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THE

RELIGION OF PHILOSOPHY,

AS CONTRA-DISTINGUISHED

FROM

Modern French Philosophy:

AND AS AN ANTIDOTE TO

ITS PERNICIOUS EFFECTS,

Lately so evident in the Prevalence

OF

ASSASSINATION & SUICIDE.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE following Treatise was originally intended to be left in manuscript to my children; being an appeal to their matured judgment, without any attempt to influence through the deference expected from a child to a parent. Finding it, however, too laborious an undertaking to multiply copies for a numerous and increasing offspring, and for some few select friends who also requested to have it, I have had recourse to the press for the purpose of a limited distribution.

I do not deny that I feel a strong excitement to publish it for general circulation; but I am not sufficiently confident of its merits as a literary production, to risk such an ordeal: I wait, therefore, until it has stood the test of this minor trial. The excitement I allude to, springs from a desire of contributing all in my humble power towards suppressing the alarming dissemination of French atheistical philosophy, which, sapping the foundation of virtuous principles, threatens destruction to *all* religion and morality; the tendency of it being to deprive man of the cheering and endearing hope of an immortal existence: a philosophy too suitable to those who are prone to evil, and therefore likely to be encouraged by them.

To what height this lamentable evil may have extended in the more elevated ranks of society, or how considered in the higher walks of literature, I do not pretend to know. I hope to many the assertion may appear extraordinary, the truth of which in my public path of life, where I am continually led to a knowledge of the fact, I have but too frequent opportunities of ascertain-

ing, viz. that, among the lower and middle orders of society, the doctrine of this atheistical philosophy is spreading to a most alarming degree. There are, among them, those who openly aver their belief that death will close the scene of their pleasures and pains for ever; and therefore their worldly wisdom is to take care of the present moment for the sensual enjoyment of all they can possibly grasp, utterly regardless of consequences. To these, death is less a terror than immediate temporary punishment, their hearts being hardened by the belief of a total annihilation. The common encouraging argument among noted culprits is, "It is but a momentary pain, and there is an end." Proofs of the existence of such belief, and consequent actions, are innumerable in the recent history of the French revolution; and it is not possible to conceive that men could have become such monsters of cruelty and wickedness, had they not previously fortified their minds by a persuasion that they were not to be accountable in a future existence. Nor are proofs wanting of a similar depravity in this country: murders committed without

provocation, in cold blood, and with but slight expectation of advantage, have greatly increased of late: the English character seems changed. Among instances of minor note, within the last few years, the case of the monster Williams stands conspicuous. A man of some education, apparent mildness of character, in the prime of life, and without any other incitement than the obtaining a little money to lengthen his sensual enjoyments awhile on shore: this miserably deceived and inhuman wretch could deliberately undertake, no matter with or without accomplices, to massacre and destroy, in an indiscriminate horrid manner, two families, in the whole seven people, with all of whom he was on a friendly footing; and then, to confirm the infernal atheistical doctrine he had imbibed, as soon as he found himself charged on suspicion, could as fearlessly as wickedly launch himself into eternity; so heavily laden with guilt, with sins of so deadly a nature, as to preclude the hope of divine mercy, but by ages of suffering repentance. I do most assuredly believe, therefore, that the misguided wretch Williams

could never have become so inhumanly depraved a monster, but from the pernicious tendency of the modern infidelity respecting a state of future rewards and punishments, consequent on the good or ill conduct of mortals in this life. The cool premeditated murder of Mr. Perceval, with other recent assassinations, all tend to prove the prevalence of such destructive infernal doctrines.

Books on religious subjects are mostly confined, in the reading, to those within the pale of the writer's faith, or to controversialists. Those who are of a different faith, generally speaking, when they hear of a publication on the subject of religion, inquire whether the author is not a clergyman, and, if so, will too often exclaim, "He is a hired interested writer," whatever sect he may belong to, "engaged to defend a system, which he dares neither discuss nor rectify." Now I am a mere practical man, and in the present instance can have no other interest to serve, or any wish, beyond that of doing all the little good I am able; and, with the blessing of God, I hope this may be productive of some.

Good men, of all religions, must be equal in the eye of Omnipotence, if mercy, justice, and integrity, are the leading principles of their conduct; for it is not in the power of a conscientious good man to coerce his faith: to say that he changes, against conviction, is declaring himself a hypocrite and not to be trusted. If a good man is so unfortunate as to entertain notions repugnant to the established doctrines of the country he is born in, that, not depending upon his will, can never be imputed to him as a crime. In truth, religion may be comprised in few words; gratitude to God and love to our fellow-creatures.

In bringing up my own children, I have contented myself with inculcating on their minds a strong pious sense of obligation to their Almighty Creator, and the beneficial effects of performing their moral duties with rectitude in this life, without disturbing their minds, while young, with controversial doctrines concerning faith, which might have perplexed them with doubts and unfitted them for performing the moral duties. To persuade them to *act* aright, has been my

chief aim, and I am well satisfied with the produce of fruit from the seed that was sown.

On men of serious reflection, of all denominations of religion, it is also a duty to endeavour, by sound rational argument, to stop the progress of so alarming an evil as the modern atheism or French philosophy. Strong, however, as my desires are to contribute my mite towards so great a good, the inadequacy of my abilities for arranging and composing any thing like a Treatise to meet the public eye, on a subject of such infinite importance, would have deterred me from the undertaking, had I not, in the course of my extensive travelling opportunities, made minutes and taken extracts from manuscripts and books whenever I have found my sentiments comprised in better language than my own. My desert is chiefly the having, in my researches, noticed and gathered some flowers, particularly in America, that probably might have bloomed and died unnoticed, had I not thus transplanted what I thought most deserving. In like manner, I have culled sentences and paragraphs from authors

at home, when, in the small circle of my reading, I have found my thoughts explained in stronger language than I was master of, which I copied at the time for the purpose of improving my own scanty knowledge of composition; and now, in a work of this serious nature, I rejoice in having recourse to such strength. At the same time, I regret that I cannot, owing to my neglect in not minuting the works, render the respective authors, from whom I have taken such extracts, their just due, by naming them, though but for a single sentence; more especially, as I am persuaded that the arguments would have been strengthened by their authority. If I could save a fellow-creature's life, by the aid of another person's boat or vehicle of any kind, I would cheerfully acknowledge such assistance, nor conceive that I depreciated my own exertions in the work of salvation, by mentioning the owner or person who originally built it.

I am well aware, that this account of my compiling the Treatise will be no recommendation to the learned, should it ever come into their hands for perusal; but, if the ar-

guments are rightly stated, and the inferences justly drawn, they will stand the test of truth; and truth, though humbly clad, if conveyed in language that may be the easiest understood by those whose intellects have not been so highly illuminated by learning, is, I conceive, likeliest to produce the desired effect which I have humbly contemplated, being better calculated, by its plain simplicity, for the meridian of common understandings. It may probably be said, that I have not advanced *all* that might be adduced in proof of my positions. This I readily admit; but I have done my best; let others do better; and I earnestly solicit the aid of more able advocates in so good and great a cause as proving the *Religion* of *Philosophy*, or in other words the *Wisdom* of *Religion;* and, whilst I confine myself to the *light* of *Nature*, as the guide of my reasoning, it will become the scholar and divine to exert their greater abilities, by advocating from scripture and adducing aid from revelation.

The better to obtain this desirable end, and shun giving offence to any, I have cautiously

avoided mentioning or even alluding to any of the various systems of religion prevailing, more or less, over the face of the globe. The Treatise is written on *general* principles of sound reason, and is addressed to mankind generally. It is founded on that rock on which every subordinate faith is and must be built, and it is accordingly hoped that liberal well-meaning men, of all persuasions, may read it without finding any thing in it to offend, notwithstanding the argument may not have been extended sufficiently to gratify each in their own particular faith; and, having maturely considered the rationality of the arguments, they may deduce every possible consolation from the contemplation of God's gracious providence, which holds forth to all mankind the great endearing hope of a blessed futurity.

Were I born in Turkey, and to announce myself of the Mahometan faith, with all the zealous strength of argument arising from being born and educated in such faith, it is not to be expected that either Christians, Jews, or heathens, would deign to look at the Treatise. And even among the Maho-

metans themselves, who are divided into as many different sectaries and are as much at variance with each other as the Christians, &c. were it known that I was a believer in Mahomet as a sectarist and follower of peculiar doctrines, I may venture to assert, that fifteen if not nineteen out of twenty would refuse acknowledging me as a true Mussulman believer, and therefore would not consider me as deserving attention. It would be the same among Christians, Jews, and heathens, and still more so among the atheistical infidels and wicked of all denominations, who fail not in decrying whatever absurdities are to be found in any particular sectary, to strengthen the ground of their infidelity; and who are *desirous* of crediting that *hereafter* they will not be accountable for their conduct in this world. For these reasons, I consider myself justified in withholding any declaration as to the *particular* tenets of my own religion, which to those who know me well is not wanted, and to those who know me not is unnecessary; for fear that it might tend to prevent and defeat my purpose, that of obtaining an *unbiassed* attention to the argu-

ments, proving the prevailing doctrine of French atheistical infidelity to be most wickedly erroneous, and fraught with incalculable destructive mischief to all mankind. I hope, therefore, it will suffice for me to declare, in *general* terms, that I rejoice in being a Christian, a true follower of Christ, as I read, and do flatter myself that I understand the doctrine of Christ, as taught by himself.

I am now fast approaching the verge of that bourn from whence no mortal has returned to tell his tale of wonders, but where every thing like doubt will vanish: it is an aweful, hopeful, joyful expectancy after travelling through a long probationary existence, which I trust and hope will be accepted at the throne of mercy. I consider it as a sacred duty and obligation in me to leave my most serious contemplations on the providence of God, to my children, for them to profit by; and, as it is my duty not to withhold those contemplations, it will be theirs to consider them well.

Among the nations of the earth, in every quarter of the globe, I have sought to read the mind of man. I have likewise sought,

with reverential attention, to study and understand the will of the Almighty Creator, as revealed to man in his works of creation, which he has given to all alike to contemplate. Consonant to this grand display of the Almighty Power and Providence, revealed for the mind of man to study, whether savage or philosopher, I have observed among all nations one uniform principle, in which all agree; a firm belief in a God. This is the rock on which all men build their hopes of an immortality; a faith, which no earthly power can shake from its foundation, or make a conscientious godly man swerve from, whether Christian, Mahometan, Jew, or Gentile: it was the rock of the Royal Psalmist, to whom Christians, Jews, and Mahometans, bow with reverence: good men may possibly be induced to swerve from one subordinate faith to another, but never from their faith in God Almighty. To this grand universal truth, all Nature speaks aloud; all that comes within the scope of man's limited power to discern; all that man can conceive of the planetary system of worlds beyond worlds in the infinitude of space; all, all,

tend to confirm the great incontrovertible truth, the existence of an eternal, omniscient, and beneficent Mind, whose power is unlimited in his nature as God.

It is this uniform consonance between the finite mind of men of all religious persuasions, intuitive, as it were, in the universal belief in an infinite Being who governs the universe, which induces a hope that a Treatise like this, founded on *general* principles, should it hereafter be deemed deserving of general publication, may be acceptable to all religious good men, and may tend to convert the atheist; leaving him, then, at perfect liberty to follow such other points of doctrinal faith as his conscience and reason may dictate.

I trust that there is not a sentence of an immoral tendency to be found in the following pages, and I hope there may be found abundance of rational argument to convince and satisfy those who have been led astray by the destructive philosophy of modern infidels, that there is a righteous just God, to whom we are to look for judgment, and to be accountable for the good and evil of our

free agency of conduct in this probationary life; and that there is every rational certainty that the soul of man, when separated from the mortal man, will enter into a state of immortality.

Imperfections in the work, as a literary production, I have no doubt may be found; for which, I have no other apology to offer than the inability to make it better; and the paramount desire of doing good must be my shield against the shafts of criticism.

THE

RELIGION OF PHILOSOPHY.

CHAPTER I.

Section 1.

A knowledge of the Being, Perfections, Power, and Providence, of God, most desirable.

THE desire of knowledge has engaged the attention of the wise and curious among mankind, in all ages. This has extended the arts and sciences far and wide in the

several quarters of the globe, and excited the mind to explore Nature's laws, in a gradual series of improvement, until philosophy, astronomy, geography, and history, with many other branches of science, have arrived to a great degree of perfection.

It is nevertheless to be regretted, that the bulk of mankind, even in those nations which are most celebrated for learning and wisdom, are still carried down the torrent of superstition, and entertain very unworthy conceptions of the *being*, *perfections*, *power*, and *providence* of *God*, and of their duty to him. It becomes, therefore, the philosophic friends of human nature, to exert themselves by all lawful, wise, and prudent means to enlighten the minds of men with those great and sublime truths concerning God and his Providence, as well as to impress upon them their obligations to moral rectitude, which, in this world and that to come, cannot fail greatly to affect their happiness and well-being.

Though, "none, by searching, can find out God, or the Almighty, to perfection," yet I am persuaded, that, if mankind would

dare to exercise their reason as freely on those divine topics as they do in the common concerns of life, they would in a great measure rid themselves of their blindness and superstition, gain more exalted ideas of God and their obligations to him and to one another, and be proportionably delighted and blessed with the views of his moral government; that they would make better members of society, and acquire many powerful incentives to the practice of morality, which is the last, best, and greatest, perfection that human nature is capable of, and appears to be the grand design of our probationary state of existence.

Section 2.

Of the Being of a God.

The laws of Nature having subjected mankind to a state of absolute dependence on

something out of, and manifestly beyond, themselves, or the compound exertion of their natural powers, gave them the first conception of a superior principle existing; otherwise, they could have had no possible conception of a superintending power.

But this sense of dependency, which results from experience and reasoning on the facts which every day cannot fail to produce, has uniformly established the knowledge of our dependence in the minds of all who are rational, necessarily enforcing the idea of a ruling power, or, that there is a God.

This gives the first idea of a Deity, and powerfully attracts the rational mind to make farther discoveries; which, through the weakness of human reasonings, opens a door for errors and mistakes respecting the divine essence; though there is no possibility of our being deceived in our conceptions of a superintending power.

The globe, with all its productions; the planets in their motions; and the starry heavens in their magnitude; surprise our senses and confound our reason, in their munificent lessons of instruction concerning God; by

means of which we are apt to be more or less lost in our ideas of the object of divine adoration; though, at the same time, every one is truly sensible, that their being and preservation is from God. We are too apt to confound our ideas of God with his works, and to take the latter for the former. Thus, some barbarous and unlearned nations have imagined, that, inasmuch as the sun in its influence is beneficial to them, in bringing forward the spring of the year, causing the production of vegetation, and food for their subsistence, it is therefore their God; while others have selected other parts of creation, and ascribed to them the prerogatives of God; mere creatures and images have been substituted to be gods by the wickedness or weakness of man, or both together. It seems, that mankind, in most ages and parts of the world, have been fond of corporeal deities, with whom their outward senses might be gratified; or have as fantastically been diverted from a just conception of the true God, by a supposed supernatural intercourse with invisible and mere spiritual beings, to whom they ascribed divinity, so that, through one means or other,

the character of the true God has been much neglected, to the great detriment of truth, justice, and morality, in the world: nor is it possible, that mankind can be uniform in their religious opinions, or worship of God, according to knowledge, except they can form a consistent arrangement of ideas of the divine character; this, therefore, shall be the great object of our pursuit.

Although a sense of dependency discloses to our minds the certainty of a Supreme Being, yet, it does not point out to us the object, nature, or perfections, of that being; this belongs to the province of reason. As far as we understand Nature, so far we are become acquainted with the character of God; for, the knowledge of Nature is the revelation of God.

