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John W. Yotter

Feb 1978

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Wisdom the first Spring of Action in
the DEITY.

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DISCOURSE,

IN WHICH,

Among other THINGS,

THE

Absurdity of GOD's being acted by
Natural Inclinations, and of an *Unbounded*
Liberty, is shewn.

The *Moral Attributes* of GOD are explain'd.

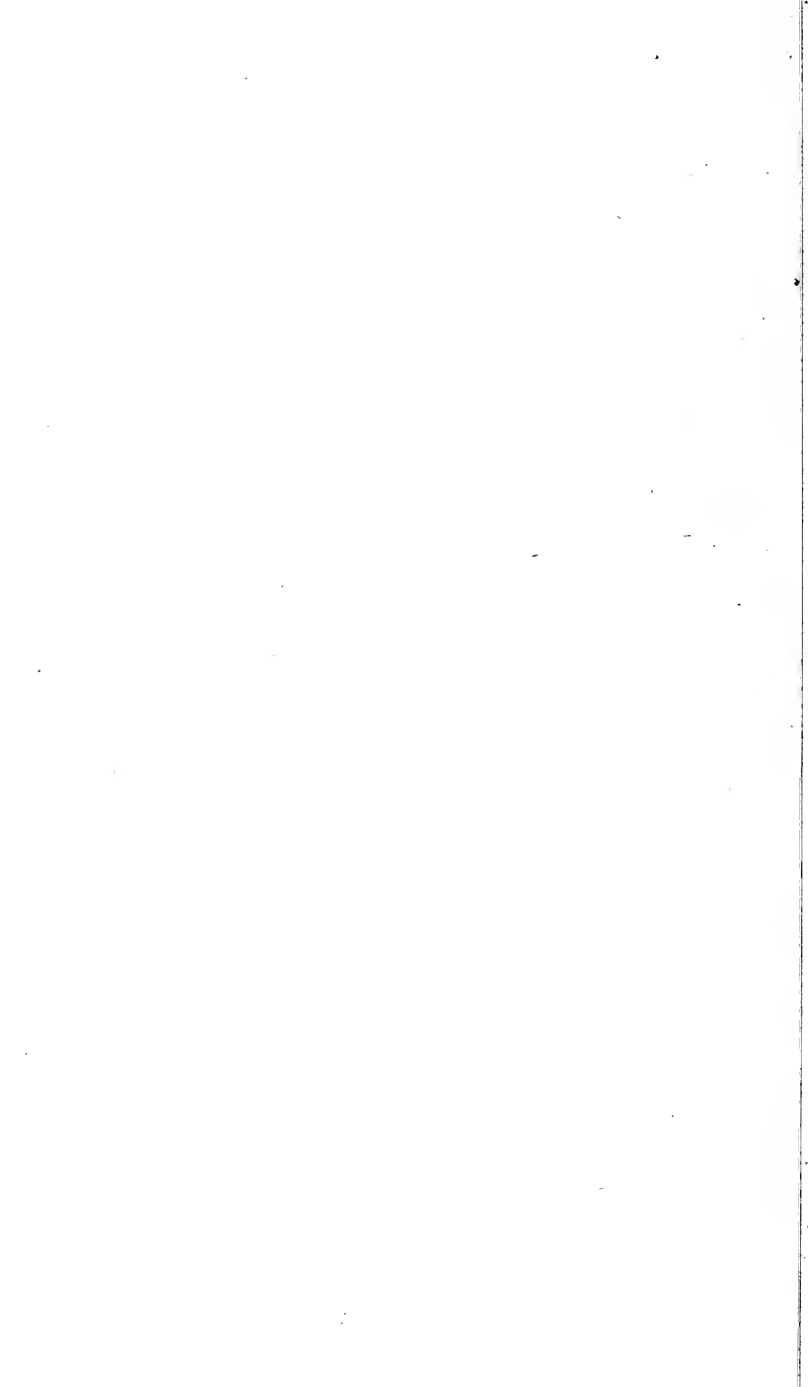
The *Origin of Evil* is consider'd.

The *Fundamental Duties* of *Natural Religion*
are shewn to be reasonable; and several
things, advanc'd by some late authors, and
others, relating to these subjects, are free-
ly examin'd.

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T H E

I N T R O D U C T I O N .

I Find, both from *conversation*, and several *writings* lately publish'd, that it is growing more and more into fashion to run down all proofs, *a priori* of the *moral attributes* of God, as well as of his *existence*. Whether the *Being* of God is capable of *this sort* of proof, I shall not at present enquire. I will suppose that *it is not*, and that the *only way* of coming to the knowledge of a *first cause* is from *effects*. But, then, I take leave to say that we are not under the same necessity of proving the *goodness*, and other *moral perfections*, of God, in this way, exclusive of every other kind of argument.

That there exists some *unoriginated Being*, we are certain from the evident absurdity of an *infinite series* of beings, every one depending upon a former, yet *all of them together independent* of any *first cause*. That this *first Being* is possess'd of all *wisdom* and *power*, we gather from the frame of the universe in

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which

which are such numberless and most wonderful displays of both these attributes, as at once satisfy the understanding, and exceed its utmost comprehension. So far we reason *merely* from *effects*. But here we shall be obliged to change our method of reasoning, if we intend to have any plain and invariable rule by which to guide our conceptions of God, as a *moral agent*, and our expectations from him. For how shall we know whether God be *just* and *good*? The sober and considering part of mankind, and indeed all whose minds have not been corrupted by vice, or prepossess'd by establish'd opinions, have universally agreed in ascribing justice and goodness to the Supreme Governour of the world. And by what have they been led into this uniformity in their sentiments? Hath it been *entirely* by observing the traces of these perfections in the works of creation and providence? Or rather hath it not been because they judg'd the things themselves to be highly worthy of God, and such as the most perfect nature cannot want? Have they not apprehended an inherent, unchangeable excellence in these qualities, which hath been the ground of their concluding, that God can never be unjust or malevolent, because then he would not be *himself*, and that, therefore, whatever seeming contradictions there may be between some appearances in providence and the idea of perfect goodness, the contradiction is not in the things themselves, but wholly owing to our imperfect views of the ways and works of

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of God? That this, which is the common notion of mankind, and that which most naturally offers itself to the mind, concerning the *intrinsic loveliness and excellence* of those, which we call the *moral perfections* of the Deity, or their being necessarily and everlastingly fit, and becoming that Being whose understanding is infinite, and his majesty above all comparison; that this notion, I say, is *absolutely right*, and that, *consequently*, we need not search for any other principle of action in the *divine being* but that *boundless intelligence or wisdom*, to which all the fitnesses and reasons of things, in all their varieties and degrees, are ever naked and open, this is what I have attempted to shew in the *first chapter* of this discourse; I hope, not without all success.

I have only this single *lemma* to premise, viz. that *there is a negative rectitude in the divine nature*; by which I mean that God hath no wrong bias upon him; no inclination to any thing, which to his wisdom, that is never deceiv'd, appears unbecoming him to do. I might content myself with referring to what I have afterwards, I think, prov'd, that *there are in God no inclinations or affections of any kind, properly so call'd*; and to be sure then none that *interfere with his immutable ideas of just and right*. But I add this farther consideration, that the existence of God being necessary, his wisdom infinite, his power equal to his wisdom, and his essence simple and uncompounded, there can
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be no room for an intestine war between *wisdom* and *inclination*. We can account for all the irregular desires of mankind, condemn'd by their own reason, either from bodily temper and complexion, or mistaken and narrow notions of persons and things, or their having been cross'd and baffled in their designs, or from the influence of custom and example; nothing of which, or a like nature, having place with regard to God, it is evident that he cannot be *tempted with evil*, nor by the *same necessity of nature* (which is a simple uniform idea) both *discern that which is good*, and be *inclin'd to the contrary*. From whence I conclude that God hath no such inclinations or affections as oppose the dictates of his infinite wisdom.

The author designs not by any thing he hath said, to make innovations in our *common language*; when we are speaking of the Deity. He is very well contented that certain expressions, consecrated by long use (such as *decrees* and *purposes*, kind *affections* and *inclinations*, *compassion*, &c.) should still keep possession. Only, he thinks that the old rule ought to be applied here, that what is spoken in compliance with human weakness, must be understood in a manner worthy of God. That such language is *popular*, not *philosophical*; fitted to strike the *imagination* and *passions*, and therefore us'd; not such as *mere reason* would make choice of.



C H A P. I.

Seet. 1. **W**HEN I examine my notion of the self-existent, all-perfect Being, I find, among others, these *two ideas*, of *infinite knowledge*, and a correspondent *energy*, or *active force*, included in it. The knowledge which this Being hath, of what is *fit* or *unfit*, to be chosen or done in every supposable circumstance, is what we mean by the *Wisdom* of God. These fitnesses and unfitnesses, are distinguished into *natural* and *moral*. *Natural fitness* is (*chiefly* at least) the fitness or subserviency of things and actions in their *own nature*, to some *good end*. *Moral fitness*, is the *fitness* or congruity, that *intelligent and free agents*, should make choice of certain *ends* preferably to others, and of certain *actions*, as *means*, suited and adapted to these ends. That there are different *moral* kinds of action, some fit, others unfit to be done, some becoming, others unbecoming the supreme Being, and this independently of his *choosing* or *willing* them, is as evident, as that there are *moral perfections* and excellencies belonging to the divine nature.

