napkin? Has he created us with active powers, that we should diligently use them, and afterwards given his spirit to justify our laziness, and to make those powers altogether unnecessary? God is not the author of such contradictions. Man is the author of them; and while some whimsical enthusiasts have laid aside their reason, and almost taken leave of their senses, under pretence of having a spiritual light that rendered them no longer necessary, others from the same frenzy have laid aside the Bible\* on account of the abundant revelations they were daily conscious of in their own souls, and which raised them far above the want of reason, or the carnal letter of the scriptures.

Leaving those geniuses to their own spiritual imaginations, we come next to consider the dependance of reason upon revelation.

As the progressive exercise of reason enables us to carry our discoveries far beyond the first principles of common sense, and thus greatly to enlarge our knowledge; so the inestimable gift of revelation carries our views still higher, and enables us to make discoveries which reason alone could never make. This does not imply that our intellectual faculties are ever deceitful; they are always true as far as they go; but being naturally feeble, they cannot soar to the *highest regions* of truth, attainable by man, without the assistance of revelation. In like manner the dictates of common sense are always true, as far as they go; but they cannot bring us even to the middle regions without the help of reason: and yet their humble sphere is so very important, that without it we lose the benefit of reason and revelation together, and drop into the shades of universal ignorance.

The great necessity and advantages of revelation have been exhibited by many good men, whose shoes I am unworthy to loose. All that is necessary on the present occasion, is briefly to mention a few particulars, which may serve to illustrate the mutual dependence of the three great sources of evidence, which is the design of the present section.

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\* See John Nelson's Journal.

First, men in general, have neither time nor talents to learn every thing needful to be known, by the slow and cautious method of reasoning, nor yet to comprehend them when exhibited by others. They must of necessity devote their chief attention to the common labours of life, and though they are capable of reasoning, yet they have not time to enter into it extensively; and therefore the goodness of God has given them a plain revelation, composed of truths the most essential that ever have been presented to the human mind. If they only exercise that degree of reason which is necessary to discover the signs of divine wisdom, goodness and holiness, that are very manifest in the scriptures, and strive impartially to understand them, nothing more is needful; and they have a fund of instruction before their eyes, adapted to every capacity. This point has been exhibited in a satisfactory manner by *Mr. Locke*, and many others.

Secondly, the doctrine of our immortality, or future existence, lies so deep, that few men are able to perceive its evidence by reasoning alone; and the most penetrating minds have found some remaining doubts, which nothing but revelation could remove.

Thirdly, the original cause of man's innate propensities to evil, lay hid in obscurity, and puzzled all serious minds, till it was exhibited by revelation: reason now confirms the truth of it, by deductions from matter of fact and common sense; but that the first man involved his posterity in this wretched state, by his rebellion against God, would yet have remained a secret, had no revelation from God been given to mankind.

Fourthly, the peculiar kindness of God towards the children of men and his, deep interest for their eternal welfare, is a pure discovery of revelation. Without it, we should be totally ignorant whether God would ever pardon our transgressions or not, and equally so, respecting the method his wisdom has adopted to make that pardon accord with the pure and righteous principles of his moral government. But, *Jesus is the light and the life of men*; and *this life and immortality have been brought to light by the gospel*.

Fifthly, our need of a divine influence to assist our faculties, together with God's willingness to grant us the aid of his holy spirit, we learn from the holy scriptures; and without a revelation from God, of some kind, all our views of this matter must have been merely hypothetical.

Sixthly, the existence of other orders of intelligent creatures



would have remained unknown to us, or at best but barely probable, had not God condescended to inform us in a supernatural way. Now we know that we have brethren in some other region of the universe, to whose society our heavenly Father intends to raise us, if we act well our part in this state of probation. We learn also, that there are other wicked creatures in the universe besides ourselves; that they have power to suggest evil thoughts to our minds, in some way unknown to us; and that it is a matter of great consequence for us to set a proper guard upon our thoughts and most secret desires. These are matters of infinite concernment, on which our virtue, tranquillity and future blessedness, materially depend.

Lastly, without revelation we could never have known the intention of God to raise our bodies from the grave, to renew the face of nature, and to make new heavens and a new earth wherein righteousness shall dwell. The gloomy thought might have accompanied us through life, and we could recur to nothing but conjecture to remove it, that the present wretched state of things would continue forever: that our descendants, in succession, and all the innocent animals through the earth, and air, and water, would be a prey to misery, bloodshed and dissolution, to all eternity. But revelation brightens the prospect before us, and casts death and misery "into the back ground of the scene." It invites man to act up to the proper dignity of his nature, gives him assurances of every necessary aid, and stimulates him by prospects, calculated to rouse into action all the intellectual and moral faculties of his soul, and which are every way worthy the wisdom and goodness of God. In a word, every thing contained in this heavenly system, is friendly to virtue and human happiness, and no man, but a wicked one, will find any thing in it to terrify or alarm him.

Those points, and many others, might be pursued to great advantage; but these hints may suffice to show the connexion of reason and revelation, and their mutual dependance upon each other.

He that rejects revelation because he possesses the light of reason, is like an astronomer who casts all his telescopes into the sea, because he has eyes, wherewith he may behold the stars or celestial planets. He who neglects and despises reason, because he has revelation, is like an astronomer who blindfolds his eyes under pretence of honoring and exalting his telescopes. He who uses them in harmony, is like an astronomer who makes a proper

use of his eyes and telescopes together, without ever dreaming that either of them can be spared or neglected, except by an ignoramus that is unacquainted with their utility. *For we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.* 11. Cor. iii. 18.

The objections commonly urged against one of those means of knowledge, are equally applicable to the other.

Is reason in the hands of depraved and fallen creatures? so is revelation. Are we liable to mistake the voice of reason? so we are the voice of revelation. Have men perverted the faculties of reason, till they have bewildered themselves and those who heard them? so have men *wrested the scriptures, even unto their own destruction.* Has a confused system of foolish opinions been long prevalent in the world, under the name of reason and philosophy? so have as foolish and as wicked system's long prevailed in the world, under the name of Christianity. Are there many contradictory opinions which claim the support of reason? so there are many as contradictory which claim the support of revelation. Have many deists pretended to be led to infidelity by *following their reason?* so they have pretended to be led into it *by reading the scriptures.* Is reason unable of itself, to effect and change the heart of man? so is revelation. Who can forgive sins but God only?

They also have the same recommendations. Is revelation the gift of God? so also is reason. Does revelation appear to better advantage the more its nature and principles are examined? so also does reason. Was revelation intended for the instruction and happiness of mankind? so also was reason. Is revelation opposed to all foolishness and wickedness? so also is reason. Does the apostle say his opposers were enemies of the gospel? so does he say they were wicked and *unreasonable men.* Does the psalmist say *the law of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes?* so does the apostle say *it is our reasonable service.* Does the apostle caution us against *vain philosophy and science falsely so called?* so he does against *false apostles, deceitful workers, who would transform themselves into the apostles of Christ.* *Are we commanded to search the scriptures, and study them diligently?* so we are commanded to *be always ready to give every one an answer, that asketh us a reason of our hope.*

It is true the apostle opposes the wisdom of this world, and says it is foolishness with God; but he no where opposes reason, and I hope no one will charge him with saying any part of truth

is foolishness with God. It is a dangerous thing, you say, to blend philosophy and christianity together, and the very way our religion was at first corrupted, was partly by connecting it with the heathen philosophy, and partly by bringing into the profession of it, the miserable superstitions of their idolatrous theology. I believe this account is perfectly correct; but do you therefore infer that reason is a very dangerous guide? It seems then, you are entirely satisfied that Aristotle's philosophy, and the superstitious theology of the Pagan priests, were altogether founded upon truth and reason!

If the heathen philosophy or theology were true, and the gospel true, what injury would result from their being brought together? Does one truth contradict another, or must we really take for granted, that one truth added to another, will produce a falsehood? Until I be prevailed on to admit the ridiculous hypothesis that one part of truth is injured and destroyed by another, I must be permitted still to believe that no philosophy that is false, was ever supported by reason, and none that is true was ever unfriendly to the gospel.

The vain philosophy and wisdom of this world which St. Paul so justly reprobated, was science falsely so called, *i. e.* it did not consist in real knowledge, which has the first principles of truth for its foundation; but it consisted in a system of fantastical opinions, built upon unsupported hypotheses, that were invented by the vanity and roving imaginations of men. All this was foolishness with God, because it was real foolishness in itself. The judgment of God is according to truth, and he pronounces a thing to be foolish because it is so: he never cautioned us against any branch of truth, because falsehood is dangerous; or against the exercise of reason, because it is dangerous for men to be unreasonable. These inconsistencies belong not to God, or to his inspired apostles: we have secretly and inadvertently borrowed them from the dark stratagems of popery, and as sure as God is the author of reason and revelation, and as truth is consistent with itself, no branch of human knowledge will ever be supported by one and contradicted by the other.

Upon the whole, I conclude, that common judgment, reason and revelation, are three that bear record on earth, and these three are so inseparably united that we cannot abandon any one of them without taking leave of the other two,

## SECTION VII.

*Of analogy and presumption.*

HAVING examined the three chief sources of human knowledge; it may be worth while to inquire whether there be any other method of discovering truth, that is not comprehended in any one of the foregoing means of instruction.

I am unable to conceive any thing else, that has even the appearance of evidence, excepting it be the subject of *analogy*; and a close inspection of this will convince us, I think, that analogy is properly comprehended under the foregoing division. It affords a self-evident probability, and thus comes under the province of common or intuitive judgment: and when we reason upon this ground, we may be led to many probable conclusions: but if our first principle be only probable, there is nothing more than probability in any conclusion deduced from it by regular reasoning. Let it suffice to illustrate this matter by three examples.

1. There is a self-evident probability, from analogy, that the other planets around our sun are the habitations of some kind of living creatures. We see that our earth abounds with various orders of animals, possessing life; and astronomers have proved by very clear evidence, that the other planets are very large bodies, like this which we inhabit; hence, we immediately perceive that there is a very strong probability that those vast bodies do not roll through the heavens for nothing, any more than the world in which we live, but that they minister to the happiness of living creatures: this is called reasoning from analogy; but the first principle of this reasoning is self-evident. How did we learn, or how can we prove, that if one thing is known to resemble another, in some particulars, it probably resembles it in some others that are unknown? Will you say from *experience*? I answer, the inferences we draw from experience, are built upon the same analogy: I know by experience that day and night have succeeded each other, without intermission, for thirty years: hence, I conclude, that for thirty years to come, the same uninterrupted regularity will continue. But this conclusion is not certain, and for aught I know to the contrary, the sun may be darkened, and the moon withdraw her light, in less than thirty years from this day. Can any philosopher demonstrate the contrary? He cannot. The conclusion is only probable, because it is built on a first principle derived from analogy, which affords no other than probable evidence.

2. It is very probable that the republic of America, will some time be changed into a monarchy. Yet it is not certain that it ever will, because the conclusion is only built upon the analogy of human nature, and the practice of former ages in different parts of the world.

3. There is a self-evident probability that if God should give another revelation to mankind, it will also be attended with certain difficulties, which could only be solved by candid and patient reflection, and that it would contain some mysteries beyond the grasp of human understanding. This conclusion is also drawn from analogy. The works of creation, the course of providence, the law of Moses, the gospel of Christ, and every part of the Almighty's works from the beginning of the world unto this day, are of this description. They are full of difficulties, and even contradictions, in the judgment of those who are too proud, too merry, or too slothful to examine them; but to the candid and sincere, those difficulties only afford matter of diligence, and useful improvements, while the incomprehensible parts afford matter of humility and just veneration for that infinite being, who cannot be completely comprehended by any finite understanding. But that another revelation, would exactly resemble the foregoing in those particulars, is only probable: God may hereafter change the state of the world, and the nature of man's probation; the powers of evil may be so subdued, and virtue and piety so established, that the same degree of laborious thinking may not be required, that is now needful for mankind; and in such a state of things, a revelation may be given, the evidence and principles of which will be perceived in a more immediate and intuitive way, without the slow method of comparison and consequential reasoning.

The probability arising from analogy, is sometimes called *presumptive evidence*. When men are cast into prison, there is a presumption that they will try to make their escape, because the supposition accords with the analogy of nature; and if they declare they will not go away from the prison, we are not disposed to leave the doors open upon the strength of their promise, because there is too strong a presumption against them.

When events are related by any person that are very extraordinary, and not according to the common analogy or resemblance of occurrences which the events of one age or country bears to those of another, there ariseth a presumption against the truth of his relation. But this presumption can never rise higher than pro-

bability, and totally disappears when combatted by positive evidence.

If an individual should tell me he saw my friend yesterday, who died more than a year ago, and conversed with him for half an hour, the presumption would be so strong against it, that I should be apt to question the fact; but if twelve men whom I could name, should corroborate his testimony and declare solemnly that they were present in open daylight, and conversed with my deceased friend for half an hour, I could no more disbelieve them than I could give up all confidence in my best tried friends and acquaintances on earth.

When the first astronomer informed his contemporaries, that he could name the precise minute, for months beforehand, when there would be an eclipse of the sun or the moon, there was a strong presumption that it was mere conjecture; but the evidence of sense has fully convinced the world, that truth may stand directly opposite to the highest probabilities that are only presumptive; and of course, the probabilities arising from analogy, should only be credited when there is no clear evidence against them, and not even then with a belief too decisive and dogmatical.

Infidels appear to be governed in their peculiar opinions, chiefly by analogy and presumption. They will not believe that man was ever in a state of innocence and perfect happiness, or that the elements of nature were ever different from their present arrangements: they will not believe a revelation was ever given from heaven: they will not believe miracles were ever performed: they will not believe any prophecy concerning a different state of the world in future: they will not believe the christian doctrine of a future state, or that mankind will ever be raised from the dead. And why all this unbelief? Is it for want of evidence? not at all: the evidence is so clear that they have to do violence to their reason to resist it; but they have contracted an almost unconquerable fondness for analogy and presumption, which they strain to the uttermost, and prefer to the plainest and most conclusive deductions of reason.

If we follow the dictates of common sense and reason, and believe the truths supported by them with corresponding confidence, they call us *dogmatical*. They are resolved, if we believe them, "to hold themselves in that state of doubt, and suspense of judgment, which is so becoming in a philosopher." But that sceptical doubt is only indulged, it would appear, when *religious* matters are in question: in matters *contrary* to religion, they seem so very dog-

matical, that they are bent upon a most obstinate adherence to their opinions, in opposition to all reason, when a bare presumption would be their only ground of credence, if there was no testimony against them.

Mr. Hume says "*A wise man will proportion his belief to the evidence.*" I presume this philosopher never spoke a more important truth; and if all men would follow it, there would be a death blow given both to the sceptical and dogmatical spirit, which equally offends against this axiom. The former, consists in giving a less degree of credit than the evidence requires; and the latter, in giving a greater: and it is as hard to determine which is the more dangerous or irrational, as it is to determine which of two travellers whom a third conducts through an unknown desert, most effectually loses the benefit of his guide; the man who runs on before him, or the one who loiters in the woods behind.

Scepticism and dogmatism both consist in believing without evidence: the former, in believing a subject is *doubtful* when there is no evidence of its being doubtful, the latter in believing a subject to be *certain*, when there is no evidence of its certainty. He who believes any proposition with the confidence of certainty, which has no foundation but analogy, is very dogmatical; he who doubts of a truth that is self-evident, like that of his own existence, is equally sceptical; and it is no uncommon thing for those extremes to meet in the same person.

Infidel philosophers have doubted the present existence of the world; they have doubted the evidence of sense and all human testimony; they have doubted "the axioms of mathematics;" and yet those very men have believed with great confidence, *that the course of nature has uniformly been the same from the beginning of the world, that no miracle was ever wrought, and that no revelation was ever given from God to man.* Now if we had no manner of evidence that such things ever did occur, the sole evidence we could have that they did not, would only be presumptive, and therefore in its very nature doubtful: from the analogy of nature, so far as it has come under our observation, we would presume it has always been the same; and if mankind in former ages had seen astonishing miracles, we would presume again, from the analogy of human nature, that they would transmit accounts of them to posterity; but how can it be demonstrated, or proved by any other argument, either that the course of nature has been the same from the creation, or that mankind in former ages, were as much disposed to transmit accounts of miraculous facts to posterity, as the



men of this generation? It is impossible for our objectors to produce any such proof.

Will they affirm then, that the thing is self evident? That there is a self-evident *probability* of it, is granted; but this implies a degree of uncertainty; and if such uncertain analogies are among their most confident opinions, let the world judge who are the men that properly merit the charge of being dogmatical.

Thus it appears, if we had no positive evidence that a miracle was ever wrought, the contrary would be a proper subject of that doubtful kind of belief, or suspense of judgment, in which our philosophers affect to glory, and upon which they congratulate each other, on their freedom from vulgar prejudices; but what shall we say of their dogmatical spirit, when we see them adhere to their presumptions in opposition to proofs and arguments the most convincing and indubitable?

Will they say a presumptive probability can never be overcome by any other evidence? And suppose an army of seven thousand men should conquer an army of ten thousand, both to all appearance equally prepared for the battle, the like of which has sometimes happened; will any one say there was no ground to presume that the army of ten thousand would be victorious? or, that this presumption ought to be adhered to, with obstinate perseverance, in opposition to all the evidence of sense, or of human testimony, that could be brought against it?

When the strange influence of the *loadstone* was first discovered, it had to combat as strong presumptions from analogy as any miracle whatsoever: and will our opponents insist that no evidence should influence us to relinquish our belief of such uncertain probabilities? Then all navigators and philosophers are fools for believing in the mystery of *magnetism*, which, like miracles, suspends the law of gravitation.

To this might be added the innumerable mysteries of *mechanical* operations and *chemistry*, many of which are so opposite to the whole course of my experience, at least, and have such strong presumption against them, that I might justly consider them as very doubtful matters, were they not confirmed by the testimony of men whose veracity cannot be doubted.

But perhaps I am mistaken all this while, in taking for granted that our sceptical philosophers, who have doubted the very existence of earth and heaven, were at the same time very dogmatical in opinions founded upon mere presumption. It cannot be possible, says a serious enquirer, that they only doubted of some things

and in others were as confident as other people: much less, that their doubts arose in proportion to the strength of the evidence, and that they chose always to be confident, where there was no evidence, but some uncertain probability! Was it not their grand maxim that "all things are *equally* doubtful?"

I answer, this was indeed their *professed* maxim, but their own writings, as well as their actions, will prove that they considered themselves at liberty to depart from it, whenever it might suit their convenience. I desire no better testimony in the case than that of Mr. Hume himself. Every one acquainted with his philosophical writings, knows that he not only professed to doubt, or disbelieve, the existence of God, angel and spirit; but that he doubted the existence of earth and sea, and laboured to prove that there is no certainty in mathematical demonstration. And is it possible that this same gentleman had at the same time, some very dogmatical opinions? Hear his own words:

"The violations of truth" says he, "are more common in the testimony concerning religious miracles, than in that concerning any other matter of fact." And did not our philosopher believe this proposition very *confidently*? So much so that he immediately adds, "This must diminish very much the authority of the former testimony, and make us form a general resolution, never to lead any attention to it, with whatever specious pretext it may be covered."\*

From this we may perceive with how much confidence Mr. Hume believed "that the course of nature had been uniform from the beginning, and that no religious miracles was ever wrought." His belief in this was so dogmatical, that it led him to "form a general resolution" to reject all evidence against his opinion, and "never lend any *attention* to it, with whatever specious pretext it may be covered."

Thus, you observe, his "sceptical doubts and suspense of judgment," are only resorted to when those subjects are introduced, concerning which he chuses to doubt or disbelieve; but when evidence is to be brought against the beloved presumptions, founded on analogy, the boasted "suspense of judgment" is laid aside, and "a general resolution" substituted in its place, "never to lend any attention" to the evidence, but to adhere to his own dogmas with the unshaken firmness of a popish inquisitor.

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\* See his Essay on Miracles, page 204; and Dr. Campbell's answer, p. 102.

In another part of the same essay, he says, "No testimony for any kind of miracle can ever possibly amount to a probability, much less to a proof."

These instances, to which many of a like nature might be added, seem indicative of very strong faith: and our wise men, it appears, who have so much complained of the blind credulity of the vulgar, are found to be as resolute in their belief as their honest neighbours. Their inconsistency would not be so intolerable, if they could be prevailed on to believe their own senses, and the common dictates of reason; but instead of this, they turn human knowledge upside down; in matters that are self-evident, they glory in being doubtful, and only become confident in those cases that are naturally dubious and uncertain; and which is worse than all, they carry their immovable faith so high as to resist every kind of positive evidence, and resolve not to give it a hearing. But it is not a little surprising, that the same persons who in general manifest such a violent fondness for analogy, abandon this ground entirely, when it suits their purpose, and draw conclusions in direct opposition to it. Almost the whole of that knowledge which we denominate experience, depends upon the veracity of our senses: it is derived through the medium of smelling, tasting, feeling, seeing, and hearing. There is a regular uniformity in the operations of these senses through the general course of our lives, and we daily find the objects around us to be what they are represented to be by this uniform experience. Our senses never cause us to take fire for water, or water for fire. When my eyes testify that one man alone comes into my room, I always find there is but one, and I am in no danger of mistaking him for a company of five, seven, or ten. And so of other things.

Now if a man declare he saw a miracle performed; that he saw for instance, a person standing by the sea side, who commanded a tree to be plucked up by the roots, and be removed into the sea, and it instantly obeyed him; there would be a strong presumption against the reality of this fact. Why? Because of its being so contrary to experience: *i. e.* contrary to what we have generally seen and heard. And suppose another man should testify of a certain particular case, in which *his senses actually deceived him, and their regular dictates led him to believe a falsehood*; there would be precisely the same presumption against the reality of this fact. Why? Because it would be equally opposite to the general course of our experience. What ought we then to do with these extraordinary cases? We ought surely to withhold our assent, till the facts

be supported by clear and convincing evidence, that would bear the closest scrutiny and inspection. Then, as reasonable beings, we should yield to the conclusion, without making any arbitrary additions to it: we should believe that in cases thus authenticated miracles had been wrought, and the senses of men had deceived them.

But what is the conduct of our infidel philosophers in these matters? The most inconsistent that can be imagined. In case of miracles, they refuse all evidence a fair hearing, and pretend that no proof is able to overcome the presumption arising from common experience; but as to those particular facts which are produced as instances of "fallacy in the senses," they not only give them a ready hearing, but entirely abandon the presumption arising from common experience, and draw a conclusion in direct contradiction of it! They grasp the new circumstance with uncommon fondness and not only believe it with a superficial examination, but leap into the wide conclusion, that all other cases are of the same nature.\* If the senses deceive us in one thing, say they, why not in all? It appears then, that if we could once prevail on those sages to believe a miracle had ever been wrought, they would instantly conclude that all men are working miracles every hour of their lives. If the laws of nature have been suspended in one case, why not in all? If one part of matter (the loadstone) can counteract the law of gravitation, why not all parts? If the sun was eclipsed on one certain day, why not every day? If a certain medicine should cure the yellow fever in one case, why not in all cases? and, to put an end to the queries, we might add, if one man should happen to be an idiot, why not all men.

If instances are produced, of certain particular cases in which the testimony of sense is fallacious, the only fair conclusion of reason would be, "that in some rare cases our senses may deceive us;" and if our opponents will produce instances of the kind, which will bear as close inspection, as the miracles ascribed to the Lord Jesus Christ, I, for one, will yield to the conclusion; but I hope they will excuse every man who understands the principles of reasoning, from drawing an universal conclusion from premises so particular, that they have to explore the most hidden secrets of nature to find any one instance, but such as may be detected in half an hour, and shown to be no fallacy of the senses.

Dr. Reid has convinced me, that the great complaint concerning the fallacy of our senses, is a mere fiction of philosophers; and I

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\* See Berkley and Hume.

cannot help being doubtful (which they say I ought always to be) whether they be able to produce a single instance that will bear examination.

“Complaints of the fallacy of the senses,” says Mr. Reid, “have been very common in ancient and in modern times, especially among the philosophers: and if we should take for granted all that they have said on this subject, the natural conclusion from it might seem to be, that the senses are given to us by some malignant dæmon on purpose to delude us, rather than that they are formed by the wise and beneficial author of nature, to give us true information of things necessary to our preservation and happiness.

Many things called the deceptions of the senses are only conclusions rashly drawn from the testimony of the senses. In these cases the testimony of the senses is true, but we rashly draw a conclusion from it, which does not necessarily follow. We are disposed to impute our errors rather to false information than to inconclusive reasoning, and to blame our senses for the wrong conclusions we draw from their testimony.

“Thus, when a man has taken a counterfeit guinea for a true one, he says his senses deceived him; but he lays the blame where it ought not to be laid: for we may ask him, did your senses give a false testimony of the colour, or of the figure, or of the impression? No. But this is all that they testified, and this they testified truly: from these premises you concluded that it was a true guinea; but this conclusion does not follow; you erred therefore, not by relying upon the testimony of sense, but by judging rashly from its testimony: not only are your senses innocent of this error, but it is only by their information that it can be discovered. If you consult them properly, they will inform you that what you took for a guinea is base metal, or is deficient in weight, and this can only be known by the testimony of sense.

“I remember to have met with a man who thought the argument used by protestants, against the popish doctrine of transubstantiation from the testimony of our senses, inconclusive; because, said he, instances may be given where several of our senses may deceive us: How do we know then that there may not be cases wherein they all deceive us, and no sense is left to detect the fallacy? I begged of him to know an instance wherein several of our senses deceive us. I take, said he, a piece of soft turf, I cut it into the shape of an apple; with the essence of apple I give it the smell of an apple; and with paint, I give it the skin and colour of

an apple. Here then is a body, which, if you judge by your eye, by your touch, or by your smell, is an apple.

“To this I answer, that no one of our senses deceives us in this case. My sight and touch testify that it has the shape and colour of an apple: this is true. The sense of smelling testifies that it has the smell of an apple: this is likewise true, and is no deception. Where then lies the deception? It is evident it lies in this, that because this body has some qualities belonging to an apple, I conclude that it is an apple. This is a fallacy, not of the senses, but of inconclusive reasoning.”\*

This candid and ingenious author examines various other grounds of this charge against the veracity of the senses, and shows that they are rash conclusions, founded on our ignorance of the laws of nature; and makes it appear that though our senses, like all our other faculties, are naturally weak, and subject to accidental disorders, yet no case has been produced in which, upon careful examination, our senses has given deceitful testimony.

It is true, that in some cases the representation of one sense, (that of sight for example) if we judge from the first appearances of things, will lead us to a false conclusion; but is it the part of a philosopher to draw his conclusions from the first appearance, or from that view that is acquired by a patient examination? If we take no pains to examine, but draw our conclusions from the first superficial glance, we may take a sophism for a sound argument, and then declare that our reason had deceived us; or we might draw a rash conclusion from the first view of scripture phrases, and then say the oracles of God are fallacious, and the apostles have deceived us: but these conclusions, though exactly similar to those which are brought to discredit the senses, would excite the just indignation of any person of common reflection; he would instantly see that the delusion of which we complain, was brought on, not by any deceit in our faculties, or in the scriptures, but by our own voluntary ignorance and want of thought.

I will suppose an Indian from the western woods, comes into our civilized region, and, among other curiosities, he is struck with the appearance of a man standing behind a looking glass: he gazes awhile with silent astonishment, thinking one of his red brethren is really standing before him. This man's senses, you say, have deceived him; he thinks there is a glass window in the wall, and that he sees a real man standing in a room on the other side.

\* Reid's Essays, vol. 1. page 288—291.

A philosopher accosts him, and says, "you must know, unlearned stranger, that there is no real man behind that wall; your senses are altogether fallacious, and I counsel you to take warning from this plain example; lay aside your vulgar and dogmatical confidence in sensation, and learn to follow the noble guide of reason!

*Indian.* "Pray Mr. Philosopher, how do you prove by reason, that there is no real man standing before me?"

*Philo.* "I know there is not: I am certain of it."

*Indian.* "Is this what you call giving a *reason*, that you *know*, and that you are *certain*?"

*Philo.* "No: but it has been proved a thousand times, and every body in our country knows it to be as I tell you."

*Indian.* "If it has been proved a thousand times, you can surely prove it once: I want to know what is the argument which proves that this is not really one of my red brethren from some of our towns."

*Philo.* "You may plainly see, by observing the motions of that supposed man, that it is nothing but a figure of yourself: if you raise your hand, or move any other part of your body, you will see that figure imitate all your actions exactly."

*Indian.* "Do you call it offering a *reason* then, to tell me I can *plainly see*? did you not just now declare that my sight is deceitful, and ought not to be trusted? And now you appeal to my fallacious senses, and call this offering a *reason*!"

*Philo.* "But if you will be at the pains to take down this glass, you may both see and feel that there is nothing but a solid wall behind it: therefore it is not possible that you could have seen any other man but the figure of yourself."

*Indian.* "It is true, I both see and feel that there is nothing behind this glass but a solid wall; but you say my senses are deceitful: how do I know then but that there is really a window through the wall, and a man standing on the other side, notwithstanding what I *see* and *feel*? you first tell me my senses deceive me, and propose to prove it by reason; and then you turn about and appeal to my senses for the proof! I suspect sir, that *you* are deceitful, and that I shall gain more wisdom and happiness by trusting my senses, then by following your shuffling and contradictory counsels."

Thus it evidently appears that reason does not correct the supposed fallacy of the senses; but we are indebted to the testimony of the senses for a correction of those fallacious conclusions which



are hastily drawn from the first appearance of things. As to the pretended imposition upon our judgment, by seeing ourselves in a mirror, or seeing a strait stick appear crooked in the water, a savage or a child may be deceived by these appearances for a little while; but it is soon discovered even by a child, that he only sees himself in the glass, and that a strait stick does not become crooked by being held in the water. And this discovery is made, not by the philosopher's boasted reason, but by a little attention to the plain dictates of common sense.

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### SECTION VIII.

#### *Four defective rules of judgment examined.*

MY thoughts have been wandering through the creation in quest of some other rule of judgment, by which to distinguish truth from falsehood, beside those I have attempted to explain; but they had to return, like Noah's dove, without being able to find any permanent resting place. Far be it from me to assert that there is no other kind of evidence, merely because I am unable to find it out; more capable minds may be able to discover what is beyond the grasp of my scanty thought; but until some other rule of judgment shall be made plain to my view, it will be readily granted that the foregoing rules of judgment ought to be my only grounds of credence.

By intuitive judgment, we are enabled to perceive immediately that some things are certainly true, that others are necessarily so, and that others have a self-evident probability; that is, are more likely to be true than false. We may build upon this foundation, and thus enlarge our knowledge by regular reasoning, and still more by the proper study of revelation; but if we depart from these rules or methods of distinguishing truth from falsehood, we are at once lost in a wide wilderness; nothing but hypothesis and conjectures surround us, and all things are equally doubtful.

It is true, several other rules of judging might be adopted; but upon a close inspection there appears to be no evidence in them, and they are very apt to contradict each other. It may not be improper to mention a few of them, and appeal to the reader's understanding, whether they ought to have the preference, and to

govern our belief, instead of common sense, and reason, and revelation.

1st. Let it be proposed as a rule of judgment, "that the things we have been taught from our youth are certainly true, and those which we have not thus learned from our parents and teachers, are certainly false."

This is indeed a very short rule, and one that is very gratifying to indolence: for if every thing be true that I have been taught, if I must govern my belief by this rule, and reject every thing that does not accord with it, I may at once lay by my pen, my reason and my bible: if I can only make shift to remember what my father and my instructors told me to believe, it is entirely sufficient, and this is all the improvement of knowledge I ought to look for. But if I may be permitted to look abroad into the world, I cannot help seeing that my rule, though short, is able to produce a long string of contradictions. It teaches me that every thing in the world is true, or else that it is not at all necessary for a thing to be true, in order for it to command our belief.

Pagans must believe in thirty thousand gods; Mahometans must believe in the whimsies of the alcoran; Papists must believe in purgatory and transubstantiation; Deists and Jews must believe that Jesus Christ was a crucified impostor; and Atheists must believe there is no God of power, wisdom and goodness, but that there is a blind god, or goddess, called Fate or Chance, which made this great world out of atoms. My new rule, I find, will support all those persons in their different creeds, provided only, that they have been taught to believe these contradictory opinions, by their parents and authorized teachers of religion and philosophy.

Suppose then that I lay this rule aside, and, flying from one extreme to another, receive it as a maxim, "that every thing I have been taught from my youth is certainly false;" will this mend the matter? so far from it, that, if possible, it will make it worse: for if mankind are to receive this for a rule of judgment, it will follow not only that all we have received from others in our education, is certainly false, but it will be equally evident that if we make any new discoveries by reflection, they also will become falsehood when we teach them to our children, and they ought of consequence to reject them as such; otherwise they will violate the rule, which teaches, that every thing our fathers and instructors have inculcated upon us, should be rejected as a prejudice of education. If we are to govern our belief by this, I hope our children are to have the same privilege, and thus, what is true in

one age becomes false in another, and therefore who can blame philosophers for retiring into the shades of scepticism, to enjoy a state of profound ignorance, and smile at the whimsical and inconsistent credulity of mankind? True, we could not blame them, if the world was favoured with no other method of discovering truth than such fantastical rules as these; but if sceptics have followed such rules till they were weary of the inconsistency of them, and then, to mend the matter, have abandoned all human knowledge, they are to be pitied, on account of the dismal case into which they have fallen, and to be blamed for leaving the sure path of reason and revelation, to pursue the bewildering dictates of passion and prejudice, or the airy flights of conjecture and imagination.

But how are these inconsistencies to be avoided? There is only one way to avoid them, and that is a very plain way; it is, to reject both those rules of judging;—to consider the mere circumstance of our having received a doctrine from our parents and teachers, as being no sign of either *truth* or *falsehood*:—and to bring such doctrines to the proper test of evidence, as well as all others.

2d. Another rule, nearly related to the foregoing, is, “to receive a doctrine for true, merely because it is believed by the majority, or at least, has a great many votaries on its side.”

When we have immediate conviction that a certain truth is self-evident, we may justly appeal to the universal judgment of mankind as a proof of its being an original dictate of our faculties; the real existence of a material world for example: but if we perceive no evidence of it from intuitive conviction, from reason or revelation, the number of votes in its favour ought to go for nothing; because this rule would lead us into the same contradictions mentioned above.

It is now a pretty general belief in the world, and was once almost universal, that there are scores and hundreds of gods in this universe; and if the truth is to be decided by vote, I suspect our heathen neighbours will still have the majority. Papists make great use of this argument, and we cannot blame them much, when we consider that they have no better; but they would do well to consider, that if a musselman, or a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, should chance to get hold of their mighty argument, he would be able to turn it against themselves, and to shake the infallible church to her centre.

It is pleasant to observe with what address *Demetrius*, the Ephesian silversmith, made use of this mode of reasoning. “He call-

ed together the workmen of like occupation, and said, "sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth: moreover, ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods which are made with hands; so that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought, but also, that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, *whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.*" Acts, xix. 25.

Thus, we see the old gentleman founded his eloquent harrangue upon three very popular topics: first, our *craft* is in danger: secondly, the *magnificence* of the great goddess: and thirdly, she had *numbers* on her side; "whom all Asia and the world worshippeth." These arguments did not die with Demetrius: they have descended from one generation to another, and our fathers have found them to be very convenient engines in cases of necessity. But blessed be God, a few have been found in all ages, bold enough to look around, and ask, whether *craft*, *magnificence*, and *votes* are the method or rule of evidence, by which reasonable beings are to distinguish between truth and falsehood?

The same opinion which has the majority in one age, falls into the minority in another: and thus the present rule, like the former, causes truth to change with the opinions of men, and the same thing that is true at this time, will be deemed a falsehood whenever it has the misfortune to be neglected and fall into the minority. And if we turn about and say, "that is certainly the truth which is believed by a few," the matter remains the same; that which is believed by few at one time, is believed by many at another, and thus we would make truth change as often as a new whim rises up to alter the fashion. For it is a lamentable fact, that books are read and doctrines believed by thousands, for no other reason but because they are fashionable; and as the fashion of a man's coat or a woman's head-dress is altered, perhaps seven times in a few years, is it wonderful that opinions should often rise and fall, with those who are disposed to regulate their belief by the same rule which produces so many revolutions in their apparel?

3d. Perhaps we shall have better success, if we take for our rule of judgment, the infancy or old age of our doctrines: "That doctrine is certainly true" will one say, "which is old and of long standing in the world."

This principle has afforded another argument, which has also been much wanted, and often resorted to, by the advocates of St.

Peter's chair. The holy Roman church, they say, has been standing for more than a thousand years; whereas the protestants sprang up, as it were but yesterday, and invented their heresies in the days of Martin Luther.

If a doctrine be false because it is new in the world, then the popish doctrine was once false, because it once was new: this they cannot deny, unless they can make it appear that the secrets of purgatory were discovered and believed by mankind from eternity. And if popery be true because it is more than a thousand years old, then the protestant doctrines, when another thousand years shall be fulfilled, will also be true for the same reason. Thus it appears that any falsehood may spring up, and will gradually change into truth by the lapse of ages. At first it is a most bitter falsehood; but a few centuries will expunge its bad qualities, and, like tobacco or wine, it grows better every year.

I fear my freedom of speech will give offence, which I would wish to avoid; and I shall probably be reminded that it ill becomes me to allow myself in these intolerable levities, when speaking upon subjects of such importance; but if I were hindered from indulging a little pleasantry, when beset with such ridiculous arguments, I am afraid I should lose my temper and get angry at them, which would be a great deal worse.

The old pharisees made great use of this kind of logic against the Redeemer of mankind; and who can blame them, if this be indeed the rule by which the Creator would have his reasonable creatures to judge? "We are Moses' disciples," say they; "we know that God spake unto Moses, for his religion was of ancient date, but as for this fellow, we know not whence he is. Is not this the carpenter's son? Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Give God the praise, we know that this man is a sinner."

If we should go to Ephesus, or to some other heathen country, and find another Demetrius making silver shrines for the goddess Diana, he would be able to stand his ground against the whole of us. And what shall we say of atheism itself, which appears to have been professed in our Saviour's time, and probably for a long time before he appeared upon earth? Have not atheists a right to plead the venerable antiquity of their doctrine as well as we? or does a good argument, used by a divine, become a sophism when it falls into the hands of infidels?

But the truth is, infidels are not very fond of the argument in this form, because priests can use it as well as they; let it be turned topsyturvy, and they not only use it with great fondness, but

claim it as theirs exclusively. Their maxim is, *that those dogmas and arguments, which are as old as the world, are not to deceive a philosopher*: he knows the truth lies in the new ideas, and new discoveries of scientific geniuses, who have happily escaped from the shackles of priest-craft, by the irradiations of science.

But if an argument or a truth be considered to diminish in its value by age, the conclusion still follows, that truth may gradually degenerate into falsehood, and reason into sophistry. And if the late discoveries of our philosophers be true, they only claim this character, it seems, by the novelty of their appearance, or the short duration they have had as ideas in the human brain; and they too, in their turn, must degenerate into falsehood and sophistry by the lapse of ages. The transubstantiating principle is the same in both cases, as to the real change produced; only the Papists appear to think time has a purifying quality, and transforms falsehood into truth; whereas the latter maxim supposes it to have a degenerating quality, so that all the value of an old truth, or an old argument, is entirely gone, and grown out of date.

4th. Another rule of judgment is the following: "It is a sure sign of the truth of any doctrine, when it is confidently believed and taught by persons of high rank and dignity, or in other words, when it is believed by a great general, statesman, philosopher, or doctor of divinity.

This maxim deserves a more particular examination than the preceding, because, in a limited degree, it ought to have an influence upon our judgment; but this degree must be carefully distinguished from its false application.

When men of understanding and habitual meditation give their judgment or opinion, in matters they have been long conversant with, some degree of credit is unquestionably due to their authority, especially where a number of them, of the same profession, agree in their judgment; and it is a matter of no small consequence to form a correct view of the degree of credit that is due, that we may not follow them with a blind and implicit confidence, on the one hand, or foolishly deprive ourselves of their assistance on the other.

Let me suppose an astronomer, who is known to be a person of experience and regular thinking, advances a certain matter as his decided opinion, of which I know nothing, and have never had any evidence for or against it: he offers no argument to prove it to me, but merely tells me he believes it, and thinks he has good evidence.

Ought I to receive it for certain, merely because the astronomer believes it? No. But still his authority affords a presumption, or a degree of probable evidence to my mind, that his opinion is true. If I find other astronomers are of the same judgment, the probability is increased, and reason enjoins on me to give that credit to it, that is due to presumptive evidence. Suppose the astronomer asks me whether I believe it or not, what ought to be my answer? I think it ought to be this: sir, you are better able to judge of this matter than I am, and your opinion alone affords a strong presumption that it is true; but though I gladly pay this proper deference to your judgment, yet I must judge for myself, and cannot believe it firmly or absolutely, till you produce some evidence to my understanding besides that of your opinion or authority.

Now it is evident, while he offers no argument, and I am unable to conceive any, I ought not to receive it for a certain truth; but while no evidence appears against it, I ought to consider myself as being possessed of probable evidence for it, and proportion my belief accordingly.

But being farther instructed in such matters, I begin to examine the subject for myself, and in the progress of my investigation, I find, or think I find, very clear evidence against the astronomer's opinion. What now must I do? I think I ought to suspend my judgment, and suspect it, so far at least, as not to suffer it to make a final decision, till I have examined the ground a second time: if the evidence still appear clear against him, let me lay it before some of my most impartial and judicious friends, who are competent to judge in the case, to see if it will carry the same conviction to their minds that it does to my own: if they perceive the force of it, as well as myself, I am warranted in believing firmly that the astronomer was in an error; still however, retaining a cheerful readiness to receive new light from any quarter. If my friends hesitate concerning the evidence I offer, and seem doubtful of its certainty, I ought to go and review the ground a third time, with the utmost care and attention; and if I discover that I have been mistaken, I ought immediately to yield to conviction; but if every succeeding view of the subject should still increase the evidence to my mind, the Almighty God will approve me in using my own judgment, independently of all authority upon earth: and I cannot abandon it, and regulate my belief merely by the opinions of other men, without being a sinner, and a positive enemy to truth. For it were to espouse the supposition, that a man ought to regulate his belief by the opinion of others regardless of any other evidence. All other men



have a right to act upon the same rule, and thus the examination of evidence may be neglected entirely, and men of high rank and character may give tone to the opinions of the world, just as they give tone to the fashions of dress and politeness, which are changing every year.

Thus it appears, that it is not only our right, but our sacred duty to think and judge each one for himself, by those methods and rules of judgment, which God has appointed to direct his intelligent creatures to truth and happiness. And if I pay that deference to the judgment of others, which is properly due, and no more, it will lead me to examine the matter more closely than otherwise; whereas some divines and philosophers, I fear, have thought a deference should be paid them, of a directly opposite tendency: instead of being influenced by their authority to examine the matter with more attention and deliberation, before we form a final judgment, they would have us give less attention on this account, and not presume to press the enquiry any further, after we know their mind and pleasure; but to take for granted at once that the thing is true, solely because they believe it; and let their dignity as philosophers and doctors of divinity supply the place of every other argument.

The popish doctors, it appears, make this profession openly, and in the face of heaven: they would have us understand that their infallible authority is the only rule by which we should regulate all our opinions: and it is truly surprising that they have been able to carry their project to such a height, and that the world has been so befooled by their ingenious craft. But it shows the great weakness of human nature, and evinces our ridiculous propensities to gaze after any leader, that has cunning enough to assume some kind of dignity and grandeur above his fellows. It is a plain proof of our natural inclination to idolatry; and it went so far among some of the heathens, that the rabble not only yielded a blind submission to their sages and heroes, while they lived, but adored them as deities after they were dead.

Deists, it is true, do not make such an open claim to these singular prerogatives, as those of the sacred and holy order; but they seem very willing to avail themselves of the common prejudice, whenever it can be done in a way that will save appearances, after all the complaints they have uttered against priestly authority. They pretend that all men of genius and liberal thinking are on their side; and they make almost as great a stir about the irradiations of science and philosophy, as the priests did about their

sanctified divinity. Paine has informed the world that the progressive improvement of the sciences will regularly discredit the christian faith; and has affirmed or insinuated, very gravely, that if men in general could be brought to understand philosophy, they would see clearly that the christian religion is contrary to the true word of God, which "is the creation we behold." And as the people in general could never see this mighty evidence, for want of a proper knowledge of science, he doubtless hoped that they would take it for granted upon the authority of a philosopher.

Are deists willing, let me ask, that every man should think for himself, and pay no more blind reverence to philosophers than to divines? Are they willing for us to examine and expose the hypotheses of a Gibbon, or a Hume, with the same freedom and independence, which they would allow us to use when exposing those of a popish Bellarmine? Are they willing we should examine ideas in the brain, as the only subject of human knowledge, and use the strong weapons of common sense against this venerable hypothesis, which has more antiquity to plead in its favour than even popery itself? If not, they show their near relationship to his holiness in St. Peter's chair, and need no longer complain of the craft of priests, in imposing their dignified authority upon the superstitious vulgar; for it seems they are very ready to use the same craft, and avail themselves of the same superstitious weakness of the people, whenever it may suit their convenience.

I have several times thought, that I shall have the mortification to pass among philosophers as a dogmatical and vulgar enthusiast; and among divines, as a pompous and self-sufficient heretic; but I hope a few friends will stand by me, which will afford some consolation under such a calamity. For you must know I am not so indifferent to the opinions of mankind, as to be willing to stand alone in such a world as this. And it affords me unspeakable pleasure to find I can screen myself under the authority of a Reid, a Beatty, and a Campbell, among philosophers; and under the authority of a Baxter, a Wesley, a Fletcher, and others, among divines; as I hope to make appear in the sequel.

Not that I intend to follow any one of these, with a blind submission, and say "Thou art my father and my master!" our heavenly Father and Master has taught us better things, and we ought to obey God rather than man.

But we often see partialities and contradictions in men, that would be unaccountable, if we were less acquainted with human nature. You will hear one person express his indignation against

the superstitious papists, for their blind submission to popes and cardinals; but at the same time, if you touch the hypothesis of Des Cartes, Berkley, or David Hume, Esq. immediately he is offended that you should question the opinions of such sublime geniuses: another smiles at the blind disciples of Mr. Hume, but thinks you a very bold heretic if you presume to question any thing advanced by *Martin Luther* or *John Calvin*. A third, is surprised at the blind attachment and will-worship of the poor Calvinists, but at the same time considers you almost a blasphemer against revelation, if you dispute the authority of *George Fox*, or *Robert Barclay*. A fourth pities the tame credulity of the poor infatuated quakers, but at the same time rises with no inconsiderable degree of zeal and indignation, if you presume to dissent from any opinion believed and taught by *John Wesley* and *John Fletcher*. These are the strange inconsistencies of mankind.

But what is still more provoking, a gentleman sometimes appears to be indulged in the privilege of becoming dictator general, and of governing the belief of hundreds by his ipse dixit, merely because he owns a very large farm, or lives in a very large house, or has large sums of money in bank. He was favoured, it seems, with a *noble birth*, and has very noble *blood*, and therefore who can doubt his indefeasible right to controul the opinions of common farmers and mechanics, and to direct them what they are to believe and what they are to disbelieve?

His honest neighbours, it appears, many of whom in all likelihood, possess more genuine wisdom and moral worth, than has been verified in his noble line from the days of his great grandfather, must prostrate themselves before his honour;—They must learn to consider themselves as a species of animals far inferior to that of his wealthy order, and must settle it down in their hearts; that the *commonalty*, or the *peasantry* are an order of beings that are to demean themselves with cringing submission, look up with reverence to their lordly superiors, and tamely yield up their understandings to their dictatorial sway. And this is to be done, not because their superiors have any more common sense or reason than themselves; (for they sometimes have not half so much) but merely because they have more gold and silver, or because they are pleased to inform the world that they have blood of a superior quality.

It is not easy for any one to imagine how it would please my soul this day, if I could persuade all my vulgar brethren, as we are denominated, over the whole face of the earth, to join me heart

and hand, and let us try if we cannot throw off the shackles which this piece of craft has cast upon our understandings. Why should we abandon the common dignity of our nature, and submit our judgments to be led by a master, just like a dog or an ox? If we have to plough their fields, and reap down their harvests, and thus wear out our *bodies* as their servants; for God's sake, for truth's sake, and for the honour of human nature let the immortal soul be free! let us show them that we are men, and that we will think and judge for ourselves. They have not power to halter our understandings without our own consent: and when they cry out, "This people which knoweth not the law are cursed—thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us—Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach (or believe) in this name?" Let us smile and imitate the noble independence of the apostle Peter, in his reply to the old scribes and doctors of divinity:—"If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, be it known unto you all, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone that was set at nought of you builders, which has become the head of the corner." Acts, iv. 9. And if they cast us into prison, and make our feet fast in the stocks, let us prove, like Paul and Silas, that still the soul is free. Let us never sacrifice truth to any man's authority, and the God of truth will defend us; he will support us under every affliction, or shake the foundation of the prison by his power, and show that his kingdom ruleth over all.

I must close this section by expressing my sincere respect for those in the higher ranks of life. There have been, and now are, many divines and philosophers,—many among the rich and influential part of society, who are persons of great respectability, and I hope I shall never be insensible to their worth. They are men of true wisdom, veracity and benevolence; and are justly to be considered among the most amiable benefactors of mankind. But how agrees this with the foregoing paragraphs? It agrees very well with them. The persons I speak of are not strutting with pomposity about the world, and labouring to be adored as deities, on account of their being divines, philosophers, statesmen or heroes; much less on account of their *money* or their *blood*: they scorn to impose upon the souls of men and cause their understandings to become the dupes of craft and absurdity: they have no desire to put out the eyes of mankind, by taking advantage of their prejudices, in order to make them their tools and vassals; nor yet to cast a

mist before them, in order to secure their ignorant gaze, and cause them to adore a hero as a little god, for being a mortal enemy to human happiness. But they delight to use their time and talents, their office, influence and riches, to diffuse useful knowledge, truth, virtue, piety and solid happiness among their fellow-creatures. The practice of despising their brethren of the human family, because they happen to be poor, ignorant or unfortunate, is detestable in their estimation. They glory in that candour and benevolence in that love of truth and righteousness, which tend to dispel the dark mists of delusion, and to assuage the miseries of the human race. They consider themselves as members of the great family of mankind, who are to live and act, not for themselves alone, but for the general welfare. They are willing that moral goodness should be the standard of esteem; and while they delight to enjoy the confidence and love of their fellow-creatures, they are equally willing that every other man should be esteemed in proportion to his moral worth, whether he be rich or poor, learned or unlearned. In a word, they chuse to be governed by consistency and reason, and are pleased to see their fellow-creatures render unto God the veneration due to his eternal goodness, as well as to see that they themselves are honoured, for exercising a degree of the same beneficence. They hate the selfish atheism, which would lead them to trample upon the rights of others to build up their own fame, and to use various arts, and sometimes very barbarous ones, to prevail with men to adore them as little deities, for thousands of years after they are dead, to the neglect of God their Creator. These are the dispositions and principles of the men, of whom I am speaking; and for these reasons I hope to love and esteem them highly till I go down to the grave.

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#### SECTION IX.

*The necessity and safety of a diligent pursuit of truth.*

WE have already noticed the false principle in divinity, that "ignorance is the mother of devotion." If this principle be admitted, it will follow from it, either that "devotion is not founded in truth," or that the most successful way of understanding or know-

ing the truth, is "to continue in a state of ignorance." The latter conclusion appears to be adopted by some christians, though they are not fairly willing to own it; why else are we indirectly cautioned against the improvement of knowledge? and why is a diligent pursuit of truth sometimes represented as being dangerous?

All truth, rightly understood, believed and practised, tends to the happiness of intelligent beings. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. For this end was I born, and for this purpose came I into the world, that I might bear witness unto the truth," says our benevolent Redeemer.

That one truth may be of far more importance to us than another, is evident; but we cannot suppose any truth is naturally unfriendly to happiness, without supposing at the same time that one truth has a nature opposite to another, and in some cases falsehood is to have the preference. We might as well suppose that justice, in some cases, is injurious, and that injustice is then to be considered of superior value.

If truth uniformly tends to the happiness of mankind, and error to their unhappiness, what *danger* can there be in a diligent pursuit, and extensive knowledge of the truth? Are men in danger of becoming too happy? or are we afraid that too many delusions will be detected? Reasons of a very different kind are alleged; some of which are the following:

First; It is urged that men in general, are incapable of entering into the intricacies of metaphysical reasoning; and it is essential to their happiness and safety, not to meddle with such bewildering speculations, but keep to the simplicity of the gospel of Christ. I answer,

1. It is true, no man will ever gain any thing, but lose much, by regularly labouring to know what he is *incapable* of knowing; but does it hence follow that some men are incapable of knowing any more than they know already? or that it is a hurtful or useless thing for them to pursue the knowledge they *can* acquire, because it is so, for them to try to know what they *cannot*? There is not a man in the world, but is incapable of knowing many things; must we all, therefore, lay by the pursuit of truth, and refuse to improve the talents we have, because it is impossible for us to improve those which we have not? For a man to exercise metaphysical reasonings upon what he cannot know, is not to pursue truth, but to build castles in the air upon an hypothesis. If these be the "bewildering speculations" alluded to in the objection, I would to God that all mankind would avoid them; for they are so far

from being a regular road to truth, that they have been the principal instruments made use of to fill the world with delusion.

2. For a man to neglect that part of truth which is within his reach, and content himself in a state of ignorance, under pretence that he may possibly get bewildered and miss his way, is an absurdity similar to that of a servant, who, after neglecting his master's business, excuses himself by saying, "sir, I thought if I went about the work you enjoined on me, I might possibly make some mistakes, and not do it exactly right: I therefore concluded my wisest and safest way was to sit still and do nothing." Some sinners have reasoned in this way, and for fear they might miss their way, or not persevere in the way of righteousness, they concluded never to begin! A person who confirms himself in his present ignorance by such pitiful sophistry, need not congratulate himself upon his having avoided "bewildering speculations."

3. As to our keeping to the simplicity of the gospel, if we follow the plain dictates of reason, they will ever keep us there. According to the simplicity of the gospel we are to give all diligence to improve our talents, to know and obey the truth, and to be always ready to give every one an answer that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us: therefore, he who pleads for the neglect of our understanding, immediately departs from the very rule he had recommended. And such persons only pretend to be ignorant, or else they have yet to learn, that true reason as well as the gospel, is very simple in its nature; and if they say that all the intricate and dark philosophy of the schools, is built upon reason, it is necessary again to remind them, that the pope will, with equal confidence, declare that the dark superstitions of the Romish religion are built upon the bible.

Secondly; It may be alleged that many men have done harm with their knowledge, and had they been more ignorant, they would have been less wicked: add to this, that as the desire of knowledge proved fatal to our first parents, so it often does to their fallen children: witness the thousands who have been led to infidelity, if not to atheism itself, by their curious speculations and insatiable thirst for new discoveries. Answer,

1. That some men have done harm with their knowledge, is readily granted; but have they not also used all the faculties of their souls, and the members of their bodies, as *instruments of unrighteousness*? But I hope every one knows that the man is culpable for all this, and not his knowledge, any more than the members of his body, or powers of his mind. Shall we conclude,



that because men have used their hands to do a great deal of mischief, it would be better for them to have no hands? or because they have more power to do harm with two hands than with one, does it therefore, follow, that the Creator would have acted more wisely, if he had given them one only? What immense evil has been done in the world by means of iron and other metals? They have been formed into instruments of death, to pour out human blood like water. But shall we hence infer that God acted unwisely in storing the earth with those metals for the use of man? or that the proper use of them should be discouraged, because wicked men will apply them to bad purposes? And because men have far more power to spread error abroad among their fellow-creatures, than they had when every copy of their works was written with a pen, is it therefore, to be lamented that the art of printing was ever discovered?

2. It is not merely the *knowledge* of truth, but the *love* of it also, that is to produce genuine happiness either in ourselves or others. It is truth rightly understood, believed and used to the regulation of our practice, that tends to the general welfare of the world; and not barely knowing it when that knowledge is only used to invent schemes of wickedness; otherwise the devil himself would be a very happy creature; for I presume he has more knowledge than any of us.

When a man is striving to increase his knowledge, in order to increase his power to do harm, he ought indeed to be discouraged, because truth is not his object; he only aims to use it so far as it can be abused to promote his selfish purposes, and when falsehood will serve his turn better, he gladly embraces it, and has no more regard for truth than he has for falsehood. He pursues knowledge, as many deists read the bible, not to use it for his own real advantage, and that of others; but to try if he cannot destroy it, and thus deprive all other men of the benefit of that which he himself abhors. Have not sceptics proved this in the face of heaven? have they not laboured under the mask of love to science and human improvement, to convince mankind that all things are equally doubtful, and that we ought not to believe any one thing rather than another? Now if mankind were brought into this state, it is evident all knowledge of truth, and the benefit resulting therefrom, would be totally destroyed, unless they are pleased to say that the knowledge of truth consists in believing nothing. Therefore, it is as impossible for such a sceptic to be a lover of truth, as it is for a man to be a friend to human happiness who does his uttermost to banish it from the face of the earth.

And shall we therefore advise this person not to pursue the knowledge of truth? Advise him rather, not to pursue the *destruction* of it. Shall we say he had better be more ignorant? How can he be more ignorant, if he is now unable to distinguish truth from falsehood in any one thing in the universe? To persuade men there is danger in pursuing the knowledge of truth too diligently, because some persons have run into great danger, by pursuing the destruction of it, under *pretence* of improving knowledge, is just as ridiculous as to declare there is great danger in being too attentive to the Christian religion, because our venerable divines of the dark ages had almost banished the knowledge of it from the earth, under pretence of supporting its authority.

The danger consists—not in our diligence,—not in the abundance of our knowledge,—not in striving to understand truth too perfectly and extensively; but in those selfish principles and pernicious prejudices which influence us to conceal, stifle, and suppress all evidence that seems to have a bearing against our favourite idols, and to pursue doctrines and defend them, not because they are true, but because they are necessary to the support of our party, our pleasure, or our pride. Candour is so essential to the discovery of truth, that a man without candour will not only miss it, but actually is not pursuing it, however diligent he may be in the pursuit of his studies. His opinions are already formed, by the rule of passion and prejudice, and he is labouring to find something to defend them. When he finds any thing that accords with his opinion, he receives it gladly and sets it off to the best advantage; but if evidence appear against him, however clear, he labours to conceal it, both from himself and others, and is unwilling it should be brought to light, for fear a full view of it would show where the truth was, so plainly, that it would be almost irresistible. Such a person is not pursuing doctrines because they are *true*, but because they are subservient to his purposes; and when error will serve his turn to the best advantage, he will love it so much better than truth, that the clearest evidence will be resisted and hated for its sake.

3. As to our First Parents, I grant the desire of knowledge was one cause of their apostacy; but was not the desire of happiness another cause? And is it then a just inference to conclude that a diligent pursuit of happiness is dangerous, and ought to be discouraged? This conclusion must stand or fall with the one I am opposing; and I presume it is impossible to banish knowledge from the world without destroying happiness in the same proportion.

In what did the danger or the fault of our first parents consist? It consisted in vainly attempting to increase their knowledge and their happiness, by recurring to imaginary means of obtaining them, which God had never appointed. The devil formed an hypothesis for our Mother Eve, which she took for granted, and made the foundation of a very grand and interesting system, as she supposed. The hypothesis was, "that she would sustain no manner of injury by partaking of the fruit, which her Maker had forbidden; but that on the contrary, she would gain much wisdom by it, and become like God himself."

Now what evidence had our mother for this theoretical maxim? She had no more evidence for it, than she had that her great and benevolent Creator was a deceiver and a liar. But she rashly admitted it without evidence, and probably her imagination was carried away with many fantastical conclusions, concerning her future dignity, happiness, wisdom and divine prerogatives, when she should become a goddess, knowing good and evil. Was she exposed to danger by the diligent pursuit of truth? Just the contrary: she admitted the devil's theory, not from a diligent examination, but from the *want* of it: had she carefully reflected upon the abundant evidence she had of the veracity of Almighty God;—that she had no proof against it but the bare word of this tempter;—that in receiving his declaration, she must necessarily renounce all the evidence she ever had of the tender care, wisdom, kindness and truth of her heavenly Father:—had she thus reflected, I say, and acted according to the convictions of her understanding, the snare would have been effectually broken. But, *neglecting to pursue truth with diligence*, and being *content with her present ignorance* of the danger that threatened her, she admitted the devil's hypothesis with very little hesitation, and thus brought wretchedness and death upon herself and family. And I am a little inclined to think that hypotheses have been among the most successful engines of Satan from that day to the present.

4. It is alleged in the objection, "that thousands have been led to deism, if not to atheism, by their curious speculations and insatiable thirst for new discoveries."

I feel no hesitation in admitting this to be very probable, if not certainly true: and I am so far from fearing it will militate against the conclusion here defended, that I hope to make it appear that it destroys the opposite conclusion.

The curious speculations, and thirst of new discoveries, which led men to unbelief and scepticism, did not arise from the love of

truth, nor consequently from a sincere desire to find it; otherwise they would have regulated their enquiries by *evidence* and by nothing else; unless some one will be pleased to assert, that truth is discovered and supported by something else besides evidence.

I readily grant that it is possible for me to think very diligently, and at the same time, through a vain curiosity, or foolish eagerness, I may expose myself to great danger, by running beyond the light of evidence, either to make a discovery in less time, and by a shorter process, than that of regular and patient induction, or to explore and pretend to account for things, of which I know nothing at all, and cannot know, because they are beyond the reach of my understanding. So far as I have evidence, so far I have knowledge in exact proportion to it; and if I be content to follow the evidence, and aim at no knowledge but that to which it conducts me, by chaste and clear comparisons and consequences, (which, by the way, is all the knowledge I can have) there is no manner of danger in the pursuit; but if I leave the evidence, in order to make *greater* discoveries than those to which it will lead me, or to find out a *greater number* of them, or to discover them *sooner*, or with less labour, then indeed I am in great danger, because I am no longer in the pursuit of truth, otherwise I would not desert the evidence of it, by which alone it can ever be ascertained.

The love of truth will never produce in me a desire to make any other discoveries than such as are true, and I shall regard the discovery no farther than I perceive evidence that it is true; otherwise it is not for the sake of truth I am labouring, but for the sake of something else.

Perhaps I am very desirous to obtain *fame*; to *immortalize* myself, or at least my *name*;—to secure *literary glory* to my *memory*;—to have a *monument* built of *wood* or *stone*;—to *live* in the people's *memories*;—to enjoy *immortality* from their *breath*;—and, to *wear a crown of laurels*, for many ages after I am dead.

Now to accomplish this end, several things are essentially necessary.

First: Something *extraordinary* must be done. I must make *new* and *great* and *ingenious* discoveries: there must also be a *sufficient number* of them to form what may be called my *theory*,—my *system*, that I may pass for a great *genius* and a *philosopher*.

Secondly: I must be very careful to frame my discoveries in a way that shall strike in with the passions and prejudices of the people;—at least with those who will probably have the greatest hand in conferring literary glory upon me. Hence, if I find evi-

dence leading me to conclusions opposite to the most darling systems and theories in the world, especially those of divines and philosophers, I must immediately reject that evidence, and give over the doctrines to which it leads, otherwise I shall become *unpopular*, and the whole body of divines and philosophers will do their utmost to deprive me of the crown of laurels.

Thirdly: My discoveries must be *sublime*, like those of a true genius: they must be far above common or vulgar opinions, and must be supported in a manner far more sublime, than to be subject to the test of old worn-out arguments, or to the vulgar dictates of common sense; they are to be so refined and philosophical, that the *commonalty* and *peasantry*, shall be totally incapable of understanding any thing concerning them.

Fourthly: They must have the appearance, at least, of great plausibility, and ingenious reasoning; otherwise they will be apt to expose me instead of securing my immortality. Suppose then I perceive that one of my discoveries would be very unpopular, and another is incapable of being supported by solid arguments: what must I do? The unpopular discovery must be abandoned without farther ceremony; and as to the other, though it cannot be supported by any solid proof, yet there is one expedient by which I can save appearances, and secure my future fame.

Let an *hypothesis* be invented, and cautiously guarded against too close an inspection, till the system be built upon it, that the eyes of men may be so dazzled with the regular deductions and philosophical appearance of the superstructure, that their attention may be diverted from the defective and theoretical foundation. Care must be taken too, that the hypothesis have some appearance of plausibility: it must seem to account for some phenomena of nature. It must also be above vulgar apprehension; so that if any one attempt to attack it with the weapons of common sense, the whole may be resolved into his unphilosophical ignorance. Perhaps the *brains* would be a good seat for the hypothesis, where the vulgar are not very conversant: no man has ever seen his brains, and it is not to be presumed that any person is so well calculated to describe the images of them as a philosopher. I can decorate the ground-work with many learned names which may serve the better to conceal it from public notice: I can treat, in systematical order, of the *organs of sensation*—of the *animal spirits*,—of the *optic and olfactory nerves*,—of the *pineal gland*,—of the *soul's presence chamber*,—of the *ideas*, or *images of sound*—and how they travel through the air, enter my ear and progress

through the organs till they reach the *brain*, where they take their seat, or are laid by in their proper apartments, and reserved for future use.

If a man should have the assurance to rise up, and declare he never saw his brains, or an idea in all the world, and that he actually sees his wife and children without ever using ideal spectacles in his brains,—it is surely an easy thing for me to silence him, “by telling him he is a poor, unphilosophical, vulgar and dogmatical enthusiast, that knows nothing about the laws of nature.”

Now I must appeal to my friendly reader, and ask two plain questions. 1. Is it not *possible* that I should pursue such a method as is here described? If so, let it be remembered, that whatever is possible may be *supposed* for the sake of argument. 2. If I *should* pursue such a method, would it not be very clear that *truth* would not be my object? If so, let it be remembered, that the danger of such a method affords no argument to prove there is any danger in the practice of diligently pursuing the knowledge of truth: consequently, for aught that has yet appeared to the contrary, it is impossible for knowledge to be improved too much, or for truth to be pursued with too much attention, scrutiny and perseverance, while the love of truth, or candour, regulates our course, without which the true enlargement of human knowledge is not the object we are after.

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## SECTION X.

### *The necessity and safety of a diligent communication of truth.*

If it be necessary, safe and right, for a man to pursue truth with diligence, because it naturally tends to promote human felicity, then it is equally necessary, safe and right, for him to communicate the knowledge of it to his fellow-creatures.

Are there any objections to this conclusion? There are several; the chief of which we will briefly examine.

First: It may be said, we ought to accommodate ourselves to the people's ignorance; and if we attempt to lead them into profound subjects, which they are not able to bear, we shall only

cause them to stumble into greater errors, and they will be materially injured, instead of being benefitted by our officiousness. Answer:

That caution should be used in the manner of our communications, is freely acknowledged. A father, if he would benefit his children, must not attempt to communicate the highest branches of knowledge to them, until the knowledge of plainer truths shall have given them a capacity to receive those of a higher order. Hence our Saviour says, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye are not able to bear them now. What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." And hence God nursed up the ancient Israelites, as children in a state of minority: "The law was their school-master," and they "were kept under tutors, and governors until the times appointed of the Father;" and many great truths of the gospel *were hid for ages*, because the world was not then capable of receiving them.

God, as the great father of mankind, knows perfectly their capacity and state of mind, and knows what portion of truth is most suitable to their present condition: he accordingly gave a revelation, by Moses, adapted to the infant state of the world, and made known his truth more fully, by the Lord Jesus Christ, after his former dispensations had opened the way for it, by maturing the minds of his feeble children.

In like manner, a minister, or any other man who is about to address a particular assembly, whom he knows to be very ignorant and uninformed, should accommodate himself to their capacity. Thus Paul says to the Corinthians, "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able." 1 Cor. iii. 2. And he reproves the Hebrews, because he had to use the same method with them; who, had they improved upon the means of knowledge in their power, might have been able to teach others: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." Heb. v. 12.

Here he blames them for neglecting to improve their knowledge, and says expressly, that they "ought to teach others also:" he therefore enjoins the two duties for which I plead: 1. "That we ought to improve our knowledge as much as possible;" and 2. "That what we gain we should communicate to others, that they may enjoy the benefit as well as ourselves."



When a man addresses himself to the world, he ought not surely to keep back any part of the truth, that he is able to understand; and to prove by evidence which to him appears satisfactory, for fear those to whom he addresses himself should not be capable of receiving it: for what could this arise from but the pride and pitiful self-sufficiency, that would lead him to think no person in the world could understand the truth so well as himself? Must he consider mankind as his children, and thus put himself in the place of God? And suppose some should be unable to enter into the subject, must it be kept back on this account? If so, it would appear, that a considerable part of the scriptures should have been kept back; for “our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unlearned wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, even to their own destruction.”

Had those ignorant people improved their understanding, by proper attention to truths within their reach, they might have become sufficiently learned, to have understood the deep things which the apostle wrote, or at least to have avoided stumbling at them; but I suspect they were too indolent to come to an understanding of those things, by the slow method of regular improvement in knowledge: they probably formed some hypothesis to help them to the understanding of Paul’s writings in a shorter way, and without much labour; and hence they *wrested them to their own destruction*.

Secondly: It may be alleged, that we ought to accommodate ourselves to the prejudices of mankind, and not advance doctrines, however true, against which there are strong and general prepossessions, lest we drive people still farther from the truth. Paul “*became all things to all men, that he might gain the more.*” To this I answer:

1. Paul accommodated himself to the different customs and manners of the people, that were in themselves indifferent, and walked cautiously and prudently among them, that he might not exasperate them, or augment those passions and prejudices which his aim was to destroy; but *he kept back no part of the counsel of God*, either in his preaching or his writings, under pretence of submitting to their prejudices.

2. When our brethren, through weakness of understanding, are very scrupulous concerning certain indifferent matters, as eating different kinds of meat, and the like, we ought to be cautious not to wound their weak consciences; but to accommodate ourselves to

their feeble minds, till they be better informed, or more capable of receiving instruction.

3. We ought never to attack people's prejudices with the weapons of anger, bitterness, or animosity; this would be the direct way to increase them, because it would be to fight delusion on its own ground; but farther accommodations than these are inadmissible; because if the calm dispassionate voice of reason and revelation is to be suppressed or laid aside, on the ground stated in the objection, we at once espouse the principle, that when *truth* and *prejudice* come into contact or competition, the former ought to yield to the latter.

4. If any of our fellow-creatures are in an error, and are wedded to it by prepossession, is it right for us to try to convince them of their mistake, or is it really better for them to believe a falsehood than the truth? Or, is it *impossible* for their prejudices to be overcome? If so, we suppose them to be held in delusion by necessity. And if it be possible for their mistake to be rectified, how is this to be done? by suppressing the truth and leaving them to hold fast their error with unsuspecting confidence? or, by calmly exhibiting the truth before them? Shall we keep back the evidence, because many will obstinately refuse to give it a fair hearing? And why not keep back the gospel from the world then, because many will obstinately shut their eyes against the light, and *reject* the counsel of God against themselves?

It will perhaps be said, if they should be shaken out of one error, they will only run over into another, perhaps a worse one; for "Nothing is more common than for men to run into one extreme under the plausible pretence of avoiding another!" To prevent such revolutions we had better leave the world and the church as it is at present.

And would not this argument apply with equal force, in any age since the world began? According to this logic, the gospel ought to have been kept back, for men were prone to extremes in that age as well as this; and thousands did in fact, after renouncing Paganism and embracing the Christian profession, run into greater scenes of darkness than ever, as has been shown in a note from Dr. Campbell. Was the gospel to blame for this? or shall wise men be deprived of the evidence of truth, because the foolish are disposed to cast it from them with contempt?

The objection supposes truth is not the thing that is to guard men from error; but that they are to be guarded against one delusion, by being kept in another. This is like saying to a man who

has fallen into a ditch on one side of a narrow path, which he was travelling in the dark, "sir, I will not help you out or bring a candle to assist you in finding your way, for fear you will be so transported upon your deliverance from that ditch, that, in your eagerness to avoid it in future, you will stagger into another on the other side of the road." Would he take that man to be his friend, or believe rather that he intended to insult him with such an abominable argument? As Paul rejected with indignation the imputation of having said, "let us do evil that good may come;" so let us renounce the pitiful prejudice, that we ought to suppress evidence, and keep men in error, that truth may prevail. We might as well say, let us walk in darkness that light may come, or let us delight in ignorance that knowledge may come.

5. The principle here opposed, is another favourite engine of the infallible church, and one which was a chief cause of its rising. Many of the heathens were converted to christianity, who had long been in habits of using many ceremonies, and worshipping many gods: The ministers of the gospel began to find it necessary, as they thought, to accommodate themselves a little to the people's prejudices, lest they should go back to the heathen idolatry: the pure voice of reason and revelation was not considered sufficient to guard them against error; but they must be indulged in a few small delusions, because no other guard was sufficient to keep them from falling into greater ones: thus they were led on from one degree to another, by this accommodating plan, till the most enormous string of absurd ceremonies were invented that the world has ever beheld; saints by hundreds were canonized and worshipped; pictures and images by thousands were exalted to the same dignity, and a cloud of darkness and barbarity overspread the world, until truth was fallen in the streets; justice and mercy abandoned the dismal plains of Europe, and humanity shuddered to behold the scene.

Thirdly: It may be objected; that we ought to be very cautious lest we stir up a spirit of controversy, and enlarge the divisions of mankind, instead of healing them. Answer:

1. If by *controversy*, we are to understand a calm and dispassionate exercise of reason and scriptural argument to lead one another into truth, I confess, I can see no danger in its being stirred up. Our Saviour was employed in regular argument, almost through the whole course of his ministry; "and Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures." Acts, xvii. 2. "And again as he

reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come, Felix trembled." Acts, xxiv. 25.

If such controversy as this is to be considered as an evil that ought to be avoided, it is a little surprising that the Redeemer should set us the example,—that Paul should be in the regular habit of doing it on the sabbath day, and that his arguments should be so successful as to be instrumental in the conversion of thousands, and even bring Felix himself to tremble.

2. But if angry and revengeful arguments be the only kind objected to, I readily acknowledge that truth needs not such weapons, and nothing but error can receive advantage by such a malevolent controversy. That we ought to guard against it, both in ourselves and others, is also admitted, without hesitation; and I suppose every one will allow, that the most direct way to stir it up in others, is to make use of it ourselves. How then is it to be avoided? There are only two ways that I can conceive; and it will be worth while to inquire which will be the more likely to accomplish the end. One is, "to keep ourselves in profound silence, and not attempt to prove any thing; the other, is to subdue those passions and prejudices in ourselves, which give rise to angry controversies, and do our utmost to persuade other men to subdue them, and follow the dictates of reason and revelation."

As to the first rule, it appears at first view as though it would be successful; for if a profound silence be maintained, if no person be opposed in any sentiment which he holds, what ground can there be for controversy? Even the thousands of heretics that were burnt at the stake, might have been spared, had they quietly held their peace; but they would indulge themselves in their carnal reasonings sometimes; and lest they should stir up a spirit of controversy, the holy mother in her prudence burnt them to death, and thus put them out of the way.

But though upon a superficial view we may think contentions and divisions would be prevented by silencing the voice of reason, yet matter of fact proves the contrary: bitter controversies and divisions arise not from the exercise of reason, but from the want of it: they rise, from those passions and prejudices, which if let alone, will break out among themselves, and "set on fire the course of nature, and it is set on fire of hell." If a party be united together under the influence of error and prejudice, they will indeed fight vigorously against truth and evidence, and while the attack continues they will adhere to one another in the opposition; but supposing truth should withdraw her artillery, to accommodate her-

self to their prejudices, would contention be thereby prevented? not at all: the combatants would look about them for a while, and finding no other enemy, would fall out among themselves, and indulge those furious passions which can never be kept long quiet, until they are subdued.

There is no manner of danger in a regular argument between two men, or two thousand of them, while the love of truth is the governing principle on both sides; because, while this is the case, each party rejoices to perceive good evidence from any quarter, seeing it tends to the support of that which he loves. If his opponents should, by solid arguments, convince him that he has been in an error, he will no more be offended at his friend, for this piece of kindness, than he would be offended at a physician, for improving his sight, by removing an obstruction from one of his eyes.

And suppose prejudice should rise in arms against the truth, however calmly the evidence be exhibited; what then? Must truth and reason give way at once, out of mere complaisance to delusion and malevolence? Must all reasonable men be prevented from speaking the truth, or hearing it, for fear madam *Prejudice* should be offended? Though a dreadful dust would be raised on one side, in such a controversy; yet, while the others keep to the proper weapons of truth, and use no others, thousands of reasonable men would yield themselves willing captives, and would follow the transporting rays of evidence; notwithstanding all the dust that might be raised to conceal it from their view: and for us to silence the voice of reason, and omit a diligent investigation of truth, for fear prejudiced minds should stumble at it, or be roused to violent opposition, is just as ridiculous as to relinquish all right to stem the torrent of iniquity, for fear many sinners would be influenced to make a stand against us, and perhaps become more furiously bent upon their abominations than they were before we disturbed their quiet indulgences.

This counterfeit prudence has ever been hostile to the interests of truth, and has promoted the most dangerous errors among mankind; and I think it may be said, of all the false rules of judgment here examined, as Mr. Fletcher said on a similar occasion, "They were brought forth in Moses' decayed chair at Jerusalem, nursed by Austin, at Hyppo, and educated by Bellarmine, at Rome."

