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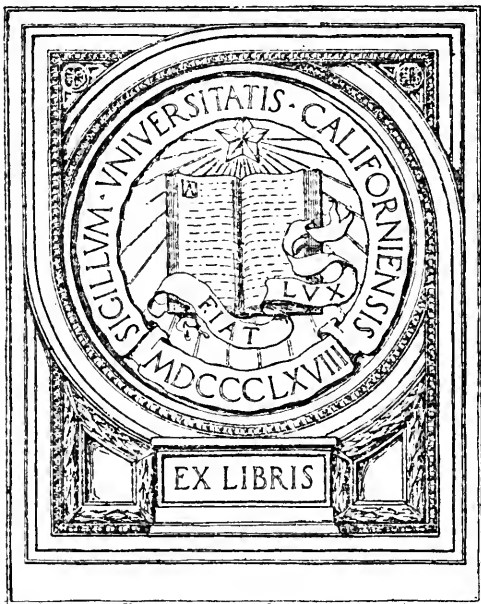
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NOTES AND ADDITIONS

TO DR. HARTLEY'S

OBSERVATIONS ON MAN;

BY HERMAN ANDREW PISTORIUS,

RECTOR OF POSERITZ IN THE ISLAND OF RUGEN.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN ORIGINAL, PRINTED  
AT ROSTOCK AND LEIPSIG IN MDCCLXXII:

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

A SKETCH

OF THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF

*DR. HARTLEY.*

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THE THIRD EDITION.

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## BOOKSELLER'S ADVERTISEMENT.

THE first two volumes of this publication contain Dr. Hartley's work entire, as published by himself in the year 1749, without any alterations or additions.

The third consists of notes and additions to the second volume by a learned German, Mr. Pistorius, which are here faithfully rendered into English, and have been added by the advice of some literary friends, who are well acquainted with the author's work, and thought they would form a valuable addition to it. A sketch of the life and character of Dr. Hartley, written by his son David Hartley, Esq. And a general index.

\* \* \* A Print of the author, engraved by Blake, in quarto, may be had of the publisher, price two shillings and six-pence.

*A NOTE to the second paragraph in p. 98, Vol. I.*

Dr. Johnstone, in his *Essay on the ganglions of the nerves*, has endeavoured to shew that they are the sources of all the nerves which go to organs that are strictly *automatic*, as the heart, &c. and the checks or causes that hinder our volitions from extending to them.

The ganglions (says he), respecting their structure, may justly be considered as little brains, or germs of the nerves detached from them, consisting of a mixture of cortical and nervous medullary substance, nourished by several small blood-vessels, in which various nervous filaments are collected, and in them lose their rectilinear parallel direction, so that a new nervous organization probably takes place in them.

Respecting their uses, ganglions seem the sources, or immediate origins, of the nerves sent to organs moved involuntarily, and probably the check or cause which hinders our volitions from extending to them.

Ganglions seem analogous to the brain in their office, subordinate springs and reservoirs of nervous power; they seem capable of dispensing it long after all communication with the brain is cut off. And though they ultimately depend on the brain for its emanations, it appears from facts that that dependance is far from being immediate and instantaneous.

From the ganglions serving as subordinate brains, it is that the vital organs derive their nervous power, and continue to move during sleep, &c.

In a word, ganglions limit the exercise of the mind's authority in the animal œconomy, and put it out of our power by a single volition to stop the motions of our heart, and in one capricious moment irrevocably to end our lives.



# A SKETCH

OF THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF

*Dr. HARTLEY.*

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**D**OCTOR DAVID HARTLEY was born on the 30th of August, 1705. He was the son of a very worthy and respectable clergyman, vicar of Armley, in the county of York. He received the first rudiments of instruction at a private school, and his academical education at Cambridge. He was admitted at Jesus' College at the age of fifteen years, and was afterwards elected a fellow of that society. He was originally intended for the church, and proceeded for some time in his thoughts and studies towards that object: but upon a

closer consideration of the conditions attached to the clerical profession, he was restrained by some scruples which made him reluctant to subscribe the thirty-nine articles. In consequence of these scruples he became disqualified for the pursuit of his first plan of devoting himself to the personal functions and service of the church. [ However he still continued to the end of his life a well affected member of the church of England, approving of its practical doctrines and conforming to its public worship. ]<sup>x</sup> As the church of England maintains all the useful and practical doctrines of Christian morality, he did not think it necessary to separate himself from its communion on account of some contested articles of speculative and abstruse opinion. He was a Catholic Christian in the most extensive and liberal sense of that term. On the subject of religious controversy he has left the following testimony of his sentiments, in the last section of proposition eighty-eight on *Religious Knowledge*; viz. “The great differences of opinion and contentions which happen on religious matters are plainly owing to the violence of men’s passions more than to any other cause. When re-  
 “ligion:

x See Wakefield’s *Memoirs*. Vol. I. p. 76

“ religion has had its due effect in restraining  
 “ these, and begetting true candour, we may  
 “ expect a unity of opinion both in religious  
 “ and other matters, as far as is necessary  
 “ for useful and practical purposes.”

Though his talents were very general, yet undoubtedly his pre-eminent faculties were formed for the moral and religious sciences. These talents displayed themselves in the earliest parts of life with so much distinction, as could not fail to hold out to his ambition a future career of honest fame, in the service of the national church, if he could have complied with the conditions, consistently with the satisfaction of his own mind. But he had at all times a most scrupulous and disinterested mind, which disposed him in every part of his life, and under all circumstances, to adhere firmly to those principles which appeared to him to form the strict and conscientious line of moral duty. It proceeded therefore from the most serious scruples, irresistibly impressed upon his mind, that he relinquished the profession of his first choice, which may properly be called the prerogative profession of moral and religious philosophy.

In consequence of this determination he applied his talents and studies to the medical profession, in which he soon became equally and in the first degree eminent for skill, integrity, and charitable compassion. His mind was formed to benevolence and universal philanthropy. He exercised the healing art with anxious and equal fidelity to the poor and to the rich. He visited, with affectionate sympathy, the humblest recesses of poverty and sickness, as well as the stately beds of pampered distemper and premature decrepitude. His manners were gentle; his countenance affable; his eloquence moral and pathetic, not harsh or importunate; yet he was not unmindful that bodily sickness softens the mind to moral sensibilities, which afforded frequent opportunities to him of exercising mental charities to afflicted minds, whilst he employed the powers of medical science to the restoration of bodily health. He thus united all the talents of his own mind for natural and moral science, conformably to those doctrines which he inculcates, to that universal system of final morality, by which each effort of sensation or science in the various

rious gradations of life must be esteemed defective, until it shall have attained to its corresponding moral consummation.

It arose from the union above mentioned, of talents in the moral science with natural philosophy, and particularly from the professional knowledge of the human frame, that Dr. Hartley was enabled to bring into one view the various arguments for his extensive system, from the first rudiments of sensation through the maze of complex affections and passions in the path of life, to the final, moral end of man.

He was industrious and indefatigable in the pursuit of all collateral branches of knowledge, and lived in personal intimacy with the learned men of his age. Dr. Law, Dr. Butler, Dr. Warburton, afterwards bishops of Carlisle, Durham, and Gloucester, and Dr. Jortin, were his intimate friends and fellow labourers in moral and religious philosophy, in metaphysics, in divinity and ecclesiastical history. He was much attached to the highly respected character of Dr. Hoadley, bishop of Winchester, for the liberality of his opinions, both in church and state, and for the  
 freedom

freedom of his religious sentiments. Dr. Hales, and Dr. Smith master of Trinity College in Cambridge, with other members of the Royal Society, were his companions in the sciences of optics, statics, and other branches of natural philosophy. Mr. Hawkins Browne, the author of an elegant Latin poem, *De Animi Immortalitate*, and Dr. Young, the moral poet, stood high in his esteem. Dr. Byrom, the inventor of a scientific short-hand writing, was much respected by him for useful and accurate judgment in the branch of philology. Mr. Hooke, the Roman historian and disciple of the Newtonian chronology, was amongst his literary intimates.

The celebrated poet Mr. Pope was likewise admired by him, not only as a man of genius, but also as a moral poet. Yet, as Dr. Hartley was a zealous Christian without guile, and (if the phrase may be admitted) a partizan for the Christian religion, he felt some jealousy of the rivalship of human philosophy, and regarded the Essay on Man, by Mr. Pope, as tending to insinuate that the divine revelation of the Christian religion was superfluous, in a case where human philosophy



lofophy was adequate: He fufpected the fecret influence of Lord Bolingbroke as guiding the poetical pen of his unfufpecting friend, to deck out in borrowed plumes the plagiarifms of modern ethics from Chriftian doctrines; not without farther diftruf of the infidious effect of poetic licence, in foftening fome rugged points of unaccommodating moral truths: It was againft this principle that his jealousy was directed: His heart, from confcious fymphony of human infirmities, was totally devoid of religious pride: His only anxiety was to preferve the rule of life inviolate, becaufe he deemed errors of human frailty lefs injurious to the moral caufe, than fystematical perversions of its principle.

It was in the fociety and friendly intercourfe of the learned men above-mentioned, and many others, that Dr. Hartley arranged his work, and brought it to a conclufion: His genius was penetrating and active; his induftry indefatigable; his philofophical obfervations and attentions unremitting: From his earlieft youth he was devoted to the fciences; particularly to logic and mathematics: He ftudied mathematics, together  
with

with natural and experimental philosophy, under the celebrated professor Saunderson. He was an enthusiastic admirer and disciple of Sir Isaac Newton: in every branch of literature and philosophy, natural and experimental, mathematical, historical and religious, which that immortal man diffused throughout the world. He received his first principles of logic and metaphysics from the works of that good and great philosopher Locke. He took the first rudiments of his own work from Sir Isaac Newton and Mr. Locke: the doctrine of vibrations, as instrumental to sensation and motion, from the former, and the principle of association originally from the latter, farther explained in a dissertation by the Rev. Mr. Gay; as he himself has informed us. His work was begun when he was about twenty-five years of age; which is a very early period for deep and comprehensive researches. And yet it remains upon his own authority, as declared by himself to his private friends and connexions, that the seeds of this work were lying in latent germination for some years antecedent even to that early bud, which in the work itself has displayed, in full maturity, the mechanical, rational, and moral

moral system of man, respecting his frame, his duty, and his expectations.

Dr. Hartley's work was published in the beginning of the year 1749, when he was a little more than forty-three years of age. It had been completed and finished about two or three years before. He did not expect that it would meet with any general or immediate reception in the philosophical world, or even that it would be much read or understood; neither did it happen otherwise than as he had expected. But at the same time he did entertain an expectation that, at some distant period, it would become the adopted system of future philosophers. That period seems now to be approaching.

He lived about nine years after the publication of his work. The labour of digesting the whole system, and of the composition, was exceedingly great and constant upon his mind for many years, as may easily be supposed from the very great scope of learning which it embraces. But after the completion and publication of it, his mind was left in perfect repose. He kept a general and vigilant attention upon the work, to receive

receive and to consider any subsequent thoughts which might have occurred from his own reflections, or from the suggestions of others, by which he might have modified or arranged any incongruous or discordant parts. But no such alterations or modifications seem to have occurred to him: and at his death he left his original work untouched, without addition or diminution, without alteration or comment. He has left no additional paper on the subject whatsoever.

The learned and ingenious Dr. Priestley published in the year 1775 some parts of Dr. Hartley's works in an octavo volume, entitled, *Hartley's Theory of the Human Mind on the Principle of the Association of Ideas, with Essays on the Subject of it*. Dr. Priestley had commenced a correspondence with the author a short time before his death, and has in subsequent literary works commented with great acuteness and erudition upon his metaphysical and moral system.

The system is in itself so extensive, and was, at the time of its publication so entirely novel and original, that the author did not appear disposed to multiply his anxieties for

for the particular fate of each tenet or doctrine; but he bequeathed the whole, as one compact and undivided system, to the candour and mature judgment of time and posterity. There was but one point in which he appeared anxious to prevent any misapprehension of his principles: that point respected the immateriality of the soul. He was apprehensive lest the doctrine of corporeal vibrations, being instrumental to sensation, should be deemed unfavourable to the opinion of the immateriality of the soul. He was therefore anxious to declare, and to have it understood, that he was not a materialist. He has not presumed to declare any sentiment respecting the nature of the soul, but the negative one, that it cannot be material according to any idea or definition that we can form of matter. He has given the following definition of matter, viz. “That it is a mere passive thing, of whose very essence it is to be endued with a *vis inertiae*; for this *vis inertiae* presents itself immediately in all our observations and experiments upon it, and is inseparable from it, even in idea.” The materiality therefore of the sensitive soul is precluded, by the definition of matter being incapable of

of sensation. If there be any other element capable of sensation, the soul may consist of that element; but that is a new supposition, still leaving the original question concluded in the negative, by the fundamental definition of matter. If indeed we could suppose that matter may have some occult powers and properties, different and superior to those which appear to us, so that it might be endued with the most simple kinds of sensation, it might then attain, according to the demonstrations of the author's theory, to all that intelligence of which the human mind is possessed; that is to say, through all the paths of sensation, imagination, ambition, self-interest, sympathy and theopathy, finally to the moral sense. And if to the moral sense, whatever may be the origin of the soul by divine creation, whether material or immaterial, transitory or destined to immortality, it is a moral essence, the noblest work of God.

The philosophical character of Dr. Hartley is delineated in his works. The features of his private and personal character were of the same complexion. It may with peculiar propriety be said of him, that the mind was the man. His thoughts were not immersed  
in



in worldly pursuits or contentions, and therefore his life was not eventful or turbulent, but placid and undisturbed by passion or violent ambition. From his earliest youth his mental ambition was pre-occupied by pursuits of science. His hours of amusement were likewise bestowed upon objects of taste and sentiment. Music, poetry, and history were his favourite recreations. His imagination was fertile and correct, his language and expression fluent and forcible. His natural temper was gay, cheerful, and sociable. He was addicted to no vice in any part of his life, neither to pride, nor to sensuality, nor intemperance, nor ostentation, nor envy, nor to any sordid self-interest: but his heart was replete with every contrary virtue. [The virtuous principles which are instilled in his works were the invariable and decided principles of his life and conduct.]

His person was of the middle size and well proportioned. His complexion fair, his features regular and handsome. His countenance open, ingenuous and animated. He was peculiarly neat in his person and attire. He was an early riser, and punctual in the

employments of the day ; methodical in the order and disposition of his library, papers and writings, as the companions of his thoughts, but without any pedantry, either in these habits, or in any other part of his character. His behaviour was polite, easy, and graceful ; but that which made his address peculiarly engaging, was the benevolence of heart from which that politeness flowed. He never conversed with a fellow-creature without feeling a wish to do him good. He considered the moral end of our creation to consist in the performance of the duties of life attached to each particular station, to which all other considerations ought to be inferior and subordinate, and consequently that the rule of life consists in training and adapting our faculties, through the means of moral habits and associations, to that end. In this he was the faithful disciple of his own theory, and by the observance of it he avoided the tumult of worldly vanities and their disquietudes, and preserved his mind in serenity and vigour, to perform the duties of life with fidelity, and without distraction. His whole character was eminently and uniformly marked by Sincerity of heart, Simplicity of manners, and manly Innocence

Innocence of mind. He died at Bath on the 28th of August, 1757, at the age of fifty-two years.

He was twice married, and has left issue by both marriages now living :

From whom this memorial testimony is the tribute of Truth, Piety, and Affection.

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NOTES AND ADDITIONS  
TO DR. HARTLEY'S  
OBSERVATIONS ON MAN.

BY HERMAN ANDREW PISTORIUS,  
Rector of Poseritz in the Island of Rugen.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN EDITION, PRINTED  
AT ROSTOCK AND LEIPSIG, 1772.

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EXTRACT FROM MR. PISTORIUS'S PREFACE.

“ I FOUND, that of the two volumes of Dr. Hartley's work in English, the first of which contains a complete physiological and psychological system, the second only was properly fit for my purpose: this contains natural religion, a demonstration of christianity, its moral doctrines, a short exhibition of the doctrines of faith, and finally a treatise on the expectations of man. I therefore contented myself with giving a short though sufficient abstract of the first volume, which contains the association of ideas; but the second I have thought it necessary to divide into two, and amplify it with my own observations.” These observations are here translated entire, and are to be considered as additions to the introduction and the propositions in the second part to which they refer.

## NOTES AND ADDITIONS.

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*On Necessity.*

WHEN the reader reflects, that this treatise on religion is the second part of a work in which Hartley considers the nature of man, and treats the mind and body altogether as machines, he will probably take it up with mistrust and prejudice, and condemn it as irrational, without an examination. A certain free-will, of which indeed very different, and, in some measure, very erroneous ideas have been formed, but with which, in the opinion of most philosophers and divines, necessity and the mechanism of the human mind are incompatible, has usually been considered as absolutely requisite to religion and morality. The supposition, that both must fall to the ground, if the human soul be subjected to corporeal or spiritual mechanism, has been supported both by the friends and by the opponents of religion: the former considering as an enemy to religion every one who defends the doctrine of mechanism, and the latter having attacked religion and morality with the principle of necessity. Hence Hartley's endeavour, not merely to shew the accordance of mechanism with religion, but even to build all religion on the doctrine

trine of necessity, is a new and unheard of attempt, in which respects it deserves the attention of the learned. The chain of his reflections, and the development of his system, will remove from the mind of every thinking and impartial reader, that mistrust which may arise from the prejudice of commonly received opinions: we will however premise a few general observations in defence of his theory.

The end of morality and religion is, unquestionably, the happiness of mankind. Man is endued with the power of being rationally virtuous, and is made capable of religion, that through the exercise of this power and this capability he may attain that happiness which is appointed for him, and of which he is susceptible. All that we have to inquire, therefore, is; can man, considered as a rational, moral, and religious being, be happy, if his moral and religious notions, perceptions, and actions be subject to mechanism? or do mechanism and happiness reciprocally exclude each other? That necessity is not incompatible with happiness and virtue, is clear, as has been already observed by others, from this principle, that, if it were, God could neither be virtuous nor happy, since he is both from necessity. Of happiness we know nothing, but that it consists in a chain of agreeable sensations, or that it is a state which man rather wills, than wills not. By mechanism we understand a power of effecting or suffering such changes as are dependent on each other, by that necessary connection which we discover in all nature, as cause and effect, and which are united to and follow each other according to certain established laws. If the human mind be subject to such a mechanism, all its actions and sufferings, its perceptions and ideas, its desires, inclinations, and passions must be consequences of a necessary connection; and so founded on each other, that, according to one or more simple invariable laws, they will follow one

another in such a manner as to exclude every thing arbitrary, fortuitous, arising from no motive, or aiming at no end. Compare these two definitions, of happiness and mechanism, and shew, that they are incompatible with each other. If you cannot do this, and prove that man is incapable of all agreeable sensations or their consequences, when there are sufficient grounds for them, and that content and happiness, when mechanically produced, are no longer content and happiness to him, mechanism and religion cannot be proved to be contradictory.

It may be said, if religion may make a man happy on the principles of necessity, still on those principles it cannot render him virtuous, or an object of divine bliss and reward. To begin with the latter: that man if necessarily good is not an object of reward. Is reward, then, essentially different from content and happiness? Assuredly no otherwise than as it is a certain determinate happiness, connected with and consequent to a certain virtuous, or suitable conduct, call it which you will. What should hinder the Supreme Being from permitting a necessary good conduct to be followed by a necessary adequate happiness? What should prevent him from making known this happiness, which he connects with the suitable conduct of his rational creatures, and proposing it as a reward, in order to incite them by this motive to pursue such a conduct? As little is necessity derogatory to virtue, unless in the definition of virtue we arbitrarily refuse all impulse, and every kind of necessity, such as consists in the relation of cause and effect; that is, unless we assume what has been disputed above. According to the common use of language we call a man virtuous who thinks and acts in a manner suitable to his nature, destination, and the grand purposes of his being. To ascribe to him virtue, we merely consider whether this manner of thinking and acting proceed

proceed from his moral character, and whether his virtue be his own will, choice, and determination; without concerning ourselves how, or after what laws, his good thoughts and actions arise, whether they be necessary or accidental, and whether the same man who acts justly and uprightly could, in the very same internal and external circumstances, and proposing the very same grounds, have acted wickedly and unjustly. We deem it sufficient, that he acts spontaneously, and that his determinations and actions accord with his will and understanding: sufficient, that he is not subjected to a blind fate, by means of which he is absolutely determined to a certain mode of acting and suffering, let what will have preceded, and independent of his internal or external circumstances.

If it be alleged, that he who is determined to the end must also be determined to the means, and that, consequently, absolute and conditional necessity amount to the same thing; we shall observe this important difference, that the rational agency of man is consistent with that conditional necessity which the mechanism of the soul admits, but with absolute necessity it is incompatible and impossible. Were man assured, that a certain consequence would be inevitable, let him do what he would, and that it would infallibly happen, independent of any means that he might choose to employ, he would do nothing to obstruct or promote it, and would have no motive to act. On the other hand, if consequences be always connected with certain means known to man, and nothing happens but in a certain series and order, and when something else has preceded it; if, too, they be so far contingent, that he cannot foresee them with certainty, or cannot foresee them in as far as all that we term means do not precede in an appointed order; he must first employ the means, if he desire them to happen, or, if he desire them

not

not to happen, he must avoid every thing that precedes when such consequences follow: in other words, his uncertainty of the future will make it so far contingent to him, that he will be capable of agency. Whilst he also knows, that if this future actually will be, it can no otherwise be than as preceded by certain circumstances, and as he does or avoids certain actions, in this knowledge he will have a principle of action, or a motive to set his mechanism agoing. Suppose a man to have broken a bone; if his fate were subjected to blind necessity, and this accident must have a consequence, whether foreseen by him or not, which must at all events follow, whatever precede, or whatever steps be taken by him, he would remain inactive and in despair, unable to act or will. This is the consequence of absolute necessity. It destroys all action. If a man in the same circumstance know not the event of the fracture, and cannot foresee whether he shall recover or die, yet knows that for his recovery his bone must be united and healed, and that he must conduct himself in a proper manner to obtain this, or otherwise will inevitably die; this uncertainty and knowledge taken together will enable and determine him to act. Thus conditional necessity by no means destroys rational agency, whilst man knows not the future, but by preceding circumstances, and cannot determine necessary consequences, but by the means he employs. It may be said: if man be subject to absolute necessity, cannot his uncertainty of the future impel him to act, as well as if he were subject to conditional necessity? To this I shall answer: even if he be capable of action, that action cannot be rational: it can only be the effect of chance, since he must want those principles of action which his knowledge of cause and effect, and his insight into the natural course of things would afford him on the scheme of conditional necessity.

Hence



Hence it follows, that according to the system of conditional necessity, or mechanism, man is an agent, produces himself his actions and passions, and acts either adequately or inadequately to his ultimate end, is virtuous or wicked, and consequently happy or miserable; and as religion is given him as a mean of becoming virtuous and happy, by it he is capable of being both.

That the doctrine of necessity is liable to be misconceived and misapplied, is no objection to the doctrine itself, when it may be proved that the abuse of it always proceeds from its being misunderstood. If the wicked man allege: I am destined to sin, I must necessarily and continually act wickedly; he will fortify himself by this notion against the fear of punishment, and attempt not to make himself better. The principle of necessity, however, cannot free him from punishment, or the evil consequences of his wickedness. As his actions are not unjust, because they are necessary, his punishment is not unjust, because it is equally necessary. It depends on his evil deeds, as an effect on a cause, as his actions on the causes which produced them. Daily experience teaches him this, in the evils he suffers in consequence of his irrational conduct. Equally groundless, and contrary to experience, is it for him to reject all attempts to amend himself under the pretext of necessity. The improvement or depravation of his mind is only conditionally necessary. Both are to him accidental. According as he employs, or neglects, the means which lead to one, or the other, such improvement, or depravation, must ensue. His present evil state, and present propensity to wickedness, no more justify him in concluding their duration and increase inevitable, than the disordered state of his body in disease the infallible necessity of his dying. Were this mode of conclusion just, man would attempt no alteration of those things  
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in which his convenience required a change, and be unable to apply any endeavours for that purpose: since being in their natural state useless, and inadequate to the purposes, they must, according to this reasoning, ever remain so; or still continue to be noxious, if they be so at present. On this principle, if a man's foot slip, and he be in danger of falling, he ought not to endeavour to save himself, but let the event be as it may.

If a man, who from the necessary connections in nature should draw such conclusions, and would act from these, or rather, acknowledging his fate wholly inevitable, remain inactive, should be guilty of an obvious folly, the notion of necessity would not quiet his mind, or justify him in his own breast for his inactivity, or despair of improving his disposition. The less the consequences and efficacy of the means which lead to such an end are doubtful, and the less chance reigns in the world, the less could he do this, and with the more certainty might he hope for the happy consequences of such means, if employed in the way prescribed by religion.

#### PROPOSITION I. p. 5.

##### *On the Position of sufficient Causes.*

THE principle, that something has existed from all eternity, or that there never was a time when nothing existed, with which Locke also begins the proof of the existence of God, is the same which the German philosophers term the position of sufficient causes, and the universality of which Clarke would not grant Leibnitz. If we except the known Cartesian proof of the possibility of a perfect being from his reality, all proofs of the existence of God are founded on the position of sufficient causes, and, as far as they

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are solid and convincing, depend on the truth and universality of this position. If there were a single case in which any thing might be and commence without a reason and without a cause, a world, for ought we know, might so originate. Perhaps, therefore, Hume was not in the wrong, in refusing to admit the application of the position of sufficient causes to the origin of the world, since, according to his opinion, this position being founded solely on constant experience, all the cases in which we have found it just are totally unlike that to which it is applied as a proof of the existence of God, and we are by no means justified in applying it to cases of which we can have no experience. To remove these and similar difficulties, it were to be wished, that the position of sufficient causes might be brought into a necessary and indisputable connection with the first principles of all human knowledge, the positions of compatibility and incompatibility. This has been attempted, and Baumgarten's endeavours to do it are well known. His proof of the position of sufficient causes from that of incompatibility, however, fails, if not in truth, in the necessary evidence. Nothing, he maintains, would be something, if nothing were the sufficient cause of something: but if instead of the words he uses in the latter part of this proposition we substitute the equivalent ones, if something had no cause, his consequence appears to fail.

Perhaps the connection of the two principles may be better shewn in the following manner. Every man, even the atheist, unless he would establish one simple idea, must agree, that *nothing* or something *impossible*, is that which annihilates itself, is incompatible, and is at the same time A and not A. Thus all that is affirmed of it must equally be denied. Nothing can apply to it, and therefore it is not an object of thought. On the contrary, that which does not annihilate itself, is not incompatible, is A or not

A, may be termed *possible* and *something*. Something may be affirmed or denied of it. Something will apply to it, and therefore it is an object of thought. Whether we allow it to be the first idea of a possibility or an impossibility, or the immediate consequence of the first idea, that it is or is not an object of thought, the conclusion will be the same, whilst it is admitted, that an idea which annihilates itself cannot be conceived by God or man, as it plainly is not an object of thought. Now let me ask: is a shining sun an impossibility? This no one will assert. But has its possibility any grounds? May I ask why it is possible? Unquestionably it is possible, because it is an object of thought; and it is an object of thought, because the ideas of a sun and of light are not incompatible. Thus the absence, the want of incompatibility, is the ground of all possibility; and the position of compatibility is founded on and presupposes the position of a sufficient cause. Let us not cavil about the expression of absence or want of incompatibility. This absence forms a true reality; as the want of all imperfection produces the greatest perfection. Neither can the universality of this position be disputed. It extends itself solely to possibilities, and ought not to be confounded with the position, that there is no effect without a cause. The latter is merely a deduction from the former, and is only applicable to things which actually are. If it be asked, is such a thing possible? we should first inquire, is there any incompatibility in it? The ascertaining of this can alone determine its possibility or impossibility. But if every thing be grounded on possibility, and possibility be an object of thought, nothing without ground can be an object of thought. Every thing that is has its grounds. Nothing is without grounds. All our ideas certainly spring from such an investigation, since no idea can arise in any other way. A wooden whetstone is  
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mentioned to me as a rarity. I laugh at it as an absurdity, till I am convinced, that wood is capable of being petrified, and that the incompatibility which I at first suspected does not exist. If this be perfectly just, we cannot long dispute, whether there be any idea so simple, that the presence or absence of incompatibility in it cannot be determined, or which, in other words, has no grounds of possibility or impossibility. Certainly there is no such simple idea: for every imaginable subject must have, or be capable of having a predicate; consequently, between the subject and all possible predicates there must or must not be an incompatibility, or it ceases to be a subject. The ground of this lies in both. The subject is never a purely simple idea, since it admits one predicate, and rejects another. We men never conceive a subject without conjoining to it some predicate, be it ever so obscurely: still less can a simple idea be formed in the mind of the infinite being, to whom all possible things present themselves in all possible connections. Thus it would be granting too much, to say, that a position without any ground is impossible and inconceivable, at least with respect to the human understanding; as I think I have proved, that it must be inconceivable to every thinking being. There is such a relation throughout the whole sphere of possibilities, that two ideas must in all cases be either capable or incapable of being conjoined. The ground of this consists in their compatibility or incompatibility, and as far as they are capable of being combined in thought are they possible, or impossible, without reference to any particular thinking being. The following observations may shew us how the human understanding arrives at a comprehension of what has or has not grounds.

Throughout all nature we discover nothing wholly detached, nothing perfectly insulated, nothing which

is not on one side or other connected with something else, and nothing indivisible or unconnected in a certain proportion of power and magnitude, or of quantity in general. This constant observation of a never-failing and proportionate connection is the origin of our ideas of grounded and ungrounded, of cause and effect, and by this are they justified. To this also may be added,

Secondly, The necessary association of our conceptions. We can have no conception, no perception, that is wholly solitary, and independent of every thing. Indeed we perceive an exact proportion of the associated conceptions, at least if we pay a little attention to them. It is the nature of our mind to have associated conceptions, and to associate its ideas according to certain immutable laws. As in this respect the human mind agrees with all nature, and as in each there is such a constant, complete, and proportionate association, which regulates what may be clearly conceived of the idea of grounded and ungrounded; this agreement in an association, which is absolutely necessary to our thinking, must be the last and decisive proof of the truth and universality of the position of sufficient causes, if it could not be proved by abstract reasoning.

PROP. II. p. 6.

*On the Eternity of God's Existence.*

If the foregoing proposition be admitted, that something must have existed from all eternity, or, that there never was a time when nothing existed, the sole question that remains is, whether a succession of finite dependent beings can be that something which has existed from eternity. To prove that it cannot, it is necessary to shew, that it is incompatible with

with the above proposition. I know none of our German philosophers who has more clearly and decisively shewn this than the late Reimarus in his truths of natural religion, to which I refer those of my readers, to whom Hartley's conclusions are not sufficiently clear and convincing. In the mean time, as I confess, that this important point deserves a more strict investigation, and fuller explanation than are here bestowed upon it, I will endeavour to elucidate our author's arguments.

The first term of an infinite series, says he, would be an effect without a cause, which, from the first proposition, is inadmissible. The first term, like all the other terms of this series, is a something of itself, and distinct from all the rest. Like those which follow, it must have a cause external to itself, or something must be conceived prior to it; consequently it cannot be the first. If it be objected, that, in an infinite series or number, no first term can be admitted, and that whatever term we take can only be a continuation of a series infinite *a parte ante*, this continuation of an infinite series, in which there is no first term, is destitute of a sufficient cause; and, as our author justly observes, such a series is as impossible and inconceivable as a number capable of increasing or decreasing without originating from, or arriving at unity. If it be asserted, that by increasing the terms to infinity we approach the cause, or sufficient grounds, of the whole series, and this infinite series be compared with mathematical approximation, in which the magnitude sought is continually approached nearest, without our being able ever to reach it, our author rightly answers, that in such a case every step must bring us nearer to the cause of this infinite series: but this is not the case; for however far we go back, or however great we take the series of dependent beings *a parte ante*, we are still equally distant from what is sought, namely, their

true cause. Hence what is said of infinite series in mathematics is not applicable here; as in the former we approach the magnitude sought, in this we do not. In that the difference continually decreases, and ultimately becomes imperceptible to us: in this, were we to go back to all eternity, the difference would ever remain the same. Thus an infinite series of finite beings is totally incompatible with the position of a sufficient cause. This conclusion is more clearly and concisely deduced by Baumgarten. An infinite series of dependent beings, is, from the proposition, an infinite series of accidental things, none of which has the cause of its existence in itself; so that such a series must be without a cause, if it do not originate from a prior necessary being.

The next conclusion of our author, that, if there be nothing more in the universe than a mere succession of finite dependent beings, then there is some degree of finiteness superior to all the rest, applies to those, who, to remove the difficulty of accounting for the origin of certain finite beings, admit a being superior but still finite. This is shifting the position of the difficulty without lessening it. Such a finite being, however high we place it, requires a cause equally with the least. This Hartley applies to man, and observes, that as man cannot comprehend his own nature, he must imagine a finite being superior to him that can: but as this being must naturally be supposed in a similar situation, he must go on till he arrives at an infinite being, or one capable of comprehending himself. He advances the general proposition, that no degree of finite being can be taken as the highest, as a still higher degree is conceivable, and there is absolutely no cause, or no reason, why such a higher degree should not exist. This question, the possibility of which, if we admit the position of a sufficient cause, fully proves its validity, still recurs, till we come to a being whose  
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essence exhausts all possibility, whose magnitude is above all measure, and who no longer admits of saying, why is there not yet a greater? All finite beings, indeed, that we observe, seem to point to such an immensurable infinite being. The difficulty which our author notices in the last place proceeds only from a misconception. We ascribe a cause to existent things only so far as we distinguish their reality from their possibility, or advance, that, besides what is necessary for us to comprehend their possibility, which is the want of incompatibility, we require something more to comprehend their reality. The cause of their being what they are must be in themselves, or external to them. In themselves it cannot be, for that would be the same as to say, that they produced themselves. But were there a case in which we must say, that the cause of its reality is in the thing which exists (and this we can and must say of God) there can be no cause of its reality but its possibility. He is, since he can be, and in him reality and possibility are no way distinguishable from each other. This, it is true, runs into the so often disputed proof of the being of God from his possibility: which proof, I confess, is not to me sufficiently evident. I cannot, however, without a contradiction, maintain the opposite side of the question; I cannot say, God does not exist because he is possible; or, his possibility and reality are not so closely connected, that the former presupposes the latter. Were I to say this, I must annihilate the idea of a self-existent necessary being, and return to that of accidental things, which, actually to be, require something more than to be possible, or which require grounds for their possibility, and, besides these, grounds for their reality.

## PROP. III. p. 9.

*On the Infinity of God.*

OUR author dwells longer on the proof of the divine attributes of power and knowledge, and particularly of the infiniteness of those attributes, than is usual with the German philosophers, who commonly content themselves with the first argument, that an infinite being must be infinite in every thing which he is or has, and consequently his attributes must be infinite. Indeed it is absurd and contradictory, that a being can be finite in one respect, and infinite in another; or that the powers and qualities of a being, which constitute the essence of that being, and through which it properly exists, should be of different and indeed opposite natures. To him who understands the meaning of the words this must be as evident as the position, that a finite being must have finite powers, and cannot possess infinite qualities.

Let us however examine our author's particular proofs for the infinity of God's attributes. The instances and evidences of power and wisdom which we find in nature are innumerable and incomprehensible; with respect to our comprehension, then, at least they are infinite: and this conception of a relative infinity ultimately loses itself in our minds, and is changed into an absolute infinity. He shews also, that we are led from the position of a sufficient cause to admit an infinite universe, or an universe infinite in number and extension: since if we suppose the universe to be finite, or limited in number and extension, we must inquire after the cause of this limitation, and as we can find none, we must reject the supposition. Thus the whole  
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comes to this, from the idea we have of a dependent being, a being inconceivable without an external cause, and which consequently never actually has all that it is capable of having, or the reality of which is never the same with its possibility (and such the author supposes the world to be) does it not naturally follow, that such a being cannot be infinite in the strict sense of the word, or as we say that God is infinite?

That is truly and metaphysically infinite which has every thing possible, that is, every thing real, or which has no limits. To be infinite, and to have no limits, are the same. But what is that which can have no limits? Unquestionably nothing but a reality. In God every reality is without limits: were it limited, or might it be conceived greater than it is, it would not have, or rather would not be, all that it might. For this there must be some cause; and this cause must be either in God, or out of him. In the latter case, he would no longer be a self-existent independent being; he would not be God: in the former, the limiting cause must be in his will, which is inconceivable, or in his other realities opposing and limiting one another. Were such a limitation of God's realities conceivable, it would follow, that there was actually some negation in the idea of God; since all limitation must arise from a negation, or a contradiction. But no reality considered in itself can be contradictory to the others. No reality, generally or absolutely taken, involves a negation: and with relative realities we have nothing to do. All God's realities, therefore, absolutely considered, are affirmative, whence no contradiction, and consequently no limitation of one by another is possible. Are we, however, justified in considering every reality in God as absolute? Certainly: since God is and must be actually all that is possible; consequently the grounds of the negation of all limits are

are in his very essence. This, I think, would appear more clearly, were we to consider a relative reality with its causes. The degree of mental capacity which a beast possesses is a reality of a relative kind. To the beast, a higher degree, the understanding of a man for instance, would be no reality, and for this reason, because it would be incompatible with the other qualities which the beast has, and must have. Now if we suppose a being possessing every thing that would render the highest degree of understanding not only possible, but capable of acting in the most perfect manner; in such a being the highest degree of understanding would find nothing by which it could be limited: his understanding must be without limits, or an absolute reality. Thus it is with God, and with all his realities. His unlimited essence, or his independent necessary existence, excludes all limitation of his realities, and exalts them to the state of absolute, so that they never admit a negation, but are ever affirmative; consequently they allow of no collision, no cause of limitation. I do not think it rightly and accurately speaking, therefore, to say: God has all the realities and perfections *that can possibly coexist*. The last is a superfluous addition. All realities, absolutely considered, as in the self-existent being they must be, may coexist, nothing being denied by either of them. All being affirmative, no opposition, no contradiction betwixt them is possible. Otherwise it appears to me, that no limited true reality external to God is possible, of which the original and source is not in him. He could not permit any reality actually to be out of him, if he possessed it not himself. God is the most real being; whatever is real must be in him.

To return again to the question of the infinity of the universe. When I say, that the truly infinite is that, which, devoid of limits, is either so great that we can conceive nothing greater, or, if we consider it

it as actually existing, the reality of which is equal to its possibility, according to this definition, infinity is applicable only to the self-existent being, and we must deny it to the universe as distinct from or dependent on him. Infinity, according to which a being is all that it is capable of being, flows from self-existence, and is indeed only another expression for the same thing; consequently it cannot be a property of a dependent being. What follows may serve farther to explain this difficult question.

If I confine myself to the question, whether the universe be infinitely extended, I must inquire, whether the universe admit of an infinite number of parts: and as this may still be equivocal, I must farther inquire, whether any term be to be set to its duration. In this sense of the question, I admit, that the parts of the universe may be increased *a parte post* to infinity, not merely in thought, but in reality. If it be asked, whether the number of its parts be infinite *a parte ante*, I know not what I shall answer. My customary ideas of accidental things, which render me unable to conceive them without a beginning and without an origin, stick so closely to me, that I cannot clearly comprehend the question, much less solve it. I cannot conceive an infinite universe in this sense otherwise than as an actual one, and consequently, as it appears to me, consisting of an infinite number of unities. I readily confess, that such a number is to me inconceivable. It may further be asked; is the number of parts of the universe existing at one time infinite, or so great, that it would be absurd to increase it in idea? To the given impossibility of an actually determinate, and at the same time infinite number, the following may be opposed. The infinite understanding of God is equally determinate, since it actually is; but infinity alone can measure it, to every created mind it is infinite. Suppose it to be divided into an infinite number of  
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finite terms; each of these terms would form a part of an infinite, without any one of them constituting an infinite understanding separately. Each would ever be capable of being conceived greater, and more terms might still be added till the number became infinite. Apply this to an infinite number of existing things. If the number of things existing in the universe be actually infinite, and if we conceive the understanding of God as consisting of an infinite number of finite terms, so far they will agree, and what holds good of the one will hold good of the other. In my opinion, however, this does not apply in the present instance, nor can the notion of a really existing infinite number be thus supported. The understanding of God, I would say, is a perfect unity, indivisible, immensurable. It is so totally different from those of every other intelligent being in quality, as well as in degree and in quantity, that it is not only incommensurate to them, but does not admit of being measured. If, then, I divide the understanding of God into several terms, to make one real infinite number by adding these terms together, or to shew the possibility of such a number, my division is merely chimerical, and, as I can assume no actual determinate unity, I can no more produce a number of unities, than I could produce a number from an arbitrary division of an absolute unity, if I were to suppose it something real. Now when I consider the universe and its parts, I have things actually existing distinct from one another, I have real not imaginary unities, and these must constitute a number: but if these actually constitute a number, they must bear a proportion to unity, and there is no contradiction in supposing this proportion still greater and greater: consequently this number cannot be infinite in the foregoing sense of the word.

Notwithstanding all its difficulties, however, if we would solve this question with some degree of certainty,

certainty, I believe we must have recourse to a perfect universe. God would produce the most perfect, whence it must contain as many and as great things as possible, and, which is of most importance, these must have the greatest possible harmony with each other. The number of actual things harmonizing with one another, contributes not so much to perfection as the degree in which they harmonize, with this distinction, that whilst perfection increases with the number, so long is a greater number requisite to the attainment of the greater perfection. The question, then, will come to this: does infinite extension, or an infinite number of actual things contribute most to the perfection of the universe? The latter can only be true, if an infinite number admit greater harmony than a limited one. We cannot but make the following conclusion: were only one individual most perfect universe amongst more less perfect possible, it would be an exception to the rule of the greatest perfection, and a system of actual things derogatory to the perfection of the whole would be possible. Other systems, besides those which actual are, presuppose, besides the altered systems, other existing things. Hence all that is possible does not actually exist, and this world is not infinitely extended, because, if it were infinitely extended a greater perfection would be lost.

I must still observe, that infinite extension is not to be confounded with infinite duration. Of this it is clear, as the late Reimarus has sufficiently proved, that it can never be infinite by successions, even though they proceed without end. So we perceive Hartley cannot deduce an infinite universe from the position of sufficient causes: as the question, why did not God create more existing things than a limited universe contains? may always be answered thus: the greatest perfection and the wisest ends required no more, nay would admit no more.

P R O P.

PROP. IV. p. 13. To follow Bodily Misery.

*On the spiritual Happiness of Man.*

WHEN we desire pure happiness, we know not what we desire, we are ignorant of ourselves and of our nature, and how far we are capable of happiness. It is even difficult for us to form an idea of pure happiness. The most general opinion is, that we are to understand by it an uninterrupted state of pleasing sensations, at least an everlasting exclusion of all pain and misery, or such a state as a man would not wish to exchange for any other. If we admit that the happiness of man be compounded of sensual and mental enjoyments, to procure him pure happiness, the fountains of both must flow uninterruptedly, nor must one bitter drop be mixed in the stream of pleasure that he quaffs. According to this datum his pleasures must be continually increasing; and never diminished: for the diminution of pleasure, or a less degree of it, is pain, which would detract from pure happiness. Or, if this were not the case, he must remain unalterably in the same degree of enjoyment, and at the same time his taste must not be weakened by its continuance; his capacity for pleasure, and the stimulus of the object, or its power of pleasing him, must ever possess the same force and efficacy. Both the former and the latter supposition are repugnant to the actual, and, in my opinion, the essential constitution of nature. According to this we must conceive every pleasure to be an enjoyment (this is indisputably the case with sensual pleasures at least) and every enjoyment presupposes a desire, every desire a need. The sensation of a need differs from the sensation of enjoyment, and the state of desire is, compared with the  
state



state of enjoyment at least, an unpleasant sensation. The man, then, who would enjoy, and find pleasure in enjoyment, must first desire, and in desiring and needing he must find pain and disquietude. If this pain and disquietude of desire be frequently little noticed by us, it is because they are greatly lessened by the certain expectation of approaching pleasure, and the anticipation of enjoyment. They cannot, however, be wholly annihilated; for, if they were, the taste of enjoyment would be equally imperceptible. We only obtain a lively sensation of enjoyment by comparing it with a preceding want, or with its opposite. Thus much is certain from experience, that the sensation of health, which is to man the greatest of all sensual pleasures, and which should be, and in certain circumstances actually is, the sum of all, is reduced to an almost imperceptible and indifferent sensation, if we have not an opportunity of comparing it with the opposite sensations of pain and sickness. It only rises to that noticeable height and force which we call pleasure, when it follows, or admits of a lively comparison with its opposite sensation. I do not assert that comparison is absolutely the sole cause of pleasure. On the contrary, I am much inclined to admit, that there is something positive and absolute both in sensual and mental pleasures; though I must confess that it is extremely difficult to give an exact standard for them, and that this standard must be different in each individual. In general terms I would say, that the more or less obscure perception of order in the body and mind constitutes absolute sensual and mental pleasure. Where this order is perceived to preponderate in the body or mind, there would I place the beginning or limits of pleasure: thence forwards the sensations rise through the different degrees of pleasure to ecstasy and bliss, whilst backwards they proceed through the various degrees of pain to consummate

consummate wretchedness. Still the comparison of our sensations with their opposites unquestionably contributes much to their rising or sinking in this scale; and experience seems to tell us, that in sensual enjoyments we are indebted to comparison for our principal pleasures.

If we consider mental happiness, and particularly its most important part moral happiness, or the sum of those pleasures which arise from the perfect consciousness of ourselves, from the faculty of forming general ideas, from the remembrance of the past, prospect of the future, and the capability of advancing towards perfection by means of these, comparison seems here far less necessary than in sensual happiness. Still here there is a need, and from this need arises an impulse to act; consequently some disquietude is necessary. This disquietude preceding action, if it be not absolutely painful, cannot, on comparison, be equally pleasing with the consciousness of having attained the end. Now if this progressive round of efforts and attainments be continually recurring, there must be a succession of more and less pleasing sensations. Thus, then, here also pure happiness, in the strict sense of the word, is inadmissible. It is evident, too, that in proportion as the difficulties of attaining the ends proposed, and consequently the preceding disquietude, are increased or lessened, the pleasures of attaining those ends will be increased or lessened also. If we deprive a man of the dangers of the combat, we rob him of the reward of victory.

How little pure happiness is compatible with our nature may also be conceived from the degree of perfection which is essential to it. Man, as experience tells us, when he enters into being, has nothing but capacity, and the foundations of what he is to be. This capacity must first be unfolded, these foundations built upon. He must acquire expertness by practice, become by degrees what he is capable of becoming,

becoming, and probably grow and improve without ceasing. If this be his destination, in the beginning of his existence he must be placed at the lowest point of his perfection, or his degree of perfection must be allowed as wide a sphere of activity as possible. For argument's sake, let us suppose, that man can go through a hundred degrees of perfection in the whole sphere of his existence; it is not probable, that he should be placed at once in the middle or fiftieth, without ever having passed the first. Were it so, we might ask: why in this, and not in a higher? and if we take a higher, the question would still recur, till we arrived at the last. To avoid it we must either take the highest or the lowest. Thus the perfection of which man is capable being given, the first degree from which he sets out on his progress to that perfection must be, in comparison with the second, third, &c. imperfection, that is, ignorance, inexperience, and the like, or moral evil with proportionate physical evil.

We will endeavour to make the matter still clearer. According to the benevolent plan of his Creator, man should be capable of the greatest possible happiness, and indeed by his own free agency. Now the question naturally arises: when may the actions of a created being be termed free, and when not? It needs no proof, that a knowledge of good and evil, of the good or bad consequences of an action are necessary, before such an action can be undertaken freely, or from choice. This knowledge cannot be merely historical, but it must have a force, vigour, and certainty, inevitably to produce the action, and must be a man's proper knowledge. But this can only be obtained by experience. Let us caution a child, that has never known pain nor received an injury, ever so strongly against fire, let us exert ourselves ever so much to convince him that it will burn him, whilst he has never been burnt, nor felt

any similar pain, all will be insufficient to guard him against it. Let it not be said, that the trust or confidence which we usually place in our seniors or friends will sufficiently supply the want of proper experience. This confidence, if it could take place in all cases, must be founded on experience: some case must have occurred, in which we received injury from refusing confidence to our warning friends. Not to mention, that so complete an instruction as to extend to all the occurrences of life, to all our sensations, and to all our ideas, is not possible. Daily example evidently shews us how much our own experience is preferable to the instructions of others. It requires but little reflection for us to perceive, that our proper experience would be absolutely necessary, to make the knowledge and insight of others become our own, and serve as incentives to our actions. In reality we do not understand the words in which necessary advice or wholesome warning is given us, if we have not in some cases acquired a knowledge of the thing itself, which is only to be obtained by experience. All the advantage we can derive from confidence in others, or the principle of faith, which is as necessary and useful in common life as in religion, is its freeing us from the difficulty and danger of making experiments on every new occurrence, and enabling us to avail ourselves of the knowledge and insight acquired by the experience of others, when we have previously had analogous experience of similar cases, and so much knowledge and insight, that we understand and must follow the good advice of others, whilst we have not a complete knowledge and experience of the subject ourselves.

This being admitted, it cannot be denied, that all the actions of an intelligent agent must be connected together, or form one whole. Conceptions produce actions, and these again produce conceptions, till a man has collected his whole stock of experience, filled  
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up the measure of his activity, and quits the stage of life. Many of his conceptions are no doubt borrowed, and not the result of his own experience; but these he will not appropriate, these will produce no action, till he perceives their connection with what himself has experienced. Our confidence in others enables us to supply the place of our own insight and experience with theirs, only when by reflection and use we have interwoven them with ours. New discoveries make the most rapid progress when we can most readily comprehend them from what we generally observe, and find to be true. The conceptions we derive from others cannot be so complete and forcible as those produced by our own experience, unless they cause an equal action. Our faith or confidence in those who impart them to us extends only so far as to induce us to apply them to use, and bring them to the test of experience. Only from this trial and reflection do they become our own.

Hence it is evident why man, at his birth, is placed on the lowest step of the perfection of which he is capable, and must be able to make himself unhappy by his agency. If no original bias be imparted to the human mind, and if its actions be free, the most simple action must be its own resolve, and conception which produced it must have been its own. Whatever step, except the lowest, we place at the beginning, we must admit innate ideas, which man did not procure for himself, which were to him as dead treasure, and could not be the grounds of agency. To this, every thing, except the faculty of thinking and willing, must be his own work.

This is equally true with respect to the body. In man this can have no artificial impulse, no innate activity, like that of beasts. If all its arbitrary motions accord with the free resolves of the mind, it must be formed, accustomed, and exercised to all the free actions of man, whatever be their nature (without

any difference whether they tend to his happiness or unhappiness) and consequently in this view it must be placed on the lowest step of that perfection of which it is capable; otherwise disagreements must arise between the mind and its companion.

Can it any longer remain a doubt, whether man, as man, be capable of pure happiness? To be happy, he must be free, he must be an agent. To be an agent, he must make experiments, he must examine what is good and what is bad, he must taste pleasure and pain, acquire expertness, and make himself happy even at the peril of being unhappy. This disposition of things, however, is productive of happiness far greater at bottom than that which is termed pure, were such happiness possible to a finite and mutable being. Every step towards perfection produces an immediate pleasure, in as much as it is an exercise of the powers, and an application of activity: though this pleasure, as I have already observed, is inferior to that arising from the attainment of the end proposed. A certain disquietude remains, not to be confounded with the notion of pure happiness in the strictest sense of the word, but which actually increases the sum of happiness considered in the whole, as it makes our perception of it more vivid by comparison. But the true source of mental pleasure is the contemplation of perfection attained. This pleasure is exalted by comparing it with the less that preceded, and by the remembrance of what a man was shewing him what he is, if he consider what he is as the fruit and consequence of his own endeavours, and be convinced that in all he did his actions were free. This reflection appears to me an inexpressible addition to the pleasures which constitute the mental happiness of man.

Finally, we must bring the prospect of the future into our calculation of mental happiness. Did man perceive nothing before him but a state wholly unalterable, his nature must be changed, its progress  
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and accomplishment, and the active impulse of his mind to extend itself would be done away; since, in this view of the future, his present happiness would admit not of being augmented or impaired. But were we so framed, that we could foresee only a diminution of our happiness, or a restricted increase of it, the prospect of futurity would be painful or unpleasant, and our present enjoyments lessened and disturbed. In the eye of one who contemplates the whole course of our lives, as our author well observes, we derive from our nature a balance of happiness; but to us, conscious of our progressive course and ever hoping a greater happiness, to us, who enjoy pleasure in every step we take towards perfection, which enjoyment is incessantly increasing, this nature gives more true pleasure than a pure, unalterable, and on that account limited happiness could ever bestow.

This view of the mental happiness of man, considered as the sum of all the pleasures which the imagination forms from the remembrance of the past and prospect of the future, will probably afford us a solution of the question: is man most happy or miserable? The safest manner of determining it would certainly be to let the general experience of mankind decide; but its voice is not sufficiently clear. Instead, therefore, of a positive answer, which is not to be obtained, we may be permitted to have recourse to presumptive proofs. Such a presumptive proof of the preponderance of happiness the very increasing nature of mental pleasure seems to me to afford. This is capable of constant augmentation, and if man have but an obscure conception and presentiment of the future extension of his happiness, still more if he have a clear idea of it, he would upon the whole obtain a very great balance of happiness in his present circumstances, and throughout the whole course of his existence in general, as this conception of future increasing happiness acquired

clearness, certainty, and strength in his mind. However dubious and uncertain the calculation of the number, nature, and degree of his pains and pleasures may be, and however unable we may be to determine whether he be more happy or miserable, when we contemplate his happiness and misery in a given point of time, we cannot in the least hesitate to allow him a balance of happiness when he has a prospect of a boundless futurity, in which he has to expect a happier fate, and in general more good than he has ever yet enjoyed. When the understanding of a man is so exalted as to look into futurity, and make himself an interest there through fear and hope, in calculating his happiness we must no longer confine ourselves to his present pains and pleasures, but we must take into the reckoning his hopes and fears, add them to or subtract them from his present pleasures and pains, and take the balance of the whole for the true sum of his actual happiness. This operation, it is true, offers great difficulties; as to calculate accurately the good or evil of those hopes or fears, their duration, intensity and degree of certainty must be estimated. Thus to compute them with mathematical exactitude is not practicable. It is sufficient for our purpose, that, as we learn from general experience, the greater part of mankind fear a change of circumstances when they are happy less than they hope it when unhappy, and are more inclined to form pleasing and consolatory than comfortless and unpleasing prospects of futurity. This, I believe at least, is the general propensity of mankind; and as the gloomy prospect of the future is naturally more unwelcome to the mind than the joyful one, it is not so lasting, or retained so long in it, if the body enjoy but a tolerable state of health. All pleasures of the imagination, indeed, depend on the state of the body, and are so connected with its well being, that whilst its degree of health over-

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balances that of sickness, pleasing images, particularly of the future, must predominate over unpleasing and mournful ones. The solution of the question, therefore, depends in great measure on this, whether there be more healthy or sick men in the world, and whether men upon the whole experience most painful or agreeable sensations from their bodies. To this experience gives us a clear and precise answer. What our author says of the gaiety and joyfulness of youth, whilst their bodies are in a growing state, in answer to the question, agrees with this. It is unnatural and unusual to observe a lasting discontent or sorrow in children or young persons. Their griefs are transient, and their predominant propensity is to mirth and jollity. Even though we should not allow, with some philosophers, that the agreement between the welfare of the body and cheerfulness of the mind is owing to some obscure perceptions which the latter has of the order and perfection of the former (which however appears to be very just) still the fact itself is sufficiently ascertained by experience. Thus the greater part of mankind are far more inclined to hope than fear, in their views of futurity. Were it not so, it would appear, that our ministers, whose business it is to shew man the road to true happiness, would be far more successful, and would have much more occasion to comfort and console, than to admonish and reprove.