§ 2. The *will* of God constantly to act after this or that manner, cannot be esteem'd an *excellence*; if, on supposition, he had will'd to act in a different and contrary way, the former manner would have had nothing great and excellent in it. The excellence or dignity, must be first in one *way* and *method* of acting above another, and from thence be transfer'd to the *will*, which, being steddily and complacentially determin'd that way, is, therefore, said to have a *rectitude* in it, or to be *holy* and *just* and *good*. Otherwise the meaning and proof of God's *moral* perfections, would be no more than this, that he wills what he wills, and doth every thing he doth; because his willing or doing it, makes that a perfection or excellence, which in its own nature is absolutely indifferent.

§ 3. The *Wisdom* of God is *primarily* conversant about *ends*, and *secondarily* only about the *means*. All ends are not morally indifferent, till God, by his arbitrary choice, establishes a difference between them. *e. g.* It is not a thing indifferent, whether the *end* propos'd by God in creating intelligent beings, shall be *the display of his sovereign and uncontroulable power in their everlasting misery, without the least thing done by them to deserve it; raising their expectations by express and solemn promises, and then disappointing them*; whether God shall propose this as his end in their creation, or somewhat else, is not, I say, a thing *morally indifferent*. The sun in the heavens is not more visible by its own light, than the truth of this *maxim*, that *whoever knowingly and wilfully hurts another, without cause, is guilty of injustice*; and the greater the *hurt*, the greater the *injustice*. What is without *cause*, or reason, is without *right*, and what is
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without right, in the present case, is contrary to it; even to that right which every being hath, not to suffer those evils which no other being hath a right to inflict. Now can any thing be more dreadful to the sufferer than *eternal misery*? Or more *without a cause* or reason, when he is able to plead his *innocence*? Such a proceeding, would be at an infinite distance from all right, and therefore infinitely unworthy of the most *excellent nature*. To be taken out of a state of non-existence, and immediately condemn'd to a state of everlasting torment, much more after a life of the most exact obedience and submission to its Maker, is what the creature might *justly* complain of, and still more, if there was the security of a *promise* on God's part of a contrary treatment. Let any one, for argument's sake, make this his own case, and then say, whether he should not think himself to have just matter of complaint; and then let him consider farther, whether the *complaint* being just, the *thing complain'd of* can be just too. So far then we are got, that *there is an essential everlasting fitness in Justice, and faithfulness*. Let us now see whether we cannot advance farther.

§ 4. Nothing whatsoever is of *value* but *happiness*, either the *agent's* own, or the happiness of *other beings*; or that which hath some *relation* to happiness; either more *immediate* or *remote*, *necessary* or *voluntary*, to happiness *itself*, or to the *capacities* of it. A universe of *unintelligent matter* falling (if you please) by *chance*, into the most consummate order and regularity, but without any *mind* to discern and enjoy its beauties, is *in effect nothing*, because good for nothing. Nor is the case mended by adding *intelligence* and *perception*, if that intelligence and perception, be not attended with *pleasure*; perception without all *pleasure*, is

no better than figure and magnitude without perception, as *these* are just equal in value to *nothing*. To perception add *mifery*, and *nothing* will deserve the preference. From hence I proceed to argue thus, that which immediately and properly causes *mifery* and not *happinefs*, or lefs *happinefs* than *mifery*, is upon the whole *evil* or worfe than *nothing*; that which causes neither *happinefs* nor *mifery*, either immediately or upon reflection, is neither *good* nor *evil*, and fo will ferve for no more, than to weigh againft *nothing*. *Beauty* and *order* are, in their *own nature*, fitted to communicate *pleafure* to percipient beings, that are proper judges of them; in the *natural world* as they are arguments of *design* and *skill* in the *framer*, and lead the thoughts to beauties of a higher kind; in the *moral world*, as they are the effects of the nobleft faculties applied to their right ufe. When I fay that *these things* are in their *nature* fitted to produce *pleafure*, my meaning is, that nothing is requir'd to this *pleafure*, but a *clearnefs of perception*, without any *biass* or *inclination*, one way or the other. But now, on the contrary, were it fupposeable (which it is *not*) that *beauty* and *order* had no more *aptitude* to give *pleafure*, than *deformity* and *confufion*, there would be nothing to chufe between them.

§ 5. Let us apply this to the two accomplifhments, fo univerfally coveted, of *knowledge* and *power*: they can no otherwife be *perfections*, or things rather to be defir'd than the want of them, than as the being who poffeffes them is the happier for them *himfelf*, or more capable of promoting the *happinefs* of *others*. We muft therefore grant that *end* to be *best* for a knowing and powerful being, in the purfuit of which, his *knowledge* and *power* will contribute to *actual happinefs*, or

to the *capacities* and *opportunities* of it. Why I add this *restriction*, will be seen presently: after this manner are we oblig'd to reason concerning the knowledge and power of God himself, the supreme and best of all Beings. Is the original design of God in exercising these attributes, the *misery* or *happiness* of his creatures? it cannot be their misery, for the reason before given; and because, if this be their *intended* effect, they are directed to no *valuable end*, and are, therefore, so far consider'd, at best of no use either in *themselves*, or to the possessor; unless his happiness be conceiv'd to grow out of their misery; an imagination so contradictory to the notion of a *perfect Being*, that I presume no one who believes God to be such a Being, did ever expressly and directly entertain it. There is, indeed, a contradiction in the very supposition, that the misery of the creature, makes the happiness of the creator: as his own works he cannot hate them without hating himself, he must therefore hate them, if at all, for works done by them; therefore could not hate them before they were created, therefore cou'd not create them to be miserable: besides, what are the works for which God can hate his creatures? If for evil, these they might have avoided, and then would not have been miserable; if for good, or because they have done no evil, this would be injustice, which would cause as much pain by clashing with his clear and adequate ideas of right and wrong, as it could be supposed to afford pleasure, by feeding a malicious temper: not to add, that the same necessity cannot be the original of malice, and of that right judgment which discovers and condemns the evil of it.

§ 6. It is a very ingenious comparison of Bishop *Cumberland* *, “ the greatest power that can be imagin’d, without wisdom and justice (add goodnes too) implies no more of *bleſſedneſs* or of *majeſty*, than what may be found in a maſs of lead, ſuppoſed to be of an infinite weight ; for, as thoſe who underſtand *Mechanicks* know very well, there may be a weight equivalent to any power.” We might otherwiſe reſemble power, ſeparate from moral attributes, to a reſiſtleſs tempeſt, that carries all before it ; which agrees with the notion the famous *Earl of Rocheſter* own’d himſelf to have had of the Deity †, as a vaſt power, that wrought every thing, by the neceſſity of its nature. ¶ From all this I infer, that the end or deſign of God in the creation, muſt be *happineſs* ; as to the *degree*, and *manner* of attaining it, ſuited to the *faculties*, the *dependence*, and the *freedom* of his reaſonable creatures ; or, to ſpeak more ſtrictly, a *capacity* of happineſs, which muſt be valuable, for the ſame reaſon that happineſs itſelf is ſo. It is fit that reaſonable creatures ſhould be made *free*, that they may freely acknowledge their dependence on the firſt Cauſe, and act according to it. And ’tis fit that the happineſs of a creature, whoſe actions are free, ſhould be the effect of the right uſe of his own freedom. With this only limitation, the happineſs of his creatures muſt always be deſign’d by

* *De Legib. Nat.* p. 226. †. † *Vid.* His Life by Biſhop *Burnet*.

¶ The Divinity excels in three things ; immortality, power, and virtue : of theſe the moſt venerable and divine is virtue. For the elements and vacuum have immortality ; earthquakes, thunders, ſtorms and torrents have great power ; but as for juſtice and equity, nothing participates thereof, except what is divine. *Plutarch’s* life of *Ariſtides.* *vid. loc.*

the Creator. The fitness of *punishment* is deducible from what hath been now said of *happiness*, and is not to be explain'd in any other way. For, because happiness hath enough in its idea, to awaken the active powers of an intelligent being; because, it is very plain, wherein the happiness of such a being must principally consist, even in the satisfaction of its largest and most exalted faculties, and that the only means conducing to such a happiness, is the love and practice of universal goodness, which is the immediate source of very great pleasure, to a well disposed mind; and because, *farther*, it is in the power of this being, to use these means with success; therefore, it is *fit*, that this being should exert his faculties in an agreeable course of actions, and that, if he does not, he should be punish'd with the loss of that happiness which he neglects and despises.

§ 7. The sum is; that a reasonable creature should not be made *miserable*, before he hath deserv'd it, is the *first* and *most apparent* fitness; that he should be made *for happiness* is the *next*; the *next to which* is, that every reasonable being should be oblig'd *to choose reason for his guide in the search of happiness*; which is followed with a *fourth*, that he who will not be persuaded to take the *right way* to be happy, should be left to the consequences of his own *wrong choice*. But then the fitness that this or that *particular person* should be punish'd with the loss of happiness, is only accidental, and beside the primary design of God, and therefore wholly to be ascribed to the creature's own perverseness.