If we form in our imagination a compendious idea of the harmony of the universe, it is the same as calling God by the name of harmony, for there could be no harmony without regulation, and no regulation without a regulator, which is expressive of the idea of a God: nor is it possible that there could be order or disorder, except we admit of such a

thing as creation, and creation contains in it the idea of a creator, which is another appellation for the Divine Being, distinguishing God from his creation. Furthermore, there could be no proportion, figure, or motion, without wisdom and power: wisdom to plan, and power to execute; and these are perfections, when applied to the works of Nature, which clearly signify the agency or superintendency of God. If we consider Nature to be matter, figure, and motion, we include the idea of God in that of motion: for motion implies a mover, as much as creation does a creator. If, from the composition, texture, and tendency of the universe in general, we form a complex idea of general good resulting therefrom to mankind, we implicitly admit a God, by the name of good, including the idea of his providence to man: and from hence arises our obligations to love and adore God, because he provides for and is beneficent to us: abstract the idea of goodness from the character of God, and it would cancel all our obligations to him.

For mankind to hate truth, as it may bring their evil deeds to light, and be attended with

punishment, is very easy and common; but to hate truth as truth, or God as God, which is the same as to hate goodness for its own sake, unconnected with any other consequences, is impossible even to a diabolical nature itself. If we advert to the series of the causes of our being and preservation in the world, we shall commence a retrospective examination from son to father, grandfather and great grandfather, and so on, to the supreme and self-existent Father of all; and, as to the means of our preservation or succeeding causes of it, we may begin with parental kindness, in nourishing, succouring, and providing for us in our helpless age; always remembering it to have originated from our Eternal Father, who planted that powerful and sympathetic affection in the bosoms of our earthly parents.

By extending our ideas to a larger circle, we shall perceive our dependence on the earth and waters of the globe which we inhabit, and from which we are bounteously fed, and comfortably clothed; and next, extending our ideas to the sun, whose apparent fiery mass darts its brilliant rays of light to

our terraqueous globe, with amazing velocity, and whose region of inexhaustible fire (according to the general conception of mankind) supplies it with fervent heat, causing vegetation, and providing the various seasons of the year with ten thousand charms. This we are conscious is not the work of man, but the workmanship and providence of an Almighty God. But how the sun is supplied with materials thus to perpetuate its kind influences, we know not; yet will any one deny the reality of those beneficial influences, because we do not understand the manner of the perpetuity of that fiery world, or how it became such a body of fire, as our sensations seem to convince us it must be? Or, will any one deny the reality of nutrition by food, because we do not understand the secret operation of the digestive powers of animal nature, or the minute particulars of its nourishing influence? None will be so stupid as to do it. Equally absurd would it be for us to deny the providence of God, by "whom we live, move, and have our being," because we cannot comprehend it.

The evidence of the being and providence

of God is so full and complete, that we cannot miss of discerning it, if we but open our eyes, and reflect on the visible creation. The benefit accruing to us from reflection, reasoning, and argument, as it respects our knowledge and practice, is to explore the truth of things, as they are in their own nature; this is our wisdom, all other conceptions of things are false and imaginary; we cannot exercise a thought on any thing that has a positive existence, which will not, if we trace it thoroughly, centre in an independent cause, and give evidence of a God. Thus, it is from the works of Nature that we explore its great Author: but the very best and most inquisitive of mortal minds are all lost in their researches into the immensity of the divine fulness, because, the infinite mind of the Creator has ordained, thus far shall the finite mind of man go, and no farther.

Section 3.

The Manner of discovering the moral Perfections and natural Attributes of God.

HAVING offered what appear to be indisputable reasons to evince the certainty of the being and providence of God, and of his goodness to man through the intervention of the series of Nature's operations, which are commonly described by the name of natural causes, we come now more particularly to the consideration of his moral perfections: and, though all finite beings fall as much short of an adequate knowledge of them, as they do of perfection itself, nevertheless, through the intelligence of our own souls, we may entertain something of a perspective idea of the divine perfections; for, though the human mind bears no proportion to the divine, yet there must be some resemblance

between them: for instance; God knows all things, and we know some things, and in the things we do understand, our knowledge agrees with the divine, and cannot fail of necessarily corresponding with it. To know a thing is the same as to have a right idea of it, or ideas according to truth; and truth is uniform in all rational minds, the divine mind not excepted. It will not be disputed, but that mankind in plain and common matters understand justice from injustice, truth from falsehood, right from wrong, virtue from vice, and praise-worthiness from blame-worthiness, for otherwise they could not be accountable creatures. This being admitted, we are capable of forming a complex idea of a moral character, which, when done in the most deliberate, wisest, and most rational manner in our power, we feel convinced bears some resemblance to the divine perfections. For, as we learn, from the works of Nature, an idea of the power and wisdom of God, so, from our own rational nature, we have an idea of his moral perfections.

But mere power and wisdom, abstractedly considered from justice, goodness, and truth,

are not necessarily connected with a moral character, as applicable to man; as many tyrants have demonstrated, who have been wise to plan and powerful to execute unjust wars, to the ruin and destruction of their species. But, on the other hand, when power and wisdom are in the possession of patriot governors, they subserve mankind. But as God is unchangeably and infinitely just and good, as well as infinitely wise and powerful, he can therefore never vary from the rectitude of his moral character, and consequently, his power and wisdom, though not included in his moral perfections (being his natural attributes) cannot act in opposition to his moral character. For, of all possible systems, infinite wisdom must have eternally discerned the best, and infinite justice, goodness, and truth, approved it, and infinite power effected it. This conclusion is meant in respect to the creation and providence of God only, and not to affect the liberty of man in making his choice of good or evil, which God, in his infinite wisdom and inscrutable designs, has left free.

From what has been observed, on the mo-

ral perfections of God, we may infer, that all rational beings, who have an idea of justice, goodness, and truth, have at the same time either a greater or less idea of the moral perfections of God. It is by reason that we are able to compound an idea of a moral character, whether applied to God or man; it is this which gives us the supremacy over the irrational part of the creation; and it is that by which we may truly be said to be "made after the image of God."

Section 4.

Of the Eternity and Infinity of God.

To ask, how God came to be, implies a contradiction to his being, as God, inasmuch as it supposes him to have come from, and to be dependent on, some pre-existing cause, which holds up to our view the character of

a finite and dependent being. But if we extend our minds retrospectively on the chain of pre-existing causes, as far as human nature can extend, still we are at as great a remove from a God, as when we first attempt the order of pre-existing causes; for a mere succession of causes cannot extend them ad infinitum. If we conceive God to have existed from eternity, and that he will exist to eternity; in this conception, we form an idea that God existed in time, and that in time he will cease to be; viz. from a certain era called eternity, he existed to a second era, called by the same name, that is from one epocha to another; and on this position, there would have been an eternity preceding his existence, and another succeeding it, as it is often expressed from the desk, "from eternity to eternity, thou art God," which is diametrically inconsistent with a just idea of eternity. God did not come to be, but was, nor did he exist from eternity, but eternally existed, and will eternally exist. Though eternity includes an idea of existence or duration, as applicable to God, without beginning or end, yet it is necessary, in discussing the

subject of eternal existence, to divide it into the preceding and succeeding eternity, as they may be considered separately by the mind; but to consider it complexly, it is but one entire eternity, without beginning or end; and the idea of existence without beginning or end, contains in it an idea of self-existence and independence, of any pre-existing cause; but an existence from eternity necessarily implies either from a certain time, or from a certain pre-existing cause, called by the name of eternity, which runs into the absurdity of the derivation of a God, from the chain of supposed pre-existing causes, which, it is hoped, has already been sufficiently confuted.

Self-existence is the highest appellation we can ascribe to God, for nothing short of that can render him independent, and establish a just sense of his divinity and eternity: and although we cannot comprehend this mysterious manner of existence, yet we can comprehend that any manner of existence short of or inferior to that which is self-existent, must necessarily be dependent, consequently imperfect and utterly devoid of any right-

ful pretensions of a God; for, that which is not self-existent, must necessarily be dependent on that which is so, or it could not exist, except we suppose, that a dependent existence can exist independently, which is inadmissible.

The existence of God, then, must be eternal and infinite, without beginning or end. Let us suppose a mathematical, eternal, or endless line, endless both ways: every part of it would be equally in the middle; or, more properly speaking, there would be no middle or centre to it, inasmuch as it is supposed to be endless: so that, were a cannon ball to be discharged on either direction of such a supposed line, at any given time, and suppose it to continue its velocity, (which is the same as succession or motion,) with unabated rapidity for ever, it would never reach the endless extension of that line; for, that which is without beginning or end, is eternal, and cannot be measured or comprehended by the succession of numbers or motion, or by any thing that is capable of calculation, from the order of time; for which reason it is in nature impos-

sible to trace the series of natural causes, up to the self-existent and eternal cause. God is a cause uncaused and eternally self-existent, who gave being and order to Nature, and for this reason we cannot trace the footsteps of the Creator, by a succession of causes up to the eternal cause, (for, that the series is also eternal,) any more than we can trace an endless line, by the motion of a cannon ball. Existence without a beginning, a line without end, or an eternal series of natural causes, are each and every of them beyond our calculations of succession, motion, or progression, which are made on the fleeting moments of time.

To suppose, that an eternal series of natural causes begins with a first cause, is the same as supposing a beginning to the existence of God, and, consequently, that the series is not eternal, but that there was a previous eternity, which is a downright contradiction to the eternity of God. According to the rules of chronology, a first always implies a particular era: thus Moses represents God to be under six thousand years old, at present: his words are these; "in the begin-

ning, God created the heavens and the earth." This epocha is calculated from the Jewish chronology, which wants but few figures to compute. The Chinese ascribe an era of about forty thousand years existence to their God; but these are only different beginnings and do neither of them explain the eternal, self-existent cause. It may be said, that Moses spake only with respect to the creation of the "heavens and the earth:" be it so, yet if, in any part of space, there had been any previous display of creation, that which Moses was speaking of could not have been the beginning.

In discoursing thus freely on creation, I do not confine my ideas to the creation of the earth that we inhabit, nor even to the starry worlds within our ken: my conception (feeble as it is) of the creation emanating from the eternal infinite Creator, soars far beyond our visible part of God's creation; insomuch, as to feel assured, that a creation of some nature must have perpetually existed, within the immensity of space, under and by the will of the eternal Almighty God.

Proceeding to inquire into the infinity of God, we will premise, that there is no medium between infinite and finite, as applied to God, or to his works of Nature, (which are the same as his creation and providence,) or as applied to mere space. God displays his providence in a series of Nature's operations. Infinity is boundless and unlimited; but finitude is circumscribed and limited, between which there is no comparison or proportion. A supposed infinite nature or space would be as unlimited all possible ways, as that of an eternal line may be supposed to be two ways, and every part of its immensity would be void of a centre.

Circumference necessarily admits of a centre, and though ever so extensive, comes within the description of finitude; but immensity, having no circumference, is also without a centre; so that the rapid motion of a cannon ball, for ever, could not extend itself through immensity, for, that which is boundless cannot be explored and comprehended by the succession of motion, or any progressive operation, or by the addition of numerical parts, though they should be supposed

to be ever so large and numerous; inasmuch as every of them is supposed to be local, they would make but a local whole; and finally bear no proportion to infinite nature, (which comprehends all things,) or to infinite space: so, with respect to an infinite mind, it is not included in any place, or excluded from any place, but fills immensity with cogitation, and perfectly understands all things, and is possessed of all possible powers, perfections, and excellences, without addition or diminution.

This is a summary of the infinitude of God, consisting of wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and truth, with their eternally connected and almighty operations, co-extensive with the immense fulness of things.

Section 5.

The Cause of Idolatry and the Remedy.

INASMUCH as God is not corporeal, and consequently does not and cannot come within the notice of our bodily sensations, we are therefore obliged to deduce inferences from his providence, and particularly from our own rational nature, in order to form our conceptions of the divine character; but through inattention, want of learning, or the natural imbecility of mankind, or through the artifice of designing persons, or all together, men have been greatly divided and subdivided in their notions of God. Many have so groped in the dark as wholly to mistake the proper object of divine worship; and, not distinguishing the Creator from his creation, have paid adoration to "four-footed beasts and creeping things." Some have ascribed divine honours to the sun, moon, or stars; while

others have been so infatuated as to worship dumb, senseless, and unintelligent idols, which derived their existence, as gods, partly from mechanics, who gave them their figure, proportion, and beauty, and partly from their priests, who gave them their attributes; whose believers it appears were so wrought on, that they cried out, in the extacy of their deluded zeal, "great is Diana!" Whatever delusions have taken place in the world, relative to the object of divine worship, or respecting the indecencies or immoralities of the respective superstitions themselves, or by what means soever introduced or perpetuated; whether by designing men, whose interest it has been to impose on the weakness of the great mass of the vulgar; or, as it is probable, that part of those delusions took place in consequence of the weakness of uncultivated reason, in deducing a visible instead of an invisible God from the works of nature: be this, I say, as it will, mankind are generally possessed of an idea, that there is a God, however they may have been mistaken or misled as to the object. This notion of a God, as before observed, must have ori-

ginated in a universal sense of dependence which mankind have on something that is more wise, powerful, and beneficent than themselves, or they could have had no apprehension of any superintending principle in the universe, and consequently would never have sought after a God, or have had any conception of his existence: nor could designing men have imposed on their credulity, by obtruding false gods upon them; for, taking advantage of the common belief, that there is a God, they artfully deceived their adherents with regard to the object to be adored. There are some sorts of idols which have no existence but in the mere imagination of the human mind, and these are by far the most numerous, and universally spread over the world: the wisest of mankind are not, and cannot be, wholly exempt from them, inasmuch as every wrong conception of God is (as far as the error takes place in the mind) idolatrous. To give an instance; the idea of a jealous God is of that sort: "The Lord, thy God, is a jealous God." Jealousy is the offspring of finite minds, proceedng from the want of knowledge, which in dubious mat-

ters makes us suspicious and distrustful; but, in matters which we clearly understand, there can be no jealousy, for knowledge excludes it, so that to ascribe it to God, is a manifest infringement of his omniscience.

The idea of a revengeful God is likewise one of that sort; but this idea of divinity, being borrowed from a savage nature, needs no further confutation. The representation of a God, who (as we are told by certain divines) from all eternity elected an inconsiderable part of mankind to eternal life, and reprobated the rest to eternal damnation, merely from his own sovereignty, adds another to the number: this representation of the Deity undoubtedly took its rise from that which we discover in great, powerful, and wicked tyrants among men. However, tradition may since have contributed to its support; though I am apprehensive that a belief in those who adhere to this doctrine, that they themselves constitute that blessed elect number, has been a greater inducement to them to embrace it, than all other motives put together. It is a selfish and inferior notion of a God; void of justice, goodness, and truth, and has a

natural tendency to impede the cause of true religion and morality in the world, and is diametrically repugnant to the truth of the divine character: if admitted to be true, it overturns all religion, wholly precluding the agency of mankind in either their salvation or damnation; resolving the whole into the sovereign disposal of a tyrannical and unjust being, which is offensive to reason and common sense, and subversive of moral rectitude in general. But it is not my design so much to confute the multiplicity of false representations of a God, as to represent just and consistent ideas of the true God. I shall therefore forbear any farther observations on them; with this remark, however, that all unjust representations or ideas of a God, are so many detractions from his character among mankind, and that, to remedy these idolatrous notions of a God, it is requisite to form right and consistent ideas in their stead.

The discovery of truth necessarily excludes errors from the mind, which nothing else can possibly do; for some notion or other of a God will force itself into the mind of dependent creatures, who, if they are not so

happy as to form just ones, will substitute erroneous and delusive ones in their stead; so that it serves no valuable purpose to mankind, to confute their idolatrous opinions concerning God, without communicating to them just notions concerning the true God; for, if this is not effected, nothing is done to the purpose. For, as has been before observed, mankind will form to themselves, or receive from others, an idea of divinity, either right or wrong. This is the universal voice of intelligent nature, from whence a weighty and conclusive argument may be drawn of the reality of a God, however inconsistent many of the conceptions of him may be. The fact is, mankind readily perceive there is a God, by feeling their dependence on him; and, as they explore his works, and observe his providence, which is too sublime for finite capacities to understand but in part, they have been more or less confounded in their discoveries of a just idea of a God, and of his moral government. Therefore, we should exercise great application and care, whenever we essay to speculate upon the divine character, accompanied with a sincere desire after truth; and not ascribe any thing

to his perfections or government, which is inconsistent with reason or the best information which we are able to comprehend of moral rectitude.