But were the propensity of the greater part of mankind rather to hope than fear the future allowed to determine the balance of happiness over misery, it might be objected, that happiness built upon this foundation would be very insecure and uncertain, that on a juster knowledge and more extensive insight into things it must diminish, and that by enlightened reason it must be destroyed. To this I reply, first, however feeble the foundation on which this happiness is built may be, still, whilst it stands, it is as effectual

as if it were ever so true and substantial: for a false imagination, as long as it is conceived to be true, procures as great a pleasure as if it were true in reality. Secondly, before a man's hopes or fears with their foundations become suspected, he must have acquired an improved understanding, and this particularly when supported by the christian revelation, must have relieved him from the disquiets which he previously felt, and, in the same proportion in which these disquiets were strong and well-founded, have led him to true comfort, to a sure prospect of the future, and to such a well-founded hope, as, added to the sum of his actual happiness, must give it an infinite superiority over his actual misery.

Were I inclined to admit a situation in which the balance of misery should preponderate, it would be that middle condition between half and complete knowledge of a future, between certainty and uncertainty of such a state, in which a man foresees and conjectures that there is a futurity, but doubts of his participation in it, or is fearful of his destination therein. Most miserable of all must I think him who has made it his interest to destroy this futurity, and who is forced to exert all the powers of his mind to reason it away. Such a man has only the mournful resource of plunging into beastly sensuality, abdicating all moral and mental enjoyments, and confining all his happiness to sensual pleasures; or, should he unfortunately succeed in convincing himself by his sophistry of the non-existence of a future state, he must seek an indemnification in an imaginary futurity, form to himself some pleasing interest in it, and fashion out gorgeous images of the fame and honour bestowed on him by posterity, to supply the place of reality. Imperfect as this attempt to create an overbalance of pleasure must ever be, still it is a proof, that the mind is so constituted as always to fly to happiness whilst under the pressure of misery.

## PROP. IV. p. 13.

*On the Proofs of God's Benevolence.*

THE five propositions which our author has advanced (p. 23.) to enable us to comprehend the exercise of God's benevolence to man, and in particular to explain how finite proofs of the infinite attributes of God are conceivable, include all that can be conceived of them, and are useful to throw light on the subject. On these, however, it may not be useless to add some remarks.

The first supposition, *that each individual should be always happy infinitely*, is impossible, since in that case every individual must be an infinite being, must be God. If we take the word infinitely in another sense, as an unceasing duration of an immutable and limited, or of an increasing happiness, it could only apply to the infinite most perfect being, and consequently is impossible.

The second, *that each individual should be always finitely happy*, that is, *in a limited degree, without any mixture of misery, and infinitely so in its progress through infinite time*, is equally impossible, as requiring a pure or perfect happiness of which no finite being is capable. But that infinity here meant, which consists in an infinite number of finite happinesses, is nothing more than a mathematical infinity, or number continually increasing, which may properly be applied to a finite being.

The third, *that each individual should be infinitely happy, upon the balance, in its progress through infinite time, but with a mixture of misery*, differs from the preceding in admitting a portion of evil. This is  
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also possible whilst it requires only such an infinity as a finite being is capable of.

According to the fourth, *that each individual should be finitely happy in the course of its existence, whatever that be, but with a mixture of misery, and the universe be infinitely happy upon a balance*, we must suppose, that the being of man, so far as he is susceptible of happiness, may cease or be annihilated. In the sense in which infinitely is here taken, or ought to be taken, this only can render his happiness finite. This differs from the foregoing supposition in admitting a total end to man's happiness, or an annihilation of his nature. It is difficult, however, to reconcile the latter part of this supposition with the former, that the universe is upon a balance infinitely happy, whilst beings capable of happiness are annihilated, unless we suppose happiness and non-entity to mean the same thing. The universe here spoken of can be nothing but the sum total of intelligences, or beings capable of happiness. How infinite happiness can in any sense be ascribed to this intellectual world, when so considerable a part of it as the human race is blotted out of it, is inconceivable. On such a supposition, the happiness of the universe cannot be infinite, either in a metaphysical or mathematical sense of the word. Considered in a certain point of time it is not so great as it might be; since if mankind existed, and were happy, the sum would be augmented, and this augmentation is possible. What has been, and been happy, may be again, and be again happy. In a mathematical sense also, the continual progressive series of happiness of intelligent beings cannot be so infinite, if a part of them be annihilated, as it might be if that part still continued to exist. Our author remarks, that many thinking, serious, benevolent and pious persons are much inclined to this supposition. Those who favour it, however, will not willingly admit a limited duration of

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of existence: and if this, or the annihilation of mankind be excepted, the fourth supposition is the same with the third. If our author would ascribe to human happiness any other kind of infinity than that which consists in continued or incessant progression, he runs into a complete contradiction, nor is it conceivable, that the happiness of a finite being, any more than its other qualities, should be actually unlimited, considered in any particular point of time, or, like the happiness of an infinite being, incapable of increase. It is proper to make this remark, as the reader may easily be misled by the abuse of the word infinite, which expresses two different and opposite ideas by the same term. The one can only be conceived by an infinite intelligence, and properly, too, only of itself. Could the infinite intelligence conceive such an infinity applied to the happiness of its creatures, these, as it appears to me, must be equally eternal with it, both *a parte ante* and *a parte post*; then might they, in respect of their eternal and infinite duration, be conceived as infinite by it, so far as it overlooks, and, if I may so say, comprehends them at a single glance. In any other sense, or only supposing finite beings to have had a beginning, their happiness cannot once be conceived as metaphysically infinite by the infinite intelligence. If this be just, the abatement, which distinguishes the third supposition from the first and second, cannot find a place in the fourth in any possible sense: I say, in any possible sense. That the infinite happiness of man assumed in this supposition should be changed into an absolute metaphysically infinite happiness, as the happiness of God is, must be no less impossible, than that a finite being should be changed into an infinite one, man into God. The happiness of the creatures must ever, and to all eternity, remain circumscribed, and capable of farther increase, whilst it can never reach the infinity of God's, though it continually  
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approach it. But if we understand infinity when applied to human happiness to be of such a nature as is conceivable, that is, a perpetually increasing happiness, compared with which the preceding or accompanying evil is in such a continually decreasing, and ultimately so small as to be imperceptible, proportion, so that in a practical view it is to be considered as nothing, we can conceive the happiness of man, according to the fourth supposition (if we exclude the idea of annihilation), to be infinite in the same sense as it is possible according to the two first.

An infinite balance of happiness in the universe is still more difficult to be defended on the fifth supposition, *that some individuals should be happy and some miserable upon the balance, finitely or infinitely, and yet so that there should be an infinite overplus of happiness in the universe.* An overplus of happiness is possible, even though some beings should be absolutely and perpetually miserable, or though some should be annihilated after having received more evil than good in the period of their existence. But then the number of beings which in the course of their existence receive more good than bad must be greater, and the good they receive must be at least as multifarious and weighty, or even more so, than the evil which falls to the share of the more unfortunate, and not less in quantity or degree. Now an infinite overplus of happiness, with any exception, which a number of miserable beings must make in the sum of the happiness of the universe, is impossible to be conceived otherwise than as the sum of misery bears a small and imperceptible proportion to the sum of happiness, or as the number of the unhappy, and the evils they suffer, compared with the number of the happy, and the pleasures they enjoy, are not to be reckoned in a practical view.

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Were such an overplus of happiness styled infinite, as being the greatest possible from the limited nature of all created intelligent beings, I would grant, that such a greatest possible happiness might be relatively termed infinite: but then it must first be shewn, that, from the supposition itself, a finite or infinite overplus of misery to some intelligent beings must exist, and that the idea of finiteness and circumscription requires an overplus of misery in some, whilst the same finiteness requires it not in others. In my opinion, this is not to be shewn from a general view of things. For it must be demonstrated from the finite and limited nature of intelligent beings in general. But whilst both those which are happy, and those which are miserable, have all things in common, the consequences deducible from this idea of finiteness would be equally applicable to all intelligent beings; that is, we must infer an overplus of misery either to all or to none.

It is worth while to examine the particular grounds that philosophy may allege for or against such a supposition. I will endeavour impartially to display the most important that may be brought forward on either side, without attempting to pass a judgment on them.

From rational determinations of the attributes of God and of the nature of intelligent beings, and from analogy, or experience, these grounds must be taken. If we contemplate the attributes of God, that perfect benevolence, which we must ascribe to him, seems in no wise to favour the supposition, that he should sacrifice one part of his creatures, equally capable of an overplus of happiness, to the rest, or that he should build the welfare of certain intelligent beings on the destruction of others. The idea of the most perfect and consequently impartial benevolence leads us directly to an opposite conclusion: we are reduced, then, to admit some other attribute whereby  
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God's benevolence, or its influence on the unhappy part of the creation, is limited; or that, notwithstanding the perfection of God's benevolence, the nature of finite beings is so framed, and must of necessity be so framed, that one part could not be happy, but at the expence of the other.

Now on the other hand it may be said: such perfections of God, which set bounds to his benevolence in its influence on the unhappy, are righteousness and justice. From these attributes God has an infinite satisfaction in truth and order, and an equally infinite dislike to whatever departs from order and truth. Both these are in the highest degree active. Such creatures, therefore, as deviate from truth and order cannot but experience the effects of God's displeasure, so far, and as long as they continue to deviate from them: and since God presides as a lawgiver and ruler over his intelligent creatures, he must punish those that rebel against him, he must maintain the authority of his wise and benevolent laws, and his justice must sacrifice to the welfare of the whole those who will not amend.

To this it may be replied, that the attributes of righteousness and justice, if properly considered, are by no means so adverse to benevolence as might be inferred from what precedes. The most righteous and just ruler may also be the most benevolent, if he be the most powerful. His benevolence, it is true, would not be displayed in a similar manner to his dutiful and undutiful subjects: he would not reward the latter as the former; but his good-will towards them would shew itself in such dispositions and regulations as would render them equally obedient, and by these benevolent, though forcible measures, would he reveal his justice and righteousness, maintain the authority of his wholesome laws, and promote the well-being of his whole kingdom. He must punish; but his punishments would be corrections.

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We may admit, not without grounds, that the distinction betwixt punishment and correction, the end of the former being to prevent the spreading of wickedness by warning and deterring others from it, and of the latter, to amend those to whom it is applied, is founded on the weakness of mortal rulers, and not applicable to God. Mortal rulers are not always able to punish in such a manner as to amend those on whom they inflict punishment. They cannot in the same action consult the private advantage of the individual, and the public benefit of the whole, so that they are obliged to distinguish the two, and, for the general good, sacrifice the less to the greater. Both these ends, indeed, may be compatible with each other. We may so punish, that the punishment may be a mean of reclaiming the punished, and at the same time prevent the spreading of vice by serving as a warning to others. Thus when we distinguish punishment from correction, this distinction will only hold, it appears, whilst we speak of human correction and punishment: since the distinction arises not from the nature of the things themselves, but from the weakness of mankind. Even amongst men, a sovereign would unquestionably be deemed good, wise, and just, who knew how to punish so as not only to prevent transgressions, hinder the spreading of vice, and maintain order, peace, and security throughout his dominions, but likewise to amend the criminal himself, and render him an instrument of his own happiness, and an useful member of society, by the same punishment which served as a warning to others. But if this cannot be done, and the sovereign, by shewing kindness to a single criminal, must do an injury to the whole community, in preferring the less to the greater good, being unable, from his limited power, to prevent the extension of vice, but by the sacrifice of the guilty; the idea of the justice of punishing, as a virtue in the sovereign,

sovereign, originates in his want of power; a justice, which, though beneficial to the whole, is a hardship to the party that suffers, and consequently not so perfect and good as it would be, were it at the same time beneficial to society, and to the offender. Let it not be supposed, that this inability to correct in every case of punishment is so universal as to extend to God: it is proper to man alone, and proceeds from the following causes. We have not time, space, and means sufficient so multifariously to diversify our corrections, as to place the offender in as many various unpleasing situations as are requisite ultimately to bring him to a serious reflection on his real good and permanent attention to it. We cannot render his punishment so intense as to make the desired impression upon him, without its becoming fatal. Finally, too, we are persuaded, that certain offenders, particularly dangerous ones, must be punished with death, if we seek the security of society. Would slighter punishments serve in such cases, punishments that would not destroy the transgressor, but preserve him an useful member of society, no rational or well-minded man would justify capital punishments, but hold them equally pernicious and detestable. We may even hope, that, when the benevolent and more enlightened eye of philosophy shall have inspected that important part of legislation, the distribution of punishments, this will become less and less destructive, without being less efficacious, and be gradually converted into correction of offenders. Unless we ascribe human weakness, and the shackles of humanity, to that all-wise and omnipotent God, whose moral sovereignty over his intelligent creatures is not confined to the narrow limits of time, who has unnumbered and to us inscrutable ways of leading his subjects to his purposes, who, since they actually are and must eternally remain dependent on him, can place them in such circumstances that his designs in them,

them, and through them in others, must be accomplished, we are forced to allow, that with respect to him our distinction betwixt punishment and correction is inapplicable, and that all his punishments at least may be at the same time corrections. And since this may be, we ought, from the perfection of his benevolence, to expect, that so it will be.

The happiness of mankind, will it be said again on the other hand, requires a constant comparison with its opposite. If then there be intelligent beings upon the whole happy, there must be others on the whole unhappy, or the former would want a standard by which to measure their happiness. They would not know their good, and, in the enjoyment of it, that exalted taste would fail which must give them a balance of happiness. If it be true, as experience seems to shew, that what we name pleasure is only known and estimated by comparison, and indeed by comparison with its opposite, it would be impossible for Almighty Goodness, to give blessed spirits that exalted degree of happiness which they derive from comparison, by any other means than by contrasting them with miserable ones. Should it be said, that envy and malice are the true grounds of this high taste of happiness; this it must be confessed is in many instances the case with man, but it would be making the conclusion too general. Contrast undeniably does great service where its effect is unmixed. Comparison sets this thing on one side, and that on the other, and to our minds at least this process is familiar. The valetudinarian fancies himself in health when he finds a man still more diseased. The poor man thinks himself wealthy when he meets a beggar. Joy and sorrow, happiness and misery, friendship and hatred, are mutually increased by comparison. We must confess, that envy and malice frequently mingle in our contemplation of the happiness or misery of our neighbours, and carry an innocent propensity of nature to

an immoderate and pernicious height. Still it is not to be maintained, that all those pleasures which we derive from an advantageous comparison with their opposites, or to speak with more precision, the augmentation of our happiness from comparing it with that of others, must be excluded from true happiness. Is our philanthropy stifled when we see others unhappy, not being so ourselves? As long as the consciousness of self remains, whenever happiness in ourselves is contrasted with misery in our neighbour, they will heighten each other, and we shall involuntarily return from the unpleasing contemplation of our unhappy neighbour to the more joyful prospect of our own happiness, with a pleasure that will be at least felt, however obscurely.

To this specious argument for sacrificing a part to the whole may be replied. If our pleasures become more sensible and lively through the contemplation of a want of them, or of their reverse, in others, we must stifle the sentiment of benevolence towards our neighbour in our minds at least as long as the comparison of advantage lasts: for as soon as that sentiment becomes predominant, and excites true compassion, the increased taste of our own happiness would be depressed and over-ruled by the painful participation of the misery of others. At least this pleasure arising from an advantageous comparison would ever become more and more insipid to a person in proportion as he was less selfish and the more his heart expanded with benevolence and compassion, till at length, as these sentiments increased, it would be totally lost in a sensation of pain. At sight of the sufferings of congenial souls, every sufficiently enlarged mind must endure what a husband, a parent, would feel from the misery of a wife or child. If the virtue and benevolence of happy intelligences have attained this height, their pleasures can no longer be augmented by comparison with foreign misery (to them,

them, indeed, no one's misery would be foreign) nay, it would be diminished and destroyed by it. This exalted benevolence is by no means chimerical, or unattainable to man. The aim of all the instructions we receive from God by his moral government in the course of nature, and by revelation, is to lead us to an exalted benevolence, and from the love of self to that of God and our fellow-creatures. Experience teaches us this in the examples of religious and good men, whose hearts have been enlarged and benevolence increased through the aid of religion, which must naturally follow from studying the doctrines of christianity, and imitating the universal benevolence of God, and the love of our Redeemer. The happiness of man requires a comparison, to be felt as happiness with the greatest force. That is true. But so far as this comparison is necessary and efficacious to the perception of pleasure, experience of our own misery or even an inferior degree of happiness will suffice. This indeed, it seems, ought not to be wanting, if we would properly value our actual happiness. But if we estimate our happiness from our own experience of the want of it, or of its reverse, the comparison of it with the misery of others would be superfluous. Neither could it supply the absence of our own experience: for he who has felt no pain can receive no deep or lasting impression from the sufferings of another. Besides, should we be accustomed to behold the sufferings of others, they would gradually cease to effect the proposed end. In process of time we should be as little moved by them, as an European in the American plantations is by those of a negro; or find our pleasures as little exalted by them, as those of the planter by the miseries he inflicts, so common though so disgraceful to human nature. As the latter is accustomed to consider the suffering slave as a creature of an inferior order, and no way to be compared with himself, we may presume, that happy

beings would look on their fellow-creatures condemned to eternal misery in a similar point of view, and as beings with whom they could admit of no comparison. But should their sympathy be not wholly destroyed, and the sorrows of the miserable make some impression upon them, some painful sensations must at least mix with their selfish pleasure, and abate the pride of their triumph.

Let us now consider what may be said in opposition to this. In the first place, every painful sensation, and thus the painful sensation of compassion, does not absolutely lessen the sum of happiness, since there are painful sensations of such a nature as by contrast to produce greater pleasure; and increase its intensity. This is still more the case with compassion, perhaps, the less the compassionate can banish from their minds the sense of their own perfection; and the more they observe the imperfect state of the unhappy, the more is this sense augmented. Let us take a more narrow inspection of the various effects of compassion. What passes in the mind of a virtuous man, when some near relation, notwithstanding every caution, perseveres in dissipating his patrimony in debauchery, and finally, has broken a limb? He will pity his misconduct; and its unfortunate consequences. But he will say: he has met with his deserts: it was his own seeking: and he will be more inclined to withdraw his hand from the undeserving wretch, than to relieve his wants. How different would his sensations be, if a worthy friend, journeying to do some good action, should be plundered, and wounded to death by robbers! How would his soul shudder! What would he not do, to testify his compassion, and give him assistance! Now is not the pain he feels in the latter case far greater than that in the former? And what is it that makes it so? No doubt the ideas of innocence and merit, and the attachment founded thereon. What, on the other hand, makes the un-

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fortunate wicked man more indifferent to him? Nothing but the inferiority of his worth, and his having deserved his fate. Let us apply this to the blessed and the damned. Suppose the latter, in their wretched state, to have nothing amiable annexed to their mental faculties, and to experience a severe but merited fate, would the compassion of the blessed arise to such a height as to cause a considerable defalcation of their happiness? Would not rather the pain be abundantly compensated by the heightened consciousness of their own perfections?

To this the following replication may be made. If the sum of happiness be not lessened by compassion, this must be proportionably feeble, and the fruit of a slight degree of benevolence. Innumerable instances occur, in which our own pleasures would be perfectly insipid, were they not participated with some beloved object; and we should be insensible of happiness, if this object were irreparably wretched. Frequently, it is true, in contemplating wretchedness, its being deserved, and the want of merit and worth in the sufferer, enfeeble, or even totally suppress our compassion. But it may be questioned; is this just? Is such an indifference founded on truth, and a right view of things? And is it consonant to the exalted and diffusive benevolence of blessed spirits? The christian religion, and the conduct of its divine founder, surely seem not to justify such indifference and hardheartedness against suffering guilt. This religion of love expressly enjoins its followers a sincere and active compassion, in every case of wretchedness, in every case of want, merited or unmerited. Its divine author holds out to us the example of God, who permits his sun to shine upon the righteous and unrighteous, and who sends his rain both to the just and to the unjust; by imitation of such examples shall we prove ourselves children of our common Father, who shews mercy to all his

works. He himself has shewn compassion on the most obdurate sinners; and wept over the blind, the hardened Jerusalem. He has no where set any bounds to the effective compassion of his children with regard to suffering guilt, or to their endeavours to relieve the unhappy, but those which flow from their own inability. Let it not be said, that these notions of compassion and benevolence which the christian religion endeavours to excite and maintain in her followers, respect only our present weakness and imperfection. She will not, whilst conducting and fashioning us to eternal happiness, cherish in our minds notions that would be injurious to us in eternity, and which must be suppressed the moment we enter its confines. Were compassion a weakness, that we must eradicate to attain a higher degree of perfection, the man Christ Jesus, the pattern of divine excellence, would have been exempt from compassion. He unquestionably was capable of estimating most justly the worth of every man: yet still the greatest sinner was sufficiently precious in his eyes to call forth the utmost zeal for his conversion. If the blessed be like him, their benevolence must be as extensive, and their compassion equally embrace every unhappy being. If we trace the source of compassion, we shall find it originate in the similarity of nature, and the similarity of sensation, of creatures suffering what we ourselves should suffer in like circumstances. Similarity of sensation seems to be, if not the sole, yet the prime source of compassion. Where we observe in those who suffer the same feelings as we should experience ourselves, if there be no intervening obstacle, our compassion is naturally excited. It signifies nothing to the point in question what we assume as the efficient means of producing compassion, or what as the final cause of it: it is sufficient for our purpose, that the misery of creatures bearing some affinity to us



us is alone sufficient to produce it. If misery felt by a mind similar to our own excite compassion, and if the greater this misery is the stronger this compassion, in an exalted state of benevolence, must be; the misery of the sufferer being rendered most exquisite by being himself the cause of it, the same circumstance must add poignancy to our sympathizing grief. The opposite apathy seems neither consonant to the design of our Creator, nor founded on truth and a just notion of things. Were the design with which compassion was implanted in us merely this, that we should assist such sufferers only as were so not by their own faults, and leave unassisted all those who had brought their misery on themselves, the far greater number of those who suffered most, who brought on their misery by ignorance, prejudice, or vicious conduct, nay those who after a long series of good and virtuous actions fell into misfortunes from a single error, would have no claim to our compassion or assistance. Should any one fall at the first trial, we must consider it as unjust to put him to further proof, and leave him without pity to the wretchedness he has deserved. The strongest demonstration of an active love, the endeavouring to recover a soul from perdition, would, on this supposition, be repugnant to the design of our Creator. Farther, since nothing is without a cause, we must also admit, that the unhappiness of a man, be he an agent in it or not, must have its cause external to him, must have its efficient cause in the whole series of preceding circumstances, and its final cause in all that ever was or will be. If the universe form one great whole, if all things be dependent on, originate from, and relate to one another, and on this account be what they are, the extreme blindness and obduracy of the miserable is an unhappiness founded on the general connection of things. We must deny this whole connection, make man inde-

pendent of the Almighty Creator and Ruler of the world, ascribe to him a species of omnipotence, by means of which he can produce out of nothing something not founded on the creation, through a volition likewise founded on nothing, or we must subject him to chance, which would in no wise justify our notion of a guilt unworthy compassion. If we admit not these, we must allow, that the most guilty wretch is a sacrifice, and predestined as well to his moral depravity, as to his state of misery. He would not, it is true, be unconditionally predestined to the latter, without respect to the former. But if I ask, why is he miserable? and it be answered, because he was guilty: I shall ask farther, why was he guilty? Whatever efficient causes be assigned for this, they must ultimately arrive at something external to man's moral nature, and cannot be founded on a depravity of this, as I should still go on to inquire into the first cause of this depravity, which could not possibly be explained from itself. If this be true, they, who in their inquiries trace men's actions up to their causes, would ascribe no particular merit to them, were they ever so perfect and happy, and would perceive their imperfect and unhappy fellows not unworthy compassion according to our general ideas of demerit. Such a perception of truth we may easily presume blessed and perfect spirits to possess. Here the sphere of our view is circumscribed. We content ourselves with discovering the proximate causes of vicious actions, that lie in the moral nature of man, confining or extending our benevolence and compassion according to this short-sighted glance. Supposing that we do not clearly see, and so mistake the truth, it is of no small advantage to us, that, in our judgment of human actions, we thus stop at their proximate causes. But were the true philosopher to exercise his compassion preferably towards unfortunate virtue, he must forget,

get, that the virtuous man cannot be truly unfortunate, and thus in a certain degree renounce his philosophy, or he must refuse his effective compassion to the wicked in misery, from having no hopes of being able really to serve him. Still such an one he must ever with justice lament.

In behalf of the eternity of the misery and punishment of those who rebel against the kingdom of God, it may be further alleged, that it is necessary, to confirm the good and happy in their virtue and happiness. The virtue of all finite beings seems to be of such a fragile and unstable nature, as only to be maintained by the exemplary warning of guilty wretchedness, and the terrifying picture of the miseries attending vice. Punishments then are as necessary throughout all eternity, to prevent disorder, rebellion, and the dissemination of pride and wickedness, and to teach vain and arrogant creatures their dependence on God, as they are in this world. If this be the case, it proves the supposition, of a necessary exception to universal good, to be true. Not only to heighten the happiness of the virtuous must some be sacrificed, and condemned to a balance of misery, but to render that happiness generally possible, or at least to maintain and secure it.

To this principle may be opposed the following. Punishments in themselves and immediately make no man virtuous. They can do nothing but restrain the propagation of vice, and impel men to certain external actions, where they would not be attentive or provident enough sufficiently to reflect, and by means of such reflection, and the omission of accustomed pernicious actions which it would produce, enfeeble and destroy their propensity to these; and acquire a promptitude to those, thus ultimately rendering the former disagreeable and the latter agreeable to the mind. They who take warning from the punishment of others, are influenced by fear to avoid

avoid a similar conduct. Those, then, to whom examples of punishment are edifying and necessary, must be still vicious; at least they must have no such inclination to virtue as is founded on a knowledge of its excellence, or a sense of its fitness and beauty. They must as yet have acquired no taste for it. A man practises it not freely, or of his own powers, whilst fear is the sole or strongest link which binds him to it. He is therefore but a child in virtue, a mere beginner, and very imperfect compared with the virtuous man, who is so voluntarily, and from a conviction that virtue is happiness. Now as even in this imperfect state we see examples of virtuous men, who are not so from fear of punishment, but from a real love of goodness, we cannot but suppose, that the virtue of those intelligent beings whom God will reward with eternal bliss must find every thing necessary to secure it, in the perception of their actual happiness, in the remembrance of the lower degree of it which they felt when they were less virtuous, and in the prospect of its ever increasing with their increasing virtue; whence they will need no warning, no image of terror. This view of the case is also expressly propounded in scripture, particularly in those memorable words of the apostle John: *fear is not in love, but perfect love excludes fear. For fear gives pain. But whoso feareth is not perfect in love.* This is what we have been maintaining. Fear can be necessary only to those who have just entered the paths of virtue, to make them overcome the difficulties they will have to encounter on their first steps in this to them unbeaten way, by the prospect of still greater ones that they must meet if they deviate from it, thus countervailing their impatience, and aptitude to be discouraged. But the farther they advance, the less will they need fear, to induce them to proceed steadfastly, and with perseverance. Every difficulty, against which fear was the weapon to be employed,

employed, will diminish: the path will become smooth, and easy to their feet: and they will find it so excellent and agreeable, that pleasure will redouble their speed. Then will they wonder, that those terrifying objects were necessary to impel them to seek their own happiness, and be ashamed of their folly. As soon as we know God and virtue, we cannot but love virtue and God: and in the same degree does fear vanish, for fear is incompatible with a perfect love of God and virtue. As it is our duty in this world to strive after a love that excludes fear, which is by no means unattainable here, we may easily admit, that happy beings so love as to know no fear, or, which is the same thing, that their virtue needs no longer being secured by the warning example of vice in wretchedness. Otherwise, indeed, the virtue of these happy beings must be as feeble, forced, and imperfect, as the probity of a man who could not be restrained from thieving but by the constant spectacle of robbers hanging upon the gibbet before his eyes.

Finally, for the condemnation of a part, may be adduced the experience, that, in this world, the welfare of one man is often founded on the ruin of another, and that the happiness of one is the unhappiness of another. With respect to certain earthly advantages at least, this is true. But as the possession of these does not constitute the proper happiness of man, and as we may be discontented whilst in possession of an abundance of them, and contented under a want of them, if not extreme, no conclusion can be drawn from this experience. A variance or collision may arise between men's inclinations and wishes respecting the goods of fortune, whilst the number of those goods which they covet is so confined, that it is insufficient to satisfy all, and what augments the possessions of one diminishes those of another. But, as experience teaches us, that on which true happiness

ness is founded, is not so scarce, that, like wealth, honour, and power, it can only be participated by a few at the expence of the many. If, as Pope justly observes, health, peace, and competence, alone constitute man's earthly happiness, the happiness of one individual does not require to be purchased at the expence of another. An accurate attention to the frame of men's minds teaches us, that all, notwithstanding the variety of their external circumstances, enjoy a very similar, if not an equal degree of happiness: thus analogy seems to decide against this hypothesis. Surely the benevolence of the most perfect being, the Father of all his creatures, cannot be so circumscribed, as not to embrace all the beings he has created; nor can he be so poor in happiness as to be unable to make all his children happy.

PROP. VI. p. 31. Before the Corollary.

*On the Immateriality of God.*

THE proofs of the immateriality of God here adduced by Hartley are liable to some not unfounded objections; particularly the first. This is derived from the *vis inertiae* as the fundamental property of matter. From this fundamental property is matter merely passive; consequently, the grounds and cause of its motion are not in itself, but in an essence which is not matter. The first position is taken from experience, that all the active powers of matter, as they are termed, presuppose the *vis inertiae*, by means of which alone the exercise of those active powers is possible. In my opinion, this proof is deficient both in strength and perspicuity. Our author has not sufficiently explained what he means by *vis inertiae*.

Is it the power of resisting every motion, or only a certain determinate motion? In the first case only can it be said, that matter is merely passive; not in the last. But then matter never could be properly active, and all its active powers as they are called, which appear to be exerted, would be nothing but immediate impressions of some power of an immaterial essence, and itself would have no power to act, or to resist. For what is resistance but a power acting against another power? And do not passion, and the capability of passion, presuppose a capability of action? We may, therefore, with more justice, term the *vis inertiae* a power of resisting a certain determinate motion. And, indeed, it seems to be nothing but the power of motion itself, which, being always determinate in its exertion, must necessarily resist every other motion which opposes such determinate exertion. Thus the power of resistance is only possible from the power of motion: in other words, the *vis inertiae* is not the first power conceivable of matter. It presupposes the power of moving itself, and is nothing more than a modification of that power. Thus, for example, a stone resists the power that would impress on it an horizontal motion, because it possesses gravity, or a power of moving itself towards the centre of the earth. Now, that this direction of its moving power is the ground of its resistance to that power which would give its motion another direction is evident from this, that its resistance is always proportional to the quantity of its gravity, or the force of its determinate moving power. Thus we must conclude, that, if it exerted no determinate moving power, and indeed possessed no such power, it would exert no resistance; or, in other words, if matter had no active power, it would have no power of being passive. Hence, as we must conceive the point in question, the power of motion must be the first mode of matter, and the power of resistance

resistance the second, since the latter presupposes and includes the former, and since we must absolutely deny all power to matter, unless we grant it an original power of moving itself. Our author, indeed, inverts the proposition; maintaining, that all motion is possible only by presupposing a *vis inertiae*; and that the active party which generates gravitation, magnetism, and the like in the passive one, must have a motion, and a *vis inertiae*, whereby it endeavours to persist in that motion, else it could effect nothing. But motion and *vis inertiae* are here the same thing, so that this amounts to just what I have asserted, namely, that the power, which in one point of view is a moving power, in another, and opposite view, is the power of resistance. If this be so, as long as the original power is exerted in a determinate manner, it must resist every other direction, or the body must persist in the motion begun. But if motion and *vis inertiae* be two different things, no grounds for their distinction are to be found. If a certain determinate motion be once begun, the continuance of that motion requires no new power distinct from the first original one, whereon such motion was founded, and by which it was determined. If this be just, the first argument for the immateriality of God, deduced from the *vis inertiae*, falls to the ground.

The second proof of the immateriality of God from his infinite intelligence presupposes the principle, that a blind unintelligent cause, acting either according to no laws, or to laws contradictory to the effects to be produced, cannot generate intelligent being, much less the highest and most perfect intelligence.

What our author opposes to the difficulty of our conceiving an immaterial essence deserves our attention. We have, indeed, no original ideas, says he, but what are impressed by matter: whence we are led



to conclude, that nothing but matter exists. But as we cannot explain the most ordinary and simple phænomena from our idea of matter, we must either admit an immaterial substance, or else suppose, that matter has some powers and properties different from, and superior to those which appear. But this last supposition is in effect the same as the first, though, on account of the imperfection of language, it seems to be different. Our author here speaks of the origin of our idea of immateriality. It must cost the human mind great efforts to exalt itself to this idea, which is probably the highest flight ever taken by the understanding. This is unquestionably the reason why we find no clear traces of a simple idea of it amongst the ancient philosophers. The discovery of it was the work of modern times, and in all likelihood the fruit of an earnest and continued reflection on the nature of God. Inasmuch as this reflection presupposes an antecedent, rational, and pure idea of God, and it was requisite, that a weighty and important idea of God must first be formed in order to raise man up to this reflection, the enriching of philosophy with the idea of immateriality may be ascribed to the beneficial influence of the christian religion. This obligation would philosophy have to christianity, even though the doctrine of immateriality were not expressly taught in the scriptures; and its being so may at least be questioned, since the first teachers of it, or many of the fathers at least, found not this idea therein, but always formed corporeal notions of God. Our inability to explain the phænomena of nature, and in particular the faculties of mind, from the known and admitted properties of matter, in all probability, led philosophers, who found gross matter insufficient to this explanation, to imagine a more and still more subtile matter, till finding, that, however subtile it were supposed, it would still be matter, and thus incapable of making us comprehend the effects which they

they would willingly have explained, they ultimately denied the existence of all matter, thus at least arriving at a negative idea. Now as the human understanding cannot be satisfied with a mere negative idea, this was advancing nothing more, than that what produces properties and effects, not explicable by or consistent with our ideas of matter, is not matter: but to make this idea affirmative and real we must not only say what it is not, but also determine what it is. As long as we admit, that matter is a reality, we cannot admit its opposite to be a reality also; hence all the realities that we ascribe to an immaterial substance, when for instance we term it a simple thing, are nothing but words of the same meaning as immateriality whereby in effect nothing new is advanced. Of this Leibnitz was aware, and, to extricate himself from the embarrassment, considered matter and extension, as they strike our senses, to be appearances, refusing them the appellation of real substance, and deeming them the result of the action of many substances, which, not being distinguishable by our senses, appeared to them as one, and indeed, as it must be in all such appearances, as a whole, altogether dissimilar to and distinct from its component parts. These component parts, or rather those things which constitute the basis of this appearance, are, according to this theory, not farther compounded, but absolutely simple and indivisible. But as this idea of simple substance is to our conception another negative idea, in order to make it affirmative, he must give it some power, whence it would become real. Now this power which he gave it, was the power of perception, for of every other power it might be said, that it was only an appearance, as matter itself in which the power was supposed, and this would apply perhaps even to the power of motion itself. The simple power of perception alone is not exposed to this application. It can be no appearance,

ance, since an appearance always presupposes a power of perception which represents a thing otherwise than it is, and we must also suppose, that the power of perception in one thing was produced by the power of perception in another, which is absurd. Leibnitz also maintains, that it is easy to explain all the phænomena we admit in matter from this original perceptive power of all its component parts, their various alterations and degrees, their actions and reactions. This theory, indeed, may appear chimerical to those who blindly rely on the testimony and illusion of their senses; and this explanation, advanced by Leibnitz as possible, though not, as far as I know, confirmed, cannot be proposed to the world, were it discovered, as a satisfactory means of filling up the wide chasm between physics and metaphysics, of making out the transition from one to the other, and uniting the two sciences together. Still must this notion be considered at least as an ingenious hypothesis, the impossibility of which is not to be demonstrated, and whereby the idea of immateriality is palpably freed from the objection, that it is merely negative, no true idea, and a word without meaning: it removes the contradiction, that matter and its opposite are both equally realities, and in particular defends and secures the immateriality of God, from the objection, that it admits of no conception. To be aware of what Leibnitz has hereby done, and properly to estimate the value of his hypothesis, we must be acquainted with the difficulty which he sought to remove. That difficulty, as has been observed, consists in this, that since matter is, as far as appears to us, a true and real thing, spirit, or an immaterial thing, being the opposite to it, cannot possibly be true and real, whence all real things, and consequently the most real of all things, God himself, must be matter. But since the idea of God as a self-existent and necessary being absolutely leads

us to the idea of his immutability, and these three ideas are so strictly and inseparably connected, that we must either admit or reject the whole; and since the idea of immutability is in direct contradiction to the idea of a compounded substance, or matter; we must either grant immateriality to the immutable being, or, if we suppose him to be material, we must give up the fundamental notions we have of God, namely, his self-existence, necessity, and immutability, that is, we must reject all rational ideas of him.

Our author seems, in part at least, to grant this, when he says, that to admit an immaterial substance, or to suppose that matter possesses certain powers and properties of a nature different from and superior to those we perceive in it, is the same thing. But if these two suppositions signify the same thing, we must admit, not only that the properties and powers commonly ascribed to matter are unable to afford us the desired explanation, but that it requires such powers and properties as are contradictory to our ideas of matter, and thus not merely undiscoverable by us, but absolutely not to be found in it. This will at least be the case if we would explain the idea of a necessary and self-existent being from the idea of matter, and unite those ideas in our imagination. In such a case we must first admit the mere negative idea of immateriality, and whilst we adhere to this, it must be confessed, that the two suppositions adduced are equivalent. It is the same thing, whether I say: there are substances that are not material, or substances which have powers and properties whereby we may explain what is not comprehensible from our ideas of matter and its powers, or, I must ascribe to matter properties and powers, which are not only of a different nature from those ordinarily admitted, but even of an opposite nature, and not to be conceived of it. If, however, we would go farther, and  
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make the idea of immateriality affirmative, we imperceptibly fall into the Leibnitzian hypothesis of substance and power. We must first in some sort admit, according to our usual mode of thinking, that these different and opposite powers, or rather power (for they may conveniently be reduced to one) exist in some substance, or a subject distinct from the power. But then we should indeed think nothing, since the word immateriality presents to us no real idea, and such a subject is no where to be found. Nothing then remains for us, but to take the power itself for the substance. This is in effect something real, and in it, and no where else, find we what can realise our idea of immateriality. This, in fact, seems to be the natural and immediate road which the human understanding must take, when it would convert immateriality from an empty sound to an actual idea: and if this be the only way by which we can arrive at such an idea, it is certainly a justification of, and argument for the Leibnitzian hypothesis.

## PROP. XI. p. 41.

*On the Wisdom and Goodness of God.*

It is justly remarked by our author, that our ideas of the attributes of God, both of those which are termed natural and those which are termed moral, though they can neither be pure nor complete, are not contradictory to truth and reality. The general ideas, when we separate them as much as possible from all human limitations and imperfection, must in fact be true and real, as far as the human understanding can know and distinguish truth from falsehood. Wisdom and benevolence, for instance, are such ideas, the origin and derivation of which

are clear, which are founded on something actual, have an actual object, and are in some measure more conceivable to us than the ideas of self-existence and infinity, as we have some impression of them, though a faint one, in ourselves. That these ideas do not fully answer to their object will readily be admitted: yet it by no means follows, that we do not see the truth, but that we do not see the whole truth. It by no means follows, that benevolence and goodness in God are different from, and opposite to what we term so in ourselves, whilst in him they are more than we can know or comprehend. That part of those divine attributes which lies hidden from our eyes cannot possibly contradict and annihilate that which we perceive, but we must rather presume, that, could we attain a more extensive view of those attributes, our ideas of them, as far as we have derived them from experience, and the nature of created things; according to the rules of right reason, would indeed be extended, exalted, and rendered more pure, but altogether confirmed in the abstract. Were it possible to suppose, that our imperfect ideas of God's attributes were altogether false and uncertain, so that what we term wisdom and benevolence in man would be by no means wisdom and benevolence in God, all natural religion would be done away, nor could we have the least advantage to hope from revelation. This would deprive us of the touch-stone by which true revelation is to be distinguished from false, it would expose us naked and defenceless to the seduction of artful knaves or fanatic fools, nay it would rob us of the very idea of a God: for what idea could we have of God, if we must not suppose him powerful, wise, and good, in any human sense of the words? Thus he would not be in any sense to us; consequently, with respect to us, he would not exist. The same circumspection we must with justice use, if we would deduce and demonstrate

strate *a priori* our theological suppositions of the attributes of God; a circumspection rendered necessary by our defective knowledge of these attributes, from which we are unable to determine what is suitable to them in particular cases: as just and valid on the contrary must be that proof, which shews the falsity of an idea or a proposition from its evident contradiction to the attributes of God, and our general notions of them. These general notions must absolutely constitute the first principles of theology, and it is our duty to reject whatever is repugnant to them; though it is no less audacious, to attempt to infer *a priori* all that God does, or will do, from these general notions.

The doctrine of Providence, wherein however no little perplexity prevails, and so many useless, and, in some measure, childish distinctions have been introduced, is clearly and concisely laid down by our author. He admits the division into general and particular providence, but explains himself in a way so consonant to the Deity, that particular providence includes no greater or more absolute care of God for its object, but that both general and particular providence are the same act of God, only receiving different appellations from us, according as we conceive it to operate for the good of the whole, or of some particular part, but in effect always producing the greatest good both to the whole, and to each individual part of that whole. When divines speak of the particular providence of God to his children, this distinction cannot be founded on particular actions of God, or, it is not to be understood that God acts towards these in a particular and specific manner; but the whole ground of the distinction must lie in the objects of this particular providence, inasmuch as from their righteous frame they are more capable than others of rejoicing in the general exertions of divine providence, and of embracing and

feeling the influence of God's benevolence. This explanation removes all the superficial objections made to a particular providence.

PROP. XII. p. 45. Before "In like manner."

*On the moral Sense.*

OUR author here refers to what he had said of the moral sense, and its origin, in the former part of his work (Prop. XCIX. vol. I. p. 493.); from which it appears, that this sense may be extremely different and various, more perfect or imperfect, and not seldom greatly corrupted, in different persons, according as all the means of producing it, or only certain particular ones are employed. It is easy to perceive, likewise, that it must be stronger or more feeble, in proportion as a greater or less number of circumstances concur to produce it. From what he has said, too, it is clear, that the moral sense is of itself no precise and sufficient rule of conduct, but must ever remain in a great measure uncertain and indeterminate, unless informed and guided by a rational conception of the attributes, will, and design of the Deity, and a general knowledge of what is just and unjust.

PROP. XIII. p. 48.

*On the Connection between natural and revealed Religion.*

WHAT our author here says of the light and confirmation which natural and revealed religion mutually receive from each other, is so warily and decisively propounded, that it would be difficult to raise any objections to it. Still something further explanatory of the subject may not be superfluous. Natural and  
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revealed religion have unquestionably their particular and independent proofs. The ordinary phænomena of the world, with the frame and course of nature, are the foundations on which are built the arguments for the former: unusual phænomena, deviations from the frame and course of nature, or miracles and true prophecies, constitute the particular proofs of the latter. But we must admit, that the general constitution and occurrences of the world have an invisible intelligent author, before we can infer such an one from unusual occurrences. So far only as the unusual make a stronger impression on mankind than the usual, and a certain blind necessity may be considered as the cause of the latter, with the exclusion of an intelligent author, seem the earliest of the human race to have derived the notion of an invisible supreme being not so much from the wonderful order of the world, and the constant and regular course of nature, as from deviations from them, and unusual appearances, that were either real miracles, or considered by them as such. If we farther reflect, that the discovery of natural religion must have been a task of tedious and uncommon difficulty to the uncultivated understanding of the first race of mankind, if left to itself, particularly when having to infer the unity of God, a discovery that requires a practised mind, it must appear, that the natural religion of the first men was the fruit of unusual or wonderful occurrences, or, as the Biblical records tell us, of more immediate divine revelation. These wonderful occurrences, whether men were brought by them through fear to the notion and belief of an invisible power, or were led to it by a more immediate and particular divine revelation, were, to these unpractised and ignorant reasoners, the true proofs of their natural religion. Inasmuch as the greater part of mankind are at all times incapable of obtaining a knowledge of religion from

ratiocination; and their reason in fact assists them no farther than as it enables them to guess, that the frame of the world must have had a maker, in the same manner as any common piece of mechanism; without disclosing to them any thing precise or determinate respecting his nature, attributes, and designs; revelation; and the announced manifestation of God accompanying it, were the principal, if not the sole foundations both of their natural and revealed religion. In such men it is difficult to distinguish the two, and they are unquestionably indebted to revelation for what may in them be termed natural religion. Thus with respect to the far greater number of mankind, it is not only true, that their natural religion is enlightened and confirmed by revealed religion; but also that the former receives its existence from the latter. Here the words of the apostle; through faith we know, that the world was made by the word of God, have their full force.

Even when we consider the thinking part of mankind, it is not to be disputed, that the natural religion with which they are acquainted is much indebted to revelation. That the human understanding was so early aware of the unity of God, is certainly to be ascribed to divine information, as it is so difficult for enlightened reason to discover a particular and decisive demonstration of it. If we imagine to ourselves all the ways and methods whereby man could arrive at the notion of a Deity, it must appear to us most probable, that, in the beginning, and before his reason had attained a certain dexterity, he believed a plurality of Gods: and this conjecture is confirmed by the general history of the remotest times. But besides this, revelation has not only given men more pure, worthy, and perfect ideas of the attributes of God, than prevailed amongst the most enlightened men at the time of its being promulgated, but it has also, and particularly

particularly christianity, which has made the notion and belief of a God far more important to mankind than it had ever before appeared, impelled their minds to contemplate this exalted subject, and to employ all their combined faculties in this contemplation. Hence it naturally follows, that reason has acquired a more extensive, just, and adequate knowledge of the nature, attributes, and designs of God, by a reflection thus excited and invigorated, than it ever before possessed.

Whilst, however, we acknowledge this service done to natural religion by revelation, we must not forget the benefits and advantages accruing to revealed from pure natural religion, and truths established by reason. The light and confirmation derived to the former from the latter may, perhaps not improperly, be thus displayed. Let us suppose, that a code of laws, in every respect as perfect as possible, was given by an intelligent and benevolent philosopher to an ignorant and uncultivated people. On the promulgation of it, the wisest heads amongst this people, who hitherto had formed no ideas of justice and injustice, or at least very slight and imperfect ones, and had framed no system of the laws of nature, awaking as it were from a long slumber, would first be led to study those laws, investigate their principles, and reflect on justice and injustice in general. They would at length discover by reflection and reasoning, that they could attain proofs for the excellence of these laws, independent of all respect for their author, which they at first learnt only from the code itself, and took upon trust in him who framed it. Let us also suppose, that the words of this code, however full and careful the instructions for guiding the people in the path of justice might be, were, through lapse of time and change of circumstances, become doubtful, less clear, and liable to be misunderstood; philosophy, and the law  
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of nature, first learnt by means of this code, would render the most needful and solid service in explaining obscure and disputed expressions of the law, making a just application of general laws to particular cases, and defeating the mistakes of ignorance or misapplications of superstition. There is nothing absurd in supposing, that, whilst the positive law was first made known to supply the complete want or imperfection of a rational natural law, still, when reason had been thereby formed and assisted in the discovery and knowledge of the natural law, this reason, and the knowledge it had acquired, could and must greatly contribute to explain and confirm the positive law. This, I say, is by no means contradictory. It is actually the case in all civilized nations. In such states the general law of nature is insufficient to maintain rectitude of conduct amongst their members. Positive laws are necessary, applicable to each particular state, and the peculiar circumstances of its people. Yet these laws and ordinances can never be so clear and perfect, but that it will become requisite to ascertain their meaning, to apply them in certain cases according to the principles of reason, and sometimes to have recourse to the general expression of the law of nature. Thus, I believe, is it with natural and revealed religion.

For the thinking part of mankind, wonders and prophecies, considered in themselves, are more astonishing than convincing. The power of convincing us of their divine origin will not, indeed, be denied to these peculiar proofs of revelation; they will rather be considered as deserving a sufficient and necessary confirmation. But it will still be thought requisite to a complete and firm assurance of the truth, that the doctrines and tidings which they are intended to confirm bear themselves the seal of truth, and the stamp of the Deity. Even the virtuous character of him who delivers these tidings and  
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doctrines will not render these internal evidences of their truth superfluous: for virtue is not a security against error and self-deception, though it is a presumptive proof of the truth of its doctrines. Thus it seems, thinking people cannot easily attain a confident assurance without having themselves examined and approved the doctrines of revelation. But they can no otherwise prove the decrees of revelation, than by comparing them with that knowledge of God which they derive from reason. So far all revelation requires to be confirmed by natural religion. But since the doctrines of the latter appear to be not sufficiently clear and evident to the greatest part of those who consider them, as they leave doubts and perplexities in their minds, it seems to be the office and benefit of revelation, to confirm and more clearly ascertain the doctrines common to them both by its own peculiar and sufficient proofs, and to bring the mind, disturbed by doubts, to a peaceful assurance in the truth, by the united means of a solid rational faith and its own light and conviction. And the more these two means mutually assist each other, the stronger will their united effects operate to produce peace and confidence.

## PROP. XV. p. 56.

*On Free-Will.*

ARGUMENTS favouring the mechanism of the human mind have already been adduced by our author, in the conclusion of the first part (vol. I. p. 501—3). But the opponents of the free-will defended there, and in Prop. XIV. of this part, will argue from experience, that man possesses another kind of free-will, termed philosophical by Hartley. They say: we feel that we can act differently from the manner

in which we do act, and this feeling is the highest and most incontrovertible proof of it. To this Hartley with justice replies, that in all important actions of our lives, if we attend to our motives, and those motives be of sufficient weight, we in effect find, that they were not to be resisted, and consequently have a directly opposite feeling. These two points, however, deserve to be more strictly considered.\* Man, as having a sentiment of free-will, may be considered in a three-fold point of view: whilst he is choosing; when he chooses; and after he has chosen. To judge properly of the sentiment we speak of, these three states or points of time must be accurately distinguished. In the first state, whilst a man has not at all or but slightly considered and compared the grounds of his choice, having only taken a view of them in the gross, he knows not himself what motives will determine him, or to which side he shall incline. Whilst he is in this state, and his mind is occupied in considering and weighing the motives that offer, he must deem a certain action and its opposite equally possible for him to perform, like as a balance, which has yet no weight in either scale and vibrates up and down, may be made to incline to either side, according to our precedent judgment. In this state a man has no doubt the sentiment of free-will, since in these circumstances he can choose one of two different and opposite things: but he has it only because he still hesitates, and is not yet determined. He will determine, however; and this is the state or period of choice. He has now weighed the motives, as far as was suitable to his circumstances, and his mind has received a sufficient weight to occasion a preponderance. In this

\* See the *Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek*, Band XII. Stück 2. S. 304. We have here made use of the remarks there offered, in order to elucidate the point in question.

state he is perfectly conscious of the motives that determine him, or he is not. If the former, he feels (and to this Hartley refers) that he cannot resist the grounds of his choice, and is aware of the power that rules his determination. But if he be clearly conscious of no motive, he asks whether he be, notwithstanding, determined by a motive, or there be in that case no motive, and he were determined without ground or cause, and by chance. If the latter be not admitted, and it cannot be denied, that, as strict attention in many instances informs us, inclination, desire, passion, and affection, so far as they are operations of the mind, are compounded of a number of not sufficiently distinguished, and consequently not clearly noted, perceptions of good and evil, and that in many cases, on calm and attentive deliberation, they admit of being decomposed and resolved into these unnoticed perceptions as into so many constituent parts; we ought not from a want of clearly perceived motives to infer an absence of perceptions however obscure. Philosophical free-will as it is called, would gain but a very poor advantage, were its existence defensible only in cases where man acts not from rational principles, but from lust and passion, and without clearly knowing wherefore. Besides, a blind chance, by which man is determined, must be admitted, instead of the proper motives and impulses of the will, that are denied. But this is not attributing to him an original power of determining himself to opposite things without any grounds. Even this power is chance, whilst its determination to A or not A, at the same time, and under exactly the same circumstances, is equally possible. And this is a power which man finds not in himself in the most important actions of his life, if he act with reason and deliberation.

If man, then, though he be not clearly conscious of his motives at the moment of choice, be determined

mined by them, which we cannot deny, he actually feels the internal impulse of desire and passion. But this state endures not long, and is already vanished when we begin seriously to deliberate on our choice and determination. Desire and passion have then lost their force, and in this state a man imagines, that he might have rejected that to which he was impelled by them, as he now feels himself capable of rejecting it. He confounds the state of his mind after having chosen with the state of it at the moment of choice, and from confounding these two very different states alone arises the imaginary sentiment of free-will, or this false conclusion from a true sensation. Let him be again placed in that state of desire and passion, his sentiment of free-will again vanishes at once. If a man be determined in his choice by motives which he clearly conceives, he will feel the necessity of it afterwards, whenever he reflects on those motives; and he will fancy, that he could have chosen otherwise only when he is not sufficiently attentive to all the circumstances which acted upon his mind. How often do we say, when we calmly reflect on some important determination made with mature deliberation, that we could not have chosen otherwise, and should still make the same choice were we again to deliberate! In this case, we have not the least sentiment of free-will, even after the choice. We only find it when the state of our mind after the choice obviously differs from what it was during the choice, or when the motives which determined it are not present to it on its investigation, and from their nature, having consisted of a crowd of obscure and unobservable perceptions, which were effaced without leaving any traces behind them, cannot be recalled to remembrance. When the mind chooses otherwise than it had formerly chosen, it retracts its choice, and repents of its former determination. For repentance is nothing more than a retraction of our judgment



judgment with respect to a certain decision, which, after having taken place, is again examined as if it were yet to do. If a man still made the same choice, repentance would be impossible. This is the case when a man is determined by perceptions that are perfectly clear, or at least nearly so. For these clear perceptions, on mature reflection on the choice, present themselves to the mind by means of the memory, so that its state will be the same as when it was determined to the choice. But if the determination followed the impulse of desire and passion, the force with which desire and passion acted on the mind is wanting on calm reflection. We then find, that our present clear perceptions determine us to very different resolves, and we feel a want of motives to those to which we were impelled by desire. The mind may be compared to the most sensible balance that can be conceived. Let the motives that are clearly perceived be considered as the weights, and the obscure ones as the dust that has settled on them, or in the scale. This dust will give a preponderancy to one side, not to be explained from the weights themselves. But the dust is blown away, we examine the balance again, and find a different result. If we had not before noticed the dust, we cannot conceive how such a difference could arise in the same balance, and with the same weights. So is it with the mind when it first determines from passion, or obscure perceptions, and afterwards from clear ones. Hence it is obvious, that the before-mentioned sentiment of free-will is capable of being explained by the system of mechanism or necessity, and consequently cannot be deemed an objection to that system. From the sentiment of repentance alone may all kinds and degrees of it be explained from and ingrafted on it. Repentance is, as has been observed, nothing but the retraction of our judgment relative to a certain action, or a contrasting  
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of the states of the mind during and after choice. As often as such a contrast takes place, if clear perceptions succeed to obscure ones, or the latter to the former, with respect to a certain determination, repentance must ensue: hence a man may repent of a good action, as well as a bad one.