If protestants are resolved still to hold them fast, I know not how they could do it more consistently, or enjoy them in more complete perfection, than to go back to the bosom of the mother

church, where an infallible priesthood can cherish *indolence*, support *ignorance*, silence the voice of *reason*, deprive the laity of *revelation*, and thus settle all controversies, and defend her tame children, against infidels and heretics, by the powerful arguments of the holy inquisition.

### SECTION XI.

*Whether certain errors ought to be believed for the sake of discouraging sin.*

It may be necessary, before we leave this part of the subject, to notice another prejudice, in which some good men appear to have been entangled: It is, that certain doctrines ought to be rejected without examination, lest the belief of them should tend to encourage sin.

This supposes truth and virtue are not uniformly connected together, but that sometimes, or in some cases, “delusion will be more friendly to righteousness than a proper knowledge of truth;” for if truth always supports virtue, and vice versa, the most effectual way to discourage sin is, to labour to banish all delusion from the face of the earth.

It must be granted, indeed, not that the knowledge of truth tends to encourage sin, but that certain truths presented to those who are incapable of receiving them, may become the occasion of their stumbling into greater errors, and those errors may lead them into greater sins; and in this case, as before observed, it is genuine benevolence to withhold such truths from them, until they be gradually prepared to receive them.

Had the pure spirituality of the divine nature—of the Messiah’s government—and of divine worship, been revealed to the Israelites in the days of Moses, their infant minds would have been incapable of such instructions. They would probably have concluded that the God who spake by Moses, was attempting to lead them into some strange chimeras which he did not understand himself. That the Egyptian gods were far more intelligible in their instructions; which they would consider far more agreeable than those given by Moses, and which, in their view, contained far better

sense and consistency. Such errors would lead them back rapidly to the heathen idolatry; and therefore, the wisdom and goodness of God "hid these things for ages," and did not make them known to the world, "till the fulness of the time was come."

But, if we conclude that those truths have any thing in their nature calculated to encourage sin, they ought to be hid for as many ages yet to come, or even forever; otherwise, we say God ought to give a revelation to encourage sin.

If it be granted then, that no truth, rightly understood and believed, will encourage sin; but that men take such encouragement, by stumbling into error; and therefore, that caution should be used to guard them against those errors, by leading them on in the knowledge of truth as they are able to receive it; this has been stated and considered before.

And who can tell when the world is in a fit state to receive certain truths but God himself, who perfectly knows the state and condition of our minds? Shall a man hold back any truth from the world, which is supported by evidence clear to his understanding, under pretence that all men are children but himself? A person of this cast may spare his prudence, I conjecture, for the grounds of it in this case, are a sufficient proof of such a superficial degree of knowledge, that the world will not be apt to sustain any injury by his profound discoveries; nor is there any necessity for them to be hid for ages, except perhaps to save the credit of their author.

That this notion never prevented sin in the world, but that it is replete with dangerous consequences, I think may be made very evident; let it suffice to illustrate the subject by two examples.

1. It has perhaps been thought, that we ought not to teach the people, "that God is not influenced by the feelings of grief, sympathy and pity, as we are, however clearly it may be proved, for fear it would lead them to distrust God, to indulge unbelief, and of consequence to run into other sins." To guard them against these evils, we must leave them in their error, because in this case the knowledge of truth would tend to their injury.

That it might be injurious for people to believe this to be true, or any thing else, merely upon our telling them so, I grant; because this would be to believe without evidence; but let the truth be explained, and set before them with sufficient evidence to carry conviction to their understandings, and the belief of it will do them no harm. Let them understand, that God gave us such affections to supply the deficiency of our moral goodness, and that the reason we believe God has them not, is, that his goodness is so



perfect that he needs no such stimulants to make his creatures happy; and this proper view of the subject will never lead them to distrust their Creator.

The opposite error, that of attributing human passions to our Maker, is so far from being preferable to the truth, that it has produced the most dismal consequences. Some have been led by it to conclude, that after spending a life of wickedness, they could move the passions of the Almighty, and melt him into pity by their tears and groans. Others have feared he was in such a rage of passion against them, that it was very difficult to appease his fury. The heathens imagined that scenes of barbarity would gratify his vengeance, and hence they were led to burn their own children in the fire.

2. Some have appeared to be suspicious of any doctrines that would give too full a view of the *kindness or mercy* of God, lest men should leap into presumptuous conclusions, and harden themselves in their transgressions.

And is there any danger, think you, in believing God to be fully as merciful and kind as he actually is, and can be proved to be? would it discourage sin more effectually for the world to be kept a little in the dark, and be prevailed on to believe that there is some barbarity in God, in order for them to be restrained by the force of terror? I think not.

Men are very apt indeed, to run into presumptuous conclusions, and hence to harden themselves in iniquity; but this never arises from that view of the Divine nature which is according to truth, but from some delusive notion of it.

One error is never to be cured by another, and I presume as much sin has been produced by believing God to be *less* merciful than he is, as has been brought on by believing him to be *more* merciful than he is.

Was any sin prevented in popish countries, by believing that all infants who died without baptism, were to be everlastingly damned in hell? or that God was delighted to see heretics burnt at the stake, and that his soul will be gratified to hear them and their infant children cry and groan in hell-flames forever? Was any sin ever prevented by believing that all heathens are to be forever damned, for not believing in Jesus Christ, of whom they never heard? Was any sin ever prevented by believing that most men were ordained to damnation, by the sovereign pleasure and unchangeable decree of God? No: such a barbarous divinity is just as unfriendly to holiness, as the loose tenets of those who represent

God as being a lover of sin, or who believe that there is nothing in his nature but mercy. And indeed they meet together in the same point; for how easy is it for those who believe God is possessed of the evil principles of injustice and barbarity, to believe he is possessed of the evil principles of *partiality* also? They can suppose he has a humorous fondness for *them*, and thus indulge themselves in presumptuous sins as much as the others. All the difference is, that the others suppose God has this humorous fondness for *all* the world, and they suppose he has it for a *part*, among whom they stand in the first rank, or at least that they certainly have a share in this partiality, which was secured by an absolute and eternal decree.

And suppose men were brought to believe that God had no mercy in his nature, but took such pleasure in seeing his creatures in torment, that he intended to send all men and angels into hell; would sin be prevented by this? so far from it, that it would only produce terror and dismay for a little while, which would probably degenerate into anger and resentment, and from that into atheism.

I pray God to save good men from the pitiful hypothesis, that there is danger in following the light of evidence too closely, for fear it should lead us to some *truth* that will *encourage sin!*

If any falsehood is necessary to promote virtue, why not tell lies to encourage holiness? Why not deceive the people for their good? Why not use pious frauds to support religion; or in plain English, why not *do evil that good may come?*

Shall we keep men in falsehood, that truth may prevail, or do evil; that good may come? God forbid. Let the glorious nature and attributes of our Maker be understood according to truth: let us avoid attributing to God a want of justice and holiness, on the one hand, and believing in a gloomy and barbarous divinity, on the other; both of which are alike unfriendly to virtue and human happiness: and let us never dream that God is so destitute of wisdom and goodness, as to put certain means of knowledge within our power, the diligent use of which is dangerous, and may lead to conclusions that would be naturally calculated to encourage wickedness. Such inconsistencies do not belong to God, but are invented by the imaginations of men.

I grant a doctrine believed without evidence, even though it should happen to be true, will be apt to prove unfriendly to virtue and happiness; for if there be no proof of it, that we are able to discover, we have every ground to consider it either a falsehood,

or a truth that the wisdom of God has concealed from mankind, because they are not in a fit state to receive it, and therefore, in all likelihood, the belief of it, though true, would, from their partial conceptions, cause them to stumble into some error which would lead them into sin.

For example, let us consider the dying thief, whom our Saviour pardoned on the cross: it may be that he had long before that time believed that he should obtain mercy in his last hours, and, from that persuasion, had hardened himself in his ungodliness, as many have done in all ages of the world. If so, the thing which he believed was true, and came to pass accordingly. But he had no *evidence* of its truth, and therefore must have believed it upon the ground of *hypothesis*: other sinners are equally destitute of evidence in this matter, and have an equal right to the hypothesis; but for one that finds he believed the truth, perhaps nine hundred prove, too late, that they believed a falsehood.

Now, in such cases, I acknowledge there is great danger, and the belief is of bad tendency, even though the object of their presumption may afterwards be found to be true; but it will not hence follow, that there ever is danger in pursuing truth to the utmost of our abilities, provided we believe nothing as true, but so far as it is supported by evidence.

The ease under consideration, is not believing the thing, on account of its having any sign of truth; but merely believing it upon the ground of fanciful conjecture. This is always dangerous, as I have attempted to make appear. Though the conjecture may chance to be true, in many cases, yet it is irrational to believe it till we have evidence of its truth, and is as much a violation of the method which God has appointed to govern the belief of reasonable creatures, as if it should prove to be a falsehood. Though hypotheses may be formed, as Dr. Reid observes, to excite inquiry, yet nothing but evidence should govern the belief of any man, if he would continue safe and happy, or even lay claim to the prerogatives of an intelligent being. We should never assent, even with a doubtful or hesitating faith, until some grounds of probability appear; and after they do appear, he should be still on his guard, and refuse to believe with firm assurance, while the evidence is only presumptive or probable.

Many arbitrary conjectures have been invented concerning the purifying influence of the fires of purgatory, or of hell: concerning another state of probation for sinners, after death: concerning their admittance into heaven, at the day of judgment, or

at some other time: concerning the nature of their torment, and of their accompanying the *prince of the power of the air*: concerning their future *annihilation*, and the like.

These roving of the imagination commonly have a pernicious influence upon their votaries, and if the scripture even said nothing against them, the most that could be said in their favour is, that they are unsupported hypotheses; and therefore ought not to govern the belief of any thinking man, till some evidence be produced of their reality. I am apt to think it is impossible for any such evidence to be produced; and we ought to be very cautious how we receive such opinions; for even supposing some of them to be according to truth, (that of departed sinners accompanying Satan upon errands of mischief, for example,) the belief of them being purely hypothetical, would be the same thing as believing falsehood upon a similar ground; (seeing both would be a departure from all evidence) and if any man should hope to improve human knowledge, by leaving the proper methods which God has vouchsafed for our instruction, to launch into the bold and fictitious regions of conjecture, let him look at the history of the world, from the days of Aristotle to those of Mr. Hume, and let him take warning by the wrecks he will behold, of religion, of happiness, of reason, and of common sense.

## CHAPTER II.

UPON THE NATURE AND GROUNDS OF REDEMPTION.

## SECTION I.

*A view of the Divine Attributes.*

IT is evident from the scriptures, that the coming of the Lord of glory to redeem fallen man, is the most important event that has occurred since the beginning of the world. Christ is the "foundation, the chief corner stone of the prophets and apostles. He is the light of the world, and the life of men. He is the mediator between God and man—the friend of sinners, and the beloved of the Father, full of grace and truth. He is the image of the invisible God—the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last—and in him dwelleth all the fulness of the God-head bodily" In a word, he is the *Saviour*, the *Governor*, and *Judge*, of the whole human family, and will reign till all enemies are subdued under his feet. We all want to know for what purpose he lived, died, and rose again from the dead: nor are we alone in being thus inquisitive, for these are "things which the angels desire to look into." 1 Pet. i. 12.

If the extent of this subject be such as affords matter for the enlargement of angelic knowledge, as the apostle's words seem to indicate, how can we hope to comprehend it completely, in our present state of being! The more we look into, and understand it, the more evidently shall we behold "the glory of God, shining in the face of Jesus Christ;" but never in this world, if in the world to come, shall we be able to comprehend the whole extent of its influence, or the immediate connexion between the cause and the effect. The connexion between *cause* and *effect* is a mystery in every part of the creation. Even in vegetation, in the growth of a spire of grass, our understandings have limits, beyond which they cannot penetrate. The operations of animal nature are equally difficult; much more those of the intellectual world. Is it wonderful then that the nature of God, and the great scheme of redemption, should contain some mysteries which we cannot fathom? "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preach-

ed unto the gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." 1 Tim. iii. 16.

But though we cannot comprehend the whole of our great Creator's works, either natural or supernatural; yet he has given us faculties whereby we may regularly enlarge our knowledge, and he calls us to the exercise of them: we ought therefore "to give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. We ought to meditate upon these things, and give ourselves wholly to them; that our profiting may appear to all." 1 Tim. iv. 13. 15. It is our wisdom, duty and happiness, to endeavour to understand the great plan of salvation as well as possible: "of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what the spirit of Christ, which was in them did signify, when it testified before-hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." 1 Pet. i. 10. 11.

If then the prophets, who were under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, found it necessary, and considered it laudible, to use their understanding in diligent inquiries and meditations upon the glorious doctrine of redemption; surely we are justified in following their example, and I presume neither prophets nor apostles will ever reprove us for the inquiry, or persuade us not to search too diligently.

The principle on which the necessity of redemption is founded, is, that man is a sinner, fallen and corrupted, and that God is not willing he should perish; but that he should come to repentance and salvation. Man, by *nature*, is prone to evil, and by *practice*, has become a positive rebel. Misery and death have become universal; but an universal remedy has been provided: for, "as by the offence of one, judgment come upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." Rom. v. 18. "For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope; because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Rom. viii. 21. This glorious deliverance will be accomplished through our Lord Jesus Christ, "whom the heaven must receive until the time of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." Acts iii. 21.

As to the *particular* ends for which our Saviour came into the world, they need not all be enumerated: suffice it to say, he came

to counteract the accidental consequences of Adam's sin upon the unsinning part of the creation, according to the above quoted scriptures:—he came to destroy death by a general resurrection:—"he came to fulfil all righteousness, and set us an example that we should follow his steps:—he came to bear witness unto the truth, and to confirm the promises made unto the fathers:—he came to teach us the good and the right way, to preach the gospel to the poor, and the opening of the prison doors to them that were bound: he came to destroy the works of the devil, and to reign till he shall put all enemies under his feet:—he came to die, the just for the unjust, to condemn sin in the flesh, to offer his soul a sacrifice for sin, that the world through him might not perish, but have everlasting life:" he came "to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins:" in a word, he came "to reconcile all things unto himself, whether they be things in earth or things in Heaven!"

But what was the great and general design of his coming, which comprehends all the particulars? I would answer, that he came to make such an atonement for sin, as should *glorify God, in the grant of pardon to the guilty, in relieving the miserable, and in procuring final salvation for the obedient.* Am I right in this view of the subject, or am I wrong? What saith the scripture? That Jesus is exalted to be a prince and a Saviour, and that the whole of our salvation is obtained through the redemption that is in him, is a point so abundantly established throughout all the scriptures, that there is no necessity of confirming it at present by particular proofs: no man who believes the bible will pretend to call it in question. And that he came to glorify God in this salvation of sinners, is also undeniable, from his own express declaration. "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, *glorify thy name.* Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will *glorify* it again;" "Jesus said, now is the son of man glorified, and *God is glorified in him.*" John. xiii. 27. 28.—xii. 31. "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that *the Father may be glorified in the Son*" John xiv. 13. "I have *manifested thy name* unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: I have *glorified* thee on the earth: I have finished *the work which thou gavest me to do.*" John. xvii. 4. 6. "Father, the hour is come: glorify thy son, *that thy son also may glorify thee.*" ver. 1. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying *glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men.*" Luke. ii. 13. 14.



Thus, it is evident Jesus came to make the *salvation of sinners* accord with the *full glory of God*; and not as some would have it, that he came merely to satisfy the divine justice, as if the glory of God consisted in this alone. It is true he came to satisfy justice, because justice is a moral attribute of the Deity, and must be glorified as well as his other perfections; but goodness and holiness were no more satisfied for sinners to be pardoned without a Redeemer, than justice itself: therefore, as redemption reconciles the salvation of sinners with the glorious nature and attributes of God, every moral perfection is alike satisfied and exalted by our Lord Jesus Christ.

*What is meant by the glory of God? or, in what does his essential glory consist?* “And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he said, I beseech thee, show me *thy glory*. And he said, I will make all my *goodness* pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee, &c. And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, the *Lord*, the *Lord God*, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in *goodness* and *truth*, keeping *mercy* for thousands, *forgiving* iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means *clear* the guilty.” Exod. xxxiii. 14, 18. 19—xxxiv. 5, 6. &c.

Here the Almighty God condescends to inform us in what his essential glory consists; first, in *goodness* under its various forms of *grace*, *mercy* and *long-suffering*: second, in *truth*, and the third in *justice*: that will by no means *clear* the guilty.

There is one thing in this passage deserving very particular attention: after proclaiming his goodness in various forms of expression, and declaring he *forgiveth* iniquity, and transgression, and sin, *God* immediately adds, “that he will by no means *clear* the guilty.” Is not here the appearance of a contradiction? that he *will* forgive sin, and that he *will not* forgive it at the same time? Answer: it is said in the most unequivocal manner that *he will forgive*; but it is not said *he will not forgive*; but that he will by no means *clear* the guilty; that is, he will not *excuse* the guilty, or grant them any *legal discharge* from the penalty, by *constituting them innocent*. If they would obtain deliverance from punishment, it must be by his goodness granting a free pardon, because no other kind of a discharge will ever accord with his nature and government. There are certain means through which he will pardon the guilty, but he will by no means clear them any other way,

not even by the means of redemption; for I think we shall find it was no part of our Saviour's design to exonerate sinners from guilt, by constituting them innocent, but to introduce them to a throne of mercy, as guilty rebels, that divine goodness may forgive them. Some suppose God will clear the guilty, or constitute them innocent, by means of a certain imputation; but God himself declares, he will *by no means* do it; because he has determined they shall be delivered from the penalty no other way but by his "goodness, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin." This shall afterwards be considered more particularly.

Again, we learn that the Lord is glorious in *holiness*. "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in *righteousness* and true *holiness*." Psalm xxix. 2. Eph. iv. 24.

We learn farther that "*justice* and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: *mercy* and *truth* shall go before thy face." "I will speak of the glorious honor of thy majesty, and thy wondrous works. The Lord is gracious, and full of *compassion*, *slow to anger*, and of great *mercy*. The Lord is *righteous* in all his ways and *holy* in all his works." Psalm 89. 14—145. 5. 8. 17. And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in Heaven, saying, Alleluia, salvation, and glory, and honor, and power unto the Lord our God: for *true* and *righteous* are his judgments; for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand." Rev. xix. 1. 2.

It appears from all these passages, to which many more might be added, that the glory of God, which our Saviour came to display and vindicate, consists in his *goodness, justice, truth* and *holiness*.

We must now inquire into the meaning of those words, and endeavour to obtain clear conceptions of the moral attributes to which they call our attention. For it is in vain we are told that goodness belongeth unto God, unless we know what the term goodness means, and so of justice, and all the rest.

The scriptures being written in human language, common words are used according to their common meaning; the inspired writers rarely, if ever, give a definition or explanation of the words they use, which would swell the bible into volumes, but they leave us to learn the nature of intellectual and moral qualities, by consulting the dictates of our consciousness and moral

faculty, and by using our reason in comparing one part of their writings with another, that we may draw just conclusions in regard to their proper signification.

When God proclaimed his nature unto Moses, he simply informed him, that he was "abundant in goodness, forgiving iniquity, &c." without explaining the nature of either goodness, forgiveness, or iniquity. And why was this, but because he knew his creatures were able to acquire a right conception of these things by the dictates of their original faculties, without a particular definition of them by revelation? Had we no conception of them from the immediate dictates of our moral judgments, the bible would be as unintelligible to us as to our horses: for if it were possible to give these animals a conception of goodness or justice, however faint, they would be capable of moral instruction as well as we; and were we or our children destitute of any original power to conceive the first principles of morality, it would be as useless for the bible to be presented to us, as to any other animal in the creation.

The nature of those attributes, or qualities of an intelligent being, which God proclaimed unto Moses, as belonging to himself, in all their perfection, is discovered by the human mind, not through the medium of either reasoning or of revelation, but by immediate and *intuitive conviction*; but as to their *application*, in the various cases of life, we need all the assistance we can obtain both from reason and from the oracles of God. We might here show the impossibility of their being proved by arguments, without first taking them for granted; but as a sufficient number of examples have been already given, it may now suffice to appeal to the impartial judgment of mankind for the truth of the following statements:

1. The words *good*, or *goodness*, signifies those qualities of matter or of mind, that tend to the promotion of happiness. Those parts of matter which supply our wants, by nourishing our nature, or protecting it from the extremes of heat or cold, we denominate good things; and those qualities of a moral agent, which dispose him to exert his power in diminishing the misery and enlarging the happiness of his fellow-creatures, we denominate good qualities, because of their tendency to promote the welfare of the creation.

*Natural good*, taken in its most general sense, signifies happiness, together with the natural means of it, such as food and raiment, and the like.

*Natural evil* consists in misery, together with the natural means of it, such as the poison of vegetables, or of serpents, or any thing else which naturally tends to destroy our life, health, or happiness.

*Moral evil*, in general, consists in those qualities of a moral agent which dispose him to use his power in making his fellow-creatures miserable.

When goodness is applied to the mind and taken in the most general sense, it includes all attributes or properties of that mind, which dispose it to delight in the performance of every action that tends to diminish the wretchedness and promote the well-being of all creatures possessing conscious existence, and capable of torment or felicity.

Perfect goodness, therefore, in any being, consists in "a perpetual will or disposition to support and perpetuate the happiness of every creature in existence, so far as it can be done consistently with justice." It has nothing to do with misery, excepting those degrees of it that may be necessary to promote its own benevolent designs. These exceptions are the three following: 1. A good being, who is perfectly innocent, may voluntarily enter into a state of misery, for the sake of promoting the happiness of others, where it can be done without infringing upon the rights of any other individual. In this case he gives up his own right in favour of others, in which consists the very essence of benevolence. By submitting to an affliction of short duration, he promotes the lasting good of others, without abandoning a just regard for his own felicity, which he resumes and establishes himself in the enjoyment of, after having accomplished the work of kindness in behalf of those whom he delights to bless. 2. A ruler may, through perfect goodness, inflict misery on guilty and obnoxious individuals, either to reform the offenders, or for the sake of vindicating the rights, and defending the native liberty and happiness of the innocent. 3. When innocent creatures have received a disorder in their nature, the removal of which necessarily produces a momentary pain, it is perfectly kind and gracious, for that pain to be thus inflicted, for the sake of removing a greater evil, and establishing the welfare of the subject in future. In this way Physicians have often inflicted severe pain, from the dictate of pure kindness and good will to the very objects who were suffering under their operations.

Now in all these cases the pain is inflicted for the sake of diminishing misery, or promoting happiness, which is the ultimate

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end of the agent. But such a regard to the diminution of wretchedness, and the enlargement of felicity, constitutes the essence of moral goodness, and therefore the action which inflicts pain, only so far as it is necessary to such a gracious end, proceeds from a benevolent intention, and consequently originates in perfect goodness as its source.

Goodness exercises itself in different ways, according to the nature and condition of its object: that branch of it which secures and defends the happiness of others in exact proportion to their right of demand, is called justice: that which confers happiness on others above what they have a right to claim, is called favour, grace or benevolence: that act of kindness which bears with the manners of offenders, and grants them time for repentance, is called *long-suffering*, and that which grants them forgiveness is denominated mercy.

That sympathy for another's woe, which produces a desire for its removal, and which God has planted in the human breast, we call *pity, compassion or humanity*. This tender feeling was given to supply the place of goodness in fallen creatures, and it often stimulates those to relieve the miserable who are destitute of any regard to moral principles in their general deportment. It may be subdued by long and confirmed habits of evil; but it retains a considerable influence upon the generality of men, even upon those who refuse to be governed by a regard to justice; and the few who appear to have subdued the last feelings of humanity, are considered as a kind of monsters in human shape.

This sympathetic feeling appears to be an animal principle of action; it leads many to acts of kindness, in an instinctive way, and the inferior animals appear to act under its influence as well as man. I know of no evidence to convince us that it is essential to the nature of God, whose love of his creatures, and whose regard to the principle of justice and benevolence is infinitely perfect, and therefore needs no such an auxiliary. That the mere feeling of sympathy is an animal impulse, appears from hence, that those animals show evident signs of it, who have no conception of morality. But we have no reason to think any thing is essential to the Deity which is merely animal; and therefore we have no reason to consider such feelings as being any part of the divine nature.

It is true that our Saviour, having assumed our nature, assumed all the sympathies of it, and hence the apostle says, "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our

infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Heb. iv. 15. How far, or in what manner, his being touched with the feeling of our infirmities may be essential to his office as our Redeemer, will remain a mystery or a secret, perhaps, until this mortal shall have put on immortality. The word *goodness* it is to be observed, is often applied in a limited sense, as being another word for *benevolence*.

2. *Justice*, abstractly considered, is that rule of moral conduct which accords with, and is limited by the rights of all beings in existence. Where there is a right of demand in any being, there is a corresponding obligation in others to act with a sacred regard to that right; and the violation of justice consists in any voluntary action which deprives another of his right, and which was perpetrated by an agent who had a knowledge of the other's right, and a conviction of his own obligation not to infringe upon it. When a lion takes away the life of a man, he is not guilty of injustice, not because the action is involuntary, (which I think it is not) but because the creature has no conception of a moral right, or of a corresponding obligation. ++

When a man's right is violated, he suffers an injury; that is, the unjust action tends to diminish his happiness or enlarge his misery. But though the action may have this tendency, yet the agent is not unjust, unless he both knew the other's right, and had the intention to act in opposition to it: a thing done accidentally or through invincible ignorance is certainly not unjust, otherwise we say a crime arises out of necessity, and a person is culpable for that which is not in his power.

The principle of justice in a moral agent, according to the definition given in the Roman law, is a perpetual will to render unto all men their right. A regard to universal right, or a perpetual desire and intention to promote it without any exception, is that love of justice which constitutes the character of an honest man. A man who pays his debts merely from a fear of being cast into prison, or from any other motive but that of a regard to justice, cannot be considered as an honest man; for if he was influenced by other motives, without any regard to this, it was not for the sake of justice he acted as he did, and had it not been for other stimulants he would have violated it in practice.

He who intends to injure another, but is never able to execute his purpose, is an unjust man in principle, and would be so in practice if not prevented.

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He who wishes another to be injured, and who would injure him, were it not for the fear of being detected, punished or exposed, is also an unjust man in principle.

It follows that no man can be truly just without "loving his neighbour as himself, and doing to others as he would they should do to him."

God has a right to the supreme veneration, love, and obedience of all intelligent creatures.

All innocent creatures, in a state of perfect order, have a right to the character of innocence, and to the consequences of it; and no person can charge them with being guilty when are they not so, or punish them as such, without being unjust.

When one creature knowingly and intentionally acts in opposition to the right of other creatures, or of his Creator, he thereby forfeits his own right to the character and consequences of innocence, and deserves to be punished in proportion to his demerit. He has a right still to demand that the blame and punishment shall not exceed the offence; and no being can charge him with more guilt than he has actually contracted, or punish him for crimes he never committed, without being unjust.

If his children, or other creatures, are involved in misery in consequence of his crime, which they would otherwise have avoided, he has injured them in defiance of justice, and this is a principal ground of his demerit or ill desert.

His guilt, however, is not in proportion to the extent of the injury considered distinct from, but in conjunction with, his knowledge and intention to do wrong. I will suppose one man discharges a pistol at a tree, in order to scare a person who stands near it, and that the bullet glances from the side of the tree and passes through his head; another fires at his neighbour with an intention to break his arm, but inadvertently shoots him through the heart: a third deliberately runs a sword through his neighbour's body, with the full intention to take his life.

Here are three cases, in which the hurt or loss sustained by the sufferers is the same. But does any reasonable man want arguments to convince him that the degree of guilt is not the same in all those cases? Had nothing followed in the first case but what was intended, the injury would have been comparatively small; but still the thing was criminal, because the intention was to scare a person by such means as he knew, or might have known, would expose his fellow-creature to considerable danger. But in the last case there was a full intention to deprive another of his life with



a full knowledge of the immediate tendency of the means made use of, to produce that effect.

When one or more creatures are brought into a state of misery or natural disorder, by the bad conduct of others, or by any other means, the person that shall deliver them from this state, through a regard to their happiness, without being under any obligation of justice to do it, and without violating any right of others, is truly benevolent.

If in doing this, he should find it necessary to expose himself to any kind or degree of suffering, which justice did not require of him, which should not be inconsistent with his resuming again his native happiness, and which was endured from a pure intention to glorify God and enlarge the happiness of his creatures, this suffering, far from being unjust, would increase the merit of his benevolence. To deny this, is to say it is unjust to be kind, and an innocent person must never be benevolent but where it costs him nothing. +

If he should find it necessary to inflict a degree of pain on any of those creatures with his own hand, which justice did not require that they should endure, in order to prevent a greater evil or establish them in a state of perfect happiness afterwards, this suffering inflicted on them, far from being unjust, would result from pure benignity, which carries justice in its bosom, and bestows more happiness on others than they have a right in justice to demand.

*Injustice* consists, not merely in inflicting pain on the innocent, but in doing it when it is unnecessary, and from such a regard to some selfish gratification, as makes the agent regardless of the rights or happiness of the innocent sufferer. But when the pain is necessary to counteract a disorder which would produce a greater degree or duration of it in future, or which would prevent a lasting benefit; the person who inflicts it from a pure regard to the increase of happiness and diminution of misery, is perfectly just and good. Deny this, and we say at once, that all physicians are unjust, or else that they always inflict pain on their patients in exact proportion to what they deserve, and what justice inflexibly requires.

These statements I must now take for granted: for their truth I appeal to the reader's judgment, and shall forbear tracing the absurdities which would follow from a denial of them, till I come to apply them to the several doctrines defended in the present essay.

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3. The moral attribute of *truth*, consists in a perpetual will or disposition to think, speak and act, with a sacred regard to truth, and never intentionally to do any thing that is calculated to deceive ourselves or others.

It implies such a love of truth, arising from a conviction of its tendency to promote the happiness of intelligent beings, as shall influence us to use all the means in our power to know the truth, to assist others to know it,—to guard against falsehood, to assist others to guard against it,—and to abhor all lying, deceit or dissimulation.

So far as any man indulges prejudice, or refuses to give evidence a fair hearing, through party attachments, voluntary negligence, or any thing else that depends upon his will, so far he is deficient in the love of truth.

So far as any man knowingly and intentionally uses sophistical reasonings, or any kind of false evidence, calculated to deceive others and impose upon their understandings, so far he acts in opposition to the moral attribute under consideration, and is so far culpable before that Almighty Being, who requireth truth in the inward parts.

Through the weakness of our understanding, we are all liable to fall into errors, and to lead others into them; but in such cases as do not arise from indolence, or any want of attention or candour on our part, we are altogether inculpable, because no person is blamable for not doing that which is not in his power.

4. *Holiness*, I think, is a general term, not so properly applied to any distinct and particular attribute, as to the perfection of all moral attributes in harmony.

A being that is perfectly benevolent, just and true, we call a holy being; and surely his holiness consists in the perfection of his justice, truth and goodness, and in nothing else: at least, if there be any other moral quality distinct from these, I have never been able to form any conception of it.

Shall we say holiness consists in moral purity and a perfect hatred of sin? But what is moral purity but the perfect influence of the attributes above mentioned? And what does hatred of sin arise from, but from a love of goodness, truth and justice?

Mr. Wesley somewhere speaks, and I think very properly, concerning “holiness in all its branches.” The several branches of it are mentioned above, and as unmercifulness, injustice and falsehood are the branches of wickedness or unholiness, so their opposites are the branches of holiness, which is a general term,

including every principle and action that is necessary to perfect rectitude.

Although justice, truth and benevolence, may be conceived distinctly from each other, yet I think there is a kind of unity in them, and a mutual dependence, which makes them appear to be inseparable. He who is so destitute of a regular regard to human happiness as to refuse to be benevolent, when in his power, will not perform acts of justice from a pure love of the principle, but from some selfish motive: he who is unjust, cannot be benevolent, and he who injures his neighbour by deceit and lying, is certainly unjust and unmerciful.

The unity of those attributes, and that which is common to them all, I take to be "a constant intention to enlarge happiness and diminish misery as much as possible." This implies a delight in the promotion of happiness, and a love for all good beings, so far as they are good, that is, so far as they are disposed and fixed in the intention to enlarge happiness and diminish misery as much as possible.

Those glorious attributes belong to our Maker in all their fullness: *abundant in GOODNESS and truth—and that will by no means CLEAR the GUILTY.*

So far as we act from a love to those perfections of the Deity, and from a regard to universal happiness, so far we partake of the image of God, in which man was at first created. "To love the Lord our God with all our heart," is to love goodness, truth and justice; and while this love is uniform, and is not interrupted by other motives, it will lead us to "do unto all men as we would have them do unto us." But alas! our love is too often wavering; other motives mingle with our regards to righteousness; and in this consists the deficiency of human virtue. There is no mixture of other motives in the divine mind, and hence there is perfect consistency and uniformity in all his actions: He never deviates from a pure regard to general happiness, and never will do it in any period of eternal duration. But we sometimes yield to selfish influences, and hence there is an irregularity and inconsistency in our deportment. We often make blunders also through ignorance and unavoidable mistakes, to which the Almighty is not liable. For these our heavenly Father will not condemn us; but so far as our wrong conduct arises from an abuse of our power, or a neglect to use it, so far we are guilty, and every being of truth and justice must disapprove us accordingly.

All God's perfections are in harmony with each other. If there were any inconsistency or contradiction in the divine attributes, they would lead to an inconsistency of conduct. If justice ever contradicts benevolence, then every being must lay one or the other of them aside, or contradict himself in practice.

There has, perhaps, never been a more ridiculous or dangerous mistake in the world than the supposition that one moral attribute may contradict another: it has, if I mistake not, given rise to the most inconsistent and barbarous systems of divinity, that ever darkened the human mind, and which ultimately resolve themselves into the Manichean principle, that the full disposition of essential wickedness belongs to God, as well as holiness! Surely if any attribute be a perfection, that which contradicts it must be an imperfection: if one be moral, its opposite must be immoral: if one be righteous, its contrary must be unrighteous. If we deny this, we say plainly "that virtue and vice are not opposite to each other, but that virtue or moral goodness is opposite to itself.

Benevolence produced all happiness in the creation, truth directed creatures how to enjoy and retain it, and justice guarded it, and demanded that it should not be interrupted. What contradiction is there in this? None at all: the divine attributes agreed to promote happiness, and to forbid the introduction of misery; and the first act of an intelligent being, which injured others, or obstructed the flow of happiness, opposed the influence of goodness, truth and justice, and this was the ground of its criminality.

But did sin make any alteration in the divine attributes? did it throw them into confusion, or change the nature of any of them? God forbid. Benevolence is as much disposed to communicate happiness, truth to conduct us to it, and justice to defend it, as they ever were. Hence we find a wise plan has been devised and executed from the dictate of goodness, and communicated to us according to that of truth, to save all sinners that will be saved without taking their principles of rebellion to heaven; and this they cannot do, because justice is as much as ever disposed to defend the general welfare.

Justice never inflicts misery, even on the guilty, without some essential good in view; either to reform the offender, or to guard others from the influence of his crimes: and when it is thus necessary, it is surely as consistent with goodness as it is with justice.

A principle which inflicts misery for no end, or for a bad one, is as contrary to justice as it is to mercy, and such a principle cannot be imputed to the Almighty, without charging him with essen-

*... nature, and such Design be only temporary.*

tial wickedness. When punishments are inflicted on sinners with a view to their reformation, it is kind as well as just; and when they are punished without a regard to their individual advantage, it is because they utterly refused the overtures of mercy, and is done with a view to the welfare of others. Thus are all just punishments inflicted for a good end: that is, for the purpose of promoting happiness and preventing misery.

*God is love*, "and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." 1 John. iv. 16. The office of justice is not to contradict love, but to defend the medium through which love displays itself, and diffuses tranquillity to all creatures that consent to come under its benign influences.

## SECTION II.

*Sin dishonours God, and destroys the happiness of his creatures; therefore his displeasure against it must be manifested.*

God has given his creatures a law or moral government, that is, his truth has communicated certain rules of action to their understandings, founded upon justice and goodness, with a conviction of their obligation to conform to those rules without any exception or violation. That the law is founded upon those attributes, is evident from the following scriptures:

"Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth." Psalms cxix. cxlii.

"The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity." Mal. ii. 6.

"Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." Rom. vii. 12.

The Almighty's government is *just*, because it secures the rights of all beings in existence: it is *good*, because its native tendency is to promote the happiness of all intelligent creatures, and misery was never introduced but by a departure from its precepts: it is *true*, because it has no tendency to deceive, but gives a correct view of the nature of God, and of the way in which happiness is to be enjoyed. Therefore it is *holy*, because it supports every moral principle.

As the glory of God consists in his moral attributes; and as those attributes are exhibited through the medium of his law or government; it follows, that the way creatures are to glorify God, is for them to support his government by cordial obedience to every precept of the law. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my *father glorified*, that *ye bear much fruit*; so shall ye be my disciples." John, xv. 7, 8. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your *good works*, and *glorify* your father that is in heaven." Mat. v. 16.

But how does the law of God promote the happiness of his creatures? I think it is done in two ways: first, by means of the understanding; and second, by means of the affections.\*

1. By presenting the glorious nature of God and of his government to the understanding, the soul is charmed and possesses a conscious felicity from the intrinsic excellence of those objects thus presented to its intellectual discernment. In proof of this, we may appeal to two authorities: first, to the oracles of God, which declare in many places, directly or indirectly, that the influence of truth upon the understanding produces happiness.

"Take not the word of truth out of my mouth; ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free: his delight is in the

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\* Mr. Superville says, in a sermon, "The soul is capable of three general affections; to know, to love, and to feel; which are three sources of actions and pleasures that are almost without number.—It is very certain that the soul, disengaged from the body, elevated above visible things, and admitted into the presence of Christ, shall know God in a manner very different from that in which we knew him in this life. What then can hinder the activity of the soul? Is it not certain that an understanding, refined, extended, always in motion, continually employed in the discovery of new objects; always forming just ideas; always at the source of truth; always enlightened by him who enlightens every man that cometh into the world; always capable of considering truths in connexion with their causes and effects, and in their relation to God and Jesus Christ; is it not certain, I say, that an understanding thus refined, and thus occupied, will be a source of unspeakable knowledge, and perpetual joy?" See the Methodist magazine for the year 1811, vol. 34, pages 95, 96.

There can be no objection to this just and animating view of the subject; but I presume the author would be understood to mean, that the "three sources of actions and pleasures," which he mentions, though distinct in conception, are nevertheless united in nature; and that there is no feeling essential to an intelligent nature, but what arises from knowledge and love, or is inseparably connected with them.

law of the Lord, and in his law doth he *meditate* day and night." Psalm cxix. 43. John, viii. 32. Psalm i. 2. Now if the pious man delight in his meditations on the law, that happiness results from the beauties of it presented to the understanding.

Secondly: we may appeal to the consciousness of every man of reflection, and ask if he finds no happiness in the exercise of his understanding, while he beholds the glory of God, displayed in the goodness and justice of his moral government?

2. The law produces harmony in our affections, harmony with our fellow-creatures, and union with our Creator; from this results all the sweets of moral, social, and divine felicity. We have peace in ourselves, peace and love with our brethren, communion with God, and joy in the Holy Ghost. It is true, all our happiness is from God; but it is communicated through the free exercise of our intellectual and active powers, by means of the divine government, which influences us by moral motives, and not by compulsion. How can we be happy in the love of God, or of our fellow-creatures, unless we choose to love them? A forced love, produced by mechanical impulse, is a most glaring absurdity.

The law of God is calculated to delight the understanding, to influence the will, to harmonize the affections, and to regulate the conduct: it unites the creatures of God together as a band of brothers, assimilates them into the divine nature, and thus conducts them to the eternal fountain of love and tranquillity. They partake of the felicity of their heavenly Father, because they are governed by the same moral principles, which are essential to his own perfect nature, and which (with reverence permit me to think) constitute the everlasting happiness of Almighty God. I must therefore conclude that the full joys of the upper world flow to creatures through the channel or medium of the moral law, which was established by our benevolent Creator to promote this gracious end.

But what saith the scripture? It saith *love* is the fulfilling of the law: and every one who ever loved knows that love and happiness are inseparable. Rom. xiii. 10. Again, the Lord Jesus says, "As the father hath loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love. If ye *keep my commandments* ye shall *abide* in my love; even as I have kept my father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that *my joy* might remain in you, and that *your joy might be full.*" John xv. 9, 10, &c. The psalmist says, "The law of the Lord is perfect, *converting the soul.* The testimony of the Lord is sure, *making wise the simple.* The sta-



tutes of the Lord are right, *rejoicing the heart*: the commandment of the Lord is pure, *enlightening the eyes*: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; *sweeter* also than honey and the honey-comb. Moreover, by them is thy servant *warned*; and *in keeping* of them there is *great reward*. Lord, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments. My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly. *Great peace* have they which *love thy law*; and nothing shall offend them." Psalm xix. 7, &c.—cxix. 145, &c. "But whoso looketh into the *perfect law of liberty*, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be *blessed in his deed*. For the commandment is a *lamp*; and the law is *light*; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life." Jam. i. 25. Prov. vi. 23. St. Paul tells us "The commandment was *ordained to life*;" and our Saviour, who certainly understood the nature and end of the divine law, says expressly, "I know that *his commandment is life everlasting*." Rom. vii. 10. John, xii. 50. We are therefore warranted in the conclusion that *the glory of the Creator* and the *happiness of all rational creatures*, are supported by means of his *moral government*.

From this it follows, that a violation of the law is an insult to all the attributes of God; an infringement upon the general plan of happiness; a violation of all right; and consequently *sin is a very great evil*. Its native tendency is to dissolve the harmony of universal society, to obstruct the influence of every righteous principle, and to produce everlasting misery and disorder. Is justice roused to execute vengeance upon the sinner? it is; and all the other attributes are equally insulted. *Goodness* is opposed to the rebel, because he obstructs the general flow of happiness; *truth*, because his conduct tends to obscure the government; and *justice*, because he has violated the rights of others.

But would not the repentance of the criminal be a sufficient atonement, to influence the divine being to exercise forgiveness? Answer:

1. Repentance alone would not manifest God's abhorrence of the crime at all: every one might consider sin a very small thing; a little mistake of the judgment a mere trivial affair, that, at any time would admit of forgiveness upon a bare acknowledgment: therefore (it might be said) let us all try if there be not some unknown advantage in it: at all events we shall lose nothing, for whatever be the consequences, it is plain we can be delivered

*with the modern system of atonement as we proceed*

from them when we please by a little confession and repentance. Will the great Lord of angels and men thus suffer his government to sink into contempt? Will such a small acknowledgment satisfy his goodness, justice and spotless holiness? Will the great principles of his moral law be secured, and the general happiness maintained, by such a feeble and diminutive administration?

2. It is a well known fact that sin has a pernicious influence upon the affections and moral faculties of the sinner: he contracts habits of aversion to the law and the law-giver, as well as a moral incapacity to recover himself. If then he were treated as an obedient subject, upon his repentance, while he had a secret proneness of disaffection to the government, the foundation would be laid for universal depravity. The sinner must therefore be reformed and renewed, that a proper provision may be made for his future allegiance: and this must be done by an arm more mighty than his own. And if God were to grant this extra assistance by virtue of his repentance alone, this supposes his confession would more than counterbalance his fault, inasmuch as it would not only enable him to obtain what he had before, but would merit an additional display of divine power; that of renewing a fallen creature. This would surely exhibit rebellion in a very favourable point of view! and would represent it as a small and trivial matter, which God is willing to excuse or pardon, and even to reward upon a bare confession or repentance.

3. As the purity of God's nature would not thus be displayed, by a full proof of his hatred against sin, it would neither accord with goodness nor justice for rebels to be received to favour upon such terms; because it would weaken the motives to moral obedience in the upright, and diminish their confidence in the divine attributes of their Creator.

4. This notion, concerning the all-sufficiency of repentance, originates in the most unjustifiable arrogance and presumption. God assures us his nature demands another kind of satisfaction, and who is the man that, upon second thoughts, will venture to direct the Almighty what kind of atonement would be requisite to repair the injury done to his glory?

5. If we suppose the government of God needs no other satisfaction than the repentance of the offender, we consider it inferior to the laws of men: because it often happens that repentance or acknowledgment affords a criminal no security, and many have been executed without being asked whether they repented or not. Does the insulted authority of the Almighty require less satisfac-

tion than the momentary laws of men? Such an opinion is a reproach to our maker, a support to human pride, a violation of common sense and reason, and stands amongst the whimsical absurdities of infidelity.

### SECTION III.

*The attributes of God were glorified in the redemption of the world, by our Lord Jesus Christ.*

CONSIDER WE next how God was glorified in the highest, in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ. To understand this in the clearest light, it is necessary to inquire how God would have vindicated his government, and displayed his glory if sinners had not been redeemed.

It will be readily admitted that God was not bound in justice to send a Saviour for fallen man: revelation assures us that love is the source of redemption, and God could have manifested the purity of his nature by executing the sentence of the law upon every offender. And if it be asked, why was it necessary for Christ to die for the salvation of sinners? we must ask a previous question: why must men or angels be punished on account of their rebellion against God? A proper answer to this question will effectually answer the other, and will give us a just view of the design of our Saviour's sufferings and death upon the cross.

Supposing no Saviour had interposed for sinners, and God had executed the sentence upon every criminal; on what principle could this act of the Creator be accounted for? We must believe either, (1.) that he punishes sinners for no other reason but his own sovereign pleasure; or (2.) that he does it from a regard to the safety and well-being of his creatures in general. ✕

If it be done for no other reason but his own sovereign pleasure, it will follow, (1.) that he has no regard to the promotion of happiness in this severity against offenders, and therefore, there is no goodness in the matter: (2.) that he has no regard to the security of the native rights of his creatures, and therefore it cannot arise from moral justice: (3.) that there is some principle in the Deity that delights to inflict torment, when it is not necessary to

secure the well-being of any creature in existence. These consequences are too evident to be denied, and too shocking to be admitted by any reflecting mind: and we have no other alternative, but to admit that a benevolent and righteous governor inflicts penalties on obnoxious individuals from a regard to the general good of society.

If punishments be inflicted by an earthly ruler, when they are not necessary for the support of good government, and the security of general happiness, all men of common understanding will agree that such an act in the governor's administration arises either from his *caprice* and *ignorance*, from his *pride* and *selfishness*, or from the *tyranny* and *malevolence* of his disposition. As nothing of this kind can be imputed to the Creator,—as he views such selfish and wicked principles with unchangeable abhorrence,—the conclusion is incontestable, that his sentence against offenders arises from perfect justice and goodness, or in other words, from a pure regard to those principles of government, the vindication of which is essential to the security and welfare of his obedient children.

If, on the contrary, thieves and murderers are permitted to pass with impunity under any government, and are never punished for their crimes, we justly infer that there is a deficiency of principle in the government itself, or in the executive. If the magistrate never execute the sentence of the law upon the violators of it, we conclude the principle of justice has little or no influence upon him, that he is indifferent to the public interest, and that his pernicious lenity arises from a partial fondness for criminals, and a secret disaffection to the principles of his own government. Now if the divine administration should leave any just ground for such suspicions, what darkness would overspread the universe, and how would all moral creatures be injured, whose happiness consists in their confidence in, and attachment to, the pure nature of their Almighty Father? To prevent such a general calamity, the justice and goodness of God are engaged to support the dignity of his law, and to demonstrate the purity and impartial rectitude of his unchangeable nature.

For these reasons the penalty of the law must of necessity be inflicted upon all criminals, unless the ends of government can be secured, and the divine attributes be fully and clearly manifested by some other expedient. Such an expedient has been devised by the wisdom of God, and executed by his goodness: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

He could have vindicated his government without redeeming us, by executing the sentence upon every criminal. If God had not "so loved the world as to give his only begotten son, and deliver him up for us all," the consequences would have been, that every individual sinner must die the death, or suffer the dreadful penalty. And why must this be done? Not to minister to the Almighty's pleasure, for he has declared, and confirmed by an oath, that he has "no pleasure in the death of the wicked;" but to *secure the influence of the government, for the sake of the general welfare*. And how would this have been secured by the execution of every offender? Answer: It would have manifested God's regard for righteousness and good government: It would have manifested the great evil of sin, and its hatefulness to the pure eyes of the Almighty: it would have impressed upon the obedient part of the creation, a clear conviction of the strength and purity of God's unalterable laws: it would have displayed the necessity and unutterable felicity of a cordial obedience, on the one hand; and the direful effects of rebellion on the other: hence the influence of their rebellion upon others would have been prevented, the divine attributes vindicated, and the general flow of happiness secured. For these ends, and such as these, is punishment inflicted under any just and good government upon earth: and I hope none will impute to the Creator a tyranny that is execrated among mortals, and which is shocking to conscience and contrary to revelation.

Here, then, every rebel must stand, without help, and without hope: in vain may he repent, pray, or make confession; because the general good must not be neglected to exercise partiality to an individual. All sinners must die, unless some plan can be devised to magnify the law in their deliverance.

But can the rebels devise any such plan? Alas! if it be left to them, the dye is cast forever: they can do nothing but sink still deeper into misery, unless some kind friend, more mighty than they, should interest himself in their favour. Can such a friend be found among all the armies of the sky? They all have to do their own individual part in promoting the divine glory, and cannot leave their own work to ransom another: because after they have done all that they can do, they have done nothing more than their duty: consequently each one for himself will have to support the government by obeying, while the rebels will have to do it by suffering. Is it so, then, that mercy is clean gone forever? Has the loving Father of the spirits of all flesh shut up his tender mercies in eternal displeasure! Can he see his poor miserable creatures

*Practice of Justice so as to secure the influence of Government, for the sake of the general welfare*

ingulphed in the horrors of insufferable despair! and can he devise no means whereby his banished may be brought back, that they may not be irrecoverably undone! "Will he be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousand rivers of oil?" Alas! all this is unavailing, and lighter than dust upon the scale.

But the Almighty Father waits not to be intreated; "he has found a ransom, and has laid help upon one that is mighty." The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world, to condemn the world, but that the world through him *might be saved.*" Psalms. ciii. 6, &c. John iii. 16, 17. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because 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. And we have seen, and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." 1. John. iii. 16.—iv. 9, &c.

It is evident that our Saviour did not die to supercede the necessity of pardon, by giving us a legal discharge from all penalties; but to open the way for mercy, to deliver all those from suffering the penalty, who come holdly (that is, believingly) to a throne of grace; not to a throne of justice to sue out their liberty in the name of their surety;—but that they might obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

The death of Christ manifested God's abhorrence of sin, as well as his love to the sinner, and justified the heavenly government in the pardon of all penitents, as well as it would have been done if all sinners in the universe had been forever damned. This was all mercy was waiting for: namely, for such an exposure of the dreadful evil of sin, and such a demonstration of God's hatred against it, as should glorify his attributes, and restore the government to its native dignity and influence over his intelligent creatures. This was accomplished by our Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore every moral attribute was satisfied, that a free pardon should be granted to every sinner of Adam's race that would receive the Saviour for his Lord and king, or, which is the same thing, to every sinner that would

Yield to his love's redeeming power  
And fight against his God no more.

As the Father never was disposed to punish any sinner, merely to minister to his pleasure, but to secure the ends of good government; so he never demanded of his only begotten Son, to suffer the whole penalty for the pleasure of his vengeance; but he was so loving to every man, that rather than the government should be vindicated by the condemnation of the guilty, he even gave his own Son, yea, "God himself was manifested in the flesh; that this human nature connected with the *deity*, should expire under the excruciating agonies of the cross, that poor sinners might be pardoned in such a way as should support the honour of his holy law—God could have chosen the other alternative, and have displayed his holiness and hatred against sin, by the damnation of the criminal; but love would have it otherwise. Rather than his apostate creature should die the dreadful death, the loving God himself comes down from heaven! He hangs between the heavens and the earth, a spectacle to angels and to men! What heart of stone—what frozen, savage heart—can remain unmoved, and unconcerned at such melting love as this?

Shame on the man that shall represent redemption as having its seat in the satisfaction and gratification of unrelenting vengeance, while all heaven is astonished at the bleeding mercy it displays! Prophets, apostles, and angels together are shouting and proclaiming the great love wherewith our heavenly Father hath loved us; and must we consider him as a tyrannical and malicious being, whose fury must be appeased, by an infliction of the whole penalty upon his dear Son, before he will agree for one sinner to escape? far be the thought from every soul that has been redeemed by the blood of Jesus! Christ died to open our way to mercy, and not to raise us above the want of it.

And hence the great name proclaimed unto Moses is verified to us: "gracious and merciful, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin."

"Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat? I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the people there was none with me: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me. Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: for thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is



his name: and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called. The Lord is well-pleased for his righteousness' sake; *he will magnify the law and make it honourable.*

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God: being justified freely by his *grace*, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth 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; *to declare*, I say, at this time, *his righteousness*; that he might be *just* and the *justifier* of him which believeth in Jesus." Isaiah, lxiii. 1.—liv. 4, 5.—42. 21. Rom. iii. 23. Hence it follows that the love of God gave a Redeemer to open the way for his love to flow to poor guilty sinners; and not that eternal justice demanded him as a criminal, in order that grace might be literally purchased, and thus bestow its favours for the sake of value received.

Was God waiting for his goodness to be bought by a price that should be exactly equal to its value? Then surely he was waiting to sell his grace, and have a literal price of justice paid down, that should be equivalent to every degree of favour or benevolence he should exercise; resolving not to let any go out of his treasury without an entire and complete compensation: that is, in other words, he resolved not to exercise any grace or favour at all, but merely to buy and sell, according to a literal bargain, and the complete standard of inflexible justice. It may indeed be objected, that although God demanded the whole penalty before he could be satisfied, yet his grace appears to full advantage, inasmuch as it was God himself who both devised the plan of redemption and executed it, without being under any obligation to do so: in this his goodness appears without a cloud, and there is no necessity for any new act of mercy to be exercised after justice is satisfied; because it was sufficiently displayed before. To this plausible objection I would answer:

1. That it was God who both devised the plan of redemption, and executed it, is readily admitted; and therefore, redemption resulted from his goodness; but if there was any thing done in the execution of this plan, which God in justice demanded, and then he had a demand upon himself, seeing he himself performed the thing demanded, as the objection urges, (and very properly) as the only proof of his benevolence.
2. To suppose the right of demand, and the bond of obligation can exist in the same being, so that he who claims and receives is

X

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absolutely the same that owes and discharges the obligation, is to suppose the exercise of justice is a solitary operation that depends not upon the relation of one being with another: it supposes a right of demand in one, does not necessarily imply a corresponding obligation in another, but that the claim and the obligation may be in himself alone! This, to me, is as unintelligible as to say a man's right hand has a demand upon his left hand, which is bound by moral obligation to discharge the debt, and cannot refuse it without being unjust. Suppose there should be a refusal to discharge the obligation; we must then say one person is deprived of his right, and another having acted unjustly has forfeited his right, and exposed himself to a penalty in proportion to his demerit; and yet the injured person, and the aggressor, the just person and the unjust; the aggrieved person, and the offender, are absolutely the same individual: in other words, that a person may be just and unjust, the injured and the violator, an innocent sufferer and an unrighteous sinner, at the same time. If the obligation be not discharged, justice is violated, and the unrighteous person is deserving blame in proportion to his criminality: but who must be blamed or punished for the offence? Why, truly, the injured person himself, for there is no other; and the innocent must be involved with the guilty by absolute necessity, because there is but one individual, and he is guilty and innocent at the same time. †††

3. I think there is but one conceivable way, in which any being, on whom there is no previous demand, can bind himself from the dictate of benevolence; and that is by *promise*. It is supposed in the objection that it was a matter perfectly voluntary for God to assume an obligation to himself in our favour; that he had a right to withhold this favour; and therefore, though he demanded the whole debt, yet he obligated himself to discharge it to himself, when he might have done otherwise, which was surely a great display of merey.

Now if he assumed an obligation in our favour, and discharged it according to his just demand, he graciously condescended to bind himself, which could only be done by promise, covenant or engagement.

But what conception can we have, in a consistency with common sense, of a person binding himself by promise, covenant or engagement with himself alone, excepting that he simply resolves or determines to do that for the sake of others, which he is under no obligation of justice to do? And is it indeed true, that when a person kindly determines to do a favour, he thereby becomes bound

in a debt of justice to himself, which is discharged by bestowing the favour, and which cannot be omitted after the resolution is formed, without a plain violation of justice? If so, a favour was never bestowed in the universe; for it is impossible it should be bestowed until there be a volition or determination to bestow it, and that volition or determination is supposed to bind the agent in a debt of justice, and of course the act of bestowing it, which is a consequence of the previous determination, is only a discharge of that debt, and therefore no benevolence, because it could not then be withheld without a violation of justice.

But if a resolution to bestow a favour does not bind the agent by moral obligation, then it was impossible for God to bind himself in this way by promise, engagement or covenant, unless he entered into covenant with some other being, and not with himself alone.

And if it was impossible for God to become bound in a debt to himself, then Christ never came under an obligation of justice to God, unless it can be proved that Christ is not God, or that there are *two Gods*, so totally separate that one may be bound in a debt of justice to the other.

4. Suppose there were two such Gods, we say it is the Father whose law has been violated by sinners: the Father is our God, under whose government we stand responsible. If then the Father inflexibly demanded the penalty to the very last mite, and the Son obligated himself to discharge it, the Son only has shown favour to us, and our proper sovereign, who demanded a penalty of us as the subjects of his government, has exercised no mercy towards us; and consequently our obligations of gratitude for redemption are confined and due to the Son alone. Here it will perhaps be said, the Father and the Son are *one*: I grant they are; and this is the foundation of my argument; but the sophistry I am opposing, first, supposes them to be two Gods, so separate and independent of each other, as to stand in the relation of debtor and creditor; but after the contract is made and executed, my ingenious opponent abandons his old ground, and, in order to secure a part of the benevolence, and the corresponding gratitude to the Father, he tells us very gravely that Christ and God are one.

5. Perhaps it will be said, the Father's benevolence appears in this, that he both provided Christ as a substitute for sinners, and accepted him in our place, when he was not bound to do so. I answer, first, if he provided himself for our Redeemer it was indeed benevolent: but in that case he did not become bound, or demand

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a penalty from himself, as has just been evinced. Second: if he provided Christ, as another being, and an innocent one, to be condemned and executed in the place of the guilty, what right had he to do so? If it is right to release a sinner by condemning and punishing an innocent person in his place, then surely it would be right for Satan to be released from hell, provided an innocent angel were condemned and sent there in his place. Does benevolence consist in showing favour to one by violating the rights of another? But Christ, you say, consented willingly to be offered up. That he never consented to become a sinner, or to become guilty by imputation, I hope to prove in another place. But granting, for the sake of argument, that he consented to it; still the whole of the benevolence was in him alone, because the right of option to grant the favour or withhold it, was in him and in no other. The Father, it is supposed, was determined to show no mercy, but inflexibly to demand the whole penalty: Christ was not bound to endure it in our place, and the Father had no right to inflict it on him against his will: therefore, our receiving any benefit, or not receiving any, depended on the voluntary goodness of Christ alone, and consequently to him only we are under obligations of gratitude for any favour shown us in redemption.

The only remaining subterfuge is, that the Father was gracious in accepting the substitute, when he was not bound to do it. But a few plain questions will remove this superficial vail: first, had Christ a right to discharge our obligation? Second, had the Father a right to any more than our obligation? was not our obligation the very thing which he had a right to demand? If so, when Christ discharged our obligation, which he had a right to do, the Father had no more demand against us, and we were immediately as free from all just penalties and from any need of pardon as the unoffending angels of heaven. Say Christ had no right to discharge the obligation or suffer the penalty for us, and you declare it to be unjust: say he had a right, and you affirm the Father was bound to demand no more, and to accept that or nothing; otherwise you make justice contradict itself, by supposing one being has a right to forbid what another has a previous right to do. To say the Father may demand more, after my surety has paid all that is due, is to suppose he has a right to more than his due, which is a contradiction.

Thus I think the objection is fairly and honestly answered, and that the Antinomian scheme of atonement supposes God to be totally destitute of mercy. +

*at he might have added, if his foregoing arguments were not sufficient, that any and every scheme of atonement by another person, is a total violation of justice. also*

As to the alarm that may have been excited, lest I should deny the doctrine of the Trinity, I hope it will be removed in the following section. ††

*† The alarm is not at present about denying or being understood as denying the true scriptural doctrine concerning the Trinity and the incarnation. Yet I wish more to be understood and I wish least he should find himself bound to it to maintain it in his mode of reasoning on the subject.*

SECTION IV.

*An examination of two opposite prejudices, founded upon mystery.*

INFIDELS will be apt to object that the preceding view of the subject is still too unintelligible and mysterious, that it is hard to see why the divine attributes must be displayed by a redeemer, and how this was done by the death of Christ upon the cross. I suspect some christians will, on the contrary, think it too plain, and that it savours too much of an attempt to explain away the divine mysteries. I wish to convince these opponents that two opposite prejudices, and not reason or revelation, are the foundation of their objections.

The deist will say he is not yet satisfied with the doctrine of atonement or satisfaction for sins; because, though this scheme appears less mysterious than some others, yet the mystery is not entirely removed, and he is resolved to believe nothing that he cannot comprehend. I answer:

It is true we cannot have a complete comprehension of the manner in which all the various effects revealed in the scriptures are produced by the death of Jesus; but in this respect it is like every thing else in the creation, from the growth of a vegetable to the operations of our intellectual faculties.

If nothing can be proved to us till we are able completely to comprehend it, then surely it is impossible to prove to a child, that there are such things in being as watches and ships, till he is able to understand every part of them exactly; and he ought not to believe us, but consider us as liars, whenever we affirm and attempt to prove their existence, because it would be to believe a thing which he cannot comprehend.

An astronomer declares he can tell the very minute when the sun will be eclipsed: accordingly, he publishes to the world, months or years before-hand, the precise minute when the eclipse will take place: we open our eyes and see it come to pass at the very

time foretold. Now there is no man of common understanding but will allow the astronomer in this case gives sufficient evidence that he can foresee the motions of the heavenly bodies; yet not one man in ten thousand is able to comprehend how these things can be known by men. The common people then ought to give philosophers the lie, according to the deistical method of reasoning, and disregard all evidence they can produce in support of any fact, until they can clearly and fully comprehend the manner of it.

Mystery is no criterion either of truth or falsehood: our belief should be governed by evidence. And when any principle is presented to us as a truth, its being incomprehensible is no argument for or against it. Suppose a man tells me he saw a company of men and women not more than five inches high: I can comprehend this as well as if they were five feet high; but it would be foolish for me to believe it merely because the thing is conceivable: I must have evidence of the fact. I turn my attention to this proposition: "God upholdeth all things by the word of his power." Now I find it impossible for me to comprehend how this is done; but it is just as foolish to disbelieve it, because I cannot comprehend it, as to believe the other because I can comprehend it. In this case as in the former, I call for evidence: and upon reflection I find it supported by all the evidence of reason and revelation. I find if I disbelieve it, I not only embrace a greater mystery, but am involved in absurdities shocking to every rational principle of my nature. It is plain, therefore, that a man whose belief is governed by the pretended criterion of mystery, is governed by prejudice and not by reason. As to the difficulty of conceiving why Christ must suffer, and how divine justice is satisfied thereby for man to be forgiven, it shall be considered in another place.

Some christians will probably think we ought to be very careful how we explain away the divine mysteries, or before we are aware we shall find ourselves landed on the shores of infidelity. I saw a small pamphlet once, the express design of which was to show that an attempt to avoid mysteries led a person (1.) from Calvinism to Arminianism; (2.) from Arminianism to Arianism; (3.) from Arianism to Socinianism; (4.) from Socinianism to Deism: so that the only true system was that of absolute election and reprobation. The Arminians, it seems, who could not swallow all the mysteries of free-wrath, were the men who took the first step towards infidelity. The pope will tell us *Luther* was the man who first departed from the holy mysteries; and will be able to carry on the chain with as good a grace as the Rev. Divine who published the pam-

phlet above alluded to; he will also class *John Calvin* and his followers among the heretics who paved the way to infidelity and atheism.

It may be worth while to inquire how far such cautions are reasonable, and when they may be considered the result of partiality and prejudice.

1. As to the principle, that men ought to believe nothing but what they can comprehend, we grant, if constantly pursued, this would make a fool of any man: he would not stop at infidelity; he would not stop at atheism; for surely no man of common sense will say that atheism is a principle that has no mystery in it: it is fully as mysterious as popery. In vain may a man run to universal scepticism for a cure: this is as full of mystery as atheism itself. There is no stopping place for such a person but perfect lunacy; he may wander from one mystery to another till he is distracted, and that will terminate his fantastical career.

2. It is granted also that there is great danger and absurdity in a man's labouring to comprehend that which is incomprehensible. It is a shameful abuse of our understanding to spend that time in fruitless attempts to comprehend a subject of this kind, that ought to be spent in searching into the evidence of its truth. For example: I sit down to consider this proposition: "God is an eternal being, who had no beginning." Now if, instead of examining the evidence of this truth, I spend my time in fruitless labour to understand the nature of infinite duration, I shall gain nothing by the pursuit, but bewilder myself, and stupify my intellectual faculties. But if I leave the manner of God's existence out of view, as a matter beyond the grasp of my understanding, and merely study the evidence of an eternal being, nothing can be more clear and satisfactory than this truth, that the first cause must be eternal and independent. Infinite duration is as incomprehensible as any subject whatever; yet the evidence of it is equal to demonstration: for, to say there was a period of duration, in which duration had no existence, or that there was a time when there was no time, is an absolute contradiction; and if contradictions may be received, demonstration and every other kind of evidence must fall to the ground.

3. As it is unreasonable on the one hand to follow the deist in rejecting a doctrine because of its mystery; it is equally so on the other to follow the pope in believing it merely because it is mysterious. As all truth is supported by evidence, we have as good a right to examine the evidence that may appear for or against an



incomprehensible doctrine, as any other principle in the world. But when we reject a doctrine because it charges God with being a barbarous tyrant, some will cunningly observe, that we reject it on account of its mystery. We reject it because it is condemned by the force of evidence; all the evidence of reason and revelation conducts us to the conclusion, that God is a being possessed of all moral excellence, and that there is no immoral principle in his nature. Any opinion which absolutely contradicts this, ought to be rejected, however some may artfully pass it upon the world as a holy mystery. Shortly after the synod of Dort it was openly published to the world, "that there is a kind of holy simulation in God," and that God absolutely created most men for the sole purpose of "illustrating his glory by their damnation." Popish priests had before been burning men to death by hundreds, and this merciless barbarity they called an act of faith, a holy mystery that must never be examined or called in question, upon pain of damnation. If any good meaning people should think it dangerous for us to get rid of such mysteries as these, I should be glad to know upon what evidence they adhere to such a conclusion.

4. Another set of doctrines which are called mysterious, are those which involve plain and absolute contradictions. If we reject them because we cannot force ourselves to receive contradictions, it is said we refuse to believe mysteries. It is said we go upon the deistical method of reasoning, that we will receive nothing which we cannot comprehend, and that a few steps more will conduct us to open infidelity. This is surely a great compliment to the deists, that they are the only people in the world who are consistent with themselves! I, for one, cannot help thinking they do not merit such high praise; but that in truth their system is very inconsistent. If my objector think otherwise, it seems to me to follow, that his sentiment paves the way to infidelity far more than mine.

If absolute contradictions may be received, we need not take the slow method of going from Calvinism to Arminianism, from that to Arianism, &c. but we may at one step incorporate deism and christianity together, for we may receive this contradiction: the scriptures are true; but the scriptures are false: Jesus Christ is the son of God; but Jesus Christ is nothing but an impostor. These propositions are nothing more than contradictions, and if they may be received, it is an easy thing for us to be believers and unbelievers, pious and impious, righteous and unrighteous, christians and infidels at the same time.

But a mystery, it will be said, may have the appearance of a contradiction, when in truth it is entirely consistent; only we are unable to comprehend it, so as to prove or explain its consistency. This I grant; and if it cannot be shown to be really inconsistent; but on the contrary, can be supported by clear and good evidence, it would indeed be very absurd to reject it, merely because it may have the *appearance* of contradiction.

But still there is no more danger in examining such a subject, than there is in scrutinizing any other, provided we be governed by evidence in our researches, and not by prejudice. An apparent contradiction can never be converted into a real one; but on the contrary, if it be really consistent in itself, the better it is understood, the more obvious will its consistency appear; because the reason why it *seems* contradictory, is, that we have such a partial understanding of it.

As to the doctrine of the *Trinity*, which some are fond to consider as an absolute contradiction, it is as clear of the charge as any other truth, provided we regulate our views of it by the *scriptures*, without recurring to the laboured explications of it that are to be found in human creeds and confessions of faith.

The following plain scripture argument, from Dr. Watts, supports the proper notion of it, if I mistake not, as we find it stated in the *oracles of God*:

“Since there is but *one God, even the Father*, according to St. Paul, and since *the Father is the only true God*, according to Christ’s own expression, then the Son and Spirit cannot have another or a different God-head from that of the Father: but since the Son and Spirit also are true God, it must be by some communion in the same true God-head which belongs to the Father: for if it were another God-head, that would make another God; and thus the Christian religion would have two or three Gods, which is contrary to the whole tenor of the gospel.”—Watts’ Sermons, vol. ii. page 447.

But lest Dr. Watts should be suspected of leaning towards the Socinians, let us recur to another authority: I mean to that of Mr. Fletcher, who was never suspected of heterodoxy concerning this article:

“It is agreed on all hands,” says he, “that the Supreme Being (compared with all other beings) is *one*: one Creator over numberless creatures: one Infinite Being over myriads of finite beings: one Eternal Intelligence over millions of temporary intelligences. In this sense, true christians are all *unitarians*.”

“But if the Supreme Being is *one*, when he is compared to all created beings, shall we quarrel with him, if he informs us, that, although he hath no second in the universe of creatures, yet, *in himself*, he exists after a wonderful manner, insomuch that his *one* eternal, and perfect essence subsists, *without division or separation*, under *three* adorable distinctions, which are called sometimes *the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost*; and sometimes, *the Father, the Word, and the Spirit*? Shall *the thing formed* say to *him that formed it*, why hast thou made me thus? or why dost thou exist after such a manner?

“Three sorts of people, in our days, capitally err in this matter:

“1. *Tritheists*, or the worshippers of three Gods, who so scripturally distinguish the Divine Persons, as to *divide and separate* them into *three Deities*; and who, by this means, run into *Polytheism*, or the belief of many Gods.

“2. *Detheists*, or the worshippers of *two Gods*. They are generally called *Arians*, from *Arius*, their chief leader, who maintained that there is one *eternal* God, namely, the *Father*, and one who is *not eternal*, namely, the *Son*, who was *made* sometime or other before the foundation of the world. Thus they worship two Gods, a great God and a little God.

“Never did we say or think, either that *three persons* are *one person*, or that *three Gods* are *one God*: these contradictions never disgraced our creeds. We only maintain that the *one* Divine Essence manifests itself to us in *three* Divine Subsistencies, most intimately joined, and absolutely inseparable: with the scripture we assert, that, as these subsistencies bore each a particular part in our creation, so they are particularly engaged in the securing of our eternal happiness; the *Father* chiefly *planning*, the *Son* chiefly *executing*, and the *Holy Ghost* chiefly *perfecting*, the great work of our new creation.” See *Fletcher's “Rational Vindication,”* &c. in answer to Priestly, revised and finished by Mr. Joseph Benson. London edition, 1790. vol. i. p. 33, 34, 35.

Mr. Fletcher has here exhibited the full mystery of the Divine Nature, according to the scriptures: and in this there is no contradiction.

But in certain creeds and confessions of faith, there appears to be another turn given to the subject. We may there find many learned words of divinity, concerning an eternal generation—a covenant between the Father and the Son—a purchase made by the son, of a certain number of souls—the Father's obligation to see that the Son be not defrauded of his purchased property, and

in his being "the injured person and the aggressor. The just and the innocent, the aggressor and the offender, &c. such a resemblance may be seen in some truths

the like. We may there read concerning *very God of very God—co-equal—co-existent—co-eternal—consubstantial*, &c. &c.

The plain word of God gives better instruction concerning this matter than those learned names, and all the others that have been used in the sublime and orthodox theology. It teaches us that God is an eternal Being, and that *there are three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, and these three are one*; but “never did we say or think, either that *three persons are one person*, or that *three Gods are one God*: these contradictions never disgraced our creeds.”

Deists appear to manifest a fondness, in representing the christian doctrine of the Trinity as a contradiction; but we defy them to show any contradiction in the account here given by Mr. Fletcher, or to evince that it contains any more mystery than many things in nature which they are forced to acknowledge as true. I suspect they are unwilling we should explain our views in this way, because it deprives them of the argument *ad hominem*, by which they have long laboured to involve us in contradictions.

And are some christians unwilling the matter should be believed in this way? Do they wish something to be added, that may give it more the appearance of a contradiction? For what? Do they really believe it is a contradiction? or do they wish it to be clothed with such an appearance, as much as possible, in order that others may believe so? Is it then true, that any professed christians wish deists to have full opportunity to prove out of our own mouths, that christianity is founded upon contradiction? I hope they have not entered into a secret combination against the religion of Jesus, to contribute secretly to the designs of infidels, and to expose christianity under pretence of supporting it; and how else some human creeds are to be accounted for, seems hard to ascertain.

Is it supposed that an attempt to explain the mysteries of the gospel naturally leads to infidelity? I hope an attempt to explain them, so far as to prove they are not contradictions, has no such tendency. To affirm it, is to acknowledge at once that they *are* contradictions; for, what danger can there be in attempting to prove a doctrine is not inconsistent with itself, except it be that the charge is just, and that there is no way to keep it from being proved a falsehood, but to keep it from ever being seen in a clear light?

I cannot help thinking those mistaken christians, who so repeatedly caution us against paving the way to deism, would do well to consider whether they themselves be not more guilty of it than those of whom they complain.

Let us suppose, first, that a person a little inclined to infidelity, is sincerely desirous to know the truth: he comes to an old Catholic christian, whom he finds with his creed in his hand, to obtain some instruction. He asks, what are the fundamentals of christianity? The christian presents him the creed for an answer. He looks it over, and asks his friend how those doctrines are to be made consistent with themselves: they appear to be palpable contradictions. Suppose his instructor to reply: Sir, it is against my principle to attempt any explanation of these mysteries: that would be paving the way to infidelity. They may be proved by several passages of scripture, as explained by our divines, and you must receive them just as you find them. It is dangerous for you to meddle with these sacred things, by your uncertain reason; and you must be cautious how you indulge your metaphysical investigations upon the evidence of christianity in general, or its mysterious doctrines in particular. Let the gospel be its own witness, and take the doctrines of it, as you find them in this creed, without attempting to make them any plainer.

Now what must the inquirer infer from all this? Must he not conclude that his instructor wishes to prevail with him, as openly as he dare venture to go, to believe that he ought to take the whole for granted without examination? "Does my teacher really believe, says he, that we ought to receive christianity without evidence? or does he himself secretly suspect that it is not founded in truth, and therefore thinks it dangerous to examine, lest its falsehood should become too manifest? Does he really think a doctrine of divinity ought to contradict itself? or does he think the christian doctrines are in fact a system of contradictions, and therefore wishes me to lay by my reason, and cautiously avoid looking into them, for fear their absurdity and inconsistency should so shock my understanding, that I could not believe them without doing violence to common sense?"

These would be his reflections; and let the reader judge whether the instructions he received do not afford a plain presumption that their author had a secret suspicion, either that the religion of Jesus cannot bear examination, or that the doctrines of his creed may peradventure be proved not to belong to that religion.

Secondly, let us consider the proud and passionate deist, who, from the dictate of his malice against christianity, is resolved at all events that he will not believe it: What paves the way to this kind of infidelity? I think it is done by the conduct of those very persons, who affect to be such friends to religion, and who are so apt to charge others with secret disaffection to the gospel.

First, they directly or indirectly discourage the full attention of the mind in reasoning and diligent examination; but it is the want of such attention, or a refusal to examine, that confirms this person in his unbelief; therefore they encourage him in the course he pursues.

Secondly, they discourage a candid and impartial examination, otherwise they would be willing for their mysteries to be examined, as well as other matters; but a want of candour and impartiality is the cause of this person's unbelief; therefore they encourage him in that which is the cause of his infidelity, by setting the example themselves.

Thirdly, they furnish this enemy of the gospel with very plausible arguments, with which he slays his thousands, and diffuses scepticism among his associates.

"You cannot be christians," says he, without renouncing your reason, and this the professors of that religion very well know, as you may see by their writings: they are perpetually cautioning their votaries against the diligent exercise of their intellectual faculties, which they call carnal reason and "the almost magical power of metaphysical distinctions. Some of their dearest and most beloved doctrines are plain contradictions, which they themselves cannot deny; for when we ask them to explain the matter, and clear their dogmas of this charge, they gravely answer, that these are holy mysteries, which it is wicked to pry into, even so far as to make them consistent with themselves. It is very dangerous, they say, to penetrate too deeply into those sacred matters, which they call bringing them to the profane eye of human reason: a clear presumption, surely, that they have discovered the sandy foundation of this system, and wish to silence all inquiry, for fear others should make the same discovery."