It is a subject requiring the most serious meditations and the most active vigour of a man's mind, during life; and towards the close of such a life, when length of years gives additional strength; when pride and vanity for the things of this world have lost their strong hold, and his thoughts concentre more towards another world; *then*, his meditations and consequent confirmed opinion concerning the *Being*, *Perfections*, *Creation*, and *Providence*, of *God*, may be presumed to be the best legacy he can bequeath to his children and to his fellow man.

CHAPTER II.

Section 1.

On the Eternity of Creation.

As creation was the result of eternal and infinite *wisdom*, *justice*, *goodness*, and *truth*, and effectcd by *infinite power*, it is, like its great Author, mysterious to us. How it could be accomplished, or in what manner performed, can never be comprehended by any capacity, but that by whose almighty fiat it was executed. Yet, from the necessary attributes, perfections, eternity, and infinity of God, we may demonstrate that

creation must also have been eternal and infinite. I would be understood as meaning that there must have existed an eternity of ideas in an omniscient Being, by whose almighty fiat creation was called into action, in his own fullness and fitness of time. Had it not been eternal, there could not have been an eternal display of those divine attributes and perfections, which necessarily constitute a God.

To suppose God to have been self-existent and eternal, but inactive until some certain era, or period of time, when he may have been said to have commenced the work of creation, would imply a contradiction in his nature as God, as on this thesis there would have been an eternity previous to the era of creation; for time or duration without beginning to any certain epocha, is equally eternal as time from such epocha without end; the one respects the preceding and the other the succeeding eternity. Though Providence, which is the exertion or operation of Nature, is continued in an eternal series, eternal creation is no more than eternal exertion or action: the one is as mysterious as the other, and disput-

ing against them, is neither more nor less than disputing against the eternity of God. Eternal, whether applied to duration, existence, action, or creation, is incomprehensible to us, but implies no contradiction in either of them; for that which is above our comprehension, we cannot perceive to be contradictory, nor on the other hand can we perceive its rationality or consistency. We are certain that God is a rational, wise, understanding Being, because he has in a degree made us so; and his wisdom, power, and goodness, are visible to us in his creation and government of the world. From these facts we are justly induced to acknowledge him, and not because we can comprehend his being, perfections, creation, and providence: could we fully comprehend God, he would cease to be what he is. The ignorant among men cannot comprehend the understanding of the wise among their own species, much less the perfections of a God. Nevertheless, in our ratiocination upon the works and harmony of Nature, we are obliged to acknowledge, though, at the same time, it is mysterious to us, that there must be such a Being, as a self-existent and independent

one, the eternal cause of all things. Thus we believe in God, though we cannot comprehend how, why, or wherefore it was possible for him to be; and as creation was the exertion of such an incomprehensible and perfect Being, it must of necessary consequence be in a great measure mysterious to us.

None will dispute the reality of creation, inasmuch as none can be blind to the evidence which ascertains it. This being admitted, it necessarily follows that it was either eternal, or in time; as there can be no third way, or means between these two; for that which is not eternal, must have had a beginning, which is the same as an existence in time.

With respect to us, we cannot effect or do any thing but in time; we have a dependent existence, and after a series of succeeding parts of time we arrive at a capacity of manhood, and every action of our lives is performed in the order of time; and as one part of time succeeds another, so our actions succeed each other, and every of our individual actions are progressive in themselves, simply considered, and are measured by time, whose fleeting mo-

ments pass swiftly on towards their never ending stage, eternity. But when we speak of the act, exertion, or creation of God, we should conceive of them, as not being confined or limited to the order of time, or successively connected with its fleeting moments, like ours; for such conceptions circumscribe and limit the power of God, and are ideally subversive of his eternity, infinity, and absolute perfection, subjecting him to a capacity or condition, which is manifestly finite.

Immensity being replete with creation, the omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, eternal, and infinite exertion of God in creation, is incomprehensible to the understanding of man, and will eternally remain the prerogative of infinite penetration, sagacity, and uncreated intelligence.

Section 2.

Of the Infinitude and Eternity of Providence, in the Creation and Formation of finite Beings.

ADMITTING the eternity and infinity of God, the eternity and infinity of creation and providence in the eternal mind seem to follow of consequence, as there could be no providence or government before there were creatures to govern or provide for; so that we must admit, that creatures were eternally contemplated, and consequently created when the Almighty willed it so, or eternally formed, or both. The eternal existence or succession of finite beings, in the preceding eternity, is as reconcileable to the attributes, perfection, and providence of God, as that they should be immortal, or capable of a subsequent eternal duration, which we believe with respect to the souls of mankind. Nor is the eternal contem-

plation, creation, or eternal formation, and consequently an eternal existence or succession of finite beings, as they may respect the antecedent eternity, at all more contradictory or impossible with God, than the immortality of the human soul, or the eternal perpetuation or succession of finite beings, as they may respect the subsequent eternity; inasmuch as self-existent, eternal, and infinite perfection is eternally the same, and may and must have been equally exerted eternally; referring to one entire eternity, without beginning or end: if this can be doubted, is it possible to conceive that God ever existed *without* a creation? that he existed in a complete vacuum? The eternal creation and providence of God is the necessary result of his eternal existence and activity; for, as certain as there is a God, he is eternally and infinitely perfect and complete, whatever our ignorant apprehensions and reasonings on this divine subject may be.

An eternal series or succession in Nature is as reconcileable to our understandings, as the eternal existence of Nature, or the eternal existence of a God; so that we may as well dispute against any eternal existence what-

ever, as against an eternal succession; for if one may be, the other is possible, whether we can comprehend them or not. The manner of these infinite calculations is to us incomprehensible, but not contradictory, for we cannot understand that to be a contradiction, which is to us incomprehensible.

Finally, as there could be no God without a Providence, and no Providence without intelligent beings, on whom only it could be exercised; therefore, inasmuch as there is a God, finite intelligences may, and I think must, have been interspersed through the creation and providence of God co-eternal with his existence. But as to premised successive creation, or a progressive one, consisting of local parts, which, collectively considered, would make but a local whole, it could not be of the creation and providence of God; for this reason, that by our mathematical calculations we could comprise it, and therefore it could be but finite, which would be infinitely inadequate to the providence of an absolutely perfect and infinite Being.

Section 3.

Of the Eternity and Infinity of Divine Providence.

When we consider our solar system; the planets attracted by their fiery centre, and moving in their several orbits, with regular, majestic, and periodical revolutions; we are charmed at the prospect and contemplation of those worlds of motion, and adore the wisdom and the power by which they are attracted, and their velocity regulated and perpetuated. And when we reflect that the blessings of life are derived from and dependent on the properties, qualities, constructions, proportions, and movements of that stupendous machine, we gratefully acknowledge the divine beneficence. When we extend our thoughts (through our external sensations) to the vast regions of the starry heavens, we are lost in the immensity of God's works: some stars appear fair and

luminous, and others scarcely discernible to the eye; which by the help of glasses make a brilliant appearance, bringing the knowledge of others far remote within the verge of our feeble discoveries, which merely by the eye could not have been discerned or distinguished. These discoveries of the works of God, naturally prompt the inquisitive mind to conclude that the author of this astonishing part of creation, which is displayed to our view, has still extended his creation; so that if it were possible, that any of us could be transported to the farthest extended star, which is perceptible to us here, we should from thence survey worlds as distant from that, as that is from this, and so on ad infinitum.

Furthermore, it is altogether reasonable to conclude, that the heavenly bodies, otherwise worlds, which move or are situate within the circle of our knowledge, as well as all others throughout immensity, are all of them inhabited by intelligent agents; however different their sensations or manner of receiving or communicating their ideas may be from ours, or however different from one another. For why would it not have been as wise or as consis-

tent with the perfections which we adore in God, to have neglected giving being to intelligences in this world, as in those other worlds, interspersed with ether of various qualities in his immense creation; and inasmuch as this world is thus replenished, we may with the highest rational certainty infer, that as God has given us to rejoice and adore him for our being, he has acted consistent with his goodness, in the display of his providence throughout the universality of worlds.

To suppose that God Almighty had confined his goodness to this world, to the exclusion of all others, is similar to the idle fancies of some individuals in this world, that they and those of their communion or faith, are the favorites of heaven exclusively: but these are narrow and bigotted conceptions, which are degrading to a rational nature, and utterly unworthy of God, of whom we should form the most exalted ideas. Neither could there be any display of goodness, or of any of the moral perfections of God, merely in repleting immensity with a stupid creation of elements, or sluggish, senseless, incogitative matter, which by Nature may be supposed to be incapable of sensation, reflection, and enjoy-

ment: undoubtedly elements and material composition were designed by God to subserve rational beings, by constituting or supporting them in their respective modes of existence, in this or those other numerous worlds.

There may be, in God's boundless empire of Nature and Providence, as many different sorts of modified sensation, as there are different worlds and temperatures in immensity; or at least sensation may more or less vary; but whether sensations agree in any or many respects, or not, or whether they agree with ours, or, if in any part, how far, are matters unknown to us: but that there are intelligent orders of beings, interspersed through the creation of God, is a matter of the highest degree of rational certainty of any thing that falls short of mathematical demonstration. For if this is the only world that is replenished with life and reason, it includes the whole circumference of God's providence; for there would be no display of wisdom or goodness, merely in governing rude elements and senseless matter; nor could there be any valuable end proposed by such a supposed government, or any happiness, instruction, or subserviency

to being in general, or any reason assigned why such a creation should have had the divine approbation; and consequently we may be morally certain that rational beings are interspersed co-extensive with the creation of God.

Although the various orders of intelligences throughout infinitude, differ ever so much in their manner of sensation, and consequently in their manner of communicating or receiving ideas, yet reason and consciousness must be the same in all; but not the same with respect to the various objects of the several worlds, though in nature the same. For instance, a person born blind, cannot possibly have an idea of colours, though his sensibility of sound and feeling may be as acute as ours; and since there are such a variety of modes of sensation in this world, how vastly numerous may we apprehend them to be in immensity. By pondering on these things, we shall soon feel the insufficiency of our imagination, to conceive the immense possibility of the variety of the modes of sensation, and the means of intercourse of cogitative beings. It may be objected, that a man cannot subsist in the sun;

but does it follow from thence, that God can not or has not constituted a nature peculiar to that fiery region, and caused it to be as natural and necessary for it to suck in and breathe out flames of fire, as it is in us to do the like in air?

Numerous are the kinds of aquatic animals, which can no otherwise subsist but in the water, in which other animals would perish, (amphibious ones excepted;) while others in a variety of forms, either swifter or slower, move on the surface of the earth, or wing the air. Of these there are sundry kinds, which during the season of the winter live without food; and many of the insect tribe, which are really possessed of animal life, remain frozen, till they are let loose by the kind influence of the sun, when they again assume their wonted animal life; and if animal life may differ so much in the same world, what inconceivable variety may be possible in worlds innumerable, as applicable to mental, cogitative, and organized beings? Certain it is, that any supposed obstructions concerning the quality or temperature of any or all of those worlds, could not have been any bar in

the way of God Almighty, with regard to his replenishing his universal creation with moral agents. The unlimited perfection of God, could perfectly well adapt every part of his creation to the designs of whatever rank or species of constituted beings, his godlike wisdom and goodness saw fit to impart existence to; so that, as there is no deficiency of absolute perfection in God, it is rationally demonstrative that the immense creation is replenished with rational agents, and that it has been eternally so, and that the display of divine goodness must have been as perfect and complete in the antecedent, as it is possible to be in the subsequent eternity.

When we pursue the study of Nature deeply, we are certain to be lost in the immensity of the works and wisdom of God: we may nevertheless in a varicty of things discern their fitness, happy tendency, and sustaining quality in respect to us; from all which, as rational and contemplative beings, we are prompted to infer, that God is universally uniform and consistent in his infinitude of creation and providence, although we cannot comprehend all that consistency, by reason of infirmity; yet we are morally sure, that of all pos-

sible plans, infinite wisdom must have eternally adopted the best, and infinite goodness have approved it, and infinite power have perfected it. And as the good of being in general, must have been the ultimate end of God in his creation and government of his creatures, his omniscience could not fail to have it always present in his view. Universal Nature must therefore be ultimately attracted to this single point, and infinite perfection must have eternally displayed itself in creation and providence. From hence we may infer, that God is as eternal and infinite in his goodness, as his self-existent and perfect Nature is omnipotently great.

Section 4.

The Providence of God does not interfere with the Agency of Man.

Mankind are more or less apt to confound their ideas of Divine Providence, with the ac-

tions or agency of man, which ought to be considered distinctly, inasmuch as they are not one and the same; the former is the agency of God, by the intervention of the operations of Nature, and the latter the agency of man. The Providence of God supports the universe, and enables rational agents to act in certain limited spheres, with a derived freedom, for otherwise it could not be the agency of man, but of God. So likewise in our notions of the infinity of God, we ought to make a distinction between the essence and his creation. The infinity of the Divine Nature does not include all things, though it includes all possible perfection; if it included all things, it would include all imperfections also, which is inadmissible, nor does the Providence of God include all manner of actions or agencies; it does not include the actions of free and accountable agents, for that they are more or less imperfect and sinful, though his Providence sustains their power of agency; for God cannot controul the actions of free beings, since, if he did, it would be a contradiction to their being free. Necessity and freedom are, in the diversity of their natures, diametrically oppos-

ed to each other; for which reason we cannot in truth be said to act necessarily and freely in the same actions at the same time, any more than we can exist and not exist at the same time; nor is it possible for omnipotence itself to effect these or such like contradictions, as they are attended with impossibilities in their own nature.

All matter which we have any conception of, is governed by the Almighty influence of fate, in its various and extensive operations, and well it is that it is thus regulated and made subservient to rational nature. The natural palpitation of the heart, the beating of the pulse, and gravitation of our bodies, with the other laws of our animal nature, are as mechanical as the movements of our solar system; every thing therefore in the universe is subject to the laws of fate, except the actions or exertions of moral beings only, which are by nature free, and which by intuition we know to be so, without argumentative demonstration to prove it, the knowledge of it being essential to all intelligent natures; and all the difficulties which have been started against its reality have been owing to the weakness of

our reasonings. It is in consequence of this intuitive uncertainty, that we are free, that our consciences acquit or condemn us in all our actions and deportment of life; and from this consciousness of liberty result all our mental happiness and misery, praise and blame; and from which we deduce all our notions of virtue and vice, and of accountability. But when we essay to investigate the liberty of the will, or the intrinsic nature of freedom, or wherein it consists, we are apt to be more or less confounded or embarrassed with the laws of fate, with which we are closely surrounded; and, for want of skill to distinguish liberty from compulsion, involve it (in our mistaken notions) with the operations of those mechanical laws; and so finally draw irregular inferences against the reality of it; concluding that mind as well as matter is under the compulsive influence of fate; though at the same time, such a conclusion is diametrically opposite to our intuitive certainty of the contrary. And after all, we cannot but feel ourselves guilty, or not guilty, according to the prescriptions of our own consciences, and are mentally happy or miserable on the presumption of our intuitive

knowledge of the freedom of our agency, which never fails to frustrate all our unphilosophical theory which militates against it. For the consciousness of liberty, with which our understandings are impressed by intuition, is natural and true, and will have its effects on our consciences, in spite of our theoretical speculations of the destiny of our actions. The freedom of our actions, from which virtue and vice became possible in the nature of man, was implanted in our minds coeval with the exercise of reason, or the knowledge of moral good and evil; and though our reasonings on this important subject may be too much tinctured with the fatality of things about us, and our conclusions be more or less faulty and erroneous, yet our intuition of the reality of our liberty cannot be a deception, for it is the invariable voice of all rational nature, that must have had the sanction of divinity, intuitively promulgated to rational nature universally, which lays the foundation of free-agency, and consequently of accountability, at the supreme bar of God, or the vicegerency of our own consciences; for it is extremely absurd to common sense, to suppose that

necessary beings should be commended or discommended, punished or rewarded, for their destined or passive actions. Had it been, in the nature of things, possible for God to have made probationary moral agents act necessarily, undoubtedly they would have been restrained from wickedness, and mechanically moved to the practice of that which we now call virtue, (though it would lose its nature if subjected to the laws of fate,) and they would have been made mechanically happy, which would have prevented the confusions and disorders of the moral world, and the miseries which have ensued in consequence thereof; but it was in the nature of things impossible, for God to have constituted a probationary rational nature exclusive of liberty; which essentially and necessarily results from such a nature, and is congenial with it, so that the one cannot exist without the other; in consequence whereof moral evil became possible, and found its way into this world, merely through the vicious agency of man, which could not have been, if God had not permitted man to be a free agent

The essence of thinking beings, and their manner of acting, is essentially distinct from all and every part of the universe besides, and every simile or comparison which we draw from other beings serves only to confound or perplex a just arrangement of ideas of our exalted intelligent nature, and the superlative manner of its exertions or operations, which we depreciate by deducing its character of nature or action, from matter, figure, and motion, with their various modifications, either animate or inanimate; though it is very natural to represent the liberty of the mind by external analogies. An American Indian, being asked by one of the missionaries for propagating the gospel, what his soul was, gave for answer, "It is my think." This was both laconic and pertinent; and with respect to our liberty, it is impossible for us to obtain a greater certainty that we are free agents, than that which we naturally derive from the consciousness of it. So that the greatest philosopher, and the humble and unlearned peasant, together with the savage in the wilderness, are in this respect on a level, and equal in the eye of an impartial God, being each of them con-

scious that he is free: and from this sentiment it is, that we blame ourselves and our species, when we or they depart from the conduct of reason.