It is worth while to inquire how the different modifications of repentance may be explained on the system of necessity, and the idea here advanced. I shall first observe, that this idea is confirmed by the frame of mind of those who are more or less subject to repent of their determinations. There are men who feel no repentance, or at least a very slight and transient one, even for the greatest misconduct. These are they in whom the state or situation of the mind, which determined them to their vicious actions, is so firm and predominant, as not to change for a state of better and more clear perceptions. The mind may have acquired no precise ideas of justice and injustice, virtue and vice, from want of moral instructions; or, from long habits of wickedness, it may have obtained such a carelessness and indifference, that a man may at length voluntarily suppress his moral ideas, constantly keep up the intoxication of the passions, never awake to a sober deliberation on the consequences of his determinations, and be totally incapable of attentively looking forwards to the future. In such a state of insensibility the mind finds itself a savage voluptuous sultan, whom a Voltaire\* would consider as a happy man, because finding a kind of undisturbed pleasure in the unbounded satisfaction of his brutal lusts. The complete want of moral principles, a deeply rooted prejudice that he is but the slave of a superior being, and a brutal confinement of his views to the present, secure him from the pangs of repentance, and, as far as libera-

\* See the article *Happiness* in the *Dictionnaire Encyclopedique*.

tion from the scourge of that fury can give happiness, make him happy. The reverse of this man is he who with a warm constitution, headstrong passions, and impetuous desires, is capable of reflection, possesses just principles and a not unpractised moral sense, can be guilty of a bad action, yet not abandoned, as a David for instance, can obscure though not efface better impressions when actuated by wild desires, and can suppress the fear of God and love of his neighbour for a time, though not for ever. The strong contrasts in such a mind, with the ebbs and flows of passion alternating in it continually, explain to us how repentance in all its various degrees, from the slightest disturbance to the most exquisite torture, must be strikingly displayed in it, though not arrived at the highest pitch of wickedness. That all the repugnant feelings which accompany the rejection of a determination, as shame, remorse, self-condemnation and despair, are nothing but repentance in a higher degree, and variously modified, is evident, because the rejection of a determination from a change in the state of the mind, and a displeasure founded thereon, are common to them all. According to our principles, - repentance must be stronger or weaker in proportion as the state of the mind during its choice differs more or less from its state afterwards. And this is in effect the case. The more strongly a man desires or abhors a thing, which, after having changed his frame of mind, he perceives he ought not to have desired or abhorred, and the more clearly and certainly he perceives this, the greater the contrast between the two states of his soul, the more striking his variance with himself, and the more forcible his repentance. The discontent that arises from such a variance with himself is ordinarily very complicated, and the different circumstances wherein the agent finds himself, with the manifold consequences ensuing, partly pre-  
Vol. III. M m conceived,

conceived, partly not, may variously alter, magnify, or diminish the regret of having embraced a certain determination. But it originally arises from our variance with ourselves, which of itself causes in us an unpleasant sensation, of the same nature as that we experience when our judgment is contradicted, or our conduct blamed by others. This is always painful; and the more so, the more we value the judgment of him who contradicts us. Nothing, then, can be more displeasing to us, than our not agreeing with ourselves, and being obliged to withdraw our own approbation, which always implies the want of that of every other person. When, however, besides this, we perceive a present or future embarrassment as the consequence of our repented determination, the original displeasing sensation above-mentioned is thereby augmented; and it is increased in proportion as this consequence is more or less unpleasant, as we perceive more or less clearly, that it arises from our precipitate resolve, and we are more or less convinced of its being inevitable. If the determination we reject should have no remarkable consequences that we can perceive, the pain of repentance will be scarcely observable. But, if we attend to it, we shall find, that it is not totally effaced, even when a resolve grounded on a judgment which we afterwards perceive to have been erroneous is accidentally productive of advantage to us. In this a secret impression prevails. The advantageous consequences which ensue may lessen it, but they cannot wholly suppress it, or remove a sense of shame at our unmerited fortune. This seems to me a clear proof, that the original pain of repentance, and its primitive source, spring from that variance we are in with ourselves when we repent of a thing. Repentance sometimes assumes the form of a sorrowful, at others of a shameful feeling. The latter happens when the judgment we reprobate seems to indicate

indicate a weakness of understanding, and when we remember, that we fancied our choice the result of prudent and cautious deliberation. The sentiment we feel is afflictive, when the determination we repent of appears unfriendly, unkind, or ungrateful to those who wish us well. Repentance rises to remorse, when our maturer judgment discovers in our former resolve any great and irreparable injury to others, and reprobates it for this reason. It becomes self-condemnation, when we perceive near and inevitable a threatened punishment, which we before knew, but which at the moment of our unhappy determination was overlooked and unheeded. Finally, it is despair, when our whole happiness appears to be irrevocably destroyed by the action of which we repent.

I cannot quit the subject without endeavouring to remove a plausible objection, to which the preceding explanation of repentance seems to be exposed. It may be said, if the sentiment of free-will arise from the alternation of two different and opposite states of the mind, repentance, depending on the same, would be no better founded. The dissatisfaction, accompanying it would also arise from a self-deception, and must consequently vanish as soon as we discover, that when we embraced the resolve of which we repent we were otherwise determined by the state of our mind at that time, than we are by the present. It appears too, that an adherent to the system of necessity, if he remain true to his creed, must set himself above repentance, and be able to philosophize away at will every painful sensation accompanying it. This objection takes for granted, that we can approve or disapprove, or feel satisfaction or dissatisfaction, at nothing, whether done by ourselves or others, unless what might have remained undone in exactly the same circumstances. If this were true, it would be self-evident, that neither self-approbation nor disapprobation, a good conscience nor repentance,

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would be compatible with the system of necessity. But this is merely a *gratis dictum*. Experience, and the slightest attention to ourselves, teach us, in the first place, that every thing which is beneficial, or which excites pleasing sensations, is agreeable to us, and that every thing injurious, or which excites unpleasing sensations, is disagreeable to us; and this, indeed, of themselves, without the conception or consciousness of an absolute free agency being necessarily required, to make the one agreeable, and the other disagreeable. Whence it happens, that the profitableness or injuriousness of the actions of intelligent beings please or displease us in a particular manner, I shall hereafter have occasion to explain. Besides, every contradiction is of itself repugnant and unpleasant to us. Thus when I am convinced, that he who contradicts my opinion, or blames my conduct, sees the case on an opposite side, to that on which I view it, still his contradiction or blame give me pain, and indeed the more in proportion as I esteem his approbation and value him more highly. If his approval be indispensable to my satisfaction, and it be not possible for me to bring him over to my way of thinking, in order to obtain it, and avoid the pain arising from his opposition, I shall alter my conduct conformably to his judgment. Suppose a man unable to solve a certain proposition by a given time, notwithstanding he spares no labour or exertion, and thus fail of obtaining a prize offered for its solution, yet, when it is too late, discover that on which he before bestowed so much trouble in vain. Though he cannot impute to himself the least blame for the tardiness of his discovery, would he not be dissatisfied with himself, or at least wish that he had made his discovery earlier? Now this wish really includes the pain of repentance, and is not essentially different from that which follows a bad or imprudent action, though with respect to degree, and on account of concomitant

concomitant circumstances, they are indeed distinguishable. After an inconsiderate, precipitate, and unsuccessful action, though we may feel nothing of what is termed guilt, still we fail not to wish, that we had before possessed the just notions that we now have, and had left the action unattempted. We must actually become indifferent to our perfection or imperfection, happiness or unhappiness, when the subsequent discovery of an unwise, rash, or injurious resolve, however impossible it may have been for us to have avoided it, does not excite in us dissatisfaction. The most subtle reasoning would be as little able to exempt us from this dissatisfaction, as from the sense of our littleness and imperfection.

To set this in a clearer light, I will add a few remarks. First, he who would suppress repentance from the principle, that man acts from necessity, must also admit, that his actions make him neither more imperfect nor more unhappy, and draw after them neither natural nor positive punishments. He must also, indeed, in order to efface the dissatisfaction of repentance, but half admit the system of necessity; so far only as it does away our guilt; rejecting it so far as it renders our sufferings necessary. As soon as we learn by incontestable experience, that all our actions, notwithstanding the necessity by which they are impelled, are profitable or injurious to ourselves and others, the pleasure of satisfaction on the discovery of their utility, and the pain of dissatisfaction, or repentance, at perceiving their hurtfulness, cannot but ensue. Even positive punishments, since they are nothing more than salutary medicaments, or necessary means of instruction, are neither unjust nor useless, but are rather good, as they are necessary.

Secondly; To feel that repentance which is not only consistent with, but even requisite to the system of necessity, when completely considered, a man must know, that injustice and sin are injustice and sin

by reason that they are in general detrimental, or the natural cause of misery, and that they are forbidden to us under the denunciation of punishment, to restrain us from an evil more great than that punishment, and which would necessarily follow those actions that are forbidden. If a man be convinced of this, he will perceive as little injustice in the evils consequent to those bad actions, as in a chirurgical operation, which, however painful, is necessary to preserve life. If a man have brought it upon himself by a voluntary determination, he will repent the rash step which rendered the remedy necessary, or wish that he had not done it, and steadfastly resolve never to act in the same manner if he should be in similar circumstances. This repentance will take place, whether we be conscious or not, that under our former circumstances we were necessarily impelled to perceive and think as we then did. The painful sensation we feel forces the wish not to have committed the rash deed, or not to have been determined to it: and as little as the most subtle reasoning can avail to annihilate the former, as little can it to suppress the wish which may be termed the second part of repentance. But the better resolution is so far from being excluded or rendered absurd by the system of necessity, as rather to be from it alone rational and salutary; since, on the presumption of chance, that is, the supposition of the free-will of indifferency, neither of the two would take place. The more steadfastly I resolve never to make a determination which I discover to be pernicious, in a future similar situation, the less can exactly similar circumstances hereafter recur to me: for though my future situation may be in every other respect similar, still the traces of the repentance I felt, and the better resolution I formed, remaining in my mind, will occasion so notable a difference, that I may dare to hope never again to be determined to a similar folly  
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in the hour of trial. I have styled the resolution of amendment the second part of repentance: with respect to its utility it might also be termed the most noble and important. Though from the presupposed necessity of human actions, it might be doubted, whether it be reasonable or not, to be dissatisfied with the performance of bad actions, still it is without dispute most highly reasonable, so far to disapprove of past evil deeds, as steadfastly to resolve to amend our conduct, since, even on the system of necessity, this sentiment of disapprobation, and the resolution inseparable from it, must have a salutary influence on our future behaviour, or tend to produce a state of mind different from that which determined us to go astray. From this mode of viewing the subject, it appears, that the dissatisfaction essential to repentance is only valuable so far as it conduces to confirm our resolutions of amendment, and engrave them more deeply on the mind. Now since the dissatisfaction of repentance is requisite to this good purpose, he who sees the truth completely, and comprehends the system of necessity in its whole extent, far from suppressing the pain of repentance, even were it in his power so to do, would endeavour to maintain it in its full force. He would apply it, however, wholly to the advantage of the future. To confine himself to the painful sensation of lamenting his misconduct, without casting an eye forwards to the future, and to continue without ceasing in fruitless sorrow for what is past, would be as little consonant to his system as to reason.

Thirdly; Repentance is two-fold. There is an enlightened, rational repentance, arising from the knowledge that we have mistaken and neglected our real advantage. To creatures so weak as men it is a spur to make them advance with more speed in the road to perfection, and at the same time a bridle to prevent their going astray. The pain con-

ned with this repentance punishes our follies only so far as is necessary to cure us of them, afflicts us only that we may rejoice, and depresses only to exalt us. Of a similar nature with that godly sorrow, which, as St. Paul observes, brings forth a repentance meet for salvation, and which no one can rue, this pain can never be deemed unfounded, useless, or prejudicial, but approves itself necessary and advantageous on the strictest examination of every true system of philosophy, founded on experience and observation, not on the chimeras of inventive fancy. This repentance is not only consistent with the scheme of necessity, but derives all its value from it. There is, however, a blind repentance, produced by an obscure sentiment of an arbitrary and wholly unconditional free-will, and supported by erroneous conceptions of merited vengeance. It occupies itself altogether with what has happened, and should not have happened. It takes vengeance in a proper sense in vain, and punishes the offender merely to give him pain. It terminates in moral stupefaction and despair, and like that physical melancholy which arises from the irretrievable loss of some apparent good, ultimately produces death. This repentance is by no means defensible on the system of necessity. But were this species of it, with the punishment it inflicts, totally rejected as absurd, irrational, and useless, neither virtue nor humanity would, in my opinion, be losers by it.

It appears, that the system of necessity explains both the sentiment of free-will, and that of repentance, and indeed in such a manner, that the explanation serves to confirm the system itself: but on the opposite system of chance, we cannot comprehend whence repentance arises, or what end it answers. We comprehend not whence it arises, since the sole ground of repentance of an action according to this system, namely its falling out unfortunately, is not  
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the true and proper ground of that sentiment: for we frequently find very unpleasant consequences follow an action which we cannot repent of, but must approve. This is the case, when, having acted conformably to all the knowledge we had of the object of our choice, and with the greatest circumspection, we, on a subsequent examination of this action, pass the same judgment as before, and must ascribe the unforeseen misfortune which ensues to some circumstances concealed from us, and which could have no influence on our determination. Neither do the ill consequences of our determination lead us to repentance, when we have clearly foreseen them, yet nevertheless esteem the performance of the action the greater good. So is it with self-approbation after any action. This is not properly founded on its happy consequences, but on the circumstance, that on a subsequent investigation of our motives we would determine in the very same manner as we had before done. Thus as the circumstance, that what we have chosen turns out lucky or unlucky, does not constitute the essential and principal point of self-approbation, or repentance, though both these sentiments are capable of being heightened and differently modified thereby, they who defend the freedom of indifferency must suppose some other connection and relation of approbation and repentance with the action that is approved or repented of, if the action be really connected with the repentance or approbation that ensue. In this case there must be some circumstance in the action itself which causes approbation or repentance. If, however, a man have chosen from chance, or a blind arbitrary determination, there is no circumstance discoverable in such a choice on which repentance can be founded, unless perhaps, that he should not have chosen from chance, or such a blind volition. But as this very circumstance, according to the ideas of our philosophers, constitutes the essence of free

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free-will, and if no free choice can any other way be exercised, it is impossible, that this can be the source of repentance, as in that case every free choice must be repented of. We must also farther suppose, that, as the free choice or determination is made without a sufficient cause, the approbation or repentance of this determination is equally a free action of the mind, which, like the choice on which it is founded, is produced without a sufficient cause, that is by chance or a blind volition. In this case it is just as incomprehensible why a man has formed a certain resolution, as why he approves or repents of his resolve. Unable as the system of free-will is to explain the occasional cause of approbation or repentance, equally incapable is it of explaining the final causes of those sentiments. If an action be really connected with the repentance or approbation felt after it, and the one be capable of being explained from the other, the state of the mind after the choice from the state of the mind during the choice, as an effect from its cause, or as a thing grounded on something from that on which it is grounded, according to certain psychological laws, then the subsequent state of the mind will be connected with its future state, when it has to choose again, and be so dependent on it, that its present sensation of approval or repentance must have a necessary and profitable influence on its future determinations. This is the final cause or utility of those sensations on the scheme of necessity. But the freedom of indifferency destroys this latter connection, or that of repentance or approbation with our future resolves, and consequently this final cause or advantage of them, completely, or at least in the degree in which a man possesses and exercises this freedom. Every thing that happens as a consequence of them is unfounded, fruitless, and totally incomprehensible.

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Some philosophers, to avoid these consequences of the freedom of indifferency, which they have acknowledged to be a preference to act irrationally, and at the same time not daring to admit the freedom of necessity, against which they were so prejudiced, have endeavoured to find a middle point between the two, or a freedom neither completely determinate nor indeterminate. According to their notion, man's freedom consists in the faculty of suspending choice, and, by proposing an over-balancing good, of remaining undetermined, reflecting on the case, and weighing its advantages and disadvantages against each other still farther; a faculty which is properly an original power of his own, as it requires no external cause for its use or disuse. It is easy to be shewn, however, that this is no other in fact than the rejected freedom of indifferency, only somewhat otherwise expressed. According to this middle kind of freedom, man possesses a faculty of resisting his strongest motives, and equally possesses it not; he has it only for a time. Under the very same circumstances choice is protracted, or expedited. But why is the choice finally determined? why not procrastinated still longer? and why is not a man undecided to all eternity? If it be said, the motives, and their adequacy to his understanding, make him ultimately determine, we fall into the system of necessity: for this is what the partisans of that system maintain. But this is not the meaning. Rather all the circumstances are completely the same whilst the choice is protracted, and when it is concluded. No alteration has taken place, either in the motives, or in their adequacy to the understanding: no new motives have been added to make the former more clear, lively, or perspicuous to the mind. Otherwise these alterations would be the occasional causes of determining the protracted choice. Thus nothing else remains, and the conclusion of the choice must depend

depend on an original power, the use or neglect of which is founded on nothing else, and is consequently altogether incomprehensible. The two opposite things, my now determining, or leaving myself more time for reflection, my being precipitate, or considering maturely, have no grounds, and thus happen from chance or a blind arbitrary will, according to the ideas we have of those words, exactly in the same manner as, according to the dreams of Epicurus, regular bodies and a world sprung from the fortuitous concourse and union of atoms. This also occurs in and characterizes the freedom of indifference. But it is evident, that, in whatever this chance or blind will be placed, it amounts to the same thing in effect, whether it be said, that a man can by means of his free-will resist his strongest motives, at the moment when they are to him the strongest, or that he can protract or accelerate his choice without any cause, that is, whilst the whole issue and consequence of the choice depends on this, that he can fortify what motives he chooses, and make them his proper incentives to action, according to a blind arbitrary will.

From this view of the case it is clear with how much reason Hartley considers it a mere *gratis dictum* to say, that the freedom of indifference is so essential to man, that God, in creating him, must have made it innate to him. If it be essential to man, an intelligent creature capable of happiness without it is inconceivable. But who would assert this? Who cannot at least have a clear conception of an intelligent creature, whose will is always determined by a sufficient cause, and according to certain immutable laws? What is there in this contradictory to the happiness of an intelligent being, and to reason, that is, to the faculty of having clear ideas of the qualities and habitudes of things, and acting from those clear ideas? Nay more, since all the phenomena of the human

human mind may be comprehensibly explained on the scheme of such a mechanism, it is impossible, that the reverse of it can be essential to man. To this we may add, that this freedom, termed essential to man, is incomprehensible, introduces somewhat into man's nature, to which there is nothing in any other part of nature similar or analogous, and in effect, let a man turn it what way he will, establishes the doctrine of chance. But what if with this mechanism man become nothing more than a machine, or at most an intelligent machine? What if this destroy all distinction betwixt moral good and evil, or indeed all morality? And what if it render God the author of evil? These are the fearful objections usually brought against mechanism; but were they well founded, they would by no means prove, that the freedom of indifference is essential to man.

The mind, it is said, would be a machine, were its actions necessary. This is an *argumentum ad invidiam* as it is called. It tends not to refute necessity, but to render it odious. Nothing in the human mind is altered thereby. It retains its essential excellencies, the faculty of thinking rationally, of acting, and of being happy. Whether it be termed a machine or not, whilst it retains those excellencies, is a matter of indifference. Leibnitz hesitates not to style it *automa spirituale*, and if his scholars have avoided using the odious appellation of a machine, it was that they might not incur the evil report of the unlearned, or be treated as heretics by ignorant judges. They could not venture freely to avow it, whilst it was believed, that mechanism would destroy all imputation of moral good or evil to men's actions, and partly too, they had not sufficiently clear ideas of the matter, to be capable of shewing how little foundation there was for this belief. What has since been said by others, however, in explanation and justification of the system of necessity, and especially

especially by our author, will perfectly exculpate the partisans of that system from the odious consequences laid to its charge.

Hartley's inquiries into this proposition throw great light on it. Nothing conduces more to clear up the erroneous controversies which have been started on free-will, than the just remark, that the disputants have used a double language, one philosophical, the other popular; and that all the perplexities that have arisen on the subject sprung from confounding these two languages. I have nothing to add to this, except a few words in explanation of that important proposition: *that moral good and evil are nothing but modifications or appearances of natural good and evil.* It is difficult not to be of this opinion, as soon as we place the essence and characteristic of moral good and evil in this, that the former is the ground of satisfaction, order and happiness, and the latter, of dissatisfaction, disorder and misery, that is, of natural good and evil. But can the essence of moral good and evil be otherwise defined in an intelligible and comprehensible manner? Does any thing else, commonly given as a distinction of good and evil, go so far to establish the proper beauty of virtue, the hatefulnes of vice, and the limits between the two, in so clear and precise a manner, as the tendency of the one to misery, and the other to happiness? Is not every other characteristic of moral good and evil capable, in effect, of being traced up to, and explained by this essential distinction? And, finally, what can be opposed to the sophisms of those who would deny the distinction betwixt virtue and vice of more weight than this, that they must equally deny the distinction betwixt content and discontent, happiness and misery? If it be admitted, that the actions of man are only good or bad as far as they are the grounds of natural good and evil, it is easy to shew, that what is properly real in and  
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essential to these actions is in effect natural good or evil, which they include, and to which they tend. But as the actions of men tend to and promote these in manifold ways, and, as our author observes, compound and modify them in various manners, the result of this modification is an appearance to those who know not to distinguish what is properly the ground of this result, and whence it arises. And this must be an appearance to them, whilst they have not the tendency of the action they judge of constantly in sight, inspect not its whole connection, and decide not from these, but from their own narrow sphere of view; just as colour is to us an appearance, whilst we cannot distinguish the primitive component parts of bodies from which that appearance arises. As little as our perceptions of colour resemble those of a superior being endowed with less circumscribed faculties, as little would moral good and evil appear the same to such a being, or at least to the Supreme Being, who sees every thing clearly, as to us. He would discover in men's actions nothing farther than their tendency to natural good and evil, without commixture of those secondary ideas of moral ugliness and beauty, which, founded on our narrow faculty of conception, is to us relatively good and useful, but neither to a being that penetrates the essence of things.

To this view of the question it might be objected that the moral characteristics of actions, the praise and approbation which we bestow on some, and the blame and abhorrence which we express to others, thus lose their proper signification, force, and value; and likewise, that the moral sensations of the beauty and fitness of virtue, and the ugliness and hatefulness of vice, are by this hypothesis rendered insignificant and inefficacious. Farther, a solution of the following difficulty might be required. Why are our moral distinctions and perceptions of good and evil founded  
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only on that physical good or evil which is occasioned and modified by the voluntary actions of men, or rather on those actions alone, and not on any other kind of physical good or evil? Why feel we not the same sensations of abhorrence and indignation when a man is killed by the falling of a tree, as when his death is occasioned by a blow from an enemy? The physical evil is in both cases equal: if this alone then be the real ground of our feelings, it is not conceivable whence the great difference betwixt our sensations and judgment in the two cases can arise. It would be easy for me to extricate myself from this dilemma, were I, with a certain English philosopher to have recourse to final causes. I need only say, in the one case these feelings are necessary and useful, in the other not. But this is not removing the difficulty; it serves at most to shew, that it must be so. Neither does it satisfy me, to ascribe the origin of the moral sense, so far as it arises from something else than the natural good or evil which an action tends to or includes, to laws, education, or instruction. For not to mention, that all these dispositions can introduce no perceptions into the human mind, but what are founded on its frame and confined faculties, the difficulty is only put off a step farther, and we must still inquire, how did the human understanding first arrive at these moral distinctions? This question demands an answer: and if a clear answer can be given, not only compatible with the proposition, but deducible from it, a new proof of its validity arises from the very objection.

I will endeavour to explain the subject from the nature of appearances. This, indeed, cannot be done without some seeming subtilties, whence I can scarce hope, that the investigation will suit the taste of all my readers. I cannot, however, but deem it necessary, as it may lead us to such important consequences.

The more various the parts of which any subject of our observation is composed, and the less able we are to perceive those parts separately, or distinguish which and how many of them contribute to the result of the whole, the less will our observation disclose to us the actual state of that whole, as it consists of its several parts, and through each of them effects a particular action on us, or the less objective truth will there be in our perceptions. As every thing we perceive, every thing rendered by perception an object of thought, is compounded, and includes a multifariousness of which the senses can distinguish little or nothing, it is highly probable, that we perceive nothing, and, whilst we confine ourselves to mere perceptions, think of nothing, in the strictest sense, actually as it is: but that we must content ourselves with the appearances of things, which are wide of or approach the truth, according as our minds more or less minutely comprehend the multiplied diversity of their composition at one view. Hence it follows, that a particular object, when united in our conceptions with one or more adventitious circumstances, and thus compounded becomes to us another more or less accurate appearance, that is, in one way or other, more or less departing from the objective truth. The more ingredients a made dish or medicine is composed of, the more difficult is it for us to ascertain the particular effect of each component part, and the more different the taste of the whole composition to the palate from that of its parts taken separately. A few colours mixed together give an appearance different from that of all the primitive colours united in one view. So is it with natural beauty and ugliness. No one will easily doubt, that the former is merely an appearance, or the result of certain parts, their disposition, relation, and proportion, arising from their being all taken in at one view in a certain manner. If in viewing characters and

actions we form perceptions similar to those ideas, and founded in like manner on the disposition, relation, and proportion of their various constituent parts, we apply the terms of beauty and ugliness to actions and characters. Let that constitution, which, whether clearly or obscurely perceived, is capable of exciting in both cases the idea of beauty, be termed perfection, or what else you please, still the original foundation of its agreeableness is a supposed or imagined utility of the object, as a supposed or imagined noxiousness is the foundation of an object's being disagreeable. Thus, generally taken, natural and moral beauty and ugliness are nothing but a confusedly and obscurely perceived utility or noxiousness. But why do we distinguish the beautiful from the useful, and the ugly from the noxious? Unquestionably because both the useful and noxious are sometimes so compounded, and so concealed under the manifold diversity of the object, that it is not easy to discover, distinguish, and ascertain the relation of either to its ground of utility or noxiousness, on our complicated view of it: in other words, because beauty and ugliness are appearances compounded of more parts, and differently modified from mere noxiousness or utility. These latter qualities in their greatest purity must be as little mixed and compounded as possible, and are thus obviously discoverable, when considered merely as noxious or useful. That beauty and ugliness, however, are nothing but compound appearances of the useful and noxious, may be shewn from the following considerations.

In the first place: beauty and utility, ugliness and noxiousness, range themselves under two general heads; the former under the general idea of agreeable or commendable, the latter under the idea of disagreeable or blame-worthy. If these general ideas be liable to various modifications or alterations, still  
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what is essential to them remains, and their alterations consist only in their exact relation to the modifications and compositions of their different subjects, the noxious and the useful. Unquestionably, elegance, gracefulness, and majesty on the one hand, and inelegance, brutality, and meanness on the other, may be considered as branches or divisions of beauty and ugliness. The different perceptions and ideas excited in us by the just-mentioned species of ugliness and beauty arise from the different and manifold composition of those species as they strike our eyes. So is it with the useful and the beautiful, with the noxious and the ugly. Utility assumes the form of beauty, and noxiousness of ugliness, as beauty becomes to us elegance when associated with a proportional smallness, majesty when united with a certain degree of greatness, &c. or as the simultaneous impression is differently compounded, and associated with collateral circumstances. Secondly; If we examine the appearance of beauty and ugliness, separating those parts, the united or rather compound effect of which excites in us the perception of ugliness and beauty, and distinguishing them as far as possible from each other, our process will at last bring us to a discovery of utility, fitness, or conduciveness to some end. If we change our position with respect to the object of our perceptions, our view will not be so variously complicated, or two or more parts of it will represent to us a different whole. In this case, either the illusion will wholly vanish, and with it the perception of beauty or ugliness, whilst we see the naked truth, or the bare utility or noxiousness of the object; or its beauty will adorn itself with the new charms of elegance, gracefulness, or majesty, and its ugliness will appear under the disgusting shape of inelegance, brutality or meanness. Had a fly the most refined taste that man ever possessed, it must be insensible to the beauty of St. Peter's, as its limited sight would

want that range necessary at one view to take in the whole, whence its effect is produced. Gulliver was blind to the charms of the lovely Brobdignagian, because he was so near to the individual parts and traits of the gigantic fair, that his microscopic eye had time and opportunity to examine the ingredients of her beauty one by one, whilst he was unable to survey and contemplate the whole at once. He was in the case of those who look closely at a fresco painting. On the other hand, however, an object may be too small to excite in us perceptions of beauty or ugliness. Its constituent parts may appear to us too confused to admit of distinction, and be insusceptible of any composition in our eyes. If, however, we approach nearer to such an object, or it be magnified to us by the help of art, it may appear to us beautiful or ugly.

As to moral perceptions, the appearances on which they are founded are susceptible of a great and variable multifariousness. Physical good and evil, or utility and noxiousness, are the real grounds of these appearances, and the not developed but compounded observation of their particular nature, magnitude, importance, and duration, is the perception which answers to the appearance. Were there such insignificant characters, such impotent and fruitless actions, as to afford the observer no mediæ or immediate prospect of utility or detriment, they would be by no means an object of moral perception. As soon, however, as we discover in an action any intention of the agent, it awakens our moral feelings. But this intention relates to some natural good or evil, without which it is not to be conceived. The intelligent observer cannot separate this intention from the disposition and frame of the mind that cherishes and acts according to it. It is to him a sketch of the whole character, a manifestation of all the good and evil variously combined in it. How complex, how  
variously

variously compounded shall we find the idea of him who examines an intentional action, if that idea be traced back to its origin! To an observer, then, who can form a conception of intention, must not the same action, when performed intentionally, have a very different appearance, and consequently excite very different sensations, from what it does when happening by chance? Must we not feel very differently for the death of a man killed by an enemy, and for that of one crushed by a falling tree? Still more different must the appearances and sensations in the two cases be, if in the former we combine into one view with the action itself, and the intention, the idea of its consequences, or the good and evil which it produces and may occasion. In the latter case, indeed, the consequences of the action will also be brought into consideration, but they will not be by far so complicated, important, or durable, as those in the former, or intentional action. It would carry me much too far, were I circumstantially to shew, how the appearance of an intentional act is in effect, with respect to its consequences very differently compounded and modified from that of a fortuitous occurrence. In the latter, permit me just to observe, the cause of the evil is transient, and leads us not to fear easily another of the like kind: whilst also what is extrinsic to the cause itself comes not into contemplation, and makes no part of the appearance. In the former, our perceptions extend to the agent, his future fate, and the influence of the action upon him. In both cases our moral survey includes, with the sufferer, all those who take a part in his fate, as relations, friends, or enemies. But in the case of premeditated murder we embrace all those who as members of the community have a similar fate to apprehend, and even in an especial manner ourselves, intermingling with

our ideas such a care and respect to the future, as cannot take place in an accidental occurrence.

In my opinion, what I have here advanced, concerning the nature of appearances, and the affinity between physical and moral beauty, may suffice to remove the objection raised against our hypothesis from the difference of the sensations excited by physical and moral evil. I perceive, however, that the perceptions or ideas of justice and injustice require to be still farther developed. Which of the two I ought to style them I am in doubt; as they seem to me to occupy a middle place between perceptions and ideas. On the one hand, they are not sufficiently clear and explicit to merit the appellation of ideas: on the other, they seem to me to have too much clearness and precision to be deemed merely perceptions. They are not produced in us by means of an indiscriminate compound view, as are those of beauty and ugliness, and so far ought not to be styled perceptions. We always acquire our notions of justice and injustice by comparing an intention or action with some rule, and discovering its agreement with or contrariety to it. As far as comparison itself, and the conception of a concordant or discordant proportion, are works of the understanding, they seem to belong to the class of intellectual ideas. But as by the help of the rule (which is a general proposition, that expresses how the conduct must be regulated to attain a certain good, or to avoid a certain evil) the understanding is relieved from a great part of the labour of inquiry, so that it needs not carry on its prospect of the future, and calculation or weighing of the good and bad consequences of an action so far as to the discovery of its noxiousness or utility, the words just or unjust never clearly point out to us the physical good to be attained, or evil to be avoided, but the former signifies only a conformity to the rule, and the latter a non-



non-conformity to it: so far are these notions at least half founded on an appearance, thus distinguishing themselves from ideas of utility and noxiousness, and standing in the midst, as I have observed, between the perceptions of moral beauty and ugliness, and the ideas of utility and noxiousness. We will endeavour to render this somewhat clearer. We have made such rules of conduct, or they have been delivered to us, with a view of saving us the trouble of examining on every occasion all the possible consequences of an action. They assist our inability and negligence, which would prevent us from estimating with accuracy the good and evil that would follow our resolutions. But as these rules supply the place of our own examining the good and bad consequences of our actions, and generally, or indeed almost always, serve as a touchstone with the decisions of which we satisfy ourselves, we are accustomed to consider them as something original, which admits not of being traced to a higher source; just as we do in criticism with the rules and examples of great masters; and our approbation, or disapprobation of an action, are just as much excited by them, as if we took in all the consequences of that action at one view, or had an immediate prospect of the good and evil it included. No wonder, then, that this is somewhat different from moral perception. The appearance is less multifarious. Instead of the diversely multiplied and distant consequences, which we must contemplate or revolve in our thoughts, if we would estimate an action, not according to some rule, but from calculation of the obscurely perceived or clearly discovered good and evil included in it, we consider merely the rule, with the respect it has acquired from its author, long custom, the consent of mankind, and its true or supposed indispensability, taking into the account the determinate good it promises those who are

obedient to it, and the determinate evil with which it threatens the disobedient. The rule itself is more determinate, and the cases that occur are more precisely estimated by it, in proportion as the good or evil is more clearly perceived. Its rewards and punishments are more concentrated, more intelligibly proposed, and especially more certain and inevitable, than the good or evil which might ensue from the action itself. From the latter circumstance arise the ideas of guilt and innocence; when, namely, the evil consequent to an action is, by means of a rule, held out to us as near and inevitable, so that we cannot think on the action without its consequences, and know and foresee, previous to the action, that they must affect us from our own choice and determination, we pronounce ourselves not free from these consequences, that is, we find ourselves guilty. Let the slightest circumstance be changed, the perception is weakened or annihilated. If the evil following an action be not an inevitable consequence of it, or not near enough to be ascribed to it, or if the agent have not previously known it to be a consequence of his action, he would consider himself in the first instance less guilty, in the last wholly innocent.

To confirm the hypothesis here delivered I will mention some facts well known by experience. First; The more a man has exerted himself to investigate the particular component parts of moral perceptions, that is, the natural good and evil comprised therein, the different nature, relation, and importance of these, &c. the more will he be susceptible of nice and just perceptions of morality. These perceptions will be strengthened and rendered more luminous, as the various parts which constitute the whole will have a more powerful effect, than when superficially viewed or unnoticed. Thus a beautiful symphony delights a connoisseur, who has studied its tones, and their various relations, in a manner very different from  
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that in which it affects the unlearned ear. A florist, capable of discriminating the various parts from the combined harmony of which the beauty of a flower is produced, finds far more pleasure in contemplating this beauty than he who surveys it with an unskilful eye. Thus the moral sense is generally more gross and dull in the ignorant multitude, than in the well educated and learned. In those, however, who have not at least some general though confused notions of utility and noxiousness in actions, no moral taste exists. Experience farther teaches us, that the examination of the particular component parts of beauty of any kind, if it too frequently and almost constantly employ the mind, is injurious to our feelings. The mind habituates itself to a neglect of the compound survey of the whole, and its delight is to analyse it, whence it falls into a way of contemplating its object microscopically, and piece by piece. Thus many antiquarians, many philologists, have destroyed their taste for the exquisite beauty of works of art and genius: the speculative moralist, who considers moral objects merely with the understanding, and for the understanding, and the acute casuist, who dissects and divides virtue and vice with so much pains and labour, render themselves by degrees in a great measure incapable of a lively perception of what is beautiful or ugly, becoming or unbecoming, in character, manners, or actions. Finally, if any one had wholly destroyed or lost his moral taste, more powerful means of exciting and sharpening his moral perceptions could not be found, than to place before his eyes unexpected, moving, boldly drawn scenes of the varied and extensive happiness of virtue, and as strong portraits of the misery of vice. As far as the moral sense is capable of being whetted or restored, it must be effected by strongly impressed notions of the good accruing from virtue, and the evil consequent to vice, whilst culpable insensibility finds in the world,

world, and in real life, what Hogarth has delineated in his moral pictures. The father in Rousseau's *Emilius* employed the same means to excite an abhorrence of the excesses of debauchery in his son, who was on the point of giving the reins to his wild desires: he led him to an hospital, where the fearful scenes of pain and woe displayed on every hand, in the persons of those who had fallen victims to their lusts, could not but warn him from following their example.

The second objection made to our hypothesis, that it destroys the proper signification, force, and value of the moral expressions of praise and blame, or that it enfeebles or annihilates the impressions of moral beauty and ugliness, may without difficulty be removed. These never can be the consequences of our inquiries. Moral relations are fixed constant appearances, established on the nature of their objects, and of our minds. They infallibly present themselves whenever we attentively consider actions, characters or manners, and must unavoidably produce the perceptions which answer to them. Every man of understanding considers the symmetry of a building as a mere appearance; yet can he not reason away its agreeable effect on his optic nerves, or the disagreeable one of its opposite. To Newton's eye, returning from the contemplation of his prism, the union of the primitive colours must have given the appearance of whiteness, as well as to that of the most ignorant peasant.

The author of our nature had unquestionably wise views, when he so formed our minds, that good and evil proceeding from an intelligent being should have different appearances to man, and excite different perceptions in him, from what they do when occasioned by an unintelligent cause. If we would have just notions of these final causes, let us compare the moral marks of character and actions, so far as they  
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are considered as beautiful or ugly, seemly or unseemly, virtuous or wicked, with the impression by which the certain worth of a piece of money is ascertained, when the sovereign or state intend not to affix thereby any nominal value above the intrinsic worth of the coin, but merely to determine the real value of the metal. If we had a sense just and delicate enough to enable us with certainty and readiness to distinguish the exact fineness, weight, and value of any piece of gold or silver offered us, the impression would be superfluous and unnecessary: but as we want this just, delicate, and ready power of distinguishing, the impression on a coin must teach us its true worth, and this not only saves us the trouble of weighing and assaying it, but also secures us from error and deception. In like manner, the moral characters, the tokens of praise or blame, which our perceptions impress on actions, tempers, or manners, would be unnecessary and superfluous, if we possessed such a clear, just, and ready penetration of the natural good and evil to be found in moral objects, or arising from them, that we could with accuracy separate them from each other, give to each its due worth and proper value, and appreciate the object as a whole, not only from its present internal constitution, but with respect to its relations, tendencies, and consequences. This penetration, however, we do not possess. To supply its place, therefore, it is useful and necessary, that the moral sense should stamp on actions and manners a mark easy to be known. As reason cannot conveniently assay her objects by separating them into their component parts, the synthetic, not analytic view, supplies the place of a clear knowledge, and accurate calculation. From the natural good and evil found in moral objects, it creates moral good and evil, or images of moral beauty and ugliness. Thus, particularly with a view to shorten the examination, the question, what is good or bad, just

or unjust, in any particular case, is brought before the tribunal of perception. What we lose in clearness by these means, is made up by the quickness and strength of our feelings.

It is now time, a little farther to illustrate the application which Hartley makes of the foregoing hypothesis. He shews from it the insignificance of the objection, that, from the system of necessity, God must be the author of sin. In respect to God, says he, what we call sin is nothing but natural evil, so far as it is modified by, occasioned by, and pervades the voluntary actions of men. We cannot ascribe to the most perfect intelligence, which sees nothing confusedly, but every thing clearly and distinctly, the perceptions which moral appearances excite in us, so far at least as they differ from those which the view of natural evil is capable of producing. He sees what constitutes the real ground of these appearances. Hence it follows, that the whole question, whether God be the author of sin, has no meaning, or this: does natural evil in general, and particularly that which arises from men's voluntary actions, enter into the design of God? If, however, we attribute to God our perceptions, and what this evil seems to us, the question has no meaning. In sinful actions God sees the cause of them, the imperfection and limited faculties of the creatures, which, active or passive, participate them. He sees the evil thence arising, previously considered separately and individually. In and for itself this evil is not his purpose: but as it is connected with the whole scheme of his creation, and this whole scheme is by him approved, as in it particular evil tends to general good, and as the goodness and happiness of finite creatures without this evil would be impossible, it must enter into his design. This design required the greatest possible variety of creatures: in the scale of being, then, there must have  
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been a place for man; and a certain degree of limitation and imperfection, to distinguish him, as well from the creatures above as from those below, must have been essential to him. If the errors, faults, and imperfections of man be deducible from his essential and necessary limitation, it is not possible for him to be without these, and still be man. His Creator is fully justified if no human being, the whole considered, be justified in despising the gift of existence. He is fully justified, if man be from his nature capable of no happiness, or a happiness of a growing kind. Such a disposition presupposes a growing perfection, and at the beginning of man's existence the lowest degree of that perfection which is proper to him. For the sake of brevity I may here refer to what I have said in a preceding remark (p. 481.). If it be now asked: whence arises the moral evil of human nature? I would answer: It is the consequence of man's limited faculties, and capacity for perfection. The latter renders it necessary, that he should be placed on the lowest step, in order that his faculties may have an opportunity of unfolding themselves gradually: he must be a sensitive before he is a rational being. But should he have a capacity for reason, or be an agent choosing from his own judgment, he must possess a propensity to agency as soon as he can act. He must early feel his destination to act after his own inclination, and on every occasion follow this propensity. He must fly, or at least *will* to raise himself, before he has wings. I shall here employ a common remark, yet not the less to the purpose: man, whilst a merely sensitive animal, exerts his agency, in the same manner as the steer, that feels himself destined to wear horns, butts with his head before his horns appear. He must oppose every thing that tends to obstruct or circumscribe this propensity. Every injunction or restraint is an odious compulsion, against which

which his freedom revolts. He will not be led; he will guide himself. But since he has not yet the necessary knowledge, which he must collect from experience, he is exposed to the illusions of his senses, and thus must frequently err, and choose evil for good. From often repeated error he will acquire a readiness of going astray, which tardy reason will find difficult to destroy; and propensities will arise, which a more just and perfect knowledge of things will not remove without pain and toil. Thus the moral depravity of man proceeds from the limited state and constitution essential to his nature. Now as moral evil is a consequence of metaphysical evil, and nothing more than natural evil, the grand question, whence arises moral evil? may be reduced to this, whence arises natural evil? and ultimately to this, what is the cause of metaphysical evil? This question of the origin of evil, so important to the peace of mankind, and so puzzling to human understanding, may, in my opinion, be reduced to this: when God gave existence to beings out of himself, he must have made them limited, or have multiplied himself: if the latter be an impossibility, we must grant that his goodness and wisdom might produce beings with more or fewer limitations.

PROP. XVI. p. 66.

*Whether philosophical Free-Will be consistent with the Power and Knowledge of God.*

OUR author here shews in a solid and conclusive manner, that philosophical free-will is inconsistent with the divine attributes of power and knowledge. It is not consistent with God's power, since by it his power would be limited, and hence be no longer infinite: for as far as man exercised this free-will he would



would be independent of God. It may be said, indeed, that he receives this free-will from God, and thus is dependent on him with respect to the possession of it: but as soon as he puts it into action, he ceases to be under God's power, and withdraws himself from his all-embracing influence. If God have bestowed on man such a free-will, he has given him a power of freeing himself from his subjection and dependency. This supposition brings to our minds, in some measure, what the poet said of Jupiter, who after he had made gold, was astonished at the power of his own work, and confessed, that he had created a divinity more mighty than himself. As this charge may appear too strong to the partisans of philosophical free-will, we will shew in another way, that this free-will places man without the sphere of God's power and influence. We cannot possibly form any idea of the influence of God's power, but that it acts upon its subject either mediately, or immediately. Any other way is as inconceivable as power without effect or influence. If man exercise philosophical free-will, God's power cannot act on him immediately, as that would be necessity. Neither does it act mediately, for then it would act by means of causes and effects, or of secondary causes. This is equally inconsistent with philosophical free-will, by which the chain of causes is broken. As often as man exercises this free-will he cuts asunder that chain by which God holds and draws all things. Either he is himself the creator of human actions, or chance is the lord and master of them, and forms a new chain which lasts till another chance breaks it, or produces nothing but isolated links united to no others. Whatever is effected by philosophical free-will has the original grounds of its possibility in the will of God, as far as chance is established, and authorized to produce men's actions, by that will: but that of two possible and opposite actions one only takes place, is

no farther ascribable to the will of God. Whilst God has left this to chance to determine, he has so far set limits to his own power, and left himself to prefer a certain action or its opposite, which ever blind chance, which he has placed by his side as a fellow-creator, wills to be produced. In such an action he can no more have a determinate will, than a man in an event which he leaves to the cast of a die. No one can in this case determine whether he shall win or lose: and when he leaves it to chance, to decide which of the two shall happen, it is evident, that he himself determines neither of the two. So is it with God, on the supposition of philosophical free-will. In it there is always a chance, over which he has no power and influence because it is a chance. If we say, that he can influence the event by the production and connection of circumstances, that can only take place by limiting or altogether removing the assumed chance, or so far as man is actually determined *ab extra* in the exercise of his free-will. If it be said God must have thus limited his power when he willed the creating man a free agent; this is taking for granted, that philosophical free-will is essential to man's agency, a supposition which has already been shewn to be unfounded. If it be said farther, that man can be subject to no moral imputation, unless God have so limited his power; to what has before been said on the subject we may add, that, whilst on this scheme of free-will man's actions are subject to chance, it is not more proper to impute to him merit or demerit for his actions, than if they were subject to necessity. If the atoms of Epicurus had by their concurrence formed misshapen masses, instead of regular bodies, would they have been more culpable or deserving of punishment, if under the guidance of chance, than if subject to the laws of necessity? (We call in this hypothesis with more confidence, as it is in fact the same

same with the philosophical free-will ascribed to man, except that the latter, whilst under the dominion of chance, admits consciousness, the former excludes it). If imputation and punishment be absurd and irrational, they must be so in the highest degree, on the supposition of chance, as being altogether without end or use. Finally, if it be advanced, that God voluntarily set limits to his power, and thus they are not to be considered as derogating or detracting from his greatness; it must be for want of reflecting, that this would be such a limitation of his authority, as would render it impossible for him to uphold and govern the world, in a great measure at least, if not altogether. Creatures endowed with philosophical free-will, whether they exercise it constantly or occasionally, are wholly incapable of moral rule. The end of such rule is to lead men to certain purposes by setting before them motives. When these motives have a certain adequacy to the understanding and will, and a determinate power on the mind, men are governed, or the intended purposes may be attained with and by them. But to this effect it is necessary, that they have no power of resisting those motives which are to them the strongest, or have no philosophical free-will: for by the use of this they would at once annul the wisest regulations of their ruler, remaining obstinate and disobedient, against all knowledge of their own good, and notwithstanding his giving them every possible motive to obedience. This will hold good whether we suppose God or man to be the ruler of such subjects. A human governor, it is true, is not always able to produce sufficient motives, and frequently knows not what motives will be the strongest and most powerful in certain cases. Hence he cannot lead his subjects to his purposes so fully as he would, nor exercise a perfect dominion over them. But the all-wise and omnipotent God, who at the same time that he knows

what are the strongest motives in every case, is capable of producing them, should maintain the most perfect and unlimited authority over his rational creatures. This authority, however, would be circumscribed, and nearly annihilated, if ungovernable man could render himself insensible to all motives, and could render vain by his free-will all the measures of divine power, and all the ordinances of divine wisdom. These absurd consequences flow from the doctrine of philosophical free-will. Experience, however, which teaches us, that man is actually governed by man, and in a great measure led to the purposes of his ruler, and that many may be subjected to the will and nod of one, makes not a little against such a free-will. If every subject in an extensive kingdom, governed by an absolute monarch, exercised philosophical free-will, the whole sum of its effects must be capable of being traced in an obvious and convincing manner. From the additions which each individual philosophical free-will would give to the general will, such an unbridled, fantastic, monstrous chaos would ultimately arise, that a concordant and universal will, moving to any determinate end, would be an utter impossibility. If, however, we suppose nothing of this confusion and disorder in a great and wisely regulated state, but rather find, that all its members are animated with *one* mind, and moved by *one* will, there must be some means (and these means can be nothing but motives) capable of imparting *one* will to many men, and of infallibly attaining their end, since they effect it in so distinguished a manner. May we not, then, carry our conclusions from the less to the greater? If man can so govern man, how much more may God rule him to the fulfilling of his will?

That the foreknowledge of God is incompatible with philosophical free-will is clearly shewn by our author, and has already been sufficiently demonstrated by

by others. The defenders of this free-will have, indeed, already given up thus much to the arguments of their opponents, that they content themselves with ascribing to God a probable foreknowledge of men's actions. But Mendelssohn, in his excellent Treatise on Probability, has proved in a new and incontrovertible manner, that a probable foreknowledge is absolutely inconsistent with philosophical free-will. If, says he, God have a probable foreknowledge with respect to our free actions, the degree of this probability must be determinate, as there cannot be a quantity without a determinate degree, if, as in this case, it ultimately will be. But if the degree of the divine probability be determinate, the proportion which the grounds of probability known to God bear to certainty must be given, as from this proportion the degree of probability is to be estimated. The grounds of probability are all those *data* from which the truth is known, and which, if we have them all, produce certainty, if we have a greater or less number of them, produce a higher or lower degree of probability. Now whence does God take these grounds of probability? Necessarily from the circumstances in which the free agent is placed, and from the motives and incentives that determine his choice. But all the circumstances in which the agent is placed, and all his motives and incentives are insufficient to produce a certainty of what choice he will make. Thus the degree of probability cannot be determined from the proportion which the positive motives bear to the positive and negative ones taken together: otherwise these motives must include some grounds from which this free agent is determined to one action rather than to another. Thus the more positive or negative motives act upon our will, the greater the probability, that we shall do or avoid a thing. If it were possible, that infinitely many motives should work upon our will to the production of

a certain action, they would constitute an infinite degree of probability, or a certainty, as according to the opinion of these philosophers the *maximum* of our free actions is only to be sought *in infinito*. Now as in every particular case only a finite number of motives act upon us, the probability of the divine prescience is to certainty, as the finite number of the motives that occasion our choice is to an infinite number of the same, or the degree of the divine foreknowledge = 0. Nothing, in my opinion, can be more just and clear than this demonstration. The more am I astonished, that Rautenberg in a remark on Hume's *Essays on the first Principles of Morality and Natural Religion*, translated by him, should dispute this argument, or rather, admitting the premises, deny the conclusion. He conceives, that Mendelssohn assumes, without any grounds, that all the circumstances in which a free agent is placed do not constitute a certainty, which can only arise from an infinite number of motives: and rather believes, that from a finite number such a degree of force may arise, as to incline the will to the one side, particularly when no motives, or very feeble ones only, exist on the other. But does not this opponent of Mendelssohn perceive, that, according to the system in dispute, the circumstances in which a free agent is placed cannot possibly constitute certainty? For did they amount to a certainty, this free agent must in reality be determined by circumstances, he must act according to this determination and could not act otherwise, consequently the freedom of indifferency, or the freedom by which man can resist those motives that are to him the strongest at the time, completely falls to the ground. If he can resist these circumstances he is not determined by them. If he be not determined by them, there are no grounds from which his resolution can be known. If a given number of motives certainly incline the will to one side, he who knows

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all these motives, cannot be deemed to have a probable foreknowledge, as he must unquestionably possess a certain prescience. But this is ever and solely the case, if the will be determined by the motives actually present, and by nothing else. It is not necessary to add, that every such case absolutely excludes such a freedom as enables a man to act in opposition to his motives, and independent of them, so that they are insufficient to determine him, and their power must be supplied by something else, not to be defined, if a determination take place. Rautenberg also advances, that, whilst we are ignorant of the manner in which God knows things, we cannot infer any objection to a demonstrated truth from his knowledge. Not to mention, that philosophical free-will is by no means a demonstrated truth, this is in fact saying nothing to the purpose, as Hartley very justly shews. We freely confess, that no argument against philosophical free-will is here deduced from the nature of the divine knowledge and prescience; but from the mere existence of God's foreknowledge of men's actions, let it happen however it may, we conclude, that it is not impossible to foreknow those actions, and consequently, that they cannot be indeterminate and uncertain, since were they so they could not be foreknown, either by God or by any other intelligence, as what is absolutely impossible, and includes a contradiction, is not more subject to the power of God, than to that of any other being. To be indeterminate and absolutely uncertain in itself, and at the same time to be foreknown as certain and determinate, constitute as formal and palpable a contradiction as can be conceived. The one annihilates the other. Now if the infinity of God with respect to his other attributes cannot make any contradiction possible, however infinite his knowledge may be, it extends to impossibilities no more than does his

power. But to be uncertain and fortuitous, and yet to be foreknown as certain and necessary, constitutes a non-entity.

PROP. XIX. p. 79.

*On Inspiration.*

THE different opinions held concerning divine inspiration may be conveniently reduced to three. These our author mentions, with the grounds for them; but still some other grounds may be added. There are also some general considerations which must have weight with every rational and thinking follower of the christian religion, in deciding to which of the three the preference should be given. This must first of all be laid down as a principle, as it indeed is by Hartley, that, which ever of the three be embraced, we pay such respect to revelation, as to be amended, assured, and instructed in the way of salvation. Thus he who adopts the lowest hypothesis considers the scripture as his rule of faith and life, and as the ground of his hopes and expectations. But whether his opinion of divine inspiration be in reality sufficient to this purpose or not, appears to me not to be so properly determinable on general principles, and from a general view, as from the particular way of thinking of the party, and from the point of view from which he forms his judgment. It may seem to us, that no one can attain a true confidence through revelation, or a practical conviction of the truth of its doctrines, if he have not so high an opinion of its divine origin and authority as appears to us necessary for our own trust and conviction. In this, however, we frequently err. How many pious christians are shocked and hurt by the various readings of the scriptures, and the detection  
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of faults that have crept into the modern text from carelessness and ignorance!! Unquestionably this arises from their opinion of the divine origin of the sacred books extending itself to the most trifling circumstances, to words, syllables, and letters, with which overstretched notion the remark of such errors does not accord. To still more is the idea, that premeditated additions, defalcations, or corruptions of the scriptures have taken place, totally inadmissible. Now as these find such a supposition incompatible with their high veneration for the scriptures, they are too prone to conclude, that all who assert, or even think possible, such falsifications of particular passages, altogether reject the divine authority of the whole. It will probably be admitted, that in this case the inference from ourselves to others is precipitate and unjust. But we must on the same principles admit, that it is equally unjust for those who entertain the highest possible opinion of divine inspiration, to deny all true and wholesome reverence for the scriptures to those who content themselves with the lowest. I say on the same principles. For, if every thing in the scriptures, even to each individual word, syllable, and letter, were the immediate work of God, it is but reasonable to conclude, that the same causes which moved God himself immediately and miraculously to fix and determine every thing in the scriptures, even to the most unimportant objects, would have moved him to have superintended the security and preservation of what he had so exactly and minutely established. Were it necessary, that every word and letter should have been inspired, we must also suppose it necessary, that every inspired word should retain the letters appointed by God, and be incapable of alteration by human words or letters. Yes, perhaps some one will say, but how many continual miracles must be requisite to this! Let us however consider, that, from the supposition,

such a minute inspiration being necessary to the salvation of mankind, if it could and must have happened, its requiring more or fewer miracles is of no moment to the omnipotence of God. It may be said, if every thing in the scriptures were not so accurately and minutely determined by divine inspiration, we could not have sufficient certainty and confidence in the divine doctrines. Were this true, there must be no blunders of copyists, no inaccuracy in the text, and no accidental error in the scriptures; or each individual reader of them must have an infallible sense, by which he might distinguish the divine original from the additions made by men. Even had he this, in places where alterations have actually been made, the requisite certainty and confidence could not possibly be obtained: and if a man extend his faith to words and letters, this very circumstance must greatly embarrass him. If the pretext, that so many continual miracles are necessary to preserve an unalterable purity of the text, be at all valid, the general principle must be first admitted, that God performs as few miracles as possible, and never more than are indispensably necessary to the attainment of his divine purposes. But it would be the extreme of rashness in us to determine how many or how few miracles are requisite to answer the designs of God. However, when we find, that a certain miracle has not produced certain effects, we may venture humbly to presume, that such a miracle was not necessary. But here this is actually the case. For since so many variations are to be found in respect to words, syllables, and letters, he who sees, and is conscious of these variations, cannot possibly confirm his faith and hopes by the notion, that the words, syllables, and letters which he has before him were immediately inspired by God.