Now permit me to ask, how are we to prevent the spreading of infidelity, arising from the influence of such specious arguments? By filling our works with ridiculous cautions against a close examination of the christian doctrines, and thus evincing in the face of the sun that the gentleman's premises are true? I presume we could do nothing that would please him better. From the first rise

of popery to the present day, some professors seem to dread the approach of reason, and deists are glad to have it so: They know it furnishes them with the best arguments they have ever been able to use, and were it torn from them, infidelity must sneak into a corner. While divines continue to undervalue reason, the deist will extol it to the skies: not because he has any more real attachment to it than his adversary; but because he knows that while he can keep up high notions of reason, and prove from the words and writings of divines that they are afraid of it, he needs no better argument, and none which will more successfully contribute to the support of infidelity.

But let reason be delivered from the shackles of metaphysical sophistry and hypotheses: let common sense be permitted to appear without a veil: let pride, prejudice and party attachments have nothing to do in governing the belief of mankind: and then let reason take her stand upon self-evident principles, without any thing to obstruct her operations: you will see infidels and popish doctors of divinity alike retiring from the contest, or labouring with all their might to cast dust into the air, that they may hinder the rays of evidence from shining on the world.

Let all men thus use their reason, and the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ will rise like the sun in the midst of heaven, and chase the dark mists of error from mankind. But we cannot answer for all the creeds: I suspect some of them would stand exposed in all their deformity, and perhaps a secret conviction of their being subject to it, has given rise to that species of prudence which is so necessary to the support of a tenet which cannot bear examination. "Those things are against reason, and utterly inconceivable;" says Dr. William Bates, "that involve a contradiction; and there is no such doctrine in the Christian religion." See Bates on Man's Redemption, page 136.



## SECTION V.

*The doctrine of redemption stated in the words of several respectable authors.*

MR. BAXTER, and Mr. Wesley agree (the latter having extracted the words of the former,) that "men who are conditionally pardoned and justified, may be unpardoned and unjustified again for their non-performance of the conditions, and all the debt so forgiven be required at their hands; and all this without any change in God or in his laws.

"Yea, in case the justified by faith should cease believing, the scripture would pronounce them unjust again; and yet without any change in God, or scripture, but only in themselves; because their justification doth continue *conditional* as long as they live here.

"Justification is not a single act, begun, and ended immediately upon our believing; but a continued act, which, though it be in its kind complete from the first, yet is still in doing, till the final justification at the judgment day." They add, "that the justified may pray for the continuance of their justification; and that Christ's satisfaction and our faith are of continual use, and not to be laid by, when we are once justified, as if the work was done." *Wesley's Works, vol. xxii. page 172, 173, 178.*

Again: "The pardoning of sin is a gracious act of God, discharging the offender by the gospel grant, from the obligation to punishment, upon consideration of the satisfaction made by Christ, accepted by the sinner, and pleaded with God. \*

"I call pardon a gracious act; for if it were not gracious, or free, it were no pardon. Let those think of this, who say, we have perfectly obeyed the law in Christ, and are therefore righteous. If the proper debt, either of obedience or suffering, be paid, either by ourselves or by another; then there is no place left for pardon: for when the debt is paid we owe nothing, except new obedience; and therefore can have nothing forgiven us: for the creditor cannot refuse the proper debt, nor deny any acquittance upon receipt thereof." page 174.

Here we have the authority of Mr. Baxter, of Mr. Wesley, and of a very conclusive argument, in support of all I contend for:

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1. That Christ did not properly or legally discharge our debt, either by obedience or suffering: for “If the proper debt, either of obedience or suffering, be paid, either by ourselves or by another, then there is no place left for pardon.”

2. If Christ properly paid our debt, there was no mercy exercised by the Father: “for the creditor cannot refuse the proper debt, nor deny any acquittance upon receipt thereof.”

3. The way Christ satisfied justice by his death, was, that he made it *just* for God to grant sinners a *gracious pardon*, on certain *conditions*: for “The pardoning of sin is a gracious act of God, discharging the offender by the gospel grant, from the obligation to punishment, upon consideration of the satisfaction made by Christ, accepted by the sinner, and pleaded with God.”

The next author I shall introduce is Mr. Whitby, who speaking of the imputation of Christ’s righteousness, gives us the following just observations and arguments:

“It renders the death of Christ to procure the remission of our sins vain, and that on many accounts:”

1. Because the perfect righteousness of Christ imputed to us, doth render his death unnecessary to procure any farther righteousness or justification in our behalf; for if by virtue of this imputation we be as righteous as Christ was in his life, there can be no more need that Christ should die for us, than that he should die for himself, or any other should die for him; yea, then Christ dying only for the benefit of believers, could not have died for the unjust, but only for the just, that is, for them for whom there could be no necessity that he should die, but only that he should live for them; seeing faith in him as a Mediator, performing perfect obedience to the law for them, must make them for whom he thus obeyed perfectly obedient, and therefore must have given them a full title to the promise, do this and live.

2. According to this doctrine, there remains no place for the remission of sins to believers, for God neither did, nor could forgive any sin in Christ, because he was perfectly righteous, and in him was no sin; if then believers be righteous with the same righteousness imputed to them, with which Christ was righteous, they must be as completely righteous as Christ was, and so have no more sin, to be pardoned, than he had, and so no more need to be pardoned than he had; thus doth this doctrine destroy Christ’s intercession for us, and also the necessity of his salutary passion, according to those words of St. Paul, “If righteousness,” that is, “justification come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.”—Whitby’s Commentary, vol. ii. p. 229, 230.

From this quotation the following inferences are fairly drawn, as Mr. Whitby's doctrine: 1. That if Christ's righteousness were imputed to us, we should be perfectly as righteous as Christ. 2. That this doctrine makes his death utterly unnecessary. 3. That it leaves no place, or no necessity for remission of sins. 4. That it destroys Christ's intercession.

Now if it be a just inference (which it certainly is) that if Christ perfectly obeyed the law for us, he thereby raised us above the want of pardon; it will follow equally, that if he discharged the whole penalty of the law for us, he thereby raised us above the want of pardon. For the reason why sinners need forgiveness is, that they stand exposed to punishment, as a penalty of justice, which they cannot do after that penalty is entirely discharged; and therefore such a discharge raises them as fully above the want of forgiveness as the imputation of a perfect obedience.

I must again produce two witnesses together, and two of the best, I presume, that have appeared in the world since the days of the apostles: I mean Mr. Goodwin and Mr. Wesley.

The quotations are the production of Mr. Goodwin, but Mr. Wesley has made them his own, by incorporating them into his works, as the reader will find by reading the 23d volume, Bristol edition, 1773.

“If Christ had fulfilled the law in our stead, till the uttermost period of his life, there had been no necessity of his dying for us. There is no light clearer than this. For if we stand before God, by virtue of the perfect obedience of Christ imputed to us as our own, perfectly righteous, we are no more obnoxious to the curse of the law, and consequently have no need of any satisfaction to divine justice, nor of any remission of sins by blood. There needs nothing more to a perfect justification, than a perfect righteousness, or a perfect fulfilling of the law: this the apostle clearly layeth down, Gal. ii. 21. If righteousness be by the law (whether performed by ourselves, or by another for us) then Christ is dead in vain.” *Wesley's Works, page 10, 11.*

*Again:*—“It hath no foundation, either in scripture or reason, to say that Christ, by any imputation of sins was made *formally* a sinner: or, that sin in any other sense was imputed to him, than as the punishment due to it was inflicted on him. So Bishop Davenant makes the imputation of sin to Christ, to stand in the translation of the punishment of sin upon him. And in another place,

Christ was willing so to take our sins upon him, as not to be made a sinner hereby, but a sacrifice for sin." page 20.

From this it evidently follows: 1. That Christ remained *perfectly innocent*: 2. That he came under *no obligation of justice* to suffer, and consequently justice could never demand it of him as a penalty, otherwise justice can demand *penalties* of the *innocent*.— But let the witnesses speak for themselves.

“In this sense, Christ may be said to have suffered the penalty or curse of the law. First, it was the curse, or penalty of the law, now ready to be executed upon all men for sin, that occasioned his suffering. Had not the curse of the law been incurred by man, Christ had not suffered at all. Again: 2dly, Christ may be said to have suffered the curse of the law, because the things which he suffered were of the same kind (at least in part) with those which God intended, by the curse of the law against transgressors, namely, *death*. But if, by the curse of the law, we understand, either that entire system of penalties, which the law itself intends in the term *death*, or the intent of the law, touching the quality of the persons on whom it was to be executed; in neither of these senses did Christ suffer the curse of the law; neither ever hath it, nor ever shall be suffered, by any transgressors of the law that shall believe in him. So that God required the death and sufferings of Christ, not that the law properly, either in the *letter* or *intention* of it, might be executed, but on the contrary, that it *might not* be executed upon those that believe.” page 21, 22.

Now, if the curse of the law *has not* been suffered by Christ, in the full sense, either in the *letter* or *intention* of it; if it *never hath*, and *never shall* be suffered “by any transgressors of the law that shall believe in him;” it is clear that it never has been, and never shall be suffered by either the sinner or his surety: consequently, Christ died to make it just for God to blot out the penalty, or deliver us from punishment, by granting us a gracious pardon.

Once more: “In this sense of imputation (and this only) the sins of men may be said to be imputed to Christ, namely, because he suffered the things which he did suffer, in consideration of them: and these sufferings of his may be said to be imputed to us, because we are rewarded, that is, justified and saved in consideration of them. But that either our sins should be said to be imputed to Christ, because he is reputed by God to have committed them, or that his righteousness, whether active or passive, should be said to be imputed to us, because we are reputed by God to

have done or suffered the one or the other, hath no foundation either in scripture or reason." page 30, 31.

"God hath opened another way for the justification of sinners, namely, *faith in Christ*, and he never sets up one way against another. Therefore to affirm, that the fulfilling of the law is required of any man, either by himself or by another in his stead, for his justification, is to affirm, either that a man that hath sinned, hath not sinned, or that, that which God hath said, he hath unsaid." page 33.

Now I infer, if the fulfilling of the law is not required of any man, either by himself or by any other in his stead, those breaches of the law which true believers have been guilty of, have been properly forgiven, and that the demand of the law in those cases, has never been rendered by *any one*, either by *obeying* or *suffering*; otherwise it cannot with truth be said, that the fulfilling of the law is not required of such a man, unto his justification, either by himself or by another in his stead. Consequently, if Mr. Goodwin and Mr. Wesley be in the right, Christ never died to save sinners, by means of a legal righteousness, imputed to them or fulfilled in their stead, but to make it consistent with the nature of God to grant pardon: that is, graciously to forbear requiring a fulfilment of the law in those cases, either by obedience or penalty.

"Lastly, in case a man hath transgressed the law, and suffered (whether by himself or some other for him) the full punishment of it, he is no farther a debtor to it, either in point of obedience, or of punishment, nor hath any thing to do with the law more or less, for his justification; because the punishment which hath been so suffered, is of equal consideration to the law, with the most absolute conformity to its precepts. So that as no man is or ever was, bound to fulfil the law twice over, for his justification: so neither is it equal, that he, that hath suffered in full the penalty of the law, which is as satisfactory to it as the exactest obedience, should be still bound to the observation of the law (whether by himself or any other) for his justification; this being all one, as the requiring a second obedience to the law, after a man hath perfectly fulfilled it once." page 98, 99.

Thus, the whole I contend for, is affirmed in the most unequivocal manner.

It is an easy thing, I know, for a mind blinded by prejudice, to affirm, that the doctrine here defended is false, and that Mr. Good-

win and Mr. Wesley have said nothing in favour of it; but I must request every person of candour and common sense, to look back at those quotations, and tell me if it be not *declared most expressly*, 1. That if sinners were justified, in consequence of having perfectly obeyed the law, either by themselves, or by another in their stead, there would be no place for remission of sins. 2. That if they were justified, in consequence of a full discharge of the penalty, whether by themselves or any other, it would be of equal consideration to the law, with the most absolute conformity to its precepts, and therefore would involve the same consequences.— And, 3. That this would be all one, as the requiring a second obedience to the law, after a man hath perfectly fulfilled it once.

This being so fully in point, to establish every thing that can be desired in confirmation of the subject, and that from such high authority, I shall trouble my reader at present with the testimony or judgment of only one more writer on the Arminian side.

We find a short essay on the atonement, in the Methodist Magazine, founded on this motto from Dr. S. Clark “the design of mediation was, that God would testify his hatred and indignation against sin, by consigning the pardon of it, through the blood of the Mediator.”

“God, who is not only a Being supremely excellent in goodness, but a most wise governor, was disposed so to dispense his pardoning grace to a sinful world, as at the same time to encourage men to repent, and to prevent their presuming on his goodness, and abusing its rich discoveries by greater corruption and wickedness.”

“What could more demonstrate the will of the Divine Being, to advance holiness, and destroy the very seeds of vice, than his subjecting, for this end, his only Son to the meanness and labours of a mortal condition, and the suffering of death?”

“If it be objected, where is the justice of punishing the innocent, that the guilty may go free; I answer, there is no injustice in permitting those evils to fall on the innocent, which to the guilty are punishments of sin, when important ends of the divine government are hereby answered.”

Suppose a king, out of a concern to maintain his authority, and secure the future obedience of his subjects, refuse, even at the request of his only Son to recall banished rebels, unless the Son would partake of their banishment, and endeavour personally to reclaim them to a sense of their rebellion and of their duty, and the prince willingly undertake this, it is certain by living a time with

the banished, he suffers the punishment of their rebellion, though himself innocent; and this, without any injustice, because it is his own voluntary act, and because he hath the satisfaction of reclaiming the banished, and as a reward, sees them restored to forfeited favour, and receives himself a share in his Father's throne." *Methodist Magazine for the year 1811, vol. 34, page 30, 32, 34.*

Leaving the reader to make his own comment on this quotation, I will close this section with a few remarks upon our twentieth article. The article stands thus: "the offering of Christ once made, is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone."

Here it is unequivocally affirmed,

1. That a perfect propitiation or satisfaction has been made for sin, by the offering of Christ.
2. That this satisfaction is made both for original and actual sin.
3. That it is made for the whole world of mankind.
4. That it is made for *all the sins* of the whole world, and of course for final unbelief, unless it can be proved that this is not a sin, or not a sin belonging to any man in the whole world.

Does our article mean by this satisfaction, that the sentence of the law was executed, by an inflexible demand of justice, and that all penalties were thus legally discharged by Christ for all the sins of the whole world? "If so, every sinner in the whole world is as free from all penalties, as God is free from absolute injustice.

But we believe all men who die in their sins will have to suffer the penalty, as though Christ had never died for them: I therefore conclude the meaning of the article is, that Christ rendered such satisfaction as made it just for God to pardon any sinner in the world, on condition of repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some appear to think Christ discharged all penalties, except for the sin of final unbelief; but when a sinner submits to the conditions of the gospel, is not his former unbelief forgiven, as well as his other sins? If so, they must confess the sin of unbelief has been expiated, because it has sometimes been forgiven after having been indulged for forty years. Do they mean that it is the last act of unbelief, for which no atonement was made? And is this the only act for which sinners are to be punished in a future state? No: "For God shall bring every work into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good, or evil.—Ecclesiastes, xii. 14.



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AN ESSAY ON THE

Now it is just and consistent for sinners to be punished eternally, "for the very sins which were expiated by Christ," or it is not; If it is, then what necessity of his leaving some sins without being expiated, and why recur to this subterfuge to prove the consistency and justice of the sinner's condemnation? If it is not, the conclusion follows, either that all for whom he died will infallibly be saved, or that there is some particular sin for which he did not die and for which alone penitent sinners will be punished, without ever having to account or suffer for the generality of their transgressions. Thus we should contradict our articles of religion together with the whole tenor of the scriptures. +

Section the 3<sup>rd</sup> of this Chapter for those arguments  
as much against Mr Baxter, Wesley, Goodwin &  
as they do against — the Jesuitical notion  
of Redemption which their authors oppose

SECTION VI.

*The testimony of eminent Calvinistic Divines.*

I propose now to show that our Calvinist brethren themselves are forced into this doctrine, whenever they attempt to give any reasonable account of their views of redemption.

To this end I shall take the liberty to give a quotation from Dr. Andrew Fuller, reminding the reader that those passages which directly point to the subject I have attempted to explain, are put in *Italics*.

"The sense of mankind, with regard to the necessity of a Mediator, may be illustrated by the following similitude. Let us suppose a division in the army of one of the wisest and best of kings, through the evil counsel of a foreign enemy, to have been disaffected to his government; and that without any provocation on his part, they traitorously conspired against his crown and life. The attempt failed; and the offenders were seized, disarmed, tried by the laws of their country, and condemned to die. A respite however was granted them, during his Majesty's pleasure. At this solemn period, while every part of the army, and of the empire, was expecting the fatal order for execution, *the king was employed in meditating mercy.* But how could mercy be shewn? "To make light of a conspiracy," said he to his friends, *would loosen the bands of good government; other divisions of the army might be*

*tempted to follow their example; and the nation at large might be in danger of imputing it to tameness, fear, or some unworthy motive."*

"Every one felt in this case the necessity of a mediator, and agreed as to the general line of conduct proper for him to pursue. He must not attempt," said they, "to compromise the differences by dividing the blame: that would make things worse. He must justify the king, and condemn the outrage committed against him; he must offer, if possible, some honourable expedient, by means of which the bestowment of pardon *shall not relax, but strengthen just authority*; he must convince the conspirators of their crime, and introduce them in the character of supplicants; and mercy must be shewn them out of respect to him or for his sake.

"But who could be found to mediate in such a cause? This was an important question. A work of this kind, it was allowed on all hands, required singular qualifications.

"He must be perfectly clear of any participation in the offence," said one, "or inclination to favour it."

"He must," said another, "be one, who on account of his character and services stands high in the esteem of the king and of the public: a mediator in effect pledges his honor *that no evil will result to the state from the granting of his request.*"

"I conceive it is necessary," said a third, "that the weight of the mediation should bear a proportion to the magnitude of the crime, and to the value of the favour requested; and that for this end it is proper he should be a person of *great dignity.*"

"A fourth remarked, that he must possess a *tender compassion* towards the unhappy offenders, or he would not cordially interest himself in their behalf.

"Finally, it was suggested by a fifth, that "for the greater fitness of the proceeding, it would be proper that some relation or connexion should subsist between the parties.

"Meanwhile the king and his son, whom he greatly loved, and whom he had appointed generalissimo of all his forces, had retired from the company, and were conversing about the matter, which attracted the general attention.

"My son, said the benevolent sovereign, what can be done in behalf of these unhappy men? To order them for execution, violates every feeling of my heart: yet to pardon them is dangerous. If mercy be exercised, it must be through a mediator; and who is qualified to mediate in such a cause? and what expedient can be

devised by means of which *pardon* shall not *relax*, but *strengthen* just authority: speak, my son, and say what measures can be pursued?

“My father,” said the prince, “I feel the insult offered to your person and government, and the *injury* thereby aimed at the *empire at large*. They deserve to die without mercy. Yet I feel for them. I cannot endure to witness their execution. What shall I say? On me be this wrong! Let me suffer in their stead. Inflict on me *as much as is necessary to impress the army and the nation with a just sense of the evil, and of the importance of good order and faithful allegiance*. Let it be in their presence, and in the presence of *all assembled*. When this is done, let them be permitted to implore and receive your majesty’s *pardon* in my name. If any man refuse so to implore, and so to receive it, let him die the death.

“My son!” replied the king, “you have expressed my heart! The same things have occupied my mind; but it was my desire that you should be voluntary in the undertaking. It shall be as you have said. The dignity of your person and character will render the sufferings of *an hour*, of greater account *as to the impression of the public mind*, than if all the rebellious had been executed: and by how much I am known to have loved you, by so much will *my compassion to them, and my displeasure against their wicked conduct be made manifest*.”

“The gracious design being communicated at court, all were struck with it. The only difficulty that was started, was amongst the judges of the realm. They, at first, questioned whether the proceeding was admissible. ‘The law,’ said they, ‘makes provision for the transfer of debts, but not of crimes. Its language is, the soul that sinneth it shall die.’” But when they came to view things on a *more enlarged scale*, considering it as an expedient on an extraordinary occasion, and perceiving that the spirit of the law would be preserved, *and all the ends of good government answered*, they were satisfied. “It is not a measure,” said they, “for which the law provides, yet it is not *contrary* to the law, but *above* it. [Goodness is more than justice.]

“The day appointed arrived. The prince appeared, and suffered as a criminal. Returning to the palace, amidst the tears and shouts of the loyal spectators, the suffering hero was embraced by his royal father; who, in addition to the natural affection which he bore to him as a son, loved him for his singular interposi-

tion at such a crisis. 'Sit thou,' said he, 'at my right hand! though the threatenings of the law be *not literally* accomplished, yet the spirit of them is preserved, the honour of *good government is secured*, and the end of punishment is more effectually answered, than if all the rebels had been sacrificed. Ask of me, my son, what I shall give thee!"

"He asked for the offenders to be introduced as supplicants at the feet of his father, for the *forgiveness* of their crimes, and for the direction of affairs till order and happiness should be perfectly restored.

"A proclamation, addressed to the conspirators, was now issued, stating what had been their conduct, what the conduct of the king, and what of the prince. Messengers also were appointed to carry it, with orders to read it publickly, and to expostulate with them individually, beseeching them to be reconciled to their offended sovereign, and to assure them, that if they rejected this, there remained no more hope of mercy.

"When the proclamation was read, many paid no manner of attention to it; some insinuated that the messengers were interested men, and that there might be no truth in what they said; and some even abused them as impostors.

"My heart,' says one, 'rises against every part of this proceeding. Why all this ado about a few words spoken one to another?"

"If a third person,' says another, 'must be concerned in the affair, what occasion is there for one so high in rank and dignity? To stand in need of such a mediator, must stamp our characters with everlasting infamy.'

"I believe,' says a fourth, 'that the king knows very well that we have not had justice done us, and therefore this mediation business is introduced to make us amends for the injury.'

"You are all wrong,' says a fifth, 'I comprehend the design, and am well pleased with it. I hate the government as much as any of you: but I love the mediator; for I understand it is his intention to deliver me from its tyranny. *He has paid the debt, the king is satisfied, and I am free.* I will *sue out my right, and demand my liberty.*" See the Gospel its own Witness, &c. page 141, 142, &c. &c.

Mr. Fuller afterwards introduces Paine's objection, that "the doctrine of redemption has for its basis an idea of pecuniary justice, and not that of moral justice." And in answering it he ob-

serves, "A murderer owes his life to the justice of his country; and when he suffers, he is said to pay the awful debt. So also if a great character, by suffering death, could deliver his country, such deliverance would be spoken of as obtained by the price of blood. No one mistakes these things by understanding them of pecuniary transactions. In such connexions, every one perceives that the terms are used *not literally* but *metaphorically*; and it is *thus* that they are to be understood with reference to the death of Christ." Page 154.

He says again, page 156, "Redemption by Jesus Christ was accomplished, *not by a satisfaction that should preclude the exercise of grace in forgiveness*, but in which the *displeasure of God against sin being manifested*, mercy to the sinner might be exercised without any suspicion of his having *relinquished his regards for righteousness*." Again:

After mentioning some who "have considered the death of Christ as purchasing repentance and faith, as well as all other spiritual blessings, on behalf of the elect; and upon this ground have maintained that God is bound in strict justice, in respect to Jesus Christ, to confer grace and glory on all those for whom he died:" he observes, "The writer of these pages, acknowledges he never could perceive that any clear or determinate idea was conveyed by the term purchase in this connexion, nor does it appear to him to be a doctrine taught in the scriptures. The notion of grace being bestowed, on account of value received, appears to him inconsistent with the freeness of grace itself, and with the perfection of the divine being, to whom nothing can be added or given which can lay him under obligation."

He concludes upon the whole, "If we say, *a way was opened by the death of Christ for the free and consistent exercise of mercy*, in all the methods which sovereign wisdom saw fit to adopt, perhaps we shall include every material idea which the scripture gives us of that important event." Page 157.

Now I must appeal to the good sense of the world, and ask if these quotations be not a plain defence and illustration of the subject in question? Is it possible to make them accord with the Antinomian doctrine of atonement? No: they are a positive and express contradiction of it; and afford unequivocal evidence, that even those good men who have been unhappily entangled in the horrors of reprobation, are forced into our system whenever they attempt to give any consistent account of their views of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Our doctrine is also advanced by the Rev. Samuel Davis, sometime president of the college in New Jersey.

In his first volume of sermons, speaking of God, he says, "His goodness is that of a ruler, and not of a private person; and his pardoning of sin, and receiving offenders into favour, are not private kindnesses, but acts of government, and therefore they must be conducted with the utmost wisdom; for a wrong step in his infinite administration, which affects such innumerable multitudes of subjects, would be an infinite evil, and might admit of no reparation."

"These things I hope are sufficient to convince your understandings that divine justice is not that unkind, cruel, and savage thing sinners are wont to imagine it; but that God is just, because God is love: and that he punishes not because he is the enemy, but because he is the friend of his creatures, and because he loves the whole too well to let particular offenders do mischief with impunity."

"It may perhaps be objected," "That to represent justice under the notion of love, is to affect singularity in language, to destroy the distinction of the divine attributes, and the essential differences of things."—To which I answer, 1. That a catachresis may be beautiful and emphatical, though it be always a seeming impropriety in language. Such is this representation, 'divine justice, divine love.' 2. I do not deny that God's executing righteous punishment upon the guilty may be called justice; but then it is his love to the public that excites him to do this; and therefore his doing it may be properly denominated love, as well as justice, or love under the name of justice, which is love still. 3. I do not mean that the usual names of things should be changed, but that we should affix suitable ideas to them. We may retain the name of justice still, but let us not affix ideas to it that are inconsistent with divine love. Let us not look upon it as the attribute of a tyrant, but of a wise and good ruler."—*Sermon on God is Love, vol. 1 page 453. 454.*

Here are two important principles laid down: 1. that goodness and justice operate in constant harmony, and can never be contradictory to each other. 2. That "it is his love to the public that excites him to execute righteous punishment upon the guilty because he loves the whole too well to let particular offenders do mischief with impunity." Hence it follows, that all the satisfaction goodness or justice wanted in the free-pardon of the guilty, was that the ends of government, and the general welfare should

be secured. This is effectually done by the glorious Redeemer, and therefore through him sinners may be freely forgiven.

That this was Mr. Davies's judgment in the matter, is very clear from his own words in another place. For, speaking of redemption, he says, "God being considered in this affair in his public character, as supreme Magistrate, or Governor of the world, all the punishment which he is concerned to see inflicted upon sin is, *only such as answers the ends of good government*. Private revenge must vent itself upon the very person of the offender, or be disappointed. But to a ruler, as such, it may in some cases be indifferent, whether the punishment be sustained by the very person that offended, or by a substitute suffering in his stead. It may also be indifferent, whether the very same punishment, as to kind and degree, threatened in the law, be inflicted, or a punishment equivalent to it. *If the honour of the ruler and his government be maintained, if all disobedience be properly discouraged, if in short, all the ends of government can be answered, such things as these are indifferences*. Consequently, if *these ends* should be answered by Christ suffering in the stead of sinners, there would be no objection against it."—*Sermon on "the Method of Salvation through Jesus Christ."* page 114.

Again he says, page 116, "Was it difficult how to reconcile the salvation of sinners, and the public good? that is, how to *forgive* sin, and yet give an *effectual warning against it*? How to receive the sinner into favour, and to advance him to the highest honour and happiness, and in the mean time deter all other beings from offending? All this is provided for in the sufferings of Christ. Let all worlds look to his cross, and receive the warning which his wounds and dying agonies proclaim aloud; and sure they can never dare to offend after the example of man. Now they may see that the only instance of pardon to be found in the universe, was not brought about but by such means as are not likely to be repeated: by the incarnation and death of the Lord of Glory. And can they flatter themselves that he will leave his throne, and hang upon a cross, as often as any of his creatures wantonly dare to offend him? No: such a miracle as this, the utmost effort of divine grace, is not often to be renewed; and therefore, if they dare to sin, it is at their peril. They have no reason to flatter themselves they shall be favoured like fallen man; but rather to expect they shall share in the doom of fallen angels."

Nothing can be plainer from these quotations, than the great and interesting principle under consideration; namely, that Christ



never came to give the sinner a legal discharge from all demands of the divine law; but he bore the sins of the whole world in such a sense only, as should "reconcile the salvation of sinners, and the public good; that is, that God might forgive sin, and yet give an effectual warning against it."

It is true, Mr. Davies advances some things in other places, and even in the same sermon, which I cannot reconcile with the above quotations; but this proves only that the good understandings of our brethren were so influenced and filled with the light of truth, that they were sometimes constrained to give their testimony in its behalf, though they thereby sapped the foundation of some peculiar opinions which they had unhappily espoused without sufficient examination.

President Davies was what some have termed a moderate Calvinist. I am convinced, from the character given of him, that he was a man of a generous mind, of a true spirit of christian piety, and of an excellent, improved understanding. Some may think this a sufficient reason for receiving all his opinions; but I cannot, because this rule of searching after truth was never given by our Heavenly Master, and if we were to follow it, we should be led to receive contradictions, as other men of equal character and abilities have espoused very different opinions from those of his persuasion.

Now let me appeal to my friends and fellow labourers, who glory in preaching a free salvation for all the world: and permit me to ask, whether we must be backward in proclaiming the whole truth, while the light of it shines so bright that others are constrained to publish it abroad, notwithstanding its opposition to their system, and its inseparable connexion with ours? +

While they declare that Christ came to vindicate the government, and thus introduce the sinner to a throne of grace to obtain a free pardon, and yet inconsistently maintain that all for whom he died must inevitably be saved, or else his blood was shed in vain: shall we involve ourselves in a like inconsistency, by saying with one breath, Christ died only to make salvation possible for all, and with the next, that he really discharged all penal sanctions that lay against every sinner in the world? This surely would be more than making salvation possible for all, because it would make the salvation of all men as absolutely necessary, as it is for God's law never to demand two penalties, or never to inflict the same penalty twice over.

+ which can this appeal of the author mean? he takes it for granted that his "freedom & fellow laborers" must admit the freedom of men of whom he speaks, which he advocates as established beyond contradiction because President Davies sees to agree in him on the subject, his content on avoiding the error of being misled by the authors of grace.

For many would suppose he can apologise for our requiring something more to satisfy us on the point especially which we believe the scripture account of the matter to differ from them both and yet not clogged with the difficulties which they imagine - But I am, by all means, of mind that even the system of Mr. Davies & his arguments

## CHAPTER III.

THE DIRECT EVIDENCE OF REASON AND REVELATION, IN DEFENCE  
OF THE DOCTRINE STATED IN THE PRECEDING CHAPTER.

## SECTION I.

*A brief view of the nature of forgiveness.*

THE mystery of atonement, like that of the Trinity, has been thought too sacred for human reason to examine; or at least, that it is dangerous, not to say presumptuous, for men to labour by subtle reasonings to obviate the difficulties in which it seems to be involved.

We have indirectly acknowledged to our infidel objectors, that our principles dare not approach the light, and their writers have gladly availed themselves of our concessions, to increase the effect of that insinuating ridicule, with which they wage a perpetual war against our benevolent religion.

“I am the better pleased with this method of reasoning,” says Mr. Hume, in his Essay on Miracles, “as I think it may serve to confound those dangerous friends, or disguised enemies, to the christian religion, who have undertaken to defend it upon the principles of human reason. Our most holy religion is founded on *faith*, not on reason; and 'tis a sure method of exposing it to put it to such a trial as it is, by no means, fitted to endure.” Hume's Essays, vol. ii. page 198.

Thus it appears, that Mr. Hume was very confident, that it is imprudent to bring the christian mysteries to a close inspection, and that those are *dangerous friends* to the christian religion, or *disguised enemies*, who attempt to defend it upon the principles of human reason. Are not some christian divines of the same opinion? If so, is there not an agreement of sentiment between them and Mr. Hume? And who is nearest to infidelity, the man who agrees with deists, that christianity is in danger of being exposed when too closely examined, or he who differs from them in this important point, and says with Dr. Campbell, “We scorn to take

shelter in obscurity, and meanly to decline the combat; confident as we are, that *reason* is our *ally* and our *friend*, and glad to find that the enemy at length so violently suspects her?\*"

The reason why atonement has appeared to be such a dangerous mystery, is, that the Antinomian notion of it is founded on a palpable contradiction. *Justice* and *mercy* have been considered as two principles in the divine nature, which were contradictory to each other, till they were reconciled by the Redeemer. Thus it would seem, our Saviour came into the world for the purpose of reconciling contradictions.

Did the attributes of God contradict each other *before* sin entered into the creation? If not, they could not do it *afterwards*, unless we say, sin made a change in the Divine Nature: and if they were always opposed to each other, till Christ reconciled them, it follows, that he came from Heaven to change the nature of that Immortal Being, with whom is no variableness or shadow of turning.

The divine perfections agreed as harmoniously in the plan of restoring creatures from guilt and misery, after their fall, as in their creation or government before; and as goodness was no more disposed to appoint a plan of restoring God's creatures, which should be contrary to justice, than in first forming a plan of governing them, it is evident that justice was as far from contradicting its operations in one case as in the other.

If justice demanded that sin should never be forgiven, but that all sinners should stand condemned, until it should be unjust to condemn them any longer; and if Christ came to render this demand, it is evident his death was so far from reconciling justice and mercy together, that it confirmed their irreconcilable opposition, and blotted mercy out of existence.

But nothing is more evident from the Bible than this soul-cheering truth, that mercy belongeth unto God, and is daily exercised towards the fallen children of men.

Among all the different sectaries in Christendom, I have never heard of any who professedly called this principle into question, or denied its being an essential doctrine of revelation. However we differ in other matters, we all profess to agree in the existence of this gracious attribute, on which we depend for eternal life, and without which we could never hope for pardon. The unmerited

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\* See his Lectures and Dissertations, bound together, p. 429.

kindness of our Maker, not only diffuses happiness through the heavenly regions, but extends its benign influences to the fallen and the guilty. This is evident from the structure of the Heavens and the earth; more so, from the testimony of Moses and the Prophets; and more still from the gospel of Jesus Christ, which having "brought life and immortality to light, has proclaimed a gracious pardon to the world, free for every sinner who will repent and believe the record God has given of his Son."

The doctrine of forgiveness is as universally admitted, among christians, as that of the Divine Mercy, and is justly considered as a consequence of it; but the nature of this act of pardon or justification has long been a subject of controversy, chiefly, perhaps, because the disputants did not understand each other, and were not fully aware of the ambiguity of their language, and the indistinctness of their conceptions.

Let us endeavour to conceive this subject clearly, that we may know what we mean, and what we believe concerning it: till we do this we shall be in danger of disputing about words, and of dissenting from those, who, when they rightly conceive our meaning, are of the same sentiment with ourselves.

The act of pardon is an act of the divine will: it is no act of the sinner's will, nor does it consist in any change produced upon him. It is true, indeed, that the performance of the condition on which the pardon is suspended is an act of the sinner's will: it is true likewise, that he experiences a gracious change wrought in him, as a consequence of his pardon; but if we say, on the one hand, that the pardon consists in the act of the sinner's will, we say he forgives himself; and if, on the other, that it consists in the change produced in him, we confound pardon with sanctification, and suppose the sinner stands in the same relation to God he did before; seeing we make forgiveness signify merely a change of his nature, which is surely as distinct from forgiveness, as the act of a physician is different from that of a governor.

Many justified believers still need the sanctification of their nature, but all men before they are justified, need deliverance from the penal consequences of their crimes, as well as from their natural effects: none but God can grant us this deliverance, and that act of his will which remits the sentence, or forbears the execution of it, is what we understand by the grant of pardon.

The proper and only subject of forgiveness is a rebel who justly deserves the penalty. It is ridiculous to talk of granting pardon to the innocent. And if a sinner be delivered from the sentence any other way than by an act of pardon, he certainly needs no for-

givenness, because he has, by other means, obtained as complete a deliverance from the sentence of death, as any act of pardon could possibly afford him. If a sinner be now exposed to the penalty, it stands in full force against him, and it would be just for the sentence to be executed upon him immediately; if he be not exposed to it, and yet has never obtained forgiveness, it follows that he has been delivered some other way, and upon principles of pure justice will be eternally free from the infliction of it, though no pardon should ever be granted.

The principle from which forgiveness flows, is that of benevolence.

Sinners, by their rebellion, have forfeited their right to demand exemption from the curse due to the guilty; the death of Christ was not intended to restore that right to sinners, otherwise they would have the same demand they had in a state of innocence, and consequently be as free from the want of pardon.

God is not bound in a debt of justice to any criminal, however penitent, seeing the claim of innocence is forfeited by sin; and as there is no right of demand in the sinner, there can be no corresponding obligation on his sovereign to remit the sentence, or deliver him from the penalty.

But it must be carefully observed in the mean time, that although God is under no obligation, in his individual relation to the criminal, yet he has graciously bound himself by promise, to pardon all sinners who will repent and believe the gospel. This promise he has confirmed by an oath, and sealed it by the blood of the everlasting covenant. Therefore his veracity, and of course his unchangeable character, is pledged before the whole universe, to receive and pardon all sinners, who will truly submit to the government of the Lord Jesus Christ: consequently he could not violate those promises and sacred pledges, without involving his character and government in such darkness and contradiction, as would throw the minds of all his innocent children into confusion. In this sense he may be said to be bound by his justice; but this bond arises, not from a restoration of the sinner's right to the demands of innocence, but from his own voluntary goodness, pledging himself by promise or benevolent engagement, to remit the sentence on certain specified conditions.

Every innocent creature, as before observed, has an individual and inherent right to the character and consequences of innocence: of course he has a just demand upon every being, not to destroy

his character of innocence by false imputations of guilt, or to punish him as a criminal. But all this being forfeited by sin, the rebel has no demand or claim to the character of innocence, or to be exempted from the penalty of justice. Neither the death of Christ, nor the promises of God were ever intended to restore the original rights of innocence to sinners in this probationary state; but to entitle them to the privilege of obtaining pardon and salvation, on gospel conditions, from the clemency of their gracious sovereign.

After their probation shall have ended; after every act of benevolence shall have been completed; and after their intelligent and moral nature shall have been restored and perfectly fitted for the regions of eternal happiness;—then the rights of innocence will be theirs in common with all the heavenly hosts: but we have no evidence to believe any man is in this state till he is fully sealed to the day of eternal redemption.

Whether any man be thus fully sealed on this side death, I presume not to decide; but that seal, whenever he receives it, must be considered as the closing point of his probation.

Mr. Baxter and Mr. Wesley agree, that “justification is not a single act, begun and ended immediately upon our believing; but a continued act, which, though it be in its kind complete from the first, yet is still in doing, till the final justification in the judgment day. That the justified may pray for the continuance of their justification, and that Christ’s satisfaction and our faith are of continual use, and not to be laid by, as if the work was done.” *Wesley’s Works*, vol. 22, page 178.

The conclusions I would draw from what has been said, and which I hope to defend in the sequel, are these:

1. That Christ never came under any obligation to suffer, but that of benevolence, pledged by way of promise.
2. That God in Christ never came under any other obligation to any sinner of Adam’s race.
3. That no sinner has any more inherent right to demand pardon from God, than he had to demand the death of Christ, for his redemption.
4. That Christ died to make it just for sinners to be forgiven, and finally saved, on condition of repentance, faith and gospel obedience.
5. That even upon the performance of those conditions, Christ’s death has not bound God, in any other sense than as it has been



given as a seal of his gracious promise, engagement or covenant with his creatures.

if what does The author mean by this ambiguous expression "a seal of his good promise"

We have been told, on the contrary, that Christ has done and suffered all that sinners were bound to do or to suffer: that he obeyed the whole law and suffered the whole penalty, in their stead; and that his obedience and sufferings are so made over, or transferred to the sinner, by some mysterious imputation, that God really views him as having done all the law required, and as having suffered the whole penalty it demanded. This system is clogged with the following consequences: ++

++ and for another also say that "God never views him as having done all that the Law requires when he appeals to the Law to or Justice to require some atonement by way of satisfaction" the question sometimes appears to be only whether some other times it would appear as if no more was required but a bond of promise

First: it charges God with being an unjust extortioner: for if an obedience has been rendered to the law, perfectly equal to its demand, all penalties are necessarily precluded; unless we say a law perfectly obeyed demands a penalty. For what does it demand a penalty? Not for disobedience, because it has been perfectly obeyed: the penalty then must be for obedience or for nothing at all. If the sinner, by imputation, be really clothed with a perfect righteousness, exactly such as the law demands, it would be forever unjust for any penalty to be inflicted either on him or his surety.

Secondly: clothed in this perfect righteousness, he appeals to inflexible justice as the ground of his justification; he looks up to the law for protection, having fulfilled every precept in his surety; he justly demands an exemption from the curse, and stands in no more need of pardon than the brightest angel there is in heaven.

Thirdly: if God demanded that the whole penalty should be actually inflicted before any sinner should escape, he certainly resolved that sin should never be forgiven; for if we say an infliction of the whole penalty is no proof that the sin was not pardoned, it may be true that the sins of all that are in hell have been forgiven, seeing their suffering the penalty is no proof to the contrary. If crimes forgiven, and those which are not, must be equally punished, it is plain to common sense that forgiveness is a mere name which signifies just nothing.

Fourthly: let our objectors admit, for the sake of argument, that the death of Christ did not discharge the penalty, but only accomplished that which was necessary to make the grant of pardon accord with the general welfare: would it be just for God to grant pardon in this way, or not? If it would, then there was no necessity in justice for Christ to discharge the penalty; if it would not, then we say God has no authority to forgive offenders, even when it can be done in perfect consistency with good government,

the question sometimes appears to be only whether some other times it would appear as if no more was required but a bond of promise

in any sense of the word was a mere mistake such a rambling incoherence makes it extremely difficult to understand the author's mind



and with the security of the public welfare. Consequently, that he has less authority than human rulers, who we know have the prerogative to grant pardon to those who have been legally condemned when it can be done without jeopardising the general welfare of society.

Fifthly: if we say God has authority to grant pardon, when the general good is secured, but that he will not do it, until the whole penalty be endured, these consequences will inevitably follow: 1. That God has no Mercy in his nature. 2. That in demanding punishment when the public welfare does not require it, he has no regard to the rights or happiness of others as the reason of this demand, and of course that he has no regard to the principle of justice or benevolence. 3. That this demand arises solely from a selfish principle, that is, a principle which has no object in view but its own private gratification. 4. That this private principle or passion is gratified with another's misery, seeing that misery could be abolished without injuring any creature in existence. And what is the difference between this principle, and the most confirmed and unrelenting malice? "can you split this hair? I doubt, I cannot."

Another scheme of redemption is, that Christ came merely to display the love of God to man, and reconcile man to his heavenly Father: that God never actually punishes sinners, because there is no wrath in his nature: but that sin, of its own nature; makes us miserable; and nothing obstructs our salvation but our own opposition to God and to holiness: and of course Christ did nothing to satisfy any demand of God, but merely to reconcile the sinner and bring him back to his allegiance.—See a short treatise on the atonement, by Mr. Stone.

We cannot receive this doctrine for several reasons.

1. Because it contradicts the scriptures which every where declare that God will execute just judgment upon the wicked, and that the end of Christ's coming was, "that the world through him might be saved," which surely implies that without him the world could not be saved.

2. This doctrine, like the other, contradicts divine justice: for if God has no wrath against sin, or no justice to punish it, which is the same thing, it must be because justice is not an attribute of his nature. Sinners deserve punishment, or they do not; if they deserve it, then it is just for it to be inflicted on them, and therefore to say it is contrary to the nature of God to inflict punishments, is to say it is contrary to his nature to execute justice upon unrelent-

ing offenders: if, on the contrary, they do not deserve it, then it follows that there is no demerit or ill-desert in transgression. And if misery has no just relation to moral evil (as it cannot have if evil does not justly deserve it) we should be constrained to say it is as righteous a thing to punish men for doing good as for doing evil. Thus the dictates of reason and conscience would be contradicted, all moral distinctions confounded, no difference left between right and wrong, and we should find ourselves let loose into the wide fields of atheism. ✱

3. It also destroys the scripture doctrine of forgiveness: for if sinners deserve no punishment from God, or stand exposed to no penalty, there is no sentence to be remitted, and of course a pardon would be a mere sham that could afford them no more security than they possess without it. Their actions, in a moral view, must deserve punishment, be entitled to reward, or be entirely indifferent; and if they deserve no punishment, to talk of forgiving them would be a ridiculous pretence of granting pardon to those actions which were either rewardable or totally indifferent in their nature.

If there be no ill-desert in disobedience, we are not bound either to obey our Maker, or to be just to our fellow creatures; for the sole reason sinners deserve punishment, if they do deserve it, is, that they injure others and act in defiance of moral obligation. And if we be not morally obliged to obey our Maker, he has no right to demand our obedience, and therefore, all his demands upon us would be unjust, because it were demanding of us that to which he has no right. It follows that our obligation to obey, and God's right to punish for disobedience must stand or fall together, and if we deny them, we cut down at one stroke, all religion and morality.

We must therefore renounce these two systems, which would make the pardon of sinners impossible or unnecessary; we must reject the notion that Christ died to raise the sinner above the want of pardon, by discharging all claims against him, as well as this latter one which teaches that the laws of God have no penal sanctions; and we must maintain with the apostle that "we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Eph. 1. 7.

*+ This is good reasoning but must not be taken up as a whole. See epistle to the Galatians section 3 of Chap 7 and cry theme on the man that shall represent a lawless in the great things of revelation vengeance of a tyrant - moral & malicious being &c by an imitative of not "the whole of the" be a matter upon his dear son*

## SECTION II.

*The nature of justice and benevolence considered, in their relation to each other.*

DR. Reid must be considered as standing among the most diligent and candid inquirers after truth: and he had as clear conceptions of intellectual and moral subjects, perhaps, as any man that ever lived. His account of justice is so clear, and so important, that I will give it in his own words, and notice the conclusions it will afford us.

“To sum up what has been said on this point,” says he, “a favour, an act of *justice*, and an *injury* are so related to one another, that he who conceives one must conceive the other too. They lie, as it were, in one line, and resemble the relations of greater, less, and equal. If one understands what is meant by one line being greater or less than another, he can be at no loss to understand what is meant by its being equal to the other: for, if it be neither greater nor less, it must be equal.

“In like manner, of those actions by which we profit or hurt other men, a favour is *more* than justice, an injury is *less*; and that which is neither a favour nor an injury is a *just action*.”

This statement is very clear, and must recommend itself to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.

But when we illustrate moral principles by the relation of greater, less, and equal, it is necessary to observe that happiness is always their object. A favour is more than justice: that is, when you do a favour you give a person more happiness, or more of the means which are essential to it, than he has a right to demand of you. “An injury is less:” that is, you injure a person by taking or withholding from him a part of his good things, whereby you make his happiness, or the means of it, less than his right of demand.

Thus, injustice always tends to enlarge misery, and benevolence to enlarge happiness; while justice, occupying a middle ground, forbids the introduction of misery, and demands the maintenance of happiness in exact proportion to every one’s right, without either forbidding or demanding an enlargement of it, above that standard. Injustice is the only thing that justice ever can forbid, because it is the only thing that ever sinks below her demand: she has nothing to forbid or to enjoin upon benevolence, because

the essential nature of it is, not only to secure her full demand, but to rise above it, and bestow more happiness than justice had a right to claim.

But how, it may be asked, can justice relinquish its demand in behalf of mercy, in the pardon of a criminal? Answer, the demand of justice is, that the rights of the innocent shall be secured; benevolence will never grant pardon in any other way but that which secures them; and therefore justice never relinquishes her demand.

The office of justice is to defend the public welfare, which this attribute alone can only do by punishing the guilty; but benevolence interposes, and pledges herself, not only to secure the public welfare, but also to extend the means of happiness to the guilty. This is doing more than justice alone could do, whereas injustice consists in doing less: consequently the demand of justice is not relinquished, but is completely satisfied, seeing all the happiness is secured which was demanded, and even more than was demanded.

As the object of justice is to defend happiness, it can never be dissatisfied with benevolence for enlarging it, nor with the means that are necessary to accomplish the end.

If the innocent voluntarily suffer a temporary evil, to secure an eternal good to others, this can never be unjust; otherwise we say the innocent have no right to be benevolent, except in those cases in which it will cost them nothing.

Justice and injustice are contradictory to each other: the former tending to maintain happiness, and the latter to destroy it: the former including a regard to the general welfare, and the latter a disregard of it. This will surely be granted by every man in the world.

Now as justice and injustice are contradictory to each other, benevolence must of necessity agree with one or the other of them: if with the latter, it is an essential principle of wickedness; and if with the former, it is as impossible for justice and mercy to contradict each other as it is for righteousness and wickedness to be the same thing.

He who loves the principle of justice, delights to see all creatures enjoy the full degree of happiness, which God has given them a right to claim: he who loves the principle of benevolence, delights to see them enjoy their full right of demand, and if they need it, something more: these persons both agree to delight in general happiness, and consequently they agree in their opposi-

tion to that injustice, which if not prevented, would fill the universe with misery.

From what has been said we may deduce the following plain and interesting conclusions.

There is no possible way for one person to violate justice, but by injuring another; that is, by doing less for him than he has a right to claim. Consequently an act of the deity, or of any other being, which does not infringe upon another's right of demand, is in perfect harmony with the purest dictates of everlasting righteousness.

2. An act of benevolence, being no injury, but the contrary, stands at the utmost distance from injustice of any thing that can possibly be imagined. There is as absolute an opposition between them, as there is between happiness and misery—light and darkness—or any other opposites in nature. To deny this, is to say positively that God never exercised kindness to any living creature, or that, whenever he did so, he was guilty of injustice. For at the moment he bestowed a favour, he had a right to withhold it, otherwise it was no favour at all; but if he had a right to withhold it, then it was just for him to do so: consequently goodness consists in giving up a right which justice allows us to retain. Injustice, on the contrary, consists in withholding a right from another, which justice demands us to render, and does not allow us to retain. Any doctrine therefore, which obviously jumbles perfect goodness and injustice together, as though they were the same thing, is most ridiculous and senseless confusion.

3. As goodness cannot violate justice, when God graciously and freely forgives a sinner, justice is as perfectly satisfied as it would be with the sinner's damnation: because in this case the right of no being is withheld from him, but the loving Parent of all mankind exercises the optional right of goodness, which can dissatisfy no principle but that of unrelenting barbarity and malevolence.

4. The only case in which the communication of happiness, or the diminution of misery, can be unjust, is that of one person conferring a particular benefit on another, not from the principle of benevolence, but from that of partiality: I mean, when the benefit or privilege allowed to one will tend to the injury of others.

We will suppose a number of murderers are taken up within this commonwealth, and cast into prison. They all deserve to die, and if they were immediately pardoned and set at liberty, justice would not be satisfied. Why? Because the commonwealth would be endangered; the citizens would be exposed to their unrestrained

malevolence; their rebellion would be encouraged; the governor would be suspected of a deficiency in moral principle; his administration would be brought into contempt; disaffection would be permitted to spread abroad with impunity; anarchy and wretchedness would advance with rapid strides, and the peace of the commonwealth would stand in jeopardy every hour. In this case it could not accord with good government, nor consequently with justice, for a pardon to be granted; because it would interfere with the rights of *others*, and the governor, in setting the prisoners at liberty, would not act upon the principle of *goodness*, which always regards the general welfare; but upon that of *partiality*, which invariably results from some private and selfish passion.

On what condition will justice be satisfied, and allow the prisoners to be pardoned and set at liberty? Will it never be satisfied till the prisoners be authorised, by some means or other, to *demand* their liberty, and the governor be *bound* to render it as their right? If so, justice forbids the exercise of any *clemency*, and enjoins on the governor to hold the prisoners while he is bound to do it, and to set them at liberty only because he is equally *bound*, and cannot refuse it without violating their *right of demand*. If this be our opinion, we ought, as honest men, to speak out, and tell the world we believe the eternal demand of justice is, that goodness, mercy and compassion should be excluded from God, angels and men.

The criminals have forfeited their right to life and liberty, and the right to execute the sentence upon them is now in the governor, who, for the security of the public welfare, is bound to execute them, unless it can be secured in some other way.

Now, supposing the governor to be possessed of power, wisdom and goodness enough, to devise and execute some plan through which the pardon of criminals may be made to accord with the general welfare; who will say that he thereby abolishes the sinner's demerit, and gives him a right in justice to demand the privileges of an upright citizen, which his crimes had entirely forfeited? Who will say that the criminal's right would be violated by punishing him according to his crimes? It is evident he is as void of any *right* to be exempt from punishment as he was before, and can only look for deliverance in a way of *mercy*.

But still the governor may act unjustly *in his relation to the commonwealth*, by refusing to grant pardon, when the proper terms are complied with: for, as the plan was devised and executed in the presence of all, *with the declared intention of shewing mercy*



to offenders, and thus extending happiness as far as it could be extended, consistently with the principles of good government; the members of the community would have a right to expect an administration according to the benevolent intention that had been thus openly proclaimed.

A subsequent departure from it would prove a want of veracity, and a manifest deception in the governor. It would afford a just ground for suspicion, that the original plan of redeeming those criminals did not result from benevolence, as was pretended, but from some private passion, or secret partiality, subversive of every just and equitable government; why else are criminals rejected, who are fully disposed to avail themselves of the plan of mercy, and to comply with its conditions?

In this way the supposed ruler would indeed be under obligation, but not from the criminal's right of exemption, or from any thing else but the voluntary pledges of his own truth and benevolence.

By applying this to our Maker's government of the moral world, we may discover the harmony of justice and mercy in the salvation of a sinner through Jesus Christ. The Redeemer makes it accord with the general welfare for sin to be forgiven, by a full demonstration of the divine character in the method of forgiveness; but God is not thereby brought under obligation to sinners, farther than he has graciously condescended to bind himself by promise. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

5. From the preceding view of the subject, it appears that *benevolence* is the only thing that merits reward or gratitude, and *injustice* is the only source of *demerit* and punishment: so far are they from being one and the same thing!

Every one knows that a man merits nothing, and deserves no thanks, merely for paying his debts; because he was bound in justice to do it, and did nothing more than his duty. But when a kind friend, on whom we have no demand, bestows a favour upon us, we at once perceive this to be a praise-worthy action, and feel ourselves bound under obligations of gratitude. Had he withheld the favour, he would have done us no wrong, and we should have had no right to blame or censure him for it: because, as the benefactor has a right to withhold his favours, there could be no demerit in his retaining that which was entirely his own.

For the same reason, there is no proper merit in the mere dis-



charge of justice, because it consists in rendering that which is *another's right*, and which we have not the option to retain. If we refuse to render it, in violation of another's right; this is the principle and conduct which deserves reproach and misery, because it inflicts misery on others which they do not deserve. It operates in contradiction to justice, by infringing upon the rights of the innocent; and in opposition to goodness, by obstructing that flow of happiness which it would communicate: yea, it sets at defiance every just and amiable principle of morality, and would, if not prevented, despoil angels of their felicity, and involve the whole creation in misery and ruin.

Hence it appears that injustice tends to the diminution of happiness, and to the increase of misery; whilst benevolence, pursuing a contrary direction, is ever delighted to assuage the grief of the miserable, and, if possible, to banish all wretchedness from the creation. The former always implies an intention to injure us, and the latter an intention to do us good: for if we be accidentally hurt by any one, or accidentally benefitted, the one is no proof of injustice, nor the other of goodness; because a voluntary intention is essential to all the responsible actions of a moral agent; and where no good or bad intention exists, there is no ground for either praise or blame; otherwise we might blame or praise the actions of an idiot, or even the operations of the wind. If then those two principles are as opposite to each other as heaven is from hell—opposite in the intention of the agent, in his actions, and in the final effect or tendency of them, how absurd must that system be which supposes that every departure from the inflexible standard is alike improper, and that goodness itself is unjust!

Benevolence is the source of all happiness in the creation. If the office of justice were to enjoin on all beings to do whatever they have a right to do, God would have been bound in justice not to create the universe, and diffuse his multiplied favours abroad: because he had an undoubted right to withhold them. Had he confined himself to this standard, and resolved not to do anything, but as a previous obligation enjoined, it is evident, unless some rare genius can demonstrate that we eternally had a right to our creation, and to all the blessings which followed it, that his actions would have been solely confined to himself, and no living creature would have ever existed. But if the display of his goodness in the creation, was perfectly just, because there were no other beings whose rights and privileges could be affected by it; by a parity of reason it follows, that it is perfectly just for

God to deliver guilty sinners from misery, whenever it can be done, without infringing upon the rights and liberties of others.

Presuming that any attempt to produce additional arguments in defence of this point, would insult the reader's understanding, and intrude upon his patience, I submit these to his candid reflections.

### SECTION III.

#### *An objection answered.*

It may be alleged, that, if benevolence imply a double right, to give or to withhold, then all men have a right to live without ever bestowing a favour: and also, when they do an act of kindness according to the preceding statements, there is real merit in their works; a doctrine totally opposite to the whole spirit and letter of the gospel.

In answer to this we may observe:

1. That no action among men is benevolent as it relates to God, but only in relation to our fellow-creatures. They have no right to demand it, but God has a right to enjoin the performance of it, because he is our author, and we are dependant on his goodness for our faculties, and for all our ability to exercise them. To him such actions are a mere discharge of duty, which cannot be omitted without ingratitude, and a defiance of moral obligation. No actions in the universe are absolutely and independently benevolent, but those of the Deity himself, who cannot be bound in duty to any superior authority. He is not dependant on any other being for his power to do good, and therefore his right of option, to give or withhold his favours, is perfectly free from the controul of any other authority. But as man's power, and liberty, and very existence, is dependant on an higher arm, so is his right of option: he is therefore bound in duty to the creator, even in the communication of his favours, though his fellow-creatures have no inherent right of demand,

2. Hence it appears that men are not at liberty to live without benevolence, but are bound by divine authority to exercise their ability in acts of kindness, as well as in those of justice.

And though their benevolent actions have a degree of merit in them, and are deserving gratitude, as they relate to their fellow men, yet it is very evident they merit nothing *from God*, because he has authority to command us to do good to our brethren, and *after we have done all that he has commanded, we are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.*

Yet there is more moral worth in those actions in the estimation of God himself, than in acts of mere justice between man and man. They are the nearest imitation of his essential nature of any thing that can be found in a creature. Benevolence is the highest moral attribute of the Deity, to which all the rest are perpetually subservient: he is therefore pleased with the exercise of it, above all things in the creation. Mr. Wesley very rightly observes, "The scripture doth not say that God is *justice*, or that he is *truth*, though he is just and true in all his ways; but it doth say, *God is love*. He is love in the abstract, and there is no end of his goodness. This is the attribute in which he peculiarly delights, in which he glories above all the rest."

It is therefore evident, from the nature of God, that such actions are pleasing to him in a high degree, and though in their relation to him they are not properly meritorious, yet they are rewardable, and God will manifest his approbation of them through eternity.

The Lord Jesus in describing the day of judgment, mentions acts of benevolence alone, as being of great price in the sight of God, and as being the conditional works of our final justification: "Then shall the king say to them on his right hand, come ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Matt. xxv. 34, &c.

It is very observable, that all the works he mentions are works of charity or mercy, as they relate to man, though in their relation to God, they are a mere discharge of duty; because it is impossible for a creature to do more than his duty to his creator. These works can only flow from the love of God, for there is no moral virtue in acts of kindness, which result only from animal affection, otherwise there is virtue even in the actions of brute beasts. Our works of charity must result from a love of goodness, which is

the same thing with the love of God; for *God is love*; and *we love him because he is good*, or which is the same thing, *because he first loved us*.

Nor let any conclude, that since charity is of the greatest value, and will stand so high in the day of judgment, men may therefore be discouraged in performing acts of justice, and be tempted to neglect them under pretence of preserving more time for the performance of greater works: for it is impossible for an unjust man to be benevolent. He may, indeed, perform acts of kindness from some selfish principle, or animal affection, but this is not moral goodness, because he does not act from a regard to the principle. Let this principle perpetually govern his soul, and he will not neglect the demands of justice, or bestow favours on one to the injury of others, which is not goodness, but *partiality*. If I bestow that upon objects of charity, which ought to discharge my just debts, and thereby defraud my creditors of their right, there is surely no moral worth in such an action, but it results from some whimsical delusion, or partial fondness, irreconcilable with every righteous principle. A man must therefore come up to the standard of justice, before he can possibly be benevolent; because "a favour is more than justice, injustice is less;" and to suppose a man can be benevolent in the neglect of justice, or in doing less than it requires, is the very absurdity that has been refuted by all the foregoing arguments.

Some depend for salvation upon an imaginary *piety*, which pretends to worship God, by the exercise of injustice and cruelty to men; others, through self-love and partiality bestow favours on some, while they defraud others, and call this benevolence; a third class pay little regard either to piety or benevolence, and value themselves much upon their honesty; but when the saviour enumerated our rewardable actions, on which we should be invited to our father's kingdom in the day of judgment, he did not mention common honesty as one of them: and though none but an honest man can do the works he mentions, yet according to his account of the matter, no man will be rewarded in heaven merely for paying his debts, and discharging the common demands of justice.

If we act from a love of goodness, we love God, who is the fountain of it: this includes the whole exercise of true *piety*. We also act from a regard to the general happiness, and this includes the very principle, and leads to the perfect exercise of true *charity*. The office of justice is to defend that happiness which goodness

communicates, and therefore the love of goodness essentially includes the love of justice. Thus it is plain, that he who sincerely loves God, and all mankind; he who hates *partiality* and *injustice*, and proves it by corresponding actions, is the very man that possesses moral worth, and will be rewarded in heaven with everlasting happiness.

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#### SECTION IV.

##### *The fitness, importance and necessity of redemption.*

OUR opponents will be apt to insist, that the doctrine we defend renders the death of Christ unnecessary and contemptible: for if God can freely forgive sins, before justice satisfies itself by inflicting the punishment due to the criminal, they would have us conclude that Christ died in vain, and evinced the folly of heaven in sending us a saviour, when we could have been justly pardoned and saved without his interposition.

But we perfectly agree with them that sinners could not be saved consistently with the divine attributes, but through a mediator; and also that our saviour did actually satisfy justice in our behalf. The difference between us consists in these two particulars:

1. We believe Christ died to make it just for God to pardon penitent sinners; whilst their system supposes he died to give an absolute right to salvation, independent of their penitence, and without being beholden to God for mercy or forgiveness.

2. They think the death of Christ satisfied the justice of God, considered as a private principle that demanded full vengeance for every crime; we on the contrary believe he satisfied the justice of God, only in his public character, as moral governor of the universe; or in other words, that Christ secured the ends of good government in the pardon of penitents, as effectually as it would have been done by their damnation.

Do our views of the subject render redemption unnecessary? Do they in any degree diminish the glory of it, as represented in the scriptures? I think not. And I moreover think the charge falls justly upon the opposite system, and hope to make it appear by the following arguments.

1. If they grant the whole punishment was not endured, which was due to sin, they concede the very thing for which we contend: namely, that justice can be satisfied without an infliction of the whole penalty. But if, on the contrary, they declare the whole must of necessity be endured before justice can be satisfied, it follows, that, whatever effect redemption might produce, it could not diminish the misery which was incurred by moral evil. And if the same quantum of misery take place, upon the plan of redemption, that would have existed without it, there is no other principle from which we can conclude redemption necessary, but the unscriptural hypothesis, "that penal sufferings must never be diminished, but must be transferred from the guilty to the innocent. If redemption did nothing towards the diminution of misery, what goodness was displayed in it, unless we say benevolence consists in nothing else than the transfer of punishment from the guilty to the innocent?"

2. Our opponents themselves explain the penalty of God's broken law to be "death, temporal, spiritual and eternal." Now God can, consistently with his attributes, diminish this penalty, and inflict but a part of it, or he cannot; if he can, then it was not necessary for the whole to be endured by the Redeemer; if he cannot, it plainly follows that all mankind must yet be damned, unless it can be proved "that the Lord Jesus suffered death temporal, spiritual and eternal." The word of God assures us that he, having once suffered for sins, now suffereth again no more, but is exalted above all principality and power, on the right hand of the Majesty on high. I never yet heard any one profess to believe, much less attempt to prove, that Jesus Christ suffered everlasting punishment even for the elect themselves; but this is (confessedly) the punishment which the law required of them, and which constitutes the penalty that must be inflicted to the very last mite, before justice can be satisfied: therefore the elect must yet suffer death eternal, and redemption has accomplished "a solemn nothing."

3. I would be glad to know whether punishment be the only thing that can satisfy justice, in its relation to a sinner; or whether benevolence can render any satisfaction, and thus diminish the extent of misery? If benevolence can do this, I conclude, if the death of Christ satisfied justice, in its relation to the government, and God's benevolence satisfied it in its relation to his individual right of punishing, a complete and entire satisfaction is thus rendered, and yet we are all dependent on the divine clemency for justification, and have no legal demand upon our Creator.



If it be said, on the contrary, that nothing can satisfy this attribute but *punishment*, I would ask again, whether it demand that the guilty should suffer, or whether it be indifferent to justice who is punished, provided the whole penalty be endured? If the latter, it follows that all the devils might now be taken out of hell, and justice would be satisfied, provided as many holy angels were put in their place, seeing it is a matter of indifference who endures the misery. But if, on the contrary, nothing can give satisfaction but the punishment of the *guilty*, the sufferings of an innocent Saviour would be of no avail, and the redemption of mankind would be absolutely unrighteous, and therefore impossible.

4. If it be granted that goodness can satisfy justice, in its relation to God's individual right, all objections against our system are gone at once: for if Christ died only to make it just for sinners, on certain conditions, to be forgiven, and left the sentence still in force against them, till it should be blotted out by the divine compassion, it cannot hence be concluded that justice is only satisfied in part; because the act of goodness in the grant of pardon, renders the satisfaction complete and entire.

But if we deny the merit of goodness, and maintain that mere punishment is the only thing which is effectual to a sinner's salvation, it would follow, that Christ must necessarily suffer as much real torment as all his ransomed creatures ever deserved, before they could be redeemed or delivered from the sentence. This is representing him to suffer as a *criminal*, which, to say nothing of the injustice of it, supposes the suffering of sinners, and those of their Saviour, are exactly equal in merit; seeing all merit, available for the guilty, is supposed to consist only in the degree of misery endured.

What was it that rendered the death of Jesus peculiarly meritorious? Was it necessary for sin to be imputed to him, and for him to die a real criminal? just the contrary: he suffered, being innocent, for the sake of sparing the guilty, and his whole merit, as a Saviour, consisted in that voluntary goodness which influenced him "that was rich in glory to become poor, that we through his poverty might be rich."

I presume all men will acknowledge that there is no merit in the sufferings of the damned, because they, as criminals, deserve it, and suffer the whole as a penalty of justice. But there was great merit in the sufferings of our Saviour; therefore he did not suffer as a criminal, by becoming *guilty* in their place, but endured the whole as a burden assumed by voluntary kindness, and this constitutes the meritorious efficacy of his death, for our salvation.



There would have been no peculiar merit in the sufferings of Christ, had he been bound in justice to endure the whole; no dignity of person would have increased their merit, because the mere payment of a debt or the discharge of a just obligation, is no more meritorious in a prince or other ruler, than a like action in the meanest subject of his dominions. It is true Christ's peculiar merit consisted in the dignity of his person; because he being God over all blessed forever, was far above the law given to creatures, and was under no obligation to obey or to suffer. Had he been thus bound to suffer, his death would have been of no avail, unless we suppose there is great merit in a person's suffering what justice requires of him, which were to attribute merit to the sufferings of devils: therefore the benevolence of the Lord Jesus, was the fountain of his merit, and was the only thing which rendered his death effectual to our redemption and salvation.

Now if it be granted, (1.) that our Saviour's goodness was the source of his merit, and (2.) that merit is the thing that satisfies justice in behalf of sinners, it will follow that Christ was not, by imputation, constituted a criminal, or else that there was no merit in his death: for there is no benevolence, and therefore no merit, in a criminal suffering what justice requires of him.

Dr. Crisp, had the boldness to declare, on the contrary, that "God makes Christ as very a sinner as the creature himself was." Again, as quoted by Dr. Williams, page 270: "Nor are we so completely sinful, but Christ, being made sin, was as completely sinful as we."—And it is well known, that Luther, in one of his unguarded moments, called Christ\* the greatest sinner in the world. See *Fletcher's Checks*, vol. 2. page 229.

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\* "And this, no doubt, all the prophets did foresee in spirit, that Christ should become the greatest Transgressor, Murderer, Adulterer, Thief, Rebel and Blasphemer, that ever was or could be in the world. For he being made a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, is not now an innocent person and without sins, is not now the Son of God born of the Virgin Mary: but a sinner which hath and carrieth the sin of Paul, who was a blasphemer, an oppressor and persecutor; of Peter, which denied Christ; of David, which was an adulterer, a murderer, and caused the gentiles to blaspheme the name of the Lord. When the law therefore, found him among thieves, it condemned and killed him as a thief.—If it be not absurd to confess and believe, that Christ was crucified between two thieves, then it is not absurd to say also that he was accursed, and of all sinners the greatest."

Luther's commentary on St Paul's epistle to the Galatians, London edition, 1774: page 203.

As the counter part of this, we have been taught to believe that the merits and righteousness of Christ are really transferred, or made over to us by imputation, just as he was made guilty by having our sins imputed to him.

“To deny, therefore, that God imputes righteousness to an elect, while he is full of unrighteousness; or to suppose that he imputes sin to an apostate, who is sold under sin, is but a decent way of denying the imputation of our personal sins to Christ, and the vicarious satisfaction which he made on the cross.

“To detect the fallacy of this argument,” says Mr. Fletcher, “we need only observe, (1.) that God never accounted Christ completely guilty. Such expressions as these, He made him sin for us: He laid on him the iniquities of us all, &c. are only Hebrew idioms, which signify, that God appointed Christ a sacrifice for sin; and that the chastisement of our forfeited peace was upon him: which no more implies, that God put on his back, by an absolute imputation, a robe of unrighteousness, woven with all the sins of the elect to make him completely guilty, than St. Luke, when he informs us, that the Virgin Mary offered two young pigeons for her purification, supposes her ceremonial uncleanness was, somehow, woven into a couple of little garments, and put upon the back of two pigeons, which by that means, were made completely unclean.

Gallio gets drunk, and as he reels home from his midnight revels, he breaks thirty-six lamps in the streets, and sends out volleys of curses to the number of two hundred. He is brought before you,\* and you insist on his going to the house of correction, or paying so much money to buy three dozen of lamps, besides the usual fine for his profane language. As he is not worth a groat, his sober brother Mitio kindly offers to lay down the sum for him. You accept of the vicarious satisfaction, and binding the rake to his good behaviour, you release him at his brother's request. Now sir, would you be reasonable, if you reckoned Mitio completely guilty of getting drunk, swearing two hundred oaths, and breaking thirty six lamps?

“And will you defend a doctrine which charges God with a mistake ten thousand times more glaring, than that you would be guilty of, if you really reckoned Metio an abandoned rake, and Gallio a man of an exemplary conduct? Will you indeed recommend still as gospel, an opinion which supposes, that the God of everlasting, unchangeable love, once loathed and abhorred his be-

\* Mr. Hill being a magistrate, he is here addressed as such.

loved Son; and that the God of invariable truth could once say to the holy Jesus, 'Thou art all foul, O thou defiled object of my hatred, there is no purity in thee;' while he addresses a bloody adulterer with, 'Thou art all fair, my love, my undefiled, there is no spot in thee.'" Fletcher's Works, vol. 2, page 163, 164.

To Mr Fletcher's just and ingenious illustration, we may add the following plain consequences of the Antinomian system of imputation,

1. If our sins were actually imputed to Christ, to make him completely guilty; we are delivered from the curse, not through the merit of Christ's death, but by virtue of God's act of imputation, whereby we are constituted innocent; and Christ, being as very a sinner as the creature himself was, is bound in justice to suffer the whole penalty for himself.

2. It was just for the Lord of glory to be charged with our crimes, and the guilt of them absolutely transferred from us to him, or it was not; if it was not, the doctrine we oppose is false, or God is an unjust being; if it was, then he suffered nothing but what in justice he deserved, and consequently there was no more merit in his death, than there is in the death of any other sinner.

3. If this mysterious doctrine of imputation be true, we must necessarily receive the following jumble of contradictions: that Christ was a *sinner* and yet a meritorious saviour—that he was guilty and not guilty—innocent and not innocent—that we are guilty and not guilty—innocent and not innocent—that God is good, but refuses to be gracious—and that he is just in the violation of justice.

4. Lastly, if the merits and righteousness of Christ be actually transferred to us by imputation, we are all as completely righteous and meritorious as ever he was, unless our objectors will leap into another contradiction, and say his righteousness is imputed and not imputed—his merit made over to us and not made over, at the same time. This would not constitute us ransomed sinners, but gracious saviours of the world, possessing the whole righteousness and merit of that sacred character.

These conclusions are too obvious to be denied, and too ridiculous to be admitted, by any unprejudiced, reflecting mind; and I hope the lovers of truth will not receive such inconsiderate and absurd opinions under the popish cover of "holy mysteries," nor be dissuaded from a diligent search and inquiry; through the groundless fear that truth will be exposed, and error established, by a close and candid examination; or, as some would express it, by "carnal reasonings and metaphysical distinctions."

Perhaps our opponents, in reply to the doctrine of this section, will declare they never taught nor believed that Christ suffered the entire degree of punishment that was due to sinners; but that he rendered that satisfaction to divine justice, which was equivalent to the whole penalty. We answer:

1. If our sins were really imputed to Christ, and if nothing but punishment can render satisfaction for them, he must of necessity suffer the whole that was required, and nothing less could be received as equivalent; but if there is merit in every act of the redeemer's goodness, with which divine justice is satisfied, then our doctrine is true, that benevolence was the source of our saviour's merit, which made it just for sinners to have a probation granted them; and that his benevolence in the grant of pardon, is also meritorious, and makes it just for sinners (when renewed) to be admitted into heaven.

2. In what sense was the death of Christ equivalent to the penalty? Not in the degree of punishment; and I would fain hope no person will say it was so, in the degree of guilt. In merit it was more than equivalent; for I presume there is no merit at all in a person's suffering what he deserves, and therefore a sinner's suffering what he deserves, is not meritorious. Do they mean that the death of Jesus was equivalent to the penalty in the effects produced by it, or in the satisfaction it rendered to the divine nature? I believe in both these respects it was more than equal to the damnation of all sinners: for it not only displayed God's holiness and hatred against sin, which their damnation would have done, but procured a day of mercy and salvation for all mankind, and opened the way for goodness to diffuse its benign influences even to the guilty, which an infliction of the penalty would never have accomplished. And the divine nature was certainly better satisfied with the death of Christ, than with the condemnation of all rebels, otherwise they would have been condemned, and the saviour would never have come into the world. God was more glorified, or his attributes were more extensively displayed, by redeeming sinners, than by consigning them all to perdition, because his wonderful goodness, benignity and wisdom, were manifested in the salvation of sinners, and this was done in perfect concord with his justice and impartiality.

If by equivalent, our opponents mean that Christ's death, though not equal in punishment to the requirements of the law, yet gave the sinner as absolute a discharge or deliverance from guilt and demerit as he had before sin entered into the world, the conse-

quence is, that all for whom the redeemer died, are perfectly secure and innocent in the midst of all their crimes.

We must maintain that this scheme would prove that his death was not equal to an execution of the sentence upon all offenders: for, (1.) how is his holiness or hatred against sin displayed, if he establishes a plan of redemption, which gives his creatures full liberty to sin without any danger, or possibility in justice, of ever being punished for it? Where is his general goodness and impartiality, if a few are thus absolutely saved, and the rest as unconditionally neglected, reprobated and damned? What becomes of his wisdom, if he puts the reigns of government out of his hands, gives all mankind a sham trial; threatens his elect with hell if they repent not, and invites reprobates to partake of the waters of life freely, when he cannot punish the former, or reward the latter, without being unjust? Where is his justice and equity, if his innocent creatures were placed in a state from which they might fall and perish forever, and his guilty ones in a state of sham trial, in which they are absolutely secure in the midst of all their abominations? What is this but manifesting a complacency for wickedness, and even rewarding it with that safety and unconditional assurance of eternal life, which Adam in paradise, and the very angels in heaven were not in possession of?

And if we say he died for all mankind, and discharged every demand that justice can have against any of Adam's race, then all must have a sham trial, and be unconditionally saved, in which case sin, in the finally impenitent, will be rewarded, and God's approbation of it declared; or else, standing in a state of real probation, all impenitent sinners must be condemned, and the Almighty would thereby display an act of unrighteousness, by requiring the same penalty twice over, or by executing those against whom justice had no demand. If Christ by his death satisfied every demand that ever justice had, or now has, against the sons and daughters of Adam, we are all absolutely free from all penalties: otherwise you say justice has been fully satisfied, and not fully satisfied; has received its whole demand against sinners, and not received it, at the same time.