CHAPTER III.

Section 1.

The Doctrine of the infinite Evil of Sin confuted.

That God is infinitely good in the eternal displays of his providence, must be admitted by all, from which it is right to infer that there cannot be an infinite evil in the universe, inasmuch as it would be incompatible with infinite good; yet there are many, who imbibe the doctrine of the infinite evil of sin; and the propositions on which they found their argu-

ments in its support, are, that the greatness of sin, or adequateness of its punishment, is not to be measured, or its viciousness ascertained, by the capacity and circumstances of the offender, but by the capacity and dignity of the being against whom the offence is committed: then every transgression being against the authority and law of God, is therefore against God; and as God is infinite, sin is an infinite evil; hence they infer the infinite and vindictive wrath of God against sinners, and his justice in deeming them, as some say, to infinite, and as others say, to eternal misery; the one without degree or measure, and the other without end of duration.

Now, if we were to admit, that the transgressions or sins of mankind are to be estimated, as to their heinousness, by the dignity and infinity of the divine nature, it would follow, that all sins are equal, which would confound all our notions of the degrees or aggravations of sins; so that the sin would be the same to kill my neighbour, as it would be to kill his horse. For the divine nature, by this proposition, being the rule by which man's

sin is to be estimated, and, being always the same, there could be no degrees in sin or guilt, any more than there are degrees of perfection in God, whom we all admit to be infinite, and who for that very reason cannot admit of any degrees of amplification. Therefore, as certain as there are degrees in sin, the infinity of the divine nature cannot be the standard whereby it is to be ascertained; which single consideration is a sufficient confutation of the doctrine of the infinite evil of sin, as predicated on that proposition; inasmuch as none are so stupid as not to discern that there are degrees and aggravations in sin.

Though there is one and but one infinite good, which is God, and there can be no dispute, but that God judges and approves or disapproves of all things and beings, and agencies of beings, as in truth they are, or, in other words, judges of every thing, as being what it is; but to judge a finite evil to be infinite, would be infinitely erroneous and disproportionable; for so certain as there is a distinction between infinity and finitude, so certain finite sinful agency cannot be infinitely evil, or, in other words, finite offences cannot be infinite.

We will therefore dismiss the doctrine of the infinite evil of sin with this observation, that as no mere creature can suffer an infinitude of misery or punishment, it is therefore incompatible with the wisdom of God, so far to capacitate creatures to sin, as, in his constitution of things, to preclude himself from adequately punishing them. But, though we may rationally presume so much, it would be in the highest degree presumptuous for finite capacities to say what degree of punishment will be inflicted on the wicked—it is not given to man to know---but we may reasonably conclude, that the punishment will be adequate to the offence, and will effect the ultimate purposes of God's providence.

Section 2.

The Moral Government of God incompatible with eternal Punishment.

HAVING considered the doctrine of the infinite evil of sin, we proceed to the consideration of that of eternal damnation.

Mankind in general seem to be evidently impressed with a sense and strong expectation of judgment to come, after life is ended; wherein the disorders, injustice, and wickedness, which have been acted by rational agents, shall be fully and righteously adjusted, and the delinquents punished; and that such who obey the laws of reason, or moral rectitude, and the precepts of their Divine Monitor, their conscience, may be rewarded according to their works: this impression is so general with all denominations and sectaries of men, that it is rather the intuition of nature, than the effect of

mere tradition. It is nevertheless to be considered, that the doctrine of accountability and judgment to come has not gone so far as to determine, whether the incorrigible sinner, from the close of human life, shall be everlastingly debarred from reformation and repentance, and precluded from the favor of God or not; but having taught a righteous and just judgment, has left it as the prerogative of God to proportion the rewards of the virtuous, and the punishments of the wicked, with their respective durations, which we find by reason cannot be eternal, and consequently must be temporary: in what degrees, manner, or proportions of intenseness or of duration, we cannot comprehend, but must wait the decision of the righteous Judge, whose omniscience takes cognizance of the thoughts, designs, and actions of his creatures; and whose impartial justice will hold the balance, and extend interchangeable happiness or misery to them, according to their respective merits or demerits, or the virtues or vices of their minds, in certain temporary periods co-extensive with our immortality; and though the judgments of God may be much more severe and terrible

to incorrigible sinners beyond the grave, than such as can be inflicted or conceived in this life; yet we may, by reasoning from the wisdom and goodness of God, and the nature and capacity of the human mind, determine, that its happiness or misery cannot be perpetual and eternal.

Accountability, probation, or trial, are in nature inseparably connected with the existence of moral beings, and must eternally remain so to be, for weakness and imperfection is that which subjects all finite rational beings to trial, and is the only ground of the possibility of it. All intelligent agents, therefore, except the most high God, are probationers. Could God have established any creature or race of creatures, in a confirmed and perpetual happiness, by a sovereign act of omnipotence, consistent with his moral perfections, and the nature of intelligent agents themselves, we should have experienced such a confirmation in this life. But a confirmed and perpetual state of blessedness will agree to no character short of God's. This is his prerogative, and it is the absolute perfection of his nature, which confirms him in that state; how prophanely arrogant,

then, in man, to pretend to the same, as arising from the utmost extent of his short probationary perfection in this life.

Moral good is the only source from whence a rational mind can be supplied with a happiness agreeable to the dignity of its nature. It would be impossible for omnipotence itself to make a vicious mind taste the ecstatic felicity of a moral happiness, so long as it may be supposed to be vicious; inasmuch as morality, in the nature of the thing itself, is pre-requisite to such a happiness, without the possession and actual enjoyment of which the mind cannot be mentally happy, or enjoy itself agreeably to its discerning, conscious, and sentimental nature; but must disapprove of its vicious pursuits, or departure from the amiable rules of moral fitness, and feel proportionably guilty and miserable; for miserable the mind must be, until its bias and disposition is turned from moral evil to moral good, which is the same as repentance and restoration. This is the eternal law of nature, respecting the agency and the happiness or misery of imperfect rational nature throughout its never ending agency and trial; and conse-

quently, our eternity will most probably be as much diversified with happiness and misery, as our agency may be supposed to alternately partake of moral good and evil.

It has been owing to improvement in learning that we have progressively advanced from the knowledge and capacity of childhood to that of manhood, and to our improvement in moral good and evil, that has alternately made us happy or unhappy in a mental sense; from hence we infer, that if rational nature, in the world to come, is essentially analogous to what it is in this life, agency and probation will be continued with the immortality of the soul, be the manner of its existence, or of its receiving or communicating ideas what it will.

Furthermore, the doctrine of a future improvement or agency, may be argued from the death of infants and children. None will pretend that they have an opportunity of proficiency in this life; therefore we may infer, that if such a state be requisite to fit and improve their feeble minds for the enjoyment of a rational happiness, agency must be continued to the future state; and, admitting that they are immortal, and that agency is precluded

from the world to come, they would remain children in knowledge eternally; nor could any departed soul, on such a position, expand its rational functions beyond its size of understanding at the time of departing this life, which would make immortality to man a cypher, except as to the perpetuation of their powers of cogitation in a limited circumference; the reflection whereof would be more or less rude and incoherent, which at best would be but a small fund for an eternal contemplation.

But if it be admitted that the souls of mankind, of every age and denomination, will in their futurity be progressive in knowledge, (which must be the case with cogitative beings) then it necessarily follows, that agency and trial proceed hand in hand with it in immediate succession, therefore it seems impossible that there should be a particular day of judgment, in which mankind, or any, or either of them, shall receive their eternal sentence of happiness or misery; for such a sentence is inconsistent with any further trial or agency, and therefore appears inadmissible.

A proficiency in knowledge and virtue in

this life, will most assuredly be our best passport for the higher degrees of happiness, which God in his infinite justice and goodness may assign to us in the world to come: a consideration this, which ought to excite in our minds a constant exercise of our free agency, to improve in knowledge and virtue, under a full and confident hope, that on the completion of this our earthly probationary existence, we may receive the sentence, which Christ told to his disciples would be pronounced upon the just, of "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee lord over many." A sentence, the essence of which is so very probable, that had it been handed down to us from any other less respectable authority, it would still have carried conviction with it.

Section 3.

Human Liberty, Agency, and Accountability, cannot be attended with Eternal Consequences, either good or bad.

From what has been argued, it appears, that mankind, in this life, are not agents of trial for eternity, but that they will eternally remain agents of trial. To suppose that our eternal circumstances will be unalterably fixed in happiness or misery, in consequence of the agency or transactions of this temporary life, is inconsistent with the moral government of God, and the progressive and retrospective knowledge of the human mind. God has not put it in our power to plunge ourselves into eternal woe and perdition from so limited a probation: human liberty is not so extensive, for the term of human life bears no proportion to the eternity succeeding it, so that

there could be no proportion between a momentary agency, or probation, and any supposed eternal consequences of happiness or misery resulting from it. Our liberty consists in our power of agency, and cannot fall short of, or exceed it; for liberty is agency itself, or is that by which agency or action is exerted; therefore, as our agency does not extend to consequences of eternal happiness or misery, the power of that agency, which is liberty, does not. Sufficient it is for virtuous minds, while in this life, that they keep "Consciences void of offence towards God and towards man:" and that, in their commencement in the succeeding state, they have a retrospective knowledge of their agency in this, and retain a consciousness of a well-spent life. Beings thus possessed of a habit of virtue, would enjoy a rational felicity beyond the reach of physical evils, which terminate with life; and in all rational probability, would be advanced in the order of nature to a more exalted and sublime manner of being, knowledge, and action, than at present we can conceive, where no joys or pains can approach, but of the mental kind; in which elevated state virtuous minds

will be able in a clearer and more copious manner than in this life, to contemplate the superlative beauties of moral fitness; and with ecstatic satisfaction enjoy it, notwithstanding imperfection, and consequently agency, proficiency, and trial, of some kind or other, must everlastingly continue with finite minds; and if the fallen state of angels is to be credited, how can this argument be doubted?

As to the vicious who have violated the laws of reason and morality, who have lived a life of sin and wickedness, and are at as great a remove from rational happiness, as from moral rectitude, such incorrigible sinners, at their commencing existence in the world of spirits, will undoubtedly have opened to them and will experience a most tremendous scene of horror, self-condemnation, and guilt, with anguish of mind; the more so, as no sensual delights can there (as in this world) divert the mind from its conscious guilt; the clear sense of which will be the more pungent, as the mind in that state will be greatly enlarged, and consequently more capaciously susceptible of sorrow, grief, and conscious woe, from a retrospective reflection of a wicked life;

yet we may reasonably hope and believe that through the wisdom of the divine government, which is goodness, they may in some limited period of duration have a contrition for, and detestation of, sin and vanity, the procuring cause of their punishment, and be reclaimed from viciousness, and restored to virtue and happiness; still, however, liable to transgression and *future misery* in consequence of an imperfect nature, *eternally subject to agency and trial*, and consequently to alternate happiness and misery, which must be the case with all intelligent probationary beings, But after all our researches, the insufficiency of the human understanding, to discover the economy of the divine government over the moral world, is so great, that we can determine but very little about the manner of its rewards and punishments, or of the extent of them; except that they cannot be perpetual or eternal, but will be as temporary and interchangeable, as the vice and virtue of moral agents, otherwise the punishment of the fallen angels must be fabulous. Nevertheless, from the arguments deduced from the wisdom and goodness of God in his creation and providence, we may

with rational certainty conclude, that moral goodness and happiness will ultimately be victorious over sin and misery, which undoubtedly will be more conspicuously so in the future stages of our immortality; so that there will be a far greater plenitude of the former than of the latter, to which the latter is finally made subservient; for otherwise, we could not account for the wisdom and goodness of God in his creation, providence, or moral government.

The endless disproportion between the cogitations and the agency of the human mind, in this momentary life, may, with great propriety, be urged against an everlasting fixedness of the condition of happiness or misery, after this life is ended, merely in consequence of the agency of this. Our conceptions themselves are progressive; we think by succession, and our ideas, in their operations, are numerical, and by nature subject to number; each individual idea has its circumscription, and the whole collectively considered, would make but a limited knowledge; the more inconsiderably so, as it is most probable, that not one hundredth part of our reflections from in-

fancy to old age, is worthy to be denominated knowledge, by reason of their fictitious and incoherent rudeness; so that when we contemplate the endlessness of eternity, our cogitations are lost in its infinitude; for neither numbers, quantity, admeasurement, nor any possible motion or comparison of cogitations, or of things, can possibly co-extend with it; and consequently human liberty, agency, and accountability, in their progressive exertions, can bear no manner of proportion or connection with an eternity of rewards or punishments; for the nature of our liberty, agency, and accountability, is but finite, and therefore can no otherwise operate than by succession, and cannot be attended with eternal consequences, any more than succession itself can comprise eternity. With a well grounded judgment therefore we may determine, that neither the virtues nor vices of human life can be attended with eternal consequences of good and evil; inasmuch as such endless consequences necessarily imply an endless disproportion between them and human agency: but the truth of the matter is, our liberty, and therefore our accountability, cannot exceed the

limits of our cogitations and knowledge; this is the circumference in which our liberty can exercise itself, and this is the boundary of its agency; and although eternal probation is necessarily connected with the eternal existence of finite minds, yet the merits or demerits of an everlasting probation, has its various operations for ever on the mind, existing in the conscience, and causing it to be alternately happy or miserable, in such proportions and periods as nonconformity to moral rectitude, in our eternal probation, will admit.

The policy of human governments has demanded that corporal punishments should be inflicted on the violaters of their laws, to wit, the whip, the halter, the gibbet, and the like. So far as human punishments extend not to the depriving of that life which human power cannot restore, and which belongs to God alone to take in his own good time; so far, I acquiesce in the policy, no farther. From these and from the ideas of physical evils, which are common to us in this life, it seems, that most of mankind form to themselves an arrangement of ideas of the manner of God's punishing incorrigible sinners in the world to come.