Should any one hence conclude, that in this case we can never be certain of the true sense of any  
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book in the Bible, or of any part of a book; I answer, that, in determining the meaning of a whole book, or of any connected proposition, we must not attend so much to particular words, as to the connection of all the words taken together, the scope of the whole, and all concomitant circumstances. Thus, though a particular word might be falsified, we may be sufficiently certain of the tenour of the whole: for it is highly improbable, that the whole should be falsified; and were there any part altogether corrupted and erroneous, either it would have no rational meaning, or it would have a sense contradictory to the purpose of its writer, and the general tenour of the scriptures. In this case, we could make no use of such a text, particularly if it were not to be amended and restored by the help of criticism, and a comparison with other manuscripts and versions. If, however, a text of scripture have an intelligible meaning, consonant to the designs of its divine author, and the general sense of the whole, we may be sufficiently certain, that it is not throughout altered and corrupted. But this does not prevent a word here and there in it from being erroneous: and hence it follows, that the more we build on particular words in our exposition, and the less we consider the connection of the whole, the purpose of the writer, and the like, in explaining the sense of a passage, the less certain must our interpretation be. However numerous the faults and errors that may have crept into a book of Cicero, if the whole afford an intelligible meaning, we can determine with sufficient certainty the sense of the author, and what he intended to say, notwithstanding all these errors and imperfections, if we proceed according to the rules of sound criticism. But should we set aside the connection of the whole, shutting our eyes against the light to be derived from the consideration of all its parts, and a comparison  
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of them with each other, and explain his system from a single expression, founding our conviction of his design to maintain this or that on the authenticity of a word, our certainty would rest on very slight grounds. The less probable it is, that all we employ to ascertain his meaning, should be falsified and corrupted, the more certain is our interpretation; for it is far more improbable, that the whole should be erroneous, than that a particular word should be so.

Of the same nature is the well-known dispute, whether inspiration extend only to the subject or to the words of holy writ. I do not think, however, that this properly expresses the true point in dispute. This short answer may be given to the question couched in such terms: a subject without words is inconceivable, so that if God inspired the subject, he must have inspired words expressing it. But this answer decides nothing at bottom: it rather leads to the following questions. What is the general notion of inspiration? How many kinds of inspiration are there, according to this notion? And how may all this be applied to the holy scriptures, and their several parts?

In the most extensive sense of the word, we may term every communication of our thoughts and perceptions to another, or, which is the same thing, every action by which we determine the thoughts and perceptions of another to accord with our thoughts and perceptions an inspiration. There are as many kinds of inspiration, therefore, as there are modes in which this may be effected.

The ways in which a man may occasion certain thoughts and perceptions, or certain notions, judgments, and opinions in another, or in which he may determine him to think and judge thus of a subject, and not otherwise, are various; and so many kinds of inspiration must we admit. Language is the  
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most perfect mean of propounding and imparting our thoughts to others. Thus verbal inspiration, or inspiration by means of oral or written words, is the first and most perfect kind. But other signs and symbols may be employed instead of words, to make others acquainted with our thoughts. This may be effected by significant gestures, or pictures, in particular. Thus we have a kind of inspiration, which, to distinguish it from the verbal, we may style figurative or symbolical. Farther, we may impart our thoughts on a certain subject to another, by placing him in such circumstances, and affording him such *data* and means of knowledge, that by their use and application he must necessarily be led to the same thoughts and perceptions of the subject as we have, or as we would impress on him. As this species of inspiration differs from the preceding ones in more particularly employing the mind and understanding of the person inspired, we may term it co-operative inspiration. Finally, we can conceive of a communication of thoughts by an immediate influence upon the *sensorium*, and by its means upon the mind, whereby thoughts are excited and imparted to the intellect, directly producing conceptions, without the interference of any known means. This may be styled immediate inspiration. I believe that these four kinds include the whole of our notion of inspiration, and constitute all its primary divisions: though, by variously combining them, other kinds might be formed, and some, if not all, of these primary divisions admit of being subdivided.

Instead of entering farther into this analysis, I will inquire into the end that may be proposed by inspiration. This end must be confined to the person inspired, or to others, or it must extend to both. In the first instance the person inspired must receive some information, or instruction, necessary or useful to himself alone. In the second, he will announce

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what is useful and necessary to others. In the third, the instruction imparted to him is applicable both to others and himself, and he receives it equally for both. If inspiration have any rational end, a fourth case is not to be conceived. In the first case the instruction must be perfectly understood by the person inspired, otherwise he could derive no benefit from its being imparted to him. In the third case he must understand it likewise, at least in part though it may not be necessary for him to comprehend the whole of it, as a part may concern others alone. So far, however, as he is interested in it, what it announces must be intelligible to himself. In the second case which we have mentioned, it is not necessary, that he should understand what he is to deliver. He is but the messenger; conveying instructions that may be concealed from his knowledge. In this case, the third kind of inspiration, which we have termed co-operative, would be inadmissible; and the fourth, or immediate, would scarcely be applicable. For the conceptions produced in the mind by this, which we must suppose subject to the general laws of the understanding, though excited in an extraordinary and miraculous manner, cannot possibly be unintelligible to the mind that forms them, and expresses them by words: even were the words answering to the ideas imbibed or impressed at the same time with them, which would render this kind of inspiration the same as to the principal point with the first. Both the first and second kinds of inspiration, however, are admissible in this case. In the first and third case any of the kinds of inspiration might take place, though all might not be equally suitable, which would depend on the subject of the inspiration. If we would form an accurate judgment of the point in question, we should now inquire on what occasion each kind of inspiration might be most conveniently employed.

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The subject of inspiration may be either historical, or doctrinal; it may relate to occurrences or doctrines. Occurrences may be either past, or future; doctrines may be either *credenda*, or *agenda*, articles of faith, or rules of conduct. Let us now consider what kind of inspiration would be most adequate to each purpose. To begin with past occurrences. Of these either we had testimonies, accounts, and traditions, prior to inspiration, and independent of it, or we had them not. If we had them not, the third kind of inspiration is evidently inadmissible: for there would exist no *data*, no sources of knowledge, by the use of which the person inspired might be brought to those notions which were to be imparted to him. Neither is the second suitable to the purpose, as it would be inadequate to the design of delivering a history in chronological order, with scrupulous exactness, and historic truth; consequently it ought not to be employed where this is requisite. In this case the first kind is the most convenient, though the fourth might indeed be employed. On the other hand, if oral or written accounts of such occurrences exist, though either the first or fourth kind might be used likewise here, yet the third appears to deserve the preference, for the following reasons. First, as it is sufficient to the end, which, considering that it is the most natural, whilst the others are supernatural, renders it preferable to these: secondly, as it will exercise and improve the mental faculties and understanding of those to whom history is thus inspired, or to whom knowledge is thus imparted; and, more especially, in the third place, as it is the most credible, and adequate to the end of inspiration, so far as the occurrences made known are to be admitted as true by others. To conceive this the more clearly, let us suppose, that a writer gives a history of a certain remote period, of which we had accounts before him, and still existing in his time, and expressly declares,

clares, that his history is not compiled from those accounts, but written in consequence of immediate inspiration from God. Now would such a writer be credited by posterity? Would after-ages rather rely on him, than believe the accounts existing elsewhere, in points in which his history contradicted or deviated from those accounts? Would not rather the pretence of the divine revelation and inspiration of a history, which the narrator might have known without these, from the accounts existing, from the testimony of witnesses of the occurrences, or from his own knowledge (if he be writing the history of his own time) and which he might have related with sufficient accuracy by the exercise of his own judgment, and the necessary examination, be very improbable? Much more credible would the writer's narration be, did he, in express terms, or by the actual use of the accounts still extant, limit his claim of divine inspiration to this, that he wrote his history at the command of God, endued with such faculties, and placed in such circumstances, as to be enabled to give the most accurate and true account possible, from the sources that were in existence.

Should the historian relate such circumstances and incidents as could not be the fruits of his own understanding, being such as a mind merely human could not discover, he must be indebted for them to a higher revelation. In this case the claim of such a revelation would not weaken his credibility, as by it he would be informed of circumstances, which his mind could not otherwise have conceived. If, however, he promulgate no circumstances or incidents undiscoverable by human investigation, such an immediate revelation would be unnecessary and improbable. As to what concerns future events, it must be considered whether they be delivered with accuracy, and in the ordinary form of history, or only under general types, with some degree of obscurity,



rity, and without a precise description of particular circumstances. If the former, the same may be said as of past occurrences of which we have no account: if the latter, no one of the kinds is more apt than the symbolical; and in all cases the immediate, with which the symbolical may be united. Of doctrines, and rules of conduct, we must observe, that they will be either altogether arbitrary, that is not so connected with the natural or acquired knowledge of the person inspired as to be a regular consequence of it; or they will not be in this sense arbitrary. If they be the former, they must be inspired after the first, second, or fourth manner; and according as they are more or less precisely determined, the first and fourth, or the second, will be most suitable. If the doctrines and precepts be such as might flow from the previous knowledge of the inspired person, the third kind of inspiration seems preferable, principally for these reasons, that thus they would render the ideas of the person inspired more perfect, and exalt his understanding. For this purpose doctrines and their application must be made more clear to him, and moral precepts more engaging, and easier to practise, whilst he is instructed in the principles on which they are founded.

Before I apply what has been said to the holy scriptures in particular, I shall make the two following general remarks. In the first place, I presume, that in the inspiration of the holy scriptures, as well as in all other measures relative to religion, its foundation, support, and propagation, God employs natural means, or means agreeable to the ordinary course of nature, and refrains from extraordinary, supernatural, or miraculous ones, as long as the former are sufficient to effect the purposes of God in religion, having recourse to miracles only when they are absolutely necessary. It is true, that we cannot with certainty determine by reasoning *a priori* when  
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natural means are sufficient to the purposes of God; but analogy and comparison may help us to some conjectures, and we cannot err very widely from the truth in expecting God to act in the like manner in like instances. My second remark is this, that, in solving the difficult problem of divine inspiration, that solution, which leaves the fewest difficulties, perplexities, and contradictions, is to be preferred; rejecting every other, which, instead of removing those difficulties, tends rather to make them inexplicable.

I will now examine whether the preceding theory of inspiration may be applied to the inspiration of the holy scriptures. Let us first consider the different subjects of the sacred writings. They contain doctrines, prophecies, and histories. The doctrines are of such a nature, that we may apply to them the forementioned division. There are positive doctrines, and arbitrary precepts; not so in themselves, but with respect to the understanding of man. Thus we may apply to these the foregoing consequence, that they were imparted to mankind by the first and fourth kind of inspiration. God has made known to the inspired person, what he and others should do, by means of an oral or written instruction; and this instruction was communicated supernaturally, as no ordinary or natural instruction would have been sufficient to the purpose. But again, natural means were as much as possible employed, and the laws of human reason as little as might be deviated from. Thus the most important instruction must have been communicated in human guise, and in the manner of common information. Superior beings must have appeared as men, and uttered human words, or the person inspired must at least have heard a human voice. The most weighty religious precepts were imparted to the apostles by the Son of God in human form, and in a natural manner. In some extraordinary

dinary cases only, for which they were not prepared, and in which their ignorance might have led them into great perplexity, a supernatural revelation was communicated to them. So far, however, as these truths and precepts might have followed of themselves from their natural and acquired knowledge, we may presume, that the third species of inspiration was combined with the first. Thus from the union of these two kinds the most perfect inspiration arose; whence we may conclude, that they were the most usual, though without exclusion of the second and fourth. Those doctrines and precepts which are not arbitrary, but merely rational, as in some of the Psalms for instance, the Proverbs of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, and the book of Job, may aptly be referred to the third species, and the same may be said of them as of history.

Prophecies come under the second and fourth kinds of inspiration. They are imparted by vision and symbolical perceptions in trances or dreams, in which future events are represented as in a picture, or in which human voices and words are heard. This distinction is here to be made, that, when the subject of the prophecy is made known to the prophet by external types, the second kind takes place: but when it is seen or heard by means of an immediate influence on his imagination, the fourth. How far this fourth kind of inspiration is more or less natural, I shall not venture to determine. It is so far supernatural, however, that one man cannot inspire another by its means, but only God himself, or perhaps some being superior to man, under his direction: and inasmuch as we can form no idea of the operation which produces a series of conceptions in the mind, not founded on its former ideas, on its previously acquired knowledge, or on any external perceptions, this kind of inspiration is not only supernatural, but the most wonderful of all. One

thing, however, I must observe, that it happens for the most part, in all probability, if not constantly, in a dream or trance. And the reason of this seems to be, that the person inspired might have a remarkable ground of distinction, whereby to discriminate the divine inspiration from his own thoughts and conceptions. This would be difficult, if not impossible, were the inspiration confounded with the chain of his ordinary conceptions, without any striking mark of distinction, and were it preceded by no warning to point it out as extraordinary and divine. A mere internal admonition, that what a man is about to think will be by divine inspiration, seems scarcely sufficient to secure him from self-deception, if the admonition be unaccompanied with decisive external circumstances, or if the person inspired be assured only by his natural conceptions. If such criterions fail, he cannot be certain, that the thought of an approaching inspiration itself is not his own natural conception, and particularly if he be accustomed to expect inspirations from God. This remark is perfectly consonant to what we learn of immediate inspiration from the holy scriptures. When the prophets say: the spirit of the Lord is upon me: if we suppose it to mean, that the spirit came over them, or fell upon them, it will unquestionably signify a state of supernatural trance. The prophets received what was revealed to them in visions and dreams. When Paul was honoured with that high revelation, he was entranced, so that he knew not whether he was in the body, or out of the body. Peter saw a vision, when he was instructed, that the distinction betwixt the Jews and Gentiles should be done away. An angel appeared to him in prison, to acquaint him, that he should go out of it free. We find, that, in every town upon his journey, the spirit informed Paul, by prophets, and not by an indiscriminate inspiration, that affliction and bondage awaited him in Jerusalem.

At another time, a man stood by him in a dream, telling him what he was to do. These, and many other examples which I could produce, seem to shew, first, that, when an immediate inspiration took place, it happened in trances or dreams; secondly, that, when this did not occur, the divine instruction was communicated by means of external appearances, intelligible expressions; or other signs; and thirdly, that every immediate inspiration was accompanied with such remarkable and extraordinary circumstances as convinced both the inspired person and others of a supernatural influence.

A knowledge of past occurrences was imparted, where it was possible, by means of the third species of inspiration. Here we may limit the divine inspiration to a particular call of God, or a requisition from providence to write (a call that might be communicated to the historian by means of the remarkable circumstances in which he was placed) to the indication of the necessary materials, to the gift of requisite attention, ability, and love of truth, and finally to such a combination of circumstances, as would produce a history as accurate and perfect as the sources whence it was derived would admit, and fully adequate to the purpose for which it was written. On these principles, as it appears to me, should we form our judgment of the historical writers of the Old Testament. They have compiled a true and accurate history from the accounts and documents which they had before them. They frequently refer to those more ancient accounts, as the sources and vouchers of their narration. If in these they found circumstances not true, which however we have no reason to presume, they must have recorded them, supposing them not sufficiently important to have prevented the design and utility of their history. Excepting this case, then, which is not a very probable one, we must allow them the same credibility

as a profane historian, whose history of ancient times is interspersed with improbable stories foreign to his subject. This would be so far from weakening his authority, that it would rather be a proof of his authenticity: for it was the characteristic of the earliest ages to relate natural occurrences in a poetical and allegorical style, to dress up true history in the imagery of fancy, and to give it an appearance of the marvellous, by which none who knew how to strip it of its poetic garb were deceived. Such being the characteristic of the first ages, and the most ancient records we have being written in such a style, it was necessary for the historian carefully to pursue the same track, and by no means divest his account of those traits, which would tend to prove his veracity to posterity.

On these principles, the history of the New Testament has a great pre-eminence over that of the Old, in this respect, that its writers deliver the history of their own times, and relate things which they saw with their own eyes, and heard with their own ears, or which they received from immediate eye or ear-witnesses. As they tell what they heard from the word of life, what they had seen with their eyes, and what they had felt with their hands, or as they had received it from those who saw all from the beginning, and were ministers of the word, and as they relate every thing from the commencement, they have a claim to the confidence of their readers: and when they advance this, they appear by the style of their history, to lay claim only to human credibility, though to the highest degree of it. If to this we add what has been said of that species of inspiration, according to which they wrote, their history will not want any of that divine authority that can be attributed to the testimony of an historian, who, as I shall hereafter shew, must also retain credibility as a man. It will diminish the general authority of their history

history as little as its utility, let a man decide as he will, whether they could be or actually were exempted from all trifling inaccuracies, or defect of memory, in point of time or other unimportant concomitant circumstances; or, which is far more probable, in the extraordinary circumstances in which they were placed, and with their scrupulous exactitude, permitted themselves to leave gaps, where they knew not some incident with certainty. We have at least no sufficient reason to suppose them liable to such faults: and the few apparent contradictions in their accounts may proceed from our ignorance of many particular circumstances, from their thorough conviction of the truth of their history, and the neglect of relating events after a regular plan concerted amongst themselves thence arising, and from the various situations and points of view from which they saw particular occurrences. Their deviation from chronological order may be defended from the consideration, that it is by no means an indispensable duty of an historian to relate events strictly in the order of time, that the sacred writers never professed to do this, and that their writings are not deficient in order, as they have observed that of place, or of similar and correspondent incidents. This mode of justifying them seems to me at least far preferable to that of supposing, that they have actually followed a strict chronological order, and that the same occurrence happened more than once, which is highly improbable.

Those doctrines and precepts which they were capable of deducing from the truths which were known or communicated to them, by the natural powers of their understanding, seem not to have required an immediate inspiration. Such an inspiration would have been of no advantage, and would have converted the sacred writers into speaking-trumpets, which utter just as many words as are put

into them, and no more, or amanuenses, writing only what is dictated to them. Besides what I have already said on this subject, the following reasons seem to prove the reverse of this supposition.

In the first place, it is apparent from their writings, that what they deliver has been revolved in their own minds. They argue and conclude, they lay down principles and consequences, and thence frame new inductions. Had they a particular and immediate revelation of what they thus prove, all this would be in some respects unnecessary, in others improper. In that case, *the Lord said it*, would have been the only valid argument, and a convincing one to those who admitted their divine inspiration. This argument would have been equally valid for the fundamental truths of their system, and for the minuter branches arising from their developement. We may require a man to believe us on our words (and who might with more propriety require thus to be believed than the apostles, were they immediately inspired in every thing they wrote?) and so far as we have a right to require this we need not enter into any proof of the matter to be believed. What we have to prove, perhaps, is our title to such a belief. Nay, it may sometimes be injurious to a good cause, to permit ourselves to enter into an unnecessary demonstration, as when the proof is in itself difficult, and our arguments are not sufficiently clear and persuasive to those whom we would convince. In such a case, having waved our greatest advantage, and appealed to the weight of our arguments, and the judgment of those whom we would convince, we could no longer lay claim to being believed on our assertion, but would have unnecessarily submitted ourselves to the decision of people who were not, perhaps, proper judges of the question. If we do not succeed in satisfying them with our arguments, we have given them a right to reject our assertion.

Let



Let any one determine, whether this is not the case with the apostle Paul; who frequently confirms, what he might have placed beyond a doubt by a mere appeal to that immediate inspiration from which he spoke, by a long series of arguments from revealed truths, invites his readers themselves, for their conviction, to examine the relation of what he advances to the word of God, and leaves it to a difficult demonstration (*but these are things not easy to be understood*) to decide, whether it should be admitted, or rejected. His arguments are in themselves, it is true, neither equivocal nor indecisive, but they might easily be so to those whom the apostle would convince. At all events, however, this prolixity of argumentation was unnecessary, and a far more difficult mode of convincing, than an appeal to immediate inspiration, which might have been more easily proved, had the apostle been in reality immediately inspired in every thing he wrote.

As what I have hitherto said against the immediate inspiration of the apostolic writers, when they do not lay claim to a particular revelation, holds more especially with regard to St. Paul, and his epistles, I may be permitted some remarks relative to that apostle. Peter says of him, that in his letters are things difficult to be understood. But we could scarcely allow this, were the words he utters put into his mouth by the spirit of God. In such a case we might presume, that perspicuity would have been preferred to an obscure style. If it be said: the holy spirit dictated in the style in which Paul himself would have written: such a dictation appears altogether unnecessary, as it would not contribute to the elucidation of the learned apostle's ideas, or to placing them in a clearer order. Besides, Peter says further, that Paul wrote according to the wisdom given to him. What use would he have made of this wisdom, had he written as a mere amanuensis?

What were the advantages of his learning, and profound science, if his tongue or hand alone had been employed in the delivery of divine truths, and not his understanding? This expression seems to me to accord with what I have said of the inspiration of doctrines. Besides their own stock of knowledge and wisdom, acquired by natural means, the apostles had received the necessary illumination and instruction, either by the first or fourth kind of inspiration, and, when they taught, were left to this wisdom as a true and competent guide, by means of which they more amply unfolded the revealed instruction, assimilated in their minds with their own knowledge, applied it to particular cases, and placed it in the proper order and connection. The other apostles received their instructions immediately from Christ; and where this instruction was insufficient, the want was supplied by occasional revelation. It does not appear probable to me, that they were immediately indebted to the gift of the Holy Ghost, which they received at the feast of Pentecost, for the gospel truths which they preached. Necessary as this extraordinary gift was in every point of view, that they might bear testimony of Jesus with success, I cannot persuade myself, that it consisted in a constant and uninterrupted inspiration of those truths. This gift could not render particular inspirations unnecessary, for they themselves communicated the Holy Ghost to others, who did not thereby become inspired, and were far from being exalted to that high degree of illumination which the apostles attained. Finally, Jesus himself declares, that the office of the Holy Ghost was to recal to their minds the remembrance of what he had said to them, some parts of which they had not comprehended, and others forgotten, thus to lead them in the way of truth, and render the instructions they had received from him useful and profitable.—But how does this affect the  
apostle

apostle Paul? He was not fortunate enough to be taught by Jesus during his abode upon earth, and consequently must have received his knowledge by inspiration, as he at different times expressly declares, for instance, 1 Cor. ii. No doubt he had learnt many things from the other apostles, with whom he had actually conversed concerning the truth, as he asserts Gal. ii. 2. As, in the remarkable instance first mentioned, he declares himself to have been immediately instructed by Jesus, it thence appears probable, that all he had learnt was not acquired in this manner. How the sum of the christian doctrines was revealed to the apostle Paul is not easy to determine: were I permitted a conjecture, I would say, that the grand outline of christianity was imparted to him in a revelation or vision, in which Christ, his office, sufferings, and death were represented to him as the antitypes of the high priest and sacrifices of the Levitical law. With this he might have been excited to a diligent comparison of the types with their antitypes. This will explain to us why he employs this comparison more frequently than any other apostle, if he be not the only one who does it, explains christianity from the religious worship of the Jews, and represents it as the antitype or fulfilling of the Mosaical dispensation.

Secondly; The apostles do not pretend to an immediate inspiration of all their words, when they taught orally or by writing. Paul frequently speaks with a kind of doubtfulness, and inconclusive circumspexion, when he determines cases of conscience, and gives precepts to certain persons, and under certain circumstances. And not without reason. For when he unfolds the grand principles and precepts of christianity revealed to him, and applies them to particular cases, his certainty, that a doctrine or precept is a doctrine or commandment of the Lord, must be less in proportion as it is more remote from those

those first principles, and connected with them by a greater number of intermediate ideas. Hence it was, that sometimes he would not venture to give what he says for any thing more than his own private opinion, and, which appears to me very important, makes a distinction between it and the commandments of God. Not I, says he, but the Lord: I and not the Lord. 1 Cor. vii. 10. 12. Were he merely a writer who set down what another thought, such expressions, allege what you will to render them consistent with immediate inspiration, would be most improper and absurd.

Thirdly; The occasionally interspersing the precepts of christianity with personal and domestic circumstances, not immediately connected with them, seems to prove, that on these occasions the pens of the apostles were not guided by the spirit of God. Such are the salutations, professions of friendship, advice to Timothy respecting diet, the mentioning of a cloak and books, and the whole, though excellent, Epistle to Philemon. It may be said, that the mentioning of those things might have been on many accounts useful, even supposing them to have been inspired. Not to observe, that the practical inferences drawn from such passages in opposition to certain foolish sectaries are in general very superfluous and frequently forced (as for instance, when it is attempted to prove the utility of books, and the propriety of study, against those much to be pitied persons who hold them as useless and sinful, from the command of Paul to Timothy, to bring with him the books he had left at Troas) the same would follow, were it admitted, that the apostle delivered only his own private opinion. Who could be supposed to know better than Paul what was permitted to a christian? Who would desire to be more devout and religious than that great apostle?

Fourthly;

Fourthly; Instead of the whole of Christ's discourses, the evangelists frequently give us only short extracts of them, containing, perhaps, what they had particularly remarked, and what they remembered with sufficient clearness and certainty. These short fragments often occasion some obscurity, as in the sermon on the mount, of which probably a very small part indeed is preserved to us. If what we have of it be written faithfully and accurately from memory, we ought the less to regret its shortness and obscurity, which, under such circumstances, was not to be avoided, as it is a proof of the care and fidelity of the writers, who preferred giving little with certainty to much with doubt, and fragments, though with some obscurity, to a connected whole, made by supplying the defects of their memory from their own imagination. Totally different would the case be, were this discourse of Jesus written not from memory, but from immediate inspiration. Had the original been dictated, we might reasonably presume, that we should have found it as complete and connected as could be required; and even had it been necessary, that this interesting discourse should have been abridged, it would have cost the spirit of truth, that inspired the writers, no greater miracle to have made it more intelligible, by a less degree of brevity and inaccuracy. The writers of the life of Jesus have done all that could be required of men left to their own veracity, judgment and memory, though the latter were exalted in the extraordinary circumstances in which they were placed. But were the treasures of Omniscience laid open to them, and the discourse of Jesus deserved to have been handed down to posterity in a more perfect, connected, and perspicuous manner, if they have made no use of those treasures, or used them so little to our satisfaction, this forbearance appears to us so much the more strange and incomprehensible, as it would render that  
supernatural

supernatural communication of a more ample account in a great measure useless and superfluous. If we suppose any one, after having heard a remarkable but very long discourse, to set down the most important parts that he remembered, and others, who were also present, to do the same, their performances would exactly resemble the extracts of certain discourses of Jesus given us by the evangelists. Two of them would frequently give us the same things, in the very same words, but one would often want what would be found in the other, and one would be on the whole less intelligible than the other, from the omission of particular circumstances, though on the other hand it might be in some cases more clear. Thus they would serve to illustrate each other, and the reader would find a compensation for the perplexities remaining, in the assurance he would thence receive, that the writers had not copied one another, and that they had not forged or falsified the whole in concert. Now on the supposition, that the discourse was at the same time copied *verbatim*, and that these two abridgers saw this copy, rectifying and filling up the deficiencies of their abstracts by it, if they did not completely transcribe it, we should find no considerable variation between the two, so as to occasion a perplexity or apparent contradiction. If, then, we find such, we must presume, either that they had no such copy, or that they did not make use of it.

Still there is a particular difficulty with respect to such speeches of Jesus as were spoken only once, on occasion of some festival, which were not sufficiently copious to require an abridgment, and were too important for his disciples to permit themselves purposely to make any alteration in them. Such are the words of Jesus at the institution of the holy supper. Four times they are related, and always with some little variation. Matthew leaves out the addition to *this is my body, which is given or broken*  
for

for you, and also the words that are in one instance twice repeated, *this do in remembrance of me*: but he says, *this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many* (not, for you) *for the remission of sins*. Mark is still shorter; he leaves out the words, *drink all of you thereof*, and also, *for the remission of sins*. Luke has the addition, *which is given for you*; *this do in remembrance of me*, and further, *this cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you*. Paul relates these words most fully. I shall first notice the alteration that he makes in attributing to Jesus the words, *which is broken for you*, instead of, *which is given for you*. He says twice, *in remembrance of me*, which none of the others does, and the last time with the important addition, *as often as ye drink*: finally he says, *this cup is the New Testament in my blood*, leaving out, *that is shed for many*, according to Matthew, and *for you*, according to Luke, *for the remission of sins*. These variations, additions, and omissions, it is true, do not alter the sense of the words and institution of Jesus in any material point: still they are actual alterations of one and the same speech, which, as it was only once spoken, could not possibly have been spoken with all these variations. We can only suppose one of the evangelists, therefore, to have repeated the words of our Redeemer with accuracy, and the others to have made some alteration, omission, or addition: or probably not one of them has cited them exactly. If either have done it, however, my opinion would be in favour of St. Paul, as he seems to lay claim to a particular revelation.

On the supposition, that the evangelists wrote these words of Jesus not from memory, and according to their general purport, but from a particular inspiration, this varying relation of a speech, which, as has been observed, was not so prolix as to require an intentional abbreviation, and was sufficiently important

tant to be given at full length, is totally inexplicable. In the first place, the spirit of inspiration was the spirit of wisdom and truth. Truth requires, that the words attributed to any one be related exactly as they were spoken, and not otherwise, particularly when it is so said. *Thus said he*, will not allow of any abridgment, or an expression of the speaker's meaning in terms different from his own. Unquestionably the spirit of inspiration knew precisely the words which Jesus spoke, and the order in which they were spoken: what then could prevent the evangelists from writing them exactly as they were uttered, if they were dictated to them by that spirit? It must be admitted, that it was impossible for them to write otherwise than as it was dictated to them: and why should the same speech be dictated by the same spirit of truth differently to each? To say, that the evangelists were in this instance inspired by the spirit of truth, would be the same thing as if they had copied the speech from the most exact protocol; and how should there be protocols of the same speech designedly differing from each other? But their variations from each other, and consequently from an accurate protocol, evidently prove, that they did not copy from any one. Where then would have been the use of such inspiration, or what would it have availed them to have had an authentic copy before their eyes, if they were unable, or unwilling, to write after them, or to employ them in supplying the deficiencies, or correcting the errors of their memory? Is it not obvious, that the supposition of an immediate inspiration, in cases where they have notwithstanding written as though they possessed it not, annihilates the only valid justification of their want of agreement, additions, or omissions, and even destroys that credit which we might give their narration, if they wrote from memory? The credibility of their testimony would gain nothing by this supposition, which



which it would not from the circumstance of their variations, on the presumption, that they were not immediately inspired. These variations prove their not having written in concert, the greatest natural confidence in the truth of things of which they had no doubt, and the consequent neglect of all prudential and cautious observance of things of little moment to give an air of truth to their story. On the scheme of immediate inspiration, I do not see how these could be brought in support of their credibility: for this seems to me to be the same as if they wrote from one source, and after the same original; and all their claim to our belief rests on the truth and precision of the document from which they drew their testimony. So far as what they say is not from their own memory, but taken from a certain document, or to be considered as such, the arguments for or against their veracity, derived from their particular agreement or variation, are of no weight. When I apply this to the writers of the life of Jesus, it appears to me, that the supposition of an immediate inspiration in things which they might have related from their own testimony, having seen and heard them, takes from them what constitutes the proper credibility of a witness, which we term *fidem humanam*, and leaves no other ground for our believing them, than our opinion of an immediate inspiration, to which they are indebted for all they say: consequently all the arguments to be drawn from the comparison of various testimonies in support of their veracity fall to the ground. Thus the circumstance, that they themselves heard or saw what they relate, or carefully recite them after eye or ear-witnesses, a circumstance on which they appear to have laid great stress, tends not in the least to the conviction of their readers: for, if we suppose an immediate inspiration to have taken place, it was unnecessary for them to have had any previous knowledge of what was dictated to them, as this one

source

source of truth rendered every other superfluous. Still, if we would convince an unbeliever of the truth of the gospel history, we must begin with proving the validity, care, certainty and veracity of its testimony, from an examination and comparison of its accounts, as if we spoke of mere human witnesses to transactions, and not as copyists of what was laid before them. It may be said, that it is allowable to argue from false grounds, to gain opponents who will not admit the truth: but what would this avail, when, after having convinced our antagonist by false positions, we again reject those positions, deny the human credibility of the gospel historians, and, recurring to immediate inspiration, require them to believe their testimony, on grounds not only different from the former, but which exclude them? Would not those whom we should endeavour to lead to conviction by such opposite ways be altogether confounded? And might they not say: you have at length convinced me, that all the credibility of the evangelists, who have delivered to the world an account of Jesus and his doctrines with such great care, circumspection, and love of truth, arises from a circumstance to which no witness or historian has any pretensions. I might readily grant, that their wonderful agreement in the main points of their narration, and the many other proofs of their authenticity, that impress themselves on the mind of an unprejudiced, feeling, and attentive reader, indicate the finger of God, and the direction of providence, by which they were selected as the most capable and fit for the purpose, endowed with such pre-eminent gifts, adequate knowledge, and ardent zeal for the truth, and placed in such advantageous circumstances, that its great ends must be attained by their testimony. This seems to me all that a reasonable man, who thinks justly, can require, to satisfy himself of their credibility: it is also all that we can ascribe

to them, if we would allow them any credit as actual witnesses. If you hold them out to me in this light, I examine them, and find them worthy of being believed. But if, not content with this, you seek farther to confirm their testimony, and for this well-meant purpose ascribe to them an immediate inspiration, you will destroy all the favourable impressions, that had been made on my mind, of their truth, capability, and the like. Their qualities and character as witnesses become altogether insignificant to me, when I consider them in the light of mere copyists, and you make me suspect the means by which you led me to conviction. Do you not perceive, that, endeavouring to augment the credibility of their testimony by this assumption, you in fact lessen it? You thus found all the truth of their narration on the single principle, that they were inspired in the manner before-mentioned. Admitting, that they said this of themselves as clearly and decisively as you assert it of them, no reasoning on their character, capability, or the like, as we could judge of them from what they wrote (for the character of a mere copyist cannot be discovered from what he writes) could assure us that they spoke the truth, when they gave themselves out for inspired, but only an immediate infallible perception of it: and thus, it seems, we ourselves must be inspired, to be certain that they were so.

Fifthly; Were the apostles under the influence of an immediate inspiration, whenever the truths of christianity presented themselves to their minds, or they delivered them to others, either by speech or writing, it seems to me, that they could not have had a lively and effectual knowledge of them, and thus could not have communicated them to others in the most forcible and efficacious manner. The notions which they received and imparted were not their own, or the production of their mental faculties, but

infused into them: hence all the consequences deduced from those notions, and founded on them alone, must be as foreign to the apostles, and as little to be ascribed to them, as the notions themselves. Thus their religious opinions were no more their own, than the opinions of him who dictates a letter, are those of him who writes it. It would avail little to say, that the apostles were left to themselves when they meditated on the doctrines of christianity, but not when they delivered them to others. For, let me ask, was it not the design of their meditation on those truths, that they should be saved, and of their delivery of them, that others should be so? If, then, their own reflection, exclusive of all immediate inspiration, were sufficient to effect their own salvation (and if it were insufficient, none of their christian notions, virtues, and works, or any thing moral in them, was proper to themselves) had they been left to themselves in the delivery of them, as they would have expressed their thoughts in the manner in which they were present to their minds, it would have been sufficient to the salvation of others. All that was necessary for them, as teachers, to make others wise to salvation, was the gift of expressing what they thought with order, aptness, and perspicuity: which gift was imparted to them once for all, and appertained to that wisdom with which they were endued. Besides, a man easily expresses with perspicuity what he clearly conceives.

Let us also farther consider, that the apostolical writings do not contain doctrines merely speculative, and dry theories, but practical truths, which the sacred writers themselves felt, and which were by them made fruitful: they spoke from the fulness of a heart moved and sanctified by the doctrines they delivered. All they preach is practical, and every where shews, that their notions were conformable to the spirit of christianity. That which thus comes from the heart  
must

must go to the heart, and their readers and hearers must have caught that noble fire, which, issuing from their breasts animated their words: but this would not happen, unless they supposed, that the perceptions, opinions, and affections expressed by the apostles were their own, originating from their own frame of mind and disposition, and flowing from their own hearts. This impression, however, would be at once enfeebled or annihilated, were it believed, or merely conjectured, that they were not left to their own hearts, but wrote under the guidance of some foreign influence. A reader of the apostolical writings, who believes the immediate inspiration of every word and thought, and, as will naturally be the case, does not forget this as he reads, will think, perhaps, somewhat in the following manner of the passage where Paul praises charity, 1 Cor. xiii. How excellent those thoughts! How exalted, how affecting, the apostle's description of charity! How forcibly is its supereminence expressed! How must the heart of him who so valued it, and painted it in so masterly a manner, have been warmed and penetrated by it! But what proof have I, that the apostle actually felt what flowed from his pen, and that he did not praise virtue with the lips of Balaam? The opinions, ideas, and words, which I read, are not his, but he was inspired so to write, even though he thought differently. I learn from this only what he, and what I, ought to think and conceive: but his words by no means convince me, that his heart was actually so charitable, and his character actually so virtuous, or even that it is possible for man to attain such exalted notions. Probably, when he wrote this, he was only as sounding brass, or as a tinkling cymbal.

On the supposition, that every word is immediately inspired, I know not what could be said to counter-vail these reflections, and to give the doctrines of the

apostle due weight and influence. Were we to say, the spirit of inspiration so adapted itself to the actual ideas and opinions of the sacred writer, as to inspire him with no others but those which he really felt and thought, only perhaps giving them the most suitable expressions; it might be answered: where then was the necessity of his being inspired, to say what he might have said without inspiration, and which, if his feelings and notions were true and just, he must have expressed truly in the simple, artless language of the heart? This inspiration which you suppose, was unnecessary, of no use, and gives the whole a disadvantageous aspect. It was useless, since to be convinced that what he recommends is true, godly, and christian, I need only perceive its perfect consonance to the doctrines and precepts of Christ, without its being necessary to suppose that it was divinely inspired for my farther conviction. To be assured, however, that it is possible for me to attain such exalted notions, and to be instigated to endeavour after such virtue, it is of much importance to me to know how much of this virtue Paul himself possessed; of which nothing can so well and fully convince me as his own expressions.

If it be admitted, then, that the discourses of the apostles have gained in perspicuity, precision, and certainty, by an immediate inspiration throughout, they must on the other hand have lost with respect to their power of moving and edifying. The loss is certain; but that they have gained may be disputed. For the messengers of God have ever spoken a language exhibiting all those faults and unavoidable imperfections which human language cannot be without, if it be intelligible, instructive, and efficient. It is said, that a greater degree of certainty arises from the belief, that every word comes immediately from God. But might we not have a sufficient degree of certainty, without supposing an immediate inspiration

inspiration of every thing they wrote? If we conceive, that the sacred writers had the requisite sincerity and abilities to bear testimony of Jesus and his doctrines, and that as often as they lay claim to a divine revelation, or instruction from Christ, they actually received this revelation or instruction, and have delivered it faithfully and accurately, I know not what more a reasonable man can require to edify by their writings, and to be convinced, that he actually reads divine truths. Should any doubts remain of their having properly applied the divine revelations and instructions, with which they were honoured, and of their having deduced just consequences from them, unmingled with any false notions, let us only do what they themselves require of their readers and hearers: let us prove their writings by the test of the divine truths which they have delivered. Let us examine whether their conceptions of the doctrines of christianity agree with the word of the Lord, and with the revelations to which they appeal. Let us inquire whether they adhere to the divine truth in their explanations and developement of it, and whether their consequences be really valid, and deducible from it. If we find this, and no one has hitherto proved the contrary, we should be unreasonable and unjust not to be satisfied with the degree and kind of divine inspiration here admitted. Let us duly consider, that, were the sacred writers perfectly sincere and faithful in what they deliver, their writings must have a sufficient degree of credibility for every man, since they were placed by God in circumstances so extraordinarily favourable, that they could and must teach the truths of the gospel with sufficient perfection. Thus their integrity, and love of truth, are the grand points on which the credit to be given to their doctrines depends. Were they sincere, we may be certain, without supposing all their words to have been immediately inspired, that their

writings display the true spirit of christianity and revelation. If, however, they were wanting in love of truth and integrity, or we be not fully assured they were not, our belief of an immediate inspiration cannot satisfy or confirm us: for this belief must be founded on their own assertion and testimony, which, if we doubt their truth and sincerity, can be of no weight. Hence we see how important and indispensable integrity and a love of truth, which, with the necessary abilities, constitute what we term *fidem humanam*, are for a sacred writer, whether of history, doctrines, or precepts, if he would actually obtain our trust and confidence.

PROP. XXVIII. p. 142.

*On Miracles.*

MIRACLES constitute an important object of inquiry, both to the defenders and opponents of the christian revelation. In modern times, more especially, their nature and demonstrability have been carefully investigated, and endeavours have been used to support them against the objections of sceptics and unbelievers. Much, however, as has been written on both sides of the question, what our author has advanced in his XXVIIIth proposition, in explanation and defence of miracles, seems to me perfectly just, and in some measure new. His ideas on the subject he has given, as usual, with brevity. I am persuaded, therefore, that a more ample development of them will not be without use.

In the first place it may be asked: are miracles so far supernatural as to be actually repugnant to the nature of things, and true and proper exceptions to the general plan of God, according to which he governs the world, and effects his purposes in it;

or



or are they supernatural only so far as, from our knowledge and views of the nature of things, their powers, and laws of action, they appear to us to be deviations from the general scheme of providence, and contradictory to nature? A thorough examination of this question will, I believe, throw great light on the subject of miracles.

The first notion of a miracle that strikes our minds is, that it is an extraordinary and unusual occurrence, deviating from general experience. This we may admit, at least as a definition of the term. But if we bring miracles in proof of a divine mission, or a more immediate revelation, the question is, whether miracles, considered as merely extraordinary and unusual occurrences, be sufficient to stamp credit on a messenger asserted to be from God, or it be necessary, to the full conviction of those to whom he is sent, that they discover in his works a power far beyond that of nature. They who confine the idea of a miracle merely to the unusual and extraordinary, to require nothing more to the demonstrability of miracles, maintain that the circumstance of a very unusual occurrence, brought as a proof of a divine mission, effected at the nod and command of the divine messenger, exactly at the time, and under such circumstances that it cannot be attributed to the apparently producing cause, is a sufficient demonstration, that the Lord of nature declares himself thereby. This notion of miracles sets aside the objection made by many to the immediate interposition of God, that, if they be not contradictions to the general scheme of providence, they must be considered as alterations and improvements in it. And these would more easily reconcile themselves to miracles, were they considered merely as extraordinary effects, produced in ways hidden from us though natural, and by inscrutable means, but so wisely ordered by providence, as to confirm our belief in new instructions

from God, in an unequivocal manner. Bonnet, in his philosophical inquiry into the arguments for christianity, has lately considered miracles in this light. According to him, they are occurrences which were included in the established principles of nature, or founded on the active powers of the world, but so constituted as in appearance not to arise from the usual order of things. This is, in his opinion, clear and evident, when they are not so related to the apparent means employed to produce them, that we may deem those means their real effective causes. If sight be given to one born blind, by touching his eyes, and commanding him to see; if a dead body, that has lain some days in the grave, and has already begun to corrupt, be restored to life, after a prayer to God, and the words, I say unto thee, arise: a miracle performed under such circumstances is a decisive declaration of the Lord of nature in behalf of him who performs it. I cannot perceive, that this explanation lessens the demonstrability of miracles. So far as the effect is no way connected with the powers and means employed in producing it, or proportionate to them, and presupposes a secret artful capacity in the scheme of the world, which can be employed or perceived by no one but the Creator and Ruler of the whole, the miracle is a proof of the hand of God, and particularly a valid credential for the performer, when he expressly announces himself as a messenger from God, performs the miracle itself in confirmation of the truth of his embassy and doctrines, and calls upon God in prayer to grant him the necessary power.

What Hartley advances as conjectural agrees, for the most part, with this notion of miracles. Amongst the instrumental powers by which miracles may be produced he reckons superior spirits, and influences from above, considering the whole spiritual world in such a connection, that one part is an instrument to  
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the perfection of the rest, and that higher beings employ their greater and more extensive faculties, to the divine purposes of promoting the happiness of the lower orders. This view of the subject seems perfectly consonant to the notions held out to us in the scriptures. According to it, miracles are but relatively supernatural, and not true and proper exceptions to the general scheme of God, according to which he governs the world, and effects his purposes in it. Thus it will be unnecessary for us to consider them as *immediate* acts of that omnipotence, to which God, if we may be permitted to speak of him in such human terms, must necessarily have recourse, were there, in his grand scheme of providence and government of the world, no natural secondary causes, that could be employed to effect the purposes intended by those miracles. We may say, then, with Bonnet, that God has pre-ordained every thing by one sole act of his will, that there is only one single miracle, which comprizes the immeasurable series of things that we term usual and ordinary, and the much smaller number of those that we style extraordinary, and that this incomprehensible miracle is the creation.

Which ever of the given explanations of miracles, that exclude from the idea of them the immediate interposition of God, be admitted, it appears to me; that the ground for the demonstrability of miracles, considered as immediate effects of God's omnipotence, usually derived from the moral attributes of God, loses nothing of its force. God, some will say, would, in a great measure, renounce the privilege of being the moral governor of the world, and render it impossible for him ever to give mankind a more immediate instruction, or an extraordinary illumination of the mind, if he permitted, in behalf of an impostor, and for the confirmation of lies, effects so unusual, and contrary to the common course of things,

things, that the human understanding could not ascribe them to their proximate causes, nor to any means it could discover, but must refer them to an invisible power and inscrutable wisdom. In that case, the sole criterion\* by which men could distinguish the divine nature of such appearances would be suspicious, nay totally inconclusive. We can as little determine, from our own experience, and the testimony of our senses, whether miracles adduced in support of a divine mission be, besides what is above-mentioned, the immediate act of God, or not, as we can solve the question, whether there be any truly natural powers; for instance, whether gravitation be properly a power of God, or a power of nature, or whether the occurrences which we term

\* When I speak of miracles as the only certain criterion of an immediate revelation from God, I consider them as including prophecies. For that a man should truly and clearly foretel future events, dependent on unknown circumstances, and deducible from the existing sources of information by no human science or cunning, is not less a miracle, than any other occurrence that departs from the ordinary course of nature. The Jewish Rabbies distinguish the promulgation of the law, on which they ground the divine authority of their revelation, from miracles, which, in their opinion, are no sufficient proofs of a mission from God. But this distinction is frivolous and unfounded. The public delivery of their law proves the divine authority of Moses and his mandates, only if considered as a miracle. That this miracle happened publicly was an accidental circumstance, by no means altering or destroying its extraordinary and miraculous nature. If it were not a true miracle, it was no more than a mere human performance, and probably a well-intended imposture of the law-giver, who was desirous of giving his code the stamp of divine authority. With equal reason, it seems to me, might we christians say, that we ground not the divinity of our religion on miracles, but on the resurrection of Jesus; as this, if sufficiently proved, renders the allegation of all other miracles in defence of christianity in a certain degree superfluous. But to this it may be objected: if the resurrection be not a miracle, it proves nothing. The same answer may be made to the Jews: what the promulgation of their law proves, it must prove as a miracle; and if it be no miracle, it proves nothing.

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natural be not on every occasion immediate effects of God's power. Experience gives us no information whether God act mediately, or immediately, either in miraculous or ordinary cases. All that experience and observation tells us is, whether the occurrence which we see be similar to other experiences and analogies or not; and all our reasoning, which is never certain or secure, in judging of the powers of nature, when it oversteps the bounds of experience and observation, is equally unable to inform us what those powers are capable of performing, in new combinations, and by secret properties. Thus it appears, we must adhere to these indeterminate characteristics of miracles, that they are unusual and extraordinary; that the physical causes and means in the performer's power, and which he employs, are not adequate to the effect; and that they are displayed expressly in confirmation of a divine mission, and to enforce such doctrines and precepts as are worthy of God, according to our rational ideas of him and his attributes; consistent with the relation in which he stands to his intelligent creatures, as their Creator, Governor, and Father; adequate to the wants, wishes, and expectations of those creatures, and indispensable to their attaining the summit of their happiness. Still more certain will these distinguishing marks of the divine origin of a system be, if it be demonstrable, that the precepts given to men in a miraculous manner are not only of the utmost importance to their happiness and virtue, but such as without this instruction they could never have discovered, or at least not so speedily, universally, and with sufficient certainty and perfection. As such a divine miracle should be strikingly distinguishable from illusions, and tricks of legerdemain, I would consider it as a necessary characteristic, in this point of view, that the miracle be in itself important, particularly as to its good effects, and also firm and lasting.

lasting. The juggler can perform things by dexterity and slight of hand, which will astonish beholders, especially of the ignorant multitude. Even the attentive observer, however well acquainted with the works of nature, is not always able to discover the secret. But these performances of art produce only an empty spectacle, and an object of surprise, never any useful or durable effect; whence we may suspect them of deceit, though we cannot detect the artifice. The miracles which the scriptures record of Jesus and his apostles are not liable to this suspicion, as they were directed to good ends, and produced lasting effects. When a blind man was restored to sight by such a miracle, it was not for a moment, but for his whole life. I make no objection to those who, amongst the characteristics of a divine miracle, reckon a certain external seemliness, *decorum Dei*, whence it must have some worth, dignity, and importance, distinguishing it from the puerile and sottish miracles, feigned by the legends of superstition in the dark ages. The miracles related in the scriptures have all this value and decorum, and, a very few excepted, are not exposed to the smallest shadow of objection on this head. Finally, it seems, that miracles should be employed very seldom, and only when indispensably necessary to the attainment of the end proposed. By frequent repetition, particularly as they were durable, they would lose their aim, and in a great measure, if not wholly, fail of producing conviction. They should prove to us, that the Lord of nature speaks: but this they would do chiefly from being extraordinary and unusual occurrences, ceasing to do it if they were frequent, and the miraculous œconomy continual. If we suppose the frequently repeated miracles to happen in a certain order discoverable by the human understanding, we must compare them with such natural phænomena as we cannot yet explain from their  
analogy

analogy and agreement with our other experiences and observations: but we should by no means be justified in relinquishing the hope, that we should some time or other be able to do this, or that they might be reckoned in the course of nature by future inquirers, after more experiments and observations. If, however, they happened frequently, but so irregularly as to be reducible to no order, they would probably not enlighten, but perplex our understanding. We should then be unable to determine what was natural, and supernatural, or unnatural: for our judgment in this respect is ultimately founded on experience. We can neither discover *a priori* the actions of bodies, nor the laws by which they act. Were there not an universal uninterrupted uniformity in these actions and their laws, but sometimes one action, at others its opposite, took place under the same circumstances; and if, having deduced a certain law of action from a number of cases, we found this law did not apply to many cases perfectly resembling them; our presumption of a consequence similar to those of our former observations would be highly uncertain. Whatever were our foresight, we must ever remain doubtful, whether what we had conceived to be a law of nature actually took place, or whether it were a law of nature, or not. Let us suppose, that the menace affixed to some unlawful marriages in the Mosaic dispensation, *they shall die without children*, is so to be understood, that the fruitfulness of unlawful marriages would be prevented by a constant miracle; in this case we could not distinguish the natural from the miraculous, and should be led to conjecture, that, probably, the cause of this constant unfruitfulness depended on physical principles unknown to us. Were the miraculous cures which the people attribute to sympathy, and so confidently expect in fevers, wounds, and other maladies, placed beyond a doubt, and fully proved to a natural philosopher by incontrovertible

testible experience, his former theory of the powers, laws, and actions of nature, must assuredly appear to him, suspicious, imperfect, and defective. He would unquestionably enlarge his limited ideas of them, and confess, that many things were possible in nature, which he hitherto had not supposed, or had deemed absurd and impossible. Numerous and continued miracles would place us all in a similar situation: not only would our understanding be perplexed, and our knowledge rendered uncertain thereby, but they would have a most pernicious influence on our conduct and activity. Deprived of analogy, the guide of our lives, we should have no preponderating probability, that like effects would follow like labours and exertions; whence we should have no ground or rule of conduct, and be deterred from all action, or rashly yield to every fantastic hope, or romantic scheme. The extreme rarity of miracles seems to me proper, beneficial, and necessary, for another reason. They should be nothing but the seal which God sets on his instructions to mankind, as the stamp of their authenticity. Did they abound, they would too strongly excite the curiosity of the many, draw their chief attention, which should be occupied in examining and meditating on the truth to be believed, too much to the signs, and produce an inordinate desire of miracles, inimical to the reception of truth. Besides, men would leave the proper demonstrations of truth out of the question, and not seek to discover its connection, but, accustomed to these extraneous proofs, would require a particular miracle for every precept. How much true earnest meditation on religion would be hindered, and sensuality and superstition promoted thereby, must be obvious to every one. Were miracles so multiplied, revealed religion would probably become a kind of diplomatic study to the greater part of mankind, and the substance of it would remain uninvestigated



investigated and unapplied. For as the diplomatist chiefly employs himself in examining marks, seals, and the like, thinking christians would give themselves up too much to the examination of the seals of their religion, at the expence of more useful and important occupations. I would compare miracles, therefore, with Herculean remedies, as they are called, in medicine, which properly timed, and in cases of extreme necessity, produce the most salutary effects, but used frequently, and without occasion, are highly dangerous and destructive.

If what has been advanced be just, the objection to religious miracles (and we find no reasonable grounds for the admission of any others) that they are contradictory to the laws of nature, and presume an alteration in the decrees of God, is wholly insignificant and unfounded. But it seems to me, that this objection may be removed, even if the preceding explanation be not admitted.

To another objection, which the celebrated Hume has made against miracles, or rather against their adequacy to establish the authority of any thing announced, our author, in my opinion, has given an answer the most valid and weighty hitherto adduced against his manifest sophisms. Hume maintains, that, if miracles be contradictory to the general course of things, confirmed to us as steadfast and unalterable by the universal experience of all mankind, and all our notions and conclusions respecting actual occurrences must be grounded on this universal experience, no human testimony can be sufficient to convince us, that this general course of nature has been interrupted in any particular instance. For human accounts and testimonies are not confirmed as true and certain by any such constant experience: on the contrary, experience teaches us, that men, prone to belief in the marvellous, particularly in matters of religion, lie and deceive themselves. He admits only a single instance

instance in which a miracle can be sufficiently confirmed. "No testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind, that its falsehood would be more miraculous, than the fact, which it endeavours to establish: and even in that case, there is a mutual destruction of arguments, and the superior only gives us an assurance suitable to that degree of force, which remains, after deducting the inferior."

This, with some limitation, might be granted him, without, perhaps, detracting from the credibility of the scripture miracles: and could we satisfy his demand, the higher and more over-stretched it is, the more strongly would the credibility of those miracles be proved. This our author actually performs, whilst, true to his system of necessity, he remarks, that, with respect to the human mind, its actions and movements follow certain laws as steadfast, a course of nature as unalterable, and an analogy as unfailing, as those which take place in the corporeal world. He shews, though briefly, that, on the supposition of the testimonies in behalf of the gospel miracles being false, as great a miracle, and as great a deviation from analogy, must have taken place in the moral world, as must have happened in the physical, supposing these testimonies to be true. Miracles in the physical world present us with new and unheard of occurrences, and an apparent connection of causes and effects, such as we have never experienced, and cannot explain in the same way as all our other observations and knowledge of the course of things. In the moral world they exhibit to us new men, that perceive, think, and act in a manner which we could neither expect nor believe from our internal feelings, or from our constant and uniform experience of mankind.