Thus it appears the system we oppose, renders redemption useless, unjust and contradictory: *useless*, because it teaches that the whole penalty must of necessity be endured; but this penalty is death eternal, which Christ never suffered, and therefore all sinners are left without hope and without remedy. *Unjust*, inasmuch as it presents a false charge of guilt against the innocent

redeemer, (by imputation,) that he may suffer according to his demerit. *Contradictory*, in declaring that all demands of the law have been discharged, and yet that they continue in full force: that all our guilt has been transferred to a surety, who has satisfied every claim in his own person, and yet that we remain guilty children of wrath, who will be everlastingly damned unless we repent and obtain forgiveness: finally, that God's law has but one penalty against sinners, the whole of which has been actually endured, and yet thousands shall suffer eternal punishment for the very sins that have thus been completely expiated; and we must neither call this the same penalty which the redeemer suffered, nor any other one; but must receive the whole in jumbled confusion, without presuming to indulge "the almost magical power of our metaphysical distinctions."\* These strange mysteries must be believed and defended, it seems, for the honour of christianity, and to support the glory of redemption! I hope, however, that a candid survey of the following section will convince the judicious reader, that the dignity and importance of our holy religion, can be supported upon very different principles.

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## SECTION V.

*The same subject.*

To understand the scheme of redemption correctly, it is necessary to trace the economy of providence, and the principles of moral government to their eternal fountain. From reason and revelation we learn something of the moral nature of God: this nature is the proper foundation of all just conclusions in divinity, and unless we bring our views of redemption to this criterion, our inferences are drawn in the dark, and we know not what we say, nor whereof we affirm. We will therefore, as the foundation of our superstructure, lay down the following positions, some of which will be admitted without hesitation, and the others I trust, shall be supported by correct and conclusive evidence.

1. The Almighty ruler of the heavens and the earth, being

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\* See Mr. Shirley's Reply, to Mr. Fletcher's Vindication.

glorious in holiness, and perfect in goodness, enjoys unceasing and infinite felicity.

2. This complete and perfect happiness is not derived from any thing foreign from himself, but results from the harmony and perfection of all his eternal attributes.

3. He is perfectly free and voluntary in all his actions, because he is omnipotent, and cannot be controuled by any other power or authority. To deny his free agency, is to ascribe our being and happiness to necessity, seeing if God be not a free agent, they depended not upon his liberty of option, and could not be otherwise than they are. It is to deny that power belongeth unto God; because a power to do any thing, includes a power to leave it undone, and to affirm a being has power, who is destitute of agency, is an absolute contradiction.

4. There is no immoral principle in his nature, and no error or mistake can ever enter into his infinite mind; therefore God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. It is impossible for God to lie; he is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever: therefore he never has done, and never will do any thing "but what is eternally just, right and kind."

5. This great and immortal being, from the pure benevolence of his nature, was influenced to create various orders of intelligent and moral creatures, that they might behold his glory and participate in his felicity.

6. To this end it was necessary for them to possess *understanding, liberty and moral goodness* for if the happiness of deity results from his own nature, it is evident that his creatures, to partake of the same kind of enjoyment, must possess a degree of the same nature, otherwise we say his nature is essential, and at the same time not essential, to moral happiness.

That God did in fact endow his creatures with free agency, is evident from their fall: for if they were not free, it is certain that they were made wicked, or else were driven into sin by some other power; if they were made wrong, the fault was in their Maker, not in themselves; and if they were forced into sin by the agency of another, God only could be the author of it, because there was no other power in the universe. Therefore we are reduced to this dilemma: either to believe that our creator is essentially wicked, or that his creatures were made free, and introduced evil by an abuse of their liberty.

But why was this agency or active power bestowed upon them? We must answer that it was essential to the enjoyment of moral



happiness, or that it was not: if it was, this good and perfect gift is resolvable into the divine beneficence; if it was not, then we say God bestowed a useless power upon his creatures, which could do them no good, and which might prove fatal to their tranquillity. If we say he gave it in order to ruin them, we charge him with malévolence, and if we say he gave it for no end, we charge him with folly: therefore the only modest and rational conclusion is, that he gave it through benevolence, because it was essential to their spiritual or moral happiness.

7. To secure and perpetuate the happiness of his children, God gave them a law or moral government, founded upon the attributes of his own nature. For as His felicity results from the perfections of his own nature, the government, to promote theirs, must be established upon the same principles.

His giving them a moral law is, of itself, an incontestable proof of their free agency. For had God intended to regulate all their actions by the force of destiny, nothing more would have been necessary than to subject them to the mechanical laws of matter, because these are entirely sufficient to accomplish the end. Are not the general laws of nature perfectly adequate to the government of those parts of God's creation that possess not the power of action in themselves, and can only act as they are acted upon? And if God intended that angels and men should be governed by the same necessity, would not a moral law be both useless and ridiculous?

The winds, and waves, and all the elements of nature are moved by mechanical influence: if the actions of men and angels are all directed in the same way, they need no other law, and are as incapable of moral government as a stone or a tree. And what wisdom or goodness is there in commanding or warning a creature against evil conduct, if he either has no power to do wrong or must fall into it of necessity? The absurdity of such a law is obvious to common sense, and it is truly astonishing that men should be disposed to impute such folly to the Almighty.

But it may be asked, why did not God govern all living creatures by the law of instinct, as the brute creation are governed? Could they not enjoy sufficient happiness by voluntarily following the instincts of their nature, without any responsibility, and therefore, without any danger of losing their felicity?

They might, it is true, have thus enjoyed the happiness of a brute; but not the happiness of a man, and much less that of an angel. The reason why brutes are not morally accountable is, that

they have no conception of right, or of moral obligation: to bring men and angels to this state, their knowledge must be taken from them, and they must be brought down to the ignorance of brute beasts.

I presume the happiness of all creatures, that of a beast not excepted, depends upon *knowledge* and *liberty*. Some, however, appear to imagine that beasts, birds and fishes, have no more liberty or power than a mill-wheel, or any other machine; but I know no argument to prove this conjecture, but what would equally prove that men have no power. For men have similar instincts, appetites and affections, and are under the same necessity of choosing happiness in preference to misery. Man chooses happiness in preference to misery, of necessity; and so, I presume, does every creature in existence; but the means of enjoyment are innumerable, and we have the liberty or power to use them at our option. The inferior animals have a degree of the same liberty, confined, indeed, within narrow limits, from the imperfection of their knowledge, which deprives them of spiritual and moral happiness; but although their enjoyments are almost entirely confined to sensation, yet they have a free range through the earth, and air, and water; and we cannot abridge their power, or obstruct the freedom of their choice, without, in the same proportion, diminishing their happiness.

But waving the case of beasts for the present, it is sufficient to our purpose that all men are conscious of a degree of power over their actions, and that their highest happiness arises from knowledge, and is inseparable from a voluntary choice. The exercise of virtue, or the enjoyment of moral happiness against our consent is impossible; because it implies a state of complete slavery.

If it be asked, why was not the will inclined to choose all the proper means of happiness, as necessarily as it is inclined to choose happiness as its end, in preference to misery; I think the proper answer is, that it was impossible for creatures to possess moral rectitude, and of consequence, moral happiness, without the liberty of option, or, which is the same thing, without a degree of power, which essentially implies that agency of will that can choose one thing or its contrary;—that can perform an action, or omit the performance of it—that can determine, or omit the determination.

If this be true (and that it is so, I hope to prove directly) it clearly follows that the reason why God did not hinder the introduction of moral evil, by making it *impossible* for his creatures

to sin, was because it could not be done without making it impossible for any creature to enjoy *holiness* or *moral happiness*. God left his creatures free, because *God is love*; and being love, he delights to see his creatures enjoy that sublime felicity, which the chains of destiny would have deprived them of forever.

It follows also, from the same principle, that, as the chief happiness of angels and men consisted in the voluntary exercise of their faculties, and as it was possible for those faculties to be directed wrong; it was necessary for the nature and law of God to be communicated to their understandings, both to inform them how to act, and to furnish motives to good conduct. To this end the nature and effects of good and evil were made known to them, according to their capacity of receiving this knowledge; the divine beneficence was displayed before them, inasmuch as the law was calculated to promote universal happiness, while justice guarded their liberty by all the warnings and sanctions of supreme authority.

But how is it to be determined whether the principle itself be a truth, or a mere hypothesis? My reasons for believing it a truth are derived chiefly from the moral attributes of God. Other arguments might be produced; but lest they should be thought too metaphysical, I will content myself with appealing to those sacred perfections which we all acknowledge, and which are supported by the clear evidence of reason and revelation. Why were motives offered, or warnings given to angels or men, but because it was possible for them to act wrong? And why were they made in a state, in which it was possible for them to act wrong, but because power or agency was essential to their happiness? That they were not bound to the right by necessity is a matter of fact, as both angels and men departed from their first estate by rebellion against their Creator's laws: and if we say they could have been as completely happy in a state of absolute fatality, as in that of moral liberty, it will follow that God had no regard to their felicity, in giving them the power of self determination. And if he had no regard to this, there was no benevolence in the matter, and consequently no creature ever had reason to thank his Maker for the gift of moral liberty, seeing it is of no use to men or angels, and has become the cause of general misery.

It is a little remarkable that our opponents seem unwilling to own that the creature's free agency was essential to God's glory, and to the perfect happiness of his children, and chose rather to

insist that sin was necessary to accomplish these ends! We see it is a lamentable matter of fact that moral and natural evil have entered into the creation: the question has long since been started, why did not God prevent it? Some have answered that God predestinated or determined that sin should be introduced because it was necessary for the display of his glory: and therefore "according to the council of his own will, he fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass." We answer that sin was never necessary, and God never predestinated it; and the reason why he did not make it impossible for his creatures to do wrong, was, that the liberty of option was essential to the happiness and perfection of their nature. Had he deprived them of this, he would thereby have suspended the operations of his goodness, and prevented all that sublime and angelic felicity, which results from a voluntary obedience to his commandments. This is the only conclusion that is worthy of God, or that can ever be made to accord with those perfections which are every where ascribed to him by the incontestable voice of revelation. Need we now produce particular passages to prove that God is holy, wise and good? Every one knows the bible must stand or fall with these essential truths; but if God either forced his creatures into sin, or gave them liberty for no end but to ensnare them, what holiness or justice, or hatred of sin, is herein manifested? If he gave them this power when it was not at all necessary to their happiness, it is ridiculous to say it resulted from kindness; it is equally so, to say it resulted from wisdom, if it was bestowed on them for nothing; or from truth and sincerity, if he cautioned and warned them against evil, and at the same time secretly contrived or predestinated their apostacy. We must therefore give up the divine attributes, and contradict the leading principles of revelation, or admit that God bestowed the gift of moral freedom, from the principle of loving kindness, to promote that progressive improvement and felicity, which can never result from either a mechanical or a brutal nature.

8. If then the happiness of God's creatures resulted from a voluntary exercise of their free powers, according to the principles of his divine government; and if they were influenced to good conduct by moral motives exhibited in that government; it plainly follows that the law must be maintained and displayed in all its purity, and in all its force, that happiness may be perfect and universal. Consequently any violation of it, or any departure from the just principle on which it is founded, is a direct attack upon the general welfare, and an audacious insult to its eternal Author.

Hence the odious nature and deep criminality of moral evil. It is a very dreadful evil, not merely because it has been forbidden, as if it was no evil till the prohibition made it so, but because it naturally tends to misery, and is a violation of the essential rights of God, of angels, and of men.

9. It is a mournful truth, but too notorious to be denied, that the inhabitants of our world are involved in the horrors of depravity and guilt. We drink in iniquity like water, and seem bent upon our own destruction. If sin is such a crying evil, our danger must be great; and had not divine goodness interposed in our favour, we could have no hopes of ever ascending to the regions of the blessed.

The reason why God executes vengeance upon sinners, is because it is *necessary*. It is *just* for them to be punished, because they *deserve it*; but justice is executed upon them, not merely because they deserve it, but because it is needful for the security of those creatures whom the divine attributes are engaged to defend. If we deny this, we say the execution of justice is an *unnecessary* thing, and punishments are inflicted for no other end, but because it is the good pleasure of God to inflict them; which supposes him to be actuated by the spirit of *revenge*.

If rebels pass with impunity, the whole creation are tempted at once to disbelieve the goodness, justice and holiness of their creator, and moral governor; and nothing can give them that evidence of these attributes which they ought to have, but a full manifestation of God's abhorrence of moral evil. This evidence they had before, by the divine attributes maintaining their happiness, and warning them against evil; but now that the supreme authority is insulted, some new proof must be given, which before was not necessary; because if the sinners now pass with impunity, and nothing be done to evince the creator's displeasure of their crimes, the former evidence is *contradicted*, and the creatures of God are thereby exposed to the most fatal delusions and temptations; such as are calculated to destroy the harmony of heaven, and to produce universal misery. To prevent this, the pure nature of God, and the ruinous effects of sin, must be set in a proper light, for the sake of those creatures whose nature is fitted to the influence of moral motives. For these righteous purposes, and not for the gratification of revenge, are punishments inflicted under any just government in the world: and surely the administration of Almighty God is more perfect than that of men, and is infinitely farther removed from any private passion or animosity.

10. It plainly follows from what has been said, that if sinners were not pardoned without a redeemer, it was not because there was no disposition in God to forgive them, but because he had too much regard for the general good to let particular offenders pass unpunished; unless the fatal influence of their sin could be by some other means prevented. If he had no disposition to pardon them, there was no *mercy* in his nature, and if he had, nothing hindered him from doing it, but his regard for good government and the general safety: consequently the accomplishment of these ends in redemption, was all that the nature and attributes of God ever demanded, as an atonement, propitiation, or satisfaction for sin.

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## SECTION VI.

*The same subject.*

WE come now to consider the formidable objection which deists, and some predestinarian divines will be apt to allege against us.

Be pleased to inform us, will they say, *how* God's hatred of sin could be manifested by inflicting *punishments* upon the *innocent*.

Before we give a direct answer to this objection, it may not be amiss to show how easily it may be retorted.

First: Let it be observed, that every thing in nature is surrounded with difficulties, when we attempt to discover why it is so, or how certain effects are produced. The *fact* may be plain, and may be supported by evidence which cannot be resisted; and yet the *manner* of it may remain inscrutable, or at least very inadequately comprehended by the human mind.

Consider the works of nature, and tell us how it is that he stretcheth the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing? Consider the laws of gravitation, magnetism, vegetation and dissolution, how are yonder stars and suns suspended in the heavens, and in what manner have the planets been kept in their orbits for thousands of years? How is animal life supported by various kinds of material substances, taken into the stomach, and why must there be a perpetual motion of the heart, and circulation of the blood, to keep us from dropping into the dust? How is

it, that we see by means of one member of this body, hear by means of another, and taste and smell by means of organs separate from both the others? Why is it that I cannot see with my ears, and why is my whole body susceptible of the sense of touch, while the other sensations are confined to different small parts of it? Can any one inform me why I can move my arm, and alter its motion as I please, while I have no power over my blood or heart which continually move independent of my will? or how the members of my body, and other parts of matter, are put in motion at the inconceivable influence or command of thought, which is immaterial? This is a mystery so profound, that it is acknowledged to surpass all human conceptions, even by Mr. Hume, whose testimony or opinion in this case, is of some importance, as it shows that the greatest philosophical sceptics are forced to admit the mysteries of nature while they inconsistently reject those of revelation.

“Is there any principle in all nature,” says Mr. Hume, “more mysterious than the union of soul with body; by which a supposed spiritual substance acquires such an influence over a material one that the most refined thought is able to actuate the grossest matter? Were we empowered, by a secret wish, to remove mountains, or controul the planets in their orbit; this extensive authority would not be more extraordinary, nor more beyond our comprehension.”\*

If the creation be thus full of mysteries, and if the connexion between cause and effect, or the manner of operation by which effects are produced, be inconceivable while the facts are obvious, and supported by evidence most conclusive and irresistible; why should it be thought wonderful that we cannot entirely comprehend the influence of redemption, or tell how the death of Christ produced those great effects which are ascribed to his sufferings in the christian revelation?

Secondly: as infidels are inconsistent in complaining of gospel mysteries while they themselves hold others that are parallel, so are our christian objectors in charging our system with being indefinite, while the complaint is so applicable to their own, and can be so successfully retorted.

Let us inquire, in the first place, how they will give us a clear and definite account of the connexion between our Saviour's sufferings and the “resurrection of the dead.” He said, “because I

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\* Hume's Essays, vol. 2, page 104, 105.



live ye shall live also: he is called the first fruits of them that slept: the apostles preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead: and St. Paul says, for since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead."—*John*. xiv. 19. 1 *Cór.* xv. 20, 21. *Acts*, iv. 2.

Now if they can understand the clear connexion between the death of Christ, and the resurrection of all mankind from the grave, we will wait patiently to have the matter explained; for to us it appears very difficult and hard to be understood. If men will be raised from the dead in consequence of Christ's having died for them and rose again, according to the scriptures; and if, as our opponents tell us, Christ did not die for reprobates; it plainly follows that reprobates will never rise from the dead. But our Saviour says, "all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." *John* v. 28, 29.

Let us inquire again how their system clears up the mystery of atonement, and how they explain the sufferings of Christ, as a cause of the sinner's justification. The scriptures inform us, that he died for our sins, and arose again for our justification. That he gave his life a ransom for all, and made his soul an offering for sin. That he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities: that the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed.

In this we are all agreed: but strange as it may seem, the very men who caution us against explaining away the divine mysteries, adhere to an hypothesis, unknown in the gospel, that was invented to account for the death of Christ, and to explain how the justification of sinners is accomplished by his atonement. We will suppose an objector to state his argument in these terms:

'You urge with great earnestness and assurance, that the end of Christ's death was to vindicate the divine purity in the pardon of sinners, by declaring his righteousness, or evincing his hatred against sin; but suppose all this be granted, your conclusion is not yet secure: for if Christ was innocent, as you contend, who is able to conceive how God's hatred of sin was manifested, by inflicting punishments upon the innocent? But admit our doctrine, that he became guilty and suffered the penalty as such, and it is easy to see how his hatred of sin is manifested, because he punished the sins of all his people in their surety, who voluntarily became guilty in their place.'

In answer to this, I propose to prove these three things: First: that though it were true that no man could have any conception of the manner how Christ's death made our salvation accord with the glory of God, yet we should be bound in reason to believe the fact, notwithstanding our incapacity to comprehend the manner of it.

Secondly: that the Antinomian hypothesis, far from clearing this mystery, makes it more obscure, and even involves it in contradictions.

Thirdly: that our view of the matter, though it does not explain the mystery of redemption fully, or enable the human mind to have an adequate conception of it, yet it makes the subject of atonement more intelligible than the other system, because more consistent with itself, and with the nature of God.

First: Suppose we had no conception how the death of Christ declared God's righteousness, or manifested his hatred of sin, would it be a fair conclusion, to infer that we ought to disbelieve the doctrine of redemption, until the manner of it, or the connexion between cause and effect, should be made clear? I conclude it would not, for the following reasons:

1. It is possible for us to have full evidence of a fact, or of certain effects produced by some cause, without knowing either the cause or the manner of its operation. Instance the ebbing and flowing of the tide: whether it be produced by the immediate volition of some active agent, or by the mechanical influence of some other part of the material creation, I presume remains a secret to this day: at least it remains so to thousands who are capable of knowing the fact, by the most irresistible evidence.

2. We may know both the cause and the effect, and yet have no conception of the connexion between them: witness the power of the mind over the members of the body, which Mr. Hume acknowledged to be as inconceivable a mystery, as our actions would be, "were we empowered by a secret wish, to remove mountains, or controul the planets in their orbit." While I move my hand over this paper, I am certain of the effect, that my hand does move, and equally certain that I am the cause of it, because I am conscious that it moves by the volition of my will; yet the connexion between my volition and the motion of this piece of matter, or the manner how the effect is produced, remains a secret, of which I have no conception.

3. We may know the cause, the effect and the means made use of, and yet have no conception of the manner how the means ope-

rate, or why such means are necessary to produce the effect. Witness the thousands who have been restored to health, by the influence of various kinds of medicine, who knew the agent, the means used, and the effect produced, and yet had no conception of the secret operations by which their health was restored, and were unable to tell why such particular kinds of matter were necessary to produce the effect, rather than others, or how the healing influence operated, to remove their disorders.

The creation of the world, is a mystery of this latter kind. We have full evidence of an Almighty being, as the cause: by the evidence of our senses we ascertain the existence of a material universe as the effect of his power: and by revelation we are assured the world was created by means of his word.

“God said let there be light, and there was light.”

“God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds. And upholdeth all things by the word of his power.” Heb. i. 23.

“In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made, that was made.” John i. 13.

Now will any man imagine that he can comprehend how God by his word produced the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land? And will any one do violence to his reason, and reject all the evidence we have for the cause and the effect, because the manner of his operation is incomprehensible by us? Will he deny the existence of God or the existence of the world, because he cannot understand how the world was made? As little reason has any one to disbelieve our redemption by Jesus Christ on account of his incapacity to conceive how this salvation is accomplished, or why such particular means are to be used.

The cause or agent in this work was the same that created the world; the means made use of were his assuming our nature, and submitting to suffer and die, even the death of the cross: the effect produced was, a full display of the glory of God, in the grant of pardon to penitent sinners.

For all this we have abundant evidence; and if we had no more conception how his death exhibited the evil of sin, and the purity of the divine nature, than how light came into being, when God said let there be light, our ignorance would afford no more evidence against the truth of redemption, than against the creation; and therefore we are bound to reject this infidel plea, or leap at once into atheism, seeing the objection bears equally against the

creation of the world, as against its redemption by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Secondly: The Antinomian hypothesis, far from clearing this mystery, involves the subject in darkness and contradiction.

It were easy to show, that the practice of inventing hypotheses to account for the works of God, has had the same tendency in all ages: it has never improved human knowledge, but on the contrary, has bewildered the understanding, and led to conclusions the most absurd, and inconsistent that can be imagined.

It may not be improper to mention one or two cases, and show their similarity to the present theory of our objectors.

It is impossible for us to conceive *how* God created the world out of nothing; and hence the fact has been denied, and theories have been invented to account for its existence. It has been arbitrarily taken for granted, that small particles of matter, called *atoms*, have existed eternally; that they arranged themselves together by *chance*, and that it is only by chance that this great universe continues in being.

The answer to this is the same that is to be given to other hypotheses: First, There is no manner of evidence for the principle which is taken for granted:

Secondly: The principle, if true, would not assist our conceptions, but would leave the subject as mysterious as it was before.

Thirdly: It contradicts the immediate dictates of our intelligence, "that nothing can begin to exist, or be put into motion, without a cause adequate to produce the effect, and that from the signs of power and wisdom in the effect, we may certainly know that those attributes exist in the cause which produced it."

Again: The fact is clear, that we perceive external objects by means of our senses; but the manner of it is inconceivable: hence the hypothesis has been invented, *that ideas come from external objects, through the organs of sensation, which ideas the mind immediately perceives when seated in the brain.* This has been thought to account for the fact, and to show *how* we perceive the various objects around us.

We are told that two grand axioms in Sir Isaac Newton's Philosophy were these: 1. That in accounting for any phenomenon or event in nature, "the cause we assign must be shown to exist:" and secondly, "it must be adequate to produce the effect."

Now I think Dr. Reid has made it very clear, 1. That no evidence has been produced, that there are ideas in the brain:

Secondly: That such ideas, suppose their existence to be ad-

mitted, do not account for our perception of external objects, or enable us to understand the manner of it any better than we do without them: and thirdly: That the theory contradicts common sense, and led bishop Berkley and Mr. Hume by regular and consequential reasoning, to disprove and disbelieve the existence of a material world.\*

The atonement made by our Redeemer, like all the other works of God, has something in it, surpassing our limited conceptions.

The fact is clearly revealed, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners:" we are fully informed who the Author of our salvation is, and also concerning the *means* he made use of, and the ultimate *end* of his sufferings; but *how* the means he uses produce the effect, or accomplish the end intended, is not so easily understood. Here we must be content with a partial conception, aided by metaphors and similitudes, without giving them a literal application; we must be content in a state of ignorance, where God has not given us the means of knowledge, lest we run into dangerous errors, which are far worse than ignorance.

But alas! the professors of Christianity have followed the example of the scholastic philosophers, and the effect has been the same. They have formed an hypothesis, to explain how the death of Christ made atonement for the sin of man, which instead of making the matter more clear, has involved it in tenfold obscurity, and led thousands to attribute the principles of moral evil to the Almighty.

The hypothesis is, That Christ by imputation, became guilty; and that God punished him as a guilty being, who, having assumed the obligation of sinners, stood obnoxious to the whole penalty of justice in their place.

Though this hypothesis, like most others, at first view, has some appearance of plausibility, yet I think it is not difficult to make appear, (1.) that we have no evidence that the principle is true: (2.) if it were proved, it would still leave the subject of atonement as inconceivable as it was before: and (3.) that it is opposed to the clearest evidence, and involves the doctrine of redemption in obvious and self-evident contradictions.

1. What evidence have we that the Lord Jesus Christ became guilty, and stood obnoxious, in law and justice, to penal sufferings?

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\* See his *Essays on the Intellectual Powers*, Essay II. American edition, vol. 1. chap. xiv. page 202.

The scriptures assure us "that he was without sin: that he was manifested to take away our sins, and in him is no sin: and that he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." Heb. iv. 15. 1 John, iii. 5. 1 Peter, ii. 22.

The prophet represents him as dying innocent, as a lamb that is led to the slaughter. He himself looked round upon the Jews, and from the consciousness of heavenly integrity said, "which of you convinceth me of sin." Pilate's wife, being warned in a dream, sent unto him, saying, "have thou nothing to do with that just man." And Pilate washed his hands, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person, see ye to it." Matt. xxvii. 19, 24.

Accordingly the apostles upbraided the Jews with their wickedness, in crucifying the innocent redeemer, and said, "ye denied the holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses." Acts. iii. 14, 15.

It is acknowledged on all sides, that our Saviour was innocent before he came to redeem fallen men.

Now if he voluntarily departed from a state of innocence to a state of guilt, he brought this guilt upon himself by an act which depended entirely upon his own will: and yet we believe the thing he did was perfectly right and good: then it is right and good for an innocent person voluntarily to do that which brings him into a state of guilt.

If it be said, Christ was not really guilty, but the guilt of others was imputed to him, I must take the liberty to ask a few plain questions.

Did Christ impute the guilt of others to himself? If he did, are we to understand by it, that he chose to have their guilt transferred to himself? If so, did his choosing it really make him guilty or not? If it did not, he really remained innocent, and they remained guilty as before; if it did, I would ask again, whether his thus becoming guilty of their crimes rendered them innocent or not? If they were rendered innocent they were from that moment raised above the want of pardon as effectually as innocent Adam was before the fall: but if the Saviour became guilty, and yet they remain equally so as before, then we say justice was satisfied by having additional guilt produced: inasmuch as Christ brought new guilt into the creation, without diminishing the old. There is no way to avoid this conclusion but by saying Christ took part of their guilt, and left the remainder on themselves: and if so, they still need pardon for what remains, because Christ only ap-

peased the divine vengeance, for the proportion of guilt which he received. Again:

If Christ did not choose to become really guilty, in what sense did he impute guilt to himself? If he *believed* he was guilty, when he was not, he deceived himself, and if he *professed* to be so, when he was not, he deceived others: if then he was not really guilty, did not believe himself guilty, nor profess to be so, in what way can it be imagined that he imputed sin to himself?

And if the Father accounted him guilty, when he was innocent, was not this imputation contrary to truth? Or does a false charge presented against an innocent person really make him guilty?

If it be said, it is blasphemous to ask these questions, or to answer them; and that it is enough for us to know that Christ consented to become guilty, because it was necessary to the redemption of his people; I must reply, that this is nothing more than taking the hypothesis for granted. What proof is there that Christ ever *consented* to become guilty, or that his becoming so was necessary to our redemption?

We have sufficient evidence, indeed, that he consented to take upon himself the form of a servant, and to die, the just for the unjust: we have sufficient evidence likewise that all this was necessary to our redemption: but this is so far from supposing him guilty, that it plainly supposes the contrary, unless we choose to confound the distinction between the just and the unjust.

2. The theory of our opponents, if admitted, would not account for the necessity of atonement, or explain the manner of it, any better than we understand it without such assistance.

They say it is hard to conceive how the sufferings of an innocent person can prove God's opposition to sin. We reply, it is equally hard to conceive how his hatred against sin is manifested by imputing guilt to an innocent person. The latter case affords no aid to our conceptions; for surely if it is difficult to conceive why the innocent should suffer, it does not mend the matter to charge the innocent with being guilty when he is not so, and thus add a false accusation to his other sufferings.

3. The hypothesis, far from clearing the mystery, involves the subject in darkness and contradiction.

Though we are unable to conceive adequately of the atonement, in our present state of being, yet we clearly conceive that it accords perfectly with every righteous principle for the innocent to suffer, when the pain is voluntarily endured from the dictate of benevolence. And as we know the greatest works of benevolence



performed in this world, cost the agent very considerable sufferings, of one kind or another, why should it be thought incredible that the redemption of sinners, an act of benevolence that transported the heavenly hosts, should cost its gracious Author an uncommon degree of misery?

But the sentiment we oppose can never be reconciled with righteousness; for though it is right for an innocent being to suffer through voluntary kindness, yet to charge an innocent person with guilt, and then to punish him as a criminal, is a plain violation of truth and justice. The imputation is false, and the innocent person cannot be punished as a criminal under sentence from such a charge, without unjustly violating his right both to the character and consequences of innocence. Thus the contradiction follows, that justice is satisfied by the violation of justice.

Thirdly: our view, though it does not furnish us with a full and adequate conception of atonement, is nevertheless more definite and intelligible than the opposite.

1. Our Saviour, by assuming human nature, (sin excepted) and submitting to suffer the agonies of the cross in that nature, on account of sin, and as an expedient through which sinners were to apply for mercy, plainly proved, that though God is a gracious Being, and we are his offspring, yet he is so far from being moved by a partial fondness to tolerate our iniquities, that if we or any other creatures were as near to him, as the humanity was united to God in Jesus Christ, he would not depart from the principles of his government to deliver us from punishment. This was plainly signified by our Saviour's death, which was therefore endured as a proof of the purity of the divine nature. God hereby proved before all worlds that though he was disposed to receive human sinners to favour after their rebellion, yet this was so far from arising from a connivance at iniquity, or from a fondness for them to the neglect of other creatures, that if human nature was so near to him as to be, as it were, a part of himself, it should not be delivered from punishment through partiality, or through a neglect of just and impartial government.

2. He displayed the destructive nature and demerit of sin, by exhibiting the dreadful effects of it in his own body on the cross. We may safely admit that he voluntarily endured the penal consequences of sin in a considerable degree, to show what awful miseries are incurred by disobedience; but never will we admit, I hope, that he consented to deserve this misery, or to take any part of our guilt upon himself.

His groans, and "strong cries and tears" on Calvary, spoke a language which may have been understood far better by angels than by men; and demonstrated that God is a Being of such unsullied holiness, and of such abhorrence to moral evil, that the direful consequences of it shall be held up by his beloved Son, between heaven and earth, as the only medium through which forgiveness shall be granted.

Let all creatures in the universe look to the cross of Jesus, and learn that the pure laws of Almighty God are not to be broken with impunity: no mercy can be shown, but through the medium of "God manifested in the flesh, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;" and what creature will presume that God will sacrifice himself at every turn, or whenever any part of his subjects shall choose to enter upon a course of rebellion? This glorious expedient to save sinners, shows such love and condescension on the one hand, and such a jealousy for the security of good government on the other, that it appears calculated to astonish heaven, and cause every thinking man upon earth to rejoice with trembling. We have cause to rejoice that our Redeemer has opened the way to heaven before us by his own blood; and to tremble, lest we be found among the number who neglect so great salvation, and for whom "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries."

3. Our gracious Creator, by appointing the death of Christ as the only medium of access; by demanding suitable humility and submission on the part of the sinner; and by refusing to grant pardon to those under the gospel who refuse to avail themselves of the sacrifice of Christ as the foundation of their hopes, and to implore mercy through his merit and intercession; has displayed his divine authority and unchangeable purpose to hold the principles of moral government, and make every rational creature submit to them, or feel the consequences of disobedience.

Thus he gives incontestable evidence of his regard for righteousness; whereas, had Christ by his death discharged all claims of justice against the sinner; God would have proved in the face of heaven that redemption was designed to unnerve the principles of his government, and to raise ransomed sinners above all obligations of law, during the whole of their probation. By establishing a plan of redemption, which should give them a legal indulgence in their iniquities, he would demonstrate his want of holiness, and if he were to demand and execute the penalty twice over

first on their surety, and then on themselves, he would thereby prove his deficiency in equity and moral justice.

Hence it appears, that the hypothesis invented to account for redemption, far from assisting our views of God's hatred against sin, represents him as devising an expedient which brings him into an inextricable dilemma: either to raise his creatures above all law, by granting them indulgences in sin, or to exhibit a proof of injustice by inflicting the same penalty twice over.

4. As the death of Jesus Christ, proved the great extent of God's benevolence, and at the same time evinced his love of righteousness and hatred of sin;—as it maintained the divine authority, and the sinners obligation to his law, and thereby exhibited the equity and impartiality of his supreme and holy administration;—the moral character of God was fully manifested, and his attributes harmoniously exercised in the plan of saving sinners through a Redeemer.

Though the grant of pardon to rebels was a new act, which his creatures had never before witnessed, yet he makes it manifest to them that he has adopted no new principle of action; that no change has taken place in his nature, but that the pardon of sinners through a Redeemer flows from the same attributes which were before made known, and by which his creatures had been governed from the beginning. Hence the obedient part of the creation are guarded against delusion, and their welfare is secured, because there is nothing in this plan of saving sinners that is calculated to weaken their confidence in God or his government; but on the contrary, his attributes are exhibited more extensively than before.

From what has been said, I must take the liberty to draw two general conclusions.

1. According to our view of atonement, the redemption of sinners by our Lord Jesus Christ flowed from all the divine attributes in harmony: it was done for the sake of showing mercy to the guilty and the miserable, which was a display of benevolence: it was done for the sake of guarding his creatures from falling into error concerning his nature, or his act of administration in restoring sinners, which was a display of his moral attribute of truth: it was done for the sake of guarding the native happiness of his creatures, and of showing that no partial fondness had any influence to diminish his sacred regard to universal right, which clearly manifested his justice.

2. The theory of our opponents, supposes redemption to flow from some principle in the Deity, which contradicts every known attribute of his nature: (1.) It supposes him to have no disposition to show favour to the fallen, but absolutely to execute full vengeance for every crime, which contradicts his mercy or benevolence: (2) It supposes him to impute guilt to the innocent Redeemer when he is not guilty, which must be a false charge, and therefore his truth is contradicted: (3.) It supposes him to have arrested the Redeemer upon this false charge, and to have legally punished him as a criminal, and thereby to have violated his right to the character and consequences of innocence, which plainly contradicts his justice.

And after all this is done, he is supposed either to raise sinners above all obligations to his law, or else to impose the same obligation over again that has been to all intents and purposes discharged, by the legal condemnation and execution of the surety in the sinner's place.

What a character, to be displayed to the view of the universe! It exhibits a scene well calculated to inspire all intelligent creatures with gloomy apprehensions, that God is about to abandon every moral principle of his nature, and to act upon those of falsehood, injustice and arbitrary malevolence. And all this is to be done, it seems, to satisfy divine justice!

I pray God to deliver all men from such dangerous and ruinous delusions, and enable them rightly to contemplate the immutable perfections of his nature, as they were exhibited by him *who died, the just for the unjust*, and who "has entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."

As to the objection, that Christ died upon an uncertainty, without being assured of a single soul of Adam's race, the answer is easy:

The salvation of all who die in infancy is secured through the Lord Jesus Christ, and the way is opened for all who live to years of maturity. Will any one say the merit of our Saviour's work is really diminished by the numbers who neglect this great salvation? Does it depend upon them, or their conduct, whether the plan of redemption be complete or not? If so, the Saviour must secure their absolute salvation, so as to make their perdition impossible, in order to keep them from destroying his own merit! Their will must be controlled by an irresistible power, lest they should choose to continue in sin, and thus their Redeemer would be robbed of his glory!

The truth is, that as we advance in this controversy, it appears more and more evident to every reflecting mind, that the Antinomian scheme must be received in all its parts, or must be demolished from the foundation. The single point of legal atonement, supports the whole system of predestinarian orthodoxy, and one or other of these three things must be our inevitable portion: either (1.) to receive the entire system of Antinomianism, or (2.) to contradict ourselves, or (3.) to disprove and abandon the notion of Christ's death having legally discharged all penalties in behalf of sinners, which is the chief corner stone of the ("fulsome") building.

Had it been our Saviour's purpose to save mankind by force, or any particular part of them, he doubtless had power sufficient to accomplish his design, without dying on the cross; and had such a compulsive system been consistent with the moral attributes of God, I have no doubt but he would have done so: he would have changed every man from sin to holiness, or rather, from bad propensities to good ones, by an absolute and irresistible influence; but the actions of a person thus compelled could have no relation to morality, and therefore God's moral perfections demanded that they should be saved, if at all, in a way that should not destroy their agency: for this reason our Saviour's atonement had relation to the moral attributes alone, and therefore his plan must be so laid as only to influence sinners by motives, and leave them to the liberty of choice.

The merits of Christ were never intended to secure the salvation of any definite number of men, as the predestinarians do vainly talk; but to open the way to heaven, and make the throne of grace accessible to all mankind.

"By whom also we have access into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Rom. v. 2.

"And an highway shall be there, and it shall be called the way of holiness." Isa. xxxv. 8.

"Jesus saith unto him, *I am the way*, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." John xiv. 6.

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh; let us draw near with a true heart," &c. Heb. x. 19, 20.

Thus it appears the blood of Christ was intended to open a way through the wilderness of sin where there was no way, that sinners might have access to the throne of grace.

This work is accomplished: the way is open: we are under great obligations to God our Saviour for this invaluable privilege: and surely our refusing to walk in the way, does not diminish the merit which opened it, and Christ is under no necessity of forcing any man to heaven, for fear of losing his merit, or the glory of his performances. We might as well say God was under the necessity of forcing all men and angels to continue upright, for fear of losing his merit and glory in their creation.

## SECTION VII.

*The same subject.*

OUR principle of atonement not only is more definite and intelligible than that of our opponents; but also accords better with the providence and the works of God.

1. It agrees better with the state of man in the present world. If Christ died to discharge every penalty of justice in behalf of the human race, whence is it that the wrath of God still abideth on all impenitent sinners, and that they are condemned already, by the very sentence that was executed on their surety? All this is darkness and confusion upon the Antinomian scheme; but upon our plan the incongruity at once disappears. Because if Christ died to procure a day of grace for us: if we are to stand our trial here for a future state of reward or punishment, the calamities of the present world are adapted to our condition, and accord perfectly with the wise and benevolent designs of providence.

2. It agrees better with the simplicity of the gospel. We learn from the scriptures, that *Christ died for our sins*, and yet those who repent not shall die for their own sins, and *every man shall bear his own burden*. That *he bare our sins in his own body on the tree*; and yet *the soul that sinneth it shall die*, and God, *without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work*. These are irreconcilable contradictions upon the plan of legal atonement which we oppose; but nothing can be plainer or more consistent, if it be true that Christ died to give us the privilege of obtaining pardon, or in other words, that the redemption through his blood consists in the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; and

not in a legal exoneration from the curse of the law, upon principles of eternal justice. Our doctrine makes the day of grace and the day of judgment harmonize in the divine economy. It reconciles the different offices of the Lord Jesus, as the Saviour and the Judge of human kind. It exalts the merits of Christ, and yet maintains the accountability of man; and shows that they are perfectly consistent with each other. If the sinner repent not, it is just for him to be condemned: and if he repent and believe the gospel, it is just for him to be forgiven, because universal right has been secured by a display of the divine attributes in Jesus Christ.

What stronger evidence could be given of God's love to his creatures on the one hand, and his regard for holiness and justice on the other, than for his only begotten son to assume our nature, lead a life of spotless purity among the disaffected part of his creatures, submit to the dreadful effects of moral evil, and hang bleeding between earth and heaven, a spectacle to angels and to men? The great design of God in this astonishing event, was to exhibit a grand and awful argument or proof to all worlds, that sin is such a dreadful evil, so destructive in itself, and so hateful to the pure nature of Deity, that no sinner can be forgiven, however penitent he may be, but through the intercession of that Redeemer, who exhibited the direful effects of sin, in his own bleeding body on the tree. He that was rich in glory, became poor: the son of God, whose right hand formed the stars of heaven, takes upon himself the form of a servant, and becomes obedient unto death, even the death of the cross! Behold him, ye heavens! and hear him groan his last! his agonizing spirit as it were abandoned by earth and heaven, cries out in the bleeding anguish of distress, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me! His sweat became as great drops of blood falling to the ground; while his soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death!" With all the innocence and purity of heaven in his nature, he is wounded, and bruised, and mangled with thorns and nails; while a burden of grief intolerable, presses down his spirit. Sin, the original cause of all misery, is held in such unchangeable detestation by the Creator, that to discourage the practice of it, and to exhibit its dreadful horrors, the Lord of Glory expires under that misery which is its native production.

This is the great proof of God's unchangeable perfections: and the very end for which the Redeemer thus suffered, was, "To declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time,



his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”

The Almighty gave proof of his holy attributes, *before sin entered into the creation*, by those *rewards*, which evinced his approbation of righteousness; and by those *threatenings* or *penalties* annexed to his laws, which declared his abhorrence of moral evil. But after sin is entered into the world, what must be done? Can angels do any thing to justify the government? No. If a thousand of them were sacrificed for man, this would be so far from proving God’s regard for holiness and justice, that it would be a demonstration of injustice and partiality. No being less than God can do any thing for the redemption and salvation of fallen creatures. Divine mercy pities fallen men, and is disposed to pardon all that will submit to proper government, whereby they may be qualified to become members of the peaceful society of heaven; but as an evidence to the whole creation, that this pardon does not result from any disposition to connive at a spirit of rebellion, God takes upon himself the mortal nature of man; in that nature he exhibits a shining example of the most pure and heavenly virtue; in that nature he opposes sin in all its secret windings in the heart and life of man; and in that nature he takes upon himself the burden of our sins, not by becoming guilty, but by submitting to bear the excruciating *effects of sin, in his own body on the tree*. Every groan he utters, cries aloud to earth and heaven: *behold what manner of love the father hath bestowed upon man*: Behold the horrid nature and tormenting influence of moral evil! Behold the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the God of all the armies of heaven, thus concealed in humanity, and bleeding on the cross! *Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world!*

Behold these wounds and bruises, sweat, and blood and tears: hear those strong cries, and witness those dying agonies, as a *demonstration of God’s righteousness*—and see all nature corroborate the amazing argument! The veil of the temple is rent from the top to the bottom; the mountains tremble, as if shaken from their foundation; the graves are opened; the sun blushes as in sackcloth, and hides his shining face in darkness; while the very angels, it may be, suspend their song; and all the heavenly regions are brought to pause in holy and astonished silence, while God breaks down the dreadful barrier; condemns sin to eternal infamy, and opens the gates of mercy to mankind!

This was a proof of the divine goodness and holiness, which none but God could give: for if Christ was a mere creature, he was

under an obligation of perpetual obedience to the law for himself: if he voluntarily left his own duty, which the law required, to go and do that which *it did not* require of him, it was a proof of *disobedience* to God's government: if he was a sinner, he deserved what came upon him: if he was an innocent and holy creature, and if God punished him as a criminal, it would prove nothing but injustice and partiality. But if the eternal God himself, who was under no obligation to the law given to creatures, voluntarily came under it that he himself might redeem them that were under the law, his regards for righteousness are gloriously displayed, as well as his compassion for miserable offenders.

This argument is urged with peculiar force and propriety, by Mr. Joseph Benson, who revised and finished Mr. Fletcher's "Vindication of Christ's Divinity, inscribed to Dr. Priestley."

"According to the apostle," says he, "one principal end of the death of Christ was to demonstrate God's righteousness—that is, the purity of his nature, implying his infinite hatred to sin, the authority of his law, which denounces vengeance against the sinner, and the equity of his government,—or, in one word, his justice. 'Justified freely says he by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth a propitiation, through faith in his blood, for a demonstration of his righteousness, by or on account of the remission of past sins, through the forbearance of God, for a demonstration I say of his righteousness in this present time, that he might be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.' But surely, if satisfaction can be made for the injury done to the glory of God by all the sins of all mankind, and their salvation from eternal destruction into everlasting life and happiness, can be rendered consistent with the divine attributes in consequence of their repentance upon such easy terms as the giving up of one mere man to temporal death for two or three days;—whatever inference the intelligent creation of God may draw from hence in favour of his clemency, they can draw none in favour of his righteousness or justice: but on the contrary, they will find their ideas of it contracted; and will be inclined to suppose, both that *sin is no very great evil*, and that God is *not much displeased with it*; inasmuch as he *forgives* the complicated and aggravated guilt of so many myriads of sinners, merely because one mere man, like themselves, dies for them. Surely to talk of God's righteousness being demonstrated by such a scheme as this,—that he might be and appears to be just, while he is the merciful justifier of him that believeth in Jesus, would be highly absurd and ridiculous."—*Rational Vindication*, vol. 1, page 419.

As this argument of Mr. Benson not only supports the divinity of our Saviour, but proves that the end of his suffering was to demonstrate the equity of God's government, by displaying the great evil of sin, and the Almighty's displeasure against it, his conclusion stands upon the very principle defended in these pages, and therefore the above quotation is another proof of the respectable authority and antiquity of this doctrine, and that it is not a novelty, never before heard of in the christian world.

3. Our view of redemption is better calculated than the opposite to influence the minds of angels or men, and to reconcile all things in Christ, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven.

If the Lord Jesus died, not to give man a right to demand his liberty, but to open a way of salvation, to bring him under a gracious government, or covenant of mercy, and thus to introduce men into the society of angels, not by constituting them innocent with Antinomian imputations, but by purifying them unto himself, a peculiar people, zealous of good works:—how does the wisdom and goodness of this economy shine forth and influence the very angels to rejoice, and *give glory to God in the highest!* Jesus displays the glory of God before them, and secures the influence of the divine government: through his name sinners are pardoned and saved, and not till his grace has given them a moral fitness for that salvation; therefore the interests of heaven and earth completely centre in the Lord Jesus Christ, and angels rejoice at the salvation of sinners, and gladly own them as their brethren.

“In this our first period of existence,” says Dr. Beattie, “our eye cannot penetrate beyond the present scene, and the human race appears one great and separate community: but with other worlds, and other communities, we probably may, and every argument for the truth of our religion gives us reason to think, we shall be connected hereafter. And if, by our behaviour, we may, even while here, as our Lord positively affirms, heighten, in some degree, the felicity of angels, our salvation may hereafter be a matter of importance, not to us only, but to many other orders of immortal beings. They, it is true, will not suffer for our guilt, nor be rewarded for our obedience. But it is not absurd to imagine, that our fall and recovery may be useful to them as an example; and, that the Divine grace manifested in our redemption may raise their adoration and gratitude into higher raptures, and quicken their ardour to inquire, with ever new delight, into the dispensations of infinite wisdom. This is not mere conjecture. It derives plausibility from

many analogies in nature, as well as from Holy Writ, which represents the mystery of our redemption as an object of curiosity to superior beings, and our repentance as an occasion of their joy."—*Beattie's evidences, page 133.*

This subject is father illustrated by Dr. Porteus, late bishop of London.

"It is, I believe, generally taken for granted," says he, "that it was for the human race alone, that Christ suffered and died; and we are then asked, with an air of triumph, whether it be conceivable, or in any degree credible, that the eternal Son of God should submit to so much indignity and so much misery for the fallen, the wicked, the wretched inhabitants of this small globe of earth, which is as a grain of sand to a mountain, a mere speck in the universe, when compared with that immensity of worlds, which the sagacity of a great modern astronomer has discovered in the boundless regions of space.

"But on what ground is it concluded, that the benefits of Christ's death extend no farther than to ourselves? As well might we suppose, that the sun was placed in the firmament merely to illuminate and warm this earth that we inhabit. To the vulgar and the illiterate this actually appears to be the case. But philosophy teaches us better things. It enlarges our contracted views of divine beneficence, and brings us acquainted with other planets and other worlds, which share with us the cheering influence and the vivifying warmth of that glorious luminary. Is it not then a fair analogy to conclude, that the great 'spiritual light of the world,' the fountain of life, and health, and joy to the soul, does not scatter his blessings over the creation with a sparing hand, and that the Sun of Righteousness rises with healing in his wings to other orders of beings besides ourselves? Nor does this conclusion rest on analogy alone. It is evident from scripture itself, that we are by no means the only creatures in the universe interested in the sacrifice of our Redeemer. We are expressly told, that as by him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible; and by him all things consist: so by him also was God pleased (having made peace through the blood of his cross) to reconcile all things unto himself, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one, 'all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are in earth, even in him.'"

\* Col. i. 16, 20. Eph. i. 10.

“From intimations such as these, it is highly probable, that in the great work of redemption as well as of creation, therē is a vast stupendous plan of wisdom, of which we cannot at present so much as conceive the whole compass and extent. And if we could assist and improve the mental as we can the corporeal sight; if we could magnify and bring nearer to us by the help of instruments, the great component parts of the spiritual, as we do the vast bodies of the natural world; there can be no doubt, that the resemblance and analogy would hold between them in this as it does in many other well-known instances; and that a scene of wonders would burst in upon us from the one, at least equal, if not superior, to those which the united powers of astronomy and of optics disclose to us in the other.

“If this train of reasoning be just; if the redemption wrought by Christ extended to other worlds; if its virtues penetrate even into heaven itself; if it gather together all things in Christ; who will then say, that the dignity of the agent was disproportioned to the magnitude of the work; and that it was not a scene sufficiently splendid for the Son of God himself to appear upon, and to display the riches of his love, not only to the race of man, but to many other orders of intelligent beings.” *Porteus's Sermons, page 274, 275.*

The above sentiments may appear alarming to those who may be disposed to limit the Holy One of Israel; but as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy towards his creatures: “my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, saith the Lord.” As the sentiment of those respectable authors accords with the perfections of God, the analogy of nature, and the testimony of revelation, we are surely warranted in yielding to their conclusion, so far at least, as to believe that all God’s upright creatures receive advantage by the display of his glory in the plan of redemption by our Lord Jesus Christ. Are they not interested in the divine attributes as well as man? And if redemption displayed those attributes beyond every thing that has appeared since the creation, how can it be imagined that the benefit of this wonderful event should be confined alone to us and our children? Are the angels of heaven indifferent spectators? Or are their interests closely connected with ours in that common Saviour who came to reconcile all things unto himself?

Whether the following scriptures do not establish this doctrine, I leave the reader to judge:

“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace, having made

known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself: [namely] that in the dispensation of the fullness of times [when all the times and dispensations of his grace and providence shall be full or completed] he might gather together in *one*. all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are in earth, even in him. Eph. i. 7, 9, 10. In whom we have redemption through his blood, [and what has that redemption accomplished] even the forgiveness of sins, in his name who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature; for by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and *for* him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist; and he is the head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence: for it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell: and (having made peace through the blood of his cross) by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven. Col. i. 14, 15, &c. Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named. Eph. iii. 15.

O for this love let rocks and hills,  
 Their lasting silence break;  
 And all harmonious human tongues,  
 The Saviour's praises speak.

Angels, assist our mighty joys,  
 Strike all your harps of gold;  
 But when you raise your highest notes,  
 His love can ne'er be told.

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### SECTION VIII.

*The two systems of redemption, tested by the native consequences which flow from them.*

As no doctrine, founded in truth, will be discredited by examination, or be put out of countenance by an exposure of its genuine consequences; we desire that our views of atonement may be

scrutinized, and traced in all their native tendency: not doubting the more clearly truth is seen, the more conviction it will carry to every candid mind. I purpose, in this section, to exhibit some other effects of the two opposing systems, that we may judge of them by their fruits.

1. In what a consistent, and soul-cheering light does our plan represent that Eternal Being, who is love in the abstract, and of whose goodness there is no end! It represents him as exercising his *power*, and *wisdom*, and *justice*, in perpetual subserviency to his pure and everlasting kindness. Why did he lay down a plan of salvation, by a *demonstration of his righteousness* through a Redeemer? That everlasting felicity might flow to mortal men. Why does he determine that justice and holiness shall be displayed and satisfied by the punishment of obdurate and incorrigible sinners? That the principles of moral order may not be deranged or interrupted, through which the benignity of God supports the unceasing happiness of heaven. Why does he govern his children by moral motives, and not by a compulsive or irresistible influence? That they may be assimilated into the Divine nature, and enjoy that ineffable tranquillity which is inseparable from a voluntary choice. Why does he give some of his servants one talent, some two, and others five? That his manifold wisdom may be displayed, a pleasing variety be maintained through the spiritual as well as the natural world, that all his children, the constitution of whose nature is such, that few sources of delight are more reviving to them than *variety*, may thus behold his wonderful works, and exercise their different gifts for the mutual benefit of all. Here is no reprobation or free-wrath; no partial or humorous fondness for one to the neglect of another; no double dealing, dissimulation or hypocrisy; the parts all taken together exhibit one general scheme of benevolence, transporting to an intelligent nature, and every way worthy of God.

Dr. Clarke, speaking of the Supreme Being, says, "a general definition of this Great First Cause, as far as human words dare attempt one, may be thus given. The eternal, independent, and self-existent Being: the Being whose purposes and actions spring from himself, without foreign motive or influence: He who is absolute in dominion: the most pure, most simple, most spiritual of all essences: infinitely benevolent, beneficent, true and holy: the cause of all being, the upholder of all things: infinitely happy, because infinitely good; and eternally self-sufficient, needing nothing that he has made. Illimitable in his immensity, inconceivable,



ble in his mode of existence, and indescribable in his essence: known fully only to himself, because an infinite mind can only be comprehended by itself. In a word, a Being who, from his infinite wisdom, cannot err or be deceived; and who, from his infinite goodness, can do nothing but what is eternally just, right, and kind." Comment on the first of Genesis.

In the mouth of those three witnesses, Mr. Wesley, Dr. Clarke, and the apostle John, let the truth be established, that *God is love*: or, in other words, that goodness is the leading principle of his conduct towards his creatures, from the beginning of the creation to eternity, and that no other attribute of his nature ever did, or ever will, contradict for a moment, that glorious and amiable perfection which is the fountain of all happiness, and without which, our Creator would be an object of terror and dismay, and would have nothing attracting in his nature. Power and wisdom have no charms but what they derive from benevolence: remove them from under its influence, and they are objects of indifference, or of disgust and detestation. The Devil possesses both wisdom and power; yet he is an object of our just abhorrence, for this reason only, that his faculties are no longer directed by love and kindness, but by injustice and malevolence.

"Remove goodness from all the other divine attributes," says Dr. Brown, "and suppose the Supreme Being unconcerned for the happiness of his creation, and say, whether his nature would then appear as amiable, adorable, and transcendently excellent, as it now appears to every reflecting mind. And if goodness constitute the supreme glory of the divine nature, that which gives to every other perfection its true beauty and light, and completes the real character of Deity; is it possible that any human excellence or advantage should compensate for the absence of this primary virtue?" Brown's "Natural Equality of Men," page 162.

2. As our doctrine glorifies God, on the one hand, so, on the other, it opposes every thing that is contrary to his nature. Nothing can be more discouraging to sin of every description: for it represents sin as the parent or first cause of all misery;—as waging war against the nature of God;—as being unjust, unreasonable, inexpressibly detestable;—and as assaulting the peace and happiness of the whole intelligent creation. If the Lord of Glory came down from heaven to restore our lapsed powers; if he offered himself without spot to God, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, for our redemption; and if we continually resist all the influences of his grace, multiply our crimes, and conti-

nue to injure and ruin our moral faculties till our probation is over—what can we expect but sudden destruction, seeing there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries? If we reject the offers of pardon, and harden our hearts to the last, as sure as God is eternally good, just and holy, we shall be banished from his presence and the presence of his holy angels, into the pit of destruction, with the fallen spirits who have obstinately prepared themselves for those regions of confusion and despair, by treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

3. If all the divine perfections, the principles of God's moral government, and the common interests of the heavenly regions, stood jointly opposed to man's salvation, till they were reconciled to it in Jesus Christ;—what can be imagined more adapted to the wants of men than our doctrine, or better calculated to influence them, with all humility of mind, to depend upon Christ for salvation? If they expect or endeavour to attain it any other way, than this which is procured by his meritorious death and intercession, they might as well undertake to demolish the throne of God, or to change his immutable nature. It is evident that Christ, with us, is all in all: we are dependent on him for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Our Saviour has died for us; but it is not to give us a legal discharge, and put the government out of his own hands; he still keeps us in a state of proper dependence, and we must approach in his name, as humble suppliants, for pardon, and for all things needful for life and godliness.

Whereas the opposite system encourages lawless presumption, by assuring the elect they are such eternal favourites of God, that his decree secures their salvation as absolutely as the pillars of heaven are secured. Their sins can never alter the decree; therefore they may rest safe and satisfied in the midst of their iniquities. But he whose name has been called Jesus, shall save his people *from* their sins: consequently he who trusts to be saved *in* his sins, is not depending upon Christ for salvation. As the plan of our Redeemer is to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works;—as this is his method of saving sinners,—it is ridiculous for any man to look for salvation some other way, and call this depending upon Christ.

And if they say the unchangeable decree of God secures their sanctification as absolutely as their glorification, this alters not the matter: for behold an elect sinner indulging his evil nature

with presumptuous unconcern: while Christ and the gospel are calling him to repentance and amendment, with assurances of affording him every necessary aid, he replies, and very consistently upon the predestinarian hypothesis, that the decree of God is unalterably fixed, and the precise time of its operation; therefore when the time comes, he will be drawn out of his sins as sure as God is omnipotent: as he does not feel this irresistible operation at present, he waits patiently and rests very securely, assuredly gathering that the day of power will approach in due season, and destroy his sins by as absolute an influence as was felt by the Egyptian host when they were overwhelmed in the mighty waters. Now who does not perceive that this man is depending, not upon Christ, who says, now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation; but upon the original act of predestination. The decree is his dependence; and if it should fail him, or prove to be an Antinomian chimera, he will fall as "a foolish man who built his house upon the sand: but whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, (that is, dependeth upon me for salvation,) I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house: and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock." Matt. vii. 24.

Here it will be objected, that Arminians are the men who are deficient in a proper trust upon the Saviour, because they do not expect him to draw them to heaven by a force which cannot be resisted. The notion that final salvation or damnation will turn in any degree upon the creature's agency, has been thought to rise from the natural pride of man's heart, and that a christian cannot be truly humble till he is brought to believe that it is impossible for him to take a single step towards heaven, but as he is impelled by an irresistible power. While governed by the Arminian belief, he depends, in part at least, upon himself; whereas a truly humble christian depends solely upon Christ to do every thing that is necessary to his salvation. Answer:

1. This objection supposes that humility is inseparable from the belief, that we are destitute of agency, or that our will is controlled irresistibly: for if humility may exist separate from that belief, it is not essential to humility, and of course an Arminian may be truly humble with the full belief that there is something for him to do which he may neglect, and the neglect of which will forfeit his salvation. It also follows, if such a belief and a spirit of humility be not essentially connected together, that a Calvin-

ist may be as proud with his belief, as if he believed the Arminian doctrine. And if a man can be truly humble, and repose a true confidence in his Saviour, without that belief, he does not need it to produce those effects, because they are produced without it, and entirely independent of its mighty influence.

But if it be affirmed, that the predestinarian faith and christian humility are inseparable from each other, these consequences will follow: First, that all sinners, who can but persuade themselves that salvation depends not at all upon their doings, but that Christ must do all for them, and do it irresistibly, are thereby brought into a state of true christian humility, and gospel confidence in their Saviour. Secondly, that the angels who sinned, and Adam in Paradise, were destitute of true humility and a right dependence on God, unless they believed their standing depended not upon any action of their own, and that every thing necessary to their perseverance in righteousness would be produced by the irresistible operations of omnipotence.

If they believed this, their belief was either true or false; if it was true, then their apostacy did not result from the neglect of any thing depending upon their own power, but from some voluntary act of their Creator; if it was *not true*, and yet they must believe it in order to continue humble, we say their humility was maintained by believing a falsehood.

Thirdly: That a christian to continue truly humble, must not labour to keep himself *in the love of God*; for every attempt of the kind arises from a belief that he has power to do something necessary to his salvation, which belief is supposed to destroy his humility. For if he believes he has no power to do any good thing, and still tries to do many good things, you say his christian obedience consists in trying to do what he at the same time believes to be impossible. If an irresistible power is to do for him, and in him, *every thing that is necessary*, he cannot surely aim at doing any thing else, without labouring to do that which is *unnecessary*; a kind of work that holds a close connexion with the popish doctrine of supererogation. And if he only labours to do the same things which the irresistible power is to produce, does this arise from a belief that his exertions will make the force *more than* irresistible, or from a conviction that it may be resisted, and that it is really necessary for him to *labour for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life?* John vi. 27.

The truth is, that a gospel trust upon Christ is the trust of a servant who feels his responsibility, and his need of divine sup-

port; but who does not depend upon the Master to obey his own commandments, or to deliver him from the obligation and necessity of obeying them.

True humility arises, not from a belief that we have no power, but from a conviction of our dependance upon God for the power we possess, and for the continuance of it, together with a conviction of our obligation to use that power according to the directions of him who gave it, and of our natural proneness to use it wrong. Did any man ever feel humbled and debased from considering his inability to create new worlds, or to controul the planets of heaven? And when a child has a little strength to walk, but cannot move forward without leaning upon his father's arm, does he not *feel* his dependance more than a person feels his dependance upon the *earth*, while it supports him by a law of nature which he cannot resist? A christian humility consists in a conscious sense of his weakness, which necessarily supposes some degree of activity or power, without which it can have no existence, for certainly where there is *no power* there can be *no weakness*, because the meaning of the word is, a small degree of power.

2. The objection supposes that the work of a christian in doing the will of God, which is using his power to the end for which it was given, has a native tendency to produce pride; to keep him humble, they say, he must be able to do nothing, but Christ must do all: if you permit him to *work out his own salvation*, he will feel his importance, and be proud of his own performances. That men may be, and often are, proud of their own works is granted; but this only happens when they lose sight of their extreme weakness and perpetual dependance on God: bring them to a sense of this, if you would subdue their pride, and never charge God foolishly, by supposing that pride naturally rises out of the proper exercise of those faculties which he has given to his creatures.

I am apt to think it rises from very different sources: are men never proud of any thing but what is produced by their own works? are they not proud of their natural beauty, wit or noble birth, things which have not been produced by their own activity? Suppose two men have been exalted to offices of the highest trust and honour in a nation: one has been gradually raised on account of his integrity and good conduct; the other, without any regard to his works, has been suddenly elevated to this honourable height: which of those men would be the more likely to be high-minded on account of the great favour he had received at court? The one, you say, has all his works to boast of, and the other has

received his gratuitous election without either works or conditions: yet it is evident from the common experience of mankind, that the antinomian courtier will be more apt to have exalted notions of himself than his neighbour, who had been thus favoured on account of his integrity and good conduct.

The truth is, when men know they are favourites, it is very common for them to value themselves highly upon it, though the partiality exercised towards them be not founded upon any of their works. It is enough that they have the preference to others, whom they are fond to consider as inferiors, for no other reason but because they have not been so highly exalted. And if I might be indulged in such a speculation, I would even venture to presume it not impossible that thousands of the elect in Zion have reflected upon the amazing fondness of their prince, upon their being preferred to the rest of mankind, as the eternal favourites of God, with a secret gratification very like to that complained of in the present objection.

3. Do not all men till the ground, or exercise themselves in other works of industry, from a conviction that their performances are needful to the sustenance of life? They know they are dependant on God for a harvest; but they believe at the same time, that their own works are so necessary, that a neglect of them will bring poverty or death, and idleness will cover man with rags.— Will this conviction, and consequent diligence, necessarily produce self-confidence? or is the diligent man more apt to be proud, who expects to be preserved in a way of industry, than he who neglects his business, and hopes to be supported some other way? I presume our opponents will not deny that the God of nature has suspended our preservation upon the *condition* of industry, and that a total neglect of it will speedily terminate in death: if they say, therefore, that the performance of *conditions*, from a conviction of their being so essential, that a neglect of them will deprive us of the blessings connected with the performance, naturally or necessarily leads to pride, they accuse the God of nature and providence with an egregious blunder in his arrangements, seeing, according to them, the present constitution of the world has a native tendency to encourage haughtiness and selfish independence.

4. Our doctrine gives every *encouragement* to sinners, at the same time that it discourages sin, and every vain presumption.

It teaches that goodness is the leading principle of the Divine Creator towards all mankind: that there is nothing in his nature which delights in our misery: that *the redemption which is in*

*Jesus Christ* has opened a door of salvation for all men: and that everlasting happiness is secured to all who die in infancy, to all heathens who *fear God and work righteousness*, (according to the light they have,) and to all christians who *repent and believe the gospel*. Acts x. 34. Mark i. 15.

The other very naturally leads to presumption or despair. The fancied elect may *presume* upon absolute security and inamissible salvation; but the reprobate is destined to the regions of darkness, and may bemoan his bitter fate in vain. Our opponents tell us, however, that we know not who are elected, and who are not. What then? This only leaves us doubtful whether we must presume or despair, and when the point is settled in our minds, on one side or the other, its corresponding consequence follows as naturally as light flows from the sun. But it is said that our notions are discouraging to the penitent, because we say salvation is suspended upon his own works, while he feels, in fact, that he can do nothing. We answer, the man who is not satisfied till he has an assurance that his future salvation or destruction depends not at all upon his doings, is pleading for as great encouragement as any sinner in the world could desire: namely, such as shall assure him there is no danger in wickedness, and no benefit in reformation, for the salvation of a man's soul. Our doctrine gives every encouragement, excepting such as shall influence men to presume upon impunity in their disobedience. The Spirit is ready to help our infirmities, and is given to every man to profit withal; therefore we have every thing to revive our hopes, provided we be willing to depend upon Christ for salvation, and not upon our vain delusions.

5. The necessity of a change of heart, or of gospel holiness, naturally follows from our view of redemption: for if Christ died to open the way for men to be saved upon certain conditions, and if those conditions are, a submission to the divine government, and a conformity of our souls to the holy nature of God, it plainly follows, that except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. John. iii. 3. If the death of Christ alone fully satisfied the divine attributes in the actual salvation of sinners, then nothing else is necessary to their salvation; and neither repentance, faith nor holiness are needful to make their final happiness accord with the justice and purity of God, since as our opponents tell us, every attribute was satisfied with their salvation, by the death of Christ, and by nothing else. Here stands a sinner for whom the Redeemer suffered on the cross: would the attributes of God be satisfied for him



to be taken to heaven in his present impenitence or not? If they would, a change of heart is not needful to make a sinner's glorification accord with the divine nature; if they would not, then something is still necessary to reconcile God to our admittance into his everlasting kingdom. Consequently our doctrine is true, that Christ's death rendered such satisfaction as reconciled the divine justice and holiness to man's probation, and to the free offer of eternal life to every man; but that the act of God, in the grant of pardon, and the operation of the Holy Ghost, in our sanctification, are no less essential than his death, to satisfy them in our final acceptance, or glorification at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Hence it appears that ours is the only system which makes a change of heart and gospel holiness essentially and indispensably necessary to salvation.

### SECTION IX.

*Our system harmonizes the doctrines and clears up many difficult passages of revelation.*

THE principle defended in these pages unites and harmonizes the leading and essential doctrines of christianity. It may be considered as the Key-stone in the solid arch of revelation, or as the centre point of union, where "mercy and truth have met together," and where "righteousness and peace have kissed each other." At the head of the following columns stands the Key-stone, which unites and supports the great doctrines on the right hand and on the left: take this away and the whole building falls in ruins to the ground; or in other words, those leading principles of revelation will be found utterly inconsistent with each other.

### THE KEY-STONE.

Christ died to procure a gracious probation for men—to open a way through which they might all be saved—to make the throne of grace accessible, by making it just for God to grant assistance, pardon, sanctification and eternal life to all but the finally impenitent:—but he did not die to make the throne of justice accessible

to the sinner, by discharging every legal demand against him, and thus authorizing him to sue out his liberty and claim an exemption from all penalties as his lawful right.

FIRST CLASS OF TRUTHS.

1. *Christ's death gives us the privilege to come boldly to the throne of grace.*

2. *Without Christ it is in vain for us to plead for pardon before the throne of grace.*

3. *It is unjust for men to be forgiven without a Redeemer.*

4. *A Redeemer is essential to a sinner's salvation. [and]*

5. *Christ is the gracious Saviour of mankind, who delights to extend mercy unto them, and blot out their transgressions.*

6. *Our works of righteousness cannot procure our salvation; but it is accomplished by the grace of God in Jesus Christ.*

7. *Christ has actually delivered all mankind from the curse of the law. [in the irrevocable form in which it stood without a Redeemer.]*

8. *Christ's death made it just for God to grant pardon to sinners.*

9. *Christ tasted death for every man, and bare our sins in his own body on the tree. 1 P. ii. 24.*

SECOND CLASS OF TRUTHS.

1. *God's mercy, in the grant of pardon gives us the privilege to come boldly to the throne of judgment.*

2. *Without pardon it is in vain for us to plead the merits of Christ before the throne of judgment.*

3. *It is unjust for men to be saved through a Redeemer without obtaining forgiveness.*

4. *God's mercy in the grant of pardon is equally essential to a sinner's salvation.*

5. *Christ is the moral governor of mankind, who delights to maintain impartial justice among them, and finally to judge and reward them according to their works.*

6. *Without works of righteousness, the grace of God in Jesus Christ will not save any man.*

7. *No man is actually delivered from the curse of the law [in its revocable form through a Redeemer] till he obtains the forgiveness of his sins.*

8. *The grant of pardon makes it just for sinners to be admitted into heaven.*

9. *Every man shall bear his own burden. Every man shall give account of himself to God. Gal. vi. 5. Rom. xiv. 12.*

10. The Lord is not strict or severe to mark what is done amiss; but is long suffering to us ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

10. The Lord is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity: he will by no means clear the guilty; but will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

As all those scripture doctrines are reconciled by the principle above mentioned, so are many obscure passages made clear, which upon the opposite system are either contradictory or unintelligible.

How innumerable are the instances, for example, in which we find the apostles declaring that *good works* are so essential to our salvation, that without them we shall never be admitted through the gates into the city; and yet assuring us it is a dangerous delusion for any man to expect salvation *by the works of the law*?—Now unless we take our stand upon some principle which will *unite* those scriptures, we may dispute forever, and come no nearer to a conclusion: each disputant will have many passages on his side, and while we neglect a *reconciling* principle, our controversy does nothing but afford a presumption to infidels, that the bible is at war with itself, and can never be brought to support any regular and consistent system of theology.

Whence is it that St. Paul sometimes tells us, our salvation is *of grace, through faith, not of works, lest any man should boast*; and at other times, exhorts us to *work out our own salvation with fear and trembling*? The solution is easy. If we attempt to *work* ourselves to the *throne of justice*, to merit salvation, or obtain it as a legal right, our works are an abomination in the sight of God; but if we, through divine assistance, work in order to approach the *throne of grace*, made accessible by the blood of Jesus, our *labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*. If works could take us to the throne of justice for deliverance, they would not obtain our salvation *through grace*, but *of debt*: those, on the contrary, which conduct us to the *throne of grace*, would not obtain our salvation as a debt, but as a voluntary act of divine compassion. For after we approach the throne of grace, God is not *bound* to receive us, as the Antinomian atonement supposes, only as he has bound himself by promise, from the free grace or benevolence of his nature.

Thus the apostle argues: Now to him that worketh [in order to approach the throne of justice] is the reward not reckoned of

grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not [to obtain a legal exoneration from the curse] but believeth [with the heart unto righteousness] on him that justifieth [or forgiveth] the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness. His faith, working by love, and including a proper submission to the divine government, is accounted for, or through an act of goodness is accepted instead of perfect righteousness: therefore, the apostle concludes *the reward is not of debt, but of grace*: why so? because it was pure *clemency* or *grace* that accepted him upon the terms of believing. Had he come with a perfect righteousness either inherent or imputed, that righteousness alone would be a complete ground of his justification, and there would be no truth in saying either that faith was accounted for righteousness, or that it would be any act of grace to accept him in this way, because his spotless righteousness would give him an unquestionable right to demand deliverance as a debt. Rom. iv. 4.

The apostle says again, "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace, otherwise work is no more work. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." Rom. xi. 5, 6.

Here is a very convincing argument in support of the principle he had before advanced; namely, that there is no medium between looking for a free pardon from God's benignity and expecting to receive salvation as a debt. He proves that those who deny this conclusion are involved in palpable contradictions. For, says he, if this deliverance or salvation is bestowed by grace, or favour, then it is not received upon the ground of a legal righteousness as a debt, for this would prove that there was no benevolence or grace in the matter. Deny this, and you say grace is no more grace; that is, that it is grace and not grace—a favour and the mere payment of a debt, at the same time. But if it be of works, or a legal righteousness exactly answerable to every demand of the law, then is it no more of grace, because it is obtained upon principles of inflexible justice, and there is no favour bestowed in only rendering that which is proportional to your legal right. Will you deny this, and say salvation may be received upon the ground of this legal righteousness, and yet be of grace? if so, you say work is no more work, that is, that it is received upon the ground of a just or legal demand, and not received upon this ground at the same time. These

manifest contradictions are unavoidable upon any other principle but that which is defended in these pages, and as St. Paul pointed out these consequences in his epistle to the Romans, it is a little remarkable that his writings should be considered friendly to Antinomianism: more so, that this epistle should be so understood; and more still that this very text should be thought a main pillar of predestinarian or imputed righteousness.

He assures them that no man will receive salvation who expects it as debt, because God's method of saving sinners is in a way of *mercy*. Christ is his *elect* or *chosen one*, and whoever receives him by faith, and receives pardon in his name, is *elected*, *chosen*, or *approved* of God in Christ, as a child of God and an heir according to the promise. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; [because they sought it not by faith, but by the works of the law. Chap. ix. 32.] but the election hath obtained it, [because they sought it not as a debt but as humble suppliants; they received it as an act of grace, freely vouchsafed to all that will receive it in this way,] and the rest were blinded. That is, they were blinded with the vain delusion which the apostle is here labouring to remove, and this was the reason they received not that which they sought after. Had they abandoned the notion of a legal righteousness as the ground of their justification, and received pardon from the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, they too would have been a part of *the election who hath obtained it*; but they hardened themselves in prejudice against the truth, and of course *were blinded*; because he that runs away from the light must necessarily *walk in darkness*, and "this is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."

Another scripture, worthy of particular notice, we find in Acts iv. 27. "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." Again: "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Acts ii. 23.

From these passages we learn the following particulars: 1. That God from his fore-knowledge of man's apostacy, had determined, according to his counsel or wisdom, that certain things should be done. 2. That the Lord Jesus was appointed to execute his counsel or determination. 3. That the Jews and Gen-

tiles, though their malice was over-ruled, to subserve the purposes of the Divine wisdom, were very wicked in taking and crucifying the Redeemer.

1. Our Heavenly Father determined, according to the counsel, or wise purpose of his own will, that all things should be done that were necessary for the redemption of mankind.

2. The Son of God was anointed, or set apart to execute this gracious determination, and to do every thing that was necessary to its accomplishment. I hope no person will say the Jews were appointed to do *whatsoever God's hand and council determined before to be done*. This were to suppose God commissioned them to perform the work of our redemption. If any shall declare that it was necessary for the Jews to crucify the Lord of Glory, they must suppose those sinners did at least a *part* of the work that was essential to the redemption and salvation of mankind, without whose assistance the work would not have been complete! God says he has no need of the sinful man: our Saviour says: No man taketh my life from me; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again: while the prophet in his name declares, I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me: I looked, and there was none to help; therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me. Isaiah lxiii. 3, 5.

3. It follows, that neither the treachery of Judas, nor the malice of Jews or Gentiles was necessary; but that their crime was enormous in arresting the Redeemer, and nailing him, *by their wicked hands*, to the cross. He was innocent, and did not *deserve* to suffer: and though he had a *right* to suffer, yet this right was in himself alone, and no mortal had any more authority over his life than over the life of angels.

Some pretend that the conduct of those men was unavoidable, because their actions were fixed by an immutable decree; but if God predestinated their wickedness, that decree resulted from his *goodness* or *justice*, or else it was *unjust*: if from the former, the thing which the Jews did was perfectly just and good, because it was the necessary effect of a decree that proceeded from those attributes. I hope nobody will say the decree arises from goodness, and yet the thing is not good which it produces. If, on the contrary, we say the decree was *unjust*, we charge God with malevolence, and contradict the most essential principles of revelation.

I am aware of the sophistical evasion often used to conceal the force of this conclusion: It has been said, "Though God decrees all the *actions* of men, yet he does not decree the *sinfulness* of their

actions, which consists in the principle or  *motive*  that influences the agent." In answer to this, we would inquire whether it be possible for men to perform all their wicked actions from good motives, or not?  *If it is possible, it plainly follows,*  that men might so perform them, and consequently, murder, adultery, theft and blasphemy might prevail as they now do, and yet there should be no sin in the world! if it is not possible, the inevitable consequence is, that there are many actions that cannot be performed by an intelligent being, but from bad motives, and of course God must predestinate the motives which influence them, in order to secure or bring to pass their wicked actions.