§ 8. *Another argument* for fitness in the choice of the end, is, that if there were no fitnesses but with relation to the means, after God had first fix'd his end, then what we call the *moral perfections* of
God,

God, (e. g. *justice, goodness, and truth*) are only so many *inclinations, propensions, or affections* in the divine nature, to certain ways of acting, (or, if you please, *one inclination branching itself into several streams*) not flowing from his *wisdom*, but *immediately* from the same *original proper necessity* as that of his being *eternal and immense*. Now should we grant affections in God answering to inclinations of *instinct* in mankind, yet it cannot be known what they are, unless answerable *fitnesses* of action, arising from the *natures and essences* of things, be presuppos'd, and it be farther determin'd what those fitnesses are. Then, indeed, *necessity* being a uniform self-consistent thing, the necessary propensions and affections of the divine Being, if there are any such, must fall in with the natures of things, which are founded in the same necessity. On the contrary; deny any such antecedent fitnesses, and you leave no possible way of knowing, with any certainty, what the propensions of the self-existent nature are: the mere agreement of actions to his inclinations, whatever these inclinations, or those actions be, making them to be good and eligible. It must therefore, after all the assurances which God hath given, or can give us, whether from the *frame of the world*, or by a supervening *revelation*, that he is so and so dispos'd towards us, and intends to do, or obliges himself to do, this and that for us; it must, I say, after all this, remain uncertain, whether he is so kindly affectioned as he declares, and will do as he promises; if so be a *false declaration* of his affection and intention, or a manifest breach of *promise*, have nothing in them *unworthy* of the Deity; or only as they would be contradictory to his *inclination*; for how do I, how shall I, know that he is so inclin'd? Or, that if he be so at present, the stream will not change its course, and his inclination turn

to another point? in which case, what was before unworthy of him, will become highly worthy? The result is, admitting such *antecedent affections*, yet the *moral fitness*, or *unfitness*, of actions cannot be the effect of their agreement or disagreement with these affections, but is an inseparable adjunct to the nature of things; between which and the supposed affections there will be a harmony and conspiracy, as being both resolvable into the same *absolute necessity*.

§ 9. We have had attempts to prove the *goodness of God*, as it signifies (in some mens idea of it) *a kind inclination or principle of benevolence in the Deity, without any reason for it*: but, I think, much short of the mark. A *certain writer* *, to the question, *why do you suppose God to be good rather than otherwise?* answers, because, I can prove him so “ *a posteriori*, or by ascending from effect to cause. “ That this is an attribute of the Deity, appears “ from the works of the creation, which is evidently contriv’d for the good of the whole, or “ so as to manifest, that the design of the Creator therein must be to communicate happiness.” Not to put this gentleman in mind of the *evil*, both natural and moral, that is in the world, which hath driven some into the absurd supposition of *two first principles* of things, one good, the other evil, and which must, at best, exceedingly weaken this argument for the goodness of God *a posteriori*, when it rests upon this foot, and there is suppos’d to be nothing in the idea of goodness itself, which implies it to be a perfection. Not to dwell upon this, I shall only observe, that no conclusion can be drawn from *effects* in the present case, because the *phænomena* which we have al-

* An essay on moral obligation, p. 16, 17.

ready been are only a *part*, and it may be a *very small part*, of the universal plan, which God hath laid in his own thoughts; so that the *ultimate design*, for aught we know, may be the *final misery* of all perceptive beings, to be introduc'd by contrary appearances, that it may be the more surprizing, and the more sensibly felt, when it comes. Or the predominant affection in God, may be the *love of variety*, which, in the course of ages, will produce a thousand alterations in the universe, happiness being sometimes prepollent, at other times misery. If from our ideas of truth and goodness, we cannot be sure that there is any thing in the nature of these attributes, that should give them the preheminance to falsehood and cruelty; then we cannot be sure but *this* or any other may be the scheme projected; forasmuch as we have seen so little of it, to be able to argue from effects, if we have nothing to assist and guide our reasonings, in the *absolute nature and fitness* of things.

§ 10. "But" (saith another *author*, * who espouses the same notion, tho to a very different purpose) "some things are necessarily pleasing or displeasing, and that which makes them so, is the relation there is in the nature of the thing between the object and the mind perceiving; what is the result of this relation in most cases, we know not but by experience; yet this I think we may be sure of, that certain things are in their nature incapable of being the foundation of pleasure; of which kind I take malevolence to be." If by the relation in the nature of the things, between the object and the mind perceiving, *this author* meant the relation

* Two letters from a *Deist* to his friend, p. 33.

between the *object* and *judging faculty*, I entirely agree with him in his account of *mental* pleasure and pain. But this he could not mean consistently with his own hypothesis; because when an object gives pleasure or pain, not by *immediate* and *simple perception*, but after *reasoning* or *making a judgment* about it, it is from some *apprehended* fitness or unfitness in the object, to which we have, or have not, had regard in our conduct. And as to any other relation, between an object and such a mind as the *supreme*, it is absolutely un-conceivable; and, were it granted, would prove that *malevolence* might be natural and necessary, as well as any other affection, and afford as much pleasure in the gratification. The gratifying of any inclination is pleasant, and that the pleasure is sometimes over-paid for, is because it is condemn'd by *reason*; as its being condemned by reason is, because reason judges it to be *criminal* or *foolish*. A beast of rapacious kind, tears its prey in pieces, and feels no remorse after it hath done; and the chief of intelligent beings, might in like manner delight in sacrificing millions of innocent creatures to a *cruel temper*, without having the pleasure in the least abated, by the knowledge of what these wretched beings undeservedly suffer'd, could it be suppos'd that one reasonable being hath no concern in the happiness or misery of another, but as it affects his own; and setting aside that connection, cannot be *blamed* for refusing to do the most easy action, in order to remove an unsupportable load of misery, from a great number of innocent and virtuous beings, or *even* for doing all in its power, to lay such a load of misery upon them.

§ 11. Upon the whole, were it so, as these *two writers*, one of them a *Christian*, the other a *Deist*,
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say, that in point of *moral excellence*, there is no difference between *goodness* and *malice*, so that all the assurance we have that *God is good*, or, hath an inclination *to do good*, is from the *effects*. Were this a true account of things, I should think we were upon a very precarious bottom, and had nothing at all to trust to, whether in the *phænomena* of nature, or the *promises* of the gospel, since the design in *both* might only be *to deceive us*. Would not this be a natural progression? There are no such things as *moral fitnesses*, therefore no evidence for any such attributes, as *goodness*, *truth* and *faithfulness*, therefore no way of proving the *Christian Revelation*; or, supposing the revelation of the truth of the *things revealed*, or a *providence* that regards the actions of mankind, or a *future state*, therefore no difference between *virtue* and *vice*, but only as they happen to affect our *present interest*? My mind would be unavoidably led, one step after another, to this *sad conclusion of the whole matter*. And how then are men to blame for thinking God to be delighted in those *lewd*, *superstitious*, and *inhumane* ceremonies, which they have introduc'd into their religious worship? Why might not the character of *Belial* or *Moloch* have agreed to the *true God*? It was usual for the *Carthaginians*, to offer children in sacrifice to their Gods. The *Historian* * tells us, they at one time sacrific'd two hundred children of the best families to *Saturn*, putting them into the hands of a brazen statue of that God, out of which they drop'd into a burning furnace beneath. And how could they know the impiety of this, if they had *only effects* to argue from, which according to *their interpretation* of them, signified that their *fullen God* was angry, and not to be pleas'd on any other terms?

* Diodor. Sicul. L. 20.

§ 12. There is one thing I cannot forbear remarking now I am upon this head, and that is, how far a man may be blinded by his attachment to a favourite hypothesis. How else could one of the gentlemen now mention'd (whose *zeal for christianity* I do not question, tho' he be altogether unknown to me, as his *book* is proof sufficient of his *reasoning abilities*) have made an invidious reflection upon his adversary, which returns with double force on himself? " 'Tis easy, saith he, to see
 " what a pernicious tendency the scheme of inde-
 " pendent fitnesses is of, from the use that hath been
 " made of it, by a late advocate for deism, whose
 " whole book is built upon this principle, that duty
 " and obligation ariseth from the nature and rela-
 " tions of things." Lo! here is *another deist* who agrees with *this author*, in saying that *wisdom* hath nothing to do but with the *means*, and that therefore the *goodness of God* is a pure natural inclination, which he follows without all consideration of a supposed reason and fitness in things, which these writers treat as an absurdity. Shall I now, to bring an odium upon this principle, expose it as the *refuge of deists*, when they are fleeing from the fear of future punishment? He who first set me the example, could not justly complain of me on this account. But the truth is, I have always had such a dislike to the *argumentum ab invidia ductum*, that I hope I shall never meddle with it. The only inquiry here, ought to be which of these two deists hath *argued right* from his *principles*. That the author of *christianity as old as the creation*, must have quite mistaken the doctrine of moral fitnesses before he could think to press it into his service against christianity, is evident from *hence*, that one of these fitnesses is, *that the creature should obey his Creator, without taking the liberty to question, whe-*
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ther the command is from God, merely because he does not see the fitness of the thing commanded, unless it be a question, whether God is wiser than man ; I might have said, whether one man may not be so much wiser, or better circumstanc'd, than another, as to discern an expediency where that other cannot? But now the plain tendency of the assertion, that there is no fitness in the divine actions but what is founded in natural inclination, is that we shall be left under the utmost uncertainty, for want of knowing what these inclinations are ; or, if we determine for benevolence, we shall be justified to believe, that however men behave, they shall certainly be happy, as happy as they are capable of being made, at last : happiness, whether men take care to fit themselves for it or no, being the only thing that can satisfy that benevolence which is a mere inclination of nature ; and therefore, where there is not a moral disposition for happiness, God, for his own sake, will bestow it. What hath now been said of the *wisdom* of God, will prepare the way for that which follows concerning his *will*.