Men so wonderful, so singular in their kind, must the first preachers of christianity have been, had the  
miraculous

miraculous events, on which their doctrines and proceedings were founded, been purposely forged by them, or had their belief of them arisen from self-deception. In the first case they would have been impostors, but such impostors as the world never beheld. For when men practise deceit it is with a view to gain; but their deceptions led to their own detriment. Void of fear and hope, the usual incentives to human undertakings, they were led to frame their impositions neither by one, nor the other. They feared none of those things which impostors usually fear: they braved the opposition of a whole world stirred up against them, and the obstacles thrown in their way by artifice, industry, learning, power, and authority. Quite defenceless, they involuntarily encountered all these enemies, and went as sheep to the slaughter. But perhaps they figured to themselves the contest less arduous, and victory more easy? No: they did not flatter themselves with fallacious representations. This is clear from their own and their teacher's explanations on this head, and from the never flinching constancy with which, to the end of their lives, they endured the extremest troubles and persecutions, without expressing the least astonishment. Perhaps the dread of greater evils made them so patiently submit to the less? They that renounced life, with all its comforts and enjoyments, had no greater evil to fear in this world. If their imposture went so far as to teach and confirm a future state, which they themselves did not believe, they had as little to fear in it, as to hope. If however they believed in future rewards and punishments, they could consider the propagation of this belief by means of a grand wilful imposture, and vile blasphemous lies; at most as pardonable from the benevolence of their purpose, but by no means as a title to reward, and a duty of conscience. Marvelous would it have been, under such circumstances,

had they felt themselves impelled to this imposture by the fear of future punishment. Hence it is evident, that they had nothing to hope, unless the being considered as founders and heads of a poor persecuted sect, that must be as contemptible to them as they were in the eyes of the world, and on condition of being themselves most eminently exposed to the poverty, contempt, and persecution attending it. And even this wretched hope, of being the chiefs of a proscribed and deceived people, they could not, with any shadow of reason, in their totally deserted and defenceless situation, entertain. If notwithstanding it be supposed, that ambition, though divested of all interest and every view to pleasure or comfort, was the true motive of their undertaking, it cannot but appear strange, that this should have entered into the heart of a single individual. Even in this case such individual would have assumed to himself exclusively the supremacy, in order to satisfy his ambition. But here we have at least eleven competitors, each of whom, by similar pretensions, incroaches on the ambition of the rest, makes their claim to be considered as discoverers questionable, and sets insupportable limits to their authority. Nay these men, who had sacrificed every thing to their ambition and lust of power, placed a twelfth by their side by lot; and, which is most extraordinary, bore without repining, that a young man, who had publicly been their persecutor, should, without their knowledge and assent, associate himself with them, and pretend to like powers and prerogatives. They displayed no envy at the happy success of his endeavours, or his increasing fame, though it seemed to obscure theirs: nay they permitted this new comer to attack their dearest prejudice, oppose himself to them as one of the most eminent on a signal occasion, and openly accuse them of dissimulation. Their deeds, it is true, were actually, or in appearance, so powerful and striking, that they

they not unfrequently excited the utmost reverence in their beholders; but then, with a great appearance of modesty and humility, they refused the honour and admiration themselves, transferring it wholly to God, and their crucified master. Their own assertions, that they were free from all ambition and lust of power, are perhaps of no weight: but when they promulgated an express injunction of their teacher against those passions, and a recommendation of humility, they obviously acted contrary to what is supposed to have been their inducement, and forgot the only purpose they could have had in carrying on their imposture. Still their conduct is a settled contradiction to this purpose, and they could not have acted otherwise, had it been quite different. Had they this purpose, and had they continued to act in this manner, notwithstanding they obviously failed of effecting it, it would be a miracle not to be explained.

An adroit and cunning impostor would play off his deceptions in private: he would endeavour to withdraw as much as possible from the observant eye every circumstance that could tend to detect him: and were he not certain of his point, either truly or in imagination, he would not permit it to be brought to a test, which might easily discover him, or leave it to proofs, the validity of which every one might ascertain. He would exert all the powers of his mind to conceal his secrets, on which the success of his imposture must depend, and to give a due consistency to his imposture itself. In this he would not suffer himself easily to be caught. In collateral circumstances he would be rather sparing, and exhibit his deceptions singly, as he could not adjust every occurrence, and his preceding and subsequent conduct, so naturally to his plan, but that they might awaken suspicion. The opposite of all this appears in those who bore testimony of Jesus. Had they been impostors,

postors, they could have hit upon no scheme more improbable, than that of deceiving by pretended miracles. It did not depend on the extraordinary penetration of a few to discover their falsehood, but it was in the power of every one who had common understanding to do so, and were they not concerned in the plot, they must consequently pronounce its doom. Still more, they unnecessarily exposed themselves to the hazard of being detected, by promising to impart the gift of working miracles; actually imparting it, according to their own accounts; giving instructions for its proper use, and dehortations from the abuse of it; and finally punishing those who were guilty of such abuse. The more easy and inevitable the discovery of an imposture under such circumstances, the less must they who went so far have feared it. And were it notwithstanding undiscovered, producing such an important and durable change in the world as no true occurrence has ever yet effected, this would be the greatest miracle.—But it was probably the imprudence of the pretended workers of miracles, that led them to appeal to the performance of them in proof of their mission; and their being believed was owing to the still greater folly of the spectators. —But how is this extreme imprudence reconcileable with that cunning and caution displayed in the artful sketch of their imposture, which are such, that we must suppose them capable of having forged the gospel history, or falsified it to answer their purpose, without the least trace of this forgery or falsification appearing, and so suitably and naturally adapting their subsequent conduct to the character they had once assumed, as to be deemed the most sincere and open-hearted of mankind? If we do not allow them such artfulness or badness of heart, as purposely to have forged or falsified the gospel history, so far as it concerns themselves, and the contradiction between their preceding and subsequent thoughts and concep-  
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tions; this change in their minds, supposing the miracles to which they ascribe this change not to have happened, must be attributed to the immediate effect of a miracle on their brains.

If it be attempted to explain miracles by the lax term of fanaticism, and, to make this the easier, the messengers of Jesus be considered at once as impostors and fanatics, they must have been deceived themselves in those points in which they attempted to deceive others. Thus their enthusiasm must have led them to believe the resurrection of Jesus, which was the grand theme of their discourses, and the foundation of their whole system, to be true. If this enthusiasm were not singular in its kind, and altogether miraculous, they must have turned the whole attention of their minds to that point, expected it so long, and figured it to themselves so frequently and forcibly, that their heated imaginations at length impressed it on their minds as vividly as perception itself could have done. Thus enthusiastic notions arise, and thus must their fanaticism have originated. But their account of the origin of their belief in the resurrection of their master does not agree with this. They expected it so little, as they tell us, that they could not give credit to it. They doubted it in the highest degree; and it seemed as impossible to them as it ever can do to the present opponents of christianity. If, under such circumstances, they believed it as fanatics, their fanaticism must have been a miracle. If it be said that they forged their accounts, in order to avoid all objection and suspicion of fanaticism, it must be granted, that they knew themselves to be fanatics, and therefore sought to guard against the disadvantageous conjectures of others. This clashes with the confident certainty each individual fanatic must have had of the truth of his imagination. They must have been conscious, that the grounds, on which they were convinced

of the resurrection of Jesus, were insufficient to convince others. Thus they must have had recourse to the most deliberate forgeries, and artful inventions to make others believe what was clear and unquestionable to their enthusiastic minds. They must have been fanatics and impostors in so high a degree, at the same time, as would include an impossibility. We can conceive that a man, who has imagined himself to have seen an apparition, and is so far a fanatic, when he relates the story to another, whom he wishes to convince of its reality, may supply some considerable circumstances, in order to give it the greater air of probability. Such a deception is not only consistent with fanaticism, but even scarcely to be separated from it. But had the disciples of Jesus imagined, that they had seen him after his resurrection, and purposely feigned, that they had conversed with him after it, verbally and circumstantially relating the conversation; when they tell how he removed their doubts, appeared to them in private and in public, ate with them, &c. such fictions would have perfectly excluded fanaticism, and rendered it impossible, as fanaticism would not have admitted such fictions: or we must suppose the extremes of prudence and folly united in the same mind, on the same occasion.

On a nearer examination of the case, we must wholly give up the supposition of fanaticism, unless we maintain, that they, who stole the dead body of a man from the grave, in order to give out, that he was risen from the dead, could at the same time have believed his resurrection, in their mistaken imaginations. For as the apostles appeared publicly at Jerusalem, with the witnesses of the occurrence, a few weeks after it was said to have happened, it is clear that the body of Jesus was no longer to be found in the grave; as no one could have the stupid effrontery to maintain the resurrection of a person,



person, in a place where the dead body was still to be seen. What inconceivable stupidity could have prevented their powerful, respected, and cunning enemies, from carrying these shameless promulgators of lies to the grave, to their eternal confusion? If, however, the grave were still to be found, with the body no longer in it, there was no pretext for the enemies of Jesus but this, to which they had recourse, that his disciples had stolen the body. Now let any one judge, whether there be in nature such a character, as must be ascribed to the eleven on this supposition. Let any one judge, whether a way of thinking, capable of producing such an attempt, be compatible with that which the gospel history attributes to them previous to this knavish imposture, without a marvellous alteration, or rather a new formation of the mind. If it be said, as I have already remarked, that this contradictory description of themselves was purposely and artfully contrived, to render their account of the resurrection of Jesus credible, and if it were not physically impossible for them to have executed this difficult and dangerous imposture, let any one judge, whether the following contradictions be reconcilable. Renouncing their national prejudices imbibed in early youth, the religion of their forefathers, and their dearest hopes, they must have chosen a man who had seduced and deceived them as their leader, made him their idol, and recommended him as an object of adoration and prayer, trust and imitation, to their own countrymen, by whom he was crucified, and to the heathen, who knew nothing of him, but that he had died the death of a malefactor. This they must have done with a fixed resolution, and mad design of sacrificing and suffering every thing that men could sacrifice or suffer: determining to carry their plan into execution by no usual means, not by force, or learning, which they did not possess, not by cunning and

addresses, flattering and gaining the passions, but by the most meek and patient endurance, and a bold and open avowal of what they maintained to be true, and yet knew to be not so. With all this they must have intended to make mankind tranquil in the consciousness of the divine benevolence here, and happy in a future state, by promulgating the knowledge of the true God, and the worship that would be acceptable to him, and by recommending righteousness, virtue, and charity. Were these their purposes, and that to which they so evidently laboured must assuredly have been their design, they must have been at the same time the most godly and the most ungodly, the most honest and most dishonest, the most zealous promoters and most callous betrayers of truth and virtue, the warmest friends and the bitterest enemies to mankind, the most cunning and most senseless of all men. The most godly: for they dedicated themselves wholly to the service of God. Their trust in him seems to have been unbounded, and the sole business of their lives was to make men love and honour him. The most ungodly: for they were not ashamed of carrying on the most deliberate imposture before the face of a just and all-seeing God. They placed by his side a man, who, they were convinced, was either a mad enthusiast, or a wicked impostor. The most honest: for they demeaned themselves with such open-heartedness, impartiality, and want of selfishness, as were incapable of reproach. The most dishonest: as they conducted themselves thus irreproachably only to assist their imposture, and stamp credit on their lies. Promoters of truth and virtue: as religious and moral truth are infinitely indebted to their labours, both with respect to theory and practice. They gave instructions so far above the general knowledge of their time, that, judged according to this, they appeared the fruits of madness: but the ripened and improved understanding of  
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later ages vindicated the honour of their precepts, and a purer philosophy adopted them. They supported their well-defined, pure, and rational doctrines of morality, by motives the most weighty, and most adequate to our nature. They assured the penitent sinner of, what he must wish, yet durst not confidently hope for, the grace of God, and a full pardon. Thus they excited in him gratitude to God, and made that powerful motive of the human heart an incentive to virtue. But when they assured him of this pardon, they by no means led him to a security void of fear. They seem to have been too well acquainted with human nature, to trust to gratitude alone as a sufficient motive to a virtuous conduct. They knew, that, in the present imperfect state of man, fear is indispensably necessary to impel him to his duty. Hence they represented the forgiveness of God, with all its happy consequences, and present enjoyments, as a benefit to be acquired by means of the greatest humility, most painful sufferings, and magnanimous sacrifice of a person above all measure exalted, innocent, virtuous, and benevolent. From the greatness and importance of the offering, whereby the sinful and unhappy world was to be freed from misery, and the dominion of vice, they led us to estimate the extreme perniciousness of sin, and the magnitude of the divine displeasure. Thus to incite us to good, they united fear with love; preached, as, according to their own account, it was delivered to them by their Master, the forgiveness of sins in his name, but not without repentance; pointing out to us a God from whom this forgiveness was to come, that we might fear him. The doctrine of a benefactor and saviour of mankind, who offered himself up for them, was applied by them in other ways to the advantage of virtue. They describe him to us as the prince of salvation, gone before us, and made perfect by God through his sufferings. They hold him

him up to us as a pattern, that we might consider our sufferings as necessary to our perfection. By his going before us we are excited to embrace these necessary and wholesome sufferings; by his example we are taught how to bear them; and by his victory we are filled with the hope of overcoming all the difficulties of our toilsome career, and even the terrors of death. Finally, by announcing the fate of this great and exalted person, they give us the clearest proof of a future state; and assure all who suffer with him, that with him they shall be raised to glory. It must at least be confessed, that such a plan requires no small knowledge of human nature in its inventors; that every thing in it conduces to the moral improvement and perfection of mankind; and that every wise and virtuous philanthropist must wish it to be true. Yet they who held this out to the world were nevertheless traitors to the cause of truth and virtue. They built the most important truths upon lies, and exposed them to the most imminent hazard of being rejected together with these. They were traitors to virtue: for they made belief in an impostor the most important, and, as it seems, the exclusive principle of acceptable virtue; a mean of the forgiveness of sins; and a necessary condition to that confident hope in a future state, which was to give men the courage to be virtuous. They held up as a pattern of virtue the character, morals, life, and death of a man abandoned and rejected by God. They made all the consolation of suffering innocence, and all the hope of struggling virtue, depend on the life, power, and authority of one who was dead. They endeavoured to deter the rash and hardy sinner from vice, by the fear of a man, who had announced himself as the judge of the living and the dead, and had promised, that he would rise again, as a proof of his being so. They were the warmest friends to mankind: for  
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they undertook to make men virtuous, contented, and happy in God, without the least self-interest, against all probability, and at the expence of suffering the greatest evils. They preached a religion, the strictest command of which was charity, the purest, sincerest, and most extensive charity; which strongly enjoined compassion, forbearance, patience, and forgiveness; and which was evidently the most benevolent ever published to the world. Still these preachers of love were the bitterest enemies to their fellow-creatures. For, not to mention that the indemnification and recompense which they promised their deluded followers, for the sacrifices they were to make, and the evils they must inevitably suffer, were chimerical, and founded on a non-entity; in order to propagate their lies, they were guilty of the vilest misdeeds, were disturbers of the public peace, instigators of men against each other, calumniators of their innocent countrymen, rebels against lawful authority, and infamous insurgents against the established government of their country. They were most cunning: as they invented, in support of their imposture, every thing that could tend to make it credible. But this imposture itself, the stealing out of his grave a dead man, a malefactor execrated by his own people, and then giving it out, that he had risen, was the most senseless and absurd that it is possible to conceive.

Though perhaps I have said the least, and probably far from the most important, of what might be offered on the subject,\* and the moral miracle must appear

\* I remember some years ago to have read an excellent article on this subject, in the *Gottingen Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen*. The reviewer of an English answer to Hume's Essay on Miracles, not only commended the method here employed, as the best and most conclusive against that sceptic's objections, but gave a comprehensive though brief exposition of the arguments. I regret,

appear still greater if we consider the reception, effect, and consequences of the mission of Jesus; still it may suffice to shew, that, however prone men may be to deceive themselves on every occasion, and particularly in religion, and to give way to enthusiasm, still they do not deceive in such a manner as the apostles must have done, and are not such fanatics as they must have been, had the miracles they relate, and particularly the resurrection of their Master, been false. If they were impostors and fanatics, it must have been the immediate effect of a miracle wrought on their minds: as, on that supposition, their conduct betrays such a deviation from moral order, and such a violation of the laws of the intellect, as must be deemed a miracle. Whether this miracle be greater, or less, than those which are offered in confirmation of christianity, it is not easy to determine: but this does not require a very nice investigation. Were the two kinds of miracles equally unusual, extraordinary, and anomalous, nay, did the moral one appear least so, still the moral miracle in this case must appear infinitely more improbable to the candid

gret, that I have not the journal at hand, to extract a passage so important to my purpose. I was much pleased with it at the time; but I can recollect only what was said of the traitor Judas. This, if I mistake not, it is said, is the most important witness, not only that the miracles of Jesus actually happened, but also, that there was no imposture in the case. He carried the purse, and, as money is indispensably necessary to an imposture, must have known the deceit from the first. He had conceived a grudge, and, as it appears, a suspicion against Jesus, probably for noticing his dishonesty; and determined to betray him. He did betray him. But when he saw that Jesus was condemned to death, he accused himself in the judgment hall of having betrayed innocent blood, returned the money in extreme despair, acknowledged that he was the greatest villain in the world, and hanged himself. He must have been persuaded, that the miracles of Jesus were true: and if he, to whose exculpation it was so essential to find Jesus guilty of imposture, could accuse him of none, it was impossible for him to have been an impostor.

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deist than the physical. The purpose of the latter is consonant to the attributes of God, worthy of the Creator, Father, and Governor of mankind, and beneficial to the human species. The moral miracle, on the contrary (whether we ascribe it to the immediate operation of the Almighty, to preordained physical laws, or to the influence of some demon let loose for the delusion and perdition of mankind) exhibits to us a Deity, at the discovery of whom we must shudder—a Deity, who delights in bewildering man's understanding, afflicting his mind with irremovable doubts, placing insurmountable obstacles in the course himself has marked out for him, and engaging him in a most perilous conflict. And this fearful affliction would be more especially the lot of the worthy few, who reflect on their destination; and the reward of those honest minds, who diligently seek the truth, to raise themselves to an exalted benevolence, and a similitude with God. They, on the contrary, who value not the truth, the multitude of mere machines who never reflect, would vegetate in peaceful ignorance, and happy stupidity, freed from the rack of doubt. If the consideration of the divine perfections, and a miracle answerable to them, performed in confirmation of a rational religion, in a case where we must choose between such a physical miracle and a moral one, do not incline us to the former, we must reject every notion of God, and his moral government, that is agreeable to right reason. If, after a careful examination of the doctrines and precepts of christianity, an impartial inquiry into the character, way of thinking, opinions, and views of its first preachers, and an accurate investigation of the way in which it was introduced into the world, propagated and maintained, a man be convinced, that they who taught it, and they who received it on their words, thought and acted naturally and rationally, on the  
supposition

supposition of the miracles related being true, and on the contrary unnaturally, incomprehensibly, and miraculously, on the supposition of their being false, and that man still have any grounds for doubting whether christianity be a divine institution; we must confess, that to meditate on religion, and our relation towards God, is the most vain and unfortunate occupation of our mental faculties; and that, as such meditations must lead us into doubt, tranquillity is only to be obtained by adopting popular superstition, or abjuring thought. From what has been said it appears how and why the overstrained requisition of the Scottish philosopher, namely, that to render the account of a miracle credible, it must be a greater miracle for it not to have happened, ought to be limited.

But are moral miracles conceivable? \* With our author I suppose the affirmative, when I admit the human mind to be subject to an established order, by which its changes are as firmly bound, as substance by the laws of motion. According to the

\* No one who admits the possibility of physical miracles, can well doubt the possibility of moral ones. Whether such ever happened, or whether it be probable that God would perform such, is a different question. Philosophy seems to combat these miracles, or any forcible violation and change of the proper activity of the soul, on the ground, that the personal identity of the thinking substance which is acted upon would be thereby destroyed. The scriptures give us no instance of a miracle changing the character and way of thinking of a man immediately. When a miracle was requisite to this purpose, a physical one was always employed, as in the conversion of Paul, for instance; and this was to prevent the necessity of a moral one. The remarkable passage in Exodus, xiii. 17. seems to prove, that God found it inconsistent with his wisdom, to perform moral miracles. It is true we must admit, on a certain notion of divine inspiration, that God works proper psychological miracles: but I will not attempt to decide, how far the objection to moral miracles is applicable to that inspiration. A man might be inspired by means of a psychological miracle, without having his mind altered or amended, as was the case with Balaam.



doctrines of necessity, all the perceptions and determinations of the mind are so connected, so dependant on each other, that the subsequent state of the mind is always determinable from the preceding, and chance is entirely excluded. On this supposition we are justified in presuming upon as firm an order in the moral as in the physical world, and deviations from it, or an apparent union of causes and effects contradicting all analogy and experience, are as much miracles, as similar deviations from the analogy observed and admitted in the physical world. If, however, we deny necessity, and maintain the freedom of indifferency, we must admit no moral miracles, at least in the manner required by Hume to establish the truth of the miracles related in scripture. According to this system, chance rules over the actions of the mind, though not over the phænomena of the corporeal world. Now where chance exists anomalous consequences may and must follow, and new appearances must arise, which will not be more improbable than those hitherto observed, or at least cannot pass for miracles, as we have nothing fixed, no course of nature, no analogy to be violated. We cannot on this system determine, whether a certain mode of thinking or acting be natural, unnatural, or supernatural, in any individual character (if according to it there be any such thing as a determinate character). According to this notion the mind and its actions may be compared to a case, out of which the letters to compose a book are taken blindfold. Whatever be the order into which the letters fall, I cannot say of the series arising, after a certain number of attempts, that some are natural and probable, and others unnatural and miraculous: new and various combinations may, and indeed must, ever arise, and the only improbable series would be one giving an intelligible and connected sense, as such  
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would be contrary to the nature of chance. If we say of God, with Pope in his Universal Prayer, that he

*Binding nature fast in fate, left free the human will;*

and understand it to signify that God has subjected the irrational and inanimate creation to fate, or a connection of cause and effect, and on the contrary has left the human mind free from all laws, and to the arbitrary guidance of a blind choice; the former cannot deviate from its laws, shew itself under a new form, or exhibit effects arising from no cause; but the human will may, from the freedom given it, run into the most irrational propensities, and incomprehensible determinations. In short, we thus find in man no determinate certain character, no way of thinking, design, or plan, on which we can fix our eyes, or from which we can deduce any inferences with the least appearance of probability. If these consequences of the system of the freedom of indifferency, or chance, be justly drawn, its partisans, if they be true to their system, must find it difficult, if not impossible, to admit any human testimony as sufficient to support the credibility of a miracle. For how could they overcome the objection, that, as it is possible for the witnesses to have been deceived, and to have advanced falsehoods, in an irrational and incomprehensible manner, this was probably the case? Now as such witnesses are most important and indispensable to the logical demonstration of the truth of christianity, it is clear, from this consideration, that the system of necessity, which must be tacitly admitted, if we would establish their validity and credibility, cannot be dangerous or detrimental to the christian religion. So little is it either, that it gives the due force and validity to the most rational arguments for its truth.

But are we as capable of remarking a deviation  
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from moral, as from physical order? Is our judgment as certain in the former case, as in the latter? These difficulties may be objected, though we admit what has hitherto been advanced. To me every thing seems to be alike in both cases, except that more understanding, skill, attention, and reflection, are necessary to judge of a psychological or moral miracle, than to the discovery of a physical one; at least if it be so public, firm, and void of all juggle, or *deceptio visus*, as the miracles in the gospel. If these greater requisites to the discovery of a moral miracle render the point more difficult, still it will not be less certain, if they be properly applied. Probably the judgment may be still more certain, if it be true, as it appears to me, that philosophy is farther advanced in the knowledge of the human mind, its faculties, powers and actions, than in the knowledge of nature and its powers; has made greater and more important discoveries in the moral, than in the physical world; and is more perfectly and accurately acquainted with the changes produced in our minds, than with any thing else. Some philosophers, it is true, will maintain the contrary; but the reason is, that in their inquiries into so near and interesting an object, they are desirous of tracing every thing to its primary source, without considering how much less of the nature of substance we are capable of discovering by an equally deep and ardent investigation. I will not presume to say, that there are no unexplored regions in the moral world, or nothing left for future inquirers into the human mind to discover; but I do not believe that we are so ignorant of the powers and actions of the mind, as to be unable to decide whether a certain mode of conduct be natural, or unnatural, suitable to its nature, or contradictory to it. In my opinion, what we know of the subject, and what we are capable of knowing from constant experience, and from an

attentive observation of men's characters, way of thinking, propensities and manners, will be found sufficient for this purpose. I believe, indeed, that we can more certainly judge whether a given mode of conduct, or series of actions, in a given situation, and under given circumstances, be natural to a given character, or to the human mind in general, and consequently to be expected, or not; than, from our knowledge of the physical world, we can determine what is possible, or impossible in it. The first observers of human nature seem to me to have known what is requisite to the former; and what the researches of subsequent ages have added to their knowledge serves rather, I think, to the gratification of curiosity, and the enlargement of the bounds of speculative philosophy, than to the benefit of real life, or the improvement of the art of bending man to our purposes. It appears to me of some weight, that later discoveries have by no means shewn the knowledge of human nature, delivered to us in the writings of its first observers, to be so imperfect, or erroneous, as the physical notions of the same ages. They must have been capable, therefore, of more fully examining, and more easily and justly viewing the moral, than the physical world. Consider what Aristotle has written on the faculties and actions of the human mind: his logic perfect at the first attempt; his moral and political writings; are they not still the subject of our admiration, and the rule of our taste? And are they not used as helps to our knowledge of man, and all the arts and sciences dependant on it? Though the characters of Bruyere are more distinct and finished than those of Theophrastus, the latter is not less true and just in his moral delineations: and where shall we find a modern historian better acquainted with the human heart than Tacitus, or who scrutinizes it with more depth of penetration?

Thus

Thus it seems, that we have a sufficient knowledge of mankind; to examine the probability or improbability of an account of human actions, and to judge whether moral analogy be observed, or violated in it. Our inquiry will go to this, whether the men described actually felt, thought, and acted, as we ourselves should have done in similar circumstances, or not. Though the least learned and philosophical are not destitute of this knowledge, they alone who have some knowledge of the world can exercise it readily, and with certainty. Every thinking and attentive reader remarks deviations of this kind, and always with unwillingness and dissatisfaction. They destroy the illusion and interest we feel, far more than violations of physical order. It is much more unpleasant to us, to perceive an inexplicable contradiction in a character, an unfounded want of connection in a proceeding, or a psychological and moral miracle, than exceptions from the laws of the natural world, or physical miracles. The fabulist may give his Proteus what wonderful forms he pleases, now change him into water, and then into fire; still we forgive him whilst he remains true to the character he has adopted. The magician may with his wand change the most frightful desert into a beautiful garden, or a pile of rough stones into an elegant palace, and act as an uncontrollable lord of nature. But if the poet present us with men whose perceptions, thoughts, and resolves are unconnected, unfounded, ineffectual, and tending to no end; if he introduce on the stage devils or angels in human form, without accommodating the scene to the characters, by giving them suitable employment, or placing them in situations to justify such bold fictions, so as to avoid a violation of moral analogy; he would urge our credulity to the utmost. Even were the laws of nature most strictly observed, such miracles would disgust us, and appear too improbable to be

interesting. The traveller may relate to us natural phænomena and occurrences never before heard of, yet, if we have no other reason to mistrust his veracity, we shall not easily reject, without examination, what he advances; and this on just grounds. But if he tell us, that he has met with men, who, with the same sensations as we possess of good and evil, hate their benefactors, and love those who injure them, and who seek not to escape death, though extremely attached to life, we immediately condemn him as a liar.

This at least shews an almost universal, just, and acute sensibility to every thing that agrees with moral order, or analogy, or is repugnant to it; and an equally general aversion to consider any deviation from it as probable, or to be for a moment deceived into a belief of it. This goes so far, that we disapprove, and reject as improbable, all caricatures of moral beauty and ugliness, if not naturally arising from situation. And yet these are not properly deviations from the fundamental laws of mind. These laws require connected conceptions, and exertions of the faculties of perception and desire founded on each other. This combination is demonstrated by constant experience. It is discoverable, though not so readily, in madness, frenzy, and fanaticism. The laws of mind are but apparently violated in the madman. Still we find in him a psychological and moral order, though to perceive it requires the penetrating eye of a Cervantes, a Shakespeare, or a Richardson. Whence comes it, that the fools, madmen, and fanatics of these followers of nature interest us so agreeably? It is because in all their apparent deviations they remain true to moral analogy. They spin the thread throughout as they began it; without cutting it, and tying together ends never designed to meet. Their work is all of a piece; and they carefully guard against representing the human mind to us as an instrument

instrument from which various hands produce unconnected tones. Such instruments would perfectly resemble the minds of the first preachers of christianity, were we to reject the sole ground on which the apparent contradiction, and inconsistency, of their characters, and conduct, are to be explained, and reconciled. If the miracles, which alone afford us a key to decipher the mysterious harmony, did not happen, their minds were not guided by any spirit from above, but were instruments in the hands of some fiends, who called from them discordant sounds without any plan. If, on the contrary, those miracles actually occurred, every thing is capable of an explanation, the moral or psychological miracle vanishes, and the conduct of those who bore testimony of Jesus appears in the fairest light, as natural, rational, and virtuous.

## PROP. XLVIII. p. 199.

*Of the Question whether the greater Part of Men's Actions, generally considered, be rather good than bad; or the contrary.*

THE question here started by our author, whether men be upon an average most inclined to good, or bad, and whether the greater number of their actions be commendable or blame-worthy, has generally been considered as interesting to curiosity merely; but in his hands it becomes important, as from its solution he deduces an argument in behalf of virtue. It is true, indeed, that he lays no great stress upon it, and we must own, that the tendency of virtue, or its good consequences, constitutes the chief and almost only argument for pursuing it, as into this all others may ultimately be resolved. What he infers, however, from the practice and opinion of

mankind may be admitted as a preliminary argument; and were there no other, it would have some weight if it be true, that the general practice and opinion of mankind give a decided preference to virtue; or if it be true, that the practice of mankind is, upon an average, more inclined to virtue than to vice. Some good grounds for this supposition are adduced by Hartley. Still the inquiry is intricate and difficult, for this reason, that men are not agreed on what is here to be understood by good and bad, and in measuring them employ different standards. The christian religion teaches us to endeavour after the attainment of such perfection, and places before us such a pattern of virtue, that, if we compare the actions and general practice of mankind with this perfection and pattern, deeming nothing good but what comes up to them, and styling every thing that falls short of them vicious or bad, we cannot deny, that men are more vicious than virtuous, and that their practice is rather bad than good. But if we form our judgment of men's actions from this point of view, a number of them, which do not here come into consideration, and which we may deem neutral, must not be taken into our calculation. Such are all actions in themselves lawful and good, that is consonant to the ends and purposes of our Creator, requisite and necessary to the avoidance of physical evil and the attainment of physical good, but which cannot with propriety be styled christian good works, not being performed on account of the law, and the exercise of them being unattended with such difficulties as render them properly objects of reward. Such actions are those which even the most vicious man would rather do than those of an opposite nature, or than those which may be considered as properly vicious. According to our common mode of expression, these may rather be termed good than bad, though they can be reckoned neither as the good works



works of a christian, nor the virtuous actions of philosophy. Moral philosophy, purified and perfected by christianity, would, in my opinion, produce such a pattern and rule of virtue, that the morals and actions of the majority of mankind would, on comparison therewith, appear rather bad than good. But if we take a lower standard of virtue and goodness than what revelation holds out, and apply this to the moral conduct of men, rather considering their constant behaviour in their common occupations, social employments, and endeavours to support themselves and families, and the uniform course of their domestic life, than certain conspicuous actions occasioned by rare circumstances or occurrences, I am persuaded, that we may justly maintain the actions of the greater part of mankind to be rather beneficial than injurious, and, upon the whole, attended with more good than bad consequences. Some good thoughts on this subject may be found in an essay by Dr. Jortin, in the first volume of the Theological Magazine, that well deserves to be read. He observes, that the calculation of a man's good and bad actions must be taken from the general course of his private life, and his conduct towards his relations and domestics, and he will then be found commonly to perform far more acts of compassion, benevolence, and gratitude, than of cruelty, envy, ingratitude, and malice.

The picture that Hartley draws of mankind in general seems to me to be perfectly just. Every man has actually within him the seeds of every virtue, and of every vice; and the proportion in which they thrive and ripen depends, in general, upon the situations in which he has been and is placed.

Circumstances may occur forcibly to prevent the seeds of social virtue from unfolding, and proportionably to strengthen those of selfishness and malevolence; such are those extraordinary occurrences

which first excite men to vicious actions, and which, if they continue any time, induce such a facility in those actions, that the mind, depraved by them, seems to possess a disinterested love of vice, and to practise it for its own sake. Let us suppose a society of men in such urgent want, and so pressed by the greatest long-continued distress, that each of them not only cannot assist the rest, but rather must be injurious to them, and that each is unable to support himself but at the expence and ruin of the others: let us suppose, that this extreme of misery, and the peril continually before their eyes, renders each anxious for himself alone, and draws all his attention to the support of himself, whilst his whole soul is occupied by a continued sensation of pain; the necessary consequence of such a situation would be, that all compassion, all sympathetic and benevolent sentiments, would be gradually weakened, and at length totally destroyed. On the other hand, insensibility, hard-heartedness, envy, and cruelty, in such extraordinary circumstances, becoming the means of support, and so far resembling virtues, would almost irresistibly gain the upper hand. I remember to have read an account of some Englishmen, exposed for a time to extreme misery and want in the wilds of America: the minds and conduct of these, according to the relation of one of the unfortunate sufferers, wholly agreed with and confirm what I have just been saying. Envy and malevolence were the predominant sentiments of these men towards each other, each looking upon the rest as his enemies.

There are circumstances on the other hand, and these are the most common situations of human life, in which a man may and must serve others, if he would serve himself. Any civil society, but tolerably good, is thus far preferable to a savage state, that in general, and in most cases, it connects the support and welfare of one with the maintenance and weal

weal of the whole. The celebrated Rousseau, when he exalted the state of nature so far above social life, left this point entirely out of the question, and, considering his subject solely on that side which favoured his bold assertion, placed in the strongest light all those circumstances in which civil society occasions a variance and collision of interests betwixt its members, and so far gives birth to bad and injurious actions. With equal care did he guard against displaying those circumstances and occurrences in social life which tend to the promotion of beneficence, good-will, and compassion. It is obvious, however, that in this state sentiments of benevolence are far more promoted and displayed, than those of malice. How much, for example, are wrath and revenge moderated and restrained in civil society! In the state of nature we may presume that occasions of injury, wrath, and revenge, will less frequently occur, as the savage has fewer wants than the member of a civilized community: but then, as he has proportionally fewer means of satisfying his wants (unless with Rousseau we rate much too high the natural powers of the savage to supply his necessities, and the provision spontaneously afforded him for this purpose by the unlaboured earth) the case will nearly be reduced to an equality on both sides. But the great difference lies here; the wrath of the savage rages implacably, and his revenge, whilst he considers only his future security, will not easily terminate but with the destruction of his enemy. This is the reason why anger, and implacable revenge, are esteemed exalted virtues by all savage nations, and are in general prized by people in proportion as we find amongst them more or less traces of barbarism. Civil society, on the contrary, moderates and sets bounds to anger and revenge, by holding out, and, in proportion as it approaches perfection, actually procuring to the injured party a reparation for his damage,

damage, and the injustice done him, rendering the avenging himself in many cases unnecessary, and even hazardous, and taking from him the trouble of securing himself from future injuries by exercising it. Herein also we have the testimony of experience, that the more perfect the state of society, that is the more impartially, strictly, and speedily justice is administered in it, the less implacable revenge, and the fewer violent instances of it occur. It is true, that the most perfect civil society cannot wholly remove all opposition and collision of interests betwixt its members, though it may reconcile the benefit of individuals with the good of the whole. These are imperfections probably inseparable from its nature. In this respect, however, civil society may unquestionably be carried to a far higher degree of perfection, than it has ever yet attained in any community hitherto existing. To a wise and benevolent sovereign, who sincerely wishes the improvement of mankind, no object can be of greater importance, than to remove all such variance and opposition of interests, or to render the cases as few as possible in which we may procure advantages to ourselves, without at the same time our endeavours promoting the good of others, or of the community; still fewer should those be in which we cannot benefit ourselves, but at the expence of others, or of the whole. Such are the cases in which most men give way to selfishness and vice.

The occurrences of domestic life, in which man is principally to be considered, if we would judge of his character and conduct, are far more favourable to the promotion of social inclinations, and the practice of virtue, than to the production and exercise of vice and wickedness. At least, in civil society, and in domestic life, man has far more opportunities for good than for bad actions.

## PROP. LIV. p. 238.

*Whether there be Evangelical Counsels.*

THE manner in which our author handles the doctrines of morality seems to be very natural, and at the same time contributes to the perspicuity of his propositions. It also affords him an opportunity of placing in a proper light many things important in morals, that are usually passed over as of little moment. The doctrine of pleasures and pains delivered in the former part of this work constitutes the ground-work of his moral system, whilst he delivers rules for our conduct with respect to them. To understand this rule of life then, it is necessary that we should not lose sight of that doctrine.

As the attainment of those pleasures, and the avoidance of those pains, are the scope of our desires, and the object of our endeavours, and, as morality is properly the rule of happiness, it must teach us how to conduct ourselves so as to obtain as much as possible of the former, and escape as much as possible of the latter. Human happiness arises from the satisfaction of our desires and inclinations, and is occasioned by the pleasures answering to them. It is highly useful to analyse this into those pleasures of which it principally consists, and hence to prescribe such regulations for our desires, that they may not fail of their ends. To obtain happiness and avoid misery are unquestionably the first principles of morality. But these principles are far too general for practical application, and hence are insufficient for our use. In practice, then, we must decompose them into subordinate principles. Here the division of our author seems to be supremely excellent, as it wholly exhausts the subject, and there is not a single desire

desire or propensity of the human mind which may not be conveniently referred to one or other of his seven primary classes. This division has also the advantage of clearly and accurately shewing the value of our different endeavours, and what influence they may and must reciprocally have upon each other. Our duties are commonly divided into those we owe to God, to our neighbours, and to ourselves. With many advantages this division of morals has also this disadvantage, that, as many of our duties are of a compound nature, or may be considered at least as equally duties to ourselves and to our neighbours, we are frequently at a loss under what head they may, with most propriety, be placed; hence we are led to divide things naturally connected, or to treat the same subject under two different points of view. The method here pursued removes this inconvenience. Another recommendation of it is, that thus our author was enabled to treat morality, as indeed it ought ever to be treated, as a regimen for the mind, or a rule of living for the preservation of its health.

Good as our author's method is, and excellent as many of his notions and precepts are, still I cannot deny that he appears not to have sufficiently defined many things which deserve a more narrow inquiry and explanation, whilst he has evidently pursued others too far. Under the first head of the pleasures of sensation he seems here and there to have introduced an unnecessary and almost ascetic strictness, and a monkish morality. This severe morality, it is true, our author does not press upon all christians, but, as he clearly expresses, on those only who strive to attain the summit of perfection. He supposes that the duties applied to this in the gospel are particular duties, or, as they have been styled, *consilia evangelica*, that are not obligatory to all christians. This principle is the source of his too strict and over-refined morality. Hence abstinence in eating and drinking,

drinking, when not necessary to preserve the health of the body or mind, or in any other way mediately profitable, appears to him to be in itself something devout, and approaching to perfection. Hence he speaks of indulgence in meat and wine with such an air of scrupulosity; hence he recommends religious fasting; hence he speaks somewhat unfavourably of marriage, which he considers as rather permitted than commanded; and bestows the praise of peculiar sanctity on a state of celibacy. It must be owned, that he expresses himself here with his wonted prudence and caution, but the ground on which he proceeds is not solid, and is supported neither by reason nor scripture.

We have no proofs, that the moral system of the gospel contains any particular precepts for those who endeavour after a higher degree of perfection, and superior righteousness, different from the duties which it prescribes to all men. By these precepts, it is to be observed, are not understood exhortations to an heroic virtue, the exercise of which requires a concurrence of particular circumstances with a rare and admirable frame of mind, as for instance to save the life of another at the risk of our own, or to sacrifice ourselves for the good of our country. These precepts are rather injunctions to extraordinary good works, that would be good works with respect to every man, and yet are not properly duties to all. They respect actions which every one may perform if he will. Such precepts we deny, on the principle, that they must be given by God, or by Jesus Christ, and consequently cannot be mere counsels, but must be laws. If we have a precept to do what is generally good, or what is requisite to the greatest happiness, the general precept must be subordinate to the particular one. If Christ have given a *consilium evangelicum* that would apply to all men, he has thereby explained what is best, and that

that it is our duty to do: if, for example, Jesus have counselled all his disciples, at all times, to live unmarried, and to give away their goods, he has thus declared, that it is in general the best so to do, and consequently it is their duty. Men rest themselves upon some instances in which Jesus has recommended a certain conduct that is too difficult, or indeed impracticable to some, and thence infer, that the precept is not obligatory to all, but a well-meant and salutary counsel for those who will voluntarily follow it. Of this kind are the precepts which he gave his disciples, if any one smote them upon the one cheek to turn to him the other, and if any one would take their cloak to give him their coat also. But it should be considered, that this instruction of Christ was not a counsel which he gave to his apostles as particularly holy men, but it was a precept which their particular situation, the purpose of the business they had undertaken, and the manner of their being sent out into the world, rendered prudent and necessary. Consequently they were obligatory only on them, and on those who may be in similar situations. Their Lord told them, that he sent them as sheep to the wolves, or that in the execution of their office they would have the whole world against them, and would be exposed defenceless to every violence and injury. In such circumstances, where resistance would but make things worse, where opposing force to force would produce no reparation of an injury, but only stimulate the powerful and irresistible antagonist to fresh injustice and greater cruelty, and where oppressed innocence could lay no claim to the protection of the law, there would be no other resource than extreme patience, mildness, and submission; to awaken the natural compassion of our enemies, and the feeble remains of humanity lying dormant in their breasts. Nay more. Since, as was obviously the case, the  
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grand purpose of the mission of the apostles, namely, to preach and to propagate the gospel, far from being promoted by the exercise of revenge, and an active resistance to injustice, would be rendered abortive thereby, we cannot consider these merely as prudential precepts of Christ, but as indispensable commands: yet not for such whose circumstances would not like theirs be bettered by such an extreme submission, but rendered worse by it; not for those who can shelter themselves from violence and secure themselves from injuries under the protection of the laws: not for those who have not, like the apostles, a new system to establish, the success of which must depend on the meekly suffering every injustice. To follow such precepts, given to the apostles solely, and founded on their peculiar situation, in circumstances totally different, would be absurd. In civil society, where the rights and property of every citizen should be maintained sacred and inviolable, under the guardianship of impartial laws, it would be to establish very great errors and prejudices, serving to strengthen the hands of the wicked in violence and rapine. Hence it appears, that the notion of those, who, from this wise precept of Jesus to his first disciples, would deduce a general evangelical counsel for the righteous and most perfect of all ages, and the sarcasms of the evil-minded, who from this precept misunderstood make a strong objection to the moral system of Jesus, are equally unfounded.

If we suppose that many of the precepts delivered by Jesus in his sermon on the mount, if not all of them, are merely evangelical counsels, this supposition will be contradictory to that saying of Christ, that the righteousness of his disciples must be greater than that of the scribes and pharisees. The command which Christ gave the rich young man, *Matt. xix. 21.* who came to him, and asked what he must do

do to inherit eternal life, namely, sell all that thou hast, and come and follow me, is also considered as an evangelical counsel. The question, to which this was the answer, was not what he should do, to become more righteous and perfect than other men, but what he should do to inherit eternal life. The teacher to whom he applied, and whom he thus acknowledged for a truly divine teacher, counselled him not, but commanded him, to follow him, or to become his disciple: and as this teacher certainly foresaw that this young man would not be steadfast in his attendance on him, on account of his wealth and his too great attachment to it, but would be excited to fall away by the threatened and dreaded loss of his goods, he commanded him voluntarily to part with his riches, that would otherwise be a snare to him. Jesus said to him, it is true: *if thou wilt be perfect*: but he did not here mean a greater degree of perfection, or righteousness, than was necessary to him in order to inherit eternal life; he only directed him to do what would enable him to obtain and secure that righteousness, and perfection, necessary to all the disciples and followers of Jesus. This is clear from what follows. When this young man, who thought the injunction too hard, went away sorrowing, Jesus said to his disciples: verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven: a sentence that certainly would not have been uttered, had not the young man, by declining to obey Christ's injunction, excluded himself from the kingdom of heaven, and not merely from an extraordinary degree of righteousness and perfection.

St. Paul's recommendation of celibacy, 1 Cor. vii. has also been deemed an evangelical counsel. That Christ likewise recommended it, as observed by our author, I can no where find: for the words, that till the time of his last coming men should marry, and be given in marriage, cannot possibly be construed as a  
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misprision or undervaluing of that state. They mean nothing more, than that, even at the time, so great a change of things would not be foreseen, and consequently, that men would be so little prepared for the catastrophe, as to remain in a state of peaceful security, following their worldly occupations, establishing new households, and forming matrimonial connections, which are usually done in times of peace and security alone. Though Jesus, on more than one occasion, proclaims woe to those who are with-child, and to those who give suck, this can by no means be considered as a disapprobation of matrimony. He laments the married only on account of their greater pains and trouble, to which they are more exposed than those who remain in a state of celibacy. As to the counsel of St. Paul, it appears, as he says he gives it not as a commandment, and that every one may do as he will, but that it is better to remain unmarried, that this expression has every thing requisite to constitute an evangelical precept. It may with great probability be said, that this is a precept of an extraordinary good work in all men who can and will conform to it, but that it is yet no duty. It may be observed, however, that the apostle explains it not as any such extraordinary good work, and no where says, that he recommends celibacy on this account. It is rather clear, that he advises it merely on account of its convenience. It is with him merely the dictate of prudence. He says, he would that every one would remain unmarried, on account of the carefulness arising from marriage, and the pains and troubles to be expected, the burden of which is much more heavily felt by the married, than by the unmarried. If the circumstances of those times, when those who were incumbered with a family had much severer consequences, and greater persecutions to fear, were the grounds of this apostolical precept, it was not given to those who live in

other times, and in different circumstances. St. Paul had before given this general precept, that, to avoid fornication, every man should have one wife: but to those who had the gift of continence he gave this advice, that they should remain unmarried, as thus they would have fewer troubles. But what is of most importance, St. Paul expressly says, that he, and not Christ, gives this counsel; and only to those who were not in danger of being enticed to fornication. Besides it can be no general rule, for were all men to follow it, the general happiness must fall to the ground, and it would become a most urgent duty to marry. Our author endeavours to parry this objection, by premising, that, in express precepts of the gospel, we ought not to concern ourselves what effect the general practice of them would have on the common happiness of mankind, which depends so much on matrimony, and the propagation of the human race thence arising. Had we, indeed, express and unequivocal precepts before us, we ought not, in putting them in practice, to look forward with caution to their possible consequences. In that case we must suppose, that we did not consider the subject in the right point of view, and might in some way or other be mistaken. But this will not apply in the present instance, as celibacy is no where so expressly and undeniably enjoined in the moral precepts of the gospel. We are rather to consider, whether those recommendations of it, which we find in the apostolical writings, be founded on the particular circumstances of the persons to whom, and the times when they were given, or be general rules equally valid to all men, at all times, and under all circumstances. As long as this remains doubtful, the consideration, how far the happiness of mankind would be promoted in the one case or in the other is absolutely requisite to the decision. It is no sufficient answer to the objection, that this precept, in the present  
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fallen state of mankind, as our author says, cannot be followed by all men, but only by a few, and hence its bad consequences are not to be regarded. By this subterfuge, it seems to me, many evidently bad actions may be defended as innocent and virtuous. It is indisputable, that an immediate good may be procured by several actions that are not to be permitted, as for instance, the killing a cheating gamester, a seducer of youth, or a pimp in a duel. But why is this murder, notwithstanding the immediate good consequences which it produces, an unallowed and punishable deed? Morality answers, because the permission of such actions, and the general practice of them, would destroy both public and private happiness. In justification of it, however, we might say in like manner, that we need take no thought about the general practice of such deeds as so many other considerations and circumstances would restrain men from it. But to this we might apply the general maxim of morality, that every evil act, which would be injurious, were it generally permitted and practised, is forbidden to us. This maxim must also be admitted here, otherwise the same objection may be made to christian morals, as Rousseau made to the modern French philosophers, that, if their principles did not instigate men to persecute and kill one another, they tended to prevent the propagation of the species.

Were this precept followed, says Hartley, it would be still better for us, as the coming of the kingdom of righteousness would thus be accelerated. If by the kingdom of righteousness he understand the millennium as it is called, which the Revelation of St. John seems to promise, this is probably to be considered as a chimera founded on a mistaken passage; at least we are too little acquainted with that golden period, to dare to expect in it such purity and holiness of manners as will leave no room for marriage.

In a subsequent note we shall probably have occasion to say more of this opinion of our author. If, however, he understand by it the end of the world or the last day, it is not easy to see on what our obligation is founded, or where we learn, that its coming may be hastened by an extraordinary and apparently super-human righteousness.

These are the principal instances and proofs of *consilia evangelica* usually adduced. It is obvious, however, that they are improperly so termed.

We shall now proceed to some other restrictions of our author, which we think too rigid and unnecessary. If the rules which he prescribes with respect to food be requisite to preserve health of body (and this, generally considered, they absolutely appear to be) so far they deserve to be followed. But if we abstain from eating flesh out of regard to animals, or compassion for them, or from some far-fetched notions deduced from the Old Testament, our right to the enjoyment of animal food seems to be unnecessarily limited. Supposing that no express permission to eat flesh was given to Noah and his descendants, they must have taken this liberty of themselves, as they and animals became more numerous; and an action, without which they could not support themselves and multiply on the earth, could not be forbidden as sinful. Savage and uncultivated nations, though not numerous, could not possibly subsist without the flesh of animals, whilst ignorant of agriculture, or, if acquainted with it, unable to pursue it from their insecure and warlike way of life. The spontaneous fruits of the earth are too few, and the gathering them is too uncertain, and exposed to too many dangers, for them to supply their sole food. Hunting must be the most important occupation, and chief mode of subsistence, of all barbarous nations. Civilized people, however agriculture might flourish amongst them, would not be half so numerous, were they

they deprived of animal food, as they now are whilst that forms a part of their nourishment. Certain animals, that are a restraint on the increase of mankind, and which would consume what is destined for their support, must be killed by them and kept under, or they would want room upon the earth. Finally, we are assured by natural philosophers, that the flesh of animals is a necessary food for man, to enable him to execute and support bodily or mental labours, that require a strong and continued exertion of his faculties, without being extremely enfeebled and fatigued. Thus, as eating flesh is on many accounts useful and necessary to man, it is impossible that his nature should be rendered more perfect by abstinence from it, or that in refusing the enjoyment of animal food should consist a peculiar sanctity. It is rather a self-imposed act of religion, such as St. Paul expressly disapproves, 1 Tim. iv. 3.

Equally too far appears the morality of our author to be carried with respect to the use of wine. He would have it employed as a medicine and a cordial, rather than as a common drink. Here also I must observe, that we ought to take into consideration those only of his arguments against the use of wine, which are deduced from the nature of that liquor, and its effects on the health of our bodies and minds. On the other hand, what he says against it from the alteration of the vegetable juices induced by the flood, and particularly from the vow of the Nazarites to abstain from wine, appears to me to be inconclusive, and of no weight. Whatever may have been the nature of the vow of the Nazarites, we are by no means authorized, from their abjuring the use of wine, to conclude, that abstinence from it is a step towards higher perfection. We might with equal justice infer, that cutting off the hair would be an obstacle to our attaining perfection; for against this also the Nazarites made a vow.

Both these were most probably only tokens of mourning, as a man generally took this vow when about to undertake a long journey, and absent himself for a time from his native country.

The praise bestowed by our author on religious fasting belongs also to the monkish system of morality, notwithstanding there are many amongst the protestants, who consider it as an exercise of devotion. As I have much to say against this, let me first observe, that I speak not of such temperance and sobriety as tends most effectually to remove disorders of the body, induced by an improvident and immoderate indulgence in eating and drinking, and are thus necessary to give our minds the freedom and activity requisite to the due exercise of prayer, meditation, and other acts of devotion. As far as fasting, or rather moderation in diet, is conducive to these purposes, it deserves to be strongly recommended. But fasting has no merit as an act of devotion, considered by itself, or as an action immediately acceptable to God. Can that being who is all benevolence and love take pleasure in a man's voluntarily chastening his body, without his command, and thinking to honour his Creator by punishing himself? Can it be acceptable to God for man thus to endeavour to do more than he is commanded, and thence to take merit to himself? The notion of an intrinsic and immediate excellence in religious fasting, is altogether grounded on such unjust and unworthy ideas of God, that it is scarcely worth while to say any thing farther against it. They who through ignorance and prejudice fancy themselves honouring God by punishing their bodies, can at most expect only forgiveness, but their fasts can by no means be considered as truly good works. If, however, fasting be only valued as an immediate instrument of promoting inward devotion, exciting and strengthening piety, and fortifying virtue, in particular chastity,



as it appears to be by our author, it is an absolute duty to those who are sensible of these advantages of it, as far as is actually subservient to those purposes: but to this no strict fasting is requisite, or an abstinence from all food for a whole day. Such fasting, far from promoting its designed ends, would in many respects be highly detrimental to them. Strict and frequent fasting is prejudicial to health, and in consequence of it such unpleasent sensations commonly arise at our stated periods of eating as render us unfit for any thing, especially for acts of devotion. To weaken the desires of youth by fasting requires such an extraordinary degree of it, as would tend greatly to injure health. The body must be considerably exhausted and weakened by the deprivation of nutritious juices. If this be not done, fasting, employed for this purpose, may produce directly opposite effects. For the purpose being fixed in our minds, our whole attention would be turned to it; and experience teaches us how lively this attention is capable of rendering certain ideas, even when we call in all our mental faculties to suppress them. Long fasting, practised for a course of years, may also imperceptibly and gradually weaken us, and occasion a wasting of the body, whence we may grow old before our time, and bring upon ourselves a premature death.

Let us, however, inquire what the scriptures say of fasting. The ordinances of religion enjoined the Israelites in the Old Testament were very strict: yet we find, that they had but one fast day appointed them in the whole year. This was the great day of atonement, on which they were to mourn, and appear as sinners. Were fasting such a necessary act of religion as it is deemed by some, it would in all probability have been oftener prescribed the Jews: for one day in the year is almost equivalent to none. The other holydays and sabbaths of that people were,

as is well known, days of feasting and joy. In later times, the Israelites, willing to do more in respect to fasting than God had commanded them, established other fast days. But on this head God declared by his prophet Isaiah, chap. lviii. 6, 7. that the fasts acceptable to him were when a man reduced himself to want by the restoration of goods unrighteously obtained, or when he abated somewhat of his usual proportion of food to assist those who were more poor and necessitous than himself, and to prevent the hungry and needy from perishing. Here no fasts are spoken of for which particular days were set apart, but such as a benevolent and compassionate man would exercise whenever he saw another oppressed by want. In the New Testament we find a remarkable observation of Christ on fasting, Matt. ix. 14. whence it appears, that the Pharisees, and the disciples of John fasted, but the disciples of Jesus fasted not. Christ said, that his disciples were to be considered as children of the bride chamber whilst he was with them, and consequently, that their fasting then would be as improper as fasting at the celebration of a nuptial ceremony: but, as fasting was a mark of sorrow and mourning, they would fast, when he was taken from them, and they mourned his absence. The meaning of his words is; when a man is sorrowful, and cannot eat for grief he may fast; but if he have not this reason for fasting, it is unnecessary for him thus to chasten himself. Instances of exemplary persons who have fasted have been adduced from the Acts of the Apostles, xiii. 2. 1 Cor. vii. 7. as proofs of the necessity of religious fasting. But it is not our duty to fast because Paul fasted; for Paul performed many other acts of devotion which it is not incumbent on us to imitate. Thus he took the Nazarites' vow, and permitted Timothy to be circumcised. Both these he did in compliance with the customs of the Jews, and

was justified by the particular circumstances in which he stood. To us, however, the whole of the Levitical law is annulled, and were we to do what Paul did in circumstances totally different, we should not be equally excusable. Besides, he says expressly, 1 Cor. vii. 6. that he gives not a commandment, but a permission. Christ himself has no where prescribed fasting. In a passage often cited, 1 Cor. ix. 25, 27. fasting properly so called is not spoken of, but merely an abstinence from certain meats, the indulging in which was deemed sinful, to avoid giving offence to the weaker brethren.

I admit, however, that there are a few obscure passages in the New Testament, which may be adduced in favour of the propriety, if not of the necessity of religious fasting. Of these are the words of Christ, Matt. xvii. 21. "this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting:" spoken of the casting a devil out of a lunatic youth. The disciples of our Lord had been unable to cast him out, and on their asking Jesus the reason of this, he assigns the want of faith as the general cause, but also adds, that devils of this kind were not to be cast out but by fasting and prayer. Jesus, however, cast out this devil without prayer or fasting, but merely by rebuking him: thus fasting and prayer were necessary only for his disciples, probably as being necessary to excite and fortify that faith which was necessary to the performance of that miracle. The whole passage, however, is very obscure, and I know of no commentator who has hitherto explained it sufficiently. Still thus much is clear; that, at most, fasting is here recommended as a mean to effect a miracle, and produce a faith capable of working it, and consequently cannot be required of those who have no power to work miracles. When Christ, and the apostle Paul, occasionally give some rules for the observance of fasts, and how they might be better performed

performed than was commonly done, we may presume that these religious ceremonies, like others then practised by the people amongst whom they were, and which were not positively to be rejected, were rather permitted than enjoined, and that what is said relates only to some open abuses of them.