Here stands an innocent man, we will suppose; who never did me an injury: I have no right to take away his life. Would it be possible for me intentionally to murder this man with a good motive or not? I have a conviction that I ought not to kill him: to say I might have a good motive in doing what I feel I ought not to do, is a contradiction, and confounds the distinction between right and wrong. If I have a conviction that it is wrong, it is impossible for me to do it without intending to do wrong: the action cannot be done with the consent of my will, without arising from this wrong intention: consequently, if I should be moved to do it by the irresistible influence of a secret decree, the evil intention is no less predestinated than the action which arises from it. Other arguments might be offered against the pitiful sophistry here opposed; but it is so futile and ridiculous that it deserves no farther investigation.

The plain sense of the passage above quoted (and the literal meaning of the original, according to Mr. Fletcher) is this: "for of a truth, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together against thy Holy Child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. It was God's determinate counsel that Christ should die for mankind, and fore-knowing the wicked disposition of the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, he determined not to rescue the Saviour by miraculous power, but deliver him up to their fury. "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." But if their wickedness was as much the object of his determinate counsel as the Saviour's death, (which might have been accomplished by a flash of lightning or by some other means) what was the object of his fore-knowledge? and why was the knowledge distinguished from



the determination, if they both mean the same thing? It is evident his determination related to what the Redeemer was to do and suffer for the salvation of mankind, and his fore-knowledge to the disposition of the Jews and Gentiles to take away his life. He could have prevented them from crucifying the Lord Jesus Christ, because he fore-knew their intentions; but he had determined that the Saviour should die, and therefore did not hinder them by superior power, but delivered him up to the vengeance of their wicked hands.

Many other passages might be mentioned, and cleared up, by bringing them to a conformity with the leading principles of revelation, which have often been unjustly pressed into the service of reprobation; but as they have been examined by Mr Fletcher, and by other able hands, we will omit them at present, and confine ourselves to those which relate immediately to the subject of atonement.

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law,” says St. Paul, “being made a curse for us: for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” Gal. iii. 13.

From this it hath been concluded that Christ has removed the whole curse or penalty of the law from his elect, by enduring it in their place. But it is evident from the context, and from other passages, that the apostle’s meaning in this text accords perfectly with our view of the subject.

He labours in this epistle, as well as in that to the Romans, to convince the Jews, and those whom they had corrupted, that they can never be justified by a legal righteousness, but must submit to receive salvation through Christ in a way of mercy. “For as many as are of the works of the law,” says he, (verse 10) “are under the curse: for it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” The law demanded universal obedience, made no provision for deficiency, and admitted of no forgiveness: consequently one transgression would sink the sinner beyond the possibility of deliverance upon principles of law. This was the curse: and it is evident that all who rejected the offers of mercy, and attempted to come out clear without receiving pardon, were under the curse, which they never could remove. Christ has delivered us from this curse of the law because through his atonement sin may now be forgiven, which it could not be before he demonstrated God’s righteousness, and thus removed the inexorable barrier, or curse, which cut off all access to mercy, and made the way to heaven impassable.

But as it is said Christ was made a curse for us, many have supposed this can have no meaning, unless it mean that he became guilty\* by imputation, and endured the whole penalty as a criminal in our place. The infliction of a curse, in scripture, has two meanings: 1. it means punishing a sinner according to what he deserves: 2. It means an act of God, whereby his hatred of sin is manifested. The former sense will be readily admitted; and that the latter is true, and is the only sense in which a curse was ever inflicted on the Lord Jesus, can be proved, I hope, to the satisfaction of all that believe the scripture.

“And the Lord God said unto the serpent, because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field:—and unto Adam he said; because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life: thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field.”—*Gen. iii. 14, 17.*

Thus it appears that the ground, as well as the beasts of the earth and the fowls of heaven were cursed, not as criminals suffering the penalty of the law; but they were brought under the effects of sin, as so many standing monuments of God's displeasure against it. In like manner, but far more conspicuously, the Lord Jesus was made under the law, or submitted to suffer the dreadful effects of sin, not as a criminal, but as a glorious monument of God's merciful kindness on the one hand and of his hatred against moral evil on the other. As God said to Adam “cursed is the ground for thy sake,” so he may say to guilty creatures, “The innocent Redeemer has been made a curse for your sakes:” that is, “he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;” and therefore it may be very properly said, “he was made a curse for you, because it is written cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.”

The apostle John saith, “If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John i. 9. From this passage we learn, (1.) that God is faithful, or true to his gracious promise, that is, he has pledged his goodness, to forgive us our sins: (2.) In consequence of redemption this act of pardon is perfectly just also: that is, it violates the

\* See a quotation from Luther.

right of none: not that justice demands it at the hand of God, so that he cannot withhold it without being unjust, for if so, there would be neither goodness nor forgiveness in the matter; but this act of clemency is perfectly consistent with justice, through the mediation of Jesus Christ, who has "magnified the law and made it honourable." We learn (3.) that God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, if we confess them: a clear proof that the penalty was not legally discharged by the death of Christ, otherwise we should be free upon principles of law, whether we made confession or not. This text affords incontrovertible evidence, that Christ died to make it just for God to forgive sins upon certain conditions: if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Had not the Redeemer interposed in our favour it would not have been just, that is, consistent with the general rights of the creation, for either the justifying or sanctifying grace of God to be extended to his rebellious creatures: but it has become just, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, for the divine clemency to bestow upon penitent believing sinners, every thing that is necessary to their eternal happiness in heaven.

Let us close this section by a few remarks upon that famous passage of St. Paul to the Romans: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God: being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth 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; to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Rom. iii. 23, 24.

To understand this important passage, three terms of it are to be explained:—coming short of the glory of God—justification—and propitiation.

1. God is glorified, or his glorious attributes are displayed, by means of his moral law, as has been before proved: while all creatures continued upright, his glory shone forth like the sun in the midst of heaven; but when the dark cloud of moral evil arose, the beams of divine glory were obstructed; the proof of God's spotless purity was obscured by those who sinned and came short of his glory: and some new method must now be taken to declare his righteousness, for the sake of those who continue obedient, and who have a right to such clear views of truth as shall guard them against all danger: to secure this right God must dispel the cloud of evil

by a demonstration of his righteousness: if no other method can be devised, this must be done by the damnation of every criminal; but if a Saviour can accomplish these ends of government in behalf of the guilty, then it will become just for mercy to forgive them, and restore to them the forfeited blessing of holiness and salvation. Let us consider

1. The meaning of justification. This term, if I mistake not, has four meanings in scripture: (1.) it means to excuse or vindicate, in which sense God never justifies a sinner: He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord. Prov. xvii. 15.

2. It simply signifies forgiveness, in which sense it is to be taken in the passage under present consideration, and in many other. All that believe are justified from all things [that is from all their sins] from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Acts xiii. 39.

3. It is sometimes taken in an enlarged sense as including sanctification or the renewing of our minds, as well as the pardon of our transgressions. "Whom he justified, them he also glorified: that is, whom he pardoned, renewed, and qualified for glory, them he actually glorified." Rom. viii. 38.

4. It means to declare or acknowledge a person to be truly righteous. In proof of this, see Matt. xii. 37. James ii. 21, 24, 25.

3 Consider we next the meaning of propitiation: propitious signifies favourable or kind: propitiousness, is favourableness, kindness. Propitiate, to induce to favour, to conciliate. Propitiation, the act of making propitious, the atonement, the offering by which propitiousness is obtained.—See *Walker's dictionary*.

God could not be kind or propitious to man in opposition to the principles of his government, and the general welfare, because such partiality is contrary to his perfections: his law must be magnified, and the righteousness or purity of his nature must be demonstrated: this was done by the Lord Jesus Christ, and by this atonement he was propitiated, or influenced to extend favour, kindness or mercy to his fallen and guilty creatures.

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." [they have obscured the evidence of his glorious attributes by introducing moral evil.] Being justified [or forgiven] "freely by his grace through the redemption [or display of his glory] that is in Christ Jesus. Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation [to make it accord with the nature of God to show favour to all men who will receive it] through faith in his blood, [being commissioned] to de-

declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, [to prove clearly that he is righteous, and will never show mercy in a way that shall encourage sin, though the sentence of the law is suspended] through the forbearance of God [whose goodness does every thing to save us that can be done without departing from the general welfare. 'To declare, I say, [or as the original means to demonstrate] at this time, his righteousness, that God might be just [that he might secure the rights of all his children, in his method of showing mercy, or of becoming] the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.'"]

There is not, perhaps, a more particular account of the design of our Saviour's coming, in all the scriptures, or a more copious elucidation of the interesting truths of salvation through Jesus Christ, than this passage affords us. But upon the Antinomian hypothesis, the subject is involved in darkness, and must be made to run thus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, [that is, to have all the sins of the elect imputed to him, and suffer the whole vengeance due to them] that God might be *just* in being bound by his *justice*, to render the *just* claim, which he has enabled and authorised his ransomed ones to demand as their right.

#### SECTION X.

*The plain scripture testimony, concerning redemption, reconciled with the metaphors which represent it as a purchase.*

SOME appear to imagine that Christ's death had merit enough, or that he wrought out righteousness enough for all the world; but that the particular part which is intended for me, or another sinner is withheld till we believe the gospel: when we do this it is made over to us; but if we live and die unbelievers, it is not made over, and what becomes of it I have never been informed. But whether it be reserved for the benefit of the spirits in prison, or be applied to some other unknown use in heaven, or whatever else we may suppose, it removes not the difficulty respecting our need of forgiveness.

For if Christ has discharged all penalties, and reserv'd his merit or righteousness in this conditional way, does God forgive a

sinner before this merit is made over to him, or afterwards? If before, he does not surely need this legal discharge by imputation, because he has received a gracious discharge already; if not till afterwards, then he does not need pardon, because the legal atonement is made over to him, and nothing more is wanting for his complete justification.

It is agreed, on all sides, that God pardons sinners in consequence of what Christ has done and suffered for them: it is equally true, that he pardons none against whom there is no penal demand, because they do not need it: consequently Christ's death does not remove the penalty from any sinner, but only opens the way for divine mercy, to remove it by a gracious act of forgiveness. 1. God pardons none but in consequence of the merits of Christ: 2. He pardons none but those who stand in need of it:— 3. None stand in need of it against whom there is no penal demand; it therefore follows: 4. That the death of Christ does not remove the penalty, but only opens the way for an act of mercy to remove it. The opposite system, on the contrary, is founded on the principle that Christ died, not that sinners might obtain forgiveness, but that they might be raised above the *want* of it.

And is this the view of redemption which we learn from the oracles of God? It is not. "For thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to enter into his glory—for what? that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations." Luke xxiv. 46.

"The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, and hanged on a tree: him hath God exalted with his right hand—for what? for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."— Acts v. 30.

"In whom we have redemption through his blood—and what is that redemption? the *forgiveness* of sins, according to the riches of his *grace*." Eph. i. 7. and Col. i. 14.

"Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins."— Acts xiii. 38.

"We have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God—and what inference doth this afford? Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of *grace*, that we may obtain *mercy*, and find grace to help in time of need." Heb. iv. 14, 16.

How has he made this throne of grace accessible? "The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake: he will magnify the law and make it honourable. To declare, I say, at this time, his



righteousness, that God might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."—Isa. xlii. 21. Rom. iii. 26.

These plain scriptures give us a proper and just view of redemption, and their evidence is not to be overturned by metaphorical passages, which have been often abused and misapplied.—Let us notice some of the passages which have been thought friendly to the legal atonement and imputation, defended by our mistaken opposers.

St. Paul saith, "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."—2 Cor. v. 21.

This must mean, either that Christ was really made a *sinner*, or that he was made a *sacrifice* for sin. If our sins were positively transferred from us to Christ, whereby he was properly constituted a *sinner*, we were thereby really constituted *innocent*, and can justly demand an exemption from all penalties. But the apostle explains himself in another place, and tells us, "This man, after he had offered *one sacrifice for sin*, forever sat down on the right hand of God."—Heb. x. 12. Sacrifice for sin signifies to make atonement or satisfaction for it: accordingly Christ offered satisfaction to God, as has been sufficiently explained already.

Much stress has been laid upon the word *redeem*, which often occurs in the scriptures; but according to St. Paul, it sometimes means nothing more than opening a new and living way to a throne of grace: *having redemption through his blood*, says he, *the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace*.

It often means nothing more than deliverance from bondage, by the power of God: "Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage; and I will redeem you with a stretched-out arm, and with great judgment."—Exod. vi. 6. "But because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and *redeemed* you out of the house of bond-men, from the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt."—Deut. vii. 8.

Thus it is plain that redemption, in these places, means deliverance, and so do those passages which speak of our being redeemed from our vain conversation—from sin—from the curse of the law—and that we wait for the adoption, to wit, *the redemption of our bodies*. To suppose the word *redeem*, in these places, means a price literally paid down, as an equivalent for a thing purchas-



ed, is to suppose the Lord Jesus paid a price to our vain conversation, to our sins, to the curse of the law, and to the grave!

Our redemption by Christ, I grant, is sometimes, in a metaphorical way, represented as a *purchase*: St. Paul tells the Corinthians, *Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price*; and the apostle Peter says, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently."—1 Cor. vi. 20. 1 Pet. i. 18.

These metaphors are sufficient, it may perhaps be thought, to support the whole weight of Antinomian conclusions. It is evident, will they say, that Christ has bought his people, by paying the full price of justice which their sins demanded; therefore, if any soul should be lost for whom he shed his blood, he is unjustly defrauded of his property. This conclusion, I grant, is incontrovertible, if the principle on which it rests be really true, *that Jesus Christ entered into a literal contract, and bought souls with his blood, just as a man purchases a piece of property with his money.*

Let us admit for a moment, that such scriptures are to be taken in the sense of a literal contract: the conclusion very naturally follows, that Jesus Christ bought a certain number of souls, and paid such a price as he ought in justice to pay, in order to be legally entitled to the property he had purchased; if he died for a part of mankind, that part are his forever; if he died for all, then not an individual of the human race can be taken from him without a violation of justice. Meantime, it remains for us to inquire from whom did he buy those souls, and what price did he pay? As to the price, St. Peter, tells it was not *silver or gold, but the precious blood of Christ.*—1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

But who was the other party in this contract, that disposed of such a number of souls, and received a certain quantity of blood in payment,—such a quantity as was equivalent to the value of his property? Did our Holy Redeemer pay his blood to the devil, to the curse of the law, to our vain conversation, or to the grave? Or did he purchase us from the Father? If so, the Father has no more right in us now, because he has sold us, and received the price of justice, equivalent to the property disposed of! And if we say he bought us for the Father, it seems not a little puzzling to ascertain how he lost his original right in us. Had he sold us on some former occasion, or did the devil claim us as his property by right of war? These questions may perhaps be said to be replete

with blasphemy; but I must appeal to common sense, and ask the intelligent reader, if they do not naturally arise from the principle that Jesus Christ actually bought the souls of men, and paid down a price for them, proportional to their value, according to the just principles of a literal contract?

An Antinomian, I grant, can point to 1 Cor. vi. 20. and say, "The word of God is plain and indisputable, that *ye are bought with a price.*" With equal propriety and strength of argument, a Papist may point to John vi. 53. and tell us, "the word of God is plain beyond all contradiction, *except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.*" When metaphors or comparisons are drawn from the practice of men in buying and selling, and the blood of Jesus is called a price by which we are purchased, the whole is to be taken, it seems, in a proper literal sense; but when this same blood is represented by another figure, and the Saviour declares, *My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed,—he that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him*—the whole is to be understood metaphorically. For my part I cannot help thinking the papistical argument is as good as the Antinomian, and that they are twin-sisters that must stand or fall together.

"What loads of heterodoxy," says Mr. Fletcher, "have degraded parables brought into the church! and how successfully has error carried on her trade, by dealing in figurative expressions, taken in a literal sense!"

"This is my body," says Christ: "Therefore bread is flesh," says the papist, and transubstantiation is true." "These dry bones are the house of Israel, says the Lord." Therefore Calvinism is true, say my objectors, and we can do no more towards our conversion, than dry bones towards their resurrection. Lost sinners are represented in the gospel as a lost piece of silver: therefore, says the author of *Pietas Oxoniensis*, they can no more seek God, than the piece could seek the woman who had lost it.—Christ is the Son of God, says St. Peter: Therefore, says Arius, he is not co-eternal with the Father, for I am not so old as my parents.—Vol. i. page 224.

Again: "If none go to hell but goats, and none to heaven but sheep, where shall the chickens go! Where the wolves in sheeps clothing? And in what limbus of heaven or hell shall we put that fox Herod, the dogs who return to their vomit, and the swine, before whom we must not cast our pearls? Are they all species of goats, or some particular kind of sheep?"

“My difficulties increase. The church is called a dove, and Ephraim a silly dove. Shall the silly dove be admitted among the sheep? Her case seems rather doubtful. The hair of the spouse in the Canticles is likewise said to be like a flock of goats, and Christ’s shepherds are represented as feeding kids, or young goats beside their tents. I wonder if those young goats, become young sheep, or if they were all doomed to continue reprobates? But what puzzles me most, is, that the Babylonians are in the same verse compared to lambs, rams and goats: were they mongrel elect, or mongrel reprobates, or some of Elisha Cole’s ‘spiritual monsters, in whom the spirit had begotten a lump of dead flesh?’” *Fletcher’s Checks, vol. i. page 226, 227.*

Mr. Fletcher takes the proper method to refute a hypothetical absurdity, by setting it before the reader in different views, that he may view it on all sides, and perceive its naked inconsistency. The friends of “degraded parables” will doubtless complain, that our running to other passages, and comparing them together, is not to be tolerated, because it is bringing the scriptures to our carnal reason, and the almost magical power of our metaphysical distinctions, as one of Mr. Fletcher’s opponents very wittily observed, when he found himself unable to avoid the strong arguments which besieged him, and which he could scarcely notice with any degree of patience.

I must take the liberty, however, to ask a few more questions upon the subject of buying and selling. When the wise virgins said to the foolish, “go ye rather to them that *sell and buy* for yourselves,” did they really mean that men are to purchase their own salvation, and that the other virgins were fools for thinking it might be had by begging or asking for? When Solomon said, “Buy the truth and sell it not,” did he mean that some person has a store house of truth, to whom we must lay down a price exactly equal to its value?

Our Saviour tells us, “The kingdom of heaven is like unto a *merchant-man* (whose chief business is to buy and sell) seeking goodly pearls: who when he had found one pearl of *great price*, went and sold all that he had and *bought it*.”—Matt. xiii. 44, 45.

Would he have us understand by this parable, that every man must purchase salvation for himself, and give a great price for it? True, says an antinomian, but he furnishes the purchase-money himself, and every elect soul buys it in the name of his surety.

But the surety himself, who says “I am he that was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, (Rev. i. 18.) invites us to come and

purchase it of him: I counsel thee, says he, (Rev. iii. 18.) “to buy of me gold tried in the fire, and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed.”

Are we to learn from this, that he, like a merchant-man, to whom he compares his kingdom, has bought righteousness and salvation by the gross, and proposes to retail it to us, at proper retail prices, counselling every one to come and buy for himself? Or are we to be told from the chair of dietatorial infallibility, that all these and such like scriptures, are to be considered as metaphors and parables, while those only which relate to redemption are to be taken in a literal sense? By what rule shall we understand the metaphors of scripture? Shall we compare spiritual things with spiritual, as the apostle directs us, or must we keep “the profane eye of human reason” down to the standard of popish and antinomian orthodoxy?

Papists have invented an hypothesis that bread and wine are a god; antinomians have invented another, that Jesus Christ took the sins of the elect upon him, and has discharged all claims of justice against them: neither of them are willing that one figure of scripture relating to their favourite scheme, should be explained by comparing it with other passages where the same term is used; but every passage must be understood in the sense most favourable to their respective systems, as the only standard of explanation.

The papists reason very consequentially upon this subject: if every man should be allowed to use his own reason, they say, every man must then be allowed to have his own opinion, and there will be no rule by which the true divinity and orthodoxy can be ascertained.

Heresy will abound, and there will be no short and easy rule by which to convince heretics of their delusions. A criterion must be had, and the only decisive and sure one is that of infallibility, continued from age to age in St. Peter’s chair at Rome. Here is the grand asylum where we may run and be safe from all danger of heresy! Meantime we must be very cautious not to indulge our heretical curiosity in asking, “what reason we have to believe his holiness is infallible?”—but we must learn to subdue our profane and rebellious reason, and obediently submit to the maternal instructions of our holy mother. They will excuse my mentioning these particulars; for what I have said is nothing more than the account which they themselves have given of the matter.\*

\* See a modern performance of a popish doctor of Hexham, entitled “Reflections on the spirit of religious controversy,” &c. page 176-215.

To conclude: when the blood of Jesus Christ is represented as a fountain in which we are to wash our robes and make them white, the meaning of it, according to the well known doctrines of revelation, is, that we are indebted to his sufferings and death for renewing grace or sanctification. When it is said we must eat his flesh, and drink his blood, we understand by this figure, that we are to live a spiritual life by faith in the Son of God: as we must eat and drink in order to live naturally, so we must exercise faith in the merits of Christ to live spiritually. "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."—Gal. ii. 20.

In like manner when his blood is called a price, or when we are told he gave his life a ransom for many, the meaning is, that we were held under the bondage of sin, from which there was no escaping, till his death made the throne of grace accessible: he rescued sinners from despair, and opened a door of hope and mercy for the world, by his bloody passion on the cross: hence, by a figure common among men, we are said to be ransomed, redeemed, or bought with the price of blood. Such expressions are not applied to literal contracts or pecuniary transactions, and I am persuaded the world would never have heard of such an application of them, had not such "degraded parables" been found convenient to the support of a tottering hypothesis, that must be concealed under cover of distorted allegories to be kept in any tolerable countenance in the world.

## CHAPTER IV.

AN EXAMINATION OF SOME GENERAL OBJECTIONS CONNECTED  
WITH OTHER DOCTRINES OF RELIGION.

## SECTION I.

*Of the full display of Eternal Justice.*

**OBJECTION.**—“Justice is an essential and eternal attribute of God. Its demands must therefore be fully and entirely satisfied; otherwise the Almighty must relinquish a part of his justice, and thereby abandon that which is essential to his nature, and consequently cease to be God.” **Answer:**

1. Benevolence is an eternal attribute of God, equally essential to his nature; it must therefore be fully and entirely displayed: Justice forbids the exercise of benevolence, or it does not; if it does not, then God never relinquishes any part of his justice by the exercise of kindness and mercy: if it does, then God to be just must relinquish the exercise of benevolence, seeing justice forbids it: therefore he must abandon that which is essential to his nature, and consequently cease to be God.

2. The objection supposes God’s eternal justice binds himself, and that where there is no right of demand in another, there is still an obligation on him, which he cannot depart from without being unjust: for supposing the general welfare to be secured through the Redeemer, for sinners to be pardoned, without the whole penalty being inflicted on themselves or any other person; if God be still bound to execute vengeance to the uttermost, the inevitable consequence is, that he must give up the prerogative of exercising clemency, (a prerogative which is possessed even by an earthly ruler,) in order to secure his great and eternal justice.

3. If God is bound under obligation, when there is no other person’s right involved, it follows that justice binds him, where every other being is left free: for who will presume to say that any man or angel is bound in justice, in any single case, but where there is a right of demand in another? And if men and angels are not thus bound, and yet their Eternal Maker is, does it not follow that justice binds the Almighty, and denies him the liberty and authority which it allows to the meanest of his creatures?

4. If it be granted, that God is not bound to punish sinners, excepting where the omission of it would affect the rights of others, it is undeniable that, excepting such cases, he has a right to pardon sinners, and never to inflict the penalty which they had incurred. And if we call this leaving his justice unsatisfied, or departing from it, we say God departs from his justice, and leaves it unsatisfied, by doing what he has a right to do.

5. Justice is fully displayed, and entirely satisfied, the moment universal right is secured: This was done by our Lord Jesus Christ, in consequence of which a gracious pardon is granted to sinners. But God, you say, had a right to punish them, and this right must be satisfied. The answer is easy: the moment divine goodness grants pardon, God's individual right to punish is satisfied by his benevolence, the very essence of which consists in *voluntarily giving up a right in favour of another*. Deny this, and you say at once, that benevolence has no place in the divine nature, and that justice is never satisfied for God to bestow a favour until he is bound to do it, and then it is no favour, but the mere discharge of an obligation.

6. If we deny that benevolence is meritorious to the satisfaction of justice, we must suppose that punishment is the only thing which satisfies it; but I hope it can be made appear, that the only thing in punishment which satisfies justice, is its tendency to secure the rights of others, and when it has no such tendency, justice is not satisfied with it.

Suppose, for example, that the devil and his angels had been punished in heaven as much as they are punished in hell, but had been continued in their native region, with full power to disturb the innocent and injure them, or violate their rights through eternity; would justice be satisfied merely with their being punished, when that punishment was not inflicted in a manner that should secure the rights of others? No: if they were made to endure the full degree of torment which their iniquities deserved, justice would not be satisfied with it a tittle farther than it had a tendency to secure the general welfare; and if it had no such tendency, justice would remain as unsatisfied as if the governor had not punished the criminals at all: because if he punished them in a way that answered no good end, he had no regard to the rights or the welfare of others, and therefore there would be neither justice nor benevolence in the matter. Consequently the security of general happiness and universal right, is the only thing which satisfies justice, and it is never satisfied with punishment, but so



far as it has a tendency to promote this end. To deny this, is to say justice is satisfied that the rights of the innocent should not be secured, and that mere punishment satisfies it, without any regard to the tendency or end of that punishment.

7. If you admit that benevolence, or a benevolent regard to the general welfare, which leads to every proper step to secure it, is that which satisfies justice, the conclusion is secured, that as soon as those ends are accomplished by the goodness of God, divine justice is fully satisfied, even though there should be ten thousand penalties which have never been inflicted, and never will be. But if you deny this doctrine, you must of necessity maintain that mere punishment, abstracted from its tendency to secure the public welfare, is essential to the full display of divine justice.

If this attribute cannot appear to full advantage, by merely securing universal right and happiness, but in addition to that, punishment is necessary in itself, to exhibit the full glory thereof, the consequence is, that before sin entered into the creation this attribute was not satisfied, or not fully displayed, seeing nothing more was done than the security of universal right, and no punishment existed to display and exalt this great perfection. Therefore, God must either punish the innocent, or force them into sin by his decree, in order fully to satisfy and show forth his glorious justice! Thus we see how the various parts of the predestinarian system are connected together, and how naturally they rise out of the legal atonement, which some inconsistent Arminians vainly attempt to reconcile with the benevolent doctrines of Christianity.

If justice was fully exercised and exalted originally, by the security of universal right, it is still fully exercised and exalted in securing the same end, otherwise we say a change has taken place in its nature; if it was not, then justice required the introduction of misery, in order to display itself effectually, and of course this attribute demanded that the innocent should be punished, or that they should become guilty, in order that they might deserve punishment, and thus afford the Creator an opportunity to glorify his justice, and unfold the secrets of his sovereign will!

If the angels had continued to persevere in righteousness, and to refuse to subserve the divine perfections by plunging themselves into sin, the Almighty, it should seem, to display his eternal justice, must secretly contrive their apostacy by an absolute decree, while he is openly warning them against it, with every appearance of truth and sincerity!

If a man should cruelly beat his children when innocent, or drench them with intoxicating liquors, in order to punish them severely for being drunkards, would not this be an admirable way of showing his justice? And would it mend the matter for him to warn them against intoxication, and make great professions of abhorrence against it, and at the same time to contrive some secret way of leading them into drunkenness in order to punish them, without letting them know the depth of his secret will or dissimulation? or would his august perfection be fully unfolded by imputing drunkenness to them, when they had never been guilty of it?

It is certainly right at all times for justice to display itself fully and perfectly, the contrary of which is an evident contradiction: if, therefore, the infliction of penalties be essential to its full manifestation, it was right for them to be inflicted while all creatures remained in a state of innocence, or for the creatures to be led into sin, or have sin imputed to them, that they might be proper subjects of punishment.

This reminds one of the wonderful display of justice manifested by the popish inquisitors: "When those who stood mute are called for re-examination, if they continue silent, such tortures are ordered as will either make them speak, or kill them; a string of accusations is brought against them, to which they are obliged to answer extempore, no time being given even to put their answer into proper method.

"After they have verbally answered, pen, ink and paper are given them, in order to produce a written answer, which it is required shall in every degree coincide with the verbal answer. If the verbal and the written answer differ, the prisoners are charged with prevarication, if one contains more than the other, with wishing to conceal certain circumstances; if they both agree, they are accused with premeditated artifice.

"Another artifice used by the inquisitors is this: If a prisoner has too much resolution to accuse himself, and too much sense to be ensnared by their sophistry, they proceed thus: a copy of an indictment against the prisoner is given him, in which, among many trivial accusations, he is charged with the most enormous crimes, of which human nature is capable. This, of course, rouses his temper, and he exclaims against such falsities. He is then asked which of the crimes he can deny? He naturally singles out the most atrocious, and begins to express his abhorrence of them, when the indictment being snatched out of his hand, the president says, 'By your denying only those crimes which you mention, you

implicitly confess the rest, and we shall therefore proceed accordingly.<sup>9</sup>

“The inquisitors made a ridiculous affectation of equity, by pretending that the prisoner may be indulged with a counsellor, if he chooses to demand one. Such a request is sometimes made, and a counsellor appointed, but upon these occasions as the trial itself is a mockery of justice, so the counsellor is a mere cypher; for he is not permitted to say any thing that might offend the inquisitor, or to advance a syllable that might benefit the prisoner.”\*

Now if the perfect display of justice consists in punishing those as criminals who are innocent; if it consists in forcing or enticing them into wrong conduct in order to punish them; or in falsely imputing crimes to them which they never committed; the Roman inquisitors exhibited the most perfect display of justice that the world has ever yet beheld. But if none of those things are essential to its operations, it is obvious as the beams of day-light, that God could display his righteousness without the help of either sin or misery; and that penal torments were never necessary till the voluntary wickedness of angels broke in upon the harmony of heaven and called forth the arm of justice to defend the injured rights of the innocent, by executing the righteous sentence of the law upon those malevolent and cruel invaders.

It is very evident that all creatures, while they continue just, will continue happy; and misery had no place in the creation while justice was universally maintained. But no sooner is injustice introduced than it produces misery, as its natural offspring. The rights of the innocent are violated, and divine justice, ever watchful to guard and secure them, is now under the necessity of doing it by inflicting misery on the rebels. Not that it is essential to this attribute to inflict punishments; for it never did inflict them before, and never would have done it, had not the introduction of injustice made it indispensably necessary for the vindication of the Divine character and the defence of the public welfare.

It is for the sake of maintaining happiness, and for nothing else, that misery is ever inflicted by the influence of any righteous principle. To say justice inflicts punishment because it essentially delights in the infliction of it, is to say that justice and unrelenting malice are precisely the same thing.

What is malice but a diabolical passion which disposes a person without any regard to the security of general happiness to in-

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\* See the Biographical and Martyrological Dictionary, page 291 and 293.

lict torment for its own sake, and to feast upon the groans of the miserable? This odious venom arises from the profoundest depths of hell, and it is only to obstruct the influence of such destructive principles, and to prevent others from falling into them, that the loving Parent of all creatures ever inflicted punishments on either angels or men.

Though it be granted then, that justice is an eternal attribute of God, yet we can never be persuaded that the existence of misery was essential to the satisfaction or perfect exercise of this principle, because it is so far from being in league with misery, that they are at perpetual opposition with each other; and it is to prevent the enlargement of wretchedness that justice is executed by the great Ruler of the heavens, or by any righteous and good governor in this world.

Let us look back to the blooming period of universal harmony, when all creatures in existence were both innocent and holy: let us consider the scenes of undisturbed tranquillity which gladdened the regions of the blessed, prior to the ravages of sin. Did not justice demand of all creatures to continue in the way of perfect obedience? and did it not demand of their Maker not to punish them as rebels while they were perfectly innocent? If we say no, we say it does not demand obedience to God, and that it does not protect the innocent: if we say yes, it follows that justice, far from being the original author of misery, absolutely demanded that misery should never be introduced. And had justice been maintained by all creatures, as it was by their Creator, it is evident that misery the native offspring of moral evil, would never to this moment have existed in the creation of God. Consequently the moment misery was introduced, by one creature injuring another, justice was violated; and therefore misery is so far from being essential to the exercise of this righteous attribute, that it is essential to the exercise of injustice, which is a sworn enemy to every perfection of the Deity.

But these principles, I fear, have sometimes been jumbled together in dreadful confusion. Have we indulged a confused notion, that no misery was ever produced till it was inflicted by the hand of God on account of sin? But what is sin then? Is it a perfectly harmless thing that injures no being in any part of the creation? Did God give his creatures a code of moral laws which had no relation to their happiness or misery? so that, had he let them alone, they would all have been as happy in breaking as in keeping them? If so, there was no benevolence in giving the law, because

the operation of it was not essential to the happiness of a single individual, which it could not be, if they could be as happy without keeping the law as with it. And how were the rights and privileges of others violated by sin, if they were in no degree affected by it? If the first wickedness produced no misery, it did no harm to any one, and how then can it be denominated a very dreadful evil?

Perhaps it will be said God has a right to command his creatures as he pleases, and the dreadful evil of sin consisted merely and solely in its being opposed to the divine authority. But if it was a matter purely indifferent what kind of laws God gave to his creatures, it was equally indifferent whether he gave them any laws or no; because, if one kind had no more tendency to promote their happiness and guard them against misery than another, it is evident that all kinds were equally frivolous. But if so, there was no wisdom in the law-giver, unless wisdom consists in preferring one set of means to another when they are all alike indifferent to the end. In such indifferent matters the most egregious folly could choose as well as wisdom.

If it be granted that God had a wise end in view, when he first gave laws to his moral creatures, I would be glad to know what end he had in view? Was it to promote their happiness? If not, there was no benevolence in the matter, whatever his end might be: and if it was to promote their happiness, then there was a possibility for it to be destroyed by their own conduct, otherwise you say he gave a law to promote their happiness which had no tendency to that end; which it could not have if a breach of it had no more effect upon their enjoyments than the most cordial obedience.

Did he give a law to secure all right and prevent his creatures from injuring each other? If not, he had no regard to moral justice in giving it, whatever else he had in view; if he did, then it was possible for his creatures to injure each other, or else you say he gave a law to prevent that which was impossible.

For what were the devils "cast into hell, and reserved in chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day," if they never did any harm? If misery was never produced till it was inflicted by the hand of God, it is certain their sin never injured themselves or others, and never would have hindered any creature from being as happy as it would if sin had never entered into the universe.

If we admit this hypothesis, we must believe that right and wrong have no relation to happiness and misery; because it supposes, had God withheld his hand, and not inflicted misery on his creatures, they might have broken his laws through all heaven and earth to the present hour, without ever injuring themselves or others, or diminishing their happiness in the least degree. And moreover, if right and wrong have no relation to misery, then it very evidently follows that when God inflicted punishment on the fallen angels, he did neither right nor wrong: thus all moral distinctions are confounded, all kinds of conduct are made alike indifferent, and we leap into the profound regions of atheism.

If we say misery did not originally result from that conduct which was perfectly *indifferent*, it must of necessity have arisen either from doing *wrong* or from doing *right*; if the former, the point is gained for which I contend: if the latter, then it demonstrably follows that if all creatures, and the Creator with them, had perpetually done wrong, misery would never have originated, and perfect felicity would have been universal to the present hour.

Did I not fear that any farther pursuit of this point would insult the reader's understanding, additional arguments should be produced; but presuming what has been already said will be deemed sufficient, I proceed only to mention the conclusions which follow.

The first is, that when all creatures were innocent and upright, no one deserved to be punished, and justice was so far from requiring it, that it required the contrary: of course while moral principles prevailed, misery was excluded from God's universal dominion.

Secondly, it follows that misery was introduced by injustice, and unless we say God is unjust, we are constrained to admit the conclusion, that rebellious creatures brought misery on themselves, and injured others, not by any special appointment of God, but as the natural consequence of moral evil.

Thirdly, by thus unjustly introducing misery, they forfeited their native right to happiness, and could no longer appeal to justice for an exemption from penal torments, as innocent creatures can, because they deserved to suffer for violating the rights of others, and flying in the face of that goodness and justice which were harmoniously exercised to maintain the happiness of all.

Fourthly, the righteous Governor of his creatures, who hitherto guarded their happiness by presenting his truth to their understanding, and thus morally drawing them to obedience, was now con-



strained to do it by arresting these invaders, and manifesting his abhorrence of their crimes. His justice now demands that punishments be inflicted on the rebels, not for the sake of punishing, but for the sake of his creatures in general who have not transgressed, and whose native liberty and happiness must and ought to be defended.

Fifthly, as justice delights, not in the infliction of misery, but in the security of good government and general happiness, if these ends can be by any means accomplished without delivering the rebels over to the punishment they deserve, justice will be satisfied for them to receive a gracious pardon, and enjoy the blessings of their Maker's government again.

Sixthly, the Lord Jesus, in his heavenly plan of redemption, satisfied justice, not by becoming a criminal and suffering as such, for nothing but injustice could be satisfied with this; not by giving the criminals an absolute deliverance from the penalty whether they repented or not; nor yet by suffering all that was due to sin; but by exhibiting the great evil of sin, and demonstrating God's abhorrence of it, as stated in the foregoing chapters.

## SECTION II.

*The supposed necessity of sin to make redemption necessary.*

“If sin had never entered into the world, it may be said, the goodness of God in redemption would never have appeared, and neither his justice against sin, nor his mercy to sinners could have possibly been manifested: therefore the nature of God essentially demanded the introduction of moral evil.” Answer:

1. It is true, before sin entered into the creation, it was impossible for either justice or goodness to be manifested to sinners, because there were no such creatures in being; but if those attributes were exercised in behalf of the upright, and afforded them all the happiness of which their natures were capable, what more was necessary? Must God make sinners, that he may have the opportunity of showing his mercy to them? If a physician should break his neighbour's arm, in order to show his skill in curing it; or drench his children with strong drink to display his goodness in



pardoning them for the crime of drunkenness, there would be neither justice nor mercy in such an action. It would result from a combination of cruelty and pride: for it could not arise from a regard to another's happiness, but merely to make a selfish and hypocritical display of his benevolence at their expense. If he was good, why did he not rejoice to maintain their happiness instead of obstructing it? and if he was just, why did he inflict misery on others which they did not deserve? or charge them with the criminality of his own wrong conduct? There cannot be a more palpable contradiction in nature than to say it was good and just for God to forbid sin, and yet that his goodness and justice required it, in order to display themselves! that his attributes required of his creatures, not to sin, and at the same time required that they should sin!

2. The objection supposes that it is merely for his own sake, and not for the sake of his creatures, that God displays his attributes. For if goodness and justice supported and guarded innocent creatures in a state of perfect happiness, before the introduction of moral evil, then nothing more was necessary to be done for their sake, because they were already in possession of perfect and unobstructed happiness. For whose sake then did the Creator wish to display his attributes in any other way? Not for the sake of sinners, for there were none in being. Not for the sake of enlarging the happiness of his creatures, for I presume, had they continued upright, their obedience would, through divine beneficence, have regularly enlarged it, without the help of wickedness. To deny this is to say that sin can furnish the creatures of God with greater degrees of felicity than his goodness could possibly do without its assistance. And if it was really so necessary for the well being of the creation, what principle in the Deity influenced him to forbid it, and to guard his creatures against the commission of it, by every moral motive that his truth could communicate to their understandings? Did this proceed from either justice or benevolence? if so, it is just and good to discourage moral creatures in the pursuit of that which is essential to the perfection of their happiness, or to hinder them from being so happy as they might be. And besides, if sin was essential to the display of God's glory, when he forbid it, was this done to prevent the display of his glory? or did he really wish them to violate his laws, and only pretended to be pure and holy, while he secretly decreed and delighted in their rebellion and apostacy? I hope the reader will reject such absurdities, and will acknowledge that sin was never neces-

sary to the production of happiness, but that it is the parent of misery, hateful to God and to all his holy angels.

“What havoc hast thou made, foul monster, sin!  
 Greatest and first of ills! the fruitful parent  
 Of woes of all dimensions! but for thee  
 Sorrow had never been.  
 Accursed thing! O where shall fancy find  
 A proper name to call thee by expressive  
 Of all thy horrors? pregnant womb of ills!  
 Of temper so transcendently malign,  
 That toads and serpents of most deadly kind  
 Compared to thee are harmless. Sickness  
 Of every size and symptom, racking pains,  
 And bluest plagues are thine! See how the fiend  
 Profusely scatters the contagion round!  
 Whilst deep-mouth’d slaughter bellowing at her heels,  
 Wades deep in blood new spilt; yet for to-morrow  
 Shapes out new work of great uncommon daring  
 And inly pines till the dread blow is struck.”

*Blair.*

If it be granted that the divine attributes were sufficiently displayed, before the introduction of evil, for the support and enlargement of the creature’s capacity and happiness, what other or better ends could be accomplished by manifesting them in any other way? And even supposing the utmost extent of them were not then fully known, there was no need of any more while all creatures continued holy and happy, because while this state of things remained the ends were accomplished for which they ever were displayed at all.

Has God ever made known his wisdom and power to creatures in all their extent, so that he knows nothing and can do nothing but what he has fully and entirely manifested? I presume none will be disposed to affirm this: and if he be not ambitious to display the whole extent of his wisdom and power, but only manifests them so far as is necessary for the benefit of his creatures, what ground is there for the vain presumption that he was not satisfied with that manifestation of his glory which innocent creatures in heaven beheld, but was ambitious to display himself in some other way, when it was not necessary to the felicity of any creature in being? If he were disposed to do more than was necessary for the perfect felicity

city of his creatures, and the security of their rights, what benignity or justice would appear in such a disposition? Alas! it is representing our great Creator as being governed by a selfish principle, and delighting to make some wonderful display of himself, merely for his own gratification, as if God, like fallen man, had a disposition to do certain things for no other end but to gain applause!

Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that we are righteous? or did he bring us into being because he needed us, and was concerned merely to let others see how glorious he is in himself? Surely his essential goodness was the cause of our existence, and had it not been for this attribute, which delights in the communication of happiness, I presume that men and angels would have never been. His other attributes are exercised in subserviency to this, and he displays himself to his intelligent creatures, so far only as is necessary to the felicity and perfection of their nature. But what evidence have we that he ever has fully manifested the whole extent of his perfections to any creature? "Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering. He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing. He holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it. The pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof. He divideth the sea by his power, and by his spirit he hath garnished the heavens. Lo, these are parts of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him?"—Job xxvi. 6, &c.

If then he has made known but a little portion of his nature to us, it must be because he is perfectly free from a selfish ambition, and manifests his perfections so far only as the general good requires. Upon this principle it is evident, had moral evil never been introduced, goodness would not have manifested itself in redemption, because such a manifestation would not be necessary; but after there were sinners exposed to hopeless misery, the Almighty Father was pleased to make a new display of his benevolence, and to evince before all worlds that even rebels themselves should not finally perish, while goodness could prevent it. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." John iii 16.

I suspect it will be said, that God certainly made all things for his own glory, that he worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, and that creation, providence, redemption, salvation and damnation are to be resolved into nothing else but his sovereign pleasure. Answer:

1. All things were indeed created for his own glory, because, as has been before proved, his glory consists in the exercise of his attributes, to promote the general welfare of all creatures capable of moral happiness.

2. It is true likewise that every thing he does, is done according to his sovereign pleasure, because the pleasure of his unchangeable nature is to do good, and to make all creatures happy who consent to be so without injuring the innocent.

But (3.) if it be affirmed that he ever does any thing among his creatures, without having a regard to their general felicity, or the security of their rights, there is neither goodness nor justice in those actions: and I would be glad to know what glory he would display by departing from the moral attributes of his nature, or what pleasure it could afford him, unless we suppose he is governed by a selfish principle, which is pleased to depart from goodness and righteousness. This is the very principle that now predominates in the devil and his angels, and is the foundation of all the wickedness that is practised in either earth or hell. I leave the reader to make the application.

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### SECTION III.

#### *The supposed violation of truth.*

It may be objected, "If any sinner is pardoned without an infliction of the whole penalty, divine truth is violated, seeing all the punishment is not endured, which was threatened against the disobedient: the soul that sinneth it shall die."

However great this difficulty may appear, it bears as hard upon the other system as upon that which we defend; and therefore our opponents are no less concerned in the removal of it than ourselves,

Did God threaten that every sinner should absolutely be punished in proportion to his crimes? How then was this fulfilled, if any sinner was not thus punished? It alters not the case that his surety suffered for him; because the threatening was, not if you sin an innocent person shall suffer in your place, but "the soul that sinneth it shall die." No matter what the means were through

which the sinner is rescued from punishment; for there is no way for the threatening to be literally fulfilled, but for him in his own person to suffer according to what his iniquities deserve.

If our opponents could prove two things, they would, it is true, have an advantage of us in this particular: if they could prove (1.) that the original threatening was, not "the soul that sinneth it shall die," but every degree of torment that sinners will deserve shall absolutely be suffered by some person: and (2.) that the Redeemer actually did endure the whole torment, that the elect ever would have suffered in hell, if he had not died for them;—let these points be established, I say, and they will be able to make appear that their system secures the attribute of truth, by evincing a literal accomplishment of what was denounced against sin.

But as they cannot prove those points, and do not even profess to believe them, the present objection is nugatory, when urged as a difficulty peculiar to the doctrine advanced in the preceding pages; because it equally affects every system that includes the deliverance of any sinner from the sentence denounced against him, whatever the means might be through which his salvation should be accomplished.

This answer, however, does not satisfy the serious inquirer; because, though it retorts the objection, yet it does not remove it.

The proper answer must be founded upon this principle: that although it is impossible for God to lie, yet it is not so for him to withhold the communication of his truth from creatures who are not capable of receiving it without being injured instead of being benefited thereby.

It is manifest through all the scriptures that a condition is often implied without being expressed; or in other words, a punishment is threatened, without any mention of the condition on which it may be suspended. We might produce the case of Nineveh, and many other instances, where the penal consequences of sin have been denounced without any mention of the possibility of pardon, or any intimation that mercy would devise a method to prevent the execution of the sentence on those who should offend.

While Adam stood upright God only made known to him the wages of sin, "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," without revealing the designs of his mercy in case of disobedience, until such a revelation was necessary to support his despairing mind after the transgression: then, and not before, God promised that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head."

The same goodness which discouraged sin by the threatening, concealed the designs of mercy to sinners: because a revelation of intended mercy could answer no end at that time, but to weaken the penal sanctions of the law, and prevent their influence on the mind.

The Almighty Father doubtless pledged his truth, that his abhorrence of sin should be manifested, and that the rights and happiness of his innocent creatures should be secured: one way by which this was to be done, he made known; namely, by the condemnation of offenders: but though the infinite mind conceived another method through which those ends could be accomplished, in a manner that should accord with the salvation of penitent sinners, yet he was under no obligation to communicate this knowledge to innocent Adam in Paradise: nor would there be any benevolence in such a revelation, before sin entered into the world, for the reason above advanced.

Now if we charge our Maker with a violation of truth, for revealing to Adam the penalty of the law, without making known the whole extent of his own mercy, this is to say, the withholding of truth is falsehood, and if so, there is no way for God to avoid being a liar but by making known to us all that he knows himself!

The threatening of the divine law, absolutely and definitely expressed, would stand thus: all sinners, who finally reject the terms of mercy, shall suffer the penalty. This will most certainly be accomplished. But withhold the clause which includes the revelation of pardon, and it will be, if you become sinners you shall suffer the penalty, or the soul that sinneth it shall die, without an intimation of any method of salvation or deliverance.

The sentence against Adam has been by Paine, turned into reproach and ridicule: "The Christian system," says he, "represents the Almighty as coming off, or revoking the sentence, by a quibble upon the word death:" and perhaps others may say, if part of the truth in such a case, were withheld, it would in effect be a falsehood; because it would convey a false idea to the mind: namely, that the sentence was absolute and unconditional. We answer:

1. God did not declare the sentence was unconditional, and that every sinner should absolutely be excluded from the possibility of pardon; but only withheld the knowledge of his mercy till it was necessary to reveal it.

2. This afforded no evidence to Adam that sin could be forgiven, or that it could not: this indeed left him in a state of entire ignorance, but could not lead him into error, unless he should be-

lieve things without evidence; and in that case he, not his Maker, would be the author of the delusion. Must God be charged with deceiving his creatures, because they believe what they please, upon their own voluntary imaginations, when he has given them no grounds to believe any thing concerning the matter?

3. When Adam believed the testimony of God, that sinners should die, he believed the truth; and though he had no idea that any should ever be made alive again, yet the withholding of this truth from him was no contradiction of the other, and therefore was no falsehood. And if the nature of death was left in some degree unknown or indefinite, to leave him in a state of ignorance, whereby he was guarded against dangerous presumptions, this surely was the result of perfect goodness.

4. I take it for granted that God was not bound to reveal the whole extent of his mercy to Adam before the fall, but that it was right for him to withhold this knowledge from him: also that it was just and good for him to make known to Adam the penal consequences of sin, in a manner best adapted to his present state, and best calculated to deter him from disobedience. To accomplish this, the threatening must of necessity be given in such a way as would convey no idea of salvation for the sinner. And how could this be done but by exhibiting the penalty by itself, and leaving room for the display of mercy, without any expression of it, by concealing the conditionality of the threatening in silence, or under cover of metaphorical or indefinite expressions?

Now if God had a right to withhold part of the truth from Adam, it was just for him to do so: if a revelation of part only was at that time best calculated to promote the creature's happiness, it was also a display of benevolence: therefore to call this a falsehood, is to say a lie consists in the exercise of justice and loving kindness.

This would charge with falsehood all legislators whose laws threaten murderers with death, without at the same time declaring that they may possibly obtain forgiveness.

It will charge with falsehood the God of nature, who gives sinners a consciousness that they are guilty, and exposed to punishment, without, at the same time, giving them any natural conviction that their sins may be forgiven. This interesting knowledge has been hid for ages from many nations, and is only brought to light by the gospel, or divine revelation.

Add to this, that God's promising to Israel in Egypt, that they should inherit the laud of Canaan, without at that time express-



ing any possibility of a forfeiture:—his promising them an illustrious Messiah, who should sit upon the throne of David forever, without revealing the *spirituality* of his kingdom:—his threatening to destroy Nineveh in forty days, without giving a hint that the threat was conditional:—his commanding Abraham to slay his beloved son, without mentioning that the execution should be prevented in the last moment:—these, and many other instances might be produced to prove our Creator false and deceitful, if falsehood consists in leaving persons in a state of ignorance, when certain branches of knowledge are not suitable to their present state, and would tend to their disadvantage and misery.

Without consuming time upon this theme, we may just observe: (1.) That the immoral principle of falsehood consists in an intention to deceive another to his injury. (2.) That the expression of it consists in exhibiting *false evidence* to another, by words or actions, with a design that he should receive it as evidence of truth. (3.) That a part of the truth withheld, when the divulging of it would do no good, but would be injurious, is so far from being a falsehood: that it results from a principle of loving kindness. (4.) Lastly that the truth of God can never contradict his other attributes, that he never pledged his veracity to do any thing in opposition to them, and consequently, if the death of Christ perfectly displayed his justice and goodness, it secured every thing that ever his truth was engaged to accomplish or perform. If we say he ever promised or threatened to do any thing contrary to his moral attributes, we say he engaged *to do wrong*; and if he did *not*, then the utmost he ever engaged to do was to exercise his attributes for the defence of his government and the security of general happiness: consequently, a redemption which accomplishes those purposes, does every thing that divine *truth* requires, and therefore this attribute is fully displayed by a vindication of the rest.

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#### SECTION IV.

*Moral principles in the Deity are not different from those which are to govern his creatures.*

WE come now to consider another plausible evasion. “Although the preceding arguments may be conclusive, as they relate to justice and goodness between man and man, yet it may be sup-

posed unreasonable and presumptuous to apply them to God, because his attributes are beyond our comprehension, and may be totally different in their operations from such principles in finite creatures. What God may or may not do, we know not, and it is blasphemy for us to inquire; because he has a right to do every thing according to the counsel of his own will. He has made right and wrong to be what they are; he could have made them entirely different had he so pleased; and whatever he wills to do is right, for no other reason but because he wills it."

Some such view as this many appear to have indulged, concerning the authority or sovereignty of God: He is the fountain of justice, they conclude, and may make one standard of it for his creatures, and another for himself, because he is under the controul of no superior authority, and has no other rule of his actions but his own sovereign pleasure. This maxim appears to have prevailed very generally, in the beginning of the 17th century, when Calvinian predestination was at the height of its splendour, as we may learn from a declaration of king James I. of England: When addressing his parliament in defence of his own kingly prerogative, he expressed himself in these terms: "I conclude, then, the point touching the power of kings, with this axiom of divinity, that as to dispute what God may do, is blasphemy, but what God wills, that divines may lawfully, and do ordinarily dispute and discuss; so is it sedition in subjects to dispute what a king may do in the height of his power. But just kings will ever be willing to declare what they will do, if they will not incur the curse of God. I will not be content that my power be disputed upon; but I shall ever be willing to make the reason appear of my doings, and rule my actions according to my laws."\*

Thus we perceive his majesty assumed the fancied prerogative of Deity; and maintained that justice in kings consists in "declaring what they will do," and in "ruling their actions according to their laws:" that is, that they have a right to make their laws of action in any manner they may choose, and then their justice consists in conforming to these laws till they shall will to alter them, and establish another kind of justice, by which to regulate their conduct. This august sovereignty he defends by an appeal to the well known "axiom in divinity, that it is blasphemy to dispute what God may do," because there is no other right and wrong with him, but such as he wills to establish, and may alter as he will. This, as far as I am able to conceive, is the meaning of the

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\*Hume's History of England, vol. iv. page 236.

axiom: for if God may not do any thing contrary to justice, and if it is right for us to reason upon this subject, then it is no "blasphemy to dispute what God may do," and no "sedition in subjects to dispute what a king may do in the height of his power."

I feel inclined to indulge my opposition to this "axiom in divinity," by attempting to prove, first, that moral principles in the Deity are the same that are to regulate the conduct of his creatures; and, secondly, that they are *eternal*, were never *made*, and can never be altered or destroyed.

First, The principles of righteousness in the great Creator are nothing different from those principles in men and angels.

We freely acknowledge that God possesses them in infinitely higher degrees of perfection or extent, than any finite creature can; but higher degrees of the same thing, can never be different from its lowest degrees, unless we absurdly imagine, that righteousness, carried to the utmost height of perfection, may become totally altered in its nature, and may degenerate into an opposite tendency. Goodness in creatures disposes them to communicate happiness; but this principle in the Deity is infinitely higher and more extensive than in them; therefore God is infinitely more disposed to communicate happiness than men or angels are. A just being will never inflict punishments where they are not deserved, or where no end of goodness can be promoted by them: but God is infinitely just, and therefore he has a stronger opposition to all acts of cruelty than any other being in the universe. How ridiculous, therefore, must it be, to infer from the superlative excellence of the divine perfections, that they may be entirely different in their operations from those principles of morality as they are conceived by the human understanding!

It is granted that the creatures of God have not the same native right of demand upon him, that they have upon each other: each person in relation to his fellow creatures, has a right to his existence, and to the means necessary for the support and happiness of his life; and hence there is a corresponding obligation in them not to violate these rights; but he has no right to demand existence at the hand of God, but holds his life and all the blessings of it, upon the grant of benevolence.

As God was not bound in justice to create the universe, so neither is he bound in justice to continue it in being; and he is under no obligation to continue the existence of any man or angel only as he has condescended to bind himself by promise: had he not gra-

ciously pledged his veracity, he might this moment annihilate every creature in existence, without violating the right of any one.

Hence we are under obligations of gratitude to God for our creation, preservation, redemption, forgiveness, sanctification and eternal happiness: because all these things are derived from his benevolence, which is the only cause of gratitude. Had God been bound in justice to do any of those things, upon our inherent right of demand, we should have been under no obligation of gratitude for them, because we should only receive our right, which could not be withheld without injustice. For the same reason God is not under obligations of gratitude to any creature, because it is impossible for any creature to do him a favour, which is the only ground of it.

But all this affords no shadow of evidence that moral principles in the Deity are any thing different from those principles in his creatures.

His benevolence essentially includes the right of option, to grant favours or withhold them: the same thing holds in creatures, so far as they can be benevolent, which is limited to their fellow-creatures alone, because it is impossible for them to bestow a favour upon their Maker; but have, on the contrary, derived their being and all their good things from his beneficence, and are therefore bound in duty to God, to do every thing that is right and good.

The attribute of truth is also the same in God that it is in his creatures. He is not bound to give his promise, or to confirm it by an oath; but when he does so, he graciously binds himself, and has no more right to be false and deceitful than any other being.

His justice is also the same. Though no creature has an inherent right to demand a perpetual preservation in existence, yet every creature, while innocent, has an inherent right to demand exemption from the everlasting damnation that is due to the devil and his angels, and hence there is a corresponding obligation in the Almighty, as in every other being, not to violate the character of the innocent, by false accusations, or to make them endure the penalties due only to the guilty. To deny this, is to say God has a right to be wicked, or that he has a right to do wrong, which is an absolute contradiction, and therefore impossible.

These principles are so clear, that I think no man can deny them without doing violence to his reason and conscience, as well as to the whole tenor of the gospel; but as a great stand has been made against them, I shall probably find it necessary to defend them more particularly in another place.

It is unjust to inflict pain, where there is no guilt, unless it be necessary, and be done with a kind intention, to prevent a greater evil or to promote the happiness of the subject afterwards; therefore, in all cases of this kind where it is inflicted by a just and good Creator, it is done to subserve such benevolent intentions, perhaps not discoverable by us in the present state, but which may clearly be made known when God shall have perfected the dispensations of his providence and grace. There is no other inference possible, if moral principles in the Deity are the same that regulate the conduct of his creatures, and that they are so, I hope to prove by the following arguments.

1. If they be not the same, the moral law affords no evidence of the nature of its author. This law we have considered as a copy of the divine perfections; but if his justice and goodness be any thing different from that kind which his law enjoins, the study of those principles will give us no certain evidence of his moral nature. His law is holy, just and good; but his own justice and goodness are supposed to be of another kind, and how different they may be from the principles we are acquainted with, what creature is able to determine?

2. This hypothesis would leave no rational grounds for hope, or faith, or confidence in God: Shall I trust in his goodness? Alas, I know not what it is! his attributes are so profound a mystery, I am told, that I am not to apply my narrow conceptions, to draw inferences concerning what God may do, but only what he wills to do! And this I can never discover, because a thousand promises will afford me no consolation, seeing his truth may be as different from ours as any of his other attributes.

3. It would be impossible for any creature to imitate the great Maker of the world, as our Saviour exhorts us to do; because our exercising justice and mercy among men is no imitation of God, if his justice and mercy be of another kind.

4. Christians are said to be partakers of the divine nature, and are transformed into the image of God, which is said to consist in righteousness and true holiness: but if God is governed in his actions by a righteousness and holiness of another kind, how are they partakers of his nature or image? And why should we worship or love a God whose nature and attributes are unknown, and something different from what has ever entered into our hearts to conceive? Would not this be to worship an unknown God with a witness? and might it not be said to every one of us, as our Saviour said to the Samaritans, "ye worship, ye know not what"? Leaving

our opponents to answer these plain questions, we proceed to prove,

Secondly, that moral principles are eternal, were never created, and can never be destroyed.

1. To say they are not eternal, but were made by the Almighty, is to suppose that with God there is no distinction between right and wrong, between moral good and evil, but that all he does is perfectly indifferent; there being nothing moral in any of his actions. He might alter his principles of action in any way that can be imagined, and they would be equally righteous, because he made right and wrong according to his own good pleasure, and has an equal right to alter and change them till that which is now just shall become unjust, and that which is now kind shall become cruel! If so, we say God's justice consists in doing any thing, every thing, or nothing; or, in other words, that there is no principle of justice in his nature.

2. If the principles of righteousness are not eternal, but were formed by the divine will, it plainly follows that God made his own attributes and that they are not eternal. Is not justice an eternal attribute of God? and does not this consist in having a regard to that which is right, and an aversion to that which is wrong? If so, the distinction between right and wrong is eternal, and those principles of moral goodness brought to light by the law and the gospel, are everlasting and unchangeable as the divine nature.

3. According to "the axiom," or rather the hypothesis under consideration, the Almighty could, had he been so minded, have made benevolence consist in the infliction of eternal torments on the innocent, and have made barbarous cruelty consist in the regular promotion of felicity. Had he created all men and angels in hell, in order to torment them forever and ever, it would have been as perfectly just and good as any thing he has ever done, because with him every thing is righteous and he has no rule for his actions but his own sovereign and independent will.

If we find ourselves unable to digest these shocking opinions, we must of necessity admit that the principle of right is the same yesterday, to-day and forever. It was never produced as the effect of will or volition, but being as essential to God as his omnipotence, it is as eternal, as necessary, as indestructable and unchangeable as the divine nature itself.

But though the nature of justice and goodness is eternal and cannot be altered, yet the exercise of those attributes for our be-

act is a voluntary act of the divine will. God was never bound to bring us into being, because it was an effect of his goodness, which essentially includes the right of option, to grant favours or to withhold them; and if he were to let us drop into our original nothingness, he would do us no wrong; because we have no right to demand existence at his hands. But though he is free to bestow his favours or to withhold them, yet he is not free to violate justice and torment innocent creatures in hell forever, because this would be contrary to the principle of right, which is essential to his nature and coeval with his eternal existence.

I conclude, therefore, that it is so far from being blasphemy to reason concerning *what God may do*, that it is evidently blasphemous to insinuate, "that it is a matter of indifference with him whether he does one thing or another, and that his sovereign will may choose to do any thing that ever was done, because any thing is righteous that he pleases to make so." Is not this plainly saying there are no moral principles in his nature, and that he has no regard to them in his actions? Did the prophets or apostles indulge the voluntary humility of modern times, and modestly adore the sovereign pleasure, without presuming to mention what God might do, or what he might not? Just the contrary.

"I will publish the name of the Lord," says Moses, "he is the rock, his work his perfect; for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is he."—Deut. xxxii. 3, 4.

"Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face."—Psalm lxxxix. 14.

"Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his Maker?"—Job iv. 17.

"Doth God pervert judgment? or doth the Almighty pervert justice? Far be it from God, that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity. For the work of a man shall he render unto him, and cause every man to find according to his ways. Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment."—Job viii. 3.—xxxiv. 12, &c.

Does the Lord require us to believe that he might do wrong without being evil, while his word declares that "Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked, and he that sayeth unto the wicked, thou art righteous, him shall the people curse; nations shall abhor him?" 1 Sam. xxiv. 13. Prov. xxiv. 24.



Faithful Abraham, we are told, had the assurance to violate king James's "axiom in divinity," and yet was never charged with blasphemy: "And Abraham drew near and said, wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked; and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee. Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" Gen. xviii. 23, 25.

## SECTION. V.

### *The infinity of Christ's atonement considered.*

IT may be objected, that the doctrine defended in the preceding pages, supposes it not necessary for Christ to render infinite satisfaction for sin; of course, that sin is not an infinite evil,—that the divine law is not an infinite law,—that sinners do not deserve infinite punishment,—and consequently, that the doctrine of universal salvation is true.

Much use, indeed, has been made of this argument, both by universalists and by their opposers. The former argue, "that *finite* creatures cannot commit an *infinite* offence, and therefore cannot deserve *infinite* punishment;" whilst the latter urge with equal confidence, "that God being infinite, his law must be equally so; a breach of it must therefore be an infinite offence, and consequently, deserve infinite punishment." The one is considered a principal argument in defence of everlasting punishment, the other, a principal argument against it: and it is not a little remarkable, that the same point [infinity] is the main pillar of both arguments, and seems to make them appear equally plausible.

I cannot help being of opinion, that the conclusion of the latter argument is false, and does not follow from the premises, and that the conclusion of the former, though admitted, serves nothing to the purpose for which it has been so often brought forward.

The word *infinite*, Mr. Walker tells us, signifies "unbounded, unlimited, immense. It is hyperbolically used for large, great."

Thus it appears, the word is used in two senses, the one literal, the other hyperbolic. When used as a hyperbole, the word sig-

nifies any thing large or great; and in this sense it will be admitted on all sides to apply to the atonement, to the divine law, to sin, and to future punishments. Universalists will very readily acknowledge, that future punishment will be infinite, if we explain ourselves to mean simply that it will be very great; because this may be admitted, and the everlasting duration of it be denied notwithstanding.

The argument then, to support the conclusion intended, must take the word in its literal signification, namely, "unbounded, unlimited," &c. And in this sense I presume it cannot in truth be applied to any of the forementioned subjects, but to God alone.—To clear this point and obviate the present objection, let us consider the following particulars:

1. It is very evident that God is infinite, or unbounded in his essence, and no quality or attribute essential to his Being, can be justly considered as finite, because it would suppose the same Being essentially finite and infinite at the same time, which is a contradiction; but if we attribute infinity to any thing else but God, or that which is essential to his nature, do we not at once suppose there are more infinite beings than one in existence? and what is this but to acknowledge several infinite Gods, or, which is the same thing, to attribute to other objects the grand prerogative which distinguishes the Almighty from every other being?

2. What reason have we to believe the divine law is infinite? Because God is the author of it? If this alone be a sufficient reason, it will follow that every man and every animal in the creation is infinite, because God is the author of them. Is it because the law is founded upon the divine attributes, or is formed according to them, and is made in the image of God? We are expressly told that man was made in the image of God: does it therefore follow that man was made infinite? If we say the Almighty has ever made any infinite things, is not this to affirm that he has created Gods like himself, completely infinite as their Maker?

Where is there a single passage in the Bible that declares, either directly or indirectly, that the law of God is infinite? And if there be no such passage, whence comes it to pass that many receive this hypothesis with so much confidence, and those too, who profess to regulate their opinions by the authority of the Bible alone?

3. If it be affirmed that sin is infinite, it is desirable for us to be instructed whether each and every sin be infinite, or whether a number of sins added together is necessary to bring it up to infini-

ty. If the first be true, the plain consequence is, that there are no degrees in sin, either from its quality or number: for we may select any particular sin that ever was committed, and affirm without fear of contradiction, that if it be infinite, it is equal to all the other sins that ever were perpetrated in the universe; for none surely will affirm that the whole put together will be greater than infinity. This were to suppose there are several infinities of different magnitudes, or, which is the same thing, that a subject may be infinite and finite at the same time.

If we suppose the second, that single sins are finite, but that a sufficient number put together will become infinite, then it follows that the addition of finite things together will produce infinity, than which nothing can be more absurd. And besides, if a certain number of sins become infinite, then we must suppose that all sinners come up to this precise standard, and no farther, or that they do not; if they do, then, to say nothing of this flagrant contradiction of universal experience, the inevitable consequence is, that the guilt of all sinners is exactly equal; if they do not, then some sinners may rise above the standard, and their sins may become more than infinite, whilst others may fall below the standard, and then their sins are but finite, and consequently, according to the argument, they do not deserve infinite punishment.

4. I readily admit the conclusion, and believe it indubitably true, that no sinner ever did or ever will deserve infinite punishment; and, I must repeat it, this conclusion, when admitted, serves nothing to the purpose for which it has been so often brought forward by universalists. This I hope to make appear, after first attempting to convince all christians that they are forced to admit this conclusion, or deny their other established doctrines.

All christians, as far as I know, believe that some sinners deserve more punishment than others, that none will be punished more than they deserve, and consequently that there will be different degrees of punishment in a future state: but if punishment is necessarily infinite because it is everlasting, and if all who go to hell will be punished everlastingly, then it demonstrably follows, either that there are no different degrees in their punishment or that some of them will suffer more or less than infinite, or that one infinite is greater or less than another infinite.

Suppose the punishment to be everlasting; this does not prove it infinite. For no creature has an infinite capacity to suffer; and to say the punishment is infinite while the capacity is finite, is to say a creature may suffer more than he is capable of suffering,

which is a contradiction. I am aware of the evasion, that what is finite in degree may be infinite in duration. This supposes the punishment to be both finite and infinite, which is also a contradiction. The duration of a sinner's punishment is as far from being infinite as its degree; and yet that duration may be everlasting.

Was there not a precise point of time when his punishment began? And suppose we take our stand at any conceivable point of future duration, and look back at the point where any particular person's duration began: is it not completely finite, limited and measurable, as any thing that can be imagined? And will it not always be finite, limited and measurable, which infinity cannot be? Will it be said it is infinite, because it is always enlarging? Nay, this is the very thing that proves the duration to be finite; because infinity cannot be enlarged. If we say a creature's duration is infinite because it is perpetually enlarging, then the duration of a day or an hour is infinite; for our time was as regularly enlarging during the first hour of our lives, as it ever will be.

Suppose a person in an immense or boundless plain, to commence at any given point, and travel as regularly as our time has elapsed from the moment we were born: how far must he travel before his journey would become infinite? It is evident that after millions of ages, the extent of his progress, though great, would be as completely finite, and subject to mensuration, as it was when he had advanced but a single mile. And no argument can be offered to prove that his journey will ever be infinite, but what would equally prove it was so during the first mile, or even the sixtieth part of that distance. Nothing ever will be infinite but what always was so; and it is very obvious that boundless or infinite duration belongs to God alone, who is the only being whose existence never had a beginning, and therefore the only one who properly *inhabiteth eternity*.

Hence it appears, that neither the happiness or misery of any finite creature can ever be infinite either in degree or duration.— Not in *degree*, because no creature has an infinite capacity; not in *duration*, because the existence of every creature had a beginning, and therefore can no more be enlarged into infinity, than a man can be changed into a God.

It is far from my purpose to enter into the controversy respecting eternal punishments, a controversy replete with presumptuous conjectures, seldom productive of any good effects upon the human mind, and too often pernicious in its tendency: but it appeared necessary to give a brief statement of these arguments, to

show that we are under no necessity of assuming the hypothesis, that sin is infinite, to avoid admitting the doctrine of a restoration from hell. And as to an infinite atonement, of which so much has been said, it is a position not derived from any part of *the oracles of God*; and I know not what good has been obtained for mankind by this gratuitous addition to the scripture doctrine of our redemption.

That the atonement made by our Lord Jesus Christ was abundantly sufficient to accomplish every end intended, is very clear; but whether it be called infinite or not, is a matter, I apprehend, which affects not the doctrine of the present essay, as might easily be evinced were it necessary. That our Redeemer is *God over all, blessed forever*; and that none but God could possibly ransom the guilty, has been already stated, and the reasons advanced, which need not be repeated; but whatever denomination we give to this atonement, it is sufficient for us to know, that it displayed the full glory of God, and secured the dignity and perfect influence of his government, in the grant of pardon to penitent sinners.

## SECTION VI.

*A statement of the doctrine of original sin, in reply to the charge, that our system denies it.*

IT may be said, "The plan of redemption defended in these pages, by denying the imputation of our sins to Christ, and of his righteousness to us, implies that Adam's sin was not imputed to his posterity, and thus the doctrine of *original sin* is contradicted, and we find ourselves in the heart of *Arianism*, making rapid strides to infidelity."

This objection deserves a full and particular answer, that we may avoid the alarming charge of Arianism. We ought to avoid the doctrine of Arians and Socinians, so far as they are erroneous; if they should happen to be right in any thing, it is to be hoped we will not reject any part of the truth, and run into delusion, for fear of being called by such a frightful name.

As to the doctrine of the fall, we believe, (1.) That Adam was the general representative of his posterity. (2.) That we derive

from him a nature that is depraved, and prone to evil continually. (3.) That all mankind are subject to sufferings and death, in consequence of the original apostacy.

1. *He was the general representative of his posterity.* By this we mean that the blessings of Paradise were given to him and his posterity, on condition of his obedience to the command of God. Had he stood upright, every man born of a woman would have been a native heir to the blessing of that happy state; but by disobedience the whole was forfeited, and his posterity are involved in the consequences of that forfeiture: hence, "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."—Job. xiv. 1, 2.

When the actions or decisions of one man are not confined to himself, but thousands will be affected by his good or bad conduct, he is said to be the representative of those whose interests and welfare depend upon his decisions. Thus we call the members of congress and of the state legislatures our representatives, because we and our posterity will be affected by their official acts, whether they be good or bad. But if our nation should be involved in misery and ruin, by the bad conduct of our representatives, as we all have been by the bad conduct of our first representative, I hope no one would conclude that our children would really be to blame for what was done by the national authority before they were born. Shall we infer, that because they have to share in the consequences of their rulers' actions, they equally share in the guilt thereof? If so, how do we prove a representative to be a highly responsible character? If posterity bear the responsibility in the same proportion that they are involved in the consequences, it is very evident that the individual representative is no more culpable for the wrong direction of his public actions, than he would be if he acted for himself alone.

We say, for example, that Adam was highly responsible, and there was a great degree of guilt in his disobedience, because so many millions are affected by it. Then we turn about and say these millions are affected by it because they themselves are guilty. It would be unjust, we conclude, for them to suffer, being innocent, or to suffer more than their guilt deserves; therefore so far as they are involved in misery, so far they are guilty. Now who does not see that we suppose them involved in no consequences, but those in which their own guilt has involved them? and consequently that their supposed federal head is no more culpable for his

public actions, than he would be if he acted only as a private individual. It is true, that the acts of representatives are, by a figure, transferred to the nation, and are called the acts of the *Americans*, or the conduct of the French or British nation; but every man of common judgment understands such expressions, not in a literal, but in a figurative sense, and knows that no man is really culpable for the obnoxious acts of any government, but those whose will was employed in the matter, or who approved of the conduct of the rulers.

The sin of Adam is, by a like figure, called the sin of the world, or the original apostacy of the human race; because the whole race were represented by Adam, derive inherent propensities to evil from him, and feel the temporary consequences of his fall. If our opponents mean nothing more than this, when they say Adam's sin is imputed to his posterity, we are agreed. If when they say all men are born sinners, or that we are a wicked race, they would be understood in the same sense as those who say the English or French are an unjust and a haughty nation, there is no cause of dispute between us. We all know that the infants of Europe are not really to blame for the present acts of their councils, or for the wrong conduct of any unrighteous king or emperor. In like manner, we know that we and our children are not really guilty of any crime that was committed in Paradise.

2. *We all derive from Adam a nature prone to evil continually.* This melancholy truth is confirmed by universal experience. Many good men have established it by arguments drawn from the operations of human nature, and the man must be a great stranger to himself, who is under the necessity of going out of his own soul for evidence of this internal and native degeneracy. We are naturally inclined to do wrong, and to become enemies of all righteousness. This truth has been so often proved, and indeed it is so evident from the experience and history of all mankind, that it is almost incredible that any person should seriously call it in question for a moment. Taking the fact for granted, let us inquire, as others have done before us, how is this fact to be accounted for?

Is this original inclination or propensity to do wrong a *natural* or a *penal* consequence of Adam's transgression? That it is a natural effect of sin, appears evident from the three following considerations: First, it was not contained in the original threatening, and therefore was no part of the penalty: God never said "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely" have strong propensities to sin, but "thou shalt surely die." This, we grant, may imply



the loss of spiritual life as well as natural; but is there no medium between the loss of spiritual life, and the acquiring of innate propensities to sin? Spiritual life, I am apt to think, consists in a consciousness of the presence and the love of God. None will deny that it was possible for this to have been withdrawn from Adam before he fell, and whatever is possible may be supposed for the sake of argument: let us suppose then, that God had for certain purposes taken away (or withdrawn) Adam's spiritual life, while he stood in a state of innocence; will any one say he would immediately, and of necessity have felt strong propensities to sin? I rather think he would have felt a strong inclination to *pray*, and to seek that life again, which was the support of his happiness, and the principal source of his tranquillity.

Secondly, to say such propensities are not natural effects of sin, is to suppose that Adam, after his rebellion, had no evil propensity in his nature, till God executed the penalty upon him: and moreover, that he might have continued multiplying his crimes to the present day, without contracting any evil bias, provided God had suffered him to pass, without executing the sentence of the law upon him; because sin, of itself, is supposed to do no manner of harm to the sinner, but to leave him in quiet possession of all his internal rectitude and felicity, till the hand of God implants evil dispositions in him, as a punishment of his crimes! Shall we represent wickedness as a perfectly harmless thing, that we may have the pleasure of charging God with all the disorder and misery there is in the universe? It is evident from the word of God, that Adam had strong propensities to evil, to run away and hide himself from his Maker—to excuse and justify himself—to cast the blame on his partner—and to insinuate that God ought not to have given her to him:—and all this happened immediately after his transgression, before God had pronounced any curse against him, much less executed it: a clear proof that the moral disorders of his nature were produced by himself, as the natural and necessary consequence of his voluntary wickedness and apostacy.

Thirdly, the truth I defend is confirmed by universal experience: every sinner in the world knows, or may know, that his actual sins regularly tend to increase the strength of his evil habits and propensities. As we know this to be the nature of sin in our days, and in all parts of the world, why suppose it had another nature in the days of Adam? Why contradict the bible, which so clearly exhibits the state of his mind, before any curse or penalty was executed upon him? I know it may be said, God executed the sen-

tence on him, the very moment after he sinned, by taking away his spiritual life; but there is not a shadow of proof of it in the bible or any where else. It is an easy thing to form an hypothesis; but there is no evidence whatever, of any act of God to manifest his displeasure against the first sin, till after Adam and Eve attempted to hide themselves among the trees of the garden. If the loss of spiritual life was a natural effect of the apostacy, it is true that it immediately followed the transgression; but if it was a penal consequence, we demand proof that any penalty was executed till after God pronounced the curse upon Adam, before which time he had surely manifested strong propensities to sin.