C H A P. II.

§ 1. **T**HE *infinite energy*, or active force, which, when I am contemplating the nature of the ever-blessed God, is *the other thing* that offers itself to my thoughts, as comprehended in his *idea*, may be conceiv'd to exert itself, in *willing* to do something which he sees fit to be done, or in *doing* what he wills. They, who make *will* and *power* to be in God the same, will excuse me for speaking of them as distinct ; since, whatever my sentiments

sentiments are, I do not pretend to decide any thing in that controversy, by this manner of speaking, but only follow the order of my ideas. The former of these I would call *volitive*, the latter *executive* power. I have not mention'd a *third branch* of the active force, distinct from the other two, because, to me it appears very questionable, whether there be any such, I had almost said, next to certain that there is not. Were there, indeed, any such thing as *inclination* in God, that did not come up to *express* and *full* volition, nor follow the conduct of his unerring wisdom, as volition does, but was, in order of nature *coexistent* and *independent*, this I own would be a *third way* of considering the active force, and require another, and peculiar, name, being as easily separable in our ideas from the other two, as *gravitation*, (supposing such a property were *really inherent* in matter, which I am well persuad'd it is not) would be from actual motion.

§ 2. But, in the *first place*, the *possibility* of this sort of inclinations in the *Deity* is hardly conceivable; for they will have the same kind of necessity as his *existence* itself; and tho they lie, if I may be allow'd the expression, in a *parallel direction*, with the path that is mark'd out by his infinite understanding, so as to run on with it, and to terminate in the same end, yet they will not in the least be influenc'd by it. But now, how can the active force be imagin'd to tend one way rather than another, antecedent to the knowledge of God that one of these ways is *preferable* to the other? And, were this *possible*, would it really be a *perfection*? The inclination will be nevertheless *mechanical* for being seated in an *intellectual* nature, if it is *absolutely*, *physically*, and *immediately* necessary; nor ever the less *blind* and *unintelligent*, for being united with
wisdom

wisdom and *intelligence*, if that *wisdom* and *intelligence* have no part in *guiding* the inclination, but are only subservient to it in bringing about the end, which inclination excites to the pursuit of, and is a *blind mechanical inclination, to be number'd among real absolute perfections?* or a proper foundation for all the *moral attributes* of God? Yet thus, it is we are taught to conceive of God, by some writers. The *first idea* in order (as they range them) is *goodness*, or a kind and benevolent, but *undiscerning*, inclination; then comes in *wisdom*, which is instead of eyes to inclination, not to guide it in the choice of its *end* (for to this it is determin'd by a blind necessity) but of the most proper *means* of arriving at the end propos'd.

§ 3. That there can be no place for *such inclinations* in a *perfect nature*, I farther prove after this manner. Inclination is founded in some *prior perception*, i. e. there must be some perception, pleasant or painful, that precedes inclination, or proper, *actual* inclination will never exist. It is so, even as to the appetites of *hunger* and *thirst*, which, if any, one would think, should *immediately* arise out of *nature*, plac'd in proper circumstances for it. And yet 'tis certain, all that necessarily follows the want of meat and drink, is only a *painful sensation*, not the *desire of meat and drink*. Imagine the *first man*, the instant he was created, to have only felt the same uneasiness we do, when we are hungry and thirsty, and that, while he was in this condition, a christal stream had run at his feet, and fruit of the finest taste and colour had hung just before him, yet as long as he did not know the property of water to lay thirst, and of the fruit to subdue hunger, and moreover, was not secretly admonish'd by any *effluvia* of the agreeableness of these things to his animal nature, he

he would have had no more desire to the *water*, than to the *channel* it flow'd in ; nor to the *fruit*, than to the *timber* of the *tree* which it grew on. So that even hunger and thirst, as far as they signify an *appetite*, or *actual inclination*, to meat and drink, are not the *immediate growth* of nature, but presuppose a *painful sensation*, from which the appetite appears to be entirely distinct, by this consideration that there is no connexion between them, but by the intervention of another perception. In like manner the inclination to relieve a miserable object is, many times, owing to the *pain* occasion'd in the mind of the *spectator* by the sight of such an object. And may we think that, *analogous* hereto, God is liable to *uneasy sensations*, for the removal of which, he is inclin'd to some particular actions? *Certainly*, this would not be to think worthily of him. But why may not certain ideas cause a *pleasing perception*, as for instance, the idea of a *happy creature*, that owes its happiness to God's free gift, from the pleasure accompanying which idea, there ariseth an inclination to produce such a creature? To this I might answer, that the reason why the idea of a beneficent action begets pleasure, is the apprehended fitness of such an action ; in which case, an inclination to that action, would not be an inclination of the sort I am *now* disputing against ; this having no foundation in the *fitness of things*. But, without enlarging upon this answer, I shall just observe that there is no room, even for inclinations that are *subsequent* to the ideas and perceptions of the divine mind ; that is, God does not, having perceiv'd a fitness in actions, feel in himself an inclination to them as the effect of this perception. I cannot but look on this as a very *odd notion*, though, I confess, it is by no means so dishonourable to God as the other. The grounds up-

on which I deny any such *rational inclinations* in God as well as the other sort, will be explain'd in their proper place. To proceed therefore,

§ 4. Will any one say that there must be *natural inclinations* in God, because there can be no *exciting reason* * to action without them? So that for want of this *internal weight*, the Deity must remain in an everlasting suspense, or indifference to all action? But to a Being of the most consummate wisdom, and unbounded power, not drawn aside by counter inclinations, what more *persuasive reason* can there be, than the eternal unchangeable *reason, or fitness, of things*? 'Tis fit to be done, therefore God does it. Is not this way of speaking more respectful to the Deity, than if it should be said, *he does this not because it is better than the contrary would have been, but because it better suits his inclination*? And yet this would be the plain fact, if God could *will* nothing that he was not previously *inclin'd* to, and was *inclin'd* to nothing but by a *necessity of nature*; since this would be to make inclination the *sole* moving spring of volition. The *reason of things* apprehended by the divine mind, would not at all contribute towards it: for if it hath any degree of influence, so as to bear but a *third* or *fourth* part in determining the will, it may as well determine it *wholly*, there being no more contradiction, that the two or three remaining parts which go to complete the volition, should proceed from a regard to the reason of things, than the one or two that are suppos'd to do so. *Whatever* hath

* All exciting reasons presuppose instincts and affections. *Hutcheson of the passions*. p. 216. 'Tis plain if the Deity had nothing essential to his nature, corresponding to our sweetest and most kind affections, we can scarce suppose he could have any reason exciting him to any thing he hath done. *Id.* p. 239.

any, tho' never so inconsiderable, weight, may have its *momentum* increas'd, till 'tis sufficient to break the balance.

§ 5. It is *possible*, then, for God to act without any other reason or motive, than the *intrinsic beauty and goodness of the action*. And if this be possible, then thus it is, we ought to think, he acts, as well on supposition of a *prevailing inclination*, as of none. He will, indeed, on the former supposition, act *with* inclination, but not *from* it, as the proper ultimate reason of volition, any more than on the latter. Did he act *from* inclination, in the sense now explain'd, or so as that to such like questions as these, *why does God favour the righteous more than the wicked? Why is he faithful to his promises?* &c. No farther answer was to be return'd, than because he was inclin'd to it, or because it was necessary for some end (as for instance, the bringing about the publick happiness of the rational system) which he was inclin'd to promote *without any reason*: in this case the *wisdom, equity, and goodness* of divine providence, being only occasioned by the necessary *co-incidence* of the dispositions of a perfect nature, with the nature of things, the dispensations of God's providence would be no otherwise *wise, and just, and good*, than they would be *without his consciousness*, or knowledge, of this co-incidence, which is not the ground, or reason, of his proceedings. As certainly, therefore, as all the ways of God are wise and righteous and good, they are the result of *wisdom*, and not of *unguided inclination*. The same wisdom that discovers the preferableness of one *end, one scheme, one method* to another, is inducement enough to a Being, in whom there is the most perfect rectitude of nature, to prefer that end, that scheme, that method in all his works.