The idea of fire and brimstone is, in this part of the world, their main apprehension, to which, they unite the evils of a guilty conscience, inasmuch as mental as well as physical evils, with their divers modes of sufferings, are common to them in this life; but it should be considered that death puts a final end to physical evils; unless our mortal bodies are to be raised and reunited to their respective souls; which, if admitted, they must unavoidably suffer death a second time, and such as may be supposed to be cast into hell-fire, would suffer a second dissolution instantly, unless their resurrection bodies are supposed to be of the salamander kind, and then they would not be the same bodies. Thus a physical suffering, instead of being eternal, would be but for a moment, or at most but temporary; and if we suppose those resurrection bodies will be able to endure fire, it must be likewise supposed, that it would be their proper element, and consequently that they would be as well suited to such a fiery element, as our earthly bodies are to the elements we now enjoy and exist in.

Section 4.

Of Physical Evils.

Physical evils are in nature inseparable from animal life, they commenced existence with it, and are its concomitants through life; so that the same Nature which gives being to the one, gives birth to the other also; the one is not before or after the other, but they are co-existent together, and co-temporaries; and as they began existence in a necessary dependence on each other, so they terminate together in death and dissolution. This is the original order to which animal nature is subjected, as applied to every species of it: the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, the fish of the sea, with reptiles, and all manner of beings, which are possessed of animal life; nor is pain, sickness, or mortality any part of God's

punishment for sin, for all animated nature, rational or irrational, in this world, are equally subject to these physical evils. On the other hand, sensual happiness is no part of the reward of virtue; to reward moral actions with what are deemed the good things of this world, such as a plenty of wine, and a haunch of venison, compared to the bare sustenance of others, would be as inadequate, as to measure a triangle with sound; for virtue and vice pertain to the mind, and their merits or demerits have their just effects on the conscience, as has been before evinced: but animal gratifications are common to the human race indiscriminately, and also to the beasts of the field; and physical evils as promiscuously and universally extend to the whole, so that "there is no knowing good or evil by all that is before us, for all is vanity." It was not among the number of possibles, that animal life should be exempted from mortality; omnipotence itself could not have made it capable of eternalization and indissolubility, for the self-same Nature which constitutes animal life, subjects it to decay and dissolution, so that the one cannot be without the other, any more than

there could be a compact number of mountains without vallies, or that I could exist and not exist at the same time; or that God could effect any other contradiction in nature, all contradictions being equally impossible, inasmuch as they imply an absolute incompatibility with nature and truth, for nature is founded on truth, and the same truth which constitutes mountains makes the vallies at the same time; nor is it possible that they could have a separate existence. The same truth which affirms my existence, denies its negative; so also the same law of nature, which in truth produceth an animal life, and supports it for a season, wears it out, and in its natural course reduces it to its original elements again. The vegetable world also presents us with a constant aspect of productions and dissolutions, and the bustle of elements is beyond all conception; but the dissolution of forms is not the dissolution of matter, or the annihilation of it, or of the creation, which exists in all possible forms and fluxilities; and it is from such physical alterations of the particles of matter, that animal and vegetable life are produced and destroyed; elements afford them

nutrition, and time brings them to maturity, decay, and dissolution; and in all the prolific production of animal life, or the productions of those of a vegetable nature, throughout all, their growth, decay, and dissolution, make no addition or diminution of creation; but eternal Nature continues its never ceasing operations, (though in most respects mysterious to us,) under the unerring guidance of the Providence of God.

Animal nature consists of a regular constitution of a variety of organic parts, which have a particular and necessary dependence on each other, by the mutual assistance whereof the whole is animated. Blood seems to be the source of life, and it is requisite that it have a proper circulation from the heart to the extreme parts of the body, and from thence to the heart again, that it may repeat its temporary rounds through certain arteries and veins, which replenish every minute part with blood and vital heat; but the brain is evidently the seat of sensation, which through the nervous system conveys the animal spirits to every part of the body, imparting to it sensation and motion, constituting it a living machine, which

could never have been produceed, or exercised its respective functions in any other sort of world but this; which is in a constant series of fluxilities, and causeth it to produce food for its inhabitants. An unchangeable world could not admit of production or dissolution, but would be identically the same, which would preclude the existence and nutriment of such sensitive creatures as we are. The nutrition extracted from food by the secret aptitudes of the digesting powers, demands a constant flux and reflux of the particles of matter, which are perpetually incorporating with the body, and supplying the place of the superfluous particles, that are constantly discharging themselves by insensible perspiration: supporting, and at the same time, in its ultimate tendency, destroying animal life. Thus it manifestly appears, that the laws of the world in which we live, and the constitution of the animal nature of man, are all but one uniform arrangement of causes and effects; and as by the course of those laws, animal life is propagated and sustained for a season, so by the operation of the same laws, decay and mortality are the necessary consequences.

CHAPTER IV.

TREATING ON THE IMMORTALITY OF THE HUMAN SOUL.

Section 1.

Of the Aptitudes of Sensation, and of their Subserviency to the Mind.

HAVING considered the Providence of God, as it respects the mortality of the body, we proceed to the consideration of the immortality of the soul; and in order to a clear understanding of this important subject, it is requisite that we fi st speculate on the powers, use, and end of our external sensations, and point out their particular subserviency to the

mind; and secondly, explain the intrinsic difference between them, whereby the latter may exist independent of the former; and thirdly, deduce arguments from the necessary attributes and moral perfections of God, as also from his creation and providence, of the moral certainty of the soul's immortality, or natural eternalization. Human nature is compounded of sensation and reflection: sensation comprehends the body with its five senses, viz. those of feeling, taste, and smelling, (the two latter of which are only a diversity of the modes of feeling,) as also the more extensive senses of seeing and hearing. Reflection comprehends the operation of the mind, and is that which is commonly denominated the soul, with its various modes of exertion; as that of memory, reason, consciousness, judgment, determination, contrivance, invention, and the like, which will be particularly explained and illustrated in due order.

The senses are exquisitely calculated to make discoveries of external objects to the mind, they are the medium through which the mind receives its first notices of things, or mere apprehension of them, without denying, or affirm-

ing any thing concerning them, and it is in, by, or through the instrumentality of the senses only, that the mind of man, in this life, is enabled to form any idea of external objects, or to exert its thinking conscious nature. The instances of persons born deficient in part, as to their senses, will serve to illustrate the subject matter of our inquiry: those who are born blind, can never be taught what colours are, or what we mean by seeing; an idea of colours, or the knowledge of ocular perception, is to them supernatural and impossible; so also respecting those who are born deaf, an idea of sound would to them be equally supernatural; the most harmonious music would to them be as imperceptible, as nonentity is to us, of which they could not form any conception. This we know to be true in fact.

The sense of feeling, with which those of taste and smell are connected, or from which they are produced, being only diverse modes of feeling, are essential to an animal body, and without which it could not be denominated animate, but inanimate; but seeing and hearing are not essential to animation, as it is often destitute of those sensations, so that it is impossible in nature, that we should have an

instance, wherein the mind can possibly be ignorant of the idea of feeling; it is nevertheless as certain that we are beholden to the sense of feeling for our apprehensions of it, as to that of our seeing, for our apprehension of colours, or to our hearing for the apprehension of sound. In consequence of palsies and such like disorders, our sense of feeling has been in part impaired. In some instances, human bodies on one side have been so benumbed, that, on that side, they have been wholly incapable of feeling; such instances have been common in every age and country in the world, which, together with those other experiments of blindness and deafness, evinces the dependency of the mind on its sensorium while in this life.

Whatever external object presents itself to the senses, gives the mind an apprehension of it. To enumerate the diversity and multiplicity of the objects of sense, would be endless, and also needless. The notices or apprehension of things, which are communicated to the mind by the mere aptitude of sensation itself, abstracted from a succession of reflection, or thinking, are what I denominate simple ideas, or perhaps, may be called sensible ideas,

which are excited by the intervention of the senses, between external objects and the mind, and are much the same helps to the mind, as glasses are to the senses, by assisting the natural eye to discover such object, which, without them, the eye could not perceive; and the mind by that means obtains an apprehension of such extended objects, by looking through two mediums, to wit, the eye and the glass; the eye is in this case the first medium, without which the mind could not discern the glass; and the glass the second medium, which enables the eye, and consequently the mind, to discover worlds in the expansion of the heavens, which the mind, through its first medium only, could not explore. It is on such simple sensible ideas, which the mind thus mediately obtains through the instrumentality of its senses, that all our proficiency in knowledge and science is made. There is not one individual apprehension or original simple idea but what the mind receives through its sensory, so that sensation in the order of nature discloses the way and manner of the exertions of cogitative nature. Common conversation, learning, business, and whatever

pertains to the social life is manifestly dependent on it. Those who are taught the art of reading and writing can hold correspondence with one another, though in different quarters of the globe; and by the same means we are enabled to maintain a correspondence of ideas with writers who have been long dead: twenty-four characters or letters, arranged according to certain rules, are capable of making such an impression on the sense of seeing, that, by that sense, the mind of those who read can understand the ideas of those who have written intelligibly. "It is not by any concomitant act of ratiocination that we come to be apprized of the existence and difference of the common objects of sense; but we find them to be existent and different in and by the pure act of sensation itself; we have, in and by this act, such a representation of things made to us, that we apprehend that this is not that, nor one the other. It is true, by reason and reflection, we come to a more complete and particular knowledge of the differences, but we have not our first apprehension of those differences from thence." Though reason and experience,

in a variety of instances, may correct sense; yet independent of it, there could have been no such thing as reasoning or experience among mankind, or any such creature as man, sensation being a part of his nature. There are many modes and customs arbitrarily introduced into learning and arts. It was neither sensation nor reason that pointed out any particular shape, sound, or name, to the twenty-four letters; but these were the effect of contrivance and invention, which are faculties of the mind: nevertheless the mind must have been previously informed through the medium of its senses, of shapes and sounds in general, or it would not have been able to conceive, or to invent shapes or sounds in particular, which might be adapted to answer the designs of communicating or receiving ideas; and thus it is, that sensation in all cases lays the foundation of the exercise of thought and reflection; judgment is no further concerned in such cases, than requiring the figure and size of the letters, and their particular sounds, to be uniform and distinct, and that the characters be properly written; any supposed figure or sound of letters, which

are equally well adapted to the design of giving and receiving ideas, and holding intercourse between intelligent beings, are equally approvable by reason, provided they have obtained common consent and use. The same may be observed of the rules of spelling, and many other parts of learning. Language itself is artificial and arbitrary; for though natural sensation taught all nations to apprehend the common objects of sense alike, yet neither sensation nor reason taught any particular language, and consequently the nations and tribes of the world differ in their speech, though they agree in their sensible apprehensions of external things; but we arbitrarily affix certain ideas to words or sounds, and those who are acquainted with and understand their connection, are linguists, and are able to correspond together.

Words or sounds have no particular ideas connected with them; it is common consent and use, in applying certain ideas uniformly to them, that furnish them with intelligence, some particular sounds which betoken distress or gladness excepted; so that in conversation, when certain sounds, which from

common use have been received into any language, with the ideas annexed to them, move the subtile expanding air, making it vibrate on the ear, they immediately communicate to the mind the intelligence which by art is connected with such sounds: thus too when I feel myself hungry and faint, I think of food; and when thirsty, of drink; I smell the fragance of a rose, and my mind forms an idea of that flower; I hear it thunder, and it represents to my mind the complex idea of a thunder storm; I see a vessel, which excites in my mind an idea of its figure; in fine, all sensible ideas, that ever have been or can be excited in the mind of man, have been and must be communicated by the instrumentality of the senses, and are distinguished from all our other ideas by the manner of our perception; which is merely from the pure aptitude of sensation itself, abstractedly considered from reasoning, collecting, or inferring one thing from another, and which is common to animal nature in general, as well as to the human kind. Sensible ideas of themselves, considered abstractedly from reasoning, could not compre-

hend any thing of a moral nature, nor confer any moral obligation; inasmuch as the knowledge of moral good and evil does not result merely from them: both man and beast enjoy them promiscuously, as they are the result of animation, and do not pertain to the exalted essence of reason.

Section 2.

The intrinsic Difference between Sensation, and the Principle of the Soul, and their distinct Functions.

The human mind is capable of understanding the moral fitness of things in a limited sense. It is capable of reasoning on sensible ideas, by compounding and considering them complexly; it is capable of separating and

considering them abstractedly, or complicatedly, of examining into their connection, proportion, and other properties, of making experiments and essays on many things, and discovering their tendency and subserviency. Our moral notions of things are the result of reasoning on the works of Nature, and of examining into the consequences of things, thereby discerning their ultimate tendency and rational fitness, as it affects being in general. But these extended parts of scientific knowledge do not so readily come within the scope of our understanding, as the common notions of morality, which respect society in its various relations and connections in life. It is not my design to enter into an explanation of these social duties, which are evident to mankind in general, but only to observe, that, though they are so apparent, yet the knowledge of right and wrong, truth and falsehood, with their respective consequences, are discovered by reason only, sensation being altogether inadequate to such discoveries. Invention, contrivance, and arts of various kinds, which have contributed to the service of mankind, such as the liberal arts, sciences, mechan-

ism, manufactures, and the like, originate in the exertions of the mind. The display of these noble faculties evinces that there is a principle in the nature of man, superior to any thing which could be the offspring of mere sensation.

Whatever improvement the mind makes by its reflection, invention, and reasoning upon sensible ideas is the proficiency of intelligence; for sensation is one entire and simple exertion, which does not admit of improvement; but it is the mind which improves upon those original images. The ideas thus deducible from those which we denominate sensible, are vastly more numerous than those original images themselves; inasmuch as they admit of all manner of diversification and refinement. The ideas of natural things are, in their several kinds, capable of being associated together by the mind, as those pertaining to music by themselves, and those that pertain to military discipline, or to any art, science, or manufactory; all of which have their respective associations. But ideas pertaining to moral fitness, are in their nature incapable of association with mere natural ones; for instance, justice with

mere sound, wisdom with mere personal beauty, a good conscience with a good coat, or with any unthinking or unconscious being. For as ideas of natural things in their respective classes, are capable of, and naturally associate together by reason of their natural fitness and utility; so ideas of moral fitness, naturally associate and connect together. When from a deduction of reasoning on the works of Nature, or from any particular part of them, we draw an inference of God's goodness to man, as by reasoning on the ultimate tendency of the natural world to subserve the moral, we deduce a moral inference from elementary and material things, which we denominate the progressive act of ratiocination; and inasmuch as in and by the providence of God, "We live, move, and have our being," the inferences of Divine goodness might be as numerous as the mind of man can could conceive; yet but a very small part of the Divine benignity can be comprehended by our finite understandings. The mind being thus able to deduce moral ideas from external things, which we denominate sensible ideas, is capable of compounding or

forming a complex idea of a number of them; can add to or subtract from such complex idea, can form propositions, make deductions and final consequences, and thus proceed in argumentation on moral as well as other subjects, to the extent of its capaciousness. Was it not for memory, which is a faculty of the soul, mankind must have remained children in knowledge to this day, inasmuch as without it they could gain nothing by experience, which would reduce human nature so low, that a man would as likely burn his fingers in a candle as a child, or would be brought to a level with the brute creation; as in this case, experiments could not be instructive, nor could we, on this position of the debility of memory, retain so much as one simple idea, but that which may be supposed to be in the present tense; what we could comprehend for the time being, would comprise the total of our knowledge, for, without memory, it would be impossible for us to argue and infer one thing from another, or to exercise reason. So also, if the mind had the exercise of memory, but no judgment, it could not draw any consequences,

or come to any conclusion in those things, which may be supposed to be retained in the memory; so that to remember in such circumstances as this, would be to no purpose, nor answer any wise or valuable end; and supposing the mind to have the faculty of memory and judgment, yet, if it had no will or power to put the resolutions of the judgment into execution or action, the mind in such a condition would be able to reflect, remember, reason, and judge of things, but all to no wise end, nor to serve any purpose of agency or design worthy of a rational creature, being under an invincible confinement and restraint, for want of a power to execute the decrees of the judgment: but experience assures us that we are free, and that it is through the medium of the senses, that the mind is furnished with its first notices of things, or sensible ideas; that it is able to reflect, remember, and judge of things, has a power of willing, or of agency, and in fact, is able to exert itself in a great variety of actions and conduct. The mind is but one entire, pure, or simple essence; it is the same intelligent principle which receives sensible ideas, and

retains those perceptions in memory; it is the same principle which reflects and reasons upon those ideas thus retained in itself, that exerts its powers of ratiocination to the extent of the mind's capaciousness, and which wills or controuls its own actions. All the different operations, agencies, or exertions of the mind, be they what they will, are only the various exertions of the same principle; it is therefore the same soul that receives the perception of external objects, or sensible ideas, which reflects upon them, and which remembers, reasons, and infers one thing from another, draws conclusions, judges and exerts itself, actuates the body, and does every thing which belongs to thinking; liberty therefore is essential to intelligent beings, notwithstanding the many metaphysical arguments which have been advanced to overthrow it.