As we know by experience, that actual sin produces an evil bias in the mind, and tends to confirm and strengthen our native proneness to do wrong; we have all the evidence that the nature of the subject can admit or require, that Adam contracted similar dispositions, as the immediate effects of his transgression: and as the goodness of God spared him to multiply his kind, we are all born in a disordered state, because it was impossible for him to propagate any other nature than his own.

It remains for us to inquire, whether this natural propensity to evil is in itself a sin? That it is the effect of sin, and inclines the mind to the practice of it, is too evident to admit of controversy; but whether it be proper to denominate that to be *sin*, which exists in us, prior to all moral or voluntary actions, is not so evident. St. Paul's definition of *sin* is, that it is *the transgression of the law*. Mr. Wesley puts in two explanatory words, and defines sin to be "*a voluntary transgression of a known law.*" By comparing this with the state of infants, we shall find they are *not sinners* in the sense of those definitions: but the term, *sin*, is sometimes applied to the *effects* of it, according to the following statements of Mr. Cruden; speaking of sin, he says, "It is taken (1.) for original corruption, or the depravity and naughtiness of our corrupt nature, which is prone to all evil. Psal. li. 5. (2.) For actual sin, which flows from the corruption of nature. Jam. i. 15. (3.) It is taken for the guilt and defilement of sin. Psal. li. 2. (4.) For the punishment of sin. Gen. iv. 7. (5.) Sin is taken both for the guilt and punishment of sin. Psal. xxxii. 1. (6.) The name of sin is often given to the sacrifice of expiation, or to the sacrifice for sin. Lev. iv. 3, 25, 29. What is there rendered sin-offering, is in Hebrew, sin. 2 Cor. v. 21."

Taking the word in this latitude of meaning, it is certain that it may in one sense, namely, the first mentioned by Mr. Cruden,

be applied to all infants. We may very confidently say, they are all born in sin, and have sin in them, provided we carefully distinguish the different senses in which the word is taken, and apply it to infants, only as signifying "original corruption, or the depravity and naughtiness of our corrupt nature, which is prone to all evil." If we confound those different meanings of the word, and speak of all men being born sinners, leaving the world to understand us as speaking of sin, *properly so called*, we shall inadvertently countenance the old merciless hypothesis, "that there are infants in hell not a span long." A sentiment this, which some bold professors have had the effrontery to avow, but which our opponents generally either disbelieve, or are ashamed openly to acknowledge.

Let us inquire, in the next place, whether we have proper authority to consider infants as *guilty creatures*. Dr. J. defines guilt to be "*an obligation to suffer punishment for sin.*"\*

If by an *obligation to suffer*, he means *deserving to suffer*, or that *justice requires* it of them, the definition, I think, is perfectly correct, provided he takes the word sin according to St. Paul's account of it when he says *sin is a transgression of the law*. A guilty person deserves to suffer a certain penalty: why? because he has voluntarily transgressed a known law, that was given him by just authority. To say a person is guilty who never committed a crime, is to say he is guilty of *nothing*, and that *criminality* and *guilt* have no necessary relation to each other. After a jury have investigated a charge presented to them, they bring in their verdict, guilty or not guilty: when they decide that the prisoner is *guilty*, every man of common sense understands them to mean, that *he has perpetrated some act, which is criminal, and deserves punishment*. If they determine that he is *not guilty*, we understand them to mean that *he did not commit the unlawful act, and therefore is no criminal, and deserves no punishment*.

There are many degrees of guilt, it is true, and one person may be more guilty than another; but guilt, in every degree of it, is inseparable from some criminal action, knowingly and willingly performed by the guilty person. Did any jury ever find a medium between being guilty and not guilty? Did they ever decide that the prisoner is neither guilty nor innocent, or that he is guilty and not guilty at the same time? If they were to say that the prisoner is clear of having done the action charged upon him, but is neverthe-

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\* See Mr. Wesley's Vindication of the Doctrine of Original Sin.

less guilty of the charge, would we admire the wisdom and equity of their decision, or hiss their verdict out of the world, as a contradiction, shocking to the common judgment and conscience of all mankind?

The thing we mean by a person's being guilty is, that he has "knowingly and willingly broken a law which he had power to keep, and the observance of which he knew to be enjoined on him by proper authority: and that he therefore deserves punishment." If there be any other kind of guilt, I would gladly be informed of its nature; for I have never yet been able to conceive any other kind. I have somewhere seen a definition given in these words: "Being liable to suffer on account of sin." The word *liable*, in this sentence, is subject to some ambiguity: it may mean a person's deserving to suffer on account of his own sin, and then it is the same with the definition above given; or it may signify the being exposed to punishment on account of the sin of others. If guilt consist in being liable to suffer on account of another's sin, it will indeed follow inevitably that infants are guilty, or else that their sufferings do not come upon them on account of Adam's sin. The latter is not pretended, and therefore we must admit the conclusion, or refute the definition from which it follows. This leads us to our third proposition.

3. All mankind are subject (or liable) to sufferings and temporal death in consequence of the original apostacy.

This fact is undeniable, and is admitted by christians almost universally. Our opponents think it impossible for us to believe it, without admitting the consequence, that infants are guilty. Why? because guilt consists in being in any way liable to suffer on account of sin. This is taken for granted; and we demand of them to produce evidence of its truth from reason or revelation. Admitting it to be true, for the sake of argument, we must take these consequences along with us: (1.) that when the heathen emperor caused hundreds of the primitive christians to be murdered, under pretence that they set fire to the city of Rome, a crime which he himself is said to have perpetrated; those christians were really guilty, because they suffered on account of sin. (2.) When sin was first introduced in God's creation, it injured innocent creatures, and made them suffer, or it did not; if it did not, it follows that this enormous evil which deserves everlasting damnation, was perfectly inoffensive in its nature and tendency, and did no harm to any living creature; if it did, then those innocent creatures were guilty, because they suffered on account of sin. (3.) All the beasts

of the earth, and the fowls of heaven, and the fishes of the sea, are guilty creatures unless it can be proved that their sufferings are not on account of sin. (4.) Lastly, The Lord Jesus Christ himself was a guilty creature, according to this definition, and it seems that nothing saves the very trees of the forest, or the rocks of the mountains from being guilty, but their incapacity to suffer.

The last consequence is admitted by our opponents, that the Lord Jesus was in some sort guilty, by imputation, and Luther called him the greatest sinner in the world; but I never heard that Adam's sin was imputed to the quadrupeds and the fowls, though it is almost universally acknowledged that they suffer and die in consequence of the original apostacy. The imputation must be kept up in three particular cases, it seems, however others may be spared. (1.) The imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity: (2.) The imputation of all our sins to Christ. (3.) The imputation of Christ's righteousness to us.

We are perfectly willing and desirous to understand this doctrine, and to examine whatever evidence may be advanced in its support. I, for one, am greatly at a loss to comprehend the meaning of this doctrine of imputation. I often find it stated, that Adam's sin was in some sort imputed to his posterity; that our sins were in some sense imputed to Christ, and the like. In what sense they mean, is hard to determine. The word occurs sometimes in scripture; but I find it applied to faith, more than to Adam or to Christ; and it commonly means nothing more than forgiving our sins, and accepting us in Christ in consequence of our believing. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile."—Psal. xxxii. 1, 2.—"For we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. Now, it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead." Rom. iv. 9, 23. Thus it appears that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is accepted instead of spotless righteousness; that is, when we believe, our sins are forgiven, and we are accepted as though we had never sinned, because the goodness of God in Jesus Christ is such, that he no longer demands the spotless and uninterrupted righteousness which the old covenant demanded, but graciously imputes or reckons faith unto us for righteousness.

The bible no where says that Adam's sin was imputed to his posterity; and we would gladly know how the matter is to be understood.

Is the act of breaking God's law in paradise imputed to the men of this generation? We were guilty of that act, or we were not; if we were, we acted, and broke the laws of God, some thousands of years before we were born; if we were not, to impute it to us is nothing more nor less than to allege a false accusation against us.

Will it be granted that we are clear of the criminal act, and yet be maintained that the guilt of it is imputed to us? Does this mean that we are not guilty of the crime, but are guilty of the guilt? If so, we are as far out at sea as ever, and the subject is truly a profound mystery, almost equal to that of transubstantiation.

That Adam's sin may be figuratively imputed to us, as the acts of the English Parliament are imputed to the British nation, is readily admitted, because Adam was our representative, and we are involved in the effects of his bad conduct; but this does not constitute us guilty, in any intelligible sense of the expression.

I am apt to think our opponents themselves, when they come to explain themselves, mean no more by the imputation of Adam's sin, but that we are involved in the natural consequences of it: at least, if they mean any thing else, they seem unable to tell us what they mean.

Mr. Wesley gives extracts from Dr. Watt's and Mr. Hebden upon this subject, in which we find the following explanation of the doctrine in question.

“When a man has broken the law of his country, and is punished for so doing, it is plain, that sin is imputed to him; his wickedness is upon him; he bears his iniquity; that is, he is reputed or accounted guilty: He is condemned and dealt with as an offender.

“On the other hand, if an innocent man, who is falsely accused, is acquitted by the court, sin is not imputed to him, but righteousness is imputed to him; or, to use another phrase, his righteousness is upon him.

“Farther, if a man has committed a crime, but the prince pardons him, then he is justified from it; and his fault is not imputed to him.

“But if a man having committed treason his estate is taken from him and his children, then they bear the iniquity of their father, and his sin is imputed to them also.

“But it may be asked, how can the acts of the parent's treason be imputed to his little child? since those acts were quite out of

the reach of an infant, nor was it possible for him to commit them.

“ I answer, (1.) Those acts of treason or acts of service, are by a common figure, said to be imputed to the children, when they suffer or enjoy the consequences of their father’s treason or eminent service: though the particular actions of treason or service could not be practised by the children. This would easily be understood, should it occur in an human history. And why not, when it occurs in the sacred writings?”

Thus far our author’s account of the matter is clear and intelligible: It is only “by a common figure” that “those acts of treason or acts of service are said to be imputed to the children: And why not, when it occurs in the sacred writings?” But he proceeds:

“ I answer, (2.) Sin is taken either for an act of disobedience to a law, or for the legal result of such an act; that is, the guilt, or liableness to punishment. Now when we say the sin of a traitor is imputed to his children, we do not mean, that the act of the father is charged upon the child: but that the guilt or liableness to punishment is so transferred to him, that he suffers banishment or poverty on account of it.”\*

It is true, “ If a man having committed treason, his estate is taken from him and his children,” the children suffer privation or “poverty on account of it;” but no man in his right mind believes they are really guilty of treason, because they are liable to suffer on account of their father’s crimes. If his fault is “said to be imputed to the children,” it is only “by a common figure,” and is not literally understood, as though the children were really involved in the father’s guilt, because from their peculiar relation to him they have to endure the consequences. Were children ever made responsible to any government for their fathers treason? Were they ever accused of his crime, and pronounced guilty, by the judicial authority of the nation? I presume not: and neither are the children of Adam pronounced guilty of his crime, in any part of the oracles of God.

But “guilt,” and a “liableness to punishment,” are by our author considered as synonymous: if he really mean that all the beasts of the creation are guilty of Adam’s sin, because they are liable to punishment, let him openly declare it; and we will patiently attend to the arguments or scriptures by which such a curious opinion is to be supported.

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\* See “The doctrine of original sin,” &c. page 384, &c.



The guilt of Adam's children is inferred from two passages of scripture, one is, that "we were all by nature children of wrath," and the other, "that judgment has come upon all men unto condemnation."

That *wrath*, or God's displeasure against sin, has come upon human nature, and even upon animal nature universally, is most evident; the very *ground* has been *cursed* for Adam's sake; but this is no proof that the *ground* is *guilty*: because though the words *curse*, *wrath* and *condemnation* commonly signify an execution of the sentence which justice requires, yet the words are sometimes applied, not to the guilty person only, but to other creatures or objects, which in some way stand related to him, and which are cursed for his sake, and not for their own. "Cursed is the ground for thy sake. Gen. iii. 17. Therefore is your land a desolation and a curse, at this day. Jer. xiv. 22. I will curse your blessings; yea, I have cursed them already. Mal. ii. 2. Master, behold the fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered away. Mark. xi. 21. At his wrath the earth shall tremble Jer. x. 10. I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. Was the Lord displeased against the rivers? was thine anger against the rivers? was thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thine horses, and thy chariots of salvation?" Hab. iii. 7, 8.

"By one man's offence, judgment came upon all men to condemnation." Rom. v. 18. This alludes to the condemnation which came upon Adam when he was driven out of the garden, and subjected to labour, misery and death. Human nature was thus condemned, and this *judgment* has certainly come upon all men, on account of their relation to their original representative. But when the judgments of God come upon a people, do they fall on none but those who are guilty of the crime for which the judgments were sent? When the judgment of God sent fire and brimstone upon Sodom for the abominations of that people, will any one say that the infants of that city were guilty of the crimes which brought down fire from heaven, and consumed them? I presume no person will be disposed to say so: and yet it is evident the judgment came upon them, and they "were children of this wrath even as others."

What shall we say of those days of wretchedness, at the destruction of Jerusalem, such as have not been before and shall not be again? "For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with

child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people." Luke. xxi. 22. When the Lord Jesus pronounced this *woe*, a word which frequently signifies a sentence of condemnation, did he mean that the mothers or their infant children were cursed in a peculiar sense, as being uncommonly guilty? Were the infants of the Jewish nation guilty of "crucifying the Lord of glory," or of the other crimes which brought misery and destruction upon them? The Jews said, "His blood be on us and on our children;" and it is evident the peculiar judgments which were sent on account of this crime, fell on their children, as well as themselves. Were the children therefore guilty? or shall we say the beasts and fowls which shared in the general misery, had the crimes of the high-priest, and of the pharisees, imputed to them? Thousands who knew not their right hand from their left were involved in the scene of wretchedness, which was brought on by the wickedness of the Jews, and which our Saviour calls vengeance, and wrath upon this people. The infants in Jerusalem, therefore, though they never crucified the Saviour, nor gave their consent to it, nor had it imputed to them, were nevertheless subjected to the general "judgment unto condemnation, and were (by birth, or nature) children of wrath even as others."

But arguments, as well as scriptures, are urged against us in this controversy. Some writers, who have thought it their duty, and a very important one, to exert their talents in defence of imputed righteousness, and original or imputed sin, though not in general friendly to metaphysical distinctions, have ventured to favour the world with some rational arguments in defence of these mysteries. Their arguments are plausible; and are, for the most part, drawn from the principle, "that the miseries and death which come upon all the children of Adam, can never be reconciled with justice, unless they are all in some sort guilty." This subject shall be examined, and due attention be paid to their reasonings, in the following section.

## SECTION VII.

*A view of the principal arguments by which infant guilt is defended.*

MR. TAYLOR, the great opposer of the original corruption of our nature, laid down the axiom, that "no just constitution can punish the innocent." Hence he concluded that infants are not punished for Adam's sin; but only suffer as a punishment to their parents, who are actual sinners. His opponents admitted the same axiom, but maintained that our sufferings are on account of sin, and therefore that they are properly considered as legal punishments: hence they concluded all infants are guilty.

Dr. Watts is of the same opinion. After describing the sufferings of children, he says, \* "are these treated as innocent creatures? Or rather as under some general curse, involved in some general punishment."

"But may not these sufferings of children be for the punishment of the sins of the parents?"

"Not with any justice or equity, unless the sins of the parents are imputed to their children."

Mr. Hebden corroborates the declaration of Dr. Watts: "It is incompatible with the justice and mercy of God," says he, "to appoint afflictions of any kind for the innocent. If Christ suffered, it was because the sins of others were imputed to him." Again, he says, "How are many dead, or made sinners, through the disobedience of Adam? His first sin so far affects all his descendants, as to constitute them guilty, or liable to all that death, which was contained in the original threatening." Again: "By man, in the twenty-first verse, is meant Adam. The *all* spoken of are all his natural descendants. These *all die*; that is, as his descendants, are liable to death, yea, to death everlasting."

These are respectable authorities; and it would be an easy thing to produce the testimony of many others, to the same effect. This doctrine concerning original guilt has long been considered of great importance with all the defenders of imputed righteousness, finished salvation, and eternal election and reprobation. They perceive if this should be given up, reprobation will be despoiled of a very plausible covering, and the general system of fatality or predestination will be in imminent danger.

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\* Page 69 and 71.

Accordingly, the last quoted author says, "A denial of original sin," (by which he means "guilt" that deserves "death everlasting") contradicts the main design of the gospel, which is to humble vain man, and to ascribe to God's free grace, not man's free will, the whole of his salvation. Nor indeed can we let this doctrine go, without giving up at the same time the greatest part, if not all, of the essential articles of the christian faith."

This statement, I think, is correct, if by "the essential articles of the christian faith," we are to understand the distinguishing tenets of Mr. Calvin and his followers. Their principles have a close connexion with the doctrine of original guilt, and therefore to them the doctrine is very important. Their conviction of its importance, may possibly cause them to be satisfied with very slight evidence of its truth.

Some honest Arminians, I fear, have been carried away by the general outcry against the danger of giving up this most essential and interesting principle. We have been cautioned against Socinianism, and very justly, if Socinians deny the deep depravity of human nature; this we acknowledge in all its extent; but this is not thought sufficient: to avoid the snares of the philosophical Socinians, it seems, we must espouse the doctrine in all its sacred mystery, and maintain that infants are in some sort guilty. Are we permitted to inquire in what sort they are guilty?

Are they guilty of having a nature prone to sin? or guilty of being conceived and born of such sinful parents? And was Adam guilty likewise for being made capable of sinning, and for being liable to the devil's temptations? Are the South Sea savages, who never heard of Christ, guilty for their want of faith in him? or brutes and children for their ignorance of God?

And besides, if the guilt of infants arises from their native depravity, why recur to the doctrine of imputation to account for it? Their depravity is real, and not merely imputed; but our opponents tell us the doctrine of original guilt, and that of imputation must stand or fall together. They argue, that infants are guilty because they suffer; and they cannot suffer on account of the parents' sin "with any justice or equity," says Dr. Watts, "unless the sins of the parents are imputed to their children." It is therefore plain that a denial of the imputation of sin, is a denial of their guilt, and consequently their guilt arises not from their depravity, which is real and not merely imputed.

It remains then that they are guilty of Adam's sin, by imputation. The apostle tells us condemnation came by *one offence*. We

would be glad to know whether this crime were divided, half being imputed to us, and half to Adam, or whether the whole were imputed to his descendants? If half were imputed, we deserve half the penalty; if the whole, then all infants are as guilty as Adam, and our author is right when he says, "His descendants are liable to death, yea, to *death everlasting*."

Thus, the secret is out. There is supposed to be no medium between believing infants are guilty, and being Socinians: that there is no medium between believing infants guilty, and acknowledging that they deserve death everlasting: therefore, Mr. Whitefield's conclusion stands firm with all its train, "that election and reprobation are highly just and reasonable."

Is it any longer wonderful that our opponents should be fond of this doctrine, and should think that they cannot "let it go, without giving up at the same time the greatest part, if not all, of the essential articles of the Christian faith?"

I suspect we must follow them in all their conclusions, or, denying the principle from whence they set out, (that is, the guilt of infants,) maintain that infants are *not guilty* in any sort or sense whatever.

Here then we are fairly at issue. What are the arguments by which infant guilt is to be supported?

The main argument is drawn from the axiom above mentioned, and is produced by different authors in various forms of expression. It is stated by Mr. Hebden, in as clear and intelligible a manner, as by any I have seen: his words are these:

"Since Adam's posterity are born liable to death, which is the due wages of sin, it follows, that they are born sinners. No art can set aside the consequence." Again:

"If original sin is not, either death is not the wages of sin, or there is punishment without guilt: God punishes innocent, guiltless creatures. To suppose which, is to impute iniquity to the Most Holy."

I rejoice to see a man thus come out, clear and open as the sun, and exhibit his opinions and arguments in the concise and intelligible style of manly reasoning, without confusing or covering the question, and without attempting to conceal himself in the shades of mystery.

It is necessary first, to notice one or two of the terms of his argument, that we may not dispute where we both agree.

If, by being "born sinners," his meaning be, that we are born in a disordered state, with a nature prone to sin, this conclusion is

admitted without delay or hesitation. But if it be, that we are born guilty, the question remains yet to be decided.

When he says "death is the due wages of sin," if his meaning be "death everlasting," I acknowledge it is always the wages of sin. But if it be temporal death, and if by the wages of sin we are to understand, a *penalty which justice requires*, although this is the wages of sin originally, yet it is not so in all cases, otherwise the beasts and the fowls of heaven are sinners, which has not yet been pretended.

Having premised thus much, we come to the argument, the whole force of which may be expressed in these words: It is unjust to inflict misery and death on those who are not guilty; but misery and death are inflicted on infants; therefore those who say infants are not guilty, charge God with injustice.

I purpose now to show, first, that this argument, if solid, would involve our opponents in as great a dilemma as ourselves; and secondly, that it has no strength to support their conclusion.

*First*, the argument, if true, would involve them as much as ourselves. This will appear from the three following reflections:

1. They must prove that the inferior animals are guilty, or that they do not suffer on account of sin, neither of which has yet been attempted, or their system militates against the justice of God as much as ours.

2. If the guilt of infants consists in their being born with a fallen nature, it follows that they ought not to have been thus born, otherwise you say they ought to be guilty: to say a person ought to be guilty, is to say, it is right to be guilty, which is a contradiction, and at the same time supposes, that a guilty person deserves no punishment, unless we say he deserves punishment for doing right. And if infants ought not to have been born with a fallen nature, then it was their duty to overturn the laws of nature, and defeat the dispensations of God in peopling the earth with the descendants of Adam. To deny this, is to say it is not a person's duty to keep himself clear of guilt, which at once makes it right to do wrong and saps the foundation of all moral principles. Our opponents must therefore embrace all these consequences, or admit that infants are not guilty, on account of being born with a fallen and depraved nature. It remains,

3. That if they are guilty at all, it must be by virtue of the act of imputation, and by nothing else. This seems to be the view of their writers on the subject, though they frequently speak in a confused way, and it is hard to discover whether they mean

that our original guilt arises solely from the imputation of Adam's sin, or entirely from our degenerate nature, or partly from one and partly from the other.

Dr. Watts clearly puts the question, "may not these sufferings of children be for the punishment of the sins of their parents?" or, (we might with equal propriety say,) for the sin of our first parents?

"Not with any justice or equity," says he, "unless the sins of the parents are imputed to the children."

Now they believe we actually suffer for the sin of our first parent, and at the same time maintain that this could not be inflicted "with any justice or equity, unless the sins of the parents are imputed to their children." It therefore follows, that if the parents' sin had not been thus imputed, all the children of Adam would have been clear of guilt, and could not have suffered "with any justice or equity." This imputation, they tell us, is the act of God: consequently we were never guilty till God made us so, by the act of imputation.

Supposing that God had not imputed Adam's sin to us: we should then have been free from misery, it seems, and it would have been unjust for infants either to suffer or die. And why so? Because they would have been clear of guilt, and "no just constitution can punish the innocent." It is acknowledged then that infants of themselves, abstracted from the imputation, are not guilty: therefore when God imputed guilt to them, he charged them with being guilty, when they were not so. And is this the way we are to reconcile infant sufferings with the justice of God?

The maxim is thought to be incontrovertible, that no just constitution can punish the innocent: and is it not equally evident, that no just constitution can impute guilt to the innocent, in order to punish them as guilty creatures when they are not so? The inquisitors of Spain, we are told, burnt men to death for crimes of which they were not guilty; but those crimes were imputed to them by the "holy inquisition," and this was thought sufficient to account for the justice of the sentence! In like manner it appears that our opponents, being pressed with Dr. Taylor's axiom, and fondly supposing it involves the Arminians in an "inextricable dilemma," leap out of the difficulty themselves, by gravely recurring to the doctrine of imputation, and thus avoid the "consequence which no art can set aside," by supposing one unjust action is excused by another. Will they say God has a right to impute sin to whom he pleases? And why not an equal right to punish whom he pleases, without imputing sin to them?



*Secondly,* The argument has no strength to support their conclusion.

The attack which I mean to make must of course be levelled against the major proposition; for that infants do in fact suffer and die, an idiot would acknowledge. Let us then examine this formidable principle, that it is unjust for those to suffer and die who are not guilty, or in the words of Dr. Taylor, that "no just constitution can punish the innocent."

That justice does not require that the innocent should suffer, is indeed self-evident: but that justice admits of it, whenever it results from the attribute of goodness, I hope may be established beyond all reasonable doubt.

Every violation of what justice requires, is unjust: whatever accords with what justice admits, but does not require, is benevolent. (I speak of moral actions.)

To say justice does not admit of any thing but what it requires, is to say justice required of God to bestow all the favours he has ever bestowed upon mankind, or else that it did not admit of it: if it required it, God would have been unjust had he withheld his favours; and if it did not admit of it, he was unjust in bestowing them.

Benevolence has a right to do any thing which justice admits; there is no benevolence in merely doing what justice requires; therefore if justice admits nothing but what it requires, there is no such thing as benevolence in the universe.

A present evil inflicted, when necessary, to prevent a greater evil, or to promote a lasting good to come, is not only just, but truly benevolent, whether inflicted on the guilty or the innocent. I grant the innocent do not deserve any degree of misery; that is, justice does not require it; but justice admits of it, for the best reason in the world, and that is, that it is required by goodness.

We will suppose a little child is seized with some disorder which threatens to keep it in lingering misery to the end of life: a physician proposes by a short but severe operation, to effect a perfect cure: perhaps a leg or an arm must be amputated, or some other operation must be endured equally painful: every groan and shriek of the innocent little creature cries in the ears of reason and humanity that it does not deserve this misery: but it is the physician who inflicts it: is he therefore an unjust man? not at all; because the present pain will promote an excellent end in future, and it is inflicted with a benevolent intention.

Let us suppose the physician afterwards takes hold of another child of the same family, who is in perfect health, and cuts off its arm, or performs the same operation that was performed on the other, knowing that there was no necessity for it, and that it would injure the child through life: would not every ones' indignation be raised against him, as an unjust and a cruel monster of barbarity? And why? Because the misery inflicted did not arise from a benevolent intention, nor promote a benevolent end: the child did not deserve it, and there was no necessity for it; therefore justice was so far from requiring it, that it required the contrary. How then could justice admit of the operation, in the former case? Was the former child more guilty than the latter? This cannot be pretended, unless we are disposed to conclude, very gravely, that it was guilty of having the disease. As they were therefore both alike as to innocence or guilt, justice did not require that either of them should be punished by the physician; but it admitted of it in one case, and forbid it in the other, for this reason only, that the former case was benevolent, and therefore consistent with justice, the latter unjust and cruel, and therefore contrary to it.

If it can be proved that justice requires that all infants should suffer and die, we will acknowledge at once that they are guilty. But if this dispensation was the result of goodness, it remains that their sufferings are consistent with justice, but that it does not demand them. That it was the result of benevolence may be made evident, I think, by the following arguments.

1. It will be readily granted that Adam himself, after he sinned, was guilty: that he by disobedience forfeited all the blessings of Paradise, and justly deserved to die. Whence then was he permitted to enjoy his forfeited life, and the blessings of it, for nearly a thousand years? Was it not through mere grace or favour? None surely will presume to deny it. Had not the stroke of justice been thus through mercy suspended, we should have never been born to suffer and die, unless our opponents will insist that Adam would have actually propagated his species after he was dead. Therefore our being born as we now are is the result of benevolence, sparing our first parents after their transgression.

2. It is supposed that because infants do in fact suffer and die, justice therefore requires it of them: but why is it that good men, after being pardoned and fully sanctified, have still to suffer and die? Our objectors insist, that all the suffering justice required of them was entirely satisfied when the Saviour undertook to die in their place. And though we believe this was intended only to sa-

satisfy justice for them to be spared; to be placed in a state of probation; and to receive the free offers of salvation through Jesus Christ; yet we also acknowledge that when the goodness of God pardons their sins, and renews them in the spirit of their minds, full satisfaction is rendered, and justice requires no more. But still they have to die. Is it because they are still guilty, after all that God has done for them in redemption, pardon and sanctification? or merely because they were so before? If men, after their sins have all been blotted out, are still under condemnation, merely because they were once guilty, they are justified and condemned at the same time, and may be so eternally; because it will be forever true that they were once guilty. We might as well say that a man who was once convicted of a crime, but who has received a full pardon from the governor, is still guilty and ought to be executed. If so, it is plain the governor had no just authority to pardon him, otherwise justice would not afterwards require his execution. If we say, therefore, that pardoned and sanctified christians (I mean those who are fully sanctified and sealed before death) still deserve death as a penalty, our conclusion is founded on the principle, that God has not forgiven all their sins, or that he had no just authority to do so.

3. If it be granted that such christians are now clear of guilt, and nevertheless have to die, the argument against infants is demolished, and their sufferings and death are no proof of their criminality: and if we conclude, on the contrary, that all christians remain guilty, and therefore that justice requires their death, its requirements were evidently violated in the case of *Enoch*, for the apostle tells us: "Enoch was translated that he should not see death." Heb. xi. 5. He moreover tells us, when speaking of the general resurrection, that "we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." 1 Thess. iv. 17. Those Christians who shall be alive at that happy period, will be so far from enduring the lingering pains of death, that they shall "be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump." 1 Cor. xv. 51.

4. We would be glad to know whether infants are so guilty, that justice requires that they should suffer "death temporal, spiritual and eternal," or whether it requires temporal death only.

Suppose the last to be true, that they do not deserve damnation, but that justice requires their present sufferings and their dissolution. This being granted, these two consequences are unavoidable.

ble: first, that God shows mercy to actual sinners, but to many infants he exercises judgment without mercy: for it is no uncommon thing for infants to die as soon as they are born; and therefore no mercy is exercised towards them; they are not permitted to enjoy good in the land of the living; but the whole penalty which they deserve is executed upon them the moment they come into the world. Secondly, Those who say infants need no Saviour, on supposition that they are innocent, do not avoid the same consequence, by supposing them guilty in the degree now under consideration: for the argument must rest upon the principle, that the only office of a Saviour is to "remove guilt, by bearing the penalty:" and that of consequence those who have no guilt, need no Saviour. Now if infants are only so far guilty as to deserve temporal death, when they actually die, the penalty is discharged by their own sufferings, and of course, according to the present argument, they need no Saviour, because the whole penalty they deserved has been actually endured by them, and justice requires no more.

5. It remains then, that the only ground on which infant guilt can prove they need a Saviour, is the supposition that they are so guilty as to deserve everlasting damnation. And indeed this appears to be the ground generally taken by our adversaries. They suppose all infants deserve to be damned, and therefore it is a mercy that any of them are permitted to pass with no greater punishments than those which are temporal, or of short duration.

Dr. Watts introduces this query, in form of an objection: "But how are such miseries reigning among his Creatures consistent with the goodness of God?" "Perfectly well," says he, "if we consider mankind as a sinful, degenerate part of God's creation. It is most abundant goodness that they have any comforts left, and that their miseries are not doubled."

Now if infants die as soon as they are born, what "comforts" have they "left?" And if their present sufferings and death are all that they deserve, how is it "abundant goodness that their miseries are not doubled?" Is God abundantly good merely because he does not condemn his creatures, and punish them over again, after they have suffered all that they deserve? The doctor's meaning evidently was, though he had too much modesty and humanity to express it openly, that all infants "deserve death, yea, death everlasting." This was expressed openly by one author above quoted, and it is evident that we must, if we would be consistent,

adopt the same conclusion, or maintain that infants are not guilty, and that they deserve no penalty.

Let us then suppose for the sake of argument, however gloomy and dismal the supposition may be to the feelings of justice and humanity, that all infants deserve to be sent into hell forever. I suppose our opponents will readily admit that they are not *more* guilty than Adam was.

Did Adam deserve death temporal and eternal the moment after his transgression? or had he a right in justice to live and enjoy the blessings of life for almost a thousand years afterwards? If he deserved immediate death, it was pure mercy that spared him, and had the sentence been instantly executed, the temporal sufferings of his posterity would have been thereby prevented, unless it can be proved that the earth would have been peopled by his dead body in the grave: and so would their eternal sufferings have been prevented, by the same means, unless it can be proved that his soul would have propagated his species in hell. Thus it appears, the execution of justice on Adam would have saved his posterity from all guilt, or from all the consequences of it; and if mercy spared him, to impute sin to his posterity, they were mercifully made guilty, and mercifully exposed to "death everlasting."

If any should attempt to evade this conclusion, by saying it was not through mercy that Adam was spared to enjoy the blessings of life, but through justice; then he had a right in justice to live and enjoy them before the sentence of death, either temporal or eternal, should be executed upon him: consequently his posterity have an equal right, unless they are more guilty than Adam. If they are *not* more guilty, we would thank our opponents to explain how it can accord with justice for the sentence to be executed on them as soon as they are born, whereby they are deprived of those temporal blessings which they have a right in justice to enjoy? If they *are* more guilty than Adam, we would gladly be instructed, whether imputed sin makes a person more guilty than actual sin, or whether the crimes of Satan were imputed to us, as well as the sin of our first parent. Adam deserved death temporal and eternal, but is supposed to have had a right first to enjoy the good things of this life; his posterity, we say, deserved the same death, but had no such right to the blessings of this life: consequently infants are more guilty, and deserve a more instant destruction from the presence of the Lord, than ever justice required of Adam and Eve, who were the first and most responsible sinners of the human race.

6. Lastly, if Adam's sin was imputed to his posterity, whereby they were constituted guilty, and were exposed to the whole penalty of justice which Adam himself deserved, then the sin was transferred to his posterity, and he became innocent. It was just for his guilt and punishment to be transferred to them, otherwise they are not guilty and cannot be justly exposed to the penalty: and if they deserve "death everlasting" as merited by his sin, and should accordingly suffer it, then surely Adam is free; unless some extraordinary disputant will undertake to demonstrate that after the full demands of justice are accomplished, its demands are absolutely in full force as they were before; and that the same sin, after being justly imputed, and punished according to its demerit, deserves to be punished over again, after receiving all that was deserved. This is an absolute contradiction; but it must be spared, I suppose, because it is the grand pillar on which the whole system of Antinomian divinity is built.

This, by the way, affords a new argument against the legal notion of atonement: for if redemption consists in having our sins imputed or transferred to Jesus Christ, whereby he becomes guilty and suffers the penalty in our place; then it very evidently follows that if Adam's sin is imputed or transferred to his posterity, whereby they become guilty, and if they should actually suffer the whole penalty which that sin deserves, Adam would thus be redeemed by his posterity in the very way our objectors suppose the elect have all been redeemed by our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ could not have redeemed us, we are told, without first becoming guilty by having our sins imputed to him. "It is incompatible with the justice and mercy of God," says Mr Hebden, "to appoint afflictions of any kind for the innocent. If Christ suffered, it was because the sins of others were imputed to him:" Had Christ remained innocent then, he could not have suffered consistently with the justice and mercy of God, and therefore could not have redeemed the world: consequently the only thing which enabled him to do it, was his becoming guilty by imputation, without which his dignity of person would have been of no avail. If then the only thing which rendered redemption effectual was his suffering the penalty, in consequence of having our sin and guilt imputed to him, it is evident as day-light that had Adam's posterity suffered the penalty, in consequence of having his sin and guilt imputed to them, they would have done the very thing for their original Father which redeemed the elect, and without which their redemp-



tion could never be made "compatible with the justice and mercy of God."\*

These are the noble fruits of the Antinomian doctrine of chimerical *imputation*! Adam is made innocent by having his guilt conveyed to posterity;—the Israelites, by having their's conveyed to the *scape goat*;—the elect in general, by having their's conveyed to Christ:—The Saviour is made guilty by having their sins imputed to him, and then, in suffering exactly what his guilt deserves, he acquires a certain kind of righteousness, which he immediately transfers to them by another act of *imputation*; whereby they are made righteous in the midst of all their sins! These profound mysteries have long passed in the world for pure gospel; and I suspect it will be my lot to pass for a dreadful heretic, if not for a notorious blasphemer, for attempting to remove the veil, and to bring some rays of evidence into the enormous temple of obscure

\*The only exception that can be made to this argument is, "that Christ's becoming guilty by imputation, though essential to the atonement, was not the *only* qualification which enabled him to redeem his people: he possessed a *dignity of person* which Adam's posterity did not, and this also was essential to his work of redemption." Answer:

This objection supposes that *dignity of person* renders the mere payment of a debt meritorious. As if a prince or sovereign, was more praise-worthy or meritorious than any other person, in merely paying his debts or discharging an obligation of justice. What is the difference with an insolvent debtor, whether his creditor receive payment by a mechanic who acts as his surety, or by an emperor? The payment of the debt is the single thing that satisfies the creditor, and all the *dignity of person* required, is an ability to pay it; and whether this be done by the interposition of a prince or a Hottentot, is the same thing, provided only that the debt be paid.

Now if Adam's posterity had his sin imputed to them, and if they had suffered the whole penalty which in justice it deserved, the obligation would be as effectually discharged, as if the penalty had been suffered by any other person upon a like imputation. If God imputed sin to Christ, whereby he became guilty, there was no more merit in his suffering in proportion to his guilt, than in Adam's posterity suffering in like manner: because when a criminal stands before the bar of justice, *dignity of person* goes for nothing, and a king's son, suffering according to his crimes, is no more meritorious than a beggar. Therefore the only ground on which we can appeal to the *dignity of Christ*, as our meritorious Saviour, is the ground of his sufferings; resulting from pure *benevolence*: but if so, he never was *guilty*, otherwise we say, *benevolence* consists in a person's suffering according to his guilt, and consequently according to what he deserves.



divinity, where "lady Wanton" and "Free-wrath" have kept quiet possession, and have long concealed their native and inconceivable deformity.

Not wishing to stand alone, under such a formidable charge, I must close this section by showing that Mr. Fletcher bears an equal share of the reproach.

"As sure then as Christ was not *made sin* [that is, a sin-offering] *for us*, by a speculative imputation of our personal sins; but by being actually made *flesh*, clothed with our mortality, and 'sent in the likeness of sinful flesh,' so sure are 'we made the righteousness of God in him;' not by a speculative imputation of his personal good works, but by being 'made partakers of the divine nature,' begotten of God, and clothed with essential righteousness, which is the case, when we 'put on the new man, who after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.'

"Once more: If these branches do not believingly *abide in Christ the vine*, they become such *branches in him*, as bear not fruit. Nay, they bear the poison of unrighteousness; *iniquity*, therefore, is again imputed to them; and so long as they continue in their sin and unbelief, they are every moment liable to be 'taken away, cast into the fire and burned.' John xv.\*

"This, honoured sir, is the holy imputation of righteousness, which we read of in the oracles of God: it hath *truth* for its foundation; but your imputation stands upon a preposterous supposition, that Christ, the righteous, was an execrable sinner, and that an elect is perfectly righteous, while he commits execrable iniquity.

"We firmly believe, that God's imputation, whether of sin or righteousness, is not founded upon sovereign caprice, but upon indubitable truth."†

Now if God's imputation is founded upon indubitable truth, then he never imputed sin to Christ, unless it is indubitably true that Christ was a sinner: he never imputed righteousness to any man, who in reality and truth was *not* righteous: he never imputed guilt to any creature, but to those who in reality, and indubitable truth, were guilty: consequently, he never imputed guilt to Christ, or to infants, unless they were positively guilty, independent of that imputation.

It is true, when we repent and believe the gospel, our sins are forgiven, and faith is reckoned to us for righteousness; but Mr.

\* Vol. 2. page 167, 168.

† page 165.

Fletcher observes, very justly, (page 165) "As we are partakers by *generation* of Adam's original pollution, before God imputes it to us, that is, before he accounts us really polluted; so are we partakers by *regeneration* of Christ's original righteousness, before God imputes righteousness to us, that is, before he accounts us really righteous." Thus is Mr. Fletcher involved in my supposed heresy, and I take new courage upon finding myself supported by so respectable an author.

### SECTION VIII.

*Infants are not guilty on account of their natural passions, or propensities to evil.*

HAVING examined the supposed guilt of infants, arising from the imputation of Adam's sin, let us now inquire whether they be guilty, and deserve to die, together with all christians, on account of their original corruption, or internal propensities to sin. It is true, that too many christians, after being received into divine favour, neglect to *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things*; and it appears from the words of two apostles, that temporal death, to some, becomes a penalty which justice requires, on account of their sins after justification. Whether the following passages do not evidently apply to the present question, I leave the reader to judge.

"Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." Jam. v. 13, 15. "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say he should pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death." 1 John v. 16.

As to their remaining propensities to evil, though they may cause death to be necessary, yet they do not cause any person to deserve it as a penalty, unless it can be proved that they constitute him guilty. The contrary of this has been already proved; and it is evident to any man of reason and candour, that while a christian lives without committing sin, he lives without contracting guilt,

whatever his temptations or propensities may be. The distinction between actual and inward sin I cannot understand, unless it be meant to distinguish between the acts of the body, and the acts of the mind without the body. It is evident that all sin which brings guilt is actual: though there may be no action of the body, yet it is a voluntary act of the will, going contrary to a known law of God, otherwise it brings no condemnation, seeing "sin is a voluntary transgression of a known law."

That evil propensities are sometimes figuratively called sin, because they are the original effects of it, has been already granted and explained; (section V. of the present chapter,) but every argument to prove that they constitute a person guilty, will equally prove temptations to do so, because they themselves are properly nothing else, and will be comprehended under every intelligible definition that can be given of temptation.

Does temptation consist in presenting some forbidden object to the mind, and exciting certain thoughts or feelings which tend to lead us to do wrong? Let any man consult his consciousness, and say if all his temptations be not of this nature, and if his propensities be not exactly of the same tendency. Does temptation operate in such a way, that it demands an effort, of which we are conscious, to keep from yielding to its influence? So do these evil propensities. Is temptation an occasion of, or an enticement to sin? So are these propensities. Is a man clear of guilt, however strong his temptations may be, till he consents to do what he knows is wrong? So he is when he feels these propensities. But is not a man morally defiled and guilty for having evil tempers and dispositions in his nature? Answer:

If by evil tempers, we are to understand pride or malice, and the like, that soul in which they predominate is certainly guilty; but if we only mean that he feels a propensity to pride or malice, he is not guilty on this account.

A man is praised and flattered by another: he yields to the influence of this adulation, until he habitually thinks more highly of himself than he ought to think. This is an evil temper, and in this he is guilty: why so? because he was so far from resisting the temptation, that he entered into it, by a voluntary act of his will; indulging the vain thoughts, and suffering them to lodge within him.

The same may be said of malice: a man is insulted, and feels a propensity to seek revenge: he yields to this temptation, ruminates upon the provocation, till it is greatly magnified in his ima-

gination, and thus sinful anger, or perhaps settled malice, takes the ascendancy in his heart. Such a man is guilty before God, for this plain reason, that his will, instead of resisting the temptation, voluntarily yielded and consented to its influence. He indulged malice, which implies an evil intention, or a desire of injury to his neighbour, in which consists the essence of criminality.

But suppose, when the man felt a propensity to pride or malice, he had resisted it with laborious diligence till he had gained the victory, and the temptation was no longer felt: to pronounce him guilty in this, is to say that guilt consists, not in an evil wish or intention, but either in being tempted, or in resisting temptation, in order to maintain a good intention, and to prevent an evil one from entering into the soul.

Habitual malice is indeed criminal in a high degree, not because a man has a propensity to it, but because it carries in its bosom a habitual or perpetual consent of the will to that which the understanding knows, or may know, to be wrong.

But suppose the propensity leads the person into a malicious temper, because he does not know such a temper to be wrong, and therefore does not try to resist it: is this person guilty? If his ignorance of duty in this case, arose from a voluntary neglect of the means of knowledge, he is guilty; because it included an intention not to pursue the knowledge of duty, when God had put that knowledge within his power. But if his ignorance was invincible, the indulgence of passion, though voluntary, was no crime; otherwise the beasts of the earth are criminals, for the voluntary indulgence of their passions, and any person may be sentenced to death for the violation of a precept which he knows not, and cannot know.

“No person is accountable for what is not in his power.” This is a first principle of morals, which governs the laws of all nations under heaven; and the contrary of it is shocking to the common sense of a savage. To deny this principle, is to demolish the foundation of all moral distinctions, and to open a wide door of atheism to the world. Tyrants may make what laws they please for mankind, and no person could prove it unjust for them to burn their subjects to death for not flying to the moon, if it be true that men are accountable for that which is not in their power.

Infants are supposed guilty because they have been born the descendants of Adam, or because they have evil propensities or passions: but they are not guilty for these things if it be true, that no person is culpable for what is not in his power. To make them guilty we must deny this principle; and if we deny it, the conse-

quence will indeed follow that infants may be guilty. But it would equally follow, that angels may deserve damnation for not creating worlds, men and women for not visiting the planet Jupiter, and beasts, birds and fishes, for not understanding the elements of Euclid, or the profound speculations of sir Isaac Newton. Deny the first principle above stated, and we may safely defy the world to disprove these conclusions. Acknowledge it, and we may in vain muster up arguments to prove infants guilty, till we first prove they have done some criminal action which they had power to leave undone.

But it may be said, suppose a sinner should increase his evil habits, till he has no more power to resist them, will it not follow, if there can be no guilt where there is no power, that such a person continued to multiply his crimes, till he had sinned himself innocent? This argument is urged by Dr. J.—\* and it deserves our deliberate attention. His words are:

“If a corrupt bias makes sin to be necessary, and consequently to be no sin, then the more any man is inclined to sin, the less sin he can commit: and as that corrupt bias grows stronger, his actual sinning becomes more necessary: and so the man instead of growing more wicked grows more innocent.”

This metaphysical argument is very plausible; but a little attention, I presume, will enable us to unravel it.

We will suppose A and B began their career with evil propensities exactly equal, and with an equal degree of knowledge and power. They were then alike responsible for their conduct, because they stood on equal ground. At the end of ten years A has sinned twice as much as B, and of course has contracted propensities twice as strong as the other, and thereby diminished his power, and retains only half as much as his fellow. Is he therefore less guilty than B? He is not. He is more guilty in every respect. First, his acts of wickedness are double, and the whole guilt of them are upon him. Secondly, he is a greater sinner in his disposition, because he has had a greater degree of evil intention, or resolution to sin, otherwise his companion would have gone as far as himself. Mr. J—— will certainly agree with me in this conclusion: wherein do we then differ from each other? The difference consists in this: he concludes this man's wickedness and guilt arise partly from his sinful acts, partly from his evil intention or resolution to sin, and partly from his present evil propen-

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\* Vindication, p. 68, &c.—See Mr. Wesley on original sin, p. 155.

sities contracted thereby: I conclude, his guilt consists, not in his enfeebled and disordered state, but in that evil disposition and conduct which brought him into it.

Suppose they now commit a certain crime: the act with both is the same, and we will suppose they both have the same degree of evil intention or purpose of mind to do wrong: now admitting their guilt to be equal in this particular crime, it follows that there was no sin in the strength of propensity, abstract from the evil intention, because this propensity is twice as strong in one as in the other, when their crime is exactly equal. Will any one say the propensity and the evil intention are inseparable?

Suppose A begins to yield to the reproofs of the spirit, and resolves, like the prodigal, to return to his father's house. Now a struggle arises: his propensity leads him to do wrong, and his resolution opposes it. His intention now is to do right, and this leads him to oppose that "evil bias" which is drawing in a contrary direction. Is it right for him to resist this corrupt bias? If so, while resisting it he is doing what he ought to do, and therefore there is no sin in this action, otherwise you say it is a sin for a man to do right. But he felt the propensity at the same time, because he was resisting it: consequently the evil bias does not constitute a person guilty, however strong it may be, when unaccompanied with any voluntary consent of the mind.

In the progress of reformation A is suddenly beset with a temptation to drunkenness: his propensity arises in all its strength and violence: he struggles manfully against it for a little time, but his resolution fails; he yields, and commits the crime. Meantime B comes along, seeking an occasion to get drunk, with "a regular and fixed purpose of soul" to do it the first opportunity: he finds an opportunity and immediately enters into the extravagancies of intoxication. Now tell me who was the greater criminal in this particular case. If the former, the consequence is, that the man who is overtaken in a fault is a greater sinner than he who with a fixed purpose of evil, deliberately seeks an occasion to commit it: if the latter, it follows that criminality does not consist in the strength of our corrupt bias, but in the degree of our wicked intention.

As to the supposition that a sinner may continue his wicked course till he has no power, so that it is impossible for him to suspend his sinful actions for a moment, it remains to be proved that there are any such sinners in the universe.

If there were such an one, I should not hesitate to conclude that he is no longer a moral agent, and is no more accountable for

his present actions than any man in bedlam. According to Dr. J——'s argument, this man has become innocent; but according to truth, he is guilty of all the enormous crimes which have ruined his moral faculties. "He has filled up the measure of his iniquities," and if his soul is so full of sin that it can hold no more, does it follow that he is less guilty than he was before? It does not. This sophistical conclusion has nothing to rest upon, but the supposition that a sinner does not carry the guilt of his old sins along with him. Let Mr. J—— prove that some sinners (devils if you please) have lost all power to suspend their evil acts, and are driven forward by the same necessity that a deserted vessel is carried by wind and tide: he may then conclude, and we will instantly yield to the conclusion, that those persons have become so guilty, that it is impossible for their guilt to be enlarged. This consequence we readily adopt, because it is supported by the plain dictates of common sense.

Let us suppose that your servant, to avoid the trouble of executing your commands, takes a sledge-hammer and breaks both his legs: we all agree that the crime is enormous, and he is guilty in a high degree: but you insist that he is not only guilty on account of the action he has done, but is very much to blame because he does not walk with broken legs. Common sense decides, that though he is really guilty of defrauding you of all the service due you to the end of life, yet the whole of that guilt arises from the voluntary action which unqualified him for your service, and that he is in no degree guilty for not mending his broken legs, when it is not in his power.

It has been often said, "if we destroy our power to obey, this does not destroy God's right to demand obedience." I answer, your right to your servant's obedience, is the ground of justice for you to punish him in proportion to his guilt in depriving you of that obedience. If the breaking of his legs destroyed your right to demand obedience, you would have no right to punish him for it. If your servant owed you obedience for ten years, the act of breaking his legs has as effectually deprived you of it, as if he had regularly neglected your commands for ten years: this proves the enormity of his offence, and you have a right to punish him accordingly. Now if you execute the penalty upon him, according to his demerit, what other demand have you for the obedience required? If you have a right to receive the obedience, for the neglect of which you have inflicted punishments to the full demand of justice, it follows that your original right was double; and if you could demand



the obedience, after requiring the whole penalty which justice could demand for the neglect of it, with equal truth it might be said, that you had a right to inflict the whole penalty, after receiving the full obedience which justice allowed you, and enjoined on your servant to perform.

If any men or devils have sinned till their moral faculties are entirely ruined, and their power of self-government is totally destroyed, the enormous guilt lies upon them, of utterly unqualifying themselves for God's service forever! He had a right to their service forever, of which they have deprived him, by totally ruining the moral power of their souls: hence the deep enormity of their offences; and hence the justice of that sentence which denounces *everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.*

But will any one say, that God, besides punishing them in proportion to their guilt, has a right to blame them, and augment their torment, for not breaking the gates of hell, and coming back to his service, when it is not in their power? No: such an absurdity is shocking to conscience, an insult to every principle of justice and equity, and we may safely defy our opponents to produce any proof of it, from the oracles of God, or from any other source of evidence. Let the rubbish be removed, and it still remains true and clear as the meridian sun, that *no being in the universe is culpable for what is not in his power.*

Some have attempted to evade the conclusion, by distinguishing between a *natural* and a *moral* inability: those devils, they would say, are still augmenting their guilt, because they do not *choose* to reform, if they had the power. I answer, they have *power* to *choose* differently from what they do, or they have not: if they *have*, I grant they are continuing to augment their guilt; if they *have not*, the *moral* necessity by which they are driven, is as *absolute* as *natural* necessity: and it is as much out of their power to *choose* that which is right, as to *perform* it.

Suppose all the horrors of hell, and the glories of heaven, were presented to my view at once; and that God should demand of me to *choose this eternal torment, in preference to everlasting happiness:* I feel that it would be as *impossible* for me to do it, as to pull the moon from her orbit. There is not a man upon earth, or a devil in hell, that absolutely chooses misery for its own sake, and would rather be miserable than happy. Though they choose *sin* in preference to *holiness*, it is not because they are unwilling to be happy, for our Saviour tells us, that unclean spirits are continually

going about *seeking rest*, though they are not *seeking holiness*: and we know the same is true with respect to all sinners in the world: a plain proof surely, that they do not choose sin because they *love misery*, which is absolutely impossible, but because they hate the difficulty of reformation, and are under a delusive notion, that sin is better than righteousness. Milton represents the devil as saying, "Evil be thou my good:" and it is evident, that his choice of moral evil is founded upon some delusive notion of *good*; otherwise he would not be seeking rest in the constant practice of unrighteousness.

Whether any being has lost, or ever will so lose all power of volition, as to be totally unable to alter the direction of his choice, or to suspend his evil acts for a moment, I do not take upon myself to determine: I know of no evidence for or against it, in any part of the creation.

What I contend for is, that if there be such a creature any where, there is no more power of action, or of optional choice in him, than there is in a stone that is rolling down a hill: they both move on, in a certain way, but it is by the same fatality, and it is very evident that the stone is in itself as completely passive when rolling down the hill, as when lying still upon the ground. So is the devil, if his power of volition be totally abolished, and if he be passive as a vessel that is carried by wind and tide.

It is as unjust to demand a person to choose when it is not in his power, as to demand of him to act when it is not in his power. If you command your servant to take a journey to the moon, the *act* is not in his power, and you cannot punish him for disobedience without being a tyrant. If you command him to love coals of fire better than bread, and to eat them in the place of it, in this case, though there would be no natural impossibility in his doing the outward action, yet the choice, as it related to the regulation of his affection, would be impossible, and the demand as tyrannical as the former. He might, through fear of a greater evil, choose to eat coals of fire, but to love them better than bread, would be absolutely impossible.

For me to blame or punish my child for not *setting his affection on things above*, when he could have no conception of such things, would be as ridiculous as to blame him for not flying to the clouds. The latter implies a *natural* impossibility, the former a *moral* impossibility, both of which are equally absolute and irresistible.

We should regard with a just sense of indignation, the wretch that would burn his cattle to death, for not voluntarily assembling

three times a week for the purpose of public worship: yet they have a natural power to assemble themselves together; but their obedience to the injunction would be morally impossible, because they have no conception of divine worship, nor consequently of their master's commandment.

If the devil has lost all power, so that it is impossible for him to have the least controul over any of his thoughts or actions, his case is most deplorable: and though he alone is to blame for the whole, yet his guilt consists, not in the condition in which he now is, but in the voluntary acts of wickedness which brought him there. The whole of his guilt consists in running into the dismal gulf; and eternal justice will never blame him for not coming out, when it is not in his power. It is enough for him to endure the punishment due to his voluntary crimes: heaven will never augment his misery by an unjust and unmerciful imputation of crimes, in which he was as perfectly passive and involuntary as a stone, and therefore as incapable of moral responsibility for his present actions.

## SECTION IX.

### *Of man's natural inability to do good.*

It will be said, if man be utterly unable to recover himself, then all sinners, while in a natural state, (if the above doctrine be true,) remain innocent and excusable in the midst of all their crimes, because they have no power do any thing that is good.

Answer:

First, that man, since the fall, has no natural power to recover himself, and change his own heart, is readily granted: but that either men or devils are totally destitute of all power to suspend any of their wicked actions, remains yet to be proved. When a man tells a lie, blasphemes his Maker, or steals his neighbour's goods, will any one say he had not a natural power to tell the truth, to keep his tongue from blasphemy, or his hands from intruding upon his neighbour's property at midnight? True, say you, he had a natural power to avoid these things, if he would; but he had no power to choose otherwise than he did; therefore it

was morally impossible for him to do so, and yet he was guilty, and punishable by the magistrate, because he was under no natural necessity of perpetrating those crimes. This is the sophistry that has too long imposed upon the world, and deluded thousands into the metaphysical refinements of predestination.

Suppose two men, of equal bodily powers, go together and kill an innocent neighbour; one is in possession of his rational and moral faculties, and the other is totally delirious: now I presume any court of justice in the world would condemn one as a murderer, and decide that the other is no criminal, and deserves not to be punished as such. But they both had a natural power to stay at home, and their natural power was the same in degree: consequently the judicial decision would be founded on the principle, that the delirious person, being morally incapable of self-government, was no longer an accountable agent, though he was as free from the controul of natural necessity, as the man who is pronounced a murderer.

If natural power alone renders a being morally accountable, then surely the beasts of the field are proper subjects of moral government; for they all possess natural power, and in many instances a higher degree of it than man. Does not a lion or a tyger possess far more natural power than an infant? And is natural power alone the ground of moral responsibility? Then if an infant deserves damnation, it is certain those beasts of the wilderness deserve it in a tenfold degree. If natural power alone is not the ground of moral responsibility, then it follows inevitably that sinners possess something more, that is, the moral power of choice, or self-government, otherwise they are not responsible for their actions. "No art can set aside the consequence."

By the distinction between natural and moral power, we commonly mean the power to act and the power to choose; but we ought carefully to observe that the former word is ambiguous: it is sometimes limited to the natural actions of the body; at other times every choice, or volition, is called an action of the mind. A less equivocal distinction would be, to say a natural power consists in being able to perform natural actions; a moral power, in being able to perform moral actions. The latter is inseparable from a conception of the rules of moral obligation, the foundation of which is, that "no being is responsible for what is not in his power, and that all beings capable of understanding the rules of duty are bound to conform to them so far as their power extends." To clear this matter a little farther, let us weigh the following particulars.

1. A power to do any thing, essentially includes a power to leave it undone, otherwise it is done by necessity, which is no power at all. To say a necessary action of any being is performed by the power of that being, is to say a stone possesses power when rolling down a hill, or that the action of a man's blood, or the regular and involuntary beating of his heart, is performed by the power of that man.

2. The proper notion of power, therefore, is the liberty of option, to perform an action, or to omit the performance of it. If he cannot omit it, he has no power over it, but acts by uncontrollable necessity. Consequently any being who has power, has liberty in exact proportion; and he who has no liberty has no power.

3. Of course it is impossible for any being to have power to do an action, without having power to choose to do it. Have I power to rise from this seat, and walk across the room? If I have, I possess power at the same time to omit it, and continue where I am: but it is impossible for me to walk and sit still at the same time; it is equally so, for me to *determine* and at the same time *not determine* to rise and walk: the volition or determination must necessarily precede the action, unless it be said I walk against my will, and then surely I am compelled by some other power, or else I *will* to do a thing, and at the same time *will not* to do it, which is a palpable contradiction. You command your servant, saying, come here immediately: he answers, sir, *I will* come immediately; but *I will not* come. You look at him with astonishment, and cannot conceive what he means. Does he mean that he will come to you, and stay where he is at the same time? If he stay away, you conclude he spoke a falsehood in saying "I will come immediately;" and if he come to you immediately, he spoke false in saying "I will not come." But neither of these would be a falsehood, whatever his action might be, if it be really true that a man can *will* to do an action, and at the same time *will not* to do it. A man may do many things against his desire, propensity or inclination; but to do any thing voluntarily against his will, is absolutely impossible, and involves a plain contradiction.

But if a man cannot act against his will, then he must *will* before he can act: consequently if he has no power, or liberty of option, to choose or determine, he has no power over the action which depends upon that determination.

4. Suppose sinners have a natural power to act right, or to avoid acting wrong, but at the same time have no power to alter their choice or determination: and suppose also, for the sake of ar-

gument, that a person may perform an action, without being able to choose to perform it: these persons, we say, have no power to choose otherwise than they do; but they have power to act otherwise, and this is the ground of their condemnation: if so, they are condemned for not acting against their will; and if they should alter their actions, while their will and determination is the same, the whole ground of their guilt, as to their present actions, would be entirely removed. Thus our opponents are forced to say the true service of God consists in a man's acting according to the commandments, while his will and determination are against them, or to acknowledge that their argument founded on the distinction between natural and moral power, at once falls to the ground.

5. As to devils, or disembodied spirits, there can be no distinction between their power to choose and their power to act: because all their actions are intellectual, and consist in the operations of the will, controlling and directing the thoughts, judgments and rational operations of the understanding, as also the management of the affections in loving, hating, hoping, fearing, and the like. Their power to choose and to act cannot therefore be separated, even in thought, unless we suppose them to be corporeal, or to have power to influence the elements; of course their power consists solely in their liberty of will; and if they have no liberty they have no power, and their thoughts run on in an invariable channel, as a river runs into the sea.

6. If sinners have no power by nature to do good, it is nevertheless possible for them to be less wicked than they are; and so far as men or devils have power to omit their wicked actions, so far they are accountable; and every avoidable act of evil, proportionably increases their guilt. Brutes are clear of guilt, not because they have no power of choice, for they evidently have a degree of natural or animal liberty, but because they have no conception of moral principles, and no power to acquire such a conception. If they understood the rules of morality, and choose to violate them, when they had power to do otherwise, they would be guilty as well as we; but having no conception of this kind, they are destitute of moral liberty, properly so called, and are not accountable for their actions.

7. So far as any being chooses by necessity so far his liberty is abridged, and if his choice be thus controlled in all things, he is destitute of power, and has no more agency than a stone or a clod of earth: every thought rises in his mind as necessarily as matter gravitates or tends to the centre, and he is as unable to alter the

direction of a single desire, judgment, idea or conception, as I am now unable to direct the sun, or invert the order of the stars of heaven. Whether there be any creature in this state, or whether it do not imply a total destruction of an intellectual nature, is beyond my comprehension, and I must let it rest undecided, as a matter which is too wonderful for me.

Several other questions would rise out of this metaphysical subject, into which my objector has led me; but this is not the proper place to consider them, and I must at present omit them and return to the objection.\*

Secondly, man, in the present objection, is considered as being left in the ruins of the fall, abstracted from all interpositions of *grace*, and then it is concluded that he is totally unable to do any thing that is good. But supposing grace had not interposed in his favour, Adam would have been immediately condemned before any mortal descended from† his loins. Therefore, as our personal existence was the effect of divine goodness in redemption, we are not left absolutely in a state of nature; but “the grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, and righteously, and godly, in this present world.” Admitting then that man has no power to do good in a state of nature, unassisted by the grace of God; yet the power to do good is restored to all men through Jesus Christ, and therefore those who abuse this gracious liberty are guilty and justly condemned: “for this is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.”

But it does not hence follow that those are now guilty for not doing good, who have lost the power, and never had it restored to them. Did God ever require of men to change their hearts and

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\* The doctrine of necessity is advocated by president Edwards, who dwells largely upon the argument which Dr. Reid tells us was first invented by Mr. Hobbes, and who offers several other arguments, with no inconsiderable degree of ingenuity, in opposition to the power of optional choice, and in defence of universal fatality. I omit a particular examination of his arguments at present, for these two reasons: 1. It would lead into too great a digression from the chief design of the present essay. 2. The objections he urges against moral agency, have been fully examined, and refuted in a masterly manner by Dr. Reid. See his fourth essay on the active powers “of the liberty of moral agents.” American edition, vol. 2. page 399.

† See section VI. of this chapter.



prepare themselves for heaven, without the assistance of his grace? Did he ever blame them for rejecting eternal life before it was offered to them? Did he ever tantalize any with the offer who he knew had no power to receive it? Or condemn them for burying a talent which they never had?

It may be objected again, "that infants, being clear of guilt, need no salvation through Christ: as all their moral defilement is consistent with perfect innocence, they are naturally fit for heaven, and therefore have nothing to do with the Redeemer, seeing his errand upon earth was to seek and save that which was lost." The answer is easy:

1. Though infants themselves are not guilty, yet the guilt of their original father would have prevented their personal existence, and consequently all the blessings of life and eternal salvation, had it not been for the redemption which is in Jesus Christ. Therefore though Adam stood in need of a Saviour to remove guilt from his soul, which infants do not, yet they are, to counterbalance it, beholden to redemption for their very breath and being, which Adam originally was not.

2. Had not Adam been redeemed, his posterity, though not lost with him in everlasting misery, would nevertheless have been forever lost from that conscious existence and eternal felicity which was originally intended for them. And are they under no obligation to Jesus Christ, for saving them from such a loss, and bringing them into a happy existence? If not, Adam was under no obligation to God for his creation. To dwell forever in the regions of despair, is doubtless the greatest loss that can be imagined; but the gloomy silence of non-existence would also be such a loss, that men or angels would shudder at the prospect. As to the notion, that all mankind had some mysterious existence in Adam's loins, and were after the fall exposed to some kind of unconscious damnation in him, which they must have suffered for their part of the guilt, if a Saviour had not interposed, I confess I cannot understand it. Is it any thing different from an absolute privation of life, or is it another method of expressing the same thing? I suppose nobody will say we were really *alive* in Adam, or that we were *conscious* and *unconscious* at the same time. Many have adopted this inexplicable chimera, I suspect, to accommodate themselves to the hypothesis of reprobation, that all mankind were really guilty of Adam's sin: but they wish at the same time to avoid the consequence of it, that infants deserve to dwell with everlasting burnings. Those who are guilty, surely deserve punish-

ment; therefore after taking for granted that millions of creatures in Adam's loins were in some sort guilty, they conclude they ought in some sort to be damned: but as they cannot adopt the horrors of Antinomian free-wrath, they seem to be under the necessity of inventing some kind of fantastical damnation, unsupported by scripture, and inconceivable by the human understanding. Had Adam been condemned and executed according to the sentence, his posterity would have never *lived* either in heaven or in hell: they would not have been lost in conscious misery, but they would have been lost to all life and conscious happiness, and therefore the existence and subsequent enjoyments of Adam's posterity, which were forfeited, are restored "through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ."

3. We do not affirm that infants are naturally fit for heaven; but we affirm that as nothing but positive guilt can fit a person for hell; infants will never be fit for it while justice has any place in the creation. Is there no medium between being fit for heaven, and fit for hell! I hope no man will say the beasts and the fowls of the firmament are exactly fit for hell; or that they are naturally fit for heaven.

It is evident the children of Adam all come into the world naturally fit for this state of probation which God has appointed for us; and that some change must take place to fit us for any other region. Though it would be unjust for infants to be punished as criminals, yet they have no natural right to eternal happiness, but a gracious right through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. And they are naturally *unfit* for heaven, not because they are guilty, but because heaven is intended as a place of unobstructed enjoyment, where *temptation* shall never enter. If they were taken there with natural propensities to evil, they would be placed in a state of perpetual temptation, and would be in constant danger of falling into sin: therefore God prepares them for heaven before he takes them thither, not because justice had any charge of criminality against them, but because goodness delights to place them in a state of complete enjoyment, far above the regions of evil, where no trial or temptation shall ever disturb their tranquillity.

In what way God produces or works this change in those who die in infancy, we may be unable to comprehend: nor is this wonderful, since we cannot comprehend the *manner* in which he operates upon the minds of men, or how he upholds and governs the general system of the universe. A change produced in the infant mind involves no contradiction, any more than a change wrought

in any other mind: its possibility is conceivable, and the evidence is clear, unless we have not clear evidence that heaven is intended as a place of perfect enjoyment, free from every kind of evil.

Whatever be the way, in which this change may be produced, it is evidently a great blessing, because it raises us above the force of temptation, and secures us from the influence of sin and misery: this blessing, therefore, as well as all the glories of heaven, come upon infants in consequence of the mediation of the Saviour, none of which they ever would have enjoyed, had not his interposition rescued Adam from that instant destruction which he had incurred by his rebellion.

The millions who have left our polluted region, before they knew their right hand from their left, will therefore join with the innumerable company of heaven, to sing the song of praise and thanksgiving "to Him that hath redeemed us by his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests to God and his Father: to him be glory and dominion forever and ever." Amen.

## SECTION X.

*A consequence of the doctrine established in the foregoing sections, that death is necessary in the case of infants, but is not a penalty.*

If the suffering and death of infants, and sanctified christians, be the result of goodness, then it was necessary they should suffer and die, to prevent a greater evil, or to promote a lasting good to come.

This consequence is genuine, and we adopt it without hesitation. To say punishment is inflicted on any creature through benevolence, and yet that it is totally unnecessary, and tends not to the creature's advantage, is quite absurd and contradictory.

That the afflictions of the righteous are intended for their good, and answer gracious ends under the divine administration, is evident from innumerable texts of scripture, and especially from the unequivocal declaration of St. Paul to the Corinthians: "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." 2 Cor. iv. 17.

God is not only represented as a kind father, who chastens his children for their good, which implies a fault on their part; but the Lord Jesus is frequently called our physician, whose office leads him to give pain for a moment, because it is necessary; and this may be done, and often is done by physicians, when there was no previous fault in the subject, but merely because there was a disorder, which the affliction or momentary pain had a tendency to remove.

A kind parent may subject his children to a degree of misery, to promote three benevolent ends. (1.) For a correction of their faults. (2.) For their trial and establishment in good principles. (3.) For the removal of any disease or disorder in their constitution.

These are the ends of affliction, when the pain is produced from a benevolent intention towards the suffering subjects. When punishments are inflicted on criminals, without any regard to the criminals themselves, but purely for the sake of others whom their crimes have injured, this is the operation of justice. Where the design is to defend the injured, and at the same time to reform the offender, this is the joint operation of justice and compassion.

These things being premised, we have now several inquiries to make:

1. Are infants and christians punished with death, and with foregoing afflictions, merely and solely for the sake of defending others from the influence of their crimes? If so, they are punished exactly for the same ends for which devils are punished in hell.

2. Are they punished to defend the rights of others, and at the same time to produce in themselves a conviction of their guilt, that they may be influenced to reform? If so, they are punished for the same ends for which notorious offenders are sometimes loaded with irons, or kept in confinement for a term of years. Or for the same ends for which the special judgments of God sometimes fall upon a wicked man, and sometimes upon a wicked nation.

3. Are their afflictions to be considered as the chastisements of a kind father for the correction of their faults? That christians are often thus punished, is evident both from scripture and experience; but there is no shadow of evidence that this will hold respecting infants, unless it can be proved, first, that they have committed faults, and, secondly, that their sufferings are calculated to bring them to a sense of them, that they may thereby be influenced to repent and be more diligent in the ways of righteousness.

If a parent should chastise his new-born infant, under pretence of correcting its faults, we should justly consider him as an unnatural and barbarous tyrant. And our judgment would be perfectly correct, because it would be founded upon these two obvious reasons: (1.) that the said child was incapable of committing any fault, and (2.) that it was equally incapable of conceiving for what end the punishment was inflicted. After its understanding is sufficiently opened, discipline may be exercised from a benevolent intention, because it is now able to conceive the design of it, and has in some degree the power of self-government; but to suppose a parent may consistently and righteously chastise a new-born infant for its faults, is highly absurd and ridiculous: how much more so, to impute such conduct to the all-wise and Almighty Father of universal being?

Neither can it be supposed that infants are punished for a trial of their virtue; because they have no conception of the thing intended, and are incapable of a moral influence, until their understandings are enlarged sufficiently to have some conception of an obligation.

God certainly has some end in view, in subjecting infants to misery and death, otherwise he afflicts them for nothing, to suppose which, is not only to contradict his moral attributes, but to charge him with whimsical caprice and folly.

The dilemma is therefore unavoidable, that God has no more regard to their benefit, in their afflictions, than he has to the benefit of devils in their's, or that their sufferings are intended for their advantage; and the only advantage we are able to conceive is that their sufferings are designed to counteract the original consequences of Adam's transgression, so far as they have descended to posterity.

Nor let any take occasion to infer that this involves the doctrine of a death-purgatory, if the design of such a purgatory is understood to be the removal or purging away of our guilt: for this takes for granted that infants are guilty, which has been abundantly refuted.

That death is intended to counteract the effects of sin, both in infants and christians, must be admitted, or else it is utterly unnecessary, is never advantageous, and therefore can never, in any case, be considered as a blessing.

Will it be said that it is a blessing, because it puts an end to all our miseries? This is saying plainly that no part of the misery itself is a blessing, but merely that the end of it is so: that is, that

the affliction in itself has no good effect, and was never so intended, but merely that our deliverance from it is a blessing. Was not the light affliction, which is but for a moment, intended to remove the causes of misery, by removing those natural and involuntary propensities, which would otherwise continue still to be a perpetual source of temptation? Or shall we say that all christians, who are saved from their sins, are at the same time delivered from all natural propensities to evil? If they are, I would be glad to know how the pains of death are still necessary, how they produce any good effect in our favour,—and why dying christians are to receive the bitter cup as a blessing from the hand of their heavenly Father? When a disorder and all the effects of it, are removed from the constitution of a patient, will he receive any pain as a blessing from the physician's hand, which is utterly unnecessary, and has no tendency to do him any good?

Nothing is more common, says Mr. Fletcher, than for men to run into one extreme, under the plausible pretence of avoiding another. Our Calvinist brethren have believed and taught that all christians must necessarily commit sin as long as they live, and that death is intended to remove all their iniquities from them. I apprehend the mistake of many pious men among them, consists in taking for granted that a man commits sin every time he feels a propensity to it. They observe the signs of those propensities continue with good men, the very best not excepted, apparently to the end of their pilgrimage: hence they conclude that no man in this life can be saved from sin; but that the goodness of God has appointed death as the means of its final destruction.

Admitting the premises to be true, I, for one, would cordially acquiesce in their conclusion: and if they will confine it to sin, improperly so called, that is, to those natural propensities, the entire removal of which does not at all depend upon our voluntary exertions, the conclusion is supported by the clearest evidence. But if they mean that all christians must really commit sin as long as they live, and that death alone puts an end to our actual sinning; this is contradicted by the joint testimony of the inspired writers, who agree to declare, that "Jesus saves his people from their sins, that they may walk before him in righteousness and holiness all the days of their life." This has been sufficiently proved by Mr. Wesley and Mr. Fletcher, to whose excellent works I refer the reader.

The consequences of the opposite opinion are alarming: for good men are thereby discouraged in their pursuit of holiness, and



many luke-warm professors, it is to be feared, take encouragement to indulge themselves in sin, under pretence that they must sin of necessity, until death brings them a discharge.

It is therefore necessary for us to make a firm stand against such a pernicious delusion. But let us beware at the same time that we do not run into an opposite delusion equally pernicious. This may be done in two ways: (1.) by believing that christians may in this life be delivered from all propensities to evil, and (2.) by maintaining, under pretence of opposing a death-purgatory, that death is totally unnecessary, and has no tendency to our advantage.

1. Shall we say that sanctified christians are as perfectly clear of evil propensities as an angel? If so, their warfare against such propensities is accomplished, and though the devil still may tempt them, yet they have nothing in their nature to oppose, any more than those who are now in heaven. If they still feel any excitement in their nature, which requires an effort of resistance, this is what I mean by an evil propensity: and to suppose they are entirely removed from sanctified christians, is a delusion, I apprehend, nearly as pernicious in its effects as the opposite one. Many I fear have long pursued christian holiness, under the delusive notion that it consists in a deliverance from all propensities to evil, and, finding their labour vain, have abandoned the pursuit, and have settled themselves down with attainments in religion, far below those which it was their privilege to enjoy.

That we may guard against this danger, and at the same time give no encouragement to sin, let us endeavour to obtain distinct conceptions upon a matter in which we are so seriously and deeply interested.

It is true, full sanctification includes a deliverance, not only from all gross violations of the divine law, but also from all sinful passions and tempers.

But what is a *sinful temper*? It consists in an habitual attachment or inordinate affection to something beside God. A *sinful passion* is a *momentary* attachment of the same kind. A man loves the world, or perhaps he loves himself more than he ought: this is an evil temper, and while he makes no immediate efforts against it, there is a perpetual consent of his will to love something more than it ought to be loved. Many indulge such inordinate affections for months or years, without noticing them, through mere carelessness, or want of self-examination. They *know not what manner of spirit they are of*, and may plead that they are not convinc-



ed of any wrong affection, and their conscience does not condemn them; but this excuse is vain, because they neglect to consult their conscience, or do not consult it properly, and in consequence, remain ignorant of that which might be known by a proper exercise of attention and reflection. After they received conviction of the evil temper, they interrupt its settled course by a few feeble efforts, seldom repeated; but in general there is an inordinate affection existing with the *consent of their will*, and this is a sin, properly so called, because it is a voluntary consent of the will to that which the understanding knows, or may know, to be wrong.

They may indeed have a *desire* to be delivered from such tempers, at the same time that they make no effort against them; but it is to be remembered that *will* and *desire* are not the same thing. If I have a disordered tooth that is very troublesome, I may sit for a long time with a *desire* to have it out; but the moment I *will* or *determine* to have it immediately extracted, I make an effort to that effect. An indolent person may have a strong desire to improve his farm, while he does nothing; but when he determines that he *will* improve it, you see him go to work. A timorous traveller may sit for hours upon the bank of a stream that looks dangerous, with a strong desire to be over; this *desire* alone will produce no effect; but when he determines that he *will* cross it, he plunges into the water. In like manner when a man *wills* to overcome his evil tempers, he labours and uses the proper means whereby he may obtain the victory.