§ 6. I desire never to forget the weakness and narrowness of my mind, especially when treating on matters of so sublime a Nature, in which I would carefully avoid being hasty and positive. But, after all my care, if I follow the chain of my present reasonings, I am led farther to think, that as there are no preperensions or inclinations in God, *antecedent to*, or rather *independent of*, his knowledge of the eternal and immutable relations of things, so nor *consequent* and *dependent* upon this knowledge. The progress is not from a clear *view* of what is best to an *inclination* towards it, and from thence, by another and distinct step to *volition*; but, if it be of something which God sees fit to be *immediately* done, the view of it *immediately* issues in *volition*, without any *intervening inclination*; if of something fit to be done, but not *presently*, the view of it is neither followed with inclination or volition, but only with a *purpose* of doing it, when it shall be proper: or, to speak more strictly, is attended with a *complacential thought*, that, when the *fulness of time* is come for doing it, such is the unchangeable perfection of his nature, he shall certainly *will* to do it. I freely own for myself that I am not able to separate an inclination to actions, that are not to be done till numberless ages are past, from something of uneasiness. And, were it otherwise, yet to what purpose should we suppose an inclination *so long* before it passes into volition? and, I will add, why a *Moment* before, if not from *Eternity*? that is, why *at all*?

§ 7. It may be proper to take notice, that in representing the *view* of what is fit to be *immediately done* as *immediately* connected in God with the act of *volition*. My design was only to exclude *inclination*

nation from being a sort of *medium* between these two, not every thing else whatsoever. *Inclination*, I think, is evidently shut out, but not such a *joy* or *pleasure* as is worthy of God, and essential to his happiness. The supreme Being is, in *Scripture*, stil'd, *the blessed God*; μακρῆριος, *happy*; with which agrees the common sense of mankind, that he is as much *happier* as he is *greater* than all other beings. And what is the happiness of the Deity, but the pleasure or satisfaction he enjoys? And of what nature and kind is this pleasure; and where shall we find the source of it? Is it a meer confus'd *sensation* of delight, that hath its foundation in *insin't* and *temper*, only, being without any proper *motive* to it, or *object* about which it is exercis'd? The mind recoils at the bare mention of such an absurd supposition; and yet as absurd as the notion of *blind sensation* in the Deity may appear, it is not more so, than that of *blind inclinations*; they are fit company one for the other. Shall we say then, that the happiness of the Deity hath its original from *knowledge* and *reflection*? So our noblest pleasures have; and, surely, then, much more the exalted pleasures of the supreme mind; *particularly*, from the survey of his own *ideas*, and the *relations* existing between them. These relations are infinite; whence results an infinite number of *truths*, the comtemplation of which, in the vast variety of their combinations and dependences, must give infinite delight. Truths merely *speculative*, are fruitful of pleasure; how much more *practical* Truths, or those that concern a *right conduct*, whether in God himself, or in his reasonable Creatures? The fitnesses of action as they lie before him in one boundless prospect cannot but be attended with unconceivable pleasure; which pleasure must be heighten'd by the knowledge he hath, that there is nothing, and *can be* nothing, to draw him

him

him aside into actions contrary to the fitness of things, and that therefore he shall ever act as becomes a Being of infinite perfection. This he knows with the same certainty as he knows the fitness of things; and from his *knowledge* of these fitnesses, and the *pleasure* he receives from his knowledge, we may be assur'd, that God in every instance, will act after this manner. The very supposition, that God hath pleasure in beholding these moral fitnesses, shews, that he can need no other *motive* to do what is fit, than his knowledge that it is so. The pleasure he takes in any truth must be agreeable to the *Nature* of that truth; *that is*, the truth being *moral* or *practical* (a proposition rightly affirming an action to be better than its contrary, or than the omission of it) the pleasure must arise from the consideration of it under this notion. And if God takes a pleasure in beholding what is fit to be done as such, when he farther sees that this or that is fit to be done by *him*, he cannot, when it comes to be thus fit, but will to do it, and take a pleasure in doing it. We have here then a double pleasure; one resulting from the *contemplation* of moral fitnesses, the other from *acting* according to them; which, *perhaps*, is no more than a *continuation* of that pleasure which God receives from the knowledge that he shall always so act. A wise being hath great pleasure in acting wisely, and in the assurance, that he shall act thus on all occasions, and the more wisely he acts, and the greater his assurance of his continuing to do so, the greater that pleasure; and therefore greatest of all, where the wisdom is infinite and unchangeable. But then, this pleasure is not properly the *cause* of God's acting wisely, because, the very ground of that pleasure which accompanies the divine actions, is his acting in the manner he does, because, it is acting wisely, or according

to the *reason* and *nature* of *things* as the *constant* *motive* of his *Actions*.

§ 8. Upon the whole, I would distinguish what is *less* evident from what is *more* so. That *there* are no *inclinations* in *God* at all, *distinct* from his *actual* *volitions* is to me so evident, as hardly to leave any doubt about it in my mind: that *there* are no *such* *inclinations*, as *depend* not upon any *pre-*
vious *acts* of the *understanding* is still more evident, and the proof of it more easily apprehended. But what is most evident of all, and ought in my judgment to be out of question among those, who would think in the least honourably of *God*, and not give up all his *moral* *perfections*, is that *there* are *essential* and *everlasting* *fitnesses* in *things* and *actions*, which being perfectly known to *God*, are the *true* and *invariable* *reasons* of his *conduct*. From this principle the following *corollaries* are naturally deduc'd.



C H A P. III.

First *Corollary*.

§ 1. **T**HERE can be no such unbounded liberty in the will of *God* as some have advanc'd, who (for what end, was best known to themselves) have talk'd deceitfully for *God*, and complimented him with an absolute empire over *truth* and *falsehood*, over *good* and *evil*. "It is repugnant to reason" (saith a celebrated * *Philosopher*) "that the will of *God* should not from eternity have been indif-

Descartes Respon. ad Sext. Object. Sect. 6.

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“ferent to all things, which are or ever shall be,
 “because there is nothing good or true, nothing to
 “be believ’d, or done, or omitted, the idea of
 “which was in the divine intellect, before his will
 “determin’d to effect it such as it is. Neither do I
 “here speak of priority of time, since it was not
 “there by a priority of order or nature, *i. e.* so as
 “that the idea of goodness, mov’d God to choose
 “one thing rather than another. *e. g.* He did not
 “therefore will to create the world in time, be-
 “cause he saw this to be better, than if he had
 “created it from eternity: nor did he will that
 “the three angles of a triangle, should be equal to
 “two right, because he knew that it cou’d not
 “be otherwise; but, on the contrary, because he
 “will’d to create the world in time, therefore this
 “is better than if he had created it from eternity,
 “and because he will’d that the three angles of a
 “triangle, should be necessarily equal to two right,
 “therefore this is now true, and cannot be other-
 “wise; and so of the rest. And thus this perfect
 “indifference in *God*, is a most complete argument
 “of his omnipotence. But as to *man*, finding the
 “nature of all that is good or true already deter-
 “min’d by God, and unchangeably so, it is ma-
 “nifest that he does the more readily, and, con-
 “sequently, the more *freely* embrace any good
 “or truth, the more clearly he apprehends it,
 “and that he is never *indifferent*, but when he
 “is ignorant which is the truer or better, or
 “at least doth not see it so clearly but that
 “there is some room for doubting. And thus
 “the indifference belonging to human Liberty is
 “quite another thing from that which agrees to
 “the divine.”

§ 2. In this passage we find all truth, whether *spe-*
culative or *practical*, (or truth and goodness) is en-
 tirely

tirely subjected to the free determination of God: The particular instance of a thing fit to be done is not very well chosen; it being a disputable point, whether it was possible, in the nature of the thing, for the world to have been created from eternity, and the creating of it sooner or later in time being, perhaps, a matter of arbitrary choice. But since the assertion is *universal* that there is nothing good or true, to be believ'd, or done, or omitted, but the will of God was, from eternity, indifferent to it, we have a right to suppose, that if it had come into the author's head, he would not have scrupled to say, that *fidelity* would have been no better than *perfidiousness*, *mercy* than *cruelty*, *universal benevolence* than *universal malice*; if God, of his own free will, had not made them better. I am pleas'd, however, to see these two sorts of truth plac'd upon the same foot; it rejoices me to hear that the *truth* of this *proposition*, *the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right*, is not more necessary and unchangeable than the *goodness* of some actions; and that nothing could have hinder'd the *one* from being what it is, but a power that had the same absolute dominion over the *other*. Only grant me that moral fitness is as essential to some actions, as the property now mention'd is to a triangle, and I desire no more. That *there are eternal and necessary truths*, which always were, and always will be the same, and could not possibly have been otherwise, is as plain as that there is any such thing as *truth*: since nothing could be *prov'd*, if something were not *self-evident*, and what is self-evident could not be *made so*, because *then* we could not know whether it is so or no, till we had first prov'd, that it was *the will of God*, that the truth of it should be self-evident. And some propositions being *self-evident*, the evidence of others is *demonstrative*, and so resolves into self-evidence; a *demonstration* being

chain of ideas, in which the connexion between every particular link, and the next following is evident of itself, or without any proof. That there are likewise *moral truths* which have the same immutable necessity, was attempted to be prov'd in the *two first chapters*, and appears to me in the same full light, as that there are *mathematical truths* of this kind. The nature of *justice* and *injustice*, *gratitude* and *ingratitude*, *goodness* and *malice*, *sincerity* and *fraud*, being no more liable to change, than those of a *triangle*, a *square*, and a *circle*; and having the same invariable relation of *agreement* or *disagreement* with a being possess'd of freedom and intelligence, as these several figures have one with another. Nor is it a real lessening to the *true liberty* of the *will* of God, that he cannot *arbitrarily* make *good* to be *evil*, and *evil* to be *good*, any more than it is to the *power* of God that he cannot make *truth* and *falsehood* to be the *same thing*.