To point out the exact boundaries between sensation and reflection, or the precise functions of the one and of the other, and clearly to discern where the aptitude of sensation ends, and reflection begins, in the apprehension of mere simple ideas, is curiously nice, or impossible, but it does not follow from hence,

that there is no distinction between them, or, which is the same thing, between the body and the mind, any more than that there is no such thing as day and night, because we oftentimes differ in opinion concerning the discovery of the precise dawn of daylight, or because we, more or less, are at a loss to prefix in our minds the exact moment when it becomes visible; or that there is no distinction between truth and falsehood, because that, in intricate and perplexed matters, we do not comprehend their respective limitations. When the dawn of day becomes apparent, we clearly distinguish the day from the night, though we may have been at a loss about the exact moment when it dawned; and truth and falsehood are distinguishable by us in plain cases; so also concerning sensation, and the reflections or mere cogitations of the mind, in the production of sensible ideas, it may be difficult or impossible for us to understand the exact proportion which sensation and reflection in the order of nature, have contributed towards the production of those images, from which all our knowledge of things in general are predicated. We may nevertheless, for certainty, determine

that sensation is not reflection, but that they are essentially and intrinsically different from each other. It is natural for the mind to reflect, reason, and philosophise upon the works of Nature, as it is for sensation to represent to the mind the first and simple perception of them. All sorts of ratiocination, contrivance, invention, and arts, are intrinsically distinct exertions from the aptitude of sensation, and pertain to a more exalted principle.

The terraqueous globe, with its productions, is evidently designed by the Creator, to subserve animal life, and the body to subserve the soul, and in fine that all matter, variously endowed, was made subservient to rational beings, and as *sensation* is the *production* of *matter* operating on the organs of animated beings, it is subjected to physical evils, which have already been considered.

Sensation, abstractedly considered from a superior principle, could never have given us any possible apprehension of the being and Providence of God, which could never have been known but by reasoning from effects to their cause; for the eternal cause of all things is not corporeal, and therefore cannot

come within the notice of our senses, but must be sought by reasoning; for it is as much out of the power of sensation to make that discovery, as it would be out of the power of the mind to form ideas of colours, or sound, in the instances of persons born blind or deaf. Nor could mere sensation have taught us the distinction between truth and falsehood, right and wrong, good and evil; to understand those distinctions would require the exercise of reason, nor could sensation, abstractedly considered, give us the least notion of a state of immortality; for sensation terminates at death, and if there was not an intrinsic and essential difference between soul and body, both would be destroyed by death; and for want of making a just distinction between soul and body, some have been misled into an apprehension of the gloomy prospect of annihilation at death.

Section 3.

Of the Providence of God, as it respects the important Subject of the Immortality of the Soul.

Death is called the king of terrors; certainly it is a solemn change, and to visible appearance, the destruction of the whole man; but it should be considered, that it is not at all beyond the power or goodness of God, to invest the soul at the death of the body, with new modes of sensation, entirely diverse from those we are at present united to; and which, while we are in this life, we cannot conceive, provided it be requisite, in order to our immortality or mode of future existence; but we are so imperfect with respect to our speculations on the manner of existence of unembodied souls, that we know not whether it will be necessary or not, that departed souls

should be united to any sort of sensorium at all when they are separated from the body by death; they may, for aught we know, be suited without any sensitive vehicle to their immortal state, and manner of existence. All that we know, is, that all possible power and goodness belong to God, so that there can be no rational doubt or disbelief, but that the God, who made us, has constituted our souls, so that they will survive their bodies, and exist in such a manner, as is of all others the best for them, (consistent with that of the scale of being in general,) and most worthy of the perfection of God, although he has not seen fit to indulge us with the knowledge of it. The Providence of God has been abundantly and conspicuously displayed towards us in this life, on which we may, with great confidence, build our darling and important hope of immortality. Ungrateful and foolish must it be for rational beings, in possession of existence, and surrounded with a kind and Almighty Providence, to distrust the Author thereof, concerning their futurity, because they cannot comprehend the mode or manner of their succeeding and progressive existence.

While we consider the eternity and infinity of God, and of his creation and providence, and that his ultimate design, in the whole, must have been to exalt and make happy the moral world; that human life is but a presage and pre-requisite existence for an introduction into another more dignified in the order of being; those vain and idle distrusts of our immortality will vanish, and our minds will be established in a firm reliance on God, that in the order of Nature and course of his Providence, (however inconceivable to us,) he has secured our immortality. It is in vain for us, while in this life, to expect to understand the manner of our future existence, or how mental beings, devoid of sensitive vehicles, or of such sort of sensations as ours, exert thought and reflection on new subjects in a new world, or how they interchangeably communicate intelligence to one another. These matters cannot be known to us, so long as we are dependent on our present senses for the production of our knowledge; for our present organized sensations are inadequate to such discoveries; they are calculated for this world only, in which they admirably well

answer their design, use, and end; but are unequal to the task of giving our minds any images or representations of things beyond the grave, their common repository.

Inconsiderate it is for mankind to object to the doctrine of immortality, because they cannot conceive such a state, or how it will be: this is deducing an objection, not from reason or argument, but from mere ignorance. I do not pretend to communicate the knowledge of the manner of it; but I shall proceed to collect rational arguments, from the perfections, creation, and providence of God, and particularly from the intrinsic nature of the soul, to evince its immortality. But objectors to this doctrine demand sensible or ocular demonstrations for it, which cannot be had. "For eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the" mind "of man to conceive" an idea of the manner of it. A man born blind, might with the same propriety, or rather impropriety, object to the reality of colours, or of sight, and pledge his ignorance for the proof of it, as we may object to the doctrine of immortality, because we cannot, in this life, and through the medium

of our sensorium, apprehend the manner of our succeeding existence; the reality of which depends not on the weakness of our reasonings, or the inadequateness or impropriety of our present sensations, to discover the state, condition, or manner of it; but it depends altogether on God, and on his eternalizing the nature of cogitative and intellectual beings or not. While we are in this life we should adore God, and with gratitude confide in the ultimate goodness of his Providence, to disclose to our minds the mysterious objects and manner of the world to come, at death; for then, and not till then, shall we need that knowledge. Undoubtedly our Creator wisely limited the objects of our perception to the world wherein we live, and restricted our simple ideas to the objects of sense, on which we are necessitated to superstruct all our knowledge of things in general. Thus it is, that our Creator in the order of the succession of causes has made use of those mere simple images of external things, to disclose to our understandings, whatever he sees fit to gratify us with the knowledge or perception of, while in this life; therefore all our knowledge of

things universally, while in this life, must be deduced from the present order of human nature, and the world we live in, from which we attempt to illustrate the doctrine of immortality.

Ideas once taken or conceived by the mind through the medium of its senses, and retained in the memory, are capable of being reviewed, corrected, improved, and diversified in all possible methods of thinking and argumentation, although the external objects which excited the images, from whence those argumentative arrangements originated, may have been absent for a succession of years; for instance, I may have retained the ideas or arguments of an author, whom I read twenty years ago, though I may not have read the book or heard of it since; so I may retain a remembrance of sounds, which I heard as long since, and be able to make new observations or argumentations thereon; so likewise for instances wherein persons have been deprived or have lost their senses of seeing or hearing, or both; yet the mind, having once received ideas through those senses, in the time of their use-

fulness, is able to reflect and reason on their original images, the same as though it had never been deprived of those sensations, but could never, after the deprivation of its senses of seeing or hearing, receive any new ideas of either seeing or hearing, but would be restricted to those images of seeing or hearing, which were apprehended by the mind, previous to its loss of those senses, for its new and progressive compositions, or modifications of those original ideas, and would retain the knowledge and consciousness of the state of things made perceptible to them through the medium of those senses of seeing and hearing, for ever after the loss of them, or at least during the period of life; which we know to be true in fact. From all which we may with propriety infer, that the human soul, allowing it a separate state of existence, must necessarily retain a remembrance or consciousness of this world and of its agency or conduct in it, though the body, the *instrument of sensation*, through which medium the soul, during the period of life, was enabled to apprehend its simple sensible ideas, be totally destroyed by death.

Admitting that the soul survives after death, and is by nature immortal; and also that the mode of its future existence is different from its manner of existence in this world; that death is a relief from carnality and physical evil, and shall raise departed spirits to a rank or condition in the order of being, superior to their survivors on earth; it will follow of necessary consequence, that those, who are survivors, could form no manner of conception of such an elevated kind of existence, as it would be supernatural to human conception in this compounded nature, consisting of sensation and reflection.

To suppose, that while we are in this state of probation, we could comprehend the manner of that which is beyond death, would be the same as to suppose that both states are alike; and that after death we shall exist in the same manner as we do here; and thus inadvertently, in idea, carry our mortality with us into the next state, and conceive of acting much the same as at present, which mode of existence would be subject to a second death, incompatible with our cheering hope of immortality; therefore,

as certain as our souls are immortal, the manner of our immortality cannot be understood by us in this life. Were it possible for us in this life to break in upon the order of being, and perceive and understand the felicities and glorious manner of existence in the world to come, it could not fail to embitter all our enjoyments, and make us discontented and miserable from the anticipation of a felicity beyond our condition in the order of beings, and wholly disqualify us to act in our several stations and relations in the present life; from whence we may learn the wisdom and goodness of God, in concealing from us, in this state, the ecstatic blessedness which virtuous souls will be qualified for, and be admitted to partake of in the next.

It is not rational to expect that any new laws of Nature will take place upon our commencing existence in a future state ; though the manner of that state, and our existence in it, will be new to us; inasmuch as the external order of nature has not as yet brought us into those future circumstances, and as our first perception of things in this world are new

to us, so, in the same sense, the manner of our future state, and of our existence in it, will be new; there will be an entire change of the mode of our perception, but the identity of our souls never can be changed; for the principle of the mind of A. and its individual consciousness, can never be the individual or identical principle of the mind and consciousness of B.; the same will hold equally true with respect to all rational beings, for there are as many individual souls as there are separate or distinct cogitative principles or essences.

Were we to admit that two individual and distinct minds were possessed of the same consciousness (except as to their individuality of essence, which is not possible,) they would not be, in consequence thereof, the same mind, any more than though their whole consciousnesses were dissimilar; for likeness is not sameness, any more than unlikeness is so; but reason and consciousness will certainly remain the same, as to nature and kind, in all possible modes of existence; though the manner of perception, or the objects of it, may be liable to inconceivable alterations and diver-

sity, notwithstanding thinking beings are essentially the same; for if they reflect and reason, they are conscious they do so, be they in what state or manner of existence they will; or be the objects of reflection and consciousness what they will: our present five senses are diverse in their manner of communicating the notices of external objects to the mind; so that in this life, we experience the advantage of a diversity in the mode of sensation, as seeing is not hearing. We may from hence infer the possibility of our minds forming ideas through the medium of other senses, or such a medium as at present we can have no conception of; for reasoning, which is essential to the exercise of a rational soul, is but a succession of thinking, and comparing ideas together, and drawing conclusions from certain premises, previously laid down in the mind; nor is the manner or the objects of perception particularly essential to reasoning; for if the mind has an apprehension of things, it can reason thereon, be the manner of those apprehensions what it will, or in what world it will; for as it is not essential to mere creation to occupy any particular form

though it must exist in some form or other, so any particular mode of existence or apprehension is not essential to the soul, though it must likewise exist in some state or other, and be supplied with some sort of apprehension or other, on which it may found its reasonings, and superstruct its knowledge and happiness.

From the foregoing observations, it does not appear any way contradictory to the order of Nature, as far as we are acquainted with it, that our souls should survive our bodies, and that they are by nature immortal, and capable of existing in a mode and manner very different from this world, and from our manner of existence and conversation in it, and of which at present, we can form no right conception: nor that in our progressive state, or condition of being and action, we should retain a remembrance, and consequently a consciousness, that we are the same individual intelligent beings, who inhabited and actuated our respective bodies while in this life; and also a consciousness of our previous manner of existence, and of our deportment or agency in moral good and evil. For if this is

not the case, our respective proficiencies in moral good and evil, in this stage of action, cannot be attended with consequences of conscious mental happiness or misery, in our commencing a succeeding existence; for, to be intelligently or mentally happy or miserable, without a consciousness of it, is contradictory and impossible. So that if, in our progressive state of being and action, we be not conscious of what we have done and transacted in this world, God, in his order of Nature, (which is the same as his Providence,) could not reward or punish man in his future state, for his virtuous or vicious agencies in this, which would be incompatible with the divine administration of justice and goodness.

We must therefore admit, that if our souls have a future existence, we must then have a consciousness, not only of our identity of being, but also of our demeanour in this life; and thus by a retrospective consciousness, begin a condition of mental felicity, or mental pungent woe, according to our works; which an awakened conscience, and the justice of God will disclose, at that important and awful crisis of our unembodied and incomprehensible existence.

Animal nature, as has been before observed, consists of a regular constitution of a variety of organic parts, all of which have a necessary dependence on one another. Blood is the source of life, and in order to preserve the machine, and perpetuate its functions, it is requisite that it should have a due circulation from the heart to the extreme parts of the body, to replenish it with homogeneous particles, vital heat, and vigour; from thence returning to the heart, and that it may repeat its temporary rounds, certain arteries and veins have been wisely constructed for that purpose. But the brain is evidently the seat of sensation, which through the nerves conveys the animal spirits to every part of the body, qualifying it with sensation and elastic motion, which is of an exquisite, subtile, etherial, and electrical quality, and almost instantaneous in its operation, and in which the mind takes its residence in this life. This sensorium, through which we acquire ideas of external objects, can form no conception of other minds, or of mere mental beings, except by the application of their external sensation to ours, or by language either oral or written, of which we understand

the signs; nor can our gross sensations represent the perception of our own minds to ourselves. The knowledge therefore of our cogitative nature is not compounded of sensible ideas, which are deduced mediately from material beings; but the knowledge which mental beings have of their own existence, is from their consciousness of being, reflection, and ratiocination, together with other mental exertions; which are unobservable, as well by our own sensations as by our neighbours; inasmuch as intellectual beings are imperceptible to the aptitudes of sensation; for they are neither long nor short, round nor square, black nor white, nor do they occupy space as material beings do; or consist of such a quality, on which our sensations can operate; but, as has been observed, the mind is conscious of itself, and of its own agency, though it could not have had any apprehension of external objects independent of sensation. As sensation is the result of the operation of matter on the organs of animated beings, its aptitudes are restricted to material existences, and therefore can make no discoveries of mere cogitative beings, whether that of our own souls, or

of the souls of others; for our own minds are as imperceptible by our own sensations, as that of a pure angel may be supposed to be; which I presume will be conceded by the contemplative, who examine into matters of fact, collectable from their own experience.

That our minds reflect, remember, reason, and judge of things, and are able to reconsider them, and make refinements and proficiencies upon their own reasonings, is a fact which every day's experience will confirm. The soul has a power, not only to exert its mental faculties, but to actuate its organized body into spontaneous motion, to answer the purposes of wisdom, contrivance, and design; which are effects too stupendous to arise out of mere matter, figure, and motion, with their effects and combinations: and which must therefore be ascribed to a superior principle, that is intrinsically distinct from matter, and which may continue to exist when the body is destroyed by death, and is no longer a suitable habitation or receptacle for it.