It is true, a man may will or determine to do a thing at some future period, without any present exertions; but in the mean time his will consents that it shall remain undone till the period arrives which he has appointed. A sinner appoints a time, perhaps five years hence, when he shall have accomplished certain purposes, and resolves that at that time he *will seek the Lord, and call upon him while he is near*: the man is not the less guilty on account of this resolution, because he determines that he *will not* seek the Lord at *present*, but will postpone it for five years: therefore during the five years he willingly lives without God in the world. So a christian with evil tempers may desire and wish they were removed; he may determine that some time or other he will oppose them with vigour: yet he remains a voluntary sinner for the present, because his will is not immediately exerting itself against them, but resolves to postpone it to some future period. Such a man is an imperfect christian, and is not saved from sin. He neglects that which he knows to be his immediate duty, that is,

he neglects to use or exert the power he now possesses, which is properly a sin, because it is voluntary.

Perhaps he loves present *ease* too well, and hence refuses to pursue the knowledge of duty with that vigilance which is within his power; or, through an undue attachment to some other object or party, he voluntarily indulges some prepossession or bias of mind, which refuses to give truth a fair hearing. This is an evil temper, and it prevails not in any man that is saved from sin. A prepossession arising from invincible ignorance is no crime; but so far as its existence depends upon our neglecting to use the power we possess, so far it is sinful, because it is a voluntary disaffection to the truth. How innumerable are the prejudices indulged, even by christians themselves, and what is most lamentable, thousands seem not to suspect that there is any immorality in them! What an object of pity must that man be, who imagines himself so perfect as to be free from all propensities to evil, and at the same time has such inordinate attachment to some party or interest, as influences him to shut his eyes against the light of evidence, and refuse to give it an impartial hearing! he is resolved, if possible, that nothing shall be proved or received as true, that differs from his former opinions, or from those of his particular friends, whom he is disposed to support in every thing they say, for no other reason but because they say it! The stronger your arguments are against his favourite opinion, the more he is offended; and he has recourse to stratagem, if not to secret malevolence, to put you to silence, and to hinder all he can from hearing you with that candour of which he himself is destitute. Is this a perfect man? certainly he is not, unless we say the love of truth makes no part of the christian character.

Now the word of God assures us we may, in this life, obtain salvation from all such evil tempers, so as to *love the Lord our God with all our heart, and to love our neighbour as ourselves*. He that does this is saved from all pride, malice and prejudice; and he loves nothing in the world with a higher degree of affection than that which is perfectly just and good.

We will suppose a man stands here, who is thus saved from sin. His affections are now rightly balanced, and he is resolved to keep them so. By and bye he feels some excitement in his nature, which he finds has a tendency to lead him to love some object more than he ought, and he cannot maintain the present balance of his affections, without resisting that excitement by a voluntary effort, of which he is conscious.

This is what I mean by a propensity to evil, in contradistinction to an evil temper, or inordinate affection. The propensity tends to produce the inordinate affection, and if not resisted will presently lead the soul into it; but if a firm stand be made against it, if his will refuse to yield, even for a moment, to its influence,— he has kept the balance of his affections with the magnanimity of a christian, and he is so far from being a sinner merely on account of the *feeling* which he manfully resisted, that he *fought a good fight*, and *kept the faith*, and if he continue thus to fight, until he shall have *finished his course*, there remaineth, henceforth, for him, *a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge will give him at that day*.

Hence we easily avoid the flimsy objection, that if evil propensities be no sin, we need not oppose them: for if they be not resisted, the soul yields to be carried by them into an evil affection, which is sin. We might as well say, if it be no sin for a man to be tempted, then there is no necessity for us to resist temptation. We ought to oppose our evil propensities with perpetual diligence, and to use all means in our power to avoid every occasion that would bring them into operation. And this should be done, not because they in themselves are sin, but because it is a sin for a man voluntarily to seek temptation, or to run into the occasions of it, when duty does not call him there. Our Saviour teaches us to pray that we may not be led into temptation; this is one branch of the prayer which he taught his disciples; therefore we are bound to avoid temptations as long as we can with a safe conscience, and to resist them when they are unavoidable.

My reasons for believing that christians have no grounds to expect deliverance from evil propensities in this life, and for opposing the contrary belief, are the following:

1. The highest perfection God has promised to his people in this life, is to enable them to love him with all their heart, and to love their neighbour as themselves: that is, to have their affections balanced as they ought to be. But this state may be enjoyed notwithstanding those propensities, so long as they are properly resisted.

2. Such a deliverance (as here opposed) is contrary to universal experience. Many christians may have lived for a considerable time without feeling any thing in their nature to need resistance; but some unexpected insult, or other occasion, makes them feel that their virtue cannot yet be maintained without a struggle. In proof of this we may appeal to their own consciousness, and if that

avail nothing, we may next appeal to the observations of their neighbours, who have often seen the signs of a painful warfare in their bosom.

3. The sentiment I oppose, supercedes the necessity of constant self-denial: for if there be nothing in a man's nature but what is uniformly prone to goodness, and nothing prone to evil, then he cannot deny himself, or any thing in himself, without resisting a propensity to perfect goodness. If you command this man to deny himself, you command him to resist and oppose his propensity to do right, seeing there is no other propensity in his nature.

Our Lord Jesus Christ commands us, not only to resist the devil, but to deny ourselves, and take up our cross daily, which plainly implies that there is something in ourselves which must be crossed and denied daily, because it has a tendency to lead us into sin, and will certainly do it, unless it be resisted. Why are we to cross and deny any of our natural appetites, but because there is a propensity or tendency in them to rise too high, and to produce an evil temper, if not an evil action? If there be nothing in them, or any other part of our nature, but what is regularly prone to that which is right, and to nothing else, we cannot cross or deny our appetites, or any other part of ourselves, without being actual sinners, because we would actually oppose the influence of perfect goodness.

4. I oppose this doctrine, and wish it banished out of the world, for the sake of many good men, the very best not excepted, who through the influence of this pernicious delusion, have spent many hours of fruitless grief and lamentation, merely because they felt evil propensities in their nature. "A godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation;" but such sorrow as this is a fruitless waste of that time which might be spent in rejoicing with the "blessed man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to them that love him."

5. I presume the apostles of Jesus Christ possessed as high a state of perfection as we have a right to look for; but they were not delivered from the warfare between the flesh and the spirit; for St. Paul says, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away." 1 Cor. ix. 27. Does not this plainly suppose that there was still a tendency in his natural affections, or the appetites of his body, to lead him into excess? And therefore that he found it necessary to exercise temperance, and keep

his body in subjection, as it were with a bridle, lest the flesh should prevail against the spirit? And how could this be, if there was nothing in his flesh, or any other part of his nature, but what was uniformly prone to goodness?

These excitements or tendencies in our nature which need resistance, I have called propensities, because I know no better name to give them. They differ from evil tempers and affections in this, that they are perfectly *involuntary*, and are no more under the control of our will than the circulation of the blood: Nay, they are so far from arising from an wrong direction of the will, that we often feel them when the whole force of the will is exerted in a contrary direction. They agree with other *temptations* in every particular, excepting only that the occasion of the temptation is in our nature. Am I a sinner merely because certain *feelings* rise from my constitution which tend to lead me into sin?— And suppose the temptation comes immediately from the devil, does it not produce a *feeling* of the same tendency, which must be resisted by a painful exertion? I appeal to the consciousness of every living christian. And if a man is a sinner on account of the excitement or *feeling* which arises from his body or animal nature, he is a sinner for the same reason, when resisting the painful *feelings* of which he is conscious, when tempted by the devil. Thus it appears, a man who expects deliverance from this warfare with the flesh in this life, expects to be above his Lord, who was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin.

6. I oppose this doctrine because I conceive it to be of dangerous tendency. I fear some christians have been led to make false and enthusiastic professions of those imaginary heights of holiness which surpass the lot of humanity; and supposing there was nothing now remaining in their nature to resist, have abated in their vigilance, and suspected no danger, till, like Peter, in an unguarded hour, they have fallen into sin, by not watching with a jealous eye over those propensities which they vainly imagined had no more existence.

Some, it may be, have held their profession of this high sanctification in opposition to their own consciousness: have felt those propensities time after time in their nature, and still refused to believe it. At length, being weary of doing violence to themselves, they have given up the belief of their freedom from natural excitements to evil, and with it their confidence in christian holiness. Others attempt for a while to go on to perfection; but observing that such a complete deliverance from natural propensi-

ties is no where verified in any of their religious friends, they conclude the doctrine of christian perfection is a chimera that exists no where but in the imaginations of men.

Thus it appears to me, if we were bent upon bringing men back by degrees to the Calvinistic doctrine, that it is a vain thing to seek for perfection, and that all men must continue sinners as long as they live, we could scarcely devise a more successful method of doing it, than by straining the doctrine of sanctification so far, as to make it imply a deliverance from all natural propensities to evil.

2. It is indeed a very dangerous error, to suppose death is appointed as the means of our deliverance from sin: the merits of Christ, and the operations of his spirit are the cause of our deliverance, and repentance and faith are the means of it. If therefore we neglect the means appointed in the gospel, and live in our sins till death, under the belief that death is the mean appointed for its removal, when it is not, what mistake can be imagined to be more dangerous?

But is there no way to guard against this mistake, but to run into another, and to explode all ideas of advantage from our last affliction, in mere opposition to the frightful name of a death-purgatory? If we had no other evidence against it, and had no other way to defend ourselves against the attacks of our opponents, than to cast upon them the odium of the name, purgatory, such a pitiful argument would be truly beneath their attention. The popish doctrine itself, concerning a place of purification after death, could never be proved false if we had no argument against it, but the deformity of the name by which it is called. We reject it because it is contrary to the word of God, and is an error of very dangerous tendency: remove these objections, and we can draw no arguments from the name, because it is as perfectly innocent as the name of paradise.

But though reason can derive no evidence from a mere name, yet prejudice can accomplish wonders by its magical influence.—How many have run head-long into various opinions, and adhered to them for no other reason but their dread of such shocking names as the following: Popery—Heretic—Calvinism—Arminianism—Pelagianism—Socinianism—Arianism—Free-willer—Perfectionist—Antinomian—Legalist—Democracy—Federalism, &c. &c.

Prejudice, passion and party nonsense, appear to govern the belief of thousands both in church and state. When a man is car-



ried away in this manner, the very name by which the opposite party is denominated, acquires such dismal and fearful deformity, that he can scarcely hear it mentioned, or think of it, with any degree of patience. The farther he goes from every sentiment held by his opponents, the more meritorious is his conduct. He dreads the very suspicion of his agreeing with them in any thing; and rather than be found in such detestable company, he will suppress the voice of reason, and renounce the plainest dictates of common sense. To be true to his own party, he must follow them in all their absurdities, and never suffer his soul to call into question a single sentiment which they hold, or deviate a moment from any part of their practice. Their opinions must all be taken for granted, and his business is, not to inquire what is truth, but to defend his own sect or party in every particular, and to refute the opposite by frequently repeating their *name* with indications of scorn and detestation. He will not venture to examine any sentiment held by his party, or to admit the possibility of their being mistaken, lest he should be thought not hearty in the cause: he is equally afraid to examine the sentiments of the other party, with any degree of candour, lest his own brethren should consider him a disaffected character, and brand him with the frightful name of his adversaries, from which he would shrink back as from the opening grave. In this manner has error often triumphed under the fostering influence of party malevolence, while truth had to retire among the lonely valleys, and reason to disappear, or to lie insulted, prostrate on the ground.

Without pursuing this digression, though not an unimportant one, we return to inquire what other objection can be alleged against the goodness of God making death an instrument of benefit to his creatures.

Will it be said it robs Christ of his glory, by attributing to death what his grace alone is able to accomplish? This argument of robbing Christ of his glory, so often urged by the Calvinists, may, it is true, be retorted upon themselves; but it has no solidity against either us or them. If we had no other argument but this against their doctrine, that death is an instrument of our deliverance from the power of sin, I apprehend it would prove just nothing, and might be retorted upon ourselves with success. We disbelieve their doctrine, not because it would of necessity rob Christ of his glory, which is an hypothesis unsupported by scripture or reason, but because the word of God assures us we may be saved from our sins before death, and that repentance and faith, not the agonies of



dissolution, are the means through which this salvation is to be received.

If Christ cannot make use of means and instruments, in the work of our salvation, without diminishing his own glory, he must, if he would secure the whole glory to himself, lay them all aside, and do every thing by an invisible influence, without the intervention of men or books, law or gospel, prayers or sacraments, or any other means of grace. And permit me to ask, why is one instrument which he is pleased to make use of, more calculated to rob him of his glory than another? He doubtless uses the means best calculated to promote the end intended; and when that end is the production of a moral influence on the mind, our voluntary use of them is demanded; but when they are designed to produce an effect upon any part of our constitution, that is not under the immediate control of our will, God himself applies the means without our voluntary concurrence, and produces the effect intended: hence I conclude, our salvation from all "voluntary transgressions of a known law" is accomplished through the use of means that are put in our power, and the use of which depends upon our choice. For the same reason I conclude that involuntary propensities, such as infants have, are removed from their nature when necessary, by means which depend not upon their choice. I believe death is the instrument made use of, because I must believe that the death of infants is designed for their advantage, or charge God with the cruelty or folly of punishing them for nothing, or of imputing sin to them that he may treat them as guilty rebels, upon the false charge of a crime which they never committed.

Is this the way to avoid robbing Christ of his glory? And as our lives are prolonged by the instrumentality of bread, and our health restored by various kinds of medicine, does it follow from this that the God of nature and providence is robbed of his glory? But at the same time that we maintain that the death of infants is intended for their own final benefit, we believe it equally true that their suffering promotes other just and gracious purposes.

It affords an universal argument to prove the direful tendency of sin; and evinces that it not only violates the rights of men and angels, and tends to ruin the moral faculties of the sinner; but its pernicious effects descend to the latest posterity, and our helpless infants come into the world with such disorderly propensities of nature, as are to be removed by remedies no less severe than the lingering pains of dissolution. Thus all men who will exercise their reason, may be benefitted by the state of infants, inasmuch

as their condition affords evidence of an original apostacy, and thereby establishes the truth of revelation, and at the same time furnishes the most powerful motives to flee from sin, as the moral poison which has contaminated the human race, and which, if not arrested in its progress would establish an universal empire of misery.

The groans and tears of dying children are also used by providence as a just punishment and correction to their parents, who often feel nearly or quite as great pain in their souls, as the children feel in their dissolution.

In proof of this we will select one remarkable instance. Nathan, when reproving David for his sin against Uriah, said, "Because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die. And the Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick. David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted and went in, and lay all night upon the ground. And the elders of his house arose, and went to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them."—2 Sam. xii. 14.

Thus it appears that David's soul endured such severe affliction that he refused all consolation, and abandoned himself to fasting and lamentations. And as seven days elapsed before the child was dead, the parent's heart, during all that time, was oppressed with a load of conscious misery and distress. After the child's departure, he took refreshment, and said, "While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live. But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."—Ver. 22, 23.

What abundant matter was here for humble and serious meditation! I almost fancy I can see the royal psalmist watering the ground with his briny tears, as thousands have done in all ages of the world. He lies prostrate before God, weeping, and feebly offering his plaintive cries to heaven, in all the tenderness of paternal grief. Domestic comforts fail him; the sight of his spouse and lovely offspring only serves to increase his agony, while his houses and friends are forgotten, and the beauties of nature have lost all their charms! Can silver and gold assuage his inquietude? Can orchards and gardens dissipate the gloom, and alleviate the burden of his grief? Alas! they are all neglected, his table abandoned, and his servants expostulate in vain! He beholds his little helpless infant, groaning, sighing, and sinking into the arms of death:

he shrinks back from the mournful spectacle, and melts down with conscious wretchedness, into all the tender sympathies of a parent's heart! Merciful God! are these the effects of sin? yes: the seeds of evil are so deeply sown in human nature, that they have made pain become necessary as an instrument of God's justice and goodness: *justice* towards the actual offenders, and *goodness* towards their helpless and unoffending offspring. And David might say, "This child is cut down as a flower because of my sin: had I walked uprightly, he might have lived to manhood, and become the comfort and stay of my old age. But alas! my own iniquities have hastened the dying agonies of my child, and every pain he feels is like a sword piercing through my soul!"

But upon the gloomy hypothesis I have been opposing, these salutary reflections are all stifled in the birth. For supposing David had believed the doctrine invented in after ages; what would have been his natural conclusions? "This child, he might have said, lies suffering here, because he is guilty of Adam's sin: it is most abundant goodness that his miseries are not doubled: he deserves everlasting damnation, and perhaps when this breath is gone, he will be a companion of devils, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. If he is punished for my sin, this could not be done with any justice or equity, unless the sins of parents are imputed to their children: therefore he suffers nothing more than he deserves: and I will no longer lament under the delusive notion that my guilt is the cause of his misery, because it is *his own guilt*, not mine, for which justice now demands his death. And if indeed a part of my guilt, be transferred to him, I am consequently less guilty than I would be if it were all my own: I may therefore dry up my tears, and leave the little guilty creature to his fate."

Such barbarous opinions, if I mistake not, have a native tendency to harden the heart of man, and to freeze every generous sentiment of our nature.

Many of the heathens, to imitate the malevolence of their imaginary gods, have suppressed the dearest feelings of humanity, and burnt their own children in the fire! The merciless church of Rome has exceeded the enormities of her Pagan mother, as we have seen; and the unparalleled tortures she invented for the punishment of those whom she considered heretics were inflicted under pretence of religion and piety to God! They believe that all infants are guilty, and deserve eternal destruction, especially the children of heretics. Baptism is their Saviour, and all infants who happen to die without being baptized, according to Bellarmine, certainly go "to the hell of the reprobates."

These are the sickening fruits of a superstitious theology, which attributes to the benevolent Father of the spirits of all flesh, the cruel principles of human and diabolical depravity.

It has been sometimes argued that God has no such *feelings* as those which prevail in our nature; he is not to be melted down with pity and sympathy as we are; therefore all appeals to *humanity* against any doctrine of religion, are altogether nugatory, and prove nothing but the ignorance of him who makes the appeal.

And who was it, let me ask, that planted those feelings of humanity in our nature? Is not God the author of them? And did he not plant them in us to supply the deficiency of our moral goodness? How many wretched creatures in this world, would be neglected and left to perish, if it were not for the stimulating influence of pity and sympathy? How many are there in all countries and ages, who, without any regard to the principle of benevolence or justice, are influenced to preserve their offspring, and minister to the wants of the miserable, by the mere operation of natural affection, similar to that which prevails in the inferior animals? If those natural feelings were removed from the human race, and if they were left to be influenced solely by their regard to justice and goodness, I presume that in the course of a few centuries not a human creature would be found upon the face of the earth.

If we were under the perfect and uniform influence of moral principles, if evil ones were confined to the regions of hell, and had no place in this part of the creation, then we should be more like God than we now are, and there would be no necessity for the feelings of sympathy that are now so essential to the well-being of human society.

Granting then that God has not the feelings which prevail in human nature, what does this prove? Does it prove that God is less disposed to promote the happiness of his creatures, and to prevent their misery, than true pity inclines us to be? If so, it would seem, that God is deficient in moral goodness as well as man, and needs the feelings of humanity to bring him up to our standard.

It is true, that natural sympathies may be misapplied through ignorance and partiality, as well as every other principle of our nature; but then the end for which they were given is defeated; and when so directed, they tend to the injury of mankind. So far as pity leads us to promote universal happiness, and to prevent misery, so far it answers the end for which divine goodness planted it in our nature: and it is truly absurd to suppose that it ever

produces in us a greater regard to general happiness than exists in that Mind whose paternal kindness implanted it in our nature, for the very purpose of supporting and guarding the felicity of human kind. God has no disposition to punish any creature in earth or hell, from any other principle but his regard to the rights of the innocent, and the general welfare of the creation: and the scripture doctrine of everlasting punishments is to be resolved, not into his being destitute of our feelings of humanity, but into the direful nature and tendency of moral evil. The very moment we suppose that he ever has punished any creature more than is strictly necessary to the support of general happiness, or that he ever will do it in any period of eternal duration, that moment we charge him with a departure from the principles of justice and benevolence.

The reason why devils and wicked men are to be punished everlastingly, is because they will be everlastingly hostile to the government of God, and could never be released from their dungeon without becoming a general nuisance in the creation, exerting themselves to diffuse the poison of iniquity, and to assail the tranquillity of the heavenly regions.

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## SECTION XI.

### *Second consequence.*

THE brute creatures were made subject to vanity, through a benevolent intention in the Deity towards those creatures; they are subjected to a speedy dissolution, not through caprice or cruelty, but because it is rendered necessary by their connexion with a perverse and sinful race of men. This inference we may admit without hesitation, because its truth is established by the following evidence:

1. If we deny this conclusion, we must say God punishes the beasts as criminals, according to the requirements of inflexible justice: this supposes them to be guilty, which is a monstrous hypothesis repugnant to every principle of morality and common reason. If any one should be disposed to take this ground, to secure the important doctrine of infant criminality, shall we receive

it for a truth merely because he is pleased to tell us it is so? or shall we wait for him to prove it by at least one passage of scripture, or by one argument that will bear examination?

2. Men are commanded to abstain "from things strangled, and from blood." As strangling is a very painful kind of death, and as we are to abstain from blood, because it is the life of the animal, we are thereby plainly taught to regard the life of inferior creatures, and never expose them to unnecessary pain. This is a plain dictate of conscience and humanity, as well as of revelation; and as the voice of God thus commands us not to inflict pain on his creatures, farther than is strictly necessary, it is a plain proof that he is kind to his meanest creatures, and is unwilling that they should suffer more than is needful to subserve the ends of his benevolence. Now if God does not punish the brute creatures as criminals, and if there is nothing in his nature which influences him to do it for no end but the mere pleasure of seeing them tormented, it remains that it necessarily arises from their connexion with the human race; and God has subjected them to a speedy dissolution, to prevent a greater evil, or to promote a lasting good in future. This is an evident deduction from the nature of God, as exhibited in the bible, and reason requires us to admit the conclusion, even though we were unable to discover how those ends of divine goodness will be accomplished.

3. It is not hard to understand how this dispensation of God is calculated to prevent a greater evil: for the inferior animals are tortured with unrelenting cruelty by wicked men, and if they were not released by death, their burden would be augmented and protracted for thousands of years. The very animals that lived in the days of Adam would yet be groaning under the hand of tyranny; but the decree of heaven has fixed bounds beyond which the barbarity of sinners cannot pass: when the pain is brought to a certain point, death gives the innocent creature a discharge from the monster that takes pleasure in its agony, and who would perhaps, if not thus prevented, increase its misery a thousand-fold.

"Not only the feebler creatures are continually destroyed by the stronger;" says Mr. Wesley, "but both the one and the other are exposed to the violence and cruelty of him that is now their common enemy, man. He pursues them over the widest plains, and through the thickest forests. He overtakes them in the fields of air, he finds them out in the depth of the sea. Nor are the mild and friendly creatures, who still own his sway, and are dutiful to his commands, secured thereby from more than brutal violence,

from outrage and abuse of various kinds. What returns for their long and faithful service, do many of these poor creatures find? And what a dreadful difference is there between what they suffer from their fellow-brutes, and what they suffer from the tyrant, man! The Lion, the 'Tyger, and the Shark, give them pains from mere necessity, in order to prolong their own life, and put them out of their pain at once. But the human Shark, without any such necessity, torments them of his free choice; and perhaps continues their lingering pain, till after months or years, death signs their release.\*

This just picture may be finished by the following beautiful lines of Cowper:

So Eden was a scene of harmless sport,  
 Where kindness on his part, who ruled the whole,  
 Begat a tranquil confidence in all,  
 And fear as yet was not, nor cause for fear.  
 But sin marred all; and the revolt of man,  
 That source of evils not exhausted yet,  
 Was punished with revolt of his from him.  
 Garden of God, how terrible the change  
 Thy groves and lawns then witnessed! Every heart,  
 Each animal of every name, conceived  
 A jealousy and an instinctive fear,  
 And, conscious of some danger, either fled  
 Precipitate the loath'd abode of man,  
 Or growl'd defiance in such angry sort,  
 As taught him too to tremble in his turn.  
 Thus harmony and family accord  
 Were driven from Paradise; and in that hour  
 The seeds of cruelty, that since have swell'd  
 To such gigantic and enormous growth,  
 Were sown in human nature's fruitful soil.  
 Hence date the persecution and the pain  
 That man inflicts on all inferior kinds,  
 Regardless of their plaints. To make him sport,  
 To gratify the frenzy of his wrath,  
 Or his base gluttony, are causes good  
 And just in his account, why bird and beast  
 Should suffer torture, and the streams be dy'd

\* Sermons, vol. 5, p. 126.



With blood of their inhabitants impal'd.  
 Earth groans beneath the burden of a war  
 Waged with defenceless innocence, while he  
 Not satisfied to prey on all around,  
 Adds tenfold bitterness to death by pangs  
 Needless, and first torments ere he devours.

————— Witness at his foot

The spaniel dying for some venial fault  
 Under dissection of the knotted scourge;  
 Witness the patient ox, with stripes and yells  
 Driven to the slaughter, goaded, as he runs,  
 To madness; while the savage at his heels  
 Laughs at the frantic sufferer's fury, spent  
 Upon the guiltless passenger o'erthrown.  
 He too is witness, noblest of the train  
 That wait on man, the flight-performing horse:  
 With unsuspecting readiness he takes  
 His murderer on his back, and push'd all day  
 With bleeding sides and flanks, that heave for life,  
 To the far distant gaol, arrives and dies.

But many a crime, deem'd innocent on earth,  
 Is register'd in Heav'n; and these no doubt  
 Have each their record, with a curse annex'd.  
 Man may dismiss compassion from his heart,  
 But God will never. When he charg'd the Jew  
 To assist his foe's down-fallen beast to rise;  
 And when the bush-exploring boy, that seiz'd  
 The young, to let the parent bird go free;  
 Prov'd he not plainly that his meaner works  
 Are yet his care, and have an interest all,  
 All, in the universal Father's love?

*The Task.*

Now supposing God had made no alteration in animal nature after the fall of man; but had left the unoffending animals in a state not naturally tending to dissolution: would not men have inflicted greater and more lingering miseries upon them than they now have power to do? Or will any one say that the flesh of beasts was originally made of iron, and their bones of brass? So that the lashes of the whip, or the operation of fire and sharpened steel could not give them any pain.

They were free from misery in the original state of things, not because they were incapable of suffering, but because there was

nothing in the creation to hurt them. But after moral evil was introduced, man became a barbarian to inferior animals, as matter of fact has proved in every age of the world, from that time to the present. And it is evident the very animals that lived in the days of Adam would have continued in a state of painful drudgery to the present hour, had not their kind Creator terminated their misery, by subjecting them to a speedy dissolution.

There is no way to set aside this conclusion, but by supposing they were originally incapable of being made to suffer by any art that sinners could invent. And does the bible tell us any thing about such a pitiful hypothesis? If not, on what ground are we to receive it as a truth? Are we to take it for granted without any evidence, merely because it is necessary to support the notion that sin was originally a perfectly harmless thing that could not possibly hurt any creature in existence, and that God, with his own hand, first brought misery into the creation?

What the first sin of angels was we are not informed; but whatever it might be, we must be very cautious (as those imagine who maintain that suffering is always a proof of guilt,) how we admit that it had any natural tendency to produce misery either in the sinners themselves or their fellow-creatures: all misery must arise from the execution of some penalty, otherwise there is no argument left to support the great doctrine that infants and brutes are guilty. When Adam sinned, his crime is supposed to have been equally harmless: it neither produced pain nor evil propensities, as its natural effect, either in him or his posterity: and had God withheld his hand from executing penalties, it seems, all mankind might have multiplied their crimes to the present day, and yet have remained as perfectly happy as they were in Paradise; and with all their malice and fury it would be impossible for them to give a moment's pain to any beast in the creation!

If this be so, it follows that when God first inflicted penalties on account of sin, it was not done to defend the happiness of any living creature; for the tranquillity of all remained undisturbed, and would have so continued to eternity, had not his own hand first made a breach upon it by inflicting his penalties. And as God had no regard to the welfare of any of his creatures, in punishing sin, seeing it was a harmless thing that made no inroads upon their welfare; therefore he introduced misery merely to gratify some private principle in himself, which could never rest satisfied without seeing some creature tormented. This is the secret principle that runs through the whole scheme, and supports the enormous

system of sovereign partiality and eternal reprobation! This secret, mysterious and amazing justice, arising out of the divine sovereignty, is the Manichean principle which produces all the good and evil—all the happiness and misery to be found in heaven, earth, or hell! Shall we take courage, and renounce this dismal view of things? Or must we conclude that “we cannot let it go without giving up at the same time the greatest part, if not all, of the essential articles of the christian faith?”

4. As God is thus kind and good to his meanest creatures, and proves that he has a perpetual regard for their well-being; who will undertake to declare that he has no benevolent intention to establish their happiness, when the Lord Jesus shall have destroyed the works of the devil, “at the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began?”

“The creature,” says Mr. Wesley, “every creature was subjected to vanity, to sorrow, to pain of every kind, to all manner of evils. Not indeed willingly; not by its own choice; nor by any act or deed of its own; but by reason of him that subjected it; by the wise permission of God, determining to draw eternal good out of this temporary evil.”\*

“While his creatures travail together in pain, he knoweth all their pain, and is bringing them nearer and nearer to the birth, which shall be accomplished in its season. He seeth the earnest expectation wherewith the whole animated creation waiteth for that final manifestation of the sons of God, in which they themselves, also shall be delivered, (not by annihilation: annihilation is not deliverance,) from the present bondage of corruption into (a measure of,) the glorious liberty of the children of God.”†

Mr. Wesley goes on; “nothing can be more express, away with vulgar prejudices, and let the plain word of God take place. They shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into glorious liberty: even a measure, according as they are capable, of the liberty of the children of God.

“But what end does it answer, to dwell upon this subject which we so imperfectly understand?” To consider so much as we do understand, † so much as God has been pleased to reveal to us, may answer that excellent end, to illustrate that mercy of God, which is *over all his works*. And it may exceedingly confirm our belief, that much more he is *loving to every man*. For how well

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\* Sermons, vol. v. page 123. † Page 127. ‡ Page 130.

may we urge our Lord's word, *Are not ye much better than they?* If then the Lord takes such care of the fowls of the air, and of the beasts of the field, shall he not much more take care of *you*, creatures of a nobler order?

“ May it not answer another end, namely, furnish us with a full answer to a plausible objection against the justice of God, in suffering numberless creatures, that never had sinned, to be so severely punished? They could not sin, for they were not moral agents. Yet how severely do they suffer? Yea, many of them, beasts of burden in particular, almost the whole time of their abode on earth. So that they can have no retribution here below. But the objection vanishes away, if we consider that something better remains after death, for these poor creatures also: that these likewise shall one day be delivered from this bondage of corruption, and shall then receive an ample amends for all their present sufferings.

“ One more excellent end may undoubtedly be answered by the preceding considerations. They may encourage us to imitate him, whose mercy is over all his works. They may soften our hearts towards the meaner creatures, knowing that the Lord careth for them. It may enlarge our hearts towards those poor creatures, to reflect that as vile as they appear in our eyes, not one of them is forgotten in the sight of our heavenly Father.”

These are some of the arguments which fully convinced the mind of Mr. Wesley, that the goodness of God will ultimately deliver the unsinning part of the creation from the ravages of sin, and place them in a state of undisturbed enjoyment, as was originally intended.

And shall we conclude that his opinion is a dreadful heresy, subversive of the very fundamental principles of Christianity? Shall we start and draw back from it, as if the very heavens were in danger of falling, or as if all our hopes of salvation were in danger of being destroyed? Are we afraid God should be too kind to his suffering creatures, which he created in order that they might be happy, and which have never sinned against him? What harm would it be to any man or angel, if God should kindly take care of sparrows, and restore them to that state of happiness, for which his goodness brought them into being, and of which they would still have retained the quiet possession, had it not been for the wickedness of another order of his creatures?

Are we afraid of consequences? What are they? One consequence is, that if God has such a perpetual regard for his mean-

est creatures, he will bring to just punishment the wretch that takes pleasure in abusing them. Are we afraid of this consequence? If so, we want the privilege, it seems, to abuse them with impunity. Another is, that God delights to see those creatures happy, and of course, they were not made solely for our accommodation, without any regard to their own: They were not created merely to serve us a little while, frequently groaning and bleeding under our tyranny, and then to be cast by into the silent shades of oblivion: hence we are deprived of the selfish pleasure of thinking that God made them through mere partiality to us, without any regard to their own enjoyments, which would be the case, if he kept them in being only while we wanted their services, and afterwards struck them out of existence, merely because we have no more occasion to make them our drudges. Perhaps we are afraid it will eclipse our glory, if brutes are permitted to live forever, which, to be sure, ought to be the sole prerogative of man! Were they not originally made to live forever? And did it eclipse the glory of Adam, or diminish his prerogative, that various orders of living creatures were permitted to share with him in the blessings of paradise. Would it have increased his dignity, had he wished their existence might come to an end, or refused to believe that God intended they should enjoy everlasting happiness as well as himself and his posterity?

But we are afraid if men generally believed that beasts will be restored to their original state of happiness, they would next believe that devils and sinners will be restored from hell; and hence they would banish all their fears, and rest contented in their wickedness. They may believe this or any thing else, and it is impossible for us to hinder them, if they are resolved to disregard all evidence, and believe whatever is most suitable to their taste; but they will never espouse the latter opinion as a regular consequence of the former, for there is not as much connexion between them as there is between the two poles.

The sin of devils and men, we say, has involved the brute creation in a state of misery; but God will ultimately deliver them from it and place them in their original state of happiness: why? Because they were not involved by their own fault, but by the fault of men and devils. And if God will support the happiness of his innocent creatures, because they are innocent, you conclude it is a clear consequence that he will also restore those guilty rebels who are punished on account of their abominations against

the innocent, and for the security of whom, the sentence of justice was executed upon them!

It was God's regard to the welfare of the innocent that first influenced him to send devils and wicked men to hell: how then can his regard to the innocent cause him to extend mercy to devils and wicked spirits, unless you suppose they have become innocent, since they went to hell?

The dreadful inference we are so much afraid of, could be drawn with more plausibility from the doctrine of divine mercy to sinners in this world: If I go to hell, says one, God will deliver me after a while, and take me to heaven: why? Because his nature is to show mercy; for you say he pardons many sinners in this world, and sanctifies their nature, and why not in the world to come? The inference would have more appearance of reason, when drawn from this doctrine than the other; because beasts are *innocent*, and therefore God's regard to them affords no inference in favour of the *guilty*; but if guilty men are restored from their wretched state, and taken to heaven, sinners may with some appearance of plausibility presume, that a similar dispensation will obtain in that future world to which we are fast approaching. And shall we therefore be very cautious how we believe or teach the doctrine of divine mercy to sinners in this world, for fear men will take occasion to infer, that devils and damned spirits may also obtain forgiveness? If there be a need of caution in the other case, there certainly is more in this, because it appears to afford some presumption of the kind, which the other does not.

The fact is, that men, who are determined to love sin more than reason and truth, will find pretences enough to silence their consciences, and will be at no loss to find sophistical arguments to convince them of what they are resolved to believe at all events. In vain may we attempt to guard them against it by suppressing the light of evidence, from the groundless fear that the establishment of one truth, would lead to a disbelief of another. This were to suppose that truth naturally contradicts itself, that one error is necessary to guard us against falling into another; that we ought to be afraid of the clearest evidence, and finally, that God would have the world directed by stratagem, instead of the calm voice of reason and revelation.

Without consuming too much time on this article, which must be allowed to be of less importance than many others, I will only add one argument which has had the chief influence in producing a conviction in my mind, that God will restore the animal creation to a state of perpetual happiness. It is this:

The animals were originally made to enjoy a happy existence; had it not been for the sin of others, misery and death would never have been introduced among them: of course divine goodness prepared for them a state of felicity, which was interrupted by the works of the devil: Jesus Christ came to destroy the works of the devil, and will reign till all enemies are put under his feet: but if innocent animals are totally deprived of that happy existence which God intended for them to enjoy forever, the devil has succeeded in destroying the works of God, the innocent not excepted. If those innocent creatures are never restored, it must be because God cannot restore them, or because he will not; if he *cannot* do it, it would seem that the devil has overcome his power; and if he *will not*, the old serpent has caused him to abandon the original purpose of his goodness towards millions of his unoffending creatures.

This consequence cannot be set aside, without affirming that the beasts were originally made for destruction. Nor can it be retorted, by recurring to the state of men and angels: for it was not the original design of God that they should enjoy everlasting happiness, but upon condition of their obedience; whereas no condition of obedience was enjoined on the inferior animals, and therefore, unless we suppose they were originally made to be destroyed or annihilated, they will be restored; otherwise you say the devil has caused their Creator to alter his mind concerning them.

As to men and angels, it was the design of God that they should stand responsible for their moral conduct, and be dealt with according to their works, by the law of his holy and unchangeable attributes: this design has never been frustrated, and never will be to eternity.

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## SECTION XII.

### *Of the Divine Sovereignty.*

It may be necessary, before we close this part of the subject, to notice a favourite argument of our opponents, founded upon the Divine Sovereignty.



“God, say they, has an undoubted right to do what he will with his own: he is not bound to make any creature happy, much less to restore those who have fallen from a state of rectitude: therefore he has the just prerogative to receive one and pass by another, according to his own good pleasure. Shall the thing formed, say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?” To this we would answer:

1. The English word, sovereign, signifies, supreme in power, having no superior. Sovereignty, supremacy, highest place, highest degree of excellence.\*

By the divine sovereignty then, we understand, that God is supreme in power, authority and excellence: consequently when his power is exercised to maintain his authority, according to the moral excellence of his nature, his sovereignty is secured. The moment we charge him with using his power in opposition to his excellence, or moral attributes, we charge him with renouncing the sovereign glory of his nature; and when we plead that he has a right to do so, we suppose he has a right to cease being God, and to imitate the king of the bottomless pit, who delights in the exercise of a despotic sovereignty, that has no connexion with moral goodness.

2. Justice, truth and benevolence, are essential attributes of Almighty God, or they are not; to say they are not, is to leap into atheism, or into the belief of a God totally destitute of every principle of morality, which is still worse than atheism: but if those attributes are essential to the divine nature, then to say God has a right to depart from them, is to say he has a right to abandon that which is essential to his nature, to change himself into another deity, of an opposite nature, and to govern his actions by the evil principles which predominate in the devil and his angels. Will he be pleased with any creature for imputing this to him, and for labouring to vindicate his right to such a gloomy and terrifying supremacy?

3 The word tyrannous or tyrannical, according to Walker, signifies despotic, arbitrary, severe. Tyrant, an absolute monarch governing imperiously; a cruel, despotic and severe master. According to the same author, the word arbitrary means despotic, absolute; depending on no rule; capricious. Arbitrarily, with no other rule than the will; despotically; absolutely.

Hence it appears that a tyrant is one “who governs his actions by no other rule than his own will, and who fancies he has a right

\* See Walker's Dictionary.

to do so arising out of his sovereign prerogative, as absolute monarch:” his vassals, on the contrary, must have no will, or no other rule of action, than a regular intention to submit to his will in all things he is pleased to enjoin, for no other reason but because it is his will.

Thus a tyrant departs from all moral principles himself, and demands of his subjects also to depart from them, and to make his will the sole rule of their actions. They may indeed do moral actions in those cases where his will happens not to interfere; but even then, they must not do them from a regard to morality, but from a regard to his will; and whenever he shall *will* their departure from any righteous action, they must give it up, and consider his sovereign pleasure alone as the foundation of all right and of all obligation.

Were we to plead for such a right as this in behalf of such persons as Nero, Caligula or Bishop Bonner, they would doubtless be pleased with us, and consider us as very acceptable advocates for their sovereign prerogative. I am apt to imagine that the old prince of darkness has also been in the habit of elaiming this sovereign right for some thousands of years, and that he is ambitious to govern without being limited by any other rule than that of his own will. But what good man will presume, upon second thoughts, that the benevolent Author of this great universe will be pleased to hear us advocate his supposed right to transform himself into the nature and character of an arbitrary tyrant? Who can, without horror, consider the depth of blasphemy there is in the supposition, that God has a right to transform himself into a devil? And what creature of God will do such violence to the immediate dictates of his intellectual faculties, as to believe it possible for any being to have a right to do wrong? In other words, that a being does right in doing wrong; or that right is wrong and wrong is right; or in other words, “that there is no distinction between right and wrong, and that sovereign will may do any thing, every thing, or nothing.

4. To suppose God may do any thing, because he possesses Almighty power, is to suppose right has its origin in power: that is, that the reason why a being has a right to do any thing, is that he has power to do it. Take away his power, and you take away his right; enlarge his power and his right is enlarged in exact proportion.

This doctrine was advocated by Mr. Hobbes; and it is very pleasing to every tyrant in the world; for if this be true, it of course

follows, that the tyrant never did any wrong in his life, because he never did any thing beyond his power, and therefore it could not be beyond his right, seeing right grows out of power, and out of nothing else.

Upon this atheistic hypothesis all men have a right to do any thing and every thing in their power, because the power is the only thing that supports right, seeing right naturally grows out of it. I have a right to take away any man's liberty or life, provided only that I have power to do it; and any other man has a right to take my liberty or life, whenever he may happen to have it in his power. Thus all moral principles are destroyed, all obligation ceases, and despotic tyranny is the only God that is to be worshipped in either earth or heaven.

The truth is, that the principle of right is as uncreated, eternal, and unchangeable as God himself, because it is an essential principle of his immutable nature. To say God has a right to act in opposition to his eternal Attribute of justice, appears to be equal in blasphemy with the supposition, "that God has a right to destroy himself.

5. It is granted, that "God worketh all things after the counsel of his own will;" because his perpetual will is to do every thing according to his immutable justice, truth and benevolence. But because our Saviour represents the Lord of the hired servants as saying, "may I not do what I will with my own," some appear to imagine he means that God has a right to do any thing with his creatures, because they are his own. Whereas it is evident from the parable, that the master had no reference to the labourers, for they were not his own, seeing they had voluntarily entered into his service for a stipulated price. By the term, my own, was meant his money, which he had a right to bestow as a favour, or to withhold it at his option.

It is true, all creatures belong to God; but has he a right to punish the holy angels with everlasting damnation because they are his own? If so, it would appear, that if the devil had power to create sensible or conscious creatures, and were to do so in order to torment them in the flames of hell forever, he would have a right to do it because they would be his own. The only reason why he has not the right to do this, is that he has not the power: thus we are brought back to Mr. Hobbes's atheistic theory again, that right grows out of power.

God justly claims all men and angels as his own: that is, they are his own servants, or the subjects of his government, and he has

a right to demand obedience from them in proportion to the knowledge and power he has given them, and according to the principles of his moral law. But to say he has a right to deceive them by lying, to accuse and condemn them falsely, or to punish them for nothing, but the gratification of his *sovereign pleasure*, because they are his own, is to say God is a tyrant, and that he has a right to be so.

All creatures hold their *existence* and *happiness* by a grant of benevolence; but their *right of exemption from penal torments*, they claim from eternal justice, so long as they continue innocent: here they have a proper right of demand, inseparable from their being, as innocent creatures; and their Creator is bound in justice not to violate their right.

If we deny this, we say the creatures of God, when they rebelled against his government, forfeited no right thereby, seeing they had no right to forfeit; of course they were no more exposed to punishment, in justice, than they were before; because the sovereign pleasure is supposed the only ground of their happiness or misery, and if the supreme will should so determine, it might be made just for them to be *rewarded* for their wickedness, and *punished* for keeping the commandments. The Almighty Sovereign might, if it should happen to be his good pleasure, make guilt consist in loving justice, mercy and truth, and make innocence consist in falsehood, and in hating every thing that is just and good. He might restore all devils from the lake of hell, and reward them with crowns of glory for their profound abhorrence of all morality; he might at the same time send all his holy angels into hell, together with the spirits of just men made perfect, to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, as the due wages of their want of malice; and all this would be as perfectly just and righteous as any thing that has been done since the creation, provided the sovereign will should fix it so, which is supposed to be the only standard of justice in the universe.

6. We grant God is not bound to pardon and save any sinner, by any right in the sinner, to demand salvation at his hand: and hence it is concluded by our opponents, that their doctrine is conceded, namely, that he may save one, and pass by another, for no other reason but his own good pleasure; and no creature can have a just ground of complaint. His gratuitous act of electing one, and neglecting another, they call his *sovereign grace*; but the proper name of it is *sovereign partiality*.

Sovereign grace is the grace, or favour, exercised by a sovereign: it has been shown that God's sovereignty consists in his supreme right to govern his creatures, not as a tyrant, but according to his holy and unchangeable attributes. It remains for us to inquire whether partiality is to be considered as one of the attributes of God, or whether it necessarily arises out of them.

By partiality I here mean "a disposition to limit favours to certain individuals, and to withhold them from others under similar circumstances, for no reason but arbitrary will or pleasure. Does such a disposition belong to God? I hope the following reflections will serve to decide this question in the negative:

1. Supposing God is not bound to be impartial in bestowing his favours, does it follow from this that he is disposed to be partial, or that he ever will be so? Is not benevolence as dear to him as justice, and is he any more disposed, in any case, to depart from the former than the latter?

2. Suppose two sinners stand before God, equally needy, and whose salvation would equally accord with justice: if he save one, and pass by the other, only because he will do so, in this act of passing by, he shows such a deficiency in the love of goodness, that he will not be kind to this person, when there is no moral obstruction. It is not for the sake of benevolence surely, that he refuses in this case to be benevolent; it is not for the sake of justice, because the salvation of one is supposed to accord with justice as well as that of the other; It is not for the sake of truth, unless some one will undertake to prove that God has declared he will be partial, and pass by some sinners whose salvation would perfectly accord both with justice and benevolence; therefore in such an act of partiality he would have no regard to any moral principle, and consequently the action would result from some private and selfish one, that is regardless of all morality.

3. Though it be granted that God is not bound to be impartial, from any right of demand in sinners, yet he has graciously bound himself by pledging his own character that he will always act according to the harmony of all his attributes. He has fairly and openly stated the conditions on which pardon is to be granted, and has declared that "whosoever will, may take of the waters of life freely:" if, therefore, he has made any secret reserves and absolute resolutions or decrees, that Adam's race shall not be equally welcome; if he has a *revealed will*, proclaiming most unequivocally that "he delighteth not in the death of the wicked, but would have all men come to repentance," and at the same time his secret

will and pleasure is that a majority shall be unconditionally excluded from the possibility of salvation, what an hypocritical character does he display before his holy angels! And before men too; for it seems men have found out his secret will, and published it abroad, notwithstanding his design to keep it secret. How they obtained access to the secret cabinet, I have not been informed; but be that as it may, they have made the thing public, and have let the world into the mystery of God's "holy simulation."

4. The most selfish tyrant in the world is capable of this kind of benevolence. He can bestow favours sometimes, when it suits his humour, or when it may be thought in any manner to subserve his selfish purposes; but if he frequently neglects others in similar circumstances, for no other reason but because he will, it is clear his favours are not bestowed from principle, or from a regard to general happiness, but merely from a regard to his sovereign pleasure: that is, from a desire to gratify the pride and selfishness of his own heart. He bestows favours on some, and passes by others, merely and solely because it is his will to do so: then his will is not regulated by any regard to the principle of benevolence, for that principle would apply to all those cases alike: not from a regard to justice, for the persons whom he passed by, might have been relieved as consistently with justice as the others: his actions flow from a selfish principle, and he is as destitute of moral goodness in bestowing his favours as in withholding them; because both actions flow from the same principle, and that is a proud desire to gratify and display his own sovereign pleasure.

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### SECTION XIII.

#### *The same subject.*

THE present objection supposes God to be ambitious to establish himself at the head of a party. Moral principles are universal in their application: justice is not limited to a part of mankind; and benevolence does not consist in the blind attachments of party spirit, but in such a regard to general happiness as influences a person to extend happiness as far as he is able to extend it consistently with justice. While a person is governed by those

principles, his actions and motives have relation to the community in general, and admit of no arbitrary selection of particular parties.

But in our degenerate world we see party spirit prevail both in church and state, and triumph over every principle of righteousness. Thousands have a humorous fondness for one party, and a proportional disgust and antipathy against another, which make them blind to the clearest evidence.

They are willing truth should prevail, so far as it may accord with the support of their own party; but their opponents must be hindered from speaking the truth, and no faith is to be kept with heretics. They are very tenacious of the rights of justice, on their own side; but they are unwilling others should have equal rights, and wish justice to be a limited principle, confined to particular parties. They are very benevolent also, provided it be true that benevolence consists in bestowing favours on their side of the house, for the gratification of their partiality, or their party spirit, which is the same thing; but as to a general love, that delights to bless all needy objects alike, without respect of persons, this is a stranger to their bosom.

Thus it is evident that party spirit or partiality is hostile to every righteous principle. All such principles are universal in their nature, and a proper regard to justice, truth and benevolence, arises out of a *general love* that delights to make all individuals happy, who can be made so without violating the rights of others. Whereas partiality is a *limited, selfish love*, which delights to make justice, truth and benevolence, subservient to the blind attachments and arbitrary decisions of a despotic will.

This spirit is truly the mother of abominations. It causes us to be blind to the faults and absurdities of our own party: it causes us to do violence to our reason and conscience, to suppress and hate all truth and all evidence, unless it be favourable to our own side: it causes us unmercifully to judge the other side, and to impute crimes to them according to our sovereign pleasure: it causes us to monopolize the rights of justice to ourselves: it causes us to limit our favours according to the selfish dictate of our partiality, and to be envious at the prosperity of our opponents. In short, it produces a blind, unreasonable, and idolatrous fondness for our favourites, and a corresponding animosity against the objects whom our arbitrary will singles out for reprobation. As the blind attachment rises for one side, a secret malice rises against the other in



exact proportion; and thus every moral virtue is made to yield to the selfish fury of party malevolence.

This gave rise to the furious bigotry of the Scribes and Pharisees: they laboured to confine all right and all the blessings of salvation to the Jewish party; and to detest the Gentiles, to persecute them, and fondly to consider them as outcasts from God, fit only to be taken and destroyed.

It gave rise to the bloody scenes of popery. They confined salvation to themselves; they fancied that God's partiality confined all his eternal favours to their holy church, and that he had a corresponding abhorrence for all heretics. That is, they fancied he was altogether such an one as themselves. They believed they had rights, but that others had not equal rights. They believed men ought to be benevolent and kind, but not to heretics. It was right to be sincere, to tell the truth, and keep our word; but no faith is to be kept with heretics. Thus the god of party was worshipped, till all regard to moral principles was given up, and heretics were destroyed by the most execruciating tortures, and with a fond belief that God's unchangeable hatred and malice against them was equal to their own; and of course that they would all burn in the flames of hell forever.

Wherever malice and persecution have prevailed in any sect or country, it has risen from devotion to the same God. It matters not whether it appear under the garb of piety, zeal for God, liberty, patriotism, a design to enlighten the world, to suppress priestcraft and superstition, or any other hypocritical pretension.—It is the same thing under all those names, and manifests itself by its fruits. It is such a blind and vehement fondness for our party, and such habitual and settled malevolence against others, as leads us to sacrifice truth, justice and benevolence, to build up one party and pull down the other. This, as all experience shows, is the nature and tendency of *partiality*.

Is it possible that good men can believe, upon second thoughts, that there is any such principle in the Lord our Maker? Surely such unbecoming thoughts of God must be rejected by every reflecting mind. But I think it is not hard to discover that the electing love, sovereign pleasure, and secret will, so often spoken of, are nothing more than other names substituted for arbitrary partiality, and the disposition is the same under every appellation.

God's will, in relation to his creatures, is always regulated by his moral attributes, or it is not; if it is, he is always disposed to make every creature happy, so far as it will accord with justice;

if it is not, he sometimes departs from the perfections of his nature, and is influenced by some secret principle totally distinct from them.

I think we may safely conclude upon the whole, that partiality, subversive of all righteousness, arises out of a selfish heart, and that so far as a ruler is disposed to be tyrannical, so far he desires and needs a *secret will*, in opposition to the will which he is pleased to make known, and by which he *professes* to regulate his administration.

I know it may be urged, that God has in fact exercised partiality in giving the different capacities and means of happiness which he has given to different orders of his creatures.

But this supposes partiality can be exercised towards creatures before they exist, and if so, it can be exercised toward a *nonentity*. Nothing can be more absurd than for the thing formed to say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Because this supposes we had rights or claims upon the divine attributes before we were created. If partiality can be exercised towards a *nonentity*, the objection would still hold, though God had made all creatures of the same order: for it might be said, how many millions of creatures might be created that are still in a state of non-existence? Surely God is partial, or he would not leave those creatures which might be made, in a state of nonentity, while these are in a state of happy existence!

And if God's having given beasts a small capacity of happiness, is a proof of his partiality, his conduct towards stones and trees is a still greater proof of it, because he has given them *no capacity* of happiness.

The partiality opposed in these pages, consists in an arbitrary will to bestow favours on some, and neglect others, who equally *need* such favours, and who stand in the same moral relation to him who bestows them. But as to the kind or degree of capacity creatures were to have, it has no connexion with the subject; for before our existence we were in need of nothing, and had no relation to moral principles.

The Lord gives the light and assistance of his holy spirit to a *man*, and withholds this blessing from a *beast*: there is no partiality in this, because the beast does not need spiritual grace, as the man does, nor does it stand in the same moral relation to God.— But the case of two or more sinners, who equally need pardon and salvation, and whose salvation would equally accord with the general welfare, is so entirely different from the cases alleged

in the objection, that it requires no uncommon discernment to perceive that this futile argument has no just bearing upon the doctrine defended in the present section.

But because some men have greater advantages than others during their existence on earth, it is presumed by some, that this results solely from God's sovereign pleasure; and if distinguishing grace makes such a difference in this life, why not in the life to come? Answer:

If our opponents will prove that God has no moral reason for the various dispensations of his grace and providence, but merely his arbitrary will;—if they clearly evince that he has no regard to the general welfare, and the greatest good of his creatures upon the whole, in the variety manifested in the course of his providence in the present world;—we will then grant that a principle of arbitrary sovereignty governs his actions, and in all probability the same partiality may extend to a future state. But if they cannot prove this, if the contrary be true, that God has benevolent intentions, to which this order in his works in the present world is perpetually subservient, no particular fact under his government can be produced as a proof of his partiality. And they are bound to prove this point, before their conclusion can be admitted, as much as infidels are bound to prove the same thing, before their conclusions can be admitted, concerning the caprice, or folly, or injustice that appears, as they imagine, in the Almighty's method of governing this world.

If they say it is incumbent on us to prove that God has such benevolent intentions in the different gifts and advantages conferred upon men in the present life, and to reconcile the seeming partialities of his administration with the doctrine here advanced; our answer is short.

The moral attributes of God are proved by the testimony of revelation, and by every other source of evidence, the great Creator, possessed of these perfections, is unchangeable, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; of course he never departs from them for a moment; but partiality is opposite in its nature and tendency to the divine perfections, as has just been proved, I hope to the satisfaction of every candid reader; therefore no such partiality is ever exercised by our Maker in any case, however some cases may have the appearance of it to our limited conceptions.

As to the difficulty of reconciling the disorders of the present world with the divine nature, we must either resolve it into our own ignorance, or we must charge God foolishly; and it ill becomes

a christian to draw his conclusions against God, from certain temporary appearances which he does not understand, and is incapable of comprehending, in their relation to the whole. This is truly the deistical method of reasoning; and it is a method which has been very fruitful of unreasonable and atheistical conclusions.

A father of a family or ruler of a state may exhibit abundant evidence to his children or subjects, of the goodness and impartiality of his character, and yet some particular cases may occur, concerning which they may be incapable of entering into the views of the benevolent ruler, and may consider them as deviations from wisdom and goodness, merely because they are ignorant of their tendency, and of their relation to the general welfare. A foolish child will hastily conclude that such cases are proofs of his parent's unkindness or cruelty; but he who accustoms his mind to candid reflection, will conclude they are proofs of his own ignorance, and ought not, in any degree, to weaken his confidence in the parent or governor, while so much evidence exists of the general goodness of his character.

We have intuitive conviction that the First Cause, or Supreme Being must necessarily be so completely above the blind and selfish principles of action which govern ignorant sinners, that "he cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." The same fundamental truth is established by the unequivocal evidence of revelation. We also perceive the signs of wisdom and benevolence in the visible creation, so far as we are able to take a general view of it, and could that view be comprehensive and complete, how would we be transported with the prospect! But a prejudiced and narrow mind neglects that patient reflection which would enable him to draw his conclusions from an enlarged and general view of things, and, confining himself to some particular parts, without attending to the clear signs of goodness in the whole, concludes very absurdly that God is partial or unjust. This conclusion depends upon the truth of the principle, "that the particular case under consideration has no tendency to subserve the purposes of justice or mercy." And can any one produce the least evidence of this? If not, there is no evidence to support the conclusion; and the belief of it can only result from the dictates of a haughty mind, which pretends to understand the government of this universe as well as God Almighty understands it.

In this sophistical manner atheists have reasoned against the creation, and deists against the bible. God favours some men or some nations more than others, with his natural or supernatural

blessings in this life; therefore many conclude that this variety does not flow from a benevolent intention to produce the greatest general good in future, but from an essential principle of partiality in God.

And many christians, it seems, inadvertently give full sanction to these unjust reproaches against heaven, and then hope to mend the matter by pleading that God has a right to deviate from his moral attributes, and to regulate all things by his sovereign pleasure! Infidels and christians agree in the premises, and in the first conclusion, namely, that God is a partial being: the unbeliever, perceiving that partiality is a source of every kind of wickedness in the world, concludes that the Author of nature is an immoral being, which sentiment he soon exchanges for atheism. The christian takes another course, and insists that God has a sovereign right to be partial, and to confine himself to no rule of action but his own capricious and independent will. They think this principle alone fixes the unconditional and eternal destinies, both of men and angels. If some men are saved, and others damned, it is because God eternally predestinated the fate of each by his sovereign or arbitrary will. If some angels keep their first estate, and others lose it, the reason is, that the former were always the favourite objects of electing love, and the latter of reprobating animosity. If human sinners are redeemed and restored from their fallen condition, and angelic sinners are not, this also must be resolved into the same distinguishing grace, or electing partiality, as the only reason or principle in the divine nature which made a difference between angels and men, as it respects the benefits of redemption.

Thus all the links of predestination hang together, and we must receive the whole, or totally reject the principle of partiality from whence they flow; and maintain that God has never departed from a pure regard to general happiness in any act of his administration, towards angels, or men, or any other creatures in existence.

As to the fallen angels, God has not seen fit to give us an account of the particulars of their apostacy. In what manner the divine forbearance was manifested towards them we know not; the nature, extent, and aggravating circumstances of their crimes we know not; but if any man shall have the assurance to affirm that they were passed by, through sovereign partiality, when they might have had a merciful probation granted, consistently with every moral principle; we may safely defy him to support an hy-

pothesis so unworthy of God, from scripture or from any other source of human knowledge.

As to the passages of scripture which speak of the variety of the Almighty's dispensations of grace and providence here below, and which have been pressed into the service of predestinarian sovereignty, they have been sufficiently examined by Mr. Fletcher and others, to whom I must refer the reader, and have been shown to accord perfectly with the general tenor of the scriptures, that "the Lord is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works."—Psalm cxlv. 9.

## CHAPTER V.

OF THE MEANS OR CONDITIONS THROUGH WHICH WE RECEIVE  
THE BENEFITS OF CHRIST'S ATONEMENT.

## SECTION I.

*A general view of faith.*

HAVING considered the great love wherewith our heavenly father hath loved us, and the fulness of redemption that is in Christ Jesus, for the salvation of mankind; it remains for us to notice the conditions on which we are to receive the benefits of Christ's atonement, and to enforce them upon the understanding and affections, by the interesting and powerful motives exhibited in the gospel.

Among all the terms of acceptance we find stated in the scriptures, none is so often mentioned, and so particularly and solemnly enjoined, as that of believing, or the right exercise of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is rightly represented as the root of all christian virtues. It is urged upon us by our Saviour and his apostles as the grand instrument or condition of our pardon, sanctification, and perpetual victory over the world; and it is so indispensable in every stage of our progress to heaven, that "without faith it is impossible to please God." It is therefore a matter of the first importance for us to understand this essential doctrine of the gospel, on which our eternal welfare so manifestly depends.

To believe a report, to give it credit, or to have faith in it, are terms well understood by men in general; but they are terms not capable of what is called a logical definition. We know that believing is an act or decision of the mind concerning what is true or false; all correct faith has truth for its object, and that which takes falsehood for truth, is a mistaken belief or delusion; but a correct belief may exist in various degrees, and may produce various effects, according to the nature of the truth it embraces.

Those words are used by the inspired writers in different senses, and many I apprehend have confounded those different applications of the word faith, or believing, or not sufficiently distinguished



them, and have thereby brought great confusion into their own conceptions, and bewildered the minds of others.

The term faith, is sometimes applied to a *single act* of believing, on a particular occasion; at other times, to a *continued act*, or habitual adherence to the truth.

It is sometimes applied to the simple assent of the understanding; at other times, it means an adherence to truth, by the united embrace of the understanding and affections. In some passages it applies to the *act* of believing; in others, to the *object* of it; and in others, to the *effects* of it.

That the words sometimes apply to a single act, on a particular occasion, will be readily admitted; and I need only refer to Acts xiv. 9. and Matt. viii. 13. for an example.

But when the promise of eternal life is connected with our faith or believing, those words are applied to the continued and habitual state of the mind. "He that believeth [perseveringly] shall be saved." Mark xvi. 16.

"But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." Heb. x. 39. "That is, we are not of them who for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away, like those mentioned." Luke viii. 13. "But we are of those who continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel." Col. i. 23. "This is the will of him that sent me," says our Saviour, "that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." John vi. 40. The term, *believeth on him*, evidently signifies a continued act, or habit of belief; for eternal life is not promised to those who "make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience;" but to those who "continue in the faith, and through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God." Acts xiv. 22.

Faith sometimes means a bare assent of the understanding, and many who never were justified, or even awakened to a conviction of the evil nature of sin, are said to have believed. This is evident from Acts viii. 13. "Then Simon himself believed also; and when he was baptised, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done." And yet it is obvious from the context, that he was all the while "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." Verse 23.

"King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, almost thou persuadest me to be a christian." Acts xxvi. 27.

That many are said to have believed, who continued in a state of condemnation, is still more evident from John xii. 42. "Nevertheless, among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees, they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." Will any one say those persons, who loved the praise of men more than the praise of God, and refused to confess Christ before men, were really in a state of acceptance or justification?

There are thousands of such believers at the present day: they have believed in christianity from their youth, and continue still to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and the Saviour of sinners. And yet they are ashamed of Christ and his words before an adulterous and sinful generation, and love the praise of men more than the praise of God. They are yet in their sins, and the wrath of God abideth on them. How can it then be said that all that believe are justified, and have passed from death unto life? To answer this question, we must consider in what the deficiency of this faith consists, and wherein it differs from that which is imputed to us for righteousness.

The deficiency consists in its want of energy, as a principle of action, to move the affections, and regulate the conduct. The faith which God requires, is not merely an indifferent assent of the mind, as a principle of speculative knowledge; but it is that which is influential as a principle of action, to excite the affections, to work by love, and to purify the heart. "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." Jam. ii. 26.

The cause of this deficiency is the false foundation on which their faith is built. *Evidence* is not the ground of their belief, and though the object of it be true, yet it is not for the sake of truth they believe it: they have never examined the evidence, nor felt any solicitude to understand it; but they believe merely for the sake of being in the fashion, or through some other sinister motive; their faith, therefore, is not the dictate of *candour*, which regulates the belief by *evidence*, but the dictate of *prejudice* or *bigotry*, which influences men to believe things, not for the sake of their being true, but for the sake of their subserviency to some private and selfish gratification.

Many believe the scriptures, because they can appeal to the scriptures, for the support of their party; and the support of their party is essential to the support of their popularity, as well as to many other private advantages. They believe Christ is the Son of

God, and the Saviour of the world, not because they feel any need of a Saviour, or any solicitude to examine the evidence of his mission, but because it is the belief of their relations and neighbours; to disbelieve would be unfashionable, and they esteem it better to be out of the world than to be out of the fashion. They dogmatically believe the doctrine of the Trinity, justification by faith, and the new-birth; not because they have any concern to understand these matters, or to know their evidence and importance; but because they have been the distinguishing tenets of their fathers and ancestors for some centuries, and because the belief of them is necessary, to distinguish them from Infidels, Socinians, and other heretics. Thus their faith is good for nothing, because it does not arise from a regard to truth, but from a regard to something else.

Others may believe from the influence of evidence which they cannot resist, as many of the Jews did; but their want of candour influences them to suppress the evidence, or to neglect an honest pursuit of it, for fear of losing their popularity; "for they love the praise of men more than the praise of God." Such believers are as deficient as the others, because they are equally destitute of a pure regard to truth.

This view of the subject is not only confirmed by experience and daily observation, but also by our Lord's express declaration to the Jews. "How can ye believe," says he, "which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" John v. 44. &c.

Are we to infer from this, that the Jews did not believe the writings of Moses? They surely appealed to Moses on all occasions, and believed in his divine mission, and his writings, with a most bigoted and dogmatical assurance. This our Saviour plainly intimates, when he says, *even Moses, in whom ye trust*. They could not surely trust in him, if they had no faith in his writings. And yet it is added immediately, "had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me." The solution is easy: the Jews believed in Moses, just as Simon the sorcerer believed in Jesus, as "many of the chief rulers believed on him," and as thousands in our days believe in his religion: that is, they believed in Moses, not for the sake of the truth contained in his writings, but for the sake of supporting their party, their popularity, and their

fond presumptions, that God's partiality confined all the promises to their holy nation, to the exclusion of all Gentile heretics. Had they examined the writings of Moses with candour, and with an honest and sincere desire to know the truth, they would have believed in another manner; the truth thus rightly attended to would have had its effect: it would have produced a conviction of their hostility to the essential doctrines of Moses: it would have enlightened their understanding, under the divine influence, and have given them to see and feel the importance of those matters, and of their deep interest in them: it would have led them to examine the prophecies relating to the Messiah, with a candid desire to enter into their meaning: hence their faith, having this proper influence upon their affections and conduct, would have led them honestly to compare the writings of Moses with the doctrine and miracles of the Redeemer, which would have produced a sincere and hearty belief in his divinity. Had the Jews thus believed the writings of Moses, they would have believed in Christ: for Moses wrote of him.

6. The apostle tells us, "The end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." 1 Tim. i. 5. Again he says, "I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also." 2 Tim. i. 5.

From this the inference is clear, that there is such a thing as *feigned faith*, and that the excellency of Timothy's faith consisted in its being *unfeigned*. When a man's faith is regulated by a regard to truth, and by a candid survey of its evidence and importance; when it arises from a sincere desire and honest intention to seek the truth, and to follow it without prejudice or partiality; this faith is unfeigned, and will never fail to influence the affections, and regulate the conduct of its possessor.

This is the faith required in the gospel. That sincerity and honesty of mind, which yields to the force of evidence, and which searches into the truth of God, with a willingness to sacrifice every prejudice for its sake, is well pleasing in the sight of God; because it admits truth into the affections as well as the understanding, and leads us to abandon those beloved vices which are hostile to all goodness, and to submit ourselves to the gracious government of our Redeemer. That the faith which is required to justification and eternal happiness, is of this description, and implies the united exercise of the understanding and affections, in

our embrace of the truth, is evident from the general tenor of the scriptures. "And Philip said if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Acts viii. 37. Rom. x. 10.

We have said the term faith, or believing, is sometimes applied to the *object* of it. This might be proved by many passages: but let it suffice to produce only a few.

"By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations." Rom. i. 5. Here obedience to the *faith* means, obedience to the gospel, or to the doctrines of Christ, who is the object of our faith.

"Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven? [that is, to bring Christ down from above] or, who shall descend into the deep? [that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.] But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach." Rom. x. 8, &c. The word of *faith* which we preach, evidently means Christ the object of faith, who is nigh thee, and not afar off in heaven or in the deep.

"He which persecuted us in times past, now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed." That is, he now preacheth the doctrines of Christ crucified, which once he opposed with great rage and bigotry."—Gal. i. 23.

"But after that faith is come [that is, after Christ is come with the revelation of his gospel] we are no longer under a school-master."—Gal. iii. 25.

Lastly, the term is sometimes used and intended to include the whole *effects* of faith, and is not to be limited merely to the exercise of the mind in believing.

"Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith:" that is, whether ye be in the divine favour, and have the fruits of the spirit, as the evidence of your acceptance in the beloved. "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

"Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" Jam. ii. 5. By their being rich in *faith*, the apostle means the true riches which our Saviour recommends. They are rich in "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness," and all the fruits of the Spirit, which are produced and continued in us by faith, as its effects; but they may be conceived distinctly, and are often distinguished from faith

in the scriptures, though in these passages and a few others, the word is used in a figurative way, to include all its consequences as well as the thing itself.

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.” Heb. xi. 1.

The word in this passage is used in its largest sense, and includes the fulness of christian experience. It is not the mere act of believing, but the whole of that love and joyful communion with God, which a christian feels, that is, the substance of things hoped for. Does a christian wish to know the nature of those pleasures that are at God’s right hand forevermore? His present peace and joy in believing, is the *substance* thereof: that is, the joys of heaven are the same in *substance* with his present happiness in God, though far higher in degree, and have no mixture of temptation or inquietude.

But is not all correct faith regulated by evidence? How then can faith itself be an *evidence of things not seen*? If it be proved to a man that there is a heaven of eternal happiness for the upright, and if he believe the report upon this evidence, will his believing it bring any new evidence of the fact? Not if the term faith be used according to its common meaning, to signify the mere act of the mind in believing; but if it be applied to the full experience of a christian, to include his act of believing and his immediate communion with God, as the effect of it, this is truly an evidence of things not seen: for God having appointed faith as the condition or medium through which he manifests himself to the soul, when a man embraces the Lord Jesus as his God and Saviour, the love of God is shed abroad in his heart, which produces an immediate conviction or consciousness of the divine presence entirely unknown before. This is a new *evidence* or *conviction* of things not seen, produced by the influence of the Holy Ghost, in consequence of our believing: “for the spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God.” Rom. viii. 16. This new witness, or *evidence* of things not seen, is not the *act* of faith, but the *effect* of it; for it is the spirit that bears witness, and we receive the spirit by the hearing of faith; (Gal. iii. 2.) therefore faith itself is not the witness, because it is faith that receives it: the receiver and the thing received are not surely the same thing, though the term faith is sometimes used in a figurative way to comprehend them both.

Having noticed the several applications of this word, we now meet the long contested question, *is faith the gift of God?*  
Answer:

1. Let us apply the question to the faith of Simon, and those chief rulers, who loved the praise of men more than the praise of God: was their faith the gift of God? If the inquiry relate to Christ, the *object* of their faith, (for they *believed on him*) this surely was the gift of God, for God gave his Son, and had this gift been withheld, he could never have been an object of their faith. If we mean the *power* to believe, this also was the gift of God, as are all the intellectual and physical powers of a human being. But if the meaning be, were they enabled to believe by an immediate influence of the Holy Spirit? I think the answer must be given in the negative. Thousands believe in Christ with an indifferent speculative faith, and they have a natural power to believe in this manner, without any immediate influence from above.

2. As to the faith required in the gospel, that is, faith unfeigned, which properly influences the affections and the conduct, this is the gift of God in all the senses above mentioned. The *object*, the *power* to believe, and the *spiritual influence* through which we believe, are all the gift of God.

3. When faith is applied to the gospel, and the system of doctrines contained therein, as it often is, every christian will acknowledge that this heavenly system is the gift of God.

4. When the word is applied to the effects of faith, or the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, which becomes a new "evidence of things not seen, by bearing witness with our spirits that we are the children of God," this is certainly the gift of God. He has promised to give us the Comforter to abide with us, and his word assures us we are to receive it by faith.

5. Confining the query to that act or exercise of the mind in believing, by which we are influenced to do the works of God, and by which we receive the indwelling Comforter, properly called gospel faith, we must say, either (1.) that it is an act of the human mind, independent of any immediate influence from above; or (2.) that it is an act of God, producing an effect upon the human mind, without any voluntary act of that mind; or (3.) that it is a voluntary act of the human mind, in conjunction with, or aided by, an immediate influence of the Holy Spirit.

If we admit the *first*, it will follow that man is able, of himself, and independent of any spiritual assistance from God, to believe with a faith that justifieth the ungodly, that purifieth the heart, and that overcometh the world. This contradicts the whole tenor of the gospel.



If we admit the *second*, it will follow that faith is no gospel duty, enjoined on man, but is as exclusively the act of God, as the creation of this world. If it be a duty at all, it must be the duty of God, for it is supposed to be the sole act of God, and we are as passive in receiving it, as we were in receiving our existence.— To say, therefore, that it is man's duty for God to act faith, is as ridiculous as to say it is man's duty for God to create another world. If any person can, with his eyes open, and with the bible before him, admit, either that faith is not a gospel duty required of man, as a condition of salvation; or that it ever was enjoined on man, as his duty, to perform the actions of God, I feel no more disposition to reason with such a person, than I should to reason with Mr. Hume concerning the "existence of an external universe."

I think there is no possible alternative but to admit the *third*, that gospel faith is "a voluntary act of the human mind, in conjunction with, or aided by, an immediate influence of the Holy Ghost, embracing the truth of God, both with the understanding and the affections."

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## SECTION II.

### *Of faith as the condition of our acceptance or justification.*

GENUINE gospel-faith embraces different truths at different times, and exists in various degrees.

"Ye believe in God," says our Saviour, "believe also in me." John xiv. 1. The disciples had long before this believed in him in some sense, that is, they had believed this truth; "Jesus Christ is the Messiah sent from God;" but he was now proposing another truth concerning himself, and exhorting them to believe it, as we find in verse 10, 11. "The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself: but the Father, that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very work's sake."

1. "They believed in God." 2. "That Christ was the Messiah, sent from God." 3. "That he and the Father were *one*." 4. "That he died for our sins, and rose again for our justification." 5. "That he came to be a spiritual Saviour, manifesting the love of God to

his people, by the in-dwelling power of the *Holy Ghost*." The two last articles they appear not to have believed till after our Lord's resurrection, as we shall have occasion to remark presently.

That there are various degrees in true faith is evident from many passages of scripture; a few we will notice. "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth: for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith." Rom. i. 16, 17. Here the apostle informs us the gospel is intended to communicate light and truth to the human mind progressively; *from faith to faith*. One truth embraced opens the way for another; one act of faith prepares the mind for another; and thus we proceed regularly, *from faith to faith*.

Paul to the Thessalonians, 1 epistle, chapter iii. verse 6, says, "Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity." And in verse 10, he speaks of "praying exceedingly that we might see your faces, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith." From this I infer that they then heartily believed according to the light they had, and yet a higher degree of faith was necessary, and the apostle had a strong desire to go and preach to them some higher truth, which they were now in a proper state to receive, that he might "perfect that which was lacking in their faith." In the next epistle, he says, "we are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all towards each other aboundeth." 2 Thess. i. 3.

By one degree of faith we are influenced to repent, or come unto God: "For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Heb. xv. 6. By such a faith in God's promise in Jesus Christ, as influences us to forsake our sins and submit to the covenant of mercy, we are brought into a state of acceptance with God. For "to him give all the prophets witness, that, through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." Acts x. 43. By another degree of it we experience the new birth, or receive the spirit of adoption whereby we cry Abba Father. For "whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God: and he that [thus] believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." 1 John v. 1, 10. "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Verse 4. "Little children your sins are forgiven for his name's sake.—Young men—ye have overcome the wicked one.

Fathers—ye have known him that is from the beginning.” 1 John ii. 12, 13. “Though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” 1 Pet. i. 8. “Purifying their hearts by faith.” Acts xv. 9. “Sanctified by faith that is in me.” Acts xxvi. 18.

Those various effects are produced, not all at once, or by one single act of faith, but at different times, and by the successive degrees or stages of faith, embracing different truths, as the state of the mind is suited to receive them. To conceive this subject more distinctly, let us weigh the following particulars.

1. Faith is often mentioned, as though it were the sole condition of our justification. “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;—All that believe are justified;—being justified by faith,” &c. And yet *repentance, confession and reformation* are stated as essential conditions of our pardon.

“Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out;—If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins;—Let the wicked forsake his way,—and our God will abundantly pardon.”

In these promises of pardon faith is not mentioned; but repentance, confession and forsaking our evil way, are said to be the condition. How are these passages to be reconciled with those which speak of faith as the only condition? Answer: Faith is the root and ground of all these; it is by faith men are led to repent, confess their sins, and forsake them; for this very purpose they were first required to believe; and that act of the mind which so embraces the truth as to produce sincere repentance and submission to God, is true gospel-faith, and may well be considered as the single or principal condition of our acceptance, because it is essential to produce every thing else required.

2. That every real penitent is in possession of a degree of genuine gospel-faith, may be thus proved: God is pleased with every sincere penitent, because he has commanded repentance, and to say he is not pleased with it, is to say he is not pleased that we should keep his commandments. “A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.” Psalm li. 17. “A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.” Matt. xii. 24. “The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart.” Psalm xxxiv. 18. “But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.” Isaiah lxvi. 2. “It is thus evident from many particular passages in the scriptures, as well as from

the general account they give us of the nature of God, that he is pleased with sincere repentance.