The monachal and ascetic opinion of our author respecting celibacy still deserves to be examined. He seems to conjecture, that whilst man remained in paradise in a state of innocence, the human race was propagated in a manner different from what it now is. This conjecture, however, which was entertained by the convulsionaries, and other fanatics, has no foundation in the nature or frame of man, or in the Mosaic account of his origin. Moses relates the appointment of marriage, the increase of the human species to be effected by it, and the blessing given by God to the first pair, before he mentions the fall of man. But this fall, however important and extensive we may suppose its consequences to have been, could not have occasioned such an alteration in the essential frame of man, as to produce in him parts which he had not previous to it, or to change the functions of those which he had. Before man had exposed himself to moral depravity, his natural inclinations, no doubt, were more moderate, more obedient to reason, and more subservient to the ends for which they were implanted: but it is not credible, that they were altogether wanting, and that the innocent pleasure attending a due satisfaction of them was denied; neither have we the least foundation for such a supposition. Analogy, from the consideration of animals in nature resembling man, teaches us the contrary. These, which never fell, would unquestionably have been propagated in the paradisiacal state as well as in the present. The immortality possessed by man in a state of innocence could no more render the propagation of the species unnecessary,

fary, than that immortality promised us in a future state, where we shall be liable to no decadency. Had that been the case, the Creator must have produced at once all the human race that were ever to inhabit the earth. This however, would not have been consonant to that benevolent purpose which Paul holds out to our notice, namely, that all men are of one blood, that by the manner of their origin and propagation they might all be connected together, and be brothers and sisters.

## PROP. LIX. p. 253.

*On the Lawfulness of studying the Polite Arts.*

THE sentence of our author on the polite arts, that they are scarcely to be allowed, except when employed to religious purposes, seems to be carried too far, at least if it be his meaning, that these arts are to be reprobated, unless immediately dedicated to religion. How many instructive, useful, and edifying works of taste must then vanish! The didactic poems of philosophy, the instructive fables of an Æsop, historical pictures, descriptions of the works of nature, landscapes, and gay, animating and pleasing music, must all fall together. Such an unreasonable and severe judgment, however, I cannot ascribe to our author. Must he not have considered that a man could not dedicate his talents to religion with any success, unless he had previously exercised them on lighter subjects? and that it would be necessary for him to read and study the best works of the ancients and moderns, few of which are confined to religion, in order to form his mind, obtain a just, nice, and solid taste, and acquire a capacity of expressing himself properly, clearly, accurately, smoothly and nobly? Must he not have known how the study  
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of the polite arts increases our knowledge of the human heart, and unlocks the passages to its most secret recesses? And how necessary, or at least useful it is, to enter the road to philosophy through the gate of the fine arts? Finally, must he not have reflected, that to understand and excel in sacred poetry, a man must be no stranger to the other kinds of it, or to its sister arts? I will rather suppose that, as it frequently happens with the zealous, led away by his just indignation against the immoral abuses of the polite arts, of which the best heads have been too frequently guilty, he has expressed himself somewhat too loosely and incautiously. I am far from defending against him the cause of dilettanti, who, by their labours in the polite arts, excite irreligious levity, recommend to us the satisfaction of our sensual desires as our supreme good, and the great end of our existence, and pourtray the pleasures of love and debauchery with a too seducing pencil. Still I cannot persuade myself that all images of these pleasures are absolutely immoral and unallowable: rather, in my opinion, must they be considered as permissible, whilst the pleasures of the senses are painted only in such a degree and manner as they are innocent, and ennobled by being allied to moral purposes; and in such colours only as please the imagination, and exalt the moral sense, without seducing the heart. I must confess, that a good composition, under such restraints, would be no easy work, as the fear of being immoral would be too liable to occasion a deficiency of interest; and on the other hand, to avoid leaving the heart cold and unmoved, morality might be sacrificed to the desire of giving delight. Extreme circumspection, therefore, must be recommended to the young artist, if he would not lay the foundations of repentance in his more serious and riper age. I say, to the young artist, as in general this doubtful employment of the fine arts may perhaps be pardonable  
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in the gayety of youth, as a preliminary to more useful and serious compositions: but it is highly improper at least, to use no harsher term, when old men and gray-beards continue to dedicate their talents to Bacchus and Venus, and, with one foot in the grave, indulge in the frolicsomeness of youth. A gray-headed Anacreon amongst christians, however we may admire the heathen bard, is a strange and shocking phænomenon.

PROP. LXVII. p. 280.

*On the pure Love of God.*

IT appears, from the preceding proposition, as well as from other parts of his work, that Hartley is a defender of the pure love of God, which so many have disputed, and which most moralists have banished to the kingdom of chimeras. He not only maintains its possibility, but holds it up, with its adjunct self-annihilation, as the last point of perfection, and the summit of happiness to all rational beings. That he may not be too precipitately condemned, and classed with those enthusiasts, whose defences of the point he maintains have met with no favourable reception, it will be necessary to exhibit his explanation of the nature of self-annihilation, and the pure love of God, and the manner in which they are produced. For this purpose I will endeavour to collect the scattered lights appearing here and there in his work, particularly in his theory of association. The following considerations include what he has said of most importance on the subject, and are calculated to elucidate his ideas.

All our inclinations and exertions, as soon as we become conscious of self, begin with a view to this self: and, indeed, whilst we are merely sensitive, they  
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arise from a sensual self-interest. When we have once received pleasing and unpleasing perceptions, from the impressions made by objects on our senses, we desire the return of the former, and dread the return of the latter. So long as we experience the pleasures and pains of sense alone, and, in consequence of this experience, endeavour to reproduce or avoid them, it is sensual self-interest merely that excites us to action. When by degrees we become acquainted with higher and nobler pleasures, we in like manner desire and seek a repetition of those pleasures; and then, as our author observes, we substitute a more refined self-interest, instead of that merely sensual, with which we began. If, from all the pleasures we have hitherto enjoyed, we collect a general idea of happiness, without confining ourselves to the desire of one particular kind of pleasure, and bend all our desires and endeavours to this general happiness, we act from a rational self-interest. But self-interest is ever the first motive of our exertions, inasmuch as whatever we desire, we first desire with a view to self, and as the means of self-satisfaction. Our desires and endeavours are self-interested also, so far as they are founded on objects that are pleasing and desirable to us only through the medium of self, by means of which we became acquainted with them. If, however, an object please us of itself, and for its own sake, without the least view of any satisfaction to be expected from it to ourselves; and if it be no longer considered as the means of pleasure, but the possession or enjoyment of it be an immediate satisfaction to us; the desire thence arising is, according to Hartley, disinterested, and the love of the object pure love. Experience proves, that we are capable of loving and desiring in this disinterested manner. A very obvious and remarkable example of this is given by our author, with regard to the love of money, in the former part of his work, containing the history of  
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of association, which example we shall by and by make use of, to elucidate our subject. Unquestionably, too, there are still more noble instances of disinterested love. From the foregoing definitions of self-interest and disinterestedness, how can we deem the love an affectionate mother bears to a young, helpless, and sick child, self-interest, when to nurse and watch over him she forgets herself, regardless of her own ease, convenience, and health, nay frequently sacrificing her life, and, if death free her from the toilsome task, mourning as if bereft of all the joys of life. Certain, however, it is, that this disinterested love could only have originated from considerations of self, and that it was selfish before it was disinterested.

The laws of association explain how this remarkable conversion of self-interested desires and inclinations into disinterested ones is effected, in the following manner. When desire is associated for a sufficient length of time with an object, by means of some pleasure, or self-satisfaction, which it procures, and the object, remaining the same, gives us various pleasures, and affords us satisfaction in many different ways, the desire is united with the object in such a manner, that, after repeated associations, the intervention of the idea of pleasure, which first made the object desirable, becomes less and less necessary to produce the desire, in time superfluous, and finally unheeded, so that in many cases it is no longer perceived, or supposed, to be the medium which unites the desire with the object. This may be explained by the disinterested love of money, which actually takes place in the miser. The various advantages, benefits, and pleasures, which he promised himself from the possession of money, first make it pleasing to him, and an object of desire. The more he learns to know and value those advantages, benefits, and pleasures that gold can procure to its possessors, and the

the more he is convinced, that it is indispensably necessary, and at the same time sufficient to procure them, the more eagerly must he covet it, and the higher must he prize it. When he thinks of any advantage, satisfaction, or enjoyment, he thinks also of money, as the only mean of procuring him the object of his desires, and as the exponent of all his pleasures.

These pleasures are various, and the advantages which money will procure him are various, but the money constantly presents itself to his mind at every view of them. The idea of money continually recurring, and thence becoming more forcible, weakens, obscures, and at length suppresses those ideas, and original desires, from which the love of money itself arose. He now ceases to value gold as the means of obtaining other good, and his desire is attached immediately to the gold itself: he loves it as a good, without any distinct view of the advantages it will procure him, and thus his self-interested love of money is gradually converted into a disinterested one.

Just so is it in the before-mentioned case of a mother's disinterested love to her child. This love first arises from selfish considerations, and from various references to self. The mother loves her child from considering him as a part of herself: she values him on account of the pains, troubles and cares he has cost her. The pleasing prospect of the gratitude and love with which he will one day repay her maternal affection, and the hope that he will be an honour to her, increase her inclination toward him. This inclination at length gains a prepollence over every other, as the accomplishment of all her wishes and desires can only be expected through this child, and she can figure to herself no pleasure into which the idea of her beloved child does not enter. Thus this constant idea suppresses every other, and occupies the whole of the mother's mind. When arrived at this point, she

she loves the child without reflecting on any self-satisfaction, or rather a view to self is no longer necessary to her love of her child. If he be torn from her, she feels a fearful void in her heart; and fancies she has lost her all, as indeed he was all to her.

What has been said will, I hope, prove sufficient to give the reader a clear conception of the manner in which a self-interested desire is converted into a disinterested one. The whole depends on its being admitted as a fact, that when one idea comprises in itself several others, accompanies each of them, and is frequently associated with each as its cause, source, or effective means, that one idea gradually obscures the others, and ultimately so far suppresses them, that we are no longer conscious of their intervention, but immediately pass to the single one. To illustrate this, our author instances the high degree of selfishness of those who have always found the pleasure they hoped for and expected in the completion of their desires. He supposes, that such persons first acquire this high degree of selfishness, or the pleasure which they associate with the accomplishment of their wishes, and on the other hand the pain they feel when they are disappointed, from their having always obtained the pleasure they sought when their wishes have been fulfilled. Thus the accomplishment of their wishes has become associated with every pleasurable enjoyment. First, it is agreeable to them only on account of the pleasure it procures: but by degrees the chain that links them together is overlooked, and the satisfaction of their wishes becomes immediately pleasing, and an indispensable requisite, without any view to the pleasure it will procure. That this is actually the case, and that men who always find pleasure in the accomplishment of their wishes are eminently selfish, is evident from this, that nothing conduces so much to the cure of this vice, as the being convinced by repeated experience, that

the fulfilment of our desires will not afford us the pleasure we hope, but rather tend to make us unhappy.

This will serve in some measure to decide the dispute amongst philosophers, whether all our desires and inclinations be selfish, or there be some perfectly disinterested ones. In reality our desires must first be self-interested. If an object produce in us a pleasing, or unpleasing, sensation, we immediately desire its continuance and repetition in the former case, and its cessation and absence in the latter, for our own sakes: we value it only so far as it gives us pleasure. Thus the child's love to its mother is originally founded on the pleasing taste of the milk with which she nourishes it. On the other hand, an object is only so far odious to us, as it is the cause of unpleasing sensations. We love what has given us pleasure, on account of the enjoyment and pleasure we again expect from it: or our inclination is at first self-interested, and connected with self-satisfaction. If they who assert, that all the inclinations of human nature are self-interested; mean nothing more than this, they are perfectly right: but if they would maintain that this retrospect to self, this motive of our inclinations and endeavours after an object, derived from self-satisfaction, must always continue, and ever be present to the mind, they contradict all experience, and the most accurate observations of the human intellect. They err, if they deny that an object may gradually become immediately, and for its own sake, pleasing and desirable. We have seen that this may happen, and that in some instances it must necessarily be the case. This arrives in the same way as, according to the foregoing theory of association in general all original automatic motions are changed into voluntary ones, and these again into automatic ones of the second order. Thus all our desires are originally automatic, and arise from a

bodily

bodily want, or appetite. When this want is satisfied, and this appetite appeased, a pleasing sensation ensues. As soon as we become conscious of this, we are no longer impelled to satisfy the appetite in the former involuntary manner, but from a desire of the pleasure we have experienced; and then we become self-interested. When a certain object, however, has frequently given us pleasure, it becomes immediately pleasing to us, and the inclination to it again so far automatic, that it arises in us without the intervention of the idea of the pleasure procured us. Thus when the object is desired, loved, or sought after, for its own sake, a disinterested inclination, or pure love, takes place. This disinterested love a man may feel, not only for what is good, but for what is bad. In this case also, the inclination is changed from interested to disinterested gradually, and in the way we have related. To wish, or occasion, ill to our fellow-creatures, merely for the sake of doing them harm, is no original propensity of our nature; and St. Augustin is greatly mistaken, when he infers this from the envious looks twin brothers give each other. Their malice is no more disinterested, than that of two dogs gnawing the same bone. But experience sufficiently evinces that malevolent inclinations may become disinterested, when a man has long accustomed himself to associate his pleasure and satisfaction with the miscarriage of others, and his unhappiness with their success. Here, in like manner, the connecting link is unheeded; their unhappiness is pleasing to him, as their happiness is painful, in itself, and for its own sake, and a pure hatred, and disinterested envy, take root in his heart. The blood-thirsty Domitian was no more born with an original propensity to murder than other men. But thinking himself no other way secure, and his perturbed fancy presenting nothing to his mind but naked poniards, he was impelled to murder by fear

and suspicion, like most of the Roman tyrants, as the means of self-preservation, till, by degrees, the shedding of blood became a pleasing and desirable object to him, without any view to the security for which it was first sought. The groans of the unhappy wretches whom he sacrificed to his jealousy and suspicion were grateful to his ears, and murder was so necessary an amusement, that, when he wanted other victims, he diverted himself with killing flies.

It is now time that we apply this to the pure love of God. Our author explains its origin thus. God is the fountain of all good, and consequently is associated in our minds with every perception of it, that is, with every pleasing sensation: hence it follows, that the idea of God, and of the ways by which his goodness and bliss are revealed, ultimately suppresses and excludes every other, until, in the words of scripture, he becomes all in all.

An explanation of this short sentence, the expression of which is somewhat lax, may not perhaps be disagreeable to the reader. God is the fountain of all good. In this all true philosophers agree with divines. But the sense in which our author employs these words is somewhat more exalted and expressive, than that which they commonly bear. According to him, God is the fountain of all good, so that not only what we, with our confined knowledge of good and evil, at present deem so, but every occurrence, change, and action, that takes place in the spiritual world, must be referred to him as its author. God is, according to him, the sole agent, in the strictest sense. All created spirits, without exception, are but accomplishers of his infinitely benevolent will, and instruments to fulfil his purposes, that extend to all eternity. A living knowledge of this perfect dependency of all beings on the first essence, in whom they live, and move, and have their being, by whose breath they are vivified, and by whose spirit they are  
animated,

animated, tends, in his opinion, most effectually to promote a conviction of the nothingness of ourselves, and of all-created beings, before God. But we do not properly acknowledge God as the fountain of all good, till we admit, when considering all his works and ordinances, what God himself said at the creation, that all are good: and this, with him whose view is not confined to a single point, like that of short-sighted man, but embraces all infinity, applies both to the present, and to eternity. Thus whatever God has ordained, or permitted, we must acknowledge to be good. That evil, which here distresses and perplexes us in various forms, would cease to appear to us an evil, were our views enlarged, and its connections and effects laid open to our eyes. The mind, freed from its long illusion, and perceiving all to be good, would be restored to the most perfect tranquillity, by the unexpected sight. The way in which God leads his intelligent creatures to this happy knowledge, which now too frequently seems to us an endless labyrinth, would then appear the best and speediest by which the goodness and blessedness of God could be revealed. Each knot that now shackles us would be unloosed, every doubt and difficulty that now perplexes us would be removed: and in such a manner, that we must acknowledge it worthy of the wisdom and goodness of our Creator, and necessary and beneficial to ourselves, that those knots should have been tied, and not sooner loosed, and that those doubts should have perplexed us, without being removed at an earlier period. It is probable, that this joyful discovery, with the conviction of the universality of God's influence, would eminently and irresistibly promote self-annihilation, and the pure love of God. Did we merely discover, that every thing in general was good, and particularly so for ourselves, without referring all to its only true source; did we make ourselves partakers

in the honour due to God alone, or attribute a part of it to any other creature; we should set up ourselves, or this too highly exalted creature, as the rivals of God, and the idols of our hearts, which would be an obstacle to the pure love of God and self-annihilation. On the contrary, were we to perceive and think of nothing good, but in connection with God, and associated with the idea of him; and were we to conceive of every thing presented to our minds as his work, and as an instance and manifestation of his goodness; it seems to be an unavoidable consequence, that the idea of God, and of the proofs of his goodness, must suppress and exclude every other. Every good thing is an emanation from his goodness: but these emanations are manifold and various. He, however, the living fountain of them, remains the same, and his idea is associated with every thing that is good, beautiful, or excellent. Hence the connecting chain is overlooked, and God becomes immediately pleasing to us, ravishing us with a beauty, that unites in itself the splendour of all the various good and pleasures for which we are indebted to him. Thus he becomes the immediate object of our satisfaction, desire, and joy.

It requires no farther proof, that this consequence must ensue, on the preceding supposition. We have taken an incontrovertible fact for the basis of our argument, and from unquestionable experience may infer, that what regularly happens, on a slighter occasion, must inevitably follow on an infinitely stronger, and under circumstances far more favourable. If the miser can say to a heap of gold, thou art my god: and this his god occupy his whole heart, though, notwithstanding his experience of the great and extensive utility of money, many opposite facts concur to prove that it is not always useful and indispensable, and though he must have many associations which tend to lessen his affection for it, to counterbalance



counterbalance those which knit his heart to it: must not the mind that sees all its wants and wishes satisfied through God, and through him alone, and that can think of nothing worthy of its desire, love, or admiration, without the idea of God being present with it, be penetrated with continual pleasing perceptions issuing on all sides from this only source? Must not this grand idea, recurring with every enjoyment, and absorbing every excellence, become by degrees so intimately united with all its pleasures, as to model all its powers and faculties?

The following observation will more clearly shew how fully we are justified, in this instance, in carrying our inference from the less to the greater. Experience teaches us that money, when once it becomes the immediate object of the miser's desire; is in a great measure useless to him; and, whilst he fears the loss of it too much to employ it for any purpose, it is incapable of procuring him those advantages, conveniences, and pleasures, for the sake of which he first desired wealth. His passion, when it becomes disinterested, will in a great measure, if not wholly, dispense with what served to nourish it, without the least decay. Still, however, it is clear, that, could his riches procure him the enjoyment of those pleasures on account of which they were first prized and desired by him, without any fear of the loss or diminution of them, the constant enjoyment of them would cherish and fortify his passion. Now this will really be the case with the happy mind that is filled with the pure love of God: for, as new gratifications incessantly arise from the divine benevolence, its love will never want food, and consequently the associations by which that love was generated will be continually renewed, refreshed, and strengthened. The consequence of this will be, that, to such minds, God, as our author expresses it in the words of scripture, will be all in all. From

what has been said his meaning is clear: namely, that God will be the supreme, sole, and sufficient good; that the idea of him will supply the place of every other pleasing idea, and procure all the satisfaction which had hitherto been but imperfectly obtained by means of other objects, in an infinitely more ample degree. Whether this be actually the meaning of St. Paul, who makes use of this expression 1 Cor. xv. 28. will admit of a doubt. Probably he employed it in a less extensive sense. Probably he meant nothing more, than that, after Christ had subjected all things, thus attaining the end of his office of mediator, and fulfilling the purpose of his delegated authority, every thing should be put under the dominion of the Father, and thus God become the immediate ruler of the spiritual world. To this exposition it may be objected, first, that through the subjection of all intelligent beings accomplished by Jesus, which is obviously related as preparatory to the immediate dominion to be assumed by God, such a perfection and exaltation of the creatures is to be understood as will render them fit and worthy to be immediately governed by God, and consequently not requiring an intermediate ruler. Secondly, that a forcible subjection of refractory and unamended hearts, a subjection in which the power, not the goodness of the sovereign would be displayed and experienced, cannot here be meant. Such a subjection and dominion, effected and exercised by power alone, is contradictory to the nature of the kingdom of Christ, who, as he himself declares, reigns through truth, over the hearts of willing subjects. Without that all men are subject to him, and it must be deemed a very defective explanation, to suppose this subjection to mean nothing more, than that Jesus would bring his former enemies to a knowledge of his power. Would this render them more fit or worthy to be under

under the immediate dominion of God? Here the connection of the apostle's proposition seems to fail. Most probably the passage in Philippians ii. 9—11. in which a similar subjection is spoken of, must be considered as a parallel one. On this supposition, the sense of the words, that God may be all in all, will be this, God will reign immediately, that is, the subjects which Jesus Christ shall put under his dominion will be blessed by his immediate influence: he will be their supreme and only good, their all.

The question that now remains to be answered is, when can man attain such a pure love of God? Is he capable of it in this life? or only in a future state? To this our author answers, and his answer is supported by experience, that, according to the present nature of man, and the state of the world in which he lives, extremely few, if any, approach the borders of this pure love. Far the greater part of mankind suffer themselves to be guided by the grossest self-interest, which leads them to desire, and endeavour after, the pleasures of sensation, of imagination, and of ambition alone. How small the number of those who acquire a taste for the exalted pleasures of sympathy, theopathy, and the moral sense; and who are capable of that refined self-interest, which leads them to seek those nobler pleasures! Farther, how extremely few of these deem the pleasures of the three latter classes so important as to bend their greatest, if not their only endeavours, to the attainment of them, and to seek to procure them only from the impulse of refined and rational self-interest! But if a man sacrifice these two kinds of self-interest to the pure love of God, nothing must appear good and desirable to him but as far as it is connected with the Deity. The idea of this most benevolent and blessed being must be united with every object of his wishes, and the perfect love of him must exclude all fear: for whilst  
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fear is in the slightest degree associated with the idea of God, the mind will be incapable of suffering him fully to reign in it. But we are prevented from attaining this perfect exemption from fear, by the insuperable sense of our own weakness, wants, and failings, from which, it is true, we are capable of freeing ourselves more and more, though never entirely, if we employ, with unabating ardour, the means prescribed by religion, for the improvement and confirmation of our faith, which will make it continually approach to the desired standard. To these means prayer particularly belongs, by which a lively idea of the invisible God is kept present, and frequently recalled to our minds, and we are led to an attentive contemplation of his ways, his word, and his works, more especially of those which we ourselves have experienced. Hence we acquire a disposition to perceive God in all things, and to see and feel how kind and benevolent he is on every occasion; and take pleasure in loving moral good, and hating moral evil, for his sake.

It is going a great way, when a man brings himself to this; even though considerations of self-interest, a nobler and more refined self-interest indeed, are intermingled with it. This seems to be the utmost height we can attain in this life. Indeed, from the frailty inherent in us, and the insufficiency of our virtue, it may be perilous for us anxiously to strive after greater purity, and aspire to nothing less than a perfect delight in God unalloyed by fear. Such an attempt would be too apt to lead us into the errors of fanaticism. Here we ought to remark, that perfect self-annihilation, and the pure love of God, are very wisely considered by our author as a point which man can never attain, though he may continually approach it; like surd numbers, which we may continually approximate, though we can never exactly express them. Eternity itself would  
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be too short for the spirits of the righteous to arrive at the end, or to attain a point from which they could proceed no further. But our author does not limit this progression, or approximation to the pure love of God, to a few intelligent beings, or a single kind: in his opinion, it is the common lot of all, without exception. It is obvious, that this must naturally follow, from his principles, and the doctrine of association. For if creatures, whose thoughts and wills are governed by the laws of association, be exposed to the same impressions and experiences, for an indefinite time, their modes of thinking and willing must continually become more like each other, and it seems to be impossible, that the difference between them should increase, or even remain the same. As the same nature is common to them all, similar circumstances must produce in all similar effects. This cannot be denied, if we grant our author the following suppositions.

In the first place, he supposes, that, in the various scenes and vicissitudes which men pass through in this life, all the associations by which they figured to themselves as good what was detrimental, desiring and taking pleasure in it, as well as all those by which they were led to shun as pernicious and hate what was good and desirable, are corrected by means of experiences in some measure painful. Secondly, that the associations which induce us to expect what is actually good from any created thing, and thus to attach our desires and love to such a thing, or to seek satisfaction and happiness independent of God, are in the same manner disjoined and annihilated by unexpected and opposite consequences. Thirdly, that new associations more just, and more perfect, are formed, when our former pleasures are unexpectedly united with their consequent pains, and our former pains with their consequent pleasures. If these suppositions

positions be admitted, we are justified in drawing the following inferences.

First, By following this better way we acquire knowledge, and a love of what is truly good, in the same manner as we were before made unwise and unhappy by false associations.

Secondly, As all true good is united and centred in God, we must ultimately know this, and fly to him in our search after happiness: and as we experience all good without him to be defective, unstable, and insufficient, we shall finally satiate in him our thirst after true good, and after permanent and increasing satisfaction. If we admit the laws of association, and such a mechanism of the human mind as is conformable to it, this seems to be the natural progress of every rational being. It must be confessed, that, in every given point of this progress, considered separately, we must admit a great difference with respect to the extent of the way that each has passed: but it cannot be denied, that every one approaches the same point, whether by a shorter, a longer, a straighter, or a more indirect way. No true aberration, and still less a retrogression *in infinitum* can take place: every deviation is merely apparent, and happens only to remove some obstacle. This, however, is so far valid only, as the operations of the mind are not disturbed by the interposition of any superior power, or as the being that strives after perfection is not supernaturally and forcibly obstructed or repelled in its progress.

It remains to be shewn, that this approximation to self-annihilation, and the pure love of God, is also an approximation to the highest perfection and happiness of rational beings. It is already clear, from what has been said, that they must always be approaching this point, from the frame of their natures. We infer too, that what is a natural and inevitable consequence of our nature, when we are placed in  
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suitable circumstances and a convenient situation, and what every thing tends and impels us to, must be the proper object of our active powers, and the scope of our wishes and endeavours; and when we aim at this object, and in proportion as we approach it, we strive after the proper perfection of our nature. Thus the nearer we are to it, the greater is our perfection. From what has already been observed, it is evident, that this object can be no other than the Deity himself; and this aim, nothing but the pure love of God. Every other object is unsatisfactory: every other aim is placed too low for the course we have to run, and is insufficient to content us. On the other hand, if we make God himself the immediate object of our desires, and strive after a pure love of him, perfect and durable bliss, as far as it can be the lot of a finite creature, must be our portion; or rather, in proportion as we approach to a pure love of God, we shall also approach pure felicity: for the good which we love and desire will be pure and unalloyed. We love the Father of light, in whom there is no vicissitude of light and darkness. His good is unbounded, and his happiness uncreated. Thus the good we seek and expect in him is not defective, insufficient, or limited, but ever new, uncreated, and unclaying: he is infinity.

Let us not forget to observe, on this occasion, that former defenders of the pure love of God, a Fenelon and a Madame Guyon, if they had not found fewer antagonists, would have been treated with more respect by them, had they known, like our author, how to give a clear explanation of it, deduce it from fundamental laws of the human mind, and illustrate it from analogy and experience.

## PROP. LXXVI. p. 347.

*On Symbolical Books.*

UNDER the title of the rule of faith it was natural to expect an exposition of those doctrines, the knowledge of which, with assent to them, our author considers as necessary to excite and oblige men to pursue the preceding rule of life. It is evident, that, in his opinion, a belief of certain doctrines is only so far necessary and valuable as it promotes effective religion, or the performance of our duties. He contents himself, however, with some admonitions to his readers concerning the precepts of natural religion before-mentioned, and only requires them to unite with their belief in these precepts faith in the holy scriptures, as a complete and sufficient summary of the divine doctrines of salvation. He is no friend to human articles or creeds, that are framed to serve, together with the Bible, as steadfast rules of faith and doctrine; deeming it neither necessary, nor profitable, to extract any rule of faith from the Bible, and establish it under the form of a symbolical writing.

So many learned inquiries have been made and published of late years, respecting the necessity, justice, utility, and value of symbolical books, both in England and Germany, that what I have to say on the subject must appear in some measure superfluous: but a subject so extensive and involved is not easily exhausted. He that wishes to have a complete view of it may consult Blackburne's *Confessional*, and the various controversial writings to which that celebrated book has given birth. Of German publications Töllner's *Abhandlung über die symbolischen Bücher*,



*Bücher*, and the writings of some of its late defenders and opponents, particularly deserve notice. Still I may be permitted to make some remarks on the grounds on which Hartley opposes human articles of faith, which may tend to set them in a clearer light.

The defenders of symbolical writings must assert, or rather demonstrate, that they are necessary and indispensable, if they would manage their cause with success. They must prove, that, in the present state of the christian world, the holy scriptures alone, without these supplements or authentic expositions, are insufficient to attain the great purpose for which God gave them to us, namely, that we should be made wise to salvation. They must prove, that these creeds are more powerful instruments against the doubts, ignorance, or wickedness of those who go astray, than the holy scriptures; or that the sense of the words of Jesus, and his apostles, may be more clearly and unequivocally laid down in unscriptural expressions, than in those employed by Jesus, and the sacred writers. Finally, they must prove, that, without human articles of faith, such a variety of opinions, and difference of religion, must arise, as would render the uniformity of teaching necessary to general edification utterly impossible. All this must be proved, before we can appeal to the right of the church as a community, authorizing it to establish opinions for the whole body according to its own pleasure, and to exclude those from the society who refuse to submit to them, in defence of the justice and obligatory nature of human ordinances in religious matters. No society can possess a right to make useless ordinances, or, as the case would be here, pernicious ones, contrary to the purposes for which it was established, and derogatory to the respect due to its only lawful master and legislator. No society can possess a right to exclude from a participation of its benefits those, who,  
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before the establishment of such useless or injurious ordinances, were worthy members of it, for refusing to subscribe to the new articles, whilst they abide by the laws of their master. Thus the indispensableness of symbolical books is the grand point. If this can be set aside, we must reject them, on account of the disadvantages that must ensue from their being established, the most important of which is the prevention of private and free inquiry into religion. On the other hand, if this can be supported, the ratification of symbolical books will not cease to be an evil, it is true, but it will be a necessary evil.

Against the necessity of human articles of faith, our author objects, amongst other things, that men may understand and interpret them in as various ways as they may the scriptures themselves, and raise as endless disputes about their true sense. On this point he appeals to experience, which is here unquestionably a much surer guide than reasoning *a priori*. In the Church of England experience clearly shews, that, though the thirty-nine articles were established for the purpose of preventing difference of opinion, this end has not been in the smallest degree promoted by them. One of the strongest proofs of this is, that bishop Burnet, in his learned exposition of those articles, endeavours so to explain them, that people who entertain very different opinions with respect to their purport may receive and subscribe them. Probably a similar commentary might be written on the articles of faith of every protestant church, with similar effect. If it be said, that such an exposition is nothing more than a forced and ambiguous interpretation, and that its invalidity may be shewn, and the true sense of the symbolical writings restored and proved, by the rules of sound criticism; I would ask, whether the obscurities of the Biblical text might not in like manner be removed, and its true meaning established on as clear and solid proofs,

at least as far as respects the doctrines of the church, which are the proper subjects of symbolical writings? If symbolical books be not rendered useless as proofs, or for any other purpose, from their admitting of various interpretations, why should the scriptures be so on that account? If this be asserted of the latter, it must equally hold good of the former; and as soon as a dispute arises respecting their meaning, they become useless, and incapable of deciding any thing, and the sense of the disputed passage can only be determined by a new symbolical book.

But is it not apparent, from the composition and style of the Bible, compared with those of symbolical books, that the former, written in common language, and a popular manner, must be more exposed to ambiguous and indeterminate expressions than these, which are written systematically, in philosophical language and order, and with logical precision? At the first view, this difference seems to give symbolical books an advantage over the scriptures; but, in my opinion, the contrary will appear, on a closer examination. In support of this opinion much might be said, but I must here confine myself to a few remarks. In the first place, I shall observe, that the instruction given us in the scriptures is, for the most part, conveyed to us in an historical manner, and is, on that account most clear and intelligible to every capacity. The doctrines of our religion are delivered in the history of our Saviour: and this history is the christian's system of instruction. History is in itself more intelligible than any other species of composition, particularly if written with simplicity, in a natural order, and without embellishment. To understand the principal facts it relates, at least, nothing more is necessary than a knowledge of the language in which it is written; and with a little attention I can discover the doctrines comprised in those facts, and founded on them, or those occasionally interspersed

amongst them, with more certainty and facility than if they stood alone, unconnected with any circumstances. The saying of Jesus, for example, *I am the resurrection and the life*, might admit of various explanations: but if we connect it with the awaking of one from the dead, on which occasion it was spoken, no one can mistake its true sense, that does not wilfully shut his eyes against the light. The Epistles of the Apostles, it is true, want, in some degree, this advantage of the historical style: still, however, they refer to the history of Jesus and other facts, and as they elucidate these, they are reciprocally illustrated by them. Besides this, the apostolical epistles respect the situation, state, and circumstances of those for whom they were intended, the particular complexion of the times in which they were written, and the relation in which the apostles stood to their proselytes. Now all this is historical, and the more thoroughly the reader is acquainted with this historical part, the fewer ambiguities will he find. Thus what the sacred writings lose in precision and accuracy from their popular style, their being historical will amply make up to the reader.

Let us farther observe, that a methodical and scientific delivery of doctrines is not always sufficient to determine their meaning with precision, and prevent all possibility of a misconstruction. The language and method of the schools are advantageous only when the writer has a fundamental knowledge of the subject which he handles scientifically, when his inquiries have brought him to a clear and just idea of it, and when those for whom he writes can follow the steps of his reasoning, and enter fully into the substance of it with him. Where these requisites are wanting, this rigid method, and philosophical language, serve only to perplex both himself and his readers. The appearance of solidity will lead the writer to take his arbitrary notions, deduced from mere

mere appearances, for the truest and best, and an artful combination of words, for a well-grounded concatenation of ideas, and of the subject itself; whilst the reader, whether it be the fault of himself or the writer, racks his imagination to acquire clear and precise ideas in vain. If he could not be made to understand the subject, he might at least acquire some useful notions of it, if it were delivered in familiar language, and common modes of expression. That this is the general case with most, if not all writers of symbolical books, is evident from this, that they, for the most part, endeavouring to give rules how men should think, or rather express themselves, on the mysteries of religion, and most abstruse philosophical subtleties, intermingle with the popular the philosophical method and language, which are in some measure unsuitable, to the extreme detriment of perspicuity. How can their logical method contribute to precision, and security against mistake, on subjects of which themselves had no real and determinate idea, and which, according to their own confession, were expressed in unintelligible words? Certainly it does nothing more than give them an appearance of having said something, when in fact they have said nothing; and, if we would form any conceptions of the subject, we must lay aside the language and distinctions of the schools, and have recourse to the popular expressions of the scriptures themselves. Frequently when these dogmatists would decide philosophical questions, they confound the language of the schools with that of the scriptures; a fruitful source of error and perplexity. For the justice of this remark, we may refer the reader to a striking example which Hartley gives in what he says on free-will: an example extremely applicable to the point in question, and well calculated to illustrate it, as the question concerning free-will, *de libero arbitrio*, and some subjects related to it, is

very pointedly introduced into most, if not all confessions, and decided in the ambiguous manner remarked by Hartley.

For these and similar reasons, ambiguities and obscurities must arise, though every possible precaution be taken to prevent them. Where there is no real and clear idea, that is, such as we may discover from the apparent sense, or from analogy, there is nothing that the expositor can comprehend, and he is liable to form different conceptions, whilst he adheres to the established language, and the expressions employed. When the writer does not understand what he means himself, he cannot expect that his readers should. In all such cases symbolical books can only promote uniformity of expression, not identity of notions and sentiments; and the least deviation from this uniformity of expression, or the alteration of a single word, will produce a diversity of opinion: a sufficient proof, that nothing clear and determinate has been impressed on the mind, and that terms of art have supplied the place of ideas. The unity thus promoted is like the peace of which Tacitus speaks: *ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant*. We may go still farther: not unfrequently the expressions of articles of faith are industriously contrived to be indeterminate and equivocal, to allow some difference of opinion, at least in points considered as not absolutely essential.

Finally, did symbolical writings express ideas, and points of doctrine, with all due accuracy and precision, (till they would be no longer clear and determinate, than the philosophical system which they followed prevailed, and its language remained unaltered. Should this philosophy, and this language, give way to a new system, and a new phraseology, obscurity and ambiguity must ensue, and the words of the confession would not convey the meaning of the composer, but a different, and frequently an  
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opposite one. In confirmation of this, we have a striking example in the word *presence*, as it is used in the symbolical books of the Lutheran church, with respect to the body of Christ in the Lord's supper. When they were drawn up; probably, something more was understood thereby than an effectual presence, which the followers of Wolfe's philosophy now consider it to imply. This change of ideas has at least occasioned a considerable difference in the Lutheran doctrines respecting the Lord's supper; which difference appears so important to a celebrated divine, that he accuses those, who admit the presence of Christ only according to Wolfe's idea, of seceding from the Lutheran church. But how is this opinion to be maintained and verified? Unquestionably on exegetical principles: for the grounds of the foregoing Lutheran tenet are as clear in the holy scriptures, as the tenet itself in the symbolical books. Cannot the learned inquirer, then, as clearly prove it from the former, as from the latter? Most assuredly, if he be impartial, and not obstinately blind to the truth. Even supposing him to be prejudiced against the truth, will he be less so when he meets with it in symbolical books, than when he finds it in the scriptures? and consequently see it more clearly, and with greater readiness, in the former, than in the latter? Surely not, unless he acknowledge the symbolical books to be obligatory, and they have a power of compelling him to embrace their doctrines. If he but deem them of equal authority with the scriptures themselves, and consider it as necessary to conform his opinions to those they deliver, as to those contained in the scriptures, they will only be of equal weight with him.

If precise and definite forms be indispensable to the maintenance of a necessary uniformity in teaching, why are they confined to the doctrines of belief, excluding those of morality? Heresies and schisms

are not less possible in the latter, and are far more dangerous, as Dr. Töllner has well observed. The Bible does not present us with a regular system of morality, any more than of faith. The duties, as well as the theory of christianity, are delivered in popular language, and without art. Allegorical and hyperbolical modes of expression, that seem to require an explanation, and more strict definition, occur equally in both. Many of our Redeemer's precepts of morality, particularly in the sermon on the mount, are delivered in very general terms, requiring to be explained with as much care, and consideration of the concomitant and occasional circumstances, as doctrines of faith, if we wish not to apply them improperly. Such, for instance, are the precepts termed *consilia evangelica*, on which we have enlarged in a preceding note. Clear as the literal meaning of these and other precepts may be, the application of them to particular cases is attended with considerable difficulties: and as this application of them is necessary to be considered, for the instruction of christians, and general edification, it should seem, that a symbolical standard would here be particularly conducive to orthodoxy. But let it be farther considered, that different opinions, or contradictions, between teachers on the subject of morality are far more obvious and shocking, and make a much stronger impression on the minds of the hearers, than disagreements in that part of christianity, to determine which has been the chief aim of the symbolical books of all parties, namely theological hypotheses. With respect to the latter, two teachers of the same communion may differ widely from each other in their doctrines, if the one do not announce his opinion in the most precise manner, for the declared purpose of opposing the other, without their disagreement being suspected by their hearers, to whom these speculative notions are neither important



tant nor comprehensible, however weighty they may appear to the learned dogmatists: and even should they suspect it, it would interest them little, whilst they considered, that their duties would remain unaltered, whatever way the abstruse question might be decided. Far otherwise would it be, should one of the teachers permit the mode of conduct, amusements, and pleasures; to which they had been accustomed, and the other condemn them. Far otherwise would it affect their minds, should the one lead them to suspect those acts of piety which the other had recommended, and represent to them as fallacious the hope of a speedy conversion, with which the other had flattered them. In general, the perplexities and scandal that may be, and actually are, occasioned by erroneous teaching, arise on points to which symbolical books have paid little attention, and in which men know how to dispense with their assistance.

Let now the impartial reader decide, how far the judgment of our author concerning articles of faith is just, from the preceding comparison of human creeds with the scriptures, and from experience. To many, perhaps, it will not appear altogether improbable, that the holy scriptures alone, without any human additions, or authoritative interpretations, are sufficient to maintain the unity of doctrine necessary for general instruction and edification; so far at least as this unity requires nothing but the principles of truth, and not respect to the heads of church or state. It must also be observed, that the only necessary unity of opinion is intelligible to the common capacity of mankind, without the aid of learning or philosophy: this is what concerns the facts of christianity, as delivered in the creed of the apostles, and in the doctrines and precepts immediately deducible from it. All other theories and hypotheses appertain not to general edification,

or should be propounded with modesty as private opinions, and left to the hearer's examination. If a teacher, from his knowledge of his flock, have reason to suppose, that a considerable portion of them have not sufficient knowledge and wisdom to prove such theories by the holy scriptures, and are incapable of forming a right judgment of them, so that his hearers must blindly believe what he delivers, merely from their respect to his authority, this ought to prevent his uttering them from the pulpit.

PROP. LXXXV. p. 380.

*On the Expectations of the Bodies politic of the present State of the Earth, and particularly of the Jews.*

IN proof of the expectations which our author announces in this section, he appeals to prophecies in the holy scriptures, it is true, but he does not cite them with accuracy: still less does he expound them, and shew, that they actually foretel the events which he is led by them to expect, though these prophecies must be the principal, if not sole grounds of his expectations. For were we to judge from the experience of past times what may happen hereafter, and form our prognostic from the course of the world, these expectations may turn out in many respects differently. It would not have been amiss, too, had our author been more precise and circumstantial in his arguments. He ought not to have explained the prophecies concerning the latter days so authoritatively as he has done, or considered their meaning as so determinate and precise, as it is well known, that many expositors of the prophetic passages which he had in view have not found in them any grounds for such expectations, and others have deemed the language of the prophecies,

phesies, particularly those of the Old Testament that relate to this point, so enigmatical and obscure, and the principles of interpreting prophecies as yet so indefinite, that they consider themselves bound to withhold giving an opinion. Prudence appears to me to recommend the latter, as the safest part that can be taken. It has never yet been ascertained, how far these prophecies have already been fulfilled, and what parts of them are accomplished. Thus we want that key to the prophetic writings, which a comparison of what is past with the types and expressions under which it is couched would give us, to decypher the prophecies of events that are still to come. Whilst we want this best aid to an interpretation of the prophetic mode of writing, it is impossible for us to determine, with certainty, when, and how far, images and expressions taken from earthly things, and from temporal happiness and unhappiness, must be received in a strictly literal sense, or as figurative and hyperbolical. As far, however, as we can with any confidence employ such aids, we seem to be justified in understanding the prophecies in a figurative and spiritual sense. Every one must admit that our Lord foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, and the overthrow of the Jewish republic in expressions, and by figures, that we must not interpret literally. He says, amongst other things, that he should be seen coming in the clouds, and that signs should appear in the sun, moon, and stars; yet nothing of this literally happened. Even at his first coming upon earth, as it is called, the prophets of the Old Testament had represented him as the founder of an earthly kingdom. Now as it is obvious, that this did not happen, and that he never so appeared, what reason have we to presume, that a second coming, totally different from the first, should be announced in expressions and figures, for the most part, not differing from those by which his first coming

coming was unquestionably announced? An authentic explanation of a prophecy of the prophet Joel, in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, seems to me a strong argument for the spiritual meaning of every presage relating to the kingdom of the Messiah. The prophetic words, *I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath, blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke,* are not taken in the proper and strict sense.

Let us add to this the beautiful picture of general happiness and a golden age, with which Isaiah, in his eleventh chapter, delineates the latter days, and the commencement of the Messiah's reign upon earth; if we compare it with what actually happened at that time, it will appear, how extremely cautious we ought to be, in applying to the imagery of the prophecies a gross terrestrial meaning. The expression of St. Peter, that *no prophecy is of private interpretation*, that is, can only be explained completely by the events which actually accomplish it, seems to hold good, in a particular sense, of all these prophecies. We shall be perfectly justified, therefore, so long as nothing more certain and precise is made out, in considering as uncertain the prophetic grounds alleged for the expectation of the destruction and abolition of all the present powers and kingdoms of the earth, by a fifth monarchy, or millennium as it is called, and of the establishment of this kingdom of the righteous, itself. On the dogmatic grounds that may be brought in support of such an expectation, I lay no great stress. The public attestation of Jesus, sufficiently illustrated by what follows, that his kingdom is not of this world, seems to me to contradict every expectation of his assuming any temporal dominion; neither do I think its force has ever been weakened by any counter-arguments. At least, I consider it as a just and valid objection against the expectation of such great changes, that

we cannot possibly conceive when, how, or by what means they can be effected. Still more weighty is the objection, that these expectations are not more fully demonstrable from the scriptures, than that of the millennium, as they are chiefly, if not wholly, founded on a prophecy in the Revelation of St. John. It is well known how much may be said against the divine authority of that book, and how weakly the arguments of some of its learned opponents, particularly of Semler and Michaelis, have been opposed. The point is not, perhaps, absolutely decided: yet I think no impartial inquirer, after having duly weighed and considered the arguments for and against the authenticity of the Revelation, can maintain, as true and certain, any doctrine or expectation founded solely on that book. Till something more decisive is offered on this point, I can find neither the complete destruction and abolition of all the present powers and kingdoms of the earth, by the establishment of a fifth monarchy, or millennium, nor the approaching temporal dominion of Christ, according to the expectations announced by our author, to be clearly foretold in the prophecies.

The expectation of a future general conversion and gathering of the Jews into the church of Christ, I must make an exception, as it seems to me, to be foretold with sufficient clearness, in the well-known passage, Rom. xi. 26. There are some, indeed, who interpret the words of the apostle, "all Israel shall be saved," of a spiritual Israel, or the whole number of believers of the church of Christ, composed of Jews and Gentiles; and others who refer it to the Jewish nation, but consider it as already fulfilled. The supposition of a spiritual Israel being meant, however, does not agree with the context, as, throughout the whole of the discourse, of which it makes a part, the Israel of  
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the apostle unquestionably means the Jewish nation. The same Israel of which he says, that blindness in part is happened to it, must also be understood when he says, that all Israel shall be saved. Further, the apostle declares, that he announces a mystery, that is, according to the scriptural sense of the word, a thing hitherto unknown, or an occurrence not to be discovered by human foresight. Now that Israel should be in part blind could be no such mystery, for this was well known to every christian: or that the fulness of the Gentiles should come in, for it was already known, that the heathens should be received into the church of Christ. Paul had already preached the gospel to them, and converted many of them to christianity. Neither can it be deemed a mystery, that all those Jews and Gentiles, who were chosen by God to constitute the church of Christ, should actually walk according to it. For this was by no means an event undiscoverable to the human understanding; as it was already in part fulfilled, and the complete accomplishment of it must be highly probable, nay could not be doubtful to any christian. Besides, were we to understand by all Israel that should be saved the spiritual Israel, it would be so far from being suitable to the end for which the apostle announced this mystery, that it would be totally repugnant to it. He discovers his aim clearly, in that he says: "for I would not, brethren," the christian Gentiles to whom he had before particularly addressed himself, verse 13. "that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits." He had already warned them, that they should not boast against the branches of the olive tree into which they were grafted, that is, against the chosen Israel, or despise them as utterly rejected and cast off by God. This explanation is congenial to the design of the apostle, whose mystery

was intended to suppress the pride of the believing Gentiles, and make them think better of the Jews. Any explanation, that does not accord with the attainment of this purpose, must be rejected. How would it contribute to lessen the pride of the Gentiles, to tell them, that the whole spiritual Israel, that is, all whom God should appoint to become members of the church, from every nation on earth, without distinction, should be saved? How does this information tend to inspire the believing Gentiles with less contempt for the unbelieving Jews? Would this explanation of the mystery change their opinion, that the Jews were utterly rejected by God? Admitting this sense of the words, the apostle says nothing to his purpose, nothing that would make the heathens more courteous to the Jews. But his words are perfectly adapted to his intentions, when he says: the blindness which has happened to a part of the Jews, shall not continue for ever, but only till the bulk of the Gentiles shall be converted. This blindness will then be removed. Thus you heathens must not imagine, that these unhappy people are wholly lost, and that all God's great designs and purposes with them have terminated in an utter rejection. No: the gifts and calls of God to them will never be done away.

This sense is farther confirmed by the quotation from Isaiah: "There shall come out of Sion the deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." Were not this the true sense of the words, but a spiritual Israel were spoken of, why should the apostle take the trouble to shew the little incredibility of the change foretold by him? They who "abide not in unbelief shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again. For if thou (*an heathen*) wert cut out of the olive-tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive-tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural  
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*branches*, be grafted into their own olive-tree?" To this follow the words in which he clearly and directly says, what he had before expressed figuratively. How little does the explanation of a spiritual Israel agree with all this! Let us also take the following into consideration. The counsels of God are here laid open to the apostle, and he lets us perceive a certain analogy between the choosing of the heathen, and the future choosing of Israel. After he has made the general remark, that God has not repented of his gifts, or of his calling, and that he will not alter, or depart from his purposes and promises to his chosen people, he adds the following words: "for as ye (the heathen) in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: (both here and elsewhere the apostle represents the unbelief of the Jews as the occasion of the reception of the Gentiles, and Christ himself seems to do the same in the parable of the wedding of the king's son) even so have these (the Jews) also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy." That is, as appears from the context, God will suffer them to continue in blindness and unbelief, as formerly the heathen world, that he may one day have mercy upon them of his own free grace, without the least shadow of desert in them, more than there had been in the heathen. The apostle then proceeds to the fundamental principle of the kingdom of God, which clears up the whole of God's conduct both to the Jews and Gentiles, and gives us a key to it. *For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.* He hath suffered both Jews and Gentiles to continue in like blindness, and the same condemnation, that all he should do to deliver each might be the effect of mercy alone, and be acknowledged as a free and unmerited grace. Difficult as the latter sentence is, from its connection with the whole



whole, it can have no other meaning than that which is here given to it. How much the expectation of a future general conversion of the Jews is confirmed by it, must be obvious to every one. I say a *future* general conversion of the Jews: for there are some who allow the chosen people of Israel to be here meant, yet maintain that this conversion happened long ago, and soon after the apostle's prediction. This seems to me a forced construction of the words, and not suitable to the context. History mentions no conversion of the Jews in the earlier periods of christianity, subsequent to this prediction of the apostle, so considerable as to be deemed an accomplishment of it, with any appearance of reason. We find no account of any number of the Jewish nation embracing christianity that can be compared with the earliest conversions which followed the first and second preaching of Peter, or which were brought about by the labours of the other apostles, previous to this prediction of Paul. Already when Paul wrote, he had quitted the hardened Jews for the heathens, and had given up the hope of effecting more with them than had already been done. If, notwithstanding the considerable number of Jews already converted, and though the first stem of the christians consisted of Jews, it be still said, that Israel was rejected, how could a subsequent weaker and very limited conversion be deemed a fulfilling of the words, *all Israel shall be saved*? Was the fulness of the Gentiles already come in, in those early days? However limited we may think ourselves justified in supposing the meaning of this *all* to be, it would be unnatural to suppose, that the conversion of some individuals could be termed a general conversion, in opposition to that of several thousands at once. It would be absurd to hold up the making a few occasional profelytes to christianity as a conversion of the whole, whilst the majority of the nation remained  
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unconverted, and considered themselves as a chosen people, in opposition to the christians.

After the important conversions that had already happened, how could the apostle term such inconsiderable ones, which were indeed very probable, and might be foreseen without any divine revelation, a mystery, or an occurrence not to be preconceived by the human understanding? For, after what had already taken place, it might easily be presumed that many individuals of the Jewish nation would embrace the christian religion. If the apostle meant to say no more than this, he spoke very hyperbolically, when he represented this prediction as a mystery. But it was highly improbable, and most mysterious, according to the appearance of things, that a people, which now denied Jesus of Nazareth, should acknowledge him to be the Messiah, and that a belief in him should become their national religion. If it be said, that the assurance of a distant, though great conversion, would have contributed little to the consolation of the then afflicted Jews: I would answer: it would comfort them at least as much as other joyful prophecies of the Old Testament, predicting very distant events, in the accomplishment of which they could not participate. But the apostle does not give this as the design of his prediction: he assigns as a reason for it, that it was intended to prevent the Gentiles from despising the Jews, as a nation totally rejected by God. Yet how could the occasional conversion of a few of the Jews contribute to this purpose? If the consideration that so many Jews had been made proselytes to christianity on the first promulgation of it, in a manner far more striking than has ever since happened, even to the present day, and that the first preachers of the gospel, and the first christian communities were Jews, were insufficient to induce the heathens to judge more favourably of that people, and its final destination; how much less would  
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would the following slighter conversions be capable of bringing them to a gentler and more kind opinion? After all that has happened in that respect, from those times to the present day, has a christian less reason now to consider the Jews as a people forsaken by God, than then?

Finally, if, to weaken these arguments, it be advanced, that *σωθήσεται* must be translated, will be saved, in a conditional sense, included in verse 23, that is, so far as they do not remain in unbelief, and understand by *παν Ισραηλ*, all who believe; this would be supposing the apostle to disclose a very important mystery. He would say then: now Israel is in part blind and unbelieving, till the appointed number of the Gentiles enter into the church, and so all Israel, that is, all who shall believe, will be saved. An important discovery, indeed, and very capable of abating the pride of the believing heathen!

Nothing remains for us then, but that we understand the mystery as relating to a future national conversion, which, little as the appearance of it may be at this time, and little as it probably can be in the present state of christianity, and with the now prevailing doctrines, will most assuredly happen.

Whether a general conversion of the Jews will be accompanied with their restoration to the land of Palestine, seems to me far less clearly determined by the prophecies of the Old Testament, than it does to our author. The prophecies contained in the third and fifth books of Moses, and other parts of the Old Testament, that are commonly adduced in proof of this, contain many circumstances from which it clearly appears that these prophecies are already fulfilled by the Babylonish captivity, and the return from it. At least it is inapplicable to the present state of that people, and their present long dispersion, as idolatry is every where announced as their prevailing sin, and the cause of their banishment: but it is well

known, that since their being set free by Cyrus, and still more since their dispersion by the Romans, this is a sin to which they have been by no means addicted.

Far more probable, in my opinion, and more clearly grounded on prophecies of the Old Testament, and sayings of Christ, is the expectation that the gospel will be some time or other preached to all nations, and that christianity will be the prevailing religion of the earth. Neither reason, nor experience offers any objections to the arguments in favour of this expectation, which our author adduces from the nature of christianity, namely, that every important truth will, sooner or later, rise victorious over and suppress its opposing errors. It may be objected, indeed, that christianity has yet made little progress amongst the nations of infidels: nay, that in countries where it is the established religion, its influence and authority seem daily to decay. But the obvious reason of both is, that the system of christianity which is preached to unbelievers is too much altered and corrupted by foreign additions, and must be brought back to its original purity and truth, before it can triumph over ignorance, infidelity and superstition. Before christianity is so purified, it cannot produce the expected effects, but must continue to experience various oppositions; till at length these oppositions will become the means and occasion of restoring it to its first important truth and purity.