§ 3. *Hobbs* is not quite so liberal to the Creator and Governor of the world, as *Descartes*; yet he too talks in a strain that is sure high enough. *A right to do all things, does essentially and necessarily adhere to the power of doing them* *; that is, in plain *English*, God hath *power* to damn his innocent creatures everlastingly, therefore he hath a *right* to do it; his mere *power* to *deceive* his creatures, by acting directly contrary to all the assurances and revelations of his mind that he hath given, or can possibly give them, is not to be question'd; therefore his *right* to deceive them, is also unquestionable. And if there be no difference between *physical* and *moral* power, or between *mere power* and *right* (as we have Mr. *Hobbs's* word for it there is not) we have then no absolute security that

* De Cive, l. I, cap. I. § 144

God will not thus act : and how much better, I pray, is the *sovereignty* ascrib'd by some to the most excellent of all Beings than this monstrous, this boundless right of *Hobbs*? For *my part*, I cannot see wherein they differ ; since each, like a vast abyss, swallows up, without distinction, every thing that is thrown into it. In all likelihood, *Hobbs* had never thought of that absurd notion, or would have been asham'd to broach it, if the *then reigning systems in divinity*, had not given authority to *that* and several other parts of his wild scheme of religion, morality and *politicks*.

§ 4. Some of late, who are far from believing *Cartes's Omnipotence*, or *Hobbs's Right*, and would entertain the supposition of God's devoting a world of *innocent creatures* to everlasting misery and torments with the utmost abhorrence, will not, however, allow that *one thing is in itself fitter than another* ; so that, if they abhor the supposition just now put, 'tis not an abhorrence of *reason* (according to their own account of it) but of *mechanism*, like those which we call *natural antipathies*. The will of God, they will tell you, is not guided by any such rule, as fit and unfit. “ What is the “ reason” (saith an ingenious person in this way of thinking *) “ why God should communicate happiness to the *good* and *innocent*? Will you say, “ that the reason for it is, that such a procedure “ is agreeable, and the contrary opposite to the “ nature of things? If so, I should then ask, to “ what things is such a procedure agreeable to “ the nature of? Is it to that of the creatures? “ Is it agreeable to their nature as *sensible* beings? “ It is certainly pleasing to them as such ; but this “ is entirely besides the question, and abstracting

* Divine Benevolence, p. 21.

“ from this sense of the word, I don’t see but that
 “ pain and misery is as agreeable to the nature of
 “ a sensible being, as pleasure and happiness.”
 But, with this gentleman’s leave, I would ask, how
 long a *sensible*, and an *innocent* being, have been
 equivalent terms? The question was concerning
 communicating happiness to a *good* and *innocent* be-
 ing; and certainly, in the nature of the things,
 there is a greater agreement between *innocence* and
happiness, than between *innocence* and *misery*, were
 it for no other reason but this, that the happiness of
 an innocent being, must, *in part*, arise out of his
 innocence or *goodness* itself, while his misery must
 be wholly *external*, and so (if not grounded in a
mistake) not only suit but ill with his innocence,
 but, like a *negative quantity*, help to destroy the
 satisfaction that flow’d from the consciousness of
 it; for inward satisfaction may be so equally bal-
 anc’d with outward pain, as taken with that,
 to have no more value than *non-existence*, or so
 over-balanc’d as to be unspeakably worse than that.
 If any one saith, that he cannot see how happiness
 agrees better with innocence than misery does, I
 can only wish him a better eye-sight. Should this
 author, upon second thoughts, say, that tho there is
 no reason why God should communicate happiness
 to the good and innocent, yet there are plain rea-
 sons, why he should not inflict misery, I shall think
 it a considerable gain to have this one moral fitness
 granted me; and laying this for a foundation, make
 no doubt of raising a superstructure of many other
 moral fitnesses upon it.

§ 5. The same author adds, a few lines after
 this: “ I don’t find (I am sorry to say it) any ne-
 “ cessary connexion between mere intelligence,
 “ tho ever so great, and the love or approbation
 “ of kind and beneficent actions.” And I, in my
 turn,

turn, am heartily glad to hear him say, that he is *sorry* not to find this connexion, not only as his *good nature* breaks out in this expression; but as it is a confession, of which he himself was not aware, of the *intrinsic excellence* of beneficent actions. He is sorry not to discern a connexion between the highest degree of intelligence, and the approbation of kind and beneficent actions? Why so? but because he is inwardly conscious (as indeed every man must be who hath not debauch'd his reason, and much more one of our author's virtue and good sense) that such actions greatly deserve approbation. For if they don't deserve approbation, there is no cause for sorrow, that mere intelligence or reason would not lead any one to approve them. But, if they deserve love and approbation, as this author doth in a manner confess, certainly the same intelligence, which discovers the merit of such actions, as the highest intelligence cannot but do, must needs approve them, and delight in doing them, if there be no opposite principle to counteract it, which there is not in God.

§ 6. 'Tis a strange question for any thinking man and lover of virtue to ask, but which I have heard some such seriously put, who were very well able to have answer'd it themselves, *you talk of the fitnesses of things, pray, what are these fitnesses fit for?* If I mistake not, I have shewn before that they are fit to engage the approbation of the greatest and wisest of all Beings; as, in the *2d part* of this *essay*, I shall endeavour to shew, that they are well fitted to awaken the attention, and to attract the love and esteem, of all intelligent agents whatsoever. They are a much fitter rule, surely, for a reasonable being to act by than mere *inclination*, be it never so right, which yet is the only thing by which these gentlemen

tlemen will allow the will of God to be bounded. I cannot forbear asking this new sort of advocates for virtue and benevolence, *Is not one action better than another?* tho', I know, they will presently return upon me, *for what, and for whom is it better?* To which I answer, without any manner of hesitation, 'tis better with regard to the *agent himself*, not excepting the *ever blessed God*. Doing good to those that are good, and to the innocent, is a *better work in itself*, and better suits *the perfections of the divine nature*, than *causelessly* and *needlessly* putting them to pain. 'Tis a better employment of that *infinite power*, which is under the direction of *infinite wisdom*, than the contrary; better fitted to yield a *reasonable*, I should have said a *divine, satisfaction*. Will it be said that nothing can be *fit* that is *impossible*; but that 'tis impossible, without *inclination*, for the divine Being himself to act one way or another? Why, placing the thing in this light, it is, *it seems*, fit that the sovereign Being, having an inclination to do good, should do good, and not evil; and that, in doing it, he should have an eye to the fitness of it. But I argue *farther*, that if one action be fitter and better than another, supposing only that it is *possible*, then the approbation and choice of it can never be *impossible*, to a Being that clearly perceives that fitness, and hath nothing to corrupt its judgment, and pervert its choice; which is evidently the case, with respect to the *supreme Being*. He hath a natural power of chusing, and can actually exercise this power, whenever a sufficient motive is not wanting, as such a motive to action can never be wanting where the action hath an apparent fitness, and there is no wrong bias to divert and restrain the choice of it.

§ 7. After all that I have said to prove, that *the will of God is in some sense limited by the nature of things,*

things, so that he can no more *will* to do some things on account of their *unfitness*, than he can to do others, because he knows them to be *physically impossible* I am far from saying, that a *liberty of indifference*, can never agree to the will of God; as some learned men have done, alledging this argument for it, that God can never act without a *sufficient reason*. If there can be instances assign'd of things in their nature indifferent, in all such instances, the will of God must be perfectly indifferent with regard to such things. And, for aught I know, there may be things of this nature, and the following may be instances of it, viz. *whether the world should be created in one part of space or another; of such a determinate quantity of matter, or a few particles more or less*. Yet even here, I must beg leave to observe, that, according to what appears to me, the will of God hath no power over the *nature* of these things, so, as by preferring one of two *indifferent things*, to make that become *better* than the other; but what was in its nature indifferent before, does in its nature continue the same still. If there was nothing to determine the divine election to that part of space, and that quantity of matter, which he made choice of in creating the world, before the world was created, then that part of space, and that quantity of matter, being chosen, are not now better than any other; since nothing in that particular division of space or portion of matter, was the reason of its being chosen, and no change hath happen'd in the nature of space and matter themselves; space and matter being in themselves the same, whether a world exists in such a part of space, and having such particular bounds and limits, or no.

To conclude, I shall venture to lay down this as a just idea of the *divine liberty*, viz. the entire dominion of the supreme mind over his own actions.