“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Heb. xi. 6.

Therefore every true penitent has faith, as the stimulating principle which leads him to seek that he may find, to ask that he may receive, and to knock that it may be opened unto him.

3. He that cometh to God must believe that he is:—that he is *God, powerful, wise, true, just and good*. A serious attention to the evidence of this great truth, and of the sinner’s want of conformity to this divine nature, produces a conviction that he is guilty and polluted, that sin is *exceeding sinful*, or in other words, that he is a miserable offender, whose crimes have great demerit, and expose him to a just sentence of condemnation. This leads to *godly sorrow*, to self-reproaches, and to deep regret or lamentation for having been such an offender.

4. He must believe that God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. This faith, by all who are under the gospel dispensation, has the goodness of God in Jesus Christ for its object.—The serious, inquiring mind searches into the evidence of the divine mercy to sinners, and finds it all pointing to Jesus Christ, as the *only Mediator between God and man*. The gospel proclaims *God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself*. The poor mourner believes God is a merciful Being; that he accepts all truly penitent sinners, for the sake of Christ’s atonement; and that he will thus accept him in the beloved, when he shall have fully surrendered to the terms of reconciliation.

5. When a man exercises such a degree of faith in these truths, as produces a genuine repentance; when he has such an abhorrence of sin, and such an acquiescence in God’s plan of saving sinners, as leads him to submit to Christ as his prophet, priest and king, he is accepted in the beloved. When he fully surrenders himself, and consents to be saved according to the covenant of mercy in Jesus Christ, God is reconciled to him, because his voluntary *hostility* to the divine government has ceased, which is the only thing that hinders any sinner of Adam’s race from being accepted, since Jesus magnified the law and made it honourable.

6. This faith is the condition of the sinner’s pardon or justification. God has pledged his truth and goodness in the Redeemer, to accept all sinners who lay down the weapons of their rebellion, and sincerely submit that Christ should rule over them. It is by

faith they are influenced to this, and that very exercise of the mind in crediting God's word, which leads to true repentance, confession, forsaking of sin, and humble submission to Christ's authority, is the condition of the sinner's pardon or acceptance in the beloved.

I am aware that it has often been represented, and it accords perfectly with the whole system of predestination, that all the sinner's repentance, confession, forsaking sin, and the faith which produced them, are to go for nothing; and that some *new act* of faith is required, as the sole condition of his justification. That in the midst of all his penitence and humble acknowledgments, the wrath of God is flaming against him, and will so continue till he shall *receive faith*; and this new faith which he *receives, after* his repentance, amendment, and submission, is the sole term or condition of his acceptance. That he has no ground to expect that any of his attempts to seek the Lord are any thing in God's account, because "faith is the total term of all salvation," and this faith he has not yet *received*: it is held at the disposal of his Maker, and whether he will ever give it or not, depends upon his own sovereign pleasure. The penitent must lie at the footstool of sovereign mercy: if faith should be given, all will be well; but if the Sovereign should refuse to give him faith, the poor mourning creature must depart into hell for not receiving it.

The sinner is supposed to receive faith, as passively as a vessel receives water, and at the same moment he receives pardon; this faith is the condition of his pardon, and yet it is the sole act of God, as much as the act of forgiving the sinner's transgressions! Then it seems God performs one act as the condition of his performing another, and this act of God is required as the duty of man, being the grand and sole condition, on which his salvation or damnation turns! I desire to know how this is to be reconciled with the plain word of God, which promises pardon upon our *confessing our sins*,—upon our *repenting and being converted*,—and upon our *forsaking our way and returning unto the Lord*. 1 John i. 9. Acts iii. 19. Isa. lv. 7.

Is all this included in the faith we receive the moment we are justified? or is it the condition of our receiving that faith? The promise of pardon is given on condition of repentance, confession and forsaking sin; but faith is represented in other places as the sole condition of our acceptance; therefore there is no way to avoid charging the scriptures with contradiction, but to maintain that the very faith which is received as a condition of forgiveness, is

that which comprehends or produces repentance, confession and amendment. To say a sinner is forgiven upon *another* faith, distinct from that which produces repentance, &c. is to say, either that he may be forgiven without repentance, or that there are other indispensable conditions of his receiving pardon, beside that of faith, and which are not necessarily connected with it. It remains to be proved then, that repentance, confession of sin, and forsaking it, are all included in that passive faith which we are supposed to receive at the moment of our justification, or to contradict the scriptures, which necessarily imply, that the faith which is received as the one condition of our pardon, is that which comprehends all the other conditions with which the promise of pardon is connected.

To say repentance can exist without faith—that it is the condition on which we receive faith—and that God's act of impressing this faith upon our passive souls, is the condition of our acceptance—is a confused notion that has arisen out of the system of predestination, and which has no countenance from the oracles of God.

I grant when the term faith is used in its highest and most extensive sense, as including the in-dwelling power of the Holy Spirit, it is properly received from God; but this blessing is received, not as the condition of our pardon, but as the consequence of it.

7. Pardon is an act of the divine will: who can forgive sins but God only? The act of God in pardoning or accepting a penitent sinner in Christ, and his giving the sinner a spiritual *manifestation*, or full *assurance* of his being accepted, are distinct from each other, and are not necessarily inseparable. The latter cannot exist without the former; but the former may exist without the latter. That is, a man cannot know his acceptance before he is accepted, but he may be accepted before he has a divine assurance of it. But some appear to think that a man's *consciousness* or *knowledge* of his acceptance, is the very *faith*, that is required as the condition of his acceptance: that is, that he shall be accepted, on condition that he *first know he is accepted!* That God gives us a divine assurance of his love, not as a *consequence* of our believing, but this *assurance of the divine favour*, is the very faith, on condition of which, "we are received into the divine favour!" These mysteries are truly worthy the Antinomian Babel.

There is a passage in our Saviour's discourse to his disciples, most unhappily applied to prove this strange doctrine: "At that day ye shall know, that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in

you." John xiv. 20. It is taken for granted without examination that this promise of assurance applies to the very day, and the very hour, when men are first accepted of God in Christ Jesus; whereas the context is a clear proof of the contrary. Will any man presume to say the disciples were following Jesus all this while and yet were "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity?" Were they not accepted of the Father, and did he not love them, because they had believed that Jesus came out from God? And yet in this chapter their kind Redeemer is supporting their minds against the sorrow they felt upon the prospect of his approaching fate, by promising them a comforter which should come from the Father after his resurrection, and abide with them forever. Speaking of this event, he says, "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you." Verse 18. That is, I will come in the in-dwelling power of my Holy Spirit: ("for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.") It follows, "At that day [namely, "when the comforter is come, whom the Father will send in my name"] ye shall know, that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." Ye shall have a conscious assurance of the divine presence, that will be better than my personal presence with you.

This promise was not fulfilled till after our Lord's resurrection. The day after his resurrection they still proved themselves slow of heart to believe the spirituality of his kingdom. They were directed to tarry at Jerusalem till they should receive power from on high; and after waiting sometime in faith and prayer, the Holy Ghost came upon them, and after this they went on their way with an unwavering assurance, very different from the doubtful and unsettled state of mind they had manifested before.

8. This divine assurance is also received by faith. There is a distinction between this faith and that which brought the sinner to a state of acceptance, both as to the particular truth believed, and as to the effect of believing. In the former case the truth believed was this: "God being a rewarder of them that diligently seek him," accepts all penitents who heartily repent of their sins, and fully submit to the Redeemer, as their prophet, priest and king. He will pardon and accept me in the beloved, when I shall have fully surrendered to the terms of reconciliation. This faith leads to "diligent seeking, a-king, humiliation, confession, striving against sin, disclaiming personal merit, relying upon Christ," &c. In order to make a full surrender, and meet the gracious overtures of God, in his covenant of mercy through Jesus Christ.



The truth believed in the latter case is this: "God is now my reconciled Father, and graciously accepts me as his child, for the sake of the merit and atonement of my Redeemer." This faith affectionately embraces God as a Father and a friend; it relies upon him with a filial confidence, and "sets to our seal that God is true," in his great and precious promises; and he kindly answers, according to thy faith so be it unto thee; and gives us the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry abba Father.

This is the faith by which a christian gains his victories over the world, the flesh and the devil. A filial confidence in God as our loving Father in Jesus Christ, invigorates every faculty of our souls, and influences us, "by patient continuance in well doing," to "seek for glory, and honour, and immortality. Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward." God is well pleased to see us trust in his paternal goodness; and for a christian to cast away his confidence in God, as his reconciled Father, while conscious of a sincere desire and purpose to do his will to the best of his ability, is to reproach his Maker, and to represent him as being less willing to be reconciled with his creatures, than they are to be reconciled with him. The same may be said of a penitent, who with the most sincere solicitude has long laboured to forsake all his sins, and to submit to his merciful Redeemer; but who is still writing bitter things against himself, and considering God as being afar off, frowning with vengeance upon his soul. "He abhors himself, repenting in dust and ashes;" and yet, being entangled in the theories of predestination, he holds it altogether doubtful whether the Sovereign pleasure will deign to regard his plaintive cries. The great God, he thinks, is very angry with him, and intends never to give him faith. All his penitence he has been taught to consider as filthiness, and his very breath is sin! He has no ground to indulge any confidence in God, on account of his deep repentance, and his hungering after the blessings of the new covenant; but must ever consider himself as an accursed being, unless it should please God to give him faith; and this is altogether uncertain, for if his present contrition and humility are nothing in God's account, what likelihood is there that God will give faith to him any sooner than to an impenitent sinner? Is there any promise in the bible that God will give a man faith, in consequence of his repentance? Is it any where said, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted," and I will give you faith? Is there any promise that "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just" to give us faith? What unbecoming thoughts of God

is this poor creature taught to entertain! The Lord Jesus Christ has died upon the cross for his redemption; his soul is weary of his sins, and pants after the living God, more than for his necessary food; and yet he thinks the Almighty refuses to be reconciled! He ought to consider that God is love, and that he is reconciled to every soul of us the very moment we are reconciled to give up our sins, and submit to the government of the Lord Jesus Christ. His unchangeable character is pledged: the promise is given: it is confirmed by an oath, and sealed with "the blood of the everlasting covenant:" and yet we are to suppose, it seems, that however a sinner may repent, and prostrate himself at the feet of Jesus, God is no more reconciled with him than with any other sinner. "Faith is the total term of all salvation:" God has not been pleased to give him faith; he has never promised to give it on condition of repentance; and therefore this person may repent and strive during the whole of his probation, and still continue a poor miserable unbeliever, because God will not give him faith.

If it be said all those will certainly receive faith who rightly seek and ask for it, I must answer, (1.) I know of no passage in the bible which commands us to ask for faith. In one place the disciples prayed, Lord increase our faith, and a certain person on another occasion said, Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief; but this supposes they had faith, and only prayed for help, or spiritual assistance, that the same faith might be increased. (2.) Although Christ has assured us our "heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him," and that this Spirit will help our infirmities, yet I know of no promise that God will give faith to them that ask him. And if there be no such promise, on what ground is it presumed so confidently that this passive faith which is received in the moment of justification, will be given to all that seek and ask for it? (3.) We are commanded to seek and ask in faith, and are assured that the man who does not pray in faith is like a wave of the sea; and "let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." James i. 6, 7. Now if we ask before we have faith, we certainly ask without faith, and therefore shall not receive any thing of the Lord; and it is very evident that the very faith which accompanies our seeking and asking is the condition of our acceptance. If men receive faith in the moment of their justification, in consequence of seeking and asking for it, then we say their seeking and asking are the condition, and faith is the very blessing they receive in consequence of performing the condition; which plainly contradicts the declara-

tion of St. James, as well as several important sayings of our Redeemer.

But it may be objected "that a man must feel that he is pardoned and accepted in the beloved, before he can believe it; otherwise he may deceive himself and believe a falsehood." Answer:

1. Is it not equally possible for a man to take some feeling for a pardon, which is only imaginary? and if so, is he not equally liable to deceive himself and believe a falsehood, on supposition that he must first feel his acceptance, and then believe it, as he is on supposition that he must first believe in God's fatherly approbation of him in the beloved, and receive the evidence or consciousness of it through the medium of this cordial embrace of his Heavenly Father by faith?

2. God requires of us to believe his truth upon the evidence exhibited in the gospel, before he gives us the full evidence of conscious assurance, by the in-dwelling power of his Holy Spirit.—The gospel proclaims that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself;" that he "is not willing any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;" that the obstacle which hinders our acceptance, is our hostility to the divine government, or our obstinate refusal *to be reconciled to God*: of course, when we so believe the truth as to be brought to genuine repentance and submission to Christ's authority, the obstruction is removed, and we are accepted of God through the Redeemer. We are then to believe that we *are* accepted, and that the Almighty loves us freely, for the sake of Christ's atonement, because we heartily repent of our sins and consent *to be reconciled to God*. To suppose God is not reconciled to a man, when that man sincerely repents, confesses his sins, and is reconciled to the covenant of grace, is to contradict the gospel, and to suppose that there is still some other obstacle in the way, beside the sinner's voluntary hostility. It is to suppose that some private obstruction exists in the mind of God; and therefore though the sinner exercises all the faith, repentance and submission in his power, yet the Almighty will not be reconciled on this account, but enjoins some other act of faith as the sole condition of his accepting the sinner, which he reserves in his own sovereign power, to give when he pleases, and which the sinner must passively receive. This notion accords very well with the divine sovereignty, partiality and arbitrary will, attributed to God in some human creeds; but it will never agree with the moral attributes proclaimed in the gospel; and I fear hundreds of mourning penitents have been led by it to entertain very unbe-

coming thoughts of God, and have been miserably entangled in these remains of the gloomy system of reprobation.

3. As to the danger of a man's deceiving himself, I cannot help thinking the charge justly falls upon the passive faith of the Antinomian. For if "faith is the total term of all salvation," and if this faith is received in the moment of justification, is it not an easy matter for a man, whose soul was never thoroughly humbled by repentance, but who has felt some desire to be converted, to take a sudden *impulse* or *feeling* for this gift of faith, and then to take for granted that he is in a state of justification? He is delivered at once, and by a very short process, from the trouble of repentance; and having never surrendered to the yoke of Christ, his appetites and passions retain the ascendancy; but notwithstanding his loose morals, he can remember when he received faith, and therefore he glories in his full justification.

4. If it be said that a man upon this ground may believe himself into a state of acceptance when he pleases, seeing he has nothing to do but to believe God is reconciled with him, the answer is easy. First, any man who believes he is in the divine favour before a gospel-faith has led him to genuine repentance, believes a falsehood; and the difference is nothing, whether he believe this falsehood, upon the bare supposition that he had a right to believe it, or upon some imaginary or passionate *feeling* which he took for the gift of faith and justification. Secondly, when a man *has* truly repented and become *reconciled to God*, he is accepted, and has a right to claim the promise, or to believe in his Father's love, when he pleases. It is now a truth that he is in favour with God, and I hope a man has a right to believe the truth at any time. Thirdly, when a man believes he is accepted, before he is so, there will be no corresponding influence of the Spirit on his mind, bearing witness to the justness and truth of his claim, because God will never bear witness to a lie. Fourthly, if a man should fondly imagine he has such a corresponding witness, when it is not so in reality, the word of God gives very clear rules by which he is to *examine* himself *whether he be in the faith*. And the man who thinks he can point to the place and time when faith was given him from heaven, is equally bound to examine himself by the same standard: for he too may be deceived. What then are the rules by which our faith is to be tried, and proved to be genuine? Will one say "I know the time and place when the Almighty gave me faith, and pardoned all my sins?" Another may as truly say, "I know not when the Almighty for-

gave my sins; but I remember the time and place, when my spirit first believed God was my reconciled Father, and upon which "The Spirit of God did bear witness with my spirit that I was a child of God." Another may say, "I know not when my sins were forgiven, or when I first received the clear evidence of it: but I *now have* a clear evidence that I am accepted in the beloved."

Without wasting time in contending which of these experiences is the best, I must contend upon the authority of God's word, that they are all to be tried by the same standard. And there is no rule in that standard which says, "the criterion by which your experience must be proved sound and genuine, is, that you be able to tell the place and time when you received faith, or when you were justified." I never found such a rule as this in the bible, though I have learned it from other sources. It has sometimes been insinuated or declared, that if a man cannot tell the very time when he received faith and was justified, he is yet in the way to hell. Persons of this opinion, in all likelihood, repose great confidence in this criterion, and glory in being able to tell the place and time when God gave them faith; "but God forbid that I should glory," says the apostle, "save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified, unto me, and I unto the world." Gal. vi. 14. "Does not talking about a justified or sanctified state tend to mislead men?" says Mr. Wesley: "Does it not naturally lead them to trust in what was done in one moment? Whereas we are every moment pleasing or displeasing to God according to our works: according to the whole of our present inward tempers and outward behaviour."

The apostle John, in his first epistle, fifth chapter, lays down the rules by which we are to examine ourselves whether we be in the [christian] faith. 1. "Faith worketh by love. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." 1 John v. 4. Let us examine whether we have the "genuine mark of love," or whether our faith worketh by bigotry and malice. Let us not presume that we love God, while we indulge angry and malevolent affections against his creatures.

2. "This faith, working by love, leads to gospel obedience. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous." Verse 3. The Apostle James urges this criterion against the Antinomians of his time: "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" James ii. 19, 20.

3. The faith of a christian produces victory. "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" Verse 4, 5.

4. He that believeth with this loving, working, and victorious faith, hath the witness of the Holy Spirit. For "he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." Verse 10.

These are the criterions God has directed us to use, when we examine ourselves whether we be in the faith; and any man whose faith will bear this test, is a genuine christian, loved and approved of God, whatever might have been the particular mode of his conversion.

He whose faith worketh by a flaming, fiery zeal, or bigoted fury; he who is destitute of *the meekness and gentleness of Christ*; and who is not only loose and irregular in his moral conduct, but proud, selfish, and resentful in his disposition, is no genuine christian, however he may profess to have the witness in himself, and be able to tell the day when he received faith and justification. God directs us to judge of our state, not by one of those rules alone, but by the whole of them in conjunction; and in vain may we presume to separate "the witness of the spirit, from the fruits of righteousness which are by faith of Jesus Christ."

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### SECTION III.

#### *Whether faith depends upon the will.*

Is not belief an involuntary act necessarily following the degree of evidence perceived? And has a man power to believe when he pleases?

To answer the first question we may observe:

1. In all cases where the evidence is irresistible, the belief or decision of the judgment is involuntary, and follows of necessity, when the evidence is fully before the mind. That I now exist, and am now thinking and writing, I believe of necessity, because the evidence is irresistible: it is impossible for me to believe the contrary. When a man feels acute pain, his feeling or consciousness

is irresistible, and it is impossible for him to believe that he feels no pain, when he is conscious that he does. The same may be said of many other truths. But,

2. To say *all* belief is involuntary, is to say all evidence is alike irresistible, and of course that all we hear or read concerning the comparative *degrees* of evidence, is founded in absurdity; for it is surely absurd to talk of there being *degrees* in absolute necessity. The same may be said concerning the degrees of believing: if all my belief is absolutely necessary, no one act of belief can be stronger or more firm than another, unless it be possible for something to be more firm than necessity. All men of reflection will acknowledge, for example, that we have probable evidence to believe the other planets are inhabited by living creatures; but will any one say he is under the same necessity to believe there are living creatures in the moon or the planet *Jupiter*, that he is under to believe there are living creatures upon this earth?

3. Mr. Hume's maxim is acknowledged to be true, by Deists, Christians, Turks and Jews: "A wise man will proportion his belief to the evidence." But this surely supposes belief to be in our power: for if all evidence produces belief of necessity, it is impossible for any man not to proportion his belief to the evidence; and in this respect there can be no distinction between a wise man and a fool: all are equally wise, all equally conform their belief to the evidence, and that of necessity.

4. If belief be not in our power, and can in no case depend upon our will, all complaints of deists and philosophers concerning the *credulity* of mankind, and their proneness to be too *dogmatical* in their belief, is truly ridiculous: for why complain if they always proportion their belief to the evidence, which the objection supposes they must do of necessity?

5. All our complaints against the *incredulity* or *unbelief* of infidels are equally absurd, for the same reason. They do not believe in christianity; but the objection says they believe every thing for which they have evidence, and cannot do otherwise; therefore the reason why they believe not, is that they never had any evidence: consequently, if my objector blame them for their unbelief, he wishes them to believe without evidence, and at the same time, maintains that it is impossible!

6. If all belief is necessarily produced according to the evidence, then it is impossible for a man either to resist evidence, or to believe without evidence. Consequently, no man in the world ever deceived himself, or believed a falsehood; otherwise you say a man is led into a falsehood by believing according to evidence.



If so, evidence not only impels belief, but also supports delusion; and therefore truth and falsehood are both supported alike, and no man ever believed a falsehood, without being led into it by such a force of evidence as was perfectly irresistible.

7. Every man of good character, who gives his testimony concerning matters of fact, claims a right to be believed: if his neighbours and children refuse to credit any thing he says, and to believe he is a liar, he feels himself injured, and blames them for discrediting his testimony. But according to the hypothesis here opposed, he ought not to blame them at all; because if this theory be true, the reason why they discredit his word is, that they have irresistible evidence to believe him a liar.

8. When our Lord first appeared to his disciples after his resurrection, Thomas was not among them: "The other disciples therefore said unto him, we have seen the Lord. Thomas knew their character, and could not deny that their united testimony was a just ground of belief: yet it seems he had *resolved* not to believe upon any other kind or degree of evidence than that of sight and feeling. "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my fingers into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I *will not* believe." John xx. 25. Was not Thomas here conscious that it depended upon his *will*, whether he would believe upon this evidence, or withhold assent till he should obtain greater? That he might have believed when he refused to do so, and that it would have been truly virtuous for him to have given credit to the testimony of his brethren, without indulging such obstinate scepticism, is evident from our Lord's reply: "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Verse 29.

9. Lastly, We may appeal to the *consciousness* of every living man, if the act of believing be not often as voluntary as any other action of his soul. He can examine evidence, or refuse to examine it. He can resist his prejudices and passions, or he can submit to them. He can yield to the influence of imagination, or he can oppose its influence. And it is in a great degree, at his option, whether his opinions be formed according to the model of some favourite leader, the creed of his party, or by a patient and candid examination of evidence.

The objection supposes that there is no such thing as prejudice, obstinacy, or a disposition to reject evidence, in the world. Or at least, if there be such things, they can have no effect; for however

bigoted and obstinate a man may be, whenever he hears a good argument advanced by his adversary, he is supposed to yield to its evidence as necessarily as matter gravitates to the centre.

This notion of faith is supported by deists, as well as by predeterminarian divines. Palmer advances it in his "Principles of Nature," page 62. "Faith," says he, "is the assent of the mind to the truth of a proposition supported by evidence. If the evidence adduced is sufficient to convince the mind, credence is the necessary result—if the evidence be insufficient, belief becomes impossible. In religion, therefore, or in any other of the concerns of life, if the mind discerns that quantum of evidence necessary to establish the truth of any proposition, it will yield to the force and effect of the proofs which are produced; if, on the other hand, the intelligence of man does not discern the necessary influence of such evidence, infidelity will be the natural and unavoidable result.—Why then is the principle of faith considered as a virtue? When therefore, the christian religion represents faith as being meritorious, it betrays an ignorance of nature, and becomes censurable by its deviation from the primary and essential arrangements. Yet in this holy book, we are told, that "he that believeth not, shall be damned."

Strange, that Mr. Palmer, after advancing this sentiment, which he appears to believe with great assurance, should complain so much of the credulous vulgar, who tamely give up their reason, and believe whatever priests are pleased to propose to their credence. He cannot complain of any of us, for believing in the christian religion; for he says, "if the evidence adduced is sufficient to convince the mind, credence is the necessary result—if the evidence be insufficient, belief becomes impossible." Therefore the reason we believe the truth of christianity is, that "the evidence adduced is sufficient;" for had it been "insufficient," belief would have been "impossible." And why complain of priests for deceitfully taking advantage of the prejudices and passions of the people, if "belief becomes impossible" upon any ground but that of "sufficient evidence?" If this be so, the only reason why priests or philosophers, atheists or fanatics, have been believed in the contradictory opinions they have advanced, is, that they all "adduced sufficient evidence," and therefore, "credence was the necessary result:" for had it been otherwise, "belief" would have "become impossible." Thus, Mr. Palmer, to excuse his own unbelief, excuses all fanatics, hypocrites and bigots in the world, and maintains that they regulate their belief by evidence, as uniformly

as the most candid person in existence. And yet he says in another place, "if you can once persuade a man, that he is totally ignorant of the subject on which you are about to discourse, you can make him believe any thing." Page 27.

The truth is, as universal experience shows, that the imagination, the passions and prejudices of men, when yielded to, have an influence upon belief; and it is in a considerable degree optional with every man, whether his faith shall be regulated by evidence, or by some other standard.

As to the second question, can a man believe when he pleases? it needs but a short answer:

First, It will be readily granted, I suppose, that a man, while awake, and in his right mind, is able to believe *some* truths, or exercise his mind in *some* acts of believing, when he pleases.

Secondly, As to genuine gospel-faith, which produces true repentance and submission to God, a man is dependant on the divine influence, which enlightens the eyes of his understanding, but which is not irresistible, and does not destroy his agency. If there be any time in which he cannot exercise this faith, in any degree, the fault is in himself, and not in God. He may have grieved the Holy Spirit of God, and incapacitated himself to exercise any lively or influential act of faith for the present; but excepting such particular cases, I presume he may exercise some degree of faith at any time. If it were asked, can a man exercise his reason when he pleases? I think the proper answer would be, that in general he can; but he may incapacitate himself by drunkenness, or otherwise, and for the time being, may not have it in his power to think or act like a reasonable creature. So a man may injure his faculties, grieve the spirit, and for the time being, feel himself unable to get forward in the ways of God; but in general, a sincere soul may believe in some degree, or use the means of faith, when he pleases.

The word of God assures us that *faith cometh by hearing*; and I hope it will be admitted that a man may hear or read the word, by which *faith cometh*, when he pleases. A man may *think* when he pleases; and though he may feel it impossible for him now to rise, as it were, to the third heaven, and commune with God, yet he can meditate a little upon the sufferings of Jesus on Mount Calvary, and upon the end for which he died and rose again from the dead. These serious reflections will peradventure have a greater tendency to enkindle the spark of faith within him, than some of his most painful struggles to *bring Christ down from above*.

Thirdly, Whether a man can believe that he is accepted of God, through Christ, when he pleases, or not, it is very evident the man who believes it before he has truly repented, whether upon the ground of some *feeling* which he took for justification, or otherwise, believes a *falsehood*. If this be the faith alluded to in the inquiry, the answer is, that no man can, at any time, believe it *as a truth*, who has not fully surrendered to Christ; and if he should believe it when it is *not true*, this surely is not gospel-faith.

But he who has so repented as to become reconciled to God, is accepted in the beloved, and God is reconciled to him. He now has a *right* to believe it, at any time, because every man has a right to believe the truth; and I apprehend nothing hinders him from having the *power* also, except it be some voluntary declension in heart, or some Antinomian delusion. But hundreds, it may be said, know by *experience* that a man cannot believe when he pleases; for they have often laboured to believe, and found it as impossible as for them to make a world; and afterwards, when they were not thus striving, faith was given them at a time altogether unexpected. Answer:

What were they labouring to believe? Were they striving to embrace that truth which it was *then* their duty to believe? And did they labour to do their *duty*, and at the same time find it impossible for them to do it? Then it seems a man's duty is, to do that which is impossible. *Faith cometh by hearing*. Did they labour to hear the word of God, and find it impossible? Did they labour to hear with attention, candor, self-examination, humility and earnest prayer? And is it true, that all these things were completely out of their power? Were they striving to meditate upon the plan of salvation through Jesus Christ, to understand the divine nature, to treasure up the gospel promises in their memory, to weaken their attachments to the world, and to exercise their thoughts on heavenly things? And was it absolutely impossible for them to do any of these things? If it was not, let it be remembered that in doing them, they were attending to the very matters which the word of God enjoins as conditions of our acceptance; faith is the ground of all these exertions, and when it is brought into this proper exercise, according to the power we have, more faith (or power to believe) will come through these means, seeing "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

If the man was then exercising his faith in the very way the word of God directs, how can it be said with truth that he laboured to believe and found it impossible?

But I suppose the meaning of the objection is, that he tried to believe himself into a state of unutterable joy, like that of Paul, when he was carried up into the third heaven; and that he found this to be impossible. And because the penitent cannot rise to the state of a father in Christ in a moment, it is concluded that he has no power to believe: as if nothing was to be called *faith*, but the *full assurance* of our spiritual union with God, produced by the in-dwelling power of the Holy Spirit.

We will suppose a little child is just now beginning to walk, and that a person asks the question, can this child become a man when he pleases? Is he able to become a man at any time? The obvious answer is, that it is impossible. Then, says he, you have granted all I contend for; namely, that the child can do nothing, but must passively wait till it shall please God to give it manhood.

This is a very sophistical conclusion, because, though a child cannot become a man when he pleases, yet he can use that exercise and those means, which are within his power, and which naturally tend to manhood. In like manner a penitent has power to exercise faith in some degree; and one degree, or act of believing, will make way for another. For him to neglect that exercise which is within his power, and vainly attempt to become an established believer in a moment, without taking all the intervening steps, is like a man standing at the foot of a ladder, labouring to reach the middle or the top of it at one step. Can this man ascend to the top of the ladder in a moment? It is impossible. And while he labours to do so, he is like a man beating the air, and will continue on the ground, till he shall learn to take the intervening steps, and thus regularly progress from one stage to another.

How many mourning souls have thought they had the indubitable proof of experience that they could do nothing, when the fact was, they were neglecting the truths within their reach, to grasp at the fulness of christian salvation, without taking the proper steps to attain it? The penitent, after labouring hard to receive faith, or to bring Christ down from above, sits down discouraged, and concludes he can do nothing. But has not his faith already influenced him to "humble himself under the mighty hand of God?" Has it not led him to *forsake his evil way*, to *confess his sins*, *repent* of them, and submit that "the man Christ Jesus should reign over him?" And is all this doing nothing? As sure as the word of our God shall stand forever, it is doing the very things which are enjoined as the terms of our acceptance or justification.

But "we have received it as a maxim," says Mr. Wesley, "that a man is to do nothing in order to justification. Nothing can be more false: for he that comes to God must 'cease to do evil, and learn to do well;' he that repents must 'do works meet for repentance.' And if this is not in order to find favour, what does he do them for?" God commands him to do them, and that in order to find favour, promising in the most solemn manner, that all who repent and confess their sins shall find mercy.

And has not the mourner power to examine himself, to know whether he has made a full surrender? Has he not power to search the scriptures, to know what are the gospel terms of reconciliation? Has he not power to meditate upon the evidence God has given of his love to man? and is not attention to evidence the thing which produces faith? Is he wishing to believe without evidence? Or does he expect God requires him to found his faith on some new evidence not yet given, instead of requiring him to pay proper attention to the evidence he has? "It is accepted according to that a man hath, not according to that he hath not."

By self-examination, by comparing the present state of his mind, of which he is conscious, with the marks and fruits meet for repentance, which he will find stated in the scriptures; and by a careful attention to the divine influence on his mind, a penitent may have sufficient evidence of the reality of his surrender to the covenant of grace. Upon this evidence, together with that contained in the promises in general, he has a right to claim God as his gracious Father, reconciled to him through the blood of the everlasting covenant. He has no right to expect any higher evidence, while he refuses to pay proper attention to this: and for a penitent to refuse to believe in his Father's present reconciling love, until he shall be compelled to do it, by an overpowering revelation from heaven, is to act like Thomas, who declared "except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." God may condescend to the weakness of some, as he did to the weakness of Thomas; and may give them an extraordinary manifestation to help their unbelief; but as Jesus said "blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed;" so I am persuaded God is well pleased to see a sincere penitent believe in his Fatherly goodness, upon the general evidence of the gospel, without waiting to "see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right of God." Such a sincere soul, whose faith thus glorifies God, by crediting the record he has given of his Son, without resolving (like Paine) to disbelieve

the evidence contained in the gospel, till a new revelation shall be given to confirm the truth of the old; shall be rewarded with a peaceful answer, and shall know by happy experience, that "blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

A man of an honest mind, who thus believes he is accepted in the beloved, will be careful to examine *the fruits of his faith*, to know whether it will bear the gospel test. Does it work by love? Does he find that every successive act of this faith draws him into closer communion with God? Does it increase his hatred of sin, and his pleasure in the practice of justice, mercy and truth? Does it lead him to set his affection on things above, not on things on the earth? and to "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ?" By these marks and evidences he may be settled in a sure trust and confidence, that he is a child of God by faith in Jesus Christ; and no soul that thus conforms himself to the truth of the gospel, will ever be deceived.

As to the argument founded on experience, that many have received faith like lightening from heaven, when they were not looking for it; we may observe,

1. Great allowance is to be made for those who have been entangled in the theories of Antinomianism. They have laboured hard to bring Christ down from above, and God condescended at length to their weakness and ignorance of the way of righteousness, and helped them out of the slough of despond, by an extraordinary display of his enlightening and drawing power: upon this they believed, and went on their way rejoicing. "Thomas, because thou hast seen, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

2. The reason why they laboured so hard to believe and could not, may have been, that they thought faith was away up in heaven, and were labouring to bring it down: but finding their labour vain, they gave over the struggle, and to their astonishment, in a very little while after, they were unexpectedly relieved, and enabled to *rejoice in hope of the glory of God*. Upon this they conclude, that while they sought for faith they could not find it: but after they gave over seeking, faith was given them from above. But the truth of the case may be, that after they gave over the fruitless labour to *bring Christ down from above*, which was an exercise of *unbelief*, they found *the word was nigh* them, and believed it, upon which their Redeemer answered, "according to thy faith so be it unto thee."



3. An appeal to *experience*, in support of any doctrine, is not to be received unless it accord with the oracles of God. This appeal was made in Mr. Wesley's time: "God does in fact justify those who by their own confession neither feared him, nor wrought righteousness." That is, as I understand it, that faith was unexpectedly given, before they repented, or did works meet for repentance. This contradicts the scripture, and such an Antinomian faith and justification, ought to be examined with a jealous eye. Such a person may glory in his conversion being very instantaneous, and that faith was given in a *wonderful manner*; but what is his faith *now*? Do we not need as strong faith now as in the hour of our justification?

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#### SECTION IV.

##### *Of the right exercise of the understanding.*

THE excellency of faith consists in its subserviency to the practice of piety, or evangelical righteousness. Gospel-faith being a vigorous principle of action worketh by love; and God's believing people are "a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

By good works, in the gospel sense of the phrase, is to be understood "the whole of our inward tempers and outward behaviour regulated by grace." The term implies the right exercise of all our faculties, intellectual, moral and corporeal. It includes the proper regulation and government of our affections, passions and appetites; the right ordering of our thoughts and conversation; the dedication of our property to the cause of piety and benevolence; and the temperate use of all worldly enjoyments.

As we come now to consider the practical part of religion, to which all other parts ought to be made subservient, and without which they will avail nothing to our salvation; let us first consider the right exercise of the understanding, as the foremost of all christian duties. This comes now in order, because as the practice of our duty cannot go before our knowledge of it, the right conduct of the understanding is the first of all moral obligations. We might as well suppose a man can become an accomplished artist without using his eyes, as to suppose he can become a perfect

christian, in the habitual neglect of his reflecting powers. How could we more effectually degrade the important and dignified religion of our heavenly Redeemer, than by presuming to expect we shall become proficient in it, without diligent and habitual thinking? Who can rightly appreciate the infinite advantages of revelation, or consequently return suitable and becoming gratitude to its eternal Author, without labouring to become acquainted with its essential principles? And who can become properly acquainted with them, without the uniform attention of his mind, and the vigilant exercise of his understanding?

It is true, the doctrines of the gospel, especially the practical parts of it, are very plain, and adapted to the weakest capacity; but they are made plain, not to afford any apology for indolence, but for the encouragement of the diligent soul, who by the practice of regular and serious thinking, shall acquire a sufficient knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, the weakness of his natural capacity notwithstanding.

The first operation necessary to the enlargement of knowledge, is that of *attention*. By this is meant that act of the soul by which its roving thoughts are arrested in their desultory progress, and by which the thinking power is confined to a single object, in order to acquire a more adequate knowledge of its nature and properties. This cannot be done without a voluntary exertion, of which we are conscious; this exertion, for the most part, is laborious; and men in general have such an aversion to *labour*, that they choose rather to let their thoughts run on in their irregular course, as imagination or passion shall dictate, than to confine them to any useful subject: hence thousands spend the whole course of their lives with very little regular thinking. And hence also they remain so strangely indifferent to their eternal welfare. The law has no terrors, the gospel no charms, for them. The great motives derived from eternity, from heaven and from hell, are no motives to them. And why? *Because they will not think*. The clear and incontestible arguments, which evince their deep obligations of gratitude and devotion to the great God of heaven, produce no conviction, or none that is effectual, in their ignorant and thoughtless minds. The heavens and the earth alike expostulate in vain; pathetic intreaties, and terrific warnings, are alike unavailing; reason and revelation alike disregarded; and even the moving influences of the Holy Spirit are resisted and despised. And whence is it that nothing in heaven, earth, or hell, can move these hardened and indifferent creatures to repentance? They will not think.

“The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib; but Israel doth not know: my people do not *consider*.”

The irregularity, lukewarmness, and instability of professing christians, may often be traced to the same source. They halt between religion and the world, and vainly attempt to serve two masters. In the day of prosperity, *they receive the word with joy*; but when calamity and trials approach, immediately they are offended or discouraged, and are not willing to retain religion at so high a price. One while they seem transported with desire and resolution to take the kingdom by violence; but suddenly we see the form of their visage changed, their souls move heavily like Pharaoh’s chariot wheels, and they are at the point of giving up their religion till a more convenient season. How is all this to be accounted for? Such persons undervalue things heavenly and divine, and overvalue things temporal and momentary: hence worldly things, to such minds, furnish very *strong*, and heavenly things very *feeble* motives, to influence their actions. The reason is, that they are ignorant of the *value* of heavenly things, and of the *vanity* of earthly things. And why are they thus ignorant? Because they will not think.

They have taken for granted, and perhaps have often heard it hinted from the pulpet, that religion prospers most among ignorant and unformed people; that all attempts to improve our knowledge are dangerous, and only lead to a *head-religion*; that a studious habit naturally makes a man *speculative, philosophical*, and then *deistical*: and consequently that there is no necessity of much reading or thinking; but if a person can *pray*, and talk about religion, and *feel* well, it is altogether sufficient. [“These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.”] Such persons of course make *feeling* the standard of religion. Being ignorant of the duties arising from their various relations in life, there is often a deficiency in their moral conduct; and they dishonour the cause of their Redeemer by frequent irregularities, which will be noticed by others, though the immorality of them is unobserved by themselves, through a most culpable inattention and inexcusable want of thought. Hence their conscience does not condemn them, and the singing of a lively tune will excite their passionate *feelings* into transports as before; but they ought to consider, that ignorance affords no apology, when that ignorance arises from a voluntary neglect of the proper means of knowledge; and that a *sacred regard to duty*, is of far higher price in the sight of God, than any *feelings* that can be made to accord with deficiency in moral conduct.

That pernicious prejudice against intellectual improvement, which is too often cherished, is more dangerous in its tendency than thousands are aware of. I fear it leads many to glory in their ignorance, and to look with suspicion or animosity upon every attempt to improve the mind, and to enlarge our knowledge of God and of his works. Confining the attention entirely to feeling, almost to the total neglect of the judgment, tends to produce a blind and fiery zeal, that is not according to knowledge. Let the passions operate independent of the judgment in religious matters, and they will be equally ungovernable in the common affairs of life. Other excitements will move upon them as well as devotional exercises, and the person who is at no pains to regulate his religious affections by the calm dictates of an enlightened understanding, will be apt to manifest a quickness of feeling under the powerful excitements this world affords, as well as in religious affairs.

Pious reader, mistake me not: I am far from being an advocate for that stoical formality, that inexcusable and frozen dulness, which prevails in too many professors; but I wish to guard against the common absurdity of running into one extreme, under the plausible pretence of avoiding another. The speculative and unfeeling formalist ought indeed to be reproved; but it is equally necessary to guard against the direful influence of a blind and ranting enthusiasm.

I fear that many upright and pious souls are much injured by this delusion. Conceiving that sensible impressions alone constitute the whole of religion, their confidence and prospects rise and fall with their feelings. After having access to the throne of grace, in which the divine manifestations were abundant, they rejoice greatly, and consider themselves almost on the verge of the promised land; but afterwards "for a season (if need be) they are in heaviness through manifold temptations," and hastily conclude their religion is all gone. And indeed their conclusion is very just, if it be true that religion consists entirely in happy feelings; but if it consist in the *esteem* and *integrity* of the mind,—in the *fixed purposes* and *upright motives* of the soul,—as well as in the feelings of the heart, then surely the good man has no grounds for despondency, merely because his feelings are not lively, while conscious of a firm adherence to God, a sacred regard to righteous principles, and a perpetual detestation of moral evil.

But alas! many spend hours of fruitless lamentation, which carries unbelief in its bosom, and borders upon murmuring against God, because they are not blest with uninterrupted ecstasy. Their

feelings are dull, and because they cannot obtain a sensible blessing immediately, which shall rouse their affections into lively exercise, they are ready to give up all for lost. I shall never forget the case of a pious woman on her dying bed, that came under my own observation; lingering under the pressure of a painful disorder, she could not exercise her affections in that vigorous and lively devotion, which had been common in seasons of health: in consequence of this she abandoned herself to such despondency and lamentation as grieved the hearts of her family and religious friends: after suffering in this disconsolate state of mind for a considerable time, she related her thoughts and distressing exercises of mind to myself and others, and seemed deeply interested for her everlasting welfare: she stated that her trust was in God; that her soul was resigned to his will; that she loved the ways of holiness, and hated sin as much as ever; but was doubtful and dejected, merely for want of lively feelings: upon this it was argued by one present, that sore affliction had a natural tendency to depress the spirit;—that religion did not consist merely in feelings;—that God would never cast off his people, for being pressed down with bodily pain;—and that while the mind adhered to God in principle, was firm and upright in its intentions, and resigned to the divine authority without a murmur; *this* was more acceptable to God than the most passionate ecstasies, where such good principles were wanting.

This conversation had the desired effect; and being thus instructed in the ways of the Lord more perfectly, her dejection vanished, and in a few days afterwards she calmly resigned her spirit into the hands of God, in full confidence of his everlasting complacency.

Whence arose her unnecessary grief? From the mistaken notion here opposed, namely, that the exercise and improvement of the understanding has little or nothing to do with religion; but that it consists entirely in the feelings of the heart. This fatal error leads persons to nourish their ignorance, and to make a merit of it; and they not only neglect the improvement of their own minds, but discourage and despise all attempts to acquire and communicate knowledge above their own standard. I want none of your speculative knowledge and improvements of the *head*, say they; give me the religion of the *heart*. As if the head or the understanding was not the gift of God, as well as the heart or affections! Will God be pleased with those warm devotees, for charging him with the absurdity of giving his creatures an understanding for nothing?

Will he thank that servant for saying, Lord, I knew thee to be an inconsistent master, who gave me an improvable understanding on purpose that I might neglect the improvement of it; therefore after strenuously opposing all carnal reasoners and metaphysicians, I have buried the talent of judgment in a napkin, and have devoted my whole attention to the feelings of the heart: "here take that is thine own."

Another duty belonging to the right exercise of the understanding, is that of *reasoning*. This, as I have attempted to explain it, signifies the progress of the mind from one truth to another, by comparison and consequential inference. It may perhaps be thought strange that I should place this among the duties of the gospel, which has been considered altogether *carnal*, and therefore unfit for the spiritual warfare. And indeed, if we may judge from what has been sometimes suggested by certain divines, it would seem that reasoning is so far from being a moral duty, that it is extremely doubtful whether it ought to be tolerated. Those metaphysical souls, it may be said, who make such a mighty stir about their consequences and rational conclusions, are so far from discharging a religious duty, that it is a practice which may barely be *allowed*, but which can never be considered as the discharge of a moral obligation.

If so, it is a matter of perfect indifference whether men use their reason, or entirely neglect it. Of course God gave man the power to reason, merely that he might use it as a plaything, or neglect it at his option, as a matter that has no relation to moral duty! It is a shame to insult heaven in this manner; and I think the conclusion is very clear, that every man in the world, possessing the power to reason, is morally bound to exercise it, as he is to read the bible, or to pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Not that every man is bound to learn the artificial rules of logic; but to use his thinking powers, to the best advantage, to acquire all useful knowledge. Many have reasoned most conclusively, who never read a treatise on logic, or who never even heard of such a treatise: and be it remembered, that "it is accepted according to that a man hath, not according to that he hath not."

A third duty is that of *recollection*; or that active exertion of the mind which is necessary to impress and retain useful truths in the *memory*. Those who neglect to obtain the knowledge of God, and those who neglect to retain God in their knowledge, are alike responsible and inexcusable. "Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou *forget* the things which thine

eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life." Deut. iv. 9. "Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God." Verse 23. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." Psalm ix. 17.

The fourth and last duty we will mention, as belonging to the understanding, is that of *candor* in all our judgments.

Without this, all our attention, reasoning and recollection, will be unavailing; for prejudice naturally blinds the soul, and hardens the mind against conviction. I presume it has done more to obstruct the progress of truth, and to involve the world in darkness and barbarism, than Satan or his emissaries, would be able to do without its assistance. Yet many professors of religion have indulged it without scruple; and narrow-hearted bigotry, accompanied with a blind and passionate attachment to a party, has too often passed for a becoming firmness to the truth, and a commendable zeal for the Lord God of Hosts. And this bigoted partiality, instead of being viewed according to its real nature, as a crime of the deepest dye, has been permitted to assume the semblance of virtue, or to pass as a matter of indifference that may well accord with high attainments in religion.

The reason this monster has been tolerated, and cordially cherished in the bosom of our churches, I take to be this: we have got into the habit of thinking that the support of all truth, and all virtue and excellence, depends upon the support of our particular parties; and finding bigoted souls among us very warm and zealous in the defence of our party, the inference steals upon us imperceptibly, that such a spirit is indispensable, without which our cause cannot be defended against the powerful and violent attacks of our opposers. We condemn partiality and bigotry on the other side; but who can find in his heart to check its progress, when it is warmly engaged in a cause so dear to his own soul? a cause too, on which, in his imagination, the welfare of the universe depends? Our party, we imagine, comprehends all truth, purity and excellence of every kind; while the other party, and all who adhere to it, are most wretchedly involved in error and wickedness. If we can find no evidence to prove their bad deeds, we will believe without evidence; or if their conduct be correct, we will judge their motives and designs, and thus impute the deepest crimes to them, according to our sovereign pleasure. Mean time our own partizans are to be believed in every thing they say, without scruple and without examination. Our cause is so pure that it is ri-



dieulous and insufferable for the least suspicion to be indulged concerning it, or any part of it. It must be defended at every hazard, and every thing in the world must be made subservient to its support and establishment. The plain English of all this is, that our party is the god we are resolved to worship: he is a god too, that is to be supported at the expense of every moral principle: If the popularity of our cause can be supported by telling the truth, it is very well; but if not, it must be done by falsehood and deceit. If it can be supported consistently with justice and the general welfare, be it so; but if not, the common dictates of goodness must be neglected, and the rights of opposers must be assailed by tyranny and persecution.

But partiality is not the only cause of bias or prepossession against the evidence of truth. Our indolence, our passions, and the pride of opinion, often influence us to be uncandid, and to love darkness rather than light. This uncandid disposition, when long indulged, produces an habitual obstinacy that triumphs over the dictates of reason and judgment, and thus despoils God's rational creatures of that intellectual discernment, which was intended chiefly to distinguish them from the brute creation. The understanding becomes at length so effectually blinded by prejudice, that the miserable soul is brought into a state of slavery, and is influenced, as the prophet speaks, to "put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter; to put darkness for light, and light for darkness."

Prejudice is a great sin, because it is directly opposite to piety. Truth is one of the moral attributes of God; he has given us judging faculties, and demands the diligent and candid exercise of them, that truth may thereby be understood and enjoyed; therefore he who voluntarily indulges prejudice, opposes the influence of truth, and consequently is fighting against one of the moral attributes of his Maker.

Prejudice is contrary to justice: it leads us to judge others rashly, whenever they presume to advance any thing contrary to our darling opinions: and human character is as often the subject of its rash and blind decisions, as any other matter. It produces a strong desire to hinder others from enjoying the liberty of opinion, and the liberty of speech: and when circumstances admit of it, this malevolent desire will break out into actual hostility against these native rights of God's intelligent creatures, and will thus do its uttermost to suppress the light of evidence, and fill the world with ignorance and partiality.

It is contrary to benevolence, and to the common dictates of humanity. It rouses up the evil passions, and causes men to become enemies to their own parents and children, if they shall presume to differ with them in opinion. Thus the father will be against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother-in-law against the daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be those of his own household.

Thus it appears that prejudice is contrary to reason, conscience, and human happiness: it opposes the light of revelation, wages war against God, and tramples upon the rights of man: it stifles the tender feelings of humanity, sets on fire the course of nature, and terminates in vengeance, murder and persecution.

And yet, alas! it has been prevalent for more than a thousand years, even among those who profess to be the genuine followers of the meek and lowly, dispassionate and candid, Saviour of mankind. Surely it behoves us all, as candidates for a happy immortality, to look closely into our own hearts, and see if this enemy of all righteousness have not a secret influence upon our judgment and passions. Are we willing that every man in the world should enjoy the same right of private judgment which we claim for ourselves? Or are we angry at a man because he has the assurance to think for himself? or because he will not make our party, or our favourite leaders, the standard and criterion of all his conclusions? If so, we may flatter ourselves with being high in religious attainments; but that God who requireth truth in the inward parts, and consequently a candid love of truth, will not be deceived by our pretensions, or approbate us, while we harbour in our bosom one of the most pernicious principles of moral evil.

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## SECTION V.

### *Of the right exercise of the affections.*

THE proper regulation of the *affections* is the next great duty of christians. "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." Col. iii. 2.

This supposes the affections to be, in some degree, under the control of our will; for if we had no power over them, we might as well be commanded to direct the course of the clouds, as to direct the course of our affections. It is true, the spirit of the living God quickens and invigorates our affections, and by his reviving influence draws them to heavenly things; but this gracious operation is intended, not to *destroy* our power or agency, but to *enlarge* it: “for it is God that worketh in you;—therefore work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”

This loving spirit “reproves the world of sin,” and convinces them of the necessity of righteousness, by impressing on them the solemnities of a “judgment to come.” He rouses our dull minds from their criminal supineness, and points us to things above.—He unveils the thunders of Mount Sinai to the guilty soul, and excites him to realize the horrors of that hell, for which he is preparing himself. To the mourner he kindly whispers peace, and gently draws him to the bosom of his father and his God, who is abundantly propitiated, and cordially reconciled to the humble penitent, through the intercession of his beloved Son. This spirit is light and joy to the believer, and speaks with an internal voice so comforting and encouraging, that the conscious felicity thence arising, is known only to him who becomes the happy subject of it, and cannot be adequately expressed in human language.

But in all these operations our voluntary concurrence is demanded, and we cannot set our affection on things above without that vigorous exertion which is well known to every christian, and which constitutes the chief part of his devotion and “piety to God.” There is a deep propensity in our nature to “mind earthly things;” and if a man would be *earthly, sensual and devilish*, he has nothing to do but to yield himself a passive slave to the “lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of this life,” which will regularly carry him down the current of iniquity into the pit of destruction.

Those on the contrary who would set their affection on things above, must become active creatures. They must not passively yield to the influence of animal motives, but resist them. The flesh lusteth and draweth us down to earth; but the spirit draws against it, presents reasonable and spiritual motives to the understanding, and calls us up to heaven. If we would follow the spirit, we must exert ourselves, because God made us for an active life, and calls our faculties into exercise; but to follow the flesh demands no vigorous activity: it is but to yield to the sensual

excitement, and we soon become proficient in iniquity. Laziness as naturally tends to moral corruption, as matter gravitates to the centre; and it is as vain for a man to expect he will get to heaven without active diligence, as it is for the husbandman to expect to remove the weeds out of his corn-field by a few fruitless wishes, while he lies prostrate on the earth, oppressed with the most pitiful and passive indolence.

But let us consider the objects of the good man's affection more particularly.

1. God is the chief object of his esteem, love, hope, joy and confidence. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul." Wherefore does the christian love God? "We love him because he first loved us." That is, we love him because of his essential goodness, which has not only given us life, but all things richly to enjoy, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.

2. He who hates moral excellence cannot love God, and he who loves a God of such perfection, loves him because he is thus perfect. This love naturally leads him to take pleasure in seeing the divine beneficence diffused abroad, the more extensively the better. It leads him to delight in the exercise of benevolence himself, and to encourage and promote it among his fellow-creatures.

3. He loves God because of his justice, and consequently, he is far from wishing his Maker were less strict, or less pure than he is. His law only demands the security of universal right, and therefore the good man can never consent that it should be altered. The God whom he loves sends incorrigible sinners to perdition, only when it becomes indispensably necessary to secure the general welfare; therefore he can never consent for God to become less severe against offenders than he is, without departing that moment from a love of justice. This love influences him to hold sacred the universal rights of men, and to take pleasure in doing unto all men as he would they should do unto him. It influences him to render unto all their due, and to set his face as a flint against the mean conduct of sinners, who, setting justice at defiance, violate the rights of their Maker by impiety and idolatry; the rights of men, by lying and fraud; and the rights of women and children by the dark and infernal arts of seduction.

4. He loves God because he is true: consequently he is diligent in the pursuit of truth, sincere in the communication of it, and candid in all his judgments. His language and external deportment always correspond with the meaning of his heart; he abhors

all lying and dissimulation, and is "an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile."

4. If he loves God because of his being possessed of such perfections, then he loves all good men, for the same reason. Whenever he sees benevolence, justice and truth prevail in any creature, he loves that creature for his adherence to these principles. As God is infinitely perfect, he loves him with supreme affection, and loves with a subordinate affection, every creature in proportion as it resembles God. Consequently, "with him a vile person is contemned; but he honours them that fear the Lord." His soul is delighted with the company of good men, and he says with the blessed Redeemer, "whosoever doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." Of course he takes pleasure in frequenting the assemblies of the righteous, and his glad heart cries out with ecstacy, "how amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord God of hosts! One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." Psalm xxvii. 4.

5. When it is said religion consists in love, it is to be carefully observed, that this love is to influence all the faculties of our nature. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." Mark xii. 30.

Perhaps no better comment can be given upon this passage, than the comment given by Dr. Watts. "God must be loved with all the mind, that is, he must stand highest in the esteem of the judgment. He must be loved with all the soul, that is, with the strongest attachment of the will to him: He must be loved with all the heart, that is, with the warmest and sincerest affection: And he must be loved with all the strength, that is, this love must be manifested by the utmost exercise and activity of all the inferior powers." *Discourses on the love of God, page 10, 11.*

When this love has a perfect and uniform influence over the human mind, it leads to an undeviating conformity to moral rectitude in the exercise of all our intellectual faculties, affections, and bodily members. This is christian perfection. Gracious Redeemer! when shall this pure and heavenly virtue prevail among mankind? Alas! Millions are so far from following after it, that it is an object of their greatest contempt and detestation. They pursue it with witticism, ridicule, slander, passion and revenge. They

despise goodness and do their uttermost to make all their acquaintances ashamed of it; and were they not restrained by the civil law, they would gratify their enmity against God, by putting good men to death, by the most exerceuating tortures that malicious ingenuity can devise. History proves this melancholy truth; and human nature remains the same it was in the days of Nero or bishop Bonner.

But while we lament and mourn for the general wickedness of mankind, let us not forget to bewail our own folly, and to confess the innumerable sins of religious people. Were we all of one heart and of one soul, possessing "the meekness and gentleness of Christ," we should be terrible as an army with banners: but are there not many evils prevailing among christians, and even among the ministers of Jesus Christ? How much ignorance prevails among us, through a voluntary neglect of the means of knowledge? How much self-indulgence, formality, and devotion to earthly things? How much prejudice, rash judging, fiery zeal, and party bigotry? Are not many of us "desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another?" Have we not sometimes a stronger desire for popularity, than for the glory of God and the salvation of mankind? Alas, my brethren, I fear we are not able to answer these questions in the negative. "The mystery of iniquity doth already work;" corruption is working its way into the heart of our churches, and a little of "the old leaven of malice and wickedness," unless it be speedily removed away from us, will ultimately "leaven the whole lump."

We shall never be a wise, a holy, and a happy people, till we heartily agree in these four general rules of conduct.

First, to lay aside all indolence, prejudice and bigotry, and unite our efforts to improve and enlarge our knowledge of truth, by a diligent and candid exercise of all our intellectual faculties.

Secondly, to sacrifice all sensual gratifications that are inconsistent with pure and undefiled religion, give up all confidence in mere formality or speculation, and set our affection on things above.

Thirdly, to lay aside all ridiculous and blind devotion to names, parties, ceremonies, and the thirst of applause, and maintain a perpetual and sacred regard to the glory of God, the general good of his creatures, and our own eternal salvation.

Fourthly, to lay aside the fear of man, the love of custom, the dread of singularity, and regulate all our external conduct, not according to the fashion, the general opinion, or the decisions

of the *great* and the *honourable*; but according to the pure and immutable dictates of truth, justice and benevolence, as we may find them stated in the *oracles of God*, and confirmed by the intuitive convictions of an enlightened conscience.

While we foolishly set one part of christian righteousness against another, we are weakening each other's hands, and wounding the sacred cause of the Redeemer under pretence of supporting it.

He that devotes his whole attention to the intellectual powers, to the neglect of his affections, is sure to fall into a dry speculative formality, or stoicism; a kind of external morality that has no soul. And he that attends entirely to the affections, to the neglect of the understanding, is sure to fall into a fiery, superstitious enthusiasm, something like the frenzy of Moses' disciples when "they cast dust into the air;" or like those of the heathen goddess, "who for about the space of two hours, cried great is Diana of the Ephesians."

The harmony of the understanding and the affections, is essential to the perfect enjoyment and practice of genuine christianity. The enlargement of knowledge furnishes motives to influence the will and affections; expands our views of the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ, and enables us to give an answer to every one that asketh us for a reason of the hope that is in us.—The lively exercise of the affections invigorates the operations of the understanding, puts life into all our acts of devotion, and leads to a most cordial and happy union with God. Pious affections may well be considered as the wings of the soul, by which we rise above the influence of sublunary things, and lay up our treasure in heaven. The understanding may with equal propriety be considered as eyes to the soul, which are necessary to point the course of the affections, and direct them in their flight.

This harmony of our intellectual and active powers is necessary to regulate our conduct, and to regulate our zeal. If they be not united in their operations our conduct will be partial and incomplete, and our zeal will either be deficient in energy, or wild and fiery in its course. Zeal is commonly considered as a proof of piety, and indeed there can be no better evidence of it, while that zeal rises from candor and humble love; but a zeal arising from superstition and prejudice is so far from being a proof of piety that it is a very evident proof of the want of it. "A zeal for God" that "is not according to knowledge," is productive of very dangerous effects; how much more when the zeal is not for God, but for some favorite party, opinion or ceremony? It is the very thing that



has led to the most bloody persecutions that ever disgraced the christian or the heathen world; and we have cause to be very jealous of the first motions of a zeal that works by anger, is nourished by ignorance, and is founded on an implicit devotion to a party.

But that soul whose zeal is regulated by an enlightened understanding; nourished by a calm, dispassionate love of truth; and founded upon a firm adherence to the moral attributes of God, is a plant of our heavenly Father's right hand planting, and shall be useful and happy here, and inherit eternal life hereafter. Being delivered from the dark shades of ignorance, the contracting influence of partiality, and the tyrannical ascendancy of appetite or worldly grandeur, the mind is free to think, and judge, and exercise its pious affections without obstruction, in which consists "the glorious liberty of the children of God." Free from the pitiful shackles of bigotry, such a soul enjoys a most pleasant and reviving range through all the wonders of Redeeming love. The attributes, and works, and providence, and grace of God, afford abundant matter for his pious meditations: His active mind travels through the beauties of creation, and adores that beneficent hand which sends us rain from heaven, and fills our hearts with food and gladness. He turns to the pages of revelation, explores the opening beauties of the moral law, surveys the wonderful goodness of God manifested in the flesh: then rises on the wings of contemplation, with ecstasy of thought, to those salubrious regions of ineffable tranquillity, "where momentary ages are no more." His soul adheres to God, as to the centre of all its desires. He finds no pleasure in existence equal to that of doing good. He looks over the face of the earth, with conscious friendship for every living creature. He mourns over the ignorance and wickedness of men, and melts into sympathetic tears, for the miseries of Adam's children. His enlarged and generous mind embraces the different nations of the earth with affection, and with conscious sincerity, beseeches heaven to bless all his brethren of the human race. May that great and good Being who holds the destinies of creation in his right hand, inspire us with these sentiments and affections! May his benign influences subdue the savage dispositions of our nature, and inspire the heart of man, with brotherly love to man! May his truth shine and enlighten the nations, his spirit reform them, and his goodness save them from the bitter pains of the second death! "to God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever," Amen.

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## ERRATA.

Page 68, line 16, after the word *that* read *it*.

Page 77, line 17, for *reasonable* read *reasoning*.

Page 80, line 40, for *represent* read *represents*.

Page 81, line 30, for *conclusion* read *conclusions*.

Page 83, line 18, omit the word *that*.

Page 95, line 27, for the word *was* read *were*.

Page 99, line 17, for *has* read *have*.

Page 100, line 38, for *then* read *than*.

Page 157, line 37, omit the word *and*.

Page 245, line 15, for *christian* read *christian's*.

Page 246, line 8, for *Zyon* read *Zion*.

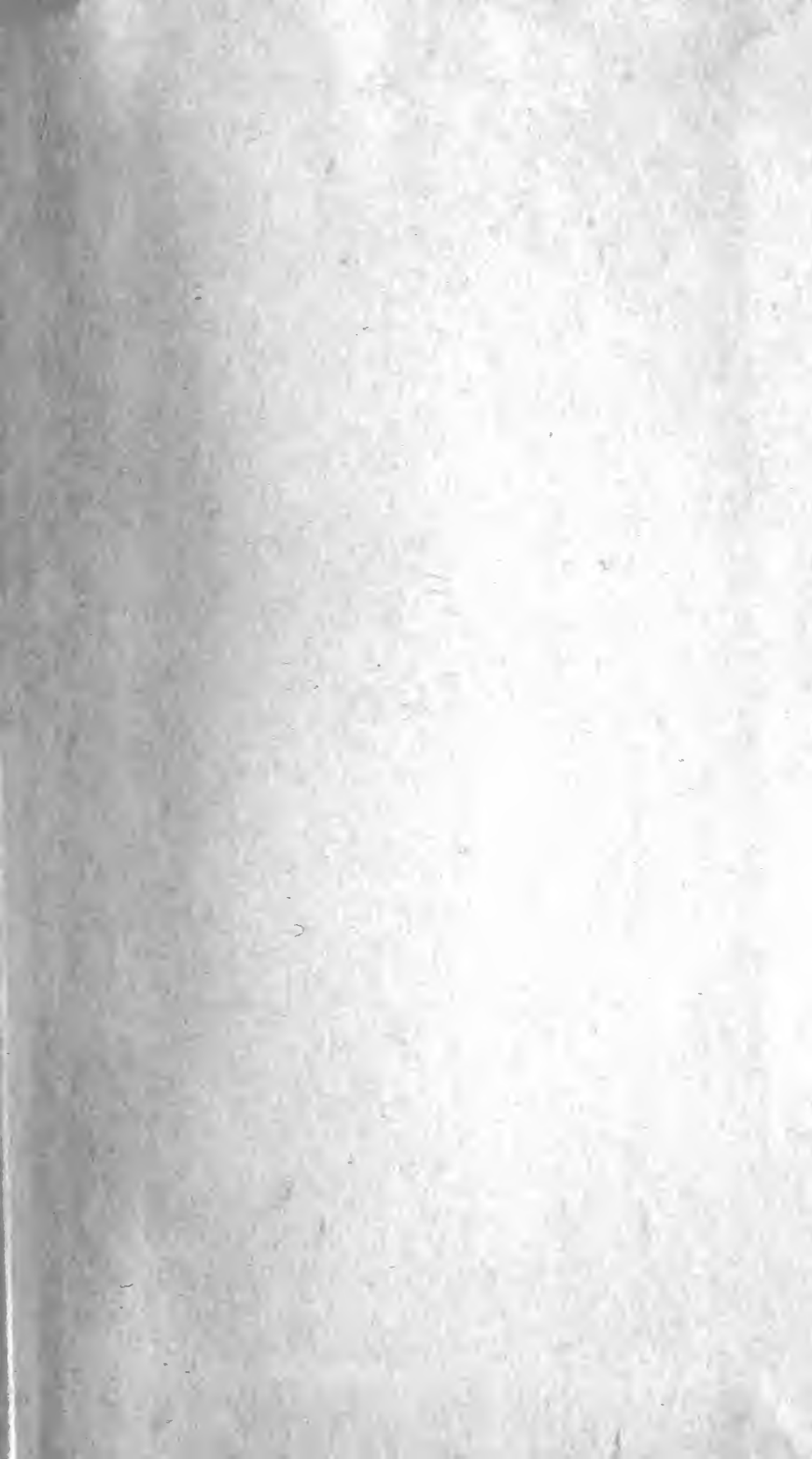
Page 254, line 30, for *where* read *were*.

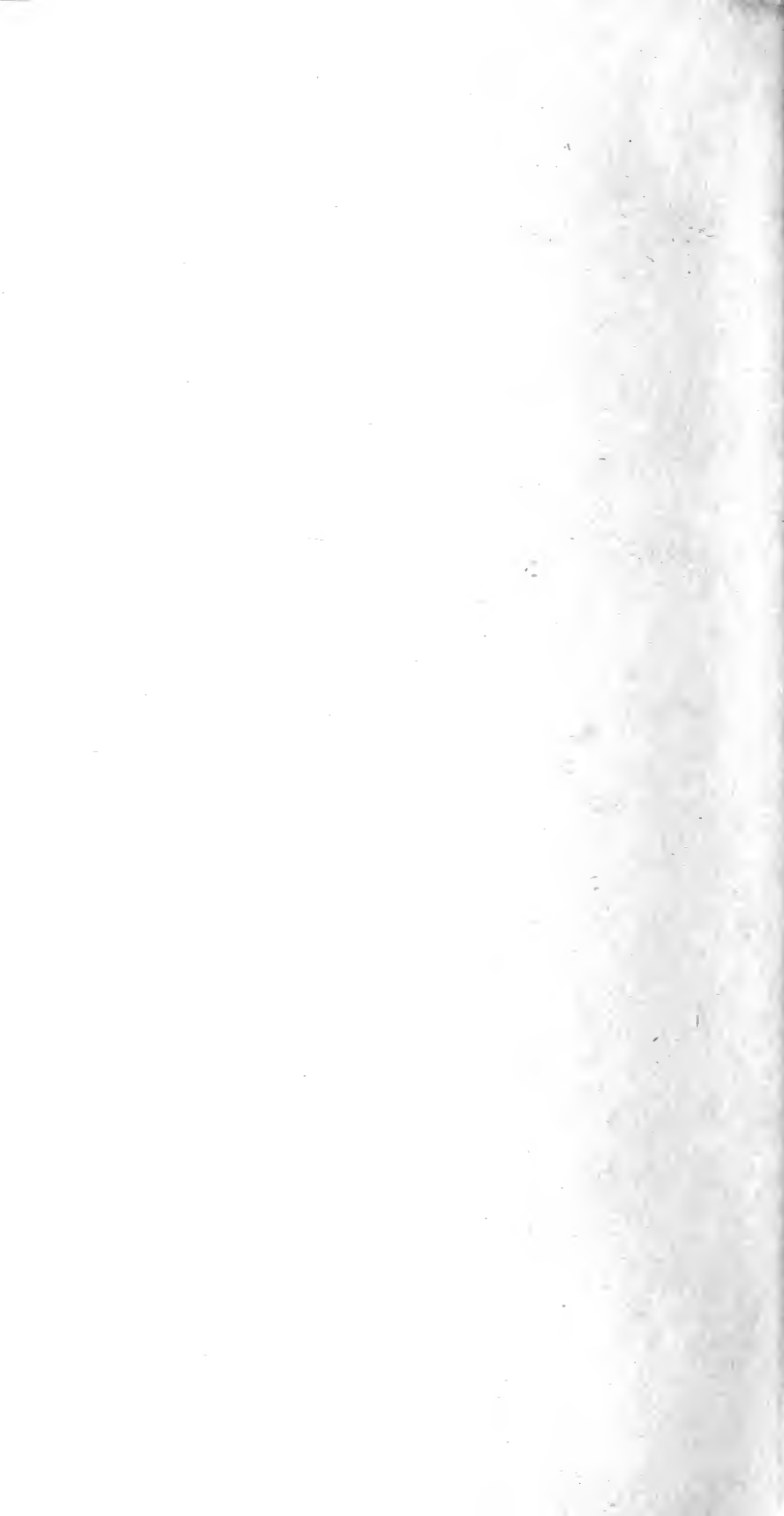
Page 299, line 38, for *not* read *nor*.

Page 383, line 31, for *genuing* read *genuine*.

N. B. Many particular or emphatical sentences, which were intended to be put in *italicks*, have been (by mistake) enclosed in commas as quotations.

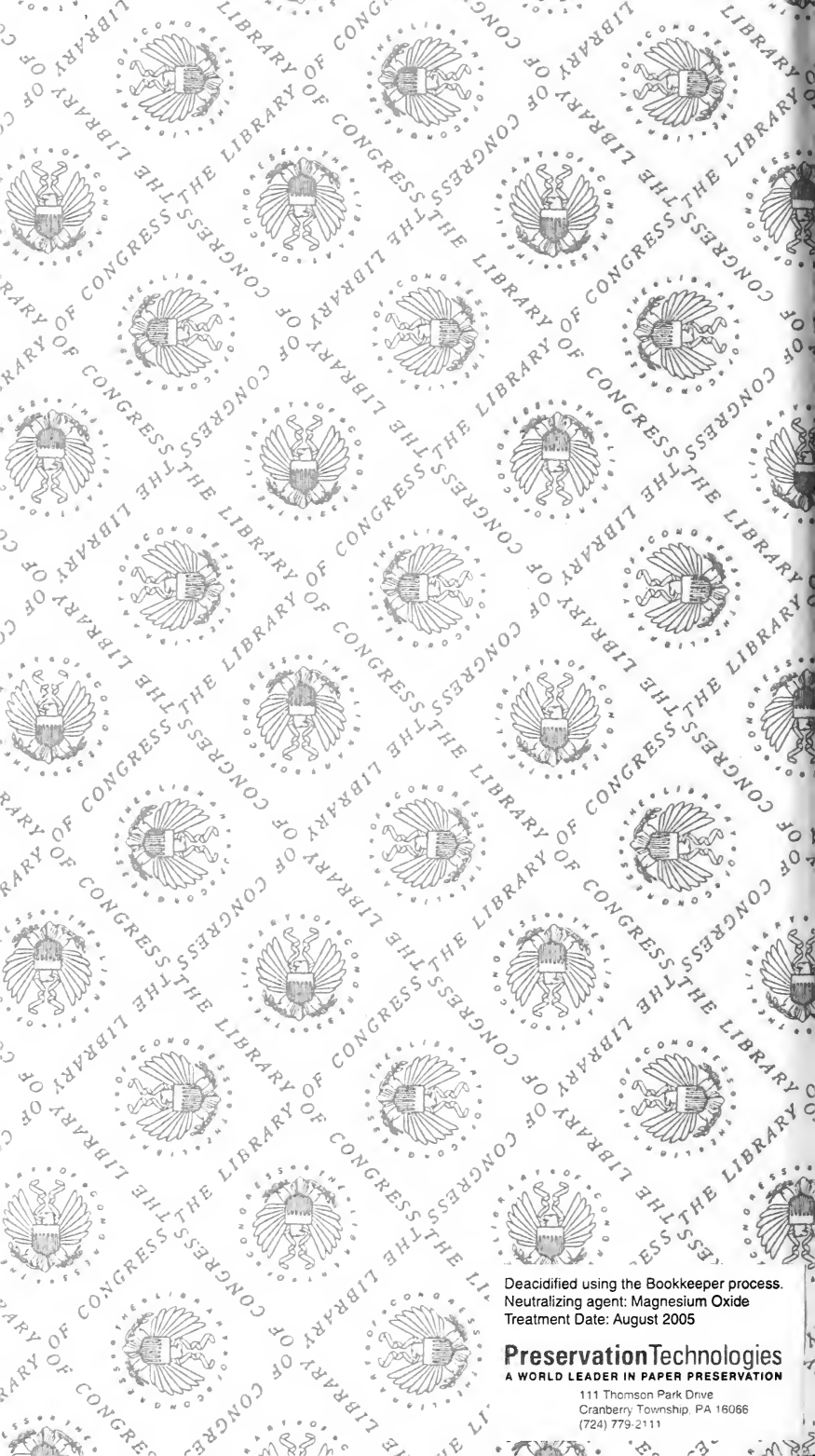
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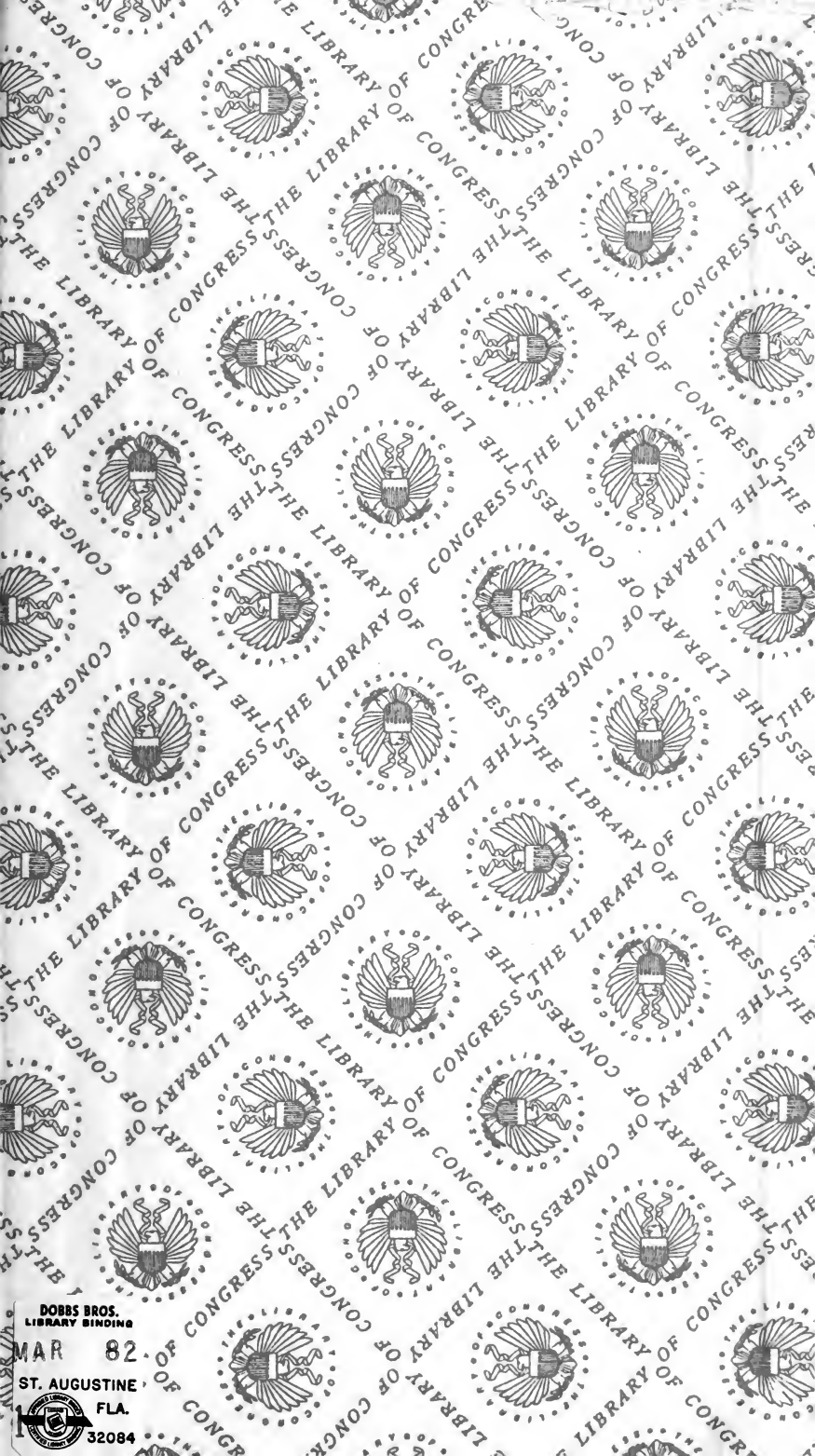




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