## PROP. XCIII. p. 407.

*On the Terms of Salvation.*

OUR author here handles the difficult and important question, how far faith in Christ is to be considered as the means of salvation. Many things that he says on the subject are good and just; but as he has not developed and defined the idea of faith, what he ascribes to it will scarcely appear sufficiently clear and methodical to the reader. "Christ our Saviour," says he, "is sent from heaven, God manifest in the flesh; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life; that, though our sins be as scarlet, they should by him, by means of his sufferings, and our faith, be made as white as wool; and the great punishment, which must otherwise have been inflicted upon us, according to what we call the course of nature, be averted. Faith then in Christ, the righteous, will supply the place of that righteousness, and sinless perfection, to which we cannot attain. And yet this faith does not make void the law, and strict conditions, above described; but, on the contrary, establishes them. For no man can have this faith in Christ, but he who complies with the conditions. If our faith do not overcome the world, and shew itself by works, it is of no avail. It contains all the other christian graces; and we can never know that we have it, but by having the christian graces, which are its fruits." Hence he infers, that a mere assurance, or strong persuasion, of a man's own salvation, or, as it is elsewhere expressed, a mere confident acceptation and imputation of the merits of the blood of Christ, is neither a condition, nor a

pledge of it. Such a strong persuasion may be generated, whilst a man continues in many gross corruptions: and, on the contrary, a man may possess every christian virtue, without having a firm assurance of his own salvation. Fear, in particular, cannot well be consistent with such an assurance. On the question concerning the privilege and advantage of faith, he observes, first, that the righteousness and sufferings of Christ, with our faith in them, are necessary to save us from our sins, and to enable us to perform our imperfect righteousness: and, secondly, that faith is proposed by the scriptures as the means appointed by God for rendering imperfect righteousness equivalent, in his sight, to perfect, and even of transforming it into perfect, as soon as we are freed from this body of flesh and death. Faith, he adds, improves righteousness, and every degree of righteousness is a proportional preparative for faith; and, if it do not produce faith, will end in self-righteousness, and *satanical* pride.

To reduce these various assertions into due order, and to shew how far they are consistent with each other, with the nature of man, and with the most obvious interpretations of the scriptures, we will endeavour to give as just, instructive, and comprehensive a notion of the nature of faith in general, and of faith in Christ in particular, as an hypothetical explanation will admit. Faith, or belief, both in common language, and in the language of the scriptures, signifies the receiving and admitting somewhat as true, from the testimony and authority of others, and on account of that testimony and authority. When I consider as true any fact testified to me by others, without any experience of it myself, or when I admit any proposition in mathematics or philosophy on the authority of a man acquainted with either science, without my being capable of perceiving the proofs or demonstrations of it, I may  
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be said to believe this fact, or proposition, in the true sense of the word. On the other hand, if I have experienced the first myself, or proved the latter in my own mind, I do not merely believe, I know and perceive the truth.) In what follows, I shall endeavour to prove that this notion is conformable both to the common use of words, and to the scriptures: at the same time, I shall endeavour, as much as possible, to remove any objections that may be made to it. Thus faith is opposed to our own knowledge and judgment, and is properly a trust in the knowledge and judgment of another, which is more or less effectual, in proportion to the nature of the object, and the scope of the faith. I say, more or less effectual: for faith has always some end, and, as on every occasion it is intended to produce some good, must be considered as an active principle. Let us now consider the natural frame of man, which renders it necessary, that he should be led to a certain end by knowledge and judgment. This is most naturally effected by his own: but, when his own are insufficient, he must employ those of others. There are two ways in which a man may be guided by the knowledge of another. Either whilst his intellectual faculties are totally passive, and at rest, as the machine of the world is governed and led by the wisdom of God; which blind guidance excludes faith, as well as all activity of the understanding: or a man may be so guided, that his mind may be employed, improved, and perfected, whilst he is himself an agent. This last mode of being guided by the knowledge of another presupposes and requires faith; without which it is impossible. In this case, the understanding, enlightened by a superior knowledge, receives the conclusions and instructions of this superior knowledge, following and obeying them from its own choice, not indeed on internal evidence drawn from its own stores, but from a confidence in that

wisdom which guides it, and gives it these instructions, arising from a conviction of the benefits of this guidance, and its obedience to it. Whenever it happens, that a weaker understanding is guided by a superior one, it must be effected by faith, if not in an irrational manner, and by mere physical powers. Thus the faith, by which God would lead man to salvation, is nothing less than a positive and arbitrary ordinance of God. It is by no means confined to religion. It is the absolutely necessary and sole mean by which every child is instructed and governed, and by which every ignorant and unexperienced man must be guided.

According to this hypothesis, there appears to me to be no proper ground of contention between faith and reason. A rational or well-founded faith (and who would not reject a faith unfounded and irrational) is so little repugnant to reason, that, in a multitude of cases, and under proper restrictions, it would be highly unreasonable not to believe. The case where faith is rational is where we want the judgment, knowledge, and experience necessary to the attainment of our purposes; where a present weakness of our intellectual faculties, or a disadvantageous situation, is a clog upon our action; or where we are compelled to determine and act, before we have acquired due knowledge and experience for the government of our determinations, and guidance of our actions. Still more is it rational, when we cannot acquire a knowledge and judgment of our own, without the greatest disadvantages, and most hazardous delay, unless under the guidance of some superior power, and in the school of faith. In these cases, we must have faith if we would seek our own good, and not be blind to it. But when, according to the supposition, our own knowledge with respect to the object of faith is defective, how can we rightly judge and determine whom we are to believe, to walk



walk with safety? Amongst the guides offering themselves to us, are we not in danger of trusting to such, whose want of skill or honesty will mislead us? To avoid this danger, our faith must be well founded, or we must have a rational assurance both of the capacity and good-will of our guide. Now it is easy to see that, with respect to the latter, we may have sufficiently strong and independent proofs: that is, we may have proofs sufficient to convince us, that our guide has the good will to lead us right, though we have no knowledge of the circumstance itself in which we are led. If, for instance, I know nothing of agriculture, I may yet be able to judge, whether he, to whom I intrust the management of my farm, means me well, or not. As to the other point, the capacity of the guide, it would seem, that, to judge rightly of it, such a knowledge is requisite, as would render faith unnecessary. But if we apply it to any practical art, we shall find, that the most inexperienced may have a well-grounded judgment of the ability of his guide, or at least a knowledge sufficient to enable him to form a rational determination. He has only to inquire, whether he in whom he would confide have given incontestable proofs of his abilities, have himself arrived at the point to which he would bring him, or have already performed what he requires of him. If I be desirous of building a house, yet know nothing of architecture, I must trust to the architect. However incapable I may be of proving his science and skill, I am able to judge whether he have executed, in other buildings, what I require in mine; and, if I find he have, I should act very absurdly to question his ability. Must not the greater part of mankind who trust their lives to a physician, found their confidence in him solely on the cures he has performed? Were it necessary that the sick man should first examine the theoretical skill and science of his physician, how few

would ever be able to determine to seek help from one! It is sufficient for us to know, that he has already cured himself or others of the disease with which we are afflicted; and this would render our confidence in him well founded and justifiable.

I am much mistaken if our Lord Jesus do not give us a test by which we may judge of the capacity of our teachers, when he says, that we shall know a prophet by his fruits. By these fruits, I do not imagine that he means the doctrines or system of the prophet, but his works; that is, his whole conduct, and his way of thinking, as it appears in his behaviour. Could we suppose it to imply, that a teacher is known by his doctrines, it would be saying nothing. We might still ask, how shall I know these doctrines to be true? and be no wiser than before. How would the ignorant and unlearned, who stood in need of these doctrines, be capable of judging of their justice and truth? But if we suppose that the prophet actually had, or professed the design of making his pupils virtuous, just, peaceful, and happy, and that he was a physician to the soul, who meant to heal the various ailments and disorders of the mind; there would be no better means, for those who could not bring his doctrines to the test of a profound examination, to distinguish a true from a false prophet, than to observe, what would not be above the reach of their judgment, whether he were actually honest and disinterested; whether his deeds were good, or evil; whether he himself enjoyed inward peace and satisfaction, to which he promised to conduct his followers; and whether he had freed himself from the common faults, frailties, and disorders of human nature.

Let me first of all observe here, that Jesus Christ confirmed himself our best and surest guide, in the way in which, according to his rule, prophets and teachers should merit the confidence of their hearers,

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not by his doctrines merely, but particularly by his fruits, or works; and further, by his life, death, resurrection, and ascension. He shewed his disciples and followers in himself a pattern of what he taught them to do. He was, in the most eminent degree, an humble and upright worshipper of God, a meek and warm friend of mankind; all his inclinations and desires, without the least exception, were under the controul of reason, and he was most perfectly master of himself. Enjoying inward peace, and honoured with the acceptance of God, the consciousness of his innocence, virtue, and holiness, set him above the wants of human nature, and made him insensible to the injuries or contempt of mankind. Well might he say: *learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart. Take up my yoke, that is, follow my instructions, and you shall find peace to your souls.* This peace, which never deserted him, which all his words and works, and his whole conduct, placed in the strongest light, his disciples might well hope to attain by imitating him; as they could not with any shadow of reason doubt that he, who possessed it in so eminent a degree, understood the art of attaining it, and was capable of teaching it to them. Thus when he offered himself to man as his guide to wisdom and virtue, to peace in God, and to a blessed immortality, his conduct was the pledge of his truth. With steadfastness unappalled, and unshaken confidence in God, he went, through a life of tribulation, to a death, unquestionably rendered more terrible and painful to him by the bitter contempt of his generally known merit and worth, the triumphant laughter and sarcasms of his enemies, and the maledictions of his own nation, than by all the pains wherewith it was accompanied. He died with the love of his murderers and confidence in God, in his heart and mouth. He suffered himself to be laid in the grave; but soon arose again out of it, left the earth,

earth, and visibly ascended into the regions of perfect bliss. They who were incapable of proving his doctrines, were able to assure themselves of the truth of his history: and he who was assured of this could not reasonably have any scruple to trust in him, but must believe him with unlimited faith.

Necessary as it is, that the grounds of our faith should be supported by reason, equally is it that its object should be so, or those doctrines and precepts which we are to believe on the authority of superior wisdom. That the doctrines of faith must not be repugnant to what are proved to be moral truths, or to the first principles of human knowledge, is too evident to be denied by any one. Thus in divine doctrines no such contradiction must appear as would set our faith at variance with reason. If one, who proclaims himself a messenger from God, should deliver doctrines that obscure, and render doubtful, the first principles of human knowledge, or totally overthrow them, all the grounds of human judgment, and consequently those on which he must build his claim to our faith would be entirely done away. If the use and application of our reason be incompatible with faith in his doctrines, we can believe nothing, or we cannot judge whether he deserve our confidence or not.

But it may here with justice be asked, how is it with doctrines that are confessed to be above the reach of the human understanding? However it may be with such doctrines, thus much seems incontestable, that such things are not to be included as are inconceivable, and which, though expressed in the words of a known language, convey no more meaning than if they were in a language unknown. Every one must admit, that such things are not objects of our faculty of conception. What a man can conceive must, at least, be capable of being clearly expressed. By the words: *doctrines above the reach*  
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*of the understanding*, such only are to be understood, the connection and dependance of which on the things to which they are conjoined, are not explicable by the knowledge it has acquired: propositions that appear to it to be separate and isolated in the regions of truth, as far as it is acquainted with them. But to form this judgment of them, the mind must comprehend the words, or they are non-entities to it. Supposing the existence of certain abstract speculations, the premises of which are indiscoverable to the human mind, and to which all its knowledge is inapplicable, be not palpably shewn, we might justly doubt, whether the promulgation of them could be useful to any purpose, and ascribable to the Supreme Wisdom. At any rate, they cannot be an effectual motive of action to man: for this would require that they should discover to him, or at least shew more clearly and certainly, some relation in which he stood to others, or in which others stood to him. But propositions that express such a relation cannot be altogether above the reach of man's understanding. As soon as a man understands the words, they display some connection with advantage or disadvantage; and, if he do not fully comprehend these in any given point of time, they cannot be absolutely inscrutable to his intellectual faculties. Even experience must gradually give him more light on the subject. Besides, it seems to me that speculations imparted to us by others to influence our actions, must in some degree admit of being united and interwoven with our general practical ideas and principles, with which their efficacy must coalesce, so as to tend to the same, not to various points. Not that a man would become more learned and enlightened thereby; as an apt scholar in mathematics, if he were shewn the solution of a difficult and intricate problem, without its connection with what he had already learnt being pointed out, perhaps would.

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This might be an useful exercise of his faculties, if he were thereby excited to fill up the gap of the intermediate propositions, in order to discover the demonstration himself, and employ it as a clue to guide his understanding. But this does not agree with the case above-mentioned. The promulgation of an unfathomable mystery, whilst it is and remains wholly unattainable to the human understanding, and whilst in the circle of our knowledge there are no premises that conduct us to it, could give no exercise to reflection, and consequently would not improve the mind. Hence it seems to me to follow, that abstract metaphysical truths, absolutely above the reach of the human understanding, cannot be the subject of a revelation, or an object of rational faith, even if they could be rendered intelligible in words. But proportionally, and with respect to a certain standard of man's intellectual faculties, and to the mode of thinking of certain persons and times, there must be many true propositions above the reach of this or that man, and this or that period. If there have been divines who believed that they had met with such unfathomable mysteries in the christian revelation, probably they did not examine their nature with sufficient care, or rightly understand the passages on which they founded them; or they sought by reasoning, or explanations, to open a way to them for their understanding, thus acknowledging, that even to themselves a connection or harmony with known truths was an indispensable quality of these mysteries. Be this as it may, it is however certain, that the christian revelation, when it speaks of mysteries, and mysteries revealed, understands facts and occurrences, which are not deducible from general ideas, or metaphysical truths, but of the reality of which we are assured by our own experience, or by credible testimony. If we be informed of them, they must be revealed in a known language.

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If they be capable of no proper demonstration, still, on the other hand, the absurdity or impossibility of such a fact or occurrence must not be deducible from any truth already demonstrated. Were the latter the case, it would be justifiable, in such a revelation, in other respects sufficiently credible, to admit passages which seem to have such significations as not sufficiently established, as unintelligible, or as misunderstood, and exert ourselves to discover the intelligible or true meaning, and if we could not succeed in this, to consider such passages as not written for us, or at least not yet to be disclosed to us.

Reason, considered subjectively, or as a mean and instrument, has been distinguished from objective reason, or the fundamental principles and truths of reason. It has been supposed that faith might thus be exalted above reason, and that thus they might be opposed to each other, without being destroyed. Admitting this distinction to be essentially true, reason cannot be employed as the instrument or means of explaining the sense of any instruction, and distinguishing what is true from what is false, without admitting the grounds of all human knowledge, that is, logical truths, which are founded on the demonstrated truths of ontology and psychology. No human reason can, in any case, distinguish what is possible from what is impossible, truth from falsehood, probability from improbability, if it be not guided by general rules: which rules consist of general, metaphysical and logical truths. Thus, in practice, subjective and objective reason are inseparable. Besides, the human understanding cannot act otherwise than according to the laws of mind. These laws require it to have associated conceptions, and consequently to endeavour to make the knowledge newly acquired, whether by experience, or imparted information, agree with the stock of ideas which it had

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had already collected. This must more especially be the case, if the newly acquired knowledge become an effectual principle of action. If, in our inquiries, we do not set out immediately from the first principles of knowledge, we must at least suppose them to be already proved: and the more distant our inquiry from these first principles, or the more intermediate ideas and experience are required to connect them, the more extensive the knowledge, and the more numerous the preparatory ideas that we must assume, if we would pursue our inquiry in a rational manner. The study of revealed religion seems to me to be no exception to this. Revealed religion presupposes not only rational men, but demonstrated rational truths, as, without these, no rational subject could be an object of thought, and, without these and their application, the meaning of any thing revealed could not be clearly perceived or determined, or we could not discover what it was intended to teach us. Any instruction, even though from God, if delivered in human words, may be misconstrued and misapplied. To guard against such misconstruction, and to discover the true and proper sense of it, man has no help but reason. This however he cannot exercise, unless he confine himself to the rules of reasoning rightly, and judge from truths already known.

This is obviously the case in passages that, literally taken, contradict each other: as when parts of the human body are attributed to God, and it is again said, that he is a spirit, and that a spirit has neither flesh nor blood: or when it is said, that he has repented of something, and again, that he is not a man that he should repent. How shall we decide which of these expressions are to be taken in a literal sense, when the scriptures do not plainly tell us that these are to be understood figuratively, and those as strictly true? Here the known principle of explain-  
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ing one passage by another is inapplicable, and unable to determine the doubtful meaning. The obvious contradiction renders it a party, and thus it can decide nothing. Nay, what is still more, itself appeals to the decision of reason; and when it says, God cannot repent, as he is not a man, it refers to reason, and its principles and ideas of God and man, and wills it to compare these ideas, that from the comparison it may perceive the justice of the assertion, that God cannot repent. But a reason as void of all ideas, principles, and fundamental truths, as unpractised in their application, would be as incapable of judging on this subject, as the raw and uncultivated understanding of a child, or a totally ignorant and unthinking man. Hence it is clear, that when reason determines in favour of the proposition, that God is a spirit and cannot repent, it is done in consequence of general principles, and rational notions of God and his nature. The same is it in cases where the scriptures deliver apparently contradictory propositions, relative to man, his moral nature, conversion, amendment, or future reward and punishment. Thus it would seem from many passages, that the forgiveness of a sinner, his acceptance with God, and his salvation, are arbitrary gifts of the Deity, not proportioned to the rectitude of his thoughts and actions, but founded on somewhat foreign and external to him. But then there are numerous other passages that say just the contrary; that man shall reap what he sows, that every one shall receive according to his works, be they good or evil, and that he must forsake what is evil, and learn to do good, if he would obtain grace and forgiveness of God. That these and similar passages apparently contradict each other, must be obvious to every one. But how shall we remove these contradictions? Who shall decide what we are to understand figuratively, what literally? Not the scriptures:

tures: as they do not say, this is spoken metaphorically, and that is simple truth. Reason then must be our sole judge. But reason can judge only from what it has discovered to be true, by experience, and reflection on the nature of the human mind, and the laws of its alterations.

It may be said, were reason so exalted, it would be totally insusceptible of instruction; and man could learn nothing by faith, or from revelation, which he might not acquire by his reason left to itself. This objection is, I think, already obviated, by what I have said above of the nature of faith. It may not be superfluous, however, to add a few observations. Speculative doctrines contrary to reason, if there be such, cannot be imparted by revelation, or received and comprehended by reason. With respect to such as are above reason, or which cannot be brought to harmonize with what man must know and acknowledge as truth, by any reflection, or by exercising the understanding to all eternity, the case is more doubtful. It is not probable indeed, that these should be the object of faith, and the subject of a divine revelation, if the design of the revelation were to perfect the human mind and will, and if our faith were sometime or other to be changed thereby into sight. Facts, however, the promulgation of which has an influence on the peace and improvement of man, facts absolutely undiscoverable by reasoning *a priori*; counsels and designs of God with respect to man, which, though perfectly consonant to reason, that is, to a rational knowledge of God and man, were wholly unknown to the reason of this or that man, or at this or that period, or obscurely, imperfectly, and not early enough known; in short, practical truths which must be approved by reason, on serious and steady reflection, though not to be known as incontestably certain without the immediate and extraordinary assistance and instruction of God, may,  
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and must be, the subjects of divine revelation. Who will venture to deny, that they are a suitable object of it? Reason would believe such a revelation as sufficiently supported by divine authority, that is, would admit it as true, use, and apply it, till it became convinced of its utility by experience, and learnt to perceive by earnest reflection how true it was, how worthy of the Deity from whom it came, how suitable to the nature, wants, and wishes of man, and how perfectly consonant to his truest and best knowledge of things. If we listen to reason, it is easy to perceive that we are far from knowing every thing necessary to our happiness here and hereafter. We find that, in many cases, we must act under the direction, and according to the instructions of others who know more than ourselves. We feel that we must learn, and learn on, and that for this purpose we must admit and employ, on the authority of others, many things, the truth of which we cannot discover from our own stock of knowledge, till we increase in understanding, and become capable of walking without assistance. Should we not learn then from our wise and good Creator, should we not trust to his supreme authority, that what he reveals to us is true, good, and beneficial? How extremely foolish and absurd would it be, to despise his instructions to salvation, because they had not entered into our own minds! How senseless not to wait with patience the time, when all his precepts and ordinances shall be justified to our reason, by a just application of them!

The duty and office of reason in general, with respect to a divine precept, may be conveniently explained, from the steps to be taken by the governor of a remote province, on receiving orders from his king, or by a judge, who hears the testimony of witnesses, and is thence to discover the truth. The first will require from the messenger who brings

him the command a clear credential, and a sufficient confirmation that he is actually sent from the king. When he is assured of this, he will endeavour to understand the king's orders, and if they be in some passages doubtful and obscure, he will carefully call to his assistance the rules of sound criticism, and all the knowledge he has of the monarch's character, notions, and designs. If he be actually a wise and good king, he will not be displeas'd with his viceroy for explaining passages that seem to him obscure, contradictory to other passages, incompatible with the known character of the king, or militating against his designs, by other parts of his instructions that are more consonant to his ideas of his master's thoughts. If he be no tyrant, and suppose and require from his delegates reason and conviction, he will not in such a case expect the sacrifice and renunciation of reason, but rather that it be applied with all possible attention. Thus, when the point is to prove whether that which is delivered to him as the king's command actually be so, or not, and also when he is to inquire how the command is to be understood, reason must be employed, and there occurs no opposition betwixt reason and faith. Different indeed would be the case, were the king an arbitrary despot; and differently must the viceroy act, were he conscious that his master was accustomed to issue contradictory and futile commands. The more use he made of reason, the more would he gain the esteem of a wise monarch. Let us suppose the case of the delivery of a divine revelation to be as if we were to hear and examine witnesses, and thereby to judge of a certain important fact; should we renounce reason, or set up faith as contradictory to it, we can think but little to the purpose. To judge whether the testimonies be admissible, or not, is evidently a duty of reason, and the proper occupation of it. It is equally impossible to deny, that reason must examine the words  
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of the witnesses, compare them with one another, sift them, and thus discover the truth. On what grounds can any case be exempted from the investigation and decision of reason, by means of which we arrive at the truth, and proper nature of facts? If an appeal be made to passages of scripture which set reason at nought, either they speak not of pure and sound reason, but of the understanding of men blinded by prejudices, who obey their passions, and listen not to its dictates; or it is said, as in that well known passage, according to which reason must commence under the direction of faith, that our reason must be convinced of the truth of divine doctrines and precepts by divine authority, and, in cases where we are ignorant, and require to be enlightened by God, be assured of our ignorance, our need of divine instruction, and its utility and advantages. Besides, this passage evidently speaks of moral precepts, or doctrines that require to be obeyed. This is exactly the case where reason itself commands us to follow the wiser and better views of God; and there must human reason be convinced, that not it, but the supreme reason of God must guide us by faith.

Let us apply this general theory of faith to the christian in particular. Supposing its justice, it will, I hope, remove many difficulties, and throw the necessary light on the foregoing proposition of our author. In the first place, it will be clear why faith in God, and Jesus Christ, are so frequently and expressly required. However high and advantageous ideas we may form of the force and extent of human reason, these ideas would only hold of the maturer reason of the wiser few. The greater part of mankind we must consider as in a state of childhood, embracing intelligible moral truths less from the exercise and application of their own mental faculties than on the authority of credible witnesses, and consequently through faith. When I consider how

uncultivated, how unpractised, the understanding of most men is, and, according to the present state of the world and of human life, must be, and how greatly they require a positive instruction and confirmation of the moral truths necessary to the peace and improvement of man; I cannot agree with those divines, who consider the discovery of absolutely inscrutable and incomprehensible truths, or mysteries, in the theological sense of the word, as indispensable characteristics of a divine revelation. Surely a revelation would not be unworthy of the goodness of God, if it only imparted, and established on unequivocal authority, instructive moral truths of importance to all mankind: nay, if it only disclosed some salutary counsel, which reason itself would hereafter have discovered, though not for ages; or if it corrected false principles, on which the world had hitherto built its grounds of consolation, or its system of moral duties.\*

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\* This, in my opinion holds good, particularly of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and a future state of retribution. This doctrine, unquestionably, was not unknown to mankind in the earliest ages, and seems so indispensable to man's peace, and so desirable to every mind, not wholly corrupted and depraved, that men willingly and eagerly embrace whatever has the least appearance of supporting this doctrine. Thus men contented themselves with the feeble and conjectural arguments of a Socrates and a Plato; or rather they wanted them not, at a period when they did not so much reason themselves into a belief of it, as build their faith on the testimony of tradition, and certain obscure perceptions which the mind felt of its immortality. But as the original simplicity of manners gradually disappeared, free-thinking and depravity gained ground; when stronger and more generally instructive proofs became necessary to satisfy the sceptic philosopher, and convince the contemner of morals. Not long before the birth of Christ, these inquiries had been pursued so far, that men began to perceive the weakness and insufficiency of the arguments adduced in support of the immortality of the soul; but still they were incapable of substituting more valid and powerful ones in their stead. In this intermediate state, a  
belief

Should the divine revelation furnish the occasion of a great revolution, still might I venture to determine how far it is conformable to the wisdom and goodness of God, to impart it immediately to mankind. For the many, and even for the wiser few, at least in the gloomy hour of doubt, faith in the divine testimony will be partly an indispensable, and partly an additional assurance of those funda-

belief so indispensable to the rendering man tranquil, and exciting him to virtue, appeared very doubtful to thinking minds.

The most virtuous of mankind, a Cato, a Brutus, who so ardently wished that this doctrine might be true, were not sufficiently convinced of it by the arguments of a Plato. How would they have rejoiced, how thankful would they have been, to have received a clearer light, and stronger confirmation on this subject! How must they have wished to have been freed from their anxious doubts! This light, this confirmation, so suitable and necessary to the state of the world at that time, the gospel of Jesus imparted to us. In this view, it could not have been promulgated at a more seasonable time. Even amongst the Jews, a very respectable sect denied the immortality of the soul, and a future state of retribution; and the revelation of the Old Testament was so little calculated to oppose this continually spreading disbelief, that the notion of a future state, held by the other Jewish sects, was not so much founded on this, as on tradition, and mere human authority. I must here observe, by the bye, that this consideration throws some light on the question, whether the christian revelation has contributed to the moral improvement of the world, and in what degree. For were the civilized, polished, and reasoning part of the world, at the time of Christ's coming, in danger of utterly losing this belief, which, as I will venture to affirm, is indispensable both to the knowledge and exercise of man's general duties, and of falling into the most immoral free-thinking, and comfortless scepticism; christianity, had it only prevented this extreme depravity, and been a powerful remedy against the absolute want of religion accompanying it, would have been one of the best and most important gifts of God. With respect to this question, as many of the partisans of christianity have already observed, we are to consider not merely the positive improvements which it has introduced into the world, but also the many and great corruptions which it has prevented: not merely how much the practical principles and conduct of men have been corrected and improved by the christian revelation, but how much worse the world would have been, had it not been promulgated.

mental principles of religion, that there is a God, and that he will reward all who seek him. The more unpractised the human understanding in early ages, the more necessary was the principle of faith. Therefore God required it from his first worshippers: therefore was so great a value set upon it, and it was imputed to Abraham as righteousness. I cannot here omit an observation that particularly shews the necessity of religious faith. I must however refer back to what I have already said on the too early exercise of the active powers of the mind, or propensity to liberty, as a probable ground of moral evil. This early propensity to liberty will determine a man in the choice of what is good or evil, before he has to guide him any knowledge, or judgment of them, or views derived from remembrance of the past, and a prospect to the future. There is no remedy for this evil more powerful than faith, or a rational confidence in the knowledge of a wise and well-meaning guide. By this alone can the wild propensity to liberty be restrained, and man's unbridled self-will, his dangerous curiosity, his inquisitive *wherefore*, and his inclination to extend his conceptions, be so fettered as to occasion him the least possible prejudice, though not forcibly suppressed. How completely would this be effected, if God gave mankind, in his son Jesus Christ, a perfect and divine man as a competent guide, meriting their confidence by every thing capable of obtaining it from a rational being! In him then would they have an express image of God, equal to their comprehension, a pattern of every excellence, and their leader in the path of perfection and happiness.

Now if Jesus Christ be such a guide to man, and if, which appears to me to be the case, all the appellations given him in the scriptures, all the benefits he has bestowed on mankind, and all that he has

done



done or suffered for them, be reducible to this idea,\* it is easy to conceive that faith in him must be an active confidence, such a confidence as a traveller, about to perform an unknown and dangerous journey, must have in a trusty and experienced guide. Evidently Christ our Saviour conducts us to a point, at which, without him, we could not arrive, or, at least, not so easily, conveniently, and certainly; or he renders us capable of attaining a happiness, by means of our faith in him, which otherwise we could not reach. But much as he may do for us, still something is left for ourselves to perform. The high value of the services he has done us, and his labours to promote our welfare, by no means exempt us from the duty of endeavouring after our own happiness: and though he has rendered it possible for us to be happy in God, he has not removed the necessity of our carefully, sincerely, and uninterruptedly treading in his steps, according to the instruction, encouragement, and support that he has given, and will give us. Were it not so, we must presume, that he meant to plunge our inclinations to good into a lethargic stupor, and quiet our minds under the dominion of sin. *So were Christ the servant of sin. God forbid.* So had he merely assured us of forgiveness, and brought us comfortable and joyful tidings, without requiring of us any application of them conducive to the increase of truth, righteousness, and perfection, but rather such as must prevent it. He would have imparted to us the hope of happiness, and offered us the greatest

\* To guard against any misconstruction, as if I thus represented Jesus merely as a teacher and pattern to the world, let me observe, that I hold him for a guide who makes imitation possible to his imitators, smooths the way for them, removes the obstacles that might retard them, and in short performs every thing necessary, that they who are led by him need only trust in him, and steadfastly follow him, to obtain their end.

advantages, without making the absolutely necessary qualification on the side of man a condition of the possession of this happiness, and of the enjoyment of these advantages. Thus the most perfect master must have sought to lead his scholars to his happiness indeed, but not to his virtues and perfection. As to believe this would be blaspheming the holy Jesus, and his services to mankind, and as it is palpably repugnant to man's reason and nature, and to the assertions of Jesus and his first disciples, we dare not give so narrow a signification to faith in Christ, to which the happiness imparted and insured by him is promised, as to confine it to any one part of what he has done and suffered for us. However good, and apparently pious, the intention of the common limited definition of faith to salvation, that the blood and death of Christ constitute its sole object, it appears to me exposed to a misconstruction not unfrequent, and to an abuse almost inevitable to the unthinking.\* This makes it possible for many christians to set their minds at peace, without thinking of amending their lives, or deeming it at all necessary. This, as I shall hereafter more fully shew, renders the transition from faith to good works, or to righteousness, not less difficult in practice than in theory. This makes a christian capable of saying: I have faith, and thou works.

Experience seems to me sufficiently to shew that the pernicious consequences above-mentioned arise from such a confined notion of faith, and that the doctrine of justification and salvation by faith alone

\* Let me not here be misunderstood. I am far from denying that the blood of Christ, which was shed for the sins of the world, is an object, and indeed an important object of the faith to salvation. I only maintain that the object of this faith is not only the death of Jesus, and the doctrines immediately relative to it, but also every other doctrine and precept of Jesus and his apostles.

promotes such unchristian abuses; and every intelligent preacher, who attends to the way of thinking of his hearers, will find christians enow who think in this manner; as a man whom I well know, and not one of the lower class, thought proper to explain his sentiments in this manner, when exhorted to amend his life, and exercise the practical virtues of christianity. But, said he, if I must do all myself, what does it avail me, that Christ has done it? He has done it once for me, and payed my debt; why then should I pay it again?—It may be replied, indeed; to christians who think in this manner, that their faith must be active. But still, if its proper essence, and whole value, be placed merely in the appropriation and acceptation of the sacrifice of Christ, I do not see why good works, that are frequently so much depreciated, are absolutely necessary; particularly, as on the common system it cannot well be denied that a man, after a continued course of wickedness, may, at the end of his life, if he only accept the merits of Christ, and confidently believe that he has paid and performed every thing for him, be acquitted of his debt, and consequently obtain forgiveness. Other motives to virtue, though good in themselves, will be too weak to countervail the deep-rooted prejudice of the superfluousness of our good actions, and of faith in Christ being a sufficient compensation for them. Their power will be so much the less, as men commonly conceive their future happiness to be something positive, depending more on the arbitrary will of God, than the virtuous disposition of the mind; and as the maxim, which cannot be too much or too carefully inculcated, that virtue itself is, and ever will be happiness, is generally decried and abjured as atheistical. This probably is, because the doctrine, that a mere confidence in the merits and virtues of another, or the wish to be justified by another, renders man capable of salvation, must fall to  
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the ground, as soon as it is admitted to be true, that a virtuous mind is happy in every point of its existence so far only as it has loved and practised doing good, and that a vicious mind must be punished in every state, in proportion as it has loved and exercised evil. Some endeavour here to avail themselves of a distinction, and say: happiness will be obtained only by means of faith, but degrees of it will be awarded in proportion as this faith displays itself in works. But whoever maintains this, must at least presume, that the point at which faith begins must have a preponderant tendency to good, that the mind of a believer must be converted from a predominant love of sin to a superior love of virtue, and that the crooked way must be left, and the strait way entered upon, at least a single step. In this state the believer may be considered as a convalescent, who, now the crisis of his disease is past, begins to find himself somewhat easier and better.

That God may remit all positive punishments to such a man, on account of his faith, is not utterly inconceivable. For as these relate to his former state of unbelief, and would bring him to reflection and knowledge, being no longer necessary in his believing state, at least as far as they tended to this purpose, they might consequently be remitted. But still this is the lowest degree of happiness that can be ascribed to him, unless something positive or arbitrary be supposed, which, by a kind of miracle, has lifted him to a higher degree than his virtue has acquired, or could reach in so short a time, and without the practice of any good work. If this be admitted, I see no reason why we may not admit every degree of happiness to be equally arbitrary. If, however, it be rejected here, so it must in respect to happiness on the whole. Besides, happiness itself cannot be conceived without the idea of some degree of it; and consequently there is nothing contradictory in

in the supposition of its having degrees. Can any creature possess happiness, without possessing it in some determinate degree? Now what holds of happiness in general, holds of every degree of it, and *vice versa*. Either happiness in general, and every degree of it, is exactly proportional and adequate to the frame of men's minds and actions, or, in all its degrees, it is totally independant of a greater or less degree of righteousness.

The difficulty of explaining how faith produces good works, and the scientific skill requisite to do this, seem to be a considerable obstacle with regard to practical christianity to those who possess not such skill. This is openly avowed by a very celebrated and worthy divine of our church.\* It must be allowed that it is difficult to shew, in a clear and convincing manner, that he who believes in Christ must, on account of this belief, feel himself bound to perform good works, and that his faith must lead him to the love and practice of what is good. It must be difficult to shew how faith and good works are connected, and how a man's inclination and promptitude to virtue are comprehensible from that disposition of the mind which we term faith. Thus the ideas of faith and good works must have no such intimate connection, no such clear and natural relation to each other, that we may infer one from the other, without the aid of one or more intermediate positions. Hence we must reprobate the notion of faith as the sole necessary mean of righteousness and salvation, in the common acceptation. Good works, or the exercise of moral virtue, will not here come into con-

\* In Ernesti's *Neue Theol. Bibl. Band. I. Scite* 483, it is said, "the author (the learned and acute Abbe Schubert) seems to be seduced by a desire of demonstrating how good works proceed from faith: a commendable attempt, indeed, but far more difficult than is imagined by those who fancy they have succeeded in it."

sideration: God does not consider a man as righteous, or recompense him, because he is just and good, but because he believes in Christ. Such doctrine alone could give birth to the inveterate dispute on the question whether good works be necessary to salvation; and decide it so far at least to their prejudice, as absolutely to refuse them all influence and relation to the forgiveness and justification of man. However, as the scriptures so frequently and expressly require the state of good works, or virtuous thoughts and actions, in those whose faith renders them objects of salvation, other motives are adduced as a kind of corrective, to prevent abuses, and to make man earnestly seek righteousness. Thus it is said, that good works are necessary as they are the fruits of faith, and in such a manner, that without them our faith is dead. It is said that good works are necessary to shew our thankfulness to God, and to our Redeemer, though the latter can have no weight with those to whom it is most requisite to demonstrate the necessity of good works. Besides, as thankfulness is itself a good work, this is saying nothing more than that a man must do good works, because he must do good works. Neither does it appear to be a more powerful motive to say, that the state of good works belongs to that order of things in which God makes us happy. For good works must belong to this order either as they are the fruits of faith, which is no new motive, being included in the first; or they belong to it as a particular and distinct part of salvation, independant of faith; which is contrary to the proposition according to which faith is the sole condition of salvation.

Thus if we would prove the necessity of good works, or sharpen the incentives to righteous thoughts and actions, nothing remains but to betake ourselves to the first ground, namely, that good works must naturally and necessarily follow a faith  
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sufficient to salvation. But to make this ground tenable, it is not sufficient that we maintain the necessary connection betwixt faith and good works, but we must also prove it: it is not sufficient that we declare a faith destitute of good works false and dead, but we must also deduce the necessity of good works, by just and clear conclusions, from the notion of faith. These conclusions cannot easily be too clear and striking. They must be capable of teaching every one to know what faith and good works are, and to compare these two ideas together. They concern the most important transition from knowing to performing, from theory to practice, and must be so clear and natural, that whoever thinks himself obliged to have faith must, by means of an infallible and inseparable association of ideas, conceive himself obliged to good works, if he have a just idea of faith. Thus we may esteem faith the sole mean of salvation, without detriment to righteousness and virtue, so far as it is the first principle and seed of moral good, and consider it as that which constitutes man an object of acceptance with God. For if, where faith is, good works must necessarily and unavoidably follow; and if they to whom I preach faith, as soon as they know what it is, cannot doubt that they must also be good and virtuous, and actually begin to become so the instant they believe; the sacred cause of virtue would receive no injury from such a doctrine. But were it difficult to shew how good works proceed from faith, such a doctrine would be essentially prejudicial to virtue. This difficulty includes also a practical one; that of evincing an active faith by love, or good works. If there be a gap betwixt faith and good works, with respect to the proof of the latter proceeding from the former, not easily to be filled up, there will be as great an one between them when applied to practice, which will be an obstacle to the ready passage from one to the other.

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According to this position, it would be difficult for a christian who should rely on faith as the only condition necessary to salvation, to convince himself of its connection with good works, or of the indispensable necessity of them. And who would venture to say, that this is not a real obstacle to good works?

For the sake of perspicuity, I will throw together in few words what has been already said. It is most clearly expressed in the scriptures that faith and good works must be united in them who would be saved. If any one ask me: what shall I do to be saved? I may answer: believe and become righteous, that is, do good works. Thus I announce both as conditions equally necessary to salvation. It would be advantageous, in many respects, if I could shew the strict connection of these two conditions; but it is not indispensably necessary. For it is not less incumbent on us, as we hope for salvation, to exercise good works, because we cannot shew how they proceed from faith. I might answer, indeed, by faith alone thou shalt become righteous, and be saved. But then I must so explain faith, that the origin of good works, or the obligation to them, and the capacity for them, should be most clearly perceptible to him. If I cannot do this, my answer would be untrue and censurable; and if I can only perform it by means of much labour, skill, and science, it would be defective.

I cannot apprehend that the idea I have given of faith is, in this respect, open to objection. I do not think one better adapted to practice can be contrived. But is it actually the idea of the holy scriptures, and not of philosophy? In the first place, it seems to me to be supported by Christ's saying to Thomas: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. For hence it appears, according to my opinion, that confidence belongs to faith, and indeed confidence in the authority of a superior knowledge,



ledge, and its testimony. But Paul tells us that faith, in the proper sense of the word, so far as it is distinguished from what is held to be true, is justly opposed to seeing, either with the eyes, or with the understanding. *We walk by faith, not by sight*, 2 Cor. v. 7. This is also confirmed by the definition of faith, Heb. xi. 1. *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.* If faith be the substance, or ground of hope, it must be produced by the actual sight of the thing hoped for, by reasoning and our proper knowledge, or by the credible testimony of another. But that the latter is the case here, and that consequently the apostle understands by faith a conviction of things unseen, founded not on our own discovery, but on the assertions of a credible witness, and arising from our confidence in him, appears to me altogether incontestable: more especially, if, as what precedes and what follows seem to indicate, we are not to understand by the unseen things hoped for the happiness of a future state, which might, in some measure, be previously discoverable by the light of reason, but approaching liberations from temporal oppressions and persecutions. For these the christians could hope on no other grounds than their trust in the promises of Jesus, and only so far as they relied on his word: thus confidence is here the principal idea of faith. This clearly appears, too, in all the instances of faith subsequently adduced by the apostle, particularly in what is said of Abraham, ver. 8. *By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.* He must have had an absolute reliance, then, on the promises of God. Still more clearly is it expressed of Sara, ver. 11. *Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.* Of Abraham it is said,

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ver. 17. that *he offered up Isaac by faith*; and ver. 19. *accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead.* These are sufficient examples of faith without sight or knowledge, in which the believers held something to be true, through confidence in the power, wisdom, and goodness of God, which they had not seen, and which in their judgment must have appeared most improbable.

Though of the things which Christ has testified to us, either by his word, or by his actions and sufferings, there are many that may be conjectured or inferred by reason, and which therefore, as it seems, we do not properly believe, or deem to be true from confidence in his word; so that the term *faith* is not strictly applicable to them: let it still be remembered that they are, and will remain objects of faith to the greater part of mankind, and must be believed by all who have not cultivated and exercised their reason, through confidence in credible testimony. This is no objection to my idea and use of the word *faith*. The question is not what is capable of being discovered by reason, but what actually has been, or will be, by that of the majority of mankind. It is a most inestimable benefit of God, and a service for which we can never be sufficiently thankful to Christ, that the important truths of God's paternal affection to man, of a future life, &c. which some few philosophers might have discovered by the help of reason, with more or less certainty, but which the far greater number of men would have remained ignorant of, or must have believed on slight authority, are, by means of a rational and well-founded faith, known to all, and rendered instruments of their improvement and consolation. Those important doctrines, which otherwise would have found a place in the religion of a few true philosophers at most, may now be known by those who are no philosophers, and received into  
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the established systems of religion of whole nations, not weakened and disfigured by fables, not resting on doubtful traditions, but clad in their original purity, and supported by rational principles.

The most specious objection that can be made to the orthodoxy of my idea of faith, and which has actually been made by an ingenious friend of mine, is taken from the opposition betwixt faith and the law, betwixt the Mosaic and Christian dispensations, which occurs in different parts of St. Paul's Epistles, and particularly Galatians iii. If faith, observed my friend, be a confidence in the judgment of a superior guide, under the law it must have applied eminently to the Israelites, who were led by Moses. How then can the law be opposed to faith, or the Mosaic dispensation to the Christian, as the principle of faith was equally necessary in both, and the Israelites were led by faith in Moses, as the Christians by faith in Christ?

Before I proceed to explain the passage on which this objection is chiefly grounded, permit me to observe that it does not follow from the apostle's opposing them to each other, that faith and the law are totally discrepant, and exclude each other, and that faith could not possibly subsist under the law. This opposition the apostle took from the notions and opinions of the Jews, with whom he was disputing. They had made a distinction betwixt faith and the law; and it seems to me that St. Paul, in his dispute with them, took up his ground on their mistaken ideas, and not on the true nature of the case. For it is undeniable that obedience to the law, delivered from mount Sinai, was less founded on the proper knowledge of its followers, than was obedience to the precepts of the gospel. Still that faith, that filial confidence which the gospel requires of its followers, in God as their father, in Jesus Christ his son, and in their elder and wiser  
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brethren, who were sent forth to bring them into the right way, is not the same as the proper principle of obedience with the Jews. This appears, as I think, from the reproof which our Saviour gave the scribes and pharisees, Matt. xxiii. that, in all their scrupulous punctuality in fulfilling the letter of the law, they omitted *the weightiest matters*, namely judgment, mercy, and *faith*. In my opinion, the word *faith* here very well admits its usual signification, but by judgment we may understand either the virtue of justice, or judging rightly of things in the mind. Either will give the passage a good sense, and agree with the context. Ye observe the letter of the law with the most servile and scrupulous exactness, in the most insignificant trifles: but ye omit the most important matters. Moral virtue, which consists in justice and mercy to your neighbour, and faith in God, which is the principle of all virtue and obedience, are wholly unheeded by you. Or, if judgment be rendered the act of judging rightly, the sense will be: in your blind and servile obedience ye neglect sound judgment, &c. It is certain that the Jews did not found their obedience to the law on a rational faith, and a filial trust in God. They divided faith and the law, by separating an outward obedience from that its proper principle, by making the sign or external ceremonies of it the *opus operatum*, looking more to these ceremonies than to the intent from which they flowed, exalting a blind superstitious conformity to the rank of proper merit, forming no rational general plan of the whole of the obedience required by God to his commands, and thus, like ignorant slaves, suffering themselves to be guided by the bare letter of the ordinances given them, without paying the least attention to the general spirit of the law. They preferred every particular act of the law to its grand design: expected the reward of their blind and irrational obedience,

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more as an arbitrary recompense of each particular external act of it, than as a natural consequence of a justness of sentiment, or of the faith from which it proceeded, to which it led, and in which it should be exercised; and, consequently, shewed more obedience to the positive, than to the proper moral precepts: in short, they substituted superstition instead of faith. Taking it for granted that this was the way of thinking of the Jews, I consider the apostle's dispute with those who embraced the Jewish notions, as the contest of reason against superstition: and thence I explain his opposing faith to the law. For with respect to men, who thought as the Jewish opponents of the apostle in my opinion did, faith and the law were actually opposites to each other, and he who would dispute with them successfully, must consider the case in their point of view. We will now proceed to examine whether, on this supposition, the words of the apostle afford a natural and apt sense, and were adapted to the purpose of refuting his antagonists.

Let it be remembered, that the grand point which the apostle had to subvert was this: the gospel is unnecessary, and of no use; it is a superfluous innovation, as we may and must be righteous and saved by the law. Now it was an adroit, yet innocent artifice of the apostle, in his controversy, to substitute, instead of the faith of the gospel a disputable word, and suspicious to the Jews on account of its novelty, that which they already knew from the Old Testament, which signified something the value, power, and efficacy of which they could not deny, as they must admit that Abraham was justified by faith, and that before the giving of the law it was the sole mean of obtaining justification. Hence it is natural for us to expect that Paul, to make the greatest possible use of this advantageous substitution of terms and ideas, would endeavour to unite and  
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combine the ideas of faith and the gospel, and so to modify the general idea of faith, that it might most eminently apply to it, and be precisely determined by it; and on the other hand, that he would place the difference and contrast between the law and the gospel, or faith, in the strongest light. The more he could do this with an assurance of truth, the more his cause gained; and what he was able to maintain, and to prove against his antagonists, from the testimony of the Old Testament, in favour of faith in general, and of Abraham's in particular, he might apply to the advantage of the gospel. He reasoned, perhaps, in this manner. The decision of the question between us, whether a man can be justified and saved by the law, or another divine instruction be necessary, depends on the decision of another question, namely, whether faith be a necessary efficacious mean ordained by God for obtaining acceptance with him. But that faith is so appears from this, that Abraham was justified by it alone, without the law, and that God required of him nothing but faith, that is, trust in his promises, and submission to his guidance, imputing this faith to him as righteousness. But they say, the law was given to us: yet, if faith alone were the instrument of justification, without the law, to what purpose does this serve?

To this the apostle answers in the words on which the objection is chiefly founded. *But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed*, Gal. iii. 23. He shews that the promises of God, and the ordinance of faith pertaining to them, were not removed by the intervention of the law: that the law, if rightly applied, prepared and led its rational and just observers to faith; and indeed to such an enlightened, reasonable, and filial faith as Abraham displayed, and as the gospel dispensation required: that the law, if separated from faith, and so considered  
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and applied as it was by the Jews, could only kill, or announce damnation: that such an observation of the law as the Jews held out could be of no avail: and that he who would be accepted by God, justified and saved, under the law, must unite faith with it, or his obedience must flow from a filial confidence in God, and be productive of righteousness. Now all that the apostle proved in support of the necessity and importance of faith, tended equally to support the gospel dispensation; as in fact the old ordinance of faith, which had been obscured and misconceived under the law, was only renewed by the gospel, though renewed and confirmed with more clearness, and a more precise establishment of the object in whom we should trust, and the promises which we were to believe.

But more particularly to explain the words of the apostle, Gal. iii. so far as they relate immediately to our purpose. The Galatians had departed from the gospel to follow the law, or at least were in danger of it. Paul represents to them, that through faith they were the children of Abraham; but that they must inherit the promises, through an imitation of that faith by which he inherited them. Ver. 7, 8, 9. *Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.* The law (as you see and observe it) denounces a curse; and whoever is so under the law, as you Jews are, to do the works of the law without faith, cannot be justified. *For the just shall live by faith:* that is, he shall owe his justification and salvation to his faith, or the rectitude of his opinions towards God. *The law is not of faith,* ver. 12. that is, the law, as you consider it, confined to mere external

nal acts of obedience, leads not to faith, not to an inward frame of heart and mind, but simply to obedience, or to matter of fact, for so I understand the words strictly, "the man that *doeth* them shall live in them, ver. 12. *If the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise, ver. 18.* Faith relates to a promise, which it presupposes: but a promise out of free grace, was unnecessary, if the inheritance were a merited recompense and salary for the observance of the law. Therefore, the apostle infers, the inheritance came by promise, and this promise supposes and requires faith. *Wherefore then serveth the law?* ver. 19. A very reasonable question, to which the apostle here gives a short reply, answering it afterwards more fully. *It was added because of transgressions:* it relates to the sinful and corrupt state of mankind. The uncultivated brutal ignorance, immorality, and wickedness of the world rendered such an ordinance necessary in the interim, to make men moral, and to shew them the difference between good and evil, right and wrong, in a manner adequate to their unpractised understandings, and capable of being comprehended by them, — *till the seed should come to whom the promise was made,* — till that great teacher, guide, and benefactor of mankind, with whom the promise was connected, should appear, and his appearance could be productive of advantageous and happy consequences. *Is the law then against the promises of God?* ver. 21. Or should the original system of God, the leading man to wisdom, virtue, and happiness, through faith in a divine guide, be annulled by this intervening ordinance? *God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.* But this actually would have been the case, could the intervening law, as it gave moral instructions, have imparted the will, the power, and the capacity for fulfilling that system, and thus



thus obtaining life. If it really could excite a virtuous frame of mind, a filial disposition to obey God, and a life of virtue, righteousness, or a just and happy constitution of man, acceptable to God, would have come by the law. Such a power, however, the law possessed not, or at least had never displayed. *The scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe,* ver. 22.

The scripture, or the law, teaches us only what is right, and what is wrong, making known a number of offences, to the end that we, condemned as sinners by the law, should not expect our justification from the law, or from our observance of it (as it is impossible for us to fulfil it perfectly) but simply from the promise, and from an active effectual trust in the promise. *But before faith came,* ver. 23. before the divine ordinance, which was to lead man to true justification and salvation through a filial confidence, and which we must suppose to have been enveloped and concealed under the mass of external commandments and ordinances, was brought to light, and fully revealed, *we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed* — held, as it were, in a kind of slavery and bondage, that we might not fail of that end to which we were appointed, but to which we were yet incapable of being openly and directly led, on account of our infant state. *Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith,* ver. 24. Both here and elsewhere they who were under the law are represented by the apostle as children, in a state of pupillage (between whom and slaves there is no difference) as they were under the strict eye of a master, who must watch and guide their every step, and not left to themselves. This state of pupillage, indeed, is not altogether unlike the state of those who are led by faith: it

differs from it, however, as that of children wholly untutored, from that of children somewhat grown up. The former must constantly be led by the hand, under the master's eye; no general principle of action can yet be held out to them, no general precept including many cases can yet be given them, but in every particular instance they must be told, as the Jews were by the law, do this, touch not that, &c. The latter, it is true, must also be led, and supply the deficiencies of their own knowledge, by a confidence in that of others: but they are now worthy of standing in their Father's sight, and are capable of receiving general principles of action. They have sufficient judgment to know that they must suffer themselves rationally to be guided to their good through a trust in their Father. General precepts may now be given them, and more of the wise and affectionate purposes of their Father may be laid open to them, as their understanding has acquired a certain degree of maturity. They are no longer to be governed as the infants (the Israelites under the law) by the immediate and instant impressions of hope and fear, but by the prospect of future pleasures and pains, and distant happiness or unhappiness. They are capable of the noble sentiments of gratitude, reciprocal love, and true filial confidence, which cannot well take place in infants.

This is the state attained by the believing christian, and so strikingly different from the state under the law, that though a certain faith be deemed necessary under the Mosaic dispensation, it is no way to be compared with that required by christianity. (Let it be observed that the majority of the Israelites are here spoken of, for the more especial friends of God, a Moses, an Asaph, a David, and some others, had already that faith which a christian should have, with respect to its nature at least, though the knowledge of its object was not so fully unfolded to them.)

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The faith under the law was that of an infant, or slave, to his preceptor, or master, founded chiefly on fear: the faith of the christian is a rational confidence in a Father, and in an affectionate guide given him by that Father, founded on gratitude, and reciprocal love.

Notwithstanding this difference, the faith under the law, that blind and slavish rather than enlightened and filial faith, was an introduction to the rational and filial religion of the gospel. This introduction was made cautiously and preparatorily in the following manner. In the first place, as mankind, and particularly the Jews, were yet too feeble to be led to fulfil the purposes of God by a rational and filial faith, this intermediate state was necessary to teach them morality, and give them strong religious impressions of right and wrong. It was necessary to awaken in them an attention to the different consequences of various thoughts and actions, that they might regulate their conduct by an attention to those consequences. In the second place, it was necessary to keep weak and ignorant men under wholesome restraint, that they might not fall into brutal ignorance, atheism, and a denial of Providence, or into wild and dissolute superstition and polytheism. This the apostle particularly points out by the appellation of a school-master. Thirdly, whilst the law, ever threatening, noticed sin by its ordinances, and particularly by its sin and trespass-offerings,\* denouncing as criminal errors, or failings, partly unavoidable, partly not punishable as civil offences, it was established as a symbolical lesson, adapted to the understandings of mankind at that period; to teach them the effects,

\* These sin and trespass-offerings, setting aside their typical nature, seem to have been chiefly a kind of ecclesiastical penance, by undergoing which the offender was excused from a slight ban, or excommunication.

guilt, and perniciousness of the slightest transgression. Thus, whilst it was appointed to teach men the existence of sin, it prepared them for a more ready reception of Christ, and his doctrine of penitence and forgiveness of sins.

Let us suppose that men had no idea, or at most a very confined and imperfect one, of morality, and of the guilt and perniciousness of immoral conduct, acknowledging perhaps only some extremely great crimes as injurious and deserving punishment; they must necessarily be more cold to the enunciation of grace and forgiveness, which in their opinion they did not want, more insensible to the call to amend their thoughts and actions, and disposed to consider the gospel requisites to salvation as extremely rigid and overstrained. Here holds the saying of the apostle: *the natural man*, that is the merely sensual, uninstructed, uncultivated man, whether on account of any thing that may be deemed his own fault, or of the circumstances in which he is placed, *received not the things of the spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them.* An understanding cultivated and enlightened, in a certain degree, is necessary to a rational conviction of the truths of christianity. *Because they are spiritually discerned:* they must be judged by reason. On this account I am inclined to believe it is that the Malabars, North Americans, Hottentots, and other wholly uncivilized nations are so deaf to the preaching of the gospel: though I do not consider it as the sole cause of the difficulty, nay almost impossibility, of convincing them of the truths of christianity in a rational manner. They want that degree of cultivation necessary to their finding the gospel worthy of acceptance on rational grounds. How far the more civilized nations, as the Greeks and Romans that were converted to christianity when the gospel was first preached, were prepared, and received the necessary

necessary susceptibility of the pure and rational religion of Jesus by other dispensations of the Divine Providence, I shall not here inquire, as it would carry me too far. Still it appears to me probable that the benevolent and impartial Father of mankind did not leave them without some means to this purpose, making up to them the want of the Mosaic dispensation and instruction by other preparatory helps, so far at least that they also might receive the roots of christianity; as it is declared that the heathen have fellowship in the gospel, and that christianity should be the religion of all men, not of a particular people, or a national religion, as all at that time known were. Thus the stock of the tree, the branches of which were gradually to overshadow the whole earth, after its inhabitants, by the cultivation of their reason and morals, were become capable and worthy of enjoying its wholesome fruit, and refreshing themselves under its grateful shade, must at least have been capable of being planted amongst the heathen.