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He who is infinite in power, cannot be *over-rul'd* by any external force to do what he would not do; if left to himself: nor can he be *tempted* to do evil, by a fallacious appearance of things to his understanding; or by inclinations not subject to reason: His infinite wisdom securing him against the *first*, and his having *no* inclinations at all, to be sure none that are wrong, against the *latter*. It is absolutely certain, that God judges every thing to be as it is, and the contrary naturally *impossible*. That, having no *motive* to act otherwise, he *will* always do that which he *judges* best to be done is *morally certain*, the contrary may be said to be *morally impossible*. So the scripture says that it is *impossible for God to lie*. So we are used to say, that it is *impossible this or that* should be, meaning, that it cannot be suppos'd without the greatest absurdity. And if, in any case, this expression be allowable, it is in this; since we might with much less absurdity, conceive all the intelligent beings throughout the universe, to agree in affirming a known falsehood, without any the least temptation for doing it, than that the conduct of the divine Being, should, in a single instance, contradict the counsel of his infinite and unerring wisdom. A *natural power* in God, in its *abstract consideration*, extending alike to all actions whatsoever, is not denied. But, as it has been very well observ'd, a *moral action is the exercise of a natural capacity, under the direction of a moral judgment*. Now the power of God being under the direction of infinite wisdom, and there being no counter-inclination to draw his will aside, tho' God acts with perfect freedom, so as to *determine himself* with the utmost complacency, yet that determination, where there is a *right* on one side, and a *wrong* on the other, is as *certain* as if it was *physically necessary*. Were there no *direction* at all of any kind there could be no *action*. And where the direction lies all

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one way, the action will certainly be that way. This is not the *only instance* wherein one perfection of the divine nature is, in the *exercise* of it, limited by another. There is in God a *vis motrix*, a locomotive power; yet such is the perfection of his nature, that he cannot *exert* this power, in regard of himself, because of his *immensity*. There is, indeed, this difference between the *latter case* and the *former*, that the restraint laid by the *omnipresence* of God upon his *power*, to move from one place to another is *natural*: whereas that which the *wisdom* of God puts upon his *power to do wrong* is of a *moral kind*; but in both cases the *effect* is alike certain. I shall not, therefore, scruple to affirm, that the most perfect freedom of which we can have any idea, is the power which the wisest of all beings hath to act in all cases as his wisdom directs, without any the least interruption or controul.

§ 8. Here I intended to have pass on to *another corollary*. But, having met with a discourse *, published not long since, in which the ingenious author hath advanc'd *two notions*, on which he seems to lay no little stress, I shall take leave to stop so long as briefly to examine them. The *first* of these notions is, that *there not only may be, and even are, numberless instances, both in the natural and moral world, of things perfectly equal*; but that 'tis necessary, and of the greatest importance, for the honour of God, and as the ground of our obligation to his goodness, that *there should be, and that we should believe, there are so*. This author does himself allow that the will of God, wheresoever there is a superior fitness, is determin'd by that fitness; and saith " that for God " to act an unfit thing would be unwise, and to

* An essay on the freedom of the will in God, and in creatures. *Vid. sect. 5.* of that discourse, particularly p. 60.

“act a thing which is evil would not be good ;” from whence it necessarily follows, that supposing the nature of things to be such, that to an *infinite understanding* there must always appear a reason for choosing one thing rather than another, tho’ God, as a wise and good Being, could not, upon this *supposition*, in any one instance, choose to act otherwise than he does, yet this would be no manner of diminution of his *glory* ; unless it be more for the glory of God to act *without* a reason than *with* one, only to shew his *sovereignty* and *dominion*. The question, therefore, at bottom is about a *matter of fact* (*viz.* whether the reasons are so exactly equal for choosing this or that in a multitude of cases, that God’s preference of one to the other is *purely arbitrary*) upon which it seems to me of little consequence *which way* we decide ; or whether we decide *at all*, one way or the other ; since God as properly *determines himself*, when he hath a *reason* for his choice, as when he hath none. Nor are we *less oblig’d* to be *thankful* for the favours God confers upon us, in one case than in the other. Have I receiv’d very great and apparent *benefits* ? Were they *design’d* as such ? and altogether *unmerited* on my part ? Certainly then, without enquiring whether God had his reasons for doing *so much* for me as he hath done, or for doing *more* for me than he hath for *another*, I cannot but acknowledge that I am under the strongest engagements to *love* and *gratitude*. According to this author’s rate of reasoning, if of three persons (whom we will call *A*, *B*, and *C*) *C* hath been favour’d as much *more* than *B* as *A* hath been *less*, will not the comparison with *C*, take away from the obligation that *B* is under to thankfulness as much as the comparison with *A* inhances it ? Had the degree of favour to *A* and *B* been the same as to *C*, would *C* who now beholds *A* and *B* below him on the scale of benefits, have been
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less in debt to the goodness of God, tho' enjoying all the same blessings and favours as now, only because he would have seen *A* and *B* upon the same foot with himself? On the contrary, the happiness of a generous mind being increas'd by company, *that* which makes *C* happier, *viz.* the happiness of *A* and *B*, ought not, one would think, to lessen his thankfulness.—But ought we not to take notice, with the liveliest sentiments of gratitude, of God's having *chosen* us to be the objects of his *distinguishing* goodness, *passing by* others? and is not this *motive* to gratitude frequently insisted upon in *scripture*? I own it; and 'tis what the examples produc'd by this author put out of all doubt. But what then? 'Tis to be hop'd the ground of our thankfulness is not that God hath past by others; but that, passing by them, he hath chosen us, who might likewise have been excluded, for any *proper claim* we have to higher degrees of favour. *Merit* we have *none* any more than they; and, as for any *other* reasons, however proper and effectual they might be, to move an infinitely wise God, they do not, by being arguments of his *wisdom*, depreciate from his *goodness*, or lessen our *obligations* to it.—Will *they* who shall be living upon earth, when the gospel is become the religion of all mankind, have less reason to be thankful for this *unspeakable gift* than we have, merely because it will then be a *common blessing*, like the *light of the sun*, and not, as now, a *distinguishing privilege*? Or is there just cause why any *christian nation* should be more sparing of their praises and acknowledgments to God for giving them the gospel, because he hath not given it to them *only*? I cannot help suspecting that such thoughts proceed from the prejudices of *education*, by which a man hath been taught, in order to magnify the grace of God the more, to narrow the bounds of it; which

is such a strange way of *magnifying* the grace of God as no one, without *instruction*, would have readily thought on. And if this was the *motive* to God's making use of this *discriminating method* in placing his favours, that his grace would hereby appear the more illustrious (not, *indeed*, in itself, but with regard to those *few*, that happen to be the *objects* of it) which seems to be the opinion of some; will it not be unaccountable that the same motive, did not induce him to confine his goodness to a *single object*, that being the way to exalt it to the highest pitch of all?

§ 9. The other notion in that treatise, which I cannot come in with, is, that *where one thing is no better than another before a choice is made of it, that choice makes it better to the chooser; so that God himself by choosing any scheme or mediums, tho' antecedently no way preferable to other schemes and mediums, which he does not choose, renders that scheme and those mediums, fit, and good, and agreeable.* * Here, I am apt to think, the ingenious author deceiv'd himself, or rather was deceiv'd by *Bishop King*, for want of attending to an obvious *distinction*, between the *absolute* and *respective* goodness or fitness of two or more schemes or mediums, which lie before the view of an intelligent agent. The *absolute* goodness of any scheme is that which makes it fit to be chosen, if there be no superior reason against it. The *respective* goodness is its eligibleness above other schemes, that is, the *excess* of its *absolute* goodness, above theirs. Consequently, where the *absolute* goodness of two schemes is *equal*, neither of them is *respectively* good and fit; nor can possibly become so by being chosen. And what then should make it good and agreeable to the chooser? Upon

the account of its absolute goodness it may be agreeable: but then, forasmuch as this does not exceed the absolute goodness of the scheme unchosen, the plain and entire reason of its being agreeable is its absolute fitness to be chosen, not its being chosen *rather* than another *equally* fit. But the agent hath chosen it, and is therefore pleas'd with it: what, is he pleas'd, that he hath chosen *that*, and *not* the *other*? that cannot be, if he knows that one is no better than the other, and is not influenc'd in his choice, by a particular and unaccountable *fancy* for one above the other; which, tho' it may be frequently fact, in respect of such compounded and imperfect beings as we are, cannot, without detracting from the simplicity and perfection of his nature, be suppos'd of God: not to add, that where there is such a *partial fancy*, the agreeableness of the thing does not arise from our having actually chosen it, but from the fancy we have for it, which is the true reason of our choice.

Second Corollary.

THE *divine rectitude* is a complex term, including several ideas under it; as, for instance, a *negative rectitude*, in opposition to every wrong inclination; *rectitude of judgment*, in opposition to all ignorance and mistake about *right* and *wrong*, whether in respect of the actions and operations of the Deity himself, or the actions and operations of his free creatures: a *rectitude of will*, denoting an invariable determination of the will, by a *right judgment*, in opposition to a will that is capable of being determin'd *without*, or *contrary* to, such a judgment: and, finally, a *rectitude of delight*, signifying that as some things are fit to be delighted in, others not, so God is delighted in that, and nothing else

else, which is a proper foundation and object of delight, and that his delight is always proportionable to the occasion, and the value of the object, in opposition to a satisfaction or delight that is *unreasonable*, because *misplac'd* as to the object, or *excessive* as to the degree. All these are comprehended in the *rectitude* of the *divine nature*; the inseparable effect of which is a *rectitude* in the *divine conduct and government*; by which rectitude, besides his never doing any thing that had better not be done, is farther meant his doing every thing that is fit and becoming him to do. The assurance we have of this (the rectitude of the *divine nature* being presuppos'd) is the infinite *power*, or *all-sufficiency*, of God. He cannot be control'd or over-rul'd in any of his designs; to him it can never be *difficult* and *painful* to do any thing that is *possible*; he *wants* nothing, and he *fears* nothing, and therefore can have no inducement to do what he otherwise would not, or to leave undone what he should else have chosen to do, only for the sake of his ease, and to secure his own *private interest* and *happiness*.