The body itself, notwithstanding its fluctuating and perishable nature, does not present us with any idea of annihilation; its final dis-

solution and return to its original elements is no more than a dissolution of the form and construction of the particles, with their cohesive and animal aptitudes and combinations, and by no means a dissolution or annihilation of matter; for no particular form is essential to the existence of matter, though it is essential to the existence of animal life; but mere matter exists in all possible forms and fluxilities.

And as in nature, there is no annihilation of matter, as such, it is a strong argument in favor of the immortality of rational beings; inasmuch as they are not liable to such physical changes, as animal bodies are obnoxious to. Thought and reflection, memory and judgment, invention and design, derive not their essence from the mass of incogitative elements, but are in their own nature immortal; for that which is immaterial is exempted from physical evils, when divested of its connection with matter, and inasmuch as matter universally was created and variously endowed, tempered, and qualified, regulated and governed, (more especially such a part as composes human bodies,) wholly to subserve

thinking and rational beings; and inasmuch as the ultimate end of creation, and the principal design of Providence, must have been to subserve the moral world, by displaying the wisdom, power, and goodness of God to cogitative and intellectual beings, we may be morally certain, that in the order of Nature and course of God's Providence, he has secured to us a never ending existence, and that mind as well as matter will be eternal. For, strangely irrational would be the reverse of the consideration, that the soul, the thinking mind, or immaterial part of man, should be annihilated and lost, while the corrupt or material particles of the human body should eternally remain, though subject to a change of form in the great mass of matter; for human life, abstractedly considered from the reality of immortality, would hardly be desired by the generality of mankind, could they have but a clear understanding of the physical evils of it, and also of the oppressions, abuses, and injustice which is "done under the sun." From the consideration whereof, the reputed wise man "praised the dead more than the living, which are yet

alive." Should we admit that death extinguishes the being of man, what narrow and contracted notions must we consequently entertain of God and his creation? We should be necessitated to deduce an inference of injustice against his Providence, from the unequal distribution of justice in this life, which on a supposition of a future state of being may be remedied. As true as mankind now exist, and are endowed with reason and understanding, and have the power of agency and proficiency in moral good and evil, so true it is, that they must be ultimately rewarded, or punished, according to their respective merits or demerits; and it is as true, as this world exists, and rational and accountable beings inhabit it, that the distribution of justice therein is partial, unequal, uncertain; and consequently it is as true as there is a God, that there must be a future state of existence, in which the disorder, injustice, oppression, and vice, which are acted and transacted by mankind in this life, shall be righteously adjusted, and the delinquents suitably punished; and that the virtuous, who obey the laws of reason or moral fitness,

which are the laws of God, shall receive a just and rational enjoyment of happiness, according to their works; nor is it assuming too much to conceive it probable, that such happiness may be progressive with their future merits; for God may as well cease to be, as cease to be just, or not appear so ultimately.

The natural hope and strong expectation of immortality, which mankind in all ages, countries, and nations, have entertained, is a presage and earnest of that eternal inheritance; for it could not be from the invention and tradition of men, inasmuch as it has taken place among all the traditions and religious sectaries of the world, except the Sadducees, who rejected it because it was not to be met with in the theology of Moses, their lawgiver, who they supposed was immediately dictated to by God, and could not have failed of promulgating the doctrine of immortality, had it been in fact true; but none of the human race, who have not been thus prepossessed by erroneous traditions to the contrary, have failed of hoping and believing in the reality of a future existence; the barbarous and uncultivated nations of the earth not excepted:

and as this expectation has made such a deep and universal impression on the human mind, we must conclude it to be the voice of Nature powerfully and universally evincing the immortality of man. And as there can be no doubt of the complete power of God, to eternize mental, cogitative, and intellectual beings, so there can be no doubt but that his perfection of goodness has induced him, in his order of Providence, to accomplish so great, benevolent, and godlike a work, to his eternal glory, and the everlasting best good of a whole world of intelligent and rational beings.

Wherefore, my children, let us persevere in the practice of virtue, habitually conforming ourselves to the moral rectitude of things, and wait patiently the few days that God sees fit to continue us in this life; remembering that, at death, the mysterious state of immortality will be unfolded unto us, and that until then, it will be best for us not to understand the superior manner and ecstatic felicities thereof. Sufficient is it for us at present, for the encouragement of morality, that we believe, from the highest

moral certainty, that there is such a future state, leaving it to the God who made us, to unfold the manner of it, at such time as his order of Nature shall bring us into the fruition of it.

A SUMMARY.

As a summary to this work, to show my humble conception of the relative situation of man, as the creature, to God, his Creator, I do exceedingly hope that my own offspring, for whom it is more particularly designed, and every other attentive reader that may possibly meet with it, will be perfectly satisfied with the general principles laid down in the preceding chapters, viz. that a knowledge of the being, perfections, creation, and providence of God, is most desirable; and that the observations and ar-

guments to evince the eternity and infinity of God; the cause of idolatry; the eternity of creation; the eternity and infinitude of divine Providence, without interfering with the agency of man's free-will; the consideration of the doctrine of the infinite evil of sin; of the moral government of God, being incompatible with eternal punishment; of the extent of human liberty, agency, and accountability; of physical evils; of the immortality of the human soul; on the difference between sensation and the principle of the human soul; and, lastly, of the providence of God, respecting the immortality of the soul. I hope it is conclusively evident to the humblest capacity, that there is and must be an almighty superintending power, as God, to whom we, as his creatures, must necessarily be subordinate; and that we ought to endeavour to conduct ourselves in such sort as will best discharge the duties of morality and religion; the sum of which being comprised in gratitude to God and love to man, it can never be the will of the Deity that the latter should be given up to show a zeal for the former; nor can it be supposed that God

created, in order that man might persecute and destroy the work of his hands. Yet, absurd as this view of religious zealots may appear, it is a correct character of those who enlist under the banners of religious intolerance, which has greatly contributed to strengthen the cause of infidelity. I hope, therefore, that whatever may be the religious persuasion of the reader, the preceding contemplations on the eternity and infinity of God, consisting of wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and truth, with their eternally connected and almighty operations, will have the full and due effect on every rational mind.

Modes of faith and exterior forms of worship are but the exterior connections and bands by which religion is compacted, and the frame or outer shell in which the more sacred and essential part is deposited; an accidental ornament, but no necessary and indisputable connection. He, therefore, who pleads the cause of externals, as equally a duty with the pure and simple parts of worship, sets up the shadow in competition with the substance, and dishonours the cause he

professes to serve. Religion receives no sanction from rites, but rites are consecrated by religion; which are proper, and deserve to be attended to when they contribute to its advancement. To suppose that the Deity requires as indispensable, and regards as important, what, in the bare eye of reason and to a moderate share of understanding, appears trivial and idle, is derogatory to his wisdom, and a far greater affront to his glory than to banish for ever every species of ceremony from his worship. But to persecute and torment others on these accounts; to imprison and slay, to hate and detest our fellow-creatures, for not adopting the same precise form of words in their oaths of fidelity and expressions of homage to their great superior; and to shelter our cruelty under the sanction of his sacred will; is treason against his divine nature. The *great* object of our adoration is One; and every form in which he beholds his worshiper is accepted, when sanctified by purity of intention, an upright heart, and correctness of conduct.

If we examine into the character of bigots in general, far from finding them to be per-

sons of greater virtues than others, we can see in them nothing that is amiable or laudable. Of whatever persuasion they may be, there exists not a more disagreeable and odious tribe; and in such a soil generally flourish the more ignoble passions, whose growth, with respect to our neighbours, by virtue's laws demand to be curbed and not encouraged.

It is not enough for the heated zealot that he enjoys his own peculiar notions and customs: his fury hurries him further, and he discards the virtues of religion, meekness, charity, and universal love, which are the sweetest incense man can offer at the altar, to make room for the apish quackery of superstition. He is not content alone to fall prostrate and worship the object of his adoration; but he must compel others to do the like in his way, however repugnant to their conscientious ways of thinking. The opinions of a man are not under his control; he cannot change them as a cameleon changes the colours of his skin. What is not in his power he can never be accountable for, and bare professions are of no weight or value.

There are, on the contrary, advocates for ceremony, as a subordinate part of religion; as a form in which it should be seen and known; as proper to entice and assemble such, for its votaries, as would not otherwise, through slowness of apprehension, have discovered its residence; and as conducing to confirm the minds of those who are enlisted in its service. With them I readily concur. The undiscerning minds of the vulgar, of all nations, are not sufficiently refined to relish the sentimental and pure dictates of religion, without externals; something striking and visible must be adopted, which is brought down on a level with their capacities. What they do not comprehend can never please them; and what does not please them will not engage their attention.

Externals, then, with persons of judgement, are to be considered only as instruments or assistants of religion, not as actually a constituent part of it. Under this view they are useful, and in some measure may be necessary. But as punctilios in our behaviour one towards another, mere compliments of politeness, are not honoured with the

name of friendship, so neither are ceremonies in religion dignified with the appellation of religion; but they should be used or neglected, curtailed or increased, as circumstances and situation of a people are judged to require; and in this consideration of the situation, the climate under which they live is a material circumstance, and has been much attended to by former legislators. But no rites or ceremonies can be allowed to violate the laws of Nature. With respect to all mere positive constitutions, injunctions, rites, and ceremonies, that do not come within the jurisdiction of the law of Nature, they are political matters, and may be enacted, dispensed with, abolished, re-enacted, compounded, or diversified, as convenience, power, opportunity, inclination, or interest, or all together, may dictate; inasmuch as they are not founded on any stable or universal principle of reason, but change with the customs, fashions, traditions, and revolutions, of the world; having no centre of attraction but interest, power, and advantages of a temporary nature.

When we reflect on the state and circum-

stances of mankind in this world; their various languages and interchangeable methods of communicating intelligence to each other, which are subject to perpetual alterations and refinements; the insuperable difficulties in translating antient manuscripts with any considerable degree of perfection; as also our being exposed to the practices of impostors; with a variety of other deceptions, blunders, and inaccuracies, which unavoidably attend written and diverse or variously translated works; we cannot too much admire the wisdom and goodness of God, in imparting his law to us in the constitution of our rational nature, placing it within the scope of man's understanding, and thereby enabling us to exercise our own judgment without relying too much on others; to point out our duty in all circumstances and vicissitudes of human life; and to comprehend and judge, not only of what he has revealed in his works of creation, but likewise of certain other of his mysterious truths, with which at the first glance our conceptions appear to be nearly confounded, and which seem paradoxical; yet, by a proper exertion of our intellectual

powers, we obtain a satisfactory knowledge of their truth. For instance: it is a maxim of truth, "that with God all things are possible;" yet it should be considered that contradictions and consequently impossibilities are not comprehended in the definition of things, but are diametrically the reverse of them, as may be seen in the definition of the word *things;* to wit, "Whatever is." There is no contradiction in nature or truth, which comprehends all things; therefore the maxim is just, "That with God all things are possible," viz. all things in nature are possible with God; but contradictions are falsehoods which have no positive existence, but are the negative to *things*, or to nature, which comprehends "Whatever is;" so that contradictions are opposed to nature and truth, and are no *things*, but the chimeras of weak unintelligent minds, who make false applications of things to persons, or ascribe such powers, qualities, dispositions, and aptitudes to things, as nature never invested them with. It derogates nothing from the power and absolute perfection of God, that he cannot make both parts of a contradiction

to be true. The figure of a triangle and that of a square is different one from the other, in the essentials of their formation, so that the one is not and cannot be of the same shape as the other; for the same figure which gives the existence of the truth of the triangle negatives the possibility of its being a square, and the same truth which is predicated on the form and figure of the mountains necessarily gives being to the figure of the valleys at the same time: the figure of the latter results from and is necessarily produced by the figure of the former, nor is it possible for omnipotence itself to give the mountains and the valleys an independent and separate existence from each other: likewise the same truth which is predicated on the fact of the existence of any thing, denies the possibility of its not existing at the same time.

That God can do any thing and every thing that is consonant to his moral perfections, and which does not imply a contradiction to the nature of the things themselves and the essential relation which they bear to each other, none will dispute; but to suppose that, inasmuch as God is all-power-

ful, he can therefore do every thing which we, in our ignorance of nature or of moral fitness, may ascribe to him, without understanding whether it is either consonant to moral rectitude or to the nature of the things themselves, and the immutable relations and connections which they bear to each other or not, is great weakness and folly. That God cannot, in the exercise of his providence or moral government, counteract the perfections of his nature, or do any manner of injustice, is manifestly certain; nor is it possible for God to effect a contradiction in the natural world, any more than in the moral. The impossibility of the one results from the moral perfections of God, and the impossibility of the other from the immutable properties, qualities, relations, and nature of the things themselves; as in the instances of the mountains, valleys, &c. before alluded to, and in numberless other similar cases.

Doubts have arisen in the minds of some, as to the possibility of the soul of man being removed from this world to the world above, or from earth to heaven, without enduring a

journey of many thousands of years, far exceeding the Mosaic history of the creation of this world, which, as therein stated, they observe is not yet seven thousand years old; and to prove this their position as to the immense length of time of so extraordinary a journey, they argue, that it is computed by astronomers that the dog-star, Sirius, is distant from our earth above two millions of millions of English miles; a distance so exceedingly great, that it is calculated a cannon-ball, continuing in the same velocity it acquires when immediately discharged at the cannon's mouth, would spend almost seven hundred thousand years in passing through such space.

This sceptical doubt is, however, soon removed, so as to satisfy and meet the understanding of the commonest reasoner, and that without any great exertion of the reasoning faculties, by reflecting on the power which God has given to the soul or mind of man, even in this probationary world; a power so infinitely great, and beyond what is generally thought of, that, were it not common to all mankind, it might ap-

pear miraculous. I allude to the rapid speed, exceeding every other idea or conception of speed, with which *thought*, the soul of man, instantaneously traverses this immensity of space, thereby removing the cause for doubts and difficulties of such sceptics.

This, then, is another proof of man's reasoning faculties; making it evident, to moderate understandings, that what has thus been ascertained concerning the number, nature, and distance of the fixed stars, by the astronomers and learned men of all ages, the hypothesis of a plurality of worlds, wherein each fixed star serves as a sun to a system of planets, seems most rational, worthy of philosophy, and greatly displays the wisdom and redounds to the glory of the great Creator and Governor of the Universe.

To return to the subject of the differences among mankind respecting matters of faith; it is often objected, that the far greater part of mankind believe according to the tradition of their forefathers, without examining into the grounds of it; and that argumentative deductions from the reason and nature of

things have, with the bulk of them, but little or no influence on their faith.

That tradition has had powerful influence on the human mind is universally admitted, even by those who are governed by it in the articles of discipline of their faith; for, though they are blind with respect to their own superstition, yet they can perceive and despise it in others. Protestants very readily discern and expose the weak side of popery, and papists are as ready and acute in discovering the errors of heretics. With equal facility do Christians and Mahometans spy out each other's inconsistencies, and both have an admirable sagacity in descrying the superstition of the heathen nations. Nor are the Jews silent in this matter: "O God! the heathen come into thine inheritance, thy holy temple have they defiled." What abomination must this have been in the opinion of a nation who had monopolised all religion to themselves, as the chosen of God! The Christians call the Mahometans by the odious name of infidels; but the mussulmen, in *their* opinion, cannot call the Christians by a worse name than that which they have given

themselves; they, therefore, call them Christians: but neither the interchange of odious language, nor the misconduct of men, nor the great diversity of religious opinions, can alter the nature of things. Instead, therefore, of thus reviling and persecuting each other for differences in doctrinal faith, which, as we cannot coerce it without conviction, we cannot be accountable for, how much more desirable, how beneficial as well as creditable, would it be, to endeavour to harmonize with each other, however wide the difference between the respective beliefs as to the purest and best mode of worshiping God. For an example, I will take the Christian and the Jew.