Lastly, This state of pupillage under the law, wherein the Israelites were confined to a slavish obedience, and tied down by the whole of their religious system to blind submission, whilst every thing was prescribed to them, and nothing left to their own judgment, prepared them for a state, in which obedience it is true was required, yet not the obedience of a slave, but of a child, who obeys from confidence in a wise and affectionate father; who obeys, because he is aware that his obedience is necessary and advantageous to him; who obeys, because he perceives that this filial obedience and confidence in his father's commands are the best and only means of augmenting and extending his virtue, knowledge and happiness. In this view the law may be compared with the difficult and laborious exercises imposed on the learner of any art, in which he is  
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left to surmount greater difficulties than occur in actual practice, that his abilities may be rendered capable of the greatest exertions. In this view perhaps it was that Jesus termed his religious system an easier yoke, and a lighter burden, compared with the yoke of ceremonies, and the weight of ordinances under the law: and the apostle represents the christians who are freed from it as persons arrived at a state of rest.

Let me also observe that, in my opinion, the apostle Paul, when he speaks of the Mosaic dispensation, with all its rites and injunctions, as a shadow of what was to be, the substance of which was in Jesus, and on this ground urges the abolition of the law, meant principally that the religion of Moses was a preparation and introduction to the more perfect religion of Christ, in the manner above related. At least the ordinances relative to unclean meats, new moons and sabbaths, could not properly be so deemed in any other sense. And as it is so clearly said that these were shadows of a future substance, we may presume from analogy that all the rest of the Mosaic ordinances could not be so in a more exalted or efficacious signification. How far the sacrifices were an exception to this, and, considered as types, were preparatory in a higher sense, I will not at present take upon me to determine.

From the explanation I have given of the words of the apostle that have been objected to me, it appears to me, that, far from contradicting my idea of faith, they tend to confirm it. But, whilst I make confidence the first and original idea of faith, I by no means deny that in the apostolical writings faith often implies the general belief and practice of christianity. My endeavour has been rather to shew in what manner the word faith must have acquired this general signification, by means of a just connection with its original more limited one. Neither have I  
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the least doubt, but this developement of the idea will enable any one to understand aright every particular passage in the writings of Paul, where faith and the law occur in opposition to each other.

If it be asked, what truths are properly the objects of a christian's faith; I would answer, that, from the nature and design of christianity; all those truths, in an especial if not exclusive sense, appear to be so, the knowledge of which makes us capable, fit, and ready to receive Christ as our guide to conduct us to God, to religious virtue, and to true happiness, giving ourselves up to his direction, and following his instructions. First of all, then, they include all that we must suppose of Jesus to confide in him as a trusty and divine guide, and every thing by which he has confirmed his claim to our confidence. What these things are I have already pointed out, when speaking of the rational grounds of faith. As he has asserted that he was sent by God to man, with full powers and authority, to be the light and life of the world, for which purposes he announced himself, we have only to admit the truth of his assertion on rational grounds. If this be the case, an exact and perfect knowledge of the exalted and mysterious relation he bears to our heavenly Father is not *absolutely necessary*, to oblige us to the strictest exercise of that in which he frequently makes the whole duty of his followers to consist, the hearkening to his voice, and keeping his word. I will not presume to say that, if we were capable of discovering something more clear and accurate respecting that relation, and it could be made intelligible to us by just images, or analogous and proper expressions, it would not tend, not to the satisfaction of a laudable curiosity merely, but to the strengthening of our faith in him, and increase of our reverence for him. It may be a duty, therefore, for those who have capacity and leisure enough, to enter on this deep and mysterious

mysterious investigation, that they may extend their knowledge by a diligent and humble inquiry. But I once more repeat that is not in my opinion, *absolutely necessary* to our believing in Jesus, and being saved through him, that we should have a perfect, clear, and determinate conception of his proper nature; if we but know in what relation he stands to us; and if we but thoroughly believe that he is endowed with divine wisdom, virtue, and power sufficient to accomplish what he was to perform for us, and that we must hearken to him as we would hearken to God, and so honour the Son as we would honour the Father. And this, I think, is so clearly and frequently said in the New Testament, that we must deem it a divine testimony of Jesus, and believe it on that testimony, though we cannot attain to this conviction by inquiring into the nature of Jesus, an inquiry bestrewed with metaphysical subtilties, whilst after all, as others have already observed,\* it gives no more certainty or satisfaction with respect to our justification, than the mere belief in the above-mentioned testimonies of God concerning Jesus, as whatever we infer relative to his nature must be in like manner founded on testimonies of scripture, and not derived from logical truths.

If then such speculative questions and disputes may be set aside, without detriment to the practical religion of Jesus, I would divide the doctrines and truths which form the proper object of christian faith into those which describe to us and elucidate the sentiments, virtues, and perfections of christianity,

\* See the excellent tract on the utility of the office of a preacher, and the qualifications for it, *Ueber die Nutzbarkeit des Predigamts, und deren Beforderung*, S. 146. where it is said: "after all my notions concerning the person of Christ, I must at last rely on the testimony of the holy scriptures (supposing that my notions actually agree with them) as I before relied on the promises of the gospel for the forgiveness of my sins."



and those which include all the motives or inducements we have to endeavour after those sentiments, virtues, and perfections. To the first class belong all the commands and precepts given us by Christ, partly in express words, partly in his conduct and example, which, as he was the declared image of God, have to us the force of laws. Though many of these precepts were such as might have been, and actually were, discovered by the reason of many philosophers unclouded by prejudice, both before and at the time of Christ's appearance, yet there were several, such for instance as those relative to purity of desires and manners, love of our enemies, &c. which he first announced. Thus these were objects of faith to the wiser few, as well as to the many, whose uncultivated understandings could embrace scarcely any part of morality except through faith.

With respect to those of the second class, many discordant notions prevail amongst christians. In my opinion, however, they might easily be reconciled, or, at least, the disputes concerning them would be conducted with less heat and animosity, if all were agreed on the principle that these truths have no intrinsic value and importance, but are so far valuable only as they are motives and aids to christian rectitude. If this be admitted, it is clear that, according to the dispositions and different ways of thinking of men, this or that notion of Christ's merits towards us will make an impression on one, which it will not on another; and this or that supposition would produce an effect in one, of which in another it would fail. To make this clear by an example, which relates to the point in question: he who considers his former disobedience to the commandments of God as an immediate offence to his divine majesty, and indeed an offence infinite in degree, may consider faith in a proper atonement of the offended and  
wrathful

wrathful Deity by the blood of Jesus necessary to a peaceful assurance of forgiveness. Now it is obvious that, whilst he thinks the former, he must believe the latter, in order to be at peace, and to have courage to set about a fresh obedience. Thus it should seem the Jews, at the time of the apostles, who were accustomed to bloody sacrifices, and considered the principle of the law, that there was no forgiveness without shedding of blood, as an eternal and immutable principle of God's government, might be sooner reconciled to christianity, by which all sacrifices were abolished, when the apostle represented to them the death of Jesus, which he suffered for the good of mankind, and on account of their sins, and which was in this view a sacrifice, as the great trespass-offering, by which all was at once accomplished.\*

On the other hand, if a man conceive sin and disobedience to be not so properly an offence against the immutable, all-sufficient, and ever blessed God, as a real calamity to the sinner, and an offence against himself: if his idea of the punishments of God be, that they are of no service to maintain the divine majesty, or satisfy his vindictive justice, represented too much like that of frail man, but that they are

\* Very different is it in this respect with the Jews of our days. As they have long desisted from offering up sacrifices, and this part of their worship is fallen into disuse, they can no longer deem sacrifices an indispensable condition of the remission of sins. Hence representing to them that Jesus was the great sin-offering for the offences of mankind does not make an impression upon their minds advantageous to christianity, as they perceive not the necessity of such an offering. They believe that God can and will forgive sins, without being moved to it by a sin-offering, from his inexhaustible mercy. To this, and not to any sacrifice, they think they must have recourse. Thus the representation of the death of Jesus as a proper atonement to divine vengeance is so far from being calculated to render christianity more pleasing and acceptable to the present Jews, that it tends rather to confirm all their prejudices against it.

ordered, and necessarily ordered by infinite goodness, for the benefit of sinful man, to warn him of his errors, and recall him from them, and consequently are to be considered as means, not as ends: he may consider the death of Jesus as necessary, but only on this account that God might give us a firm assurance of his readiness to forgive sins, and excite us to embrace the comfort arising from that forgiveness, and to strive after a grateful truth and obedience. The merits of Christ, and especially his death, would be deemed important and be revered by a christian of this way of thinking, though he could not convince himself that he ought to understand literally such expressions of scripture as, the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin, we are reconciled to God through the death of his Son, the Lord took all our sins upon himself, &c. or though he could not conceive that the imputation of the sins of another, or of the obedience and righteousness of another, taken in a strict sense, accord with the mercifulness of God. Such a christian, however, must believe that all which Christ did and suffered was highly meritorious, that all his services to mankind were crowned by his death, that this was a most magnanimous sacrifice, and, in short, that Jesus did for us every thing that one man could do for another. He would find in the death of Christ incitements to the most heartfelt gratitude towards him, and to an imitation of his conduct, if his notions of its design, utility and necessity were somewhat like the following. In the first place we will suppose him to believe, on the divine authority, that the Lord of our salvation was to be made perfect by suffering death; or that Jesus could not have been our succour, in the most extensive sense in which we need succour, if he had only been born and lived for us, without dying for us also. He would find it highly proper that he, who was intended for a pattern to creatures that could only be made happy by suffer-

ings, should, as the leader of mortal man, go through sufferings to dominion, and guide them through the gloomy path of death: a leader, from whom they should learn, with unshaken reliance on the assisting and supporting grace of their heavenly Father, to go through all the toils and afflictions of this life, and to submit to that painful and terrible scene which even his beloved Son could not escape. He would find it highly meet that Jesus in his death should exhibit a pattern of those magnanimous sentiments and virtues, by the imitation of which we might exalt and ennoble an event so humiliating to man. Moreover, the death of Jesus would appear to him a matter highly conducive to his peace and comfort, when connected with his return to life and resurrection, which so quickly followed. It would then be to him the most certain proof of the truth of what he said to all who believe in him: *I live, that ye also might receive life.* In his opinion our heavenly guide would thus, in his most perfect life, and eternal essence, have shewn his followers what they had to hope and expect. Considering how necessary the well-founded hope of a happy immortality is to excite and promote christian virtue; considering that all other motives would have little or no effect on the human mind, that all must ultimately centre in this hope, and receive from it their chief force; he would think the question, why Christ should die, sufficiently resolved if he knew no other answer. It was necessary for him to die that he might rise again; and for him to rise again, that he might convince, by an actual proof, adapted to their understandings, the immense number of those who are incapable of being persuaded of a future state by probable or solid arguments; remove all distrust of this most beneficial and important truth from the minds of the more thinking; and place the authenticity of his divine mission, and the validity of his doctrines, beyond the reach of doubt.

doubt. Probably he would imagine that the death of Jesus might be considered as a natural event, perfectly according with the circumstances of the times, and the state of the Jews at that period. Considering the religious notions and opinions that prevailed amongst that people, their elders, and men of learning, at the time of Christ's coming; he might believe that such a reformer, who combated their dearest prejudices; stripped off the mask from hypocrisy and superstition; preached, instead of mere outward ceremonies, the worshipping God in spirit and in truth; instead of a corrupt and mutilated morality, pure rational virtue; instead of a blind religious zeal, and a partial love and benevolence confined to men of the same way of thinking, an enlightened zeal for God, and universal philanthropy; teaching men, to expect the proper reward of virtue in the internal happiness resulting from goodness of heart; the sentiment of acceptance with God, and the nobler pleasures of a future and better state, instead of the temporal and external advantages of this world; and acting in a manner diametrically opposite to all their earthly hopes and expectations; could not, without a miraculous interposition of Providence, have experienced any other fate than that of Jesus. Thus, would he conceive, must he have been hated, persecuted, and put to death. Why then, would he ask, should Providence have prevented, by a miracle, this natural event, when it served to confirm the uprightness and truth of Christ, whose sufferings and death served to display his excellent and divine character, and place it in the strongest and most pleasing light? When besides, his person must become more worthy, his moral character more estimable, and his merits more important and affecting to mankind, by what he suffered as their benefactor and saviour; whilst thus redeemed man must be drawn and knitted to him by the strongest ties of gratitude?

gratitude? Must not truth, wisdom and virtue be profited by whatever tended to promote a reverential esteem, heartfelt gratitude, and lively thankfulness for the bloody sacrifice of our Redeemer? Can we love, admire and adore the most perfect pattern of wisdom and virtue in human nature, not from esteem merely, but, as he gave his life for us, from gratitude, without being moved to imitate his virtue and goodness? Why should Providence have miraculously interposed to prevent the sufferings and death of Jesus, when they could not but excite, in the minds of those who believe in him, an abhorrence of those moral evils which occasioned them, and from the dominion and consequences of which nothing but the sacrifice of himself could deliver the sinful world? Such a christian as we are describing would naturally conclude: a state, from which nothing but the extreme abasement, and most magnanimous sacrifice of so eminently exalted a person could emancipate us, must have been in the highest degree corrupt, perilous, and destructive: an evil, that could require so dear a remedy, must have been a great and most detestable evil.

Now let these notions stand or fall by their intrinsic worth. It will be of the highest importance, to inquire into their efficacy with respect to promoting diligence and zeal in the cause of virtue, and an imitation of Christ, which is so strongly inculcated in scripture. To shorten this inquiry, let us compare what he has done and suffered for the good of mankind, to the endeavours of a magnanimous and benevolent man, who seeks to deliver his lost unhappy brother from the hands of those by whom he has been led to perdition.

Let us suppose it necessary to this purpose, not only that the good brother should open the eyes of his seduced kinsman to his errors, shew him the abyss into which he had fallen, and into which he  
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would plunge still deeper, point out to him the better way in which he should go, and excite him to break his disgraceful chains; but that his endeavours to deliver this brother should expose him to the hatred, malice, and persecution of his seducers, all the effects of whose enmity and rancour he must undergo; and in short, that he can only save his brother at the peril of his own life. If now he resolve to submit to all this, and steadfastly pursue his affectionate purpose, undeterred by toil, danger, and contumely, what must we naturally expect from such an heroic instance of unconquerable greatness of soul? Will not he who is delivered, if he have a lively conception of what his brother has done and suffered for him, consider his former blindness and error with more inward sorrow, shame, and repentance, the more it cost his deliverer? When he reflects that his brother, regardless of himself, sacrificed his ease and reputation; when he views the scars and wounds on his body, the consequences of his benevolent undertaking; how will the feelings of his mind, that would otherwise have remained insensible, be awakened! However torpid his sensibility might hitherto have been, will he not be moved and excited to the most lively gratitude towards his deliverer, to admiration of his benevolent and virtuous disposition, and to a resolution of pursuing the path to which his brother has brought him back? If we can think this; and if it be difficult to find another way in which a man can be more naturally and certainly excited to good, than this, which engages every moral motive in the cause of virtue; the notions of the christian above described cannot be detrimental to christianity in a practical view, whatever may be thought of them in other respects. Under the promised acceptance of God, he would perform, incomparably better, his duty to his divine benefactor, the seeds of which already existed in his

nature. He would think it the more unnecessary that the universally beneficial death of Jesus should be prevented by a miracle, as permitting it was no injustice to him who suffered it willingly, and God could fully compensate all his sufferings by the most glorious reward.

Such perhaps would be the notion of the destination of Jesus, and the design and use of his sufferings and death, formed by one who could not reconcile the systematic opinion of a particular mediation and atonement with his ideas of God, his attributes, his paternal relation to man, the intent of punishment in general, and of that of a father in particular. We will not determine, whether such a notion be sufficiently complete, and comprise the full meaning of those passages which mention the destination of Jesus, and the purpose of his death: as it hitherto remains undecided, whether, on account of certain difficulties, we be authorized to reject the literal meaning of such passages, and, laying aside some particular modes of expression, confine ourselves to the general point, that the sufferings of Christ were beneficial to mankind, and a source of salvation. This, however, I think may be maintained that, with such a notion, defective as it may be, a christian whose way of thinking is as we have above described, may possess a faith in Christ capable of quieting his mind, and amending his heart. He may possess a faith not derogatory to the fundamental truths of the christian religion: believing that God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is also the Father of all men; that he has and shews paternal sentiments, purposes, and determinations with respect to them; and that owing to this paternal love he sent them his Son, to bring them back to himself, to a knowledge of truth, to the love and exercise of virtue, and to eternal happiness: believing that the Son effected this, partly by the information that  
God



God was their Father in the most comprehensive and consolatory sense, that he would forgive all past disobedience, if succeeded by repentance and obedience, that this obedience consisted in the practice of his injunctions and the imitation of his example, that the ceremonial religion of the Jews was abolished, that worshipping in spirit and in truth, or faith made active through love alone was of any avail, and that a spiritual, heavenly, and eternal felicity would be the reward and inheritance of his faithful followers; and partly by his whole life, his conduct, his fate, his death and resurrection, in which he not only confirmed his mission in the clearest manner, but performed every thing necessary to reconcile man to God that man himself could not perform, removed every obstacle which he himself could not surmount, and by his spirit gave them all the excitement, hope, assistance and support, necessary to their following him with truth and steadfastness. I will not presume to deny that these fundamental doctrines of christianity may be farther developed, and more precisely determined. How they are displayed in theological systems, according to different confessions of faith, is well known to every learned reader. But let me observe, my design is only to illustrate my text by a few remarks, not to write a system of theology. I shall now, therefore, return to our author and examine how the idea of faith here given may be reconciled with what he says on the subject.

In the first place: *faith is the means through which we shall not perish, but have everlasting life.* If, by faith in Christ, we understand an active efficacious confidence in him, according to the relation in which he has revealed himself to us, so that this faith is the ground of our amendment, as well as of our assurance; a faith in him, not only as the messenger of God's forgiveness, but as a mediator, and a guide to

the actual enjoyment of it: nothing can be more suitable to man's nature, or conducive to the end, than God's design of bringing man to eternal life through faith in Christ.

Secondly: *By means of faith in him our sins will be forgiven, and the punishment of them will be averted.* This forgiveness is actually his work, either as he effects it with God for us, in the proper sense, and reconciles him to man, or as he gives us an assurance of the divine forgiveness, and renders us capable of enjoying it; and our faith, this active trust in him, is, on our side, the mean by which we become partakers of the divine beneficence.

Thirdly: *Faith in Christ the righteous will supply the place of that righteousness, and sinless perfection, to which we cannot attain.* It may be said of the christian's faith in Jesus, that it supplies the place of perfect righteousness, in the same sense, and with as much justice as we might say of an infant, that all his duties and virtues consist in an obedient confidence in his wiser and affectionate parents, and in submission to their necessary and salutary guidance. The more perfect the child's confidence in its parents and their instructions, and the christian's in Christ and his precepts, the better each fulfils his duty, is obedient and virtuous.

Fourthly: *Yet this faith doth not make void the law, but establishes it.* This our author seems to advance as a limitation. But according to the idea I have given of faith it requires no such limitation, no caution against its abuse. For our faith must be thoroughly active, since the ultimate end of Christ's coming into the world was to make us good and happy. As little necessary was it to observe that *a mere assurance, or strong persuasion of a man's own salvation, is neither a condition, nor a pledge of it.* For this assurance is not an active faith in Jesus,  
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our guide. In fact, I have no confidence in a guide, who could and would conduct me to the desired place, if it be not active, or if it do not impel me to follow him. An assurance or persuasion that he could conduct me rightly, however strong it may be, or however I may intend to honour him by it; or the idea, however lively, that he has already led me to the place, though I have not yet taken a single step; is mere self-deception, and not that confidence which I ought to have in him. On the contrary, such a confidence is by no means inconsistent with the doubt whether I be diligent, active, and indefatigable in following my guide, or whether my confidence be sufficiently efficacious. Thus it is very possible that a christian may have a saving faith, an efficacious trust in Jesus, without an absolute assurance of his being in a state of grace. This doubt, however, can only consist in a man's objecting to himself that he is not sufficiently diligent and zealous in his faith, and in the love and practice of what is good. Hence it is obvious, that a christian, who demonstrates his faith by imitating Jesus, has little cause to doubt of his being in a state of grace, because he has not such lively feelings of love towards Christ, and joy in him, as he might wish. He who truly and indefatigably follows his guide, may rest assured that he will be led right by him, and that he possesses the necessary confidence in him, though he may wish this confidence accompanied with more joyfulness and with more lively sentiments of love and gratitude.

Fifthly: *The advantage of faith is, that, by its means, the righteousness and death of Christ will save us from our sins.* If this be consistent with the foregoing, faith in Christ the righteous, who has given himself for us, not only comforts, but saves us: that is, we must believe Christ was righteous for us, not

to impart to us his righteousness, but to recommend righteousness to us in the most powerful manner, to deter us from sin, to display to us the odiousness of its form, &c. When all that he did and suffered is considered in this way, particularly in a moral view, we are actually saved from our sins, through faith in his righteousness and death. How they have made this possible in general may be left undetermined. It is sufficient that all parties admit that our faith actually must do so, inasmuch as we are thereby placed in a situation to attain our imperfect righteousness, or to be as good, and as obedient to God as is possible in the present state of things. Our author farther places the advantage of faith in this, that *it is proposed by the scriptures as the means appointed by God for rendering imperfect righteousness equivalent, in his sight, to perfect, and even of transforming it into perfect.* Where God perceives in man the active principle of obedience, and the elements of righteousness, that is, faith in our present state, he sees the inevitable good consequences which will extend to all eternity. So far is true faith, in his sight, equivalent to perfect righteousness; as it contains the principle, seed, and origin of it. Its consequences will still continue to increase and extend themselves. Thus virtue, proceeding from faith, and founded on the infallible knowledge and just direction of God, must ever be growing more perfect; especially as faith tends to increase and rectify our practical judgment, and to bring both it, and the will joined with it, more nearly to coincide with the judgment and will of God. The more this happens, the more are we capable of loving and doing, from our own knowledge, that good which we had hitherto loved and practised from confidence in God; and our advancement towards perfection will be more speedy, and our propensity to virtue more firm

firm and unalterable, when we no longer walk by faith, but by sight.

Sixthly : *Faith improves righteousness, and again every degree of righteousness is a proportional preparative for faith; and, if it do not produce faith, will end in self-righteousness, and satanical pride.* That faith improves righteousness is obvious, as, in want of practical knowledge, the knowledge of God made ours by faith, not only improves righteousness and religious virtue, but produces them. But as faith moves and excites us to follow the divine precepts; in proportion as we practise the obedience excited by faith, we shall experience, and feel an inward conviction, how necessary and advantageous it is to us to have such an active confidence in God. If, however, we be not more disposed to faith by such experience, and more strongly moved to trust in God, and give ourselves up to his direction; we cannot acknowledge him to be a good and trusty leader: we must fall into self-righteousness; oppose our judgment to his; imagine that we are capable of directing ourselves; rebel against his will; and, with satanical pride, seek to be independant of him.

P R O P. XCV. p. 426.

*General Reflections on the final Happiness of Mankind.*

OUR author, in his endeavour to prove the probability of the final happiness of all mankind from the scriptures, notices the most important passages that tend to support his argument. Avoiding a similar inquiry into particular texts of scripture, I shall content myself with adding some general remarks on the subject; preserving the same impartiality, as  
when,

when, in an addition to a former proposition, I exhibited the arguments that might be deduced from reason both for and against the ultimate happiness of all men, without offering any decision of my own.

I shall first observe that particular passages of scripture appear absolutely to favour the common opinion of the total rejection, and endless misery, of those who leave this world unbelieving and unamended; and that these passages appear to be more weighty, as well as more numerous, than those which favour the opposite opinion. Thus whilst both sides rest their proof on particular passages, the advocates of the common opinion have some advantage over their opponents, and the latter can act only on the defensive, seeking to ward off the blows that they cannot return. On the other hand, if the disputants add to their inquiry into particular passages, the consideration of the general purport of the christian revelation; the scriptural representations of the universal benevolence and paternal love of God, the design of our redemption by Christ, &c; or if the strength of the expressions be brought to the test of reason, by it to be confirmed or softened; the opposers of that opinion will have the vantage ground. Probably the question might ultimately be decided in their favour, if they could prove that the general purport of revelation, and the fundamental notions it gives of God, his attributes, designs, and relation to man, must avail more than particular passages, in reconciling contradictions not easy to be removed. In this case, the paternal relation of God to man, which is the foundation of all christianity, would seem a sufficient ground for rejecting the strict literal sense of passages militating against it, and sacrificing them to the general purport of the scripture. God promises, would the defender of the final happiness of all men say to himself, to shew infinitely more  
mercy,

mercy, patience, grace, and forgiveness to man, than the most affectionate father can ever shew to his child. How can I reconcile this paternal love and mercy with the threats of eternal punishment, and total rejection? Can I suppose that such a father as God declares himself to be to mankind, will allow his son, who is all his life-time under his eye, and the influence of his paternal authority, not a few years, but at most a few days of probation; his good or bad conduct during which is to decide the whole of his future fate, which depends on his father? Can I imagine that he has so limited to the shortest period his son's possibility and capability of meriting his father's love and reward, or hatred and punishment, and in a certain measure his whole moral nature, that beyond it no change of his heart to good or bad can follow, or, if it did, could produce no alteration in his fate? Can I believe that a wise father would thus permit the total happiness or misery of his son to depend on a single trial, or at most a few?

This case is not drawn too unlike, or is it an unapt comparison. For what is the life of man, considered as a state of probation, when compared with an eternity, in which no farther trial takes place, and no alteration can be made, but his disposition, conduct and fate are immutably fixed? Probably the advocate of final happiness will avail himself of this circumstance too in the comparison, that, to make every thing equal in both cases, ignorant, unthinking, inexperienced childhood must be considered as the time of probation, our earthly life being but the beginning and infancy of our existence. Besides, in comparing the two cases, he would find this much harder, that in the latter there is no determinate time of probation, no certain number of years on which the son may safely reckon, where at least he would have opportunity for repeated trials.

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But unquestionably the hardest of all would be, when the father irrevocably rejects his son on the first failure, without giving him a chance for repairing it, or behaving himself better: and we frequently find the young and thoughtless sinner suddenly taken off in his first crime. To this indeed it may be replied that the father, who has made this strict determination with respect to his son's fate, is free from reproach, as he had already given his son warning: the latter, therefore, knowing he had a rigid father, should have been more cautious; if he were not, he can blame nothing but his own imprudence. But it may be answered, though I must leave the inconsiderate son to his fate, as the fruits of his own folly, I perceive no love, kindness or mercy in the father's conduct to his rash, but unhappy son. If I cannot fully justify the son's conduct, this does not justify the strict resolve of the father, according to human notions. The ignorance, inexperience, and giddiness of youth, are at least some excuse for the former: but what softening circumstances can be advanced in justifying the rigour of the latter? If it be said that a paternal love, incompatible with such severe resolves, is not that true paternal love which God bears his rational creatures, and which is suitable to his nature, but human frailty and imperfection: this is cutting the knot, instead of untying it: and it may be said that what is considered as human, and unsuitable to God, in this idea, is the essence of paternal love, which seeks the happiness of its object as much and as long as possible. If this be taken away, nothing more remains of God's paternal love to man; regarded as so affectionate, and we are totally deprived of all ideas of it; or rather it is changed into its opposite, according to that analogy by which alone we are able to form any conception of this, as well as of the other attributes of God.

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They who have endeavoured to reconcile the threats of eternal punishment, that cannot well be denied, with the goodness and paternal love of God, by supposing that these threats will not be carried into execution to the utmost rigour of the words by which they are expressed; but that God has a right, like human legislators, to mitigate the severity of his punishments according to circumstances; did not consider that this supposition is a disparagement to God's truth, and consequently weakens the grounds on which our trust in his word must be built. It will avail them nothing to make a distinction betwixt threats and promises; and to maintain that these must be certain and determinate, but that those may be altered by the subsequent resolves of God. Neither can the comparison of human legislators or magistrates hold here; as severer threats than they could, or would fulfil, would procure no true and durable advantage, either in government or education, but rather be prejudicial: they would frequently give occasion to impunity; and it always denotes weakness, or want of power, when a man threatens more than he can, or will perform. Besides, when we speak of the execution of human laws, we in some measure know and foresee the principles and maxims according to which, in the distribution of punishment, they will be mitigated, or put in force with the utmost rigour. The circumstances under which this rigour or mitigation will take place being known, he who violates the law can still foresee his fate with some probability. All this, however, is inapplicable to the threats of God. Were we once to admit that the intent of them is not equally strict with the expression, and that a mitigation of them may be expected, we are in a dangerous uncertainty. Not perceiving the fundamental laws of God's moral government of his rational creatures, and not sufficiently

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ently knowing his manner of action, we should be ignorant of the principles on which we might judge what in these threats was properly true, in what degree they would be carried into execution, and whether they would in general take place. This uncertainty would greatly favour the hope of absolute impunity, with which the wicked are too prone to flatter themselves: at least it would much weaken the impression of the threats of punishment; and consequently militate against the end for which they were designed.

Though we cannot easily admit this softening explanation of the threats of eternal punishment, still it may be asked, whether we may not suppose that these threats, which are expressed in an unconditional and unlimited manner, are to be understood in a conditional and limited sense, without doing violence to the words, and without sapping the foundations of God's truth. It may be supposed that eternal punishments are threatened to sin and sinners, that is, to the former as long as it is practised, as long as it exists; to the latter so far as they are sinners, or so far as they continue to offend against the designs and ordinances of their Creator. If the divine threats may be understood with this limitation, or, in the language of the schools, *reduplicative*, it would not follow that punishment must endure to all eternity, if, in some portion of eternity, sin could cease, and be annihilated, and the sinner be some time converted. It may be said, they relate to sin, and presume its actual existence. They concern the sinner so far as he is a sinner. If, then, he cease to be so, it would seem that his punishment must also cease. There are parallel modes of expression in scripture, that appear to favour this interpretation. When, for instance, it is said: *whosoever is born of God sinneth not*, 1 John v. 18. we must understand this limitation: so long,  
and

and so far, as he is born of God. For he might cease to be so, and then he would certainly sin. What should hinder our understanding the scriptural expression concerning the wicked: *the wrath of God remaineth on him*, and other similar ones, with the limitation that they remain objects of God's wrath as long as they are wicked. St. Paul declares, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, that neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, &c. shall inherit the kingdom of God. This is unquestionably to be understood in a conditional sense, that the wicked, so far as they are so, and whilst they continue in sin, shall be excluded from the kingdom of God. But they are not denied the hope of being converted from their sins, and then becoming happy partakers in Christ's kingdom. The Bible, however, affords us a passage still more to the point, which seems fully to justify this mode of interpretation. The prophet Jonah is commissioned from God to tell the corrupt Ninevites that their city will be destroyed in forty days. This was an unconditional threat, and no hope was given the Ninevites, that their repentance would avert the threatened punishment. This may be concluded from the silence of the prophet, who, in delivering his message, mentions not a word of any mitigation of the rigour of the sentence being to be expected from their amendment. But were not this sufficient to make us suppose the threat unconditional, we cannot doubt it, when we consider how dissatisfied the prophet was, because the threat announced by him was not executed. Could he have been dissatisfied, if his threat had been couched in such terms as to give the Ninevites room to hope that their repentance would save them from its execution, or if he had understood it in that sense? Had this been the case, he could not possibly have imagined, that the suppression of the punishment of the Ninevites, after they had repented, could lead them to consider him

as a lying prophet; nor could he possibly have been angry at God's remitting the threatened punishment, which he had promised to remit on their repentance. Besides, the lesson which God gave the discontented prophet, when he attempted to justify his anger, must have been couched in very different terms: instead of pointing out to the prophet his pity, and so justifying his sparing the Ninevites, he needed only have mentioned his injustice, in requiring of God what he had not promised, and demanding the execution of a threat expressly contrary to its conditions. Whether the Ninevites were justified in expecting the performance of God's threat only on condition that they did not turn from their ways, and how far they had grounds for hoping that their sincere repentance would avert the intended punishment, are only to be determined by the event, and by God's answer to Jonah. Both teach us that, in similar cases, we may expect every thing from the mercy of God, and that his threats may be conditionally understood, when they are unconditionally expressed.

If it be asked, why these threats were thus unconditionally spoken, and why this condition was not clearly expressed in words, it may probably be answered: an unconditional threat may make a deeper impression on the mind of a sinner, excite a terror that will be the more efficacious for being united with doubt and anxiety, and thus produce a more earnest repentance, in those who require for their amendment a strong sense of fear and terror. Probably the denunciation of the prophet Jonah would not so powerfully have excited the Ninevites to repentance, had the hope of pardon been clearly announced to them, so that they could have had no doubt of it. It is not difficult to perceive that the threats of eternal misery, uttered in the scriptures against sin and sinners, are most suitably and efficaciously expressed

in an unconditional manner. The instructions given us in the scripture are confined to the teaching us, how we must lead our lives here, to secure happiness hereafter. They extend not to a future life: they tell us not how we must conduct ourselves in it: they only assure us that we shall be in it what we are fitted for by our conduct in the present, and that it will be a state of the most just and adequate retribution of the works we perform, and the disposition we cultivate here. They teach us, that he who opposes the order and purposes of his wise and benevolent Creator will be the object of punishment and wretchedness, and that an opposition to the ordinances of God will be attended with eternal misery.

To make the impression of these instructions more forcible, the scripture tells us that the future state of retribution will be the more perfect, in that it will be devoid of every thing which moderates and alloys the undisturbed enjoyment and perfect reward of good, and the natural consequences and punishment of evil in this life. In that kingdom of truth and order every one will be exactly what he ought to be, the virtuous happy, the wicked miserable, without any commixture of circumstances tending to weaken the proper fate of each. Thus much the scripture teaches us concerning our future state: and this appears to me all that it was necessary or proper to teach us. The questions, however, whether the good may there become worse, or the wicked better; and what alterations the destiny of either would, in that case, undergo; on which, according to this state of the case, bottoms the whole doctrine of the future fate of the blessed, and of the damned, it leaves to be answered by philosophy.

It does not agree with my plan, fully to examine what philosophy gives us reason, with some probability, to expect. As however it only permits us to conclude from analogy, it will only allow of the three

following propositions: either the state of every man in a future life is irreversibly fixed, so that, with respect to the developement of his mental faculties, his morality and perfection admit not of any advancement or decline: or some men advance without being able to decline, whilst others decline without being able to advance: or both declension and advancement may take place in one and the same man.

The first is repugnant to that mutability essential to man, and to all created beings in general; according to which, it cannot be impossible for them, though they may be unable to acquire new ideas, to associate their former ones in a new manner. From their nature, as long as they are left to themselves, all intelligent creatures must approach that perfection to which they tend, or they must recede from it. If they remain invariably still, it can only be owing to an extraordinary effect of divine omnipotence, by which both the virtue of the good, and the wickedness of the bad, after having attained a certain point, are brought to an eternal stand. If this be taken for granted with respect to the wicked, and it be attempted to prove from it the eternity of their punishment, it appears to me reasoning in a circle. For the supposition of eternal punishment is founded on the eternal perverseness of the wicked: and this eternal perverseness is not deduced from the nature of their minds, but from a determination of God, by which they are compelled to it, that they might suffer eternal punishment, as the good are compelled to remain in their virtue, that they may be capable of eternal reward.

Whether the second proposition be admissible, or not, will depend chiefly on the answer to the following question: does the debasement or decline of the wicked apply to their understanding, as well as their will; or is it to be supposed that the understanding continues to improve, whilst the will is eternally

nally growing worse? He that asserts the latter, will appeal, perhaps, to the example of those wicked people who may be extremely depraved in heart, notwithstanding their knowledge of their duty, and what is truly for their advantage; and all to whom *video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor* may be applied. He will say, punishment, particularly when severe, long-continued, and incessant, hardens rather than bends the mind; and as the despair of the sinner is augmented, his perverseness, and propensity to evil, will increase. To this it may be answered: when a man remains a slave to vice, in spite of his better judgment, he is chained to it by habit, and the force of bodily aptitude; the practice of it gives him more pleasure and satisfaction than the omitting it; he has still an opportunity of sinning; and he has the power of increasing and confirming the habit and aptitude, which chained him to vice, by repetition of it. In short, vice, though he must repent of it, is not sufficiently hateful to him; or he does not consider the natural or positive punishments that follow his misconduct, as consequences so inseparable from it that there are no hopes of avoiding them, or at least mitigating their effects, without abstaining from sin. Just too as we may suppose his judgment to be in what is really for his advantage, this judgment is not constant in him, but relaxes as the sense of his punishment abates; when the much stronger perception of the overbalance of pleasure promised him by sin returns, and again exercises its tyrannic sway. But this, according to the proposition, cannot be the state and disposition of him who is condemned to eternal misery. He will no longer possess this sinful body, and if the influence of bodily aptitude be not totally annihilated with it, it will unquestionably be much diminished. The perfect retribution which will follow in the next world will require a privation of objects and opportunities for

finning. For the wicked must there be pained by the privation of those things, their immoderate indulgence in which constituted their crimes. A vicious propensity, it is true, may not be gradually weakened, and ultimately destroyed, by the mere privation of objects and opportunities for sinning, if the smallest hope remain that these objects and opportunities may again return. But if the propensity be totally deprived of its object, and of all hope of ever obtaining it; and if the sinner perceive that the future satisfaction of it is utterly impossible; this forcible privation, and this known impossibility, will finally overcome this propensity, be it ever so strong. Besides, in this state the sinner could no longer deceive himself, or shut his eyes to the real cause of his misery; wanting those amusements and diversions with which he formerly kept at bay the stinging reproofs of conscience, the painful voice of truth will strike deep and loud on his inmost soul. Sin stripped of all its charms will incessantly appear before him in its native ugliness, unable longer to promise him any compensation; and he must perceive in it the sole cause of all his wretchedness and torment.

To maintain that between the understanding and will of the wicked there is such a gap, that the knowledge and judgment of the former do not determine the resolves of the latter; we must deny that they are thus punished in eternity, and made miserable with the most just retribution; or mitigate and lower their pains to that resistible and tolerable degree which they may attain in this world. On the contrary, the more just, adequate and strong we suppose the punishment of the wicked to be, the more assuredly must they know that their sufferings are absolutely founded on their deviations from the laws of truth and virtue; the more clearly will their understanding perceive their true interest; and the  
more



more strong and effectual must be their hatred to their former errors. Should not this follow, but their wills continue to grow more depraved, their perceptions of good and evil must grow more erroneous, and their understanding more darkened. Now it may be asked, whether a state of decline can continue to eternity, so that the light of reason may constantly diminish, without being ultimately extinguished. This question experience, in my opinion, answers in the negative. We know a state from which we are emerged, in which all the perceptions of our minds were confused and obscure, and we had no clear consciousness of our being, or our personality. Thus a spirit that should continue to decay would soon lose itself in this state of insensibility, would soon cease to be a thinking substance, and would be what man was before his birth. As we know no point in the ascending scale to which the human understanding cannot rise, though we know a point in the descending, below which it cannot fall without losing its personality, its consciousness, its individuality of being, this objection, will not apply to an ever continuing improvement.

If it be said, according to the third proposition, that every man, good or bad, happy or unhappy, may both advance and decline in perfection; this would be perfectly consonant to the present frame of man's nature, and what mere analogy leads us to expect in that period which man has to go through. Such is the state in which we find ourselves here. But that, being a state of most perfect retribution, must, in all appearance, eminently promote an advancement to perfection.\*

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\* We cannot here avoid recommending to our reader the story of Carazan, the merchant of Bagdad, in the *Adventurer*, which, though a fiction, has an air of probability, and is true to nature.

In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, a future life is not only represented as a state of retribution, but the effect of that retri-

I do not consider the subject as exhausted, or the question decided, by these desultory remarks: my sole aim was to point out some considerations, which appear to me of weight in this inquiry, and which probably deserve to be more narrowly investigated and compared. This I shall leave to the more experienced mind, whilst I endeavour to remove, if possible, one difficulty, which too naturally rises to the view to be passed over in silence.

It may be said, if the author of the scriptures had good and sufficient reasons not directly to answer the question, whether the wicked can be amended by the punishments of the Almighty in the next world, or not; and if he have left the decision of it to philosophy: in undertaking to answer the question, and answering it in the affirmative, philosophy would render nugatory the purposes for which God left us in the dark; destroy the necessary and salutary influence which the ignorance and uncertainty of mankind on this point would have on their minds; and, if it should succeed in giving a full and satisfactory answer, only discover a pernicious truth.

If this objection be made, still it must be understood that philosophy, in answering the question in the affirmative, does not contradict the scriptures. Though we agree concerning the intent of the silence of scripture, we may yet ask: will this always hold good in every state of mankind, to whatever degree of knowledge they may arrive, whatever may be

bution is probably shadowed out in the sentiments expressed by the former. The sinner, when in the torments of hell, perceived, no doubt, that the pain he suffered was a just reward of the abuse he had made of his possessions, in his voluptuous and selfish life. Unquestionably he now abhorred and execrated his former blindness and vice; and could he have returned to his father's house, he would probably have obeyed that warning, which, from a noble and disinterested anxiety for the delivery of his still living brothers, he wished to have communicated to them, in the most effectual manner.

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their way of thinking, and whatever may be the state of their morals? Or is the ignorance of the philosophical solution, or the common belief of the contrary opinion, adapted only to a certain constitution, or a determinate state of man, and useful in that only, but prejudicial under a change of circumstances? It may be asked farther, whether, notwithstanding the answer of philosophy, the silence of the scriptures may not produce its intended effects, and procure all the advantages desired. There may be a period, and there may be circumstances, under which the greater part of mankind are ill fitted to bear the light of philosophy; when they would not give themselves any concern about a nice decision of this question, or would admit the common opinion of the impossibility of conversion in a future state, and the collateral doctrine of eternal punishment, as rational, without finding in it any thing offensive; and when they could only abuse the contrary opinion to their detriment. With respect to such a period, and such circumstances, would it not be advantageous that the scripture should observe strict silence respecting the change men might undergo in another world? But again there may be times and circumstances, in which the discovery of the possibility of a future change might relatively produce more good than harm: when maintaining the contrary might, perhaps, be to thinking men a most insurmountable obstacle to their belief of divine revelation; an obstacle which they could not reconcile with the attributes and nature of God, with the appearance of his works, or even with the general tenor of the scriptures: and when the unthinking majority of christians themselves would be little more affected and deterred by the doctrine of eternal punishment; nay, when the abuse of it would but lull them into greater security. Can it militate against the design of God that a hitherto mistaken truth, probably concealed from  
mankind

mankind for their good, should be stripped of its veil, when circumstances are so altered that ignorance of it would be more prejudicial than advantageous? It is difficult to maintain that the discovery of a truth, or the detection of a prejudice, will have the same influence at all times, and under all circumstances. Neither can we absolutely assert that conclusions to which we may be led by reason, if they discover to us truths which God did not think fit to reveal to us in the scriptures, are contrary to the designs of God, or render them nugatory. Much more suitable both to philosophy and religion would it be to suppose that Providence, which orders every thing for the general good, watches over the cultivation and progress of truth amongst mortals with such wisdom, that it promotes or retards its discovery in proportion to the wants of the age; that no rightly demonstrated truth can be injurious upon the whole, or tend to corrupt the world; that light and darkness are distributed throughout the moral world according to wise and benevolent laws; and that both are necessary to the accomplishment of the grand scheme of Providence, however incapable we may be of perceiving it in every particular instance.

Perhaps the following considerations may also tend to remove the objection. The greater part of those who are not philosophers enough to answer this question in a satisfactory manner, on rational principles, but trust to the decision of others, without examining it for themselves, would probably be inclined to abuse it, whilst unable to see the truth in its whole extent, and with all its consequences. These would be led by the silence of the scriptures to a necessary and beneficial diffidence of themselves, and a trust in the judgment of others, which would prevent their abusing it: but, had the scriptures explained it clearly, this could not have happened. They who are capable of demonstrating to themselves

elves the possibility of a future conversion, with more or less probability, must, so far as they reason on true and just grounds, discover this truth; that a long continued course of vice will render their discontinuance of it and amendment more difficult, their pains and chastisements more severe and lasting, the purifying fire stronger, and their misery more extreme: a truth that cannot but act as an antidote to the abuse. They must also learn that their amendment can never be completed without making a beginning; and that this completion is not the business of a moment; not the inevitable consequence of a wonderful conjunction of particularly favourable circumstances; not the catastrophe of a tragedy or romance; but that it requires an earnest and steadfast exertion, if a man would learn to govern himself; to subject his inclinations and desires to reason; to make them accord with the will of his Creator, which tends to the happiness of all; to love God above all things, and his neighbour as himself; to obtain a predominant taste for truth, order, and perfection; and to find pleasure in happiness wherever it may be. They must know that peace, content and happiness are to be tasted in that kingdom of truth and order, only in proportion as their minds are habituated to these, and approach perfection. They must also be conscious that every sin cherishes and confirms the propensity to evil, and consequently the disorder and depravity of their minds; that every injury to another increases the measure that is to be filled out to themselves; and that both the general good and their own require this, that when, on account of their unrighteousness, they are condemned to be imprisoned in hell, they shall not be released till they have paid the uttermost farthing, or received full retribution.—He who knows all this, or who believes the doctrine of a future retribution in the whole of its philosophical and scriptural extent, is in

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no danger of being seduced into spiritual indolence and security by the hope of a future conversion.

If then the answer of philosophy can be supported, the fear of its having discovered a dangerous truth, or of its abuse being more general and disadvantageous than the abuse of the opposite opinion, appears to be unfounded. For who can deny that men by whom every thing is abused, may also abuse this, and misapply the doctrine of eternal punishment, or at least render it ineffectual? It may drive them to despair. It gives religion a gloomy aspect, deprives it of its pleasing form, and seems more adapted to make the Deity terrible to us, than an object of love. Besides the majority of mankind are incapable of forming a clear, determinate, and effectual idea of eternal punishment. The expression is too abstract, not sensible, not concrete enough to affect the minds of such men, who cannot conceive abstract expressions otherwise than by applying them to particular cases. Tell such a man that he shall remain a very long time in prison, he will be much less affected, than if a certain number of years were mentioned. The expression, *eternal punishment*, will convey to him no idea; or he will imagine it to represent a certain number of years, so that the proper idea of eternity, at which he cannot arrive, will be lost to him, or at least will make no impression on his mind which a determinate number of years would not have done with equal force and certainty. Let us, however, suppose that he can form a just idea of eternal duration, probably one of the two following consequences would ensue. His religion, if it did not make him totally abandon it, and fall into practical atheism, would be chiefly superstition; consisting more in fear and terror, than love and confidence in God: or he would seek to lessen his burdensome fear and disquiet by the hope that the number of the damned, amongst believing christians at least, must

must be extremely small ; that a man, baptized in the name of Christ, could not draw upon himself damnation but by an eminently wicked life, or the most detestable religious errors ; and that, if he were not worse than the majority, or guilty of immediately offending God, and of crying injustice against his neighbour, but took care to avoid crimes forbidden by the law, he should escape eternal punishment, and consequently all punishment, as he knows no other.

As every one believes that there is a certain proportion betwixt crimes and their punishment, both in degree and duration ; it is very natural, that he who is conscious of no immediate offence to God, or no irreparable injury to his neighbour ; and can only reproach himself with a very common degree of thoughtlessness, a too great sensuality, a propensity to the pleasures and enjoyments of this world, a careless and free life, &c. should consider eternal punishment as too disproportionate to the sum of his guilt for him to fear it ; or not to hope being secured from it, by an adherence to the worship of the church to which he belongs, a right faith, and an observance of the ceremonies of religion. This, it may be presumed, in all likelihood, would not be the case, and the great number of mere nominal christians would be less apt to flatter themselves with the hope of impunity, if they were deprived of the specious pretext, and secret foundation of this hope ; namely, the perceived or imagined disproportion betwixt their sins and eternal punishment. They would probably be awakened to a more earnest reflection on their future fate ; every the least act disapproved by their conscience would become more important, and more powerfully excite in them diligence to do good ; were they clearly convinced that every virtuous sentiment which they nourished by good works, would promote their happiness

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in eternity; and every wicked inclination, which they cherished by acquiescence, would promote their unhappiness, in exact proportion; that every good deed would there meet a suitable reward, and every bad one an adequate punishment; and that they would experience good or evil, as long as they should merit it. Men would then have their own natural sentiments of right and wrong; and the judge in their own breasts would confirm the sentence announced to them: but now the threats of hell suggest to many that eternal misery is too severe a punishment for the indulgence of a few years, and those intermingled with so much sorrow and vexation. The effects of the Popish doctrine of purgatory seem to make this conjecture in some degree probable. If this doctrine were delivered in a pure and rational manner, divested of superstitious notions, and the gainful additions foisted into it by priestcraft; it would be found to be the same at bottom; or to teach that a proportional retribution is the mean of purifying us from bad thoughts and actions, and that when we are thus purified we may hope for a releasement from pain. But the great object of fear in the Romish church is not so much eternal fire, as that purifying flame. Purgatory is the rein that curbs so many unruly desires, and the spur to so many, at least outwardly, good works. The certain hope of release does not so diminish the fear of it, but it occasions many restitutions accompanied with much self-denial, many abasing retractions, many humiliating confessions, and many expiations that cost dear to self-love; particularly on the bed of death: of all which, alas! our church offers us but few examples. How much greater and more numerous effects of this kind may we presume would be produced, had not masses for the dead, legacies in favour of the priesthood, pious foundations, and similar succedaneums for actual restitu-

tions,



tions, and reparations of injuries, been invented by self-interest, and swallowed by superstition!

But supposing it could be proved that the fire of hell is a purifying fire, would it be advisable to advance this, and directly to maintain it, in mixed societies? This question, I believe, I have weighty reasons for answering in the negative. Our societies, at least the greater part of them, may not be sufficiently prepared for the reception, and right application of this doctrine. In my opinion, that preacher takes the safest way, who, in his public discourses on this subject, goes no farther than revelation itself, the words of which he undertakes to explain and enforce. It behoveth him not to dispel that wise and salutary darkness, with which scripture has enveloped the future fate of mankind; as he cannot tell whether the greater part of his hearers be not in the same circumstances as the Ninevites at the preaching of Jonah; or whether ignorance, or at least uncertainty be not necessary, to awaken them to more serious reflection, and to a more lively and effectual repentance. To this another reason for caution may be added. Hitherto the torments of hell have ever been represented as eternal. Our auditors are so accustomed to this notion, that they have associated the idea of eternity with that of hell-torments in such a manner as to consider it an essential part of them. Many unthinking men, therefore, hearing that it is not impossible for them to be converted in eternity, and that probably in some period of it their torments would cease, might imagine that the pains of hell themselves may likewise be annihilated, or at least no longer figure them of sufficient weight to be affected by them: in the same manner as a man who is accustomed to see, and to suffer, severe punishment, little heeds a milder chastisement, though it would be sensible and efficacious enough of itself, and in other circumstances;

stances; or, as a man who has borne a very heavy burden, when a lighter is placed on his shoulders, is insensible of the load.

But if it be admitted on the other hand, that the scriptures do not clearly assert the impossibility of a conversion and alteration in eternity; we must go no farther on that side than they do, and at least avoid making it a point of our public duty to demonstrate it to be impossible. Would it not be most advisable, to treat this subject with the same caution, and to pass it over for the same reasons, as a prudent and conscientious preacher would treat cautiously, and perhaps totally pass over the similar point, of the possibility of a death-bed conversion. If a man content himself with saying that scripture gives us no hope of this kind in express words; would not his preaching be true and effectual, whilst he carefully enforces the clear threats of eternal punishment in the scriptures, denounced against those who obey not God; and endeavours to inculcate as urgently as possible, that the longer a man continues in disobedience the more he will enhance his misery, and the more difficult he will make the alteration of his mind, and that as long as a man defers to make a beginning and waits for a more convenient or favourable opportunity, he has actually reason to fear an eternal or irrevocable misery?—Still I presume not to decide any thing on this point. All I have said on the subject is merely hypothetical, and I am prepared to embrace any system that may appear to rest on more solid foundations.

# I N D E X.

*References to the NOTES of PISTORIUS, which form the THIRD VOLUME, are distinguished by a P. preceding the Number of the Page.*

## A.

- A**BRAMHAM, his history considered, II. 130.  
*Action* the first property of matter, P. III. 509.  
*Æther* considered, I. 13.  
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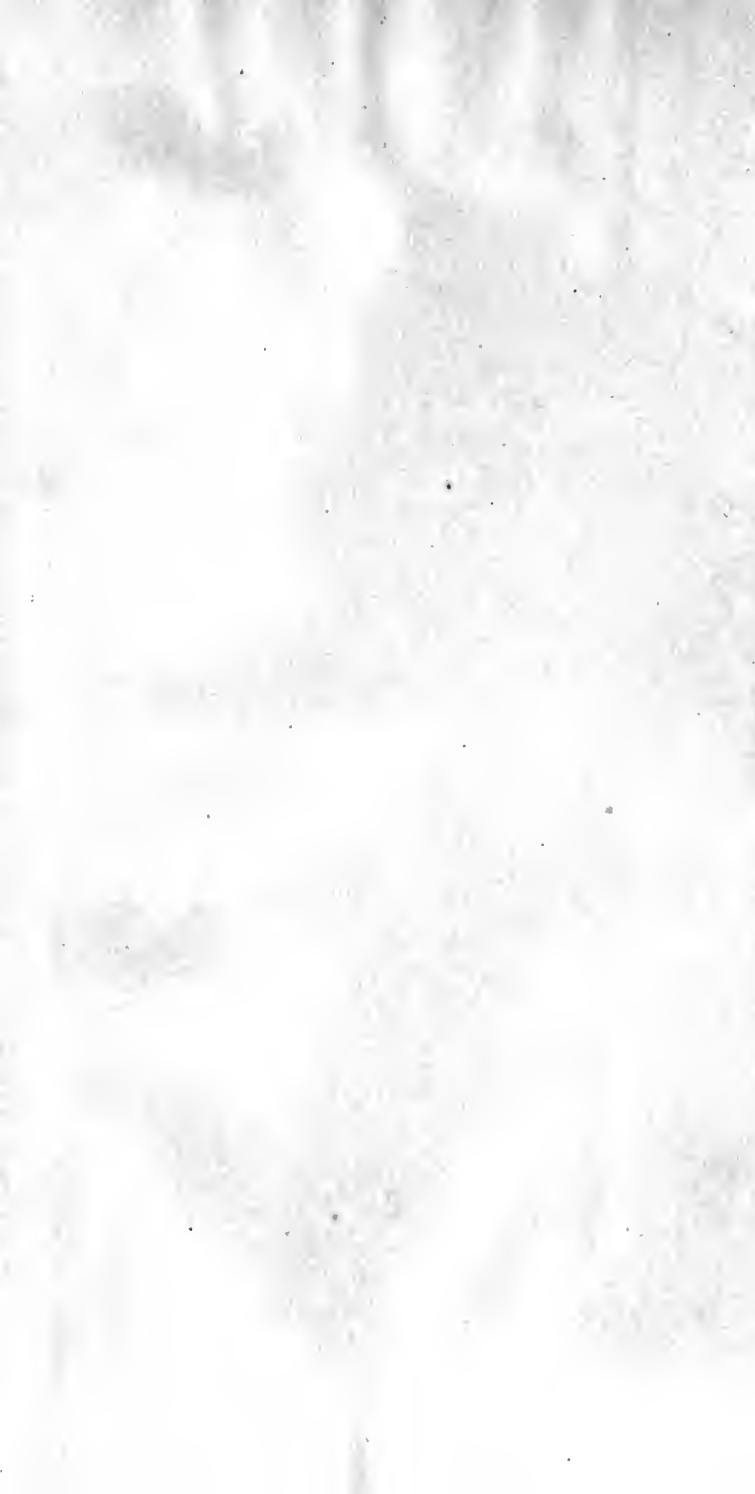
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