I do conceive it is not possible to find language too strong and elevated for the Christian to make use of, in pourtraying the beauties of the moral doctrines of the Christian religion; for this is what neither Jew, Mahometan, nor heathen, can gainsay; and, should an eloquent preacher, whose soul is deeply impressed with the truths of revelation, and who from conviction firmly believes in Christ as the Son of God, and that as

such he came down from heaven to save repenting sinners who place their faith in him; believing also in the doctrine of atonement; should he, I say, use arguments as persuasive as so delightful and glorious a theme might warrant and inspire, who, that heard, could possibly resist the *desire*, at least, to believe in a doctrine so highly interesting, so inviting, and divinely comfortable? For, neither Jew, Mahometan, nor heathen, have any thing to compare with, or that is half so desirable in their respective creeds, as the being rescued from sin and damnation by the meritorious sufferings of the Son of God. Yet, allowing that the Jew should attentively hear, and, having sedulously examined, should well appreciate the advantages and benefits thus held out to all true believers; considering how much easier it would be for him to obtain a forgiveness of his sins in this world and salvation in the next, provided he could by any means in his power acquire a sound conviction of the truths of Christianity, in preference to his depending on his own endeavours in the work of salvation, by a rigid

adherence to the Mosaic law and the prophets, is it not natural to suppose that he would gladly embrace so divine, so delectable, a doctrine? But if, in defiance of his earnest wish and most strenuous endeavours to obtain so desirable a faith, he should find it impossible to bring his mind into such a persuasion, and should then candidly confess as much to the Christian, lamenting his inability to persuade or to coerce his conscience, it would be the Christian's duty to pray for his conversion, but it could never become him to revile, much less to persecute and torture, the conscientious Jew, for not being able to force his faith.

The genuine true disciple of Christ would meekly and thankfully rejoice that his own burden was so light, and his path made so easy by the suffering merits of a Redeemer in whom he believed, when compared with the Jew, whose reliance in the tradition of his forefathers, as delivered by the law of Moses and the prophets, was immovable. This comparison between the two would, or should, be an additional cause to the Christian for grateful adoration to Al-

mighty God, but can be no reason for exhibiting hatred to those he deems heretics.

On the other hand, the Jew, who had listened with attention to the comfortable and desirable doctrine of being saved through the merits of Jesus Christ, might repine that he could not so readily obtain a remission of his sins by an act of faith which his conscientious reasoning would not admit of; and the more heinous his transgressions, the stronger would be his desire to acquire such a sanctuary; but, being sensible that a mere declaration in words, contrary to his inward belief, would not avail him in the all-penetrating judgment of God, and that he could not accept the gracious proffer; yet such his rejection of the mercies through Christ, from his unhappy but inevitable, as unconquerable, objection to the Christian faith, ought not to excite in him any envious, uncharitable, or reproachful thoughts towards the Christian, who sincerely believes in Christ as the Messiah and promised Redeemer of man. The conscientious reluctant unbeliever, satisfied with the law of Moses and the prophets, should continue fervent and devout

in adoration of the God of his fathers, contentedly looking forward with hope to the coming of *his* Messiah and Redeemer, without rancour or hatred to others who differ from him in faith.

In like manner, (as I hope I have impartially shewn,) how commendable and desirable would it be to harmonize the difference of religious opinions between the Christian and the Jew! So the same reasoning may equally apply to the differences in the traditional modes of faith of all other religions.

The Christian stands pre-eminently high above others in his claims for salvation through the merits of a Mediator and Redeemer, provided his faith is sure and his actions correspond with it; what a strength of argument, then, has he to urge, in addition to what is advanced in this treatise on general principles: this, however, is more properly the province of the Christian divine.

The disciples of Mahomet, of Brahma, of Confucius, and the religious of all denominations, may likewise bring forward their respective creeds, to establish in the minds of

men the existence of an Almighty God and his Providence. It is the duty, therefore, of the good men of every religion, so to harmonize with each other, that the fell destroyer of *all* religion, virtue, and humanity, the modern French atheistical philosophy, may be defeated in its diabolical attempt to disorganize society and rob mankind of their brightest hope, a blessed immortality.

What is thus observed upon tradition is sufficient to admonish us of its errors and superstitions, and the prejudices to which a bigoted attachment thereto exposes us; which is abundantly sufficient to excite us to a careful examination of our respective traditions, and not to rest satisfied until we have regulated our faith by reason, which infallibly directs to the main point in which most agree, a firm belief in an Almighty, Omniscient, and Beneficent Providence.

There are, however, some among mankind by whom the doctrine of chance, or good or ill fortune, is considered to be the only lever capable of moving the universe: this is the contriver and chief engineer among the common people, who believe they know it to

be so; especially when, after much care, and the wisest measures for procuring themselves some advantage, or guarding against some misfortune, they perceive it is not precisely from the steps which they have taken that the fortunate or unfortunate event proceeded, but that some singularity, some unforeseen accident, had insensibly led them to it by paths unknown to human prudence. But can this, we know not what, which is called chance, be the cause of something, being nothing itself? We might, therefore, represent it to ourselves as Wisdom with her hands tied behind her back, and reducing to subjection animate and inanimate nature. But, indeed, chance has no more power over what externally happens to us, than it has over what passes within our minds.

There are essential relations of causes with effects, which, though hidden, are not less real and necessary. Nature has her mechanism and springs; and, if studied though ever so little, we may perceive the most perfect uniformity in her designs. All her works, by an immense and continued chain, are connected with one another, dependent

on one another, and placed in such gradation, such harmony, in order so wisely combined, that they all concur, and with one common effort, to produce the motion which maintains and makes herself like unto herself. But even the term Nature is vague and indiscriminate, unless we have recourse to an Eternal Almighty Being, who by his breath animates Nature, who alone has the power of producing every thing in its rank, and who seems to dispose no otherwise of them contrary to our expectations, but because we are ignorant of his laws, views, and motives. It is, therefore, neither fortune, nor chance, nor Nature herself, that alone regulates all here below; and what we call fortune, or misfortune, is but a consequence of the invariable plan that makes events spring up one after the other, and leads them on like so many links fastened together, and by unknown relations drawing after them others, to which other relations, equally secret, bind successively new ones. It is these relations, which we cannot know nor often foresee, that make us fancy an incorrectness and disorder, a dissonance

and contrariety, in most of the accidents of life. We should judge differently, if we could discover the inner parts of the machine: we might then see, that all particulars hold to one another, and that the motion which makes the blade of grass to vegetate in our fields, may be as really the occasion as the consequence of that which makes the stars to move. We might see that there is no absolute evil in the world; and that, in effect, this supposed evil is a relative good in the hands of the Sovereign Mover of all beings, the God of Harmony. To succeed in our projects, it might seem proper for us to study the connections of things, to examine their proportions, and to seize upon, as it were, their hour and minute; but we can do nothing else than consign ourselves over to Providence, who alone is thoroughly acquainted with all the secret springs of his works; at the same time using our best endeavours to support, with patience, what we call misfortune, and not to depend too much on whatever we may imagine may procure us fortunate and tranquil days.

To show the importance of the exercise of

reason and practice of morality, in order to the happiness of mankind, we should bear in remembrance that our period of life is very uncertain, and at the longest is but short; a few years bring us from infancy to manhood, a few more to dissolution: pain, sickness, and death, are the necessary consequences of animal life. Through life we struggle with physical evils, which eventually are certain to destroy our earthly composition: and well would it be for some, did evils end here; but, alas! moral evil has been more or less predominant in our agency, and though what we term natural evil is unavoidable, yet moral evil may be prevented or remedied by the exercise of virtue. Morality, therefore, is of more importance to us than any or all other attainments; as it is a habit of mind, which, from a retrospective consciousness of our agency in this life, we should carry with us into our succeeding state of existence, as an acquired appendage of our rational nature, and as the necessary means of our mental happiness. Virtue and vice are the only things in this world, which, with our souls, are capable of surviving

death: the former is the rational and only procuring cause of all intellectual happiness, and the latter of conscious guilt and misery; and therefore our indispensable duty and ultimate interest is, to love, cultivate, and improve the one, as the means of our greatest good, and to hate and abstain from the other, as productive of our greatest evil.

One of the noblest gifts of heaven is content. Riches and honour are but the flattering promisers of what content alone can give. Viewed through the medium of content, kings and peasants are seen on a level, and the cottage suffers no diminution when set by the side of the palace. The one is not despised, nor the other envied; but they are equally considered as accompanied with their share of felicity.

There generally subsists in our hearts a common sentiment, which has contributed to form the first societies, and which, brought to the point it is now at, seems, notwithstanding, less proper for maintaining than dissolving them. This sentiment is the pressing and continued desire of present happiness; and this desire is of all ages, all cha-

racters, all climates, and all conditions of life. It bears, more or less, on the objects that may gratify it; but it bears equally on all. Proportionate to the number of the species of happiness, are the transports whereby we are agitated. A single happiness can seldom satisfy us; we would have all sorts at once, and possess them without alteration or division. The too eager pursuit after sensual happiness, frequently produces intellectual misery. What should most surprise us is, that we commonly do not know in what happiness consists, or what are the surest means for procuring it: it ought, also, to be durable, and so independent that nothing but our own choice can deprive us of it. Is this the property of each species of good fortune? Do not we seek, as a-kin to natural affections, and if it may be so expressed to the talents of the heart, what agrees least with them? as durable, what must necessarily have an end? as independent, that which, by not having its source in ourselves, we may be robbed of by the least accident? How many people appear to us flourishing amidst the smiles of fortune,

yet, in the main, are no otherwise satisfied but so far as decorum, pride, or affectation of being so, compels them to it? Does the ambitious man esteem himself the child of Fortune, because he is rich? Does the covetous man, for being raised to the highest honours? And do not most men endeavour to gratify fleeting and rapid tastes, rather than the inclinations of their characters; which are never the same in all men, and which constantly make known that whatever is good in Nature is not equally good for the beings she has formed? I say nothing of the short duration of fortune, which, like lightning, whose entire vigour is in its birth, yields commonly but one report, which is dissipated almost in the moment of its appearance. But, if there is no fortune equal in permanency to desire, can it be maintained against the languor of satiety, the loathing of indifference, the instability of humour, the refinement of delicacy, and even the fear of seeing it end, which alone is often sufficient to weaken and spoil all the joys it may be attended with. Neither do I speak of the daily obstacles which the man of for-

tune finds in the physical evils which besiege him on all sides, and, perhaps, still more in the multiplicity of cares which flutter about his gilded cielings, or chase his thoughts about with more impetuosity than the winds do the clouds. I now come to the means of acquiring a fortune, and consequently the happiness annexed to it; but first it were to be wished, that all could be dissuaded from being too eager in their quest after such fleeting happiness. We are only happy, indeed, so far as we do not think of being so. This is a truth founded on reason and experience; for what can be a happiness, when, in order to enjoy it, we must, in some measure, divert our eyes from it, make no reflection, nor desire to know it. The case is very hard; and it may well be thought, that our lot is very unhappy, since, to possess the gifts and pleasures of fortune, we should begin by being ignorant of them; whilst Providence thus kindly instructs, by giving us a foresight of the ills that threaten. But it is not, therefore, the less true, that even the means for attaining happiness spoil it before hand. We know of but one which

is a happiness itself, and this is, the good use of reason. A happiness is durable, when reason never alters from itself; and it is independent, because no power whatever can command reason or bring it under subjection. The rules for attaining it are not severe, tending only to remove what is hurtful to human nature. Reason opposes no pleasure that is honest and compatible with temperance, no taste that is conformable to justice, no affection which probity allows of and honour and decorum do not blush to own. Reason, also, is the cause that the happiness procured by it does not depend on any success. The mean here becomes the end. In short, genuine reason, which is readily distinguished from the false by the reasoner himself, by its being approved or not by his own never-failing monitor, Conscience, is itself a happiness, and blest with all the desirable gifts of fortune. Adversity can neither deject nor alter it; and, as a structure founded upon a rock, it braves the blustering rage of winds and storms. What will it signify to a man thus placed in society, where he is to make a figure during the short

space of his probationary life, what sort of station he takes? His felicity consists in behaving himself so as to reap the advantages he has there sought after, by doing good; in the full hope of receiving the joyful sentence of "Well done, thou good and faithful servant," &c. Let him be a Hercules or a Solomon, an emperor or a peasant, no character is so proper to him as that of a sociable man, which is common to him with the meanest of the actors on the stage of human life. It is the only title he can have to the joint stock of the company, if he faithfully discharges his duty, whether he be rich or poor, a nobleman or a plebeian. His good or ill fortune, his happiness or unhappiness, can only proceed from his punctuality or negligence in this respect; any thing else is all illusion and vain phantasma; it is only in our virtues or vices that we ought to seek after the source of good or ill fortune, prosperity or adversity, happiness or unhappiness. But, above all, it behoves us to consider seriously, that the cause of good or ill fortune, unknown to most men, can in no wise be natural. The events that appear

fortuitous or accidental to us, can only be attributed to Divine Providence, and what we call fortune or chance is nothing else but the decrees of that Providence. For, indeed, reason cannot be satisfied in referring to imaginary beings a power which can depend only upon the will of God and his Providence, who watches over all Nature and maintains therein the most astonishing order and harmony; who suspended from the vault of the heavens those glorious luminaries that give light throughout the immensity of its extent; who poised our globe at that just distance which both secures it from the devouring fires of the burning sun and the piercing rigours of eternal frost. What created mind is able to make an exact enumeration of his works? A single reflection on them is enough to banish all the seducing passions of the heart; and a single glance on the grandeur and magnificence of the objects which the spectacle of the universe displays before our admiring eyes, is enough to make all our doubts vanish in the bosom of evidence, and all our homage rise to the throne of the Creator.

CHILDREN,

I have exerted myself to the best of my powers, to promote your welfare in this life, and ensure your happiness in the next. I feel conscious of having performed a parent's duty by you all. Read, then, attentively; contemplate seriously, and judge deliberately what I have thus with the utmost consideration put together, as the last, best duty I could undertake for your good. May our Almighty, Heavenly Father bless and guide your endeavours to his own glory!

The following select extracts from the Royal Psalmist being applicable to the main subject of this Treatise, I know not how better to confirm and conclude what is therein advanced.

THE fool saith in his heart, there is no God.

The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer: my God, my strength, in

whom I will trust. The Lord liveth, and blessed is my rock. Let the God of my salvation be exalted.

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy work. The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.

What man is he that feareth the Lord? Him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose. His soul shall dwell at ease, and his seed shall inherit the earth.

Examine me, O Lord! and prove me: try my reins and my heart; that I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works.

Give ear unto the Lord, O ye mighty! give unto the Lord glory and strength; give unto the Lord the glory due to his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.

O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together. Come, ye children! and hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.

Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord

his trust, and respecteth not the proud nor such as turn aside to lies. I delight to do thy will, O my God! yea, thy law is within my heart. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation; lo! I have not refrained my lips.

Hear this, all ye people! give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world! They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches, none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give a ransom for him that he should live for ever and not see corruption. But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave.

Have mercy upon me, O God! according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.

Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands! sing forth the honour of his name, make his praise glorious.

In thee, O Lord! do I put my trust; let me never be put to confusion. Let my mouth be filled with thy praise and with thy honour all the day. Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth.

There is none like unto thee, O Lord! neither are there any works like unto thy works. All nations, whom thou hast made, shall come and worship before thee, O Lord! and shall glorify thy name. For thou art great, and doest wondrous things; thou art God alone.

We spend our years as a tale that is told: the days of our years are three-score and ten; and if by reason of strength they be four-score years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

O sing unto the Lord a new song; sing unto the Lord, all the earth! Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people. For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised, and he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord created all things.

Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands! Serve the Lord with gladness, come before his presence with thanksgiving. For the Lord is good, his mercy is everlasting, and his truth endureth to all generations.

Bless the Lord, O my soul! and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul! and forget not all his benefits.

The Lord is merciful, and graciously slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.

Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.

As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.

For the wind passeth over it and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more.

But the mercy of the Lord is everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children.

Bless the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominions! Bless the Lord, O my soul!

THE END.

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