Third Corollary.

§ 1. **T**HE moral attributes of God are only divers ways of considering the will of God as invariably and delightfully determin'd by his wisdom to that which is best in all possible circumstances. The attributes that go under this name of *moral*, are *goodness*, *justice*, *truth* and *faithfulness*. *Goodness* is the will of God invariably and delightfully determin'd by his wisdom to the *communication of being and happiness*, because it is fit, and as far as is fit. — *Justice* is the will of God invariably and delightfully determin'd by his wisdom to *maintain right and order*, and, for this end and purpose, to
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do all that is necessary to convince his reasonable creatures, of the regard he hath to the preservation of his *own* rights, and of *theirs*.—*Truth*, or *sincerity*, is the will of God invariably and delightfully determin'd by his wisdom *to avoid using all signs*, in his intercourses with his intelligent creatures, from which they may not only take occasion, *without necessity*, to deceive *themselves*, but would have *just ground* to charge *him* with being their *deceiver*, having a meaning to himself quite different from *that* which the words, or other signs, he made use of, *naturally* suggested, and were *intended* to suggest *.—*Faithfulness* is the will of God invariably and delightfully determin'd by his wisdom to make good all his promises and engagements.—The *Holiness* of God seems to stand for all these perfections in *conjunction*, he being by these perfections separated from all society and friendship with false gods, as his people were to be from the worship and worshippers of these false deities, and from all imitation of them in their wicked lives, their superstitious rights and customs, and impious devotion; and upon that account called a *holy people*.

§ 2. From this *general account* of God's *moral attributes*, it follows, that we have clear, distinct and proper ideas of the moral attributes of the divine nature, “ that, notwithstanding the diversity
“ of the objects, the principle of all these attributes

* Can the Deity *lie* by objecting to the mind a false image, either by words or things?—Of what use can a lie be to him? Can he be driven to it by the fear of enemies? or need it to serve his friends?—there being *no reason why* God should lie, we ought to conclude the nature of the Gods is free of this imputation. God is true in words and actions, is neither chang'd himself, nor deceives others, whether by visions, or voices, or signs, whether sleeping or waking. *Plat: ds Repub. Dial. 2.*

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“ is, strictly speaking, one and the same.” *viz.* God’s knowledge of, and delight in, that which is good and fit: in a word, that *infinity* may be predicated of the *moral* as well as of the *other*, attributes of God; as we farther learn in what sense it may be so.

§ 3. I. *We have clear, distinct, and proper, tho not adequate, ideas of the moral attributes of God.* I am sensible, this is very disagreeable doctrine to the disciples of a certain *reformer*, who will not allow that our *notions of justice and goodness*, do at all agree to these attributes as they are in the *Deity*; in whom they signify something, of which we have only a *confus’d*, or rather no, apprehension, and exceeding different from what they do when ascrib’d to men. And, the truth is, as long as they resolve to give such representations of the *decrees* of God, of his *works*, and of, what they call, his *glory*, as they universally do, they are perfectly in the right of it, to take it for a thing granted, that we have no *proper* idea of these moral perfections (tho, they would do still better to *prove* it too, if they could) since they must be conscious of its being a desperate undertaking to reconcile the divine proceedings, according to their scheme of them, with the conceptions which all mankind, not excepting those who have improv’d their reason to the highest degree, have of justice and goodness. And not only *these men*, but *others* too, who know how to reason admirably well upon the attributes of God when they please, have, as often as a different purpose was to be serv’d, talk’d in the same strain. -

§ 4. Bishop King is the man who hath most distinguished himself on this head. ’Tis true, his discourse does particularly concern the *fore-knowledge*
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of God. But then, he lays down such unlimited assertions, that no reader can forbear concluding from them, that his opinion was the same of the moral attributes as of the rest; notwithstanding his not particularly insisting upon them. “ Those powers, properties, and operations, the names of which we transfer to God, are (saith he) but faint shadows and resemblances, or rather indeed *emblems* and *parabolical figures* of the divine attributes which they are design’d to signify. —A map is only paper and ink diversified with several strokes and lines which in themselves have very little likenesses to earth, mountains, valleys, lakes and rivers. Yet none can deny but by proportion and analogy, they are very instructive: and if any should imagine that these countries are really paper, because, the maps that represent them are made of it, and should seriously draw conclusions from that supposition, he would expose his understanding, and make himself ridiculous. And yet such as argue from the faint resemblances that either scripture or reason give us of the divine attributes and operations, and proceed in their reasonings, as if these must, in all respects, answer one another, fall into the same absurdities that those would be guilty of, who should think that countries must be of paper, because the maps that represent them are so.” And, in the next paragraph, applying this general observation to the particular case of God’s decrees and predestination, he saith, “ We ascribe these to God, because the things signified by these words, bear some resemblance to certain perfections, which we believe to be in him: but there is as little likeness between the one and the other, as between the countries and maps which represent

“ them * .” — If, agreeably to what that *writer* saith here of the *foreknowledge* of God, it be affirm’d, that there is as little likeness between our *ideas* of the *justice* and *goodness* of God, and the attributes *themselves*, as between a map of a country, and the country represented by it (which seems to have been his sense of the matter) I cannot but regard it as not only a very *false* but *dangerous* position. Maps are of use to help us in conceiving of the countries they describe; because, as to the *situation* and *bounds* of the several parts of the map one with regard to another, there is suppos’d to be an exact and *proper* correspondence between the map and the country; and because, as to other *intentions* of a map, having *seen* the earth itself, mountains, valleys, lakes, and rivers, any *arbitrary* sign will serve to *revive* the ideas of them in our minds, which we can easily apply to any particular country, mountain, river, which we have not seen. But now supposing the first and only object a man had seen was a *map*. I ask, what sort of a representation the map would be to such a man? Would it answer the same ends to him it does to us? of no more use would our ideas of the divine perfections be to us, if they were only *emblems* and parabolical *figures* of those perfections, and represented them no better than a map does a country; since, having never convers’d with the attributes and perfections themselves, we must be continually and unavoidably blundering in all our contemplations and discourses about them; and should not, after all, know what we were to *believe* concerning God, or to *expect* from him; using the words *wisdom*, *justice*, and *goodness*, without any *certain ideas* affix’d to them. Whereas, from the account just before given of the

* Divine predestination, &c. a sermon preach’d before the house of lords in *Ireland*, 1709.

moral perfections of God, it appears that the *general ideas* of them, are as clear and distinct as of the same things when attributed to other intelligent beings.

§ 4. 'Tis very true; as these attributes are exercised and imploy'd in the *works* of God, we are often at a loss to make a judgment of them. But then we know that the *works* of God cannot but be agreeable to his *nature*; so that God himself being wise, and just, and good, we may be confident that wisdom, justice, and goodness, belong to all his providential dispensations. As in the *natural world* the wisdom of God is clearly seen in the *laws* and *phænomena* of it, with the exception of a few instances, which, tho' we cannot tell how they discover the wisdom of God, we cannot prove to be inconsistent with it; so, in the *moral world*, the wisdom, justice, and goodness of God, shine out in a thousand instances; and, tho' there are some appearances (more it must be confess'd than in the *natural world*) which are not easy to be accounted for, perhaps not *possible* at present, yet we cannot say they do any of them contradict *our clearest ideas* of wisdom, justice, and goodness, as *some cases* evidently do, which may be *suppos'd*, and which therefore can never be *real cases*. To annex a greater degree of misery than of happiness to the existence of an *innocent creature* (greater, I mean, upon the whole) is repugnant to the most obvious ideas of *justice*, as inflicting the *least* degree of misery (tho' it were but as the dust of the balance compared with the happiness which the creature enjoy'd) when it was neither *deserv'd*, nor *promov'd any valuable end*, would be contrary to the *wisdom* and *goodness* of the infinite Being, and for this reason, it is not possible that any such instances should ever occur.

§ 5. 'Tis *one thing not to see the fitness* of this or that apprehended part of the divine conduct; *another to see the unfitness* of it. The latter only is sufficient to prove, that God is not wise, and just, and good; or that our ideas of wisdom, justice, and goodness are wrong; or that the thing is falsely ascribed to God. But now as to any such *manifest unfitness*, it hath never yet *been*, and, we may safely conclude, never *will be* prov'd of any one thing which God *hath done*, or which 'tis *certain he will do*. *Difficulties* there are, such and so many, that it would be the utmost vanity and arrogance in any man to think of surmounting them. But then, these difficulties, proceeding from our imperfect views of things, are no real objection against what hath been asserted, of our having clear ideas of the moral attributes of God; any more than our not being able to give a satisfactory account to our selves, of some things in the management of a *family*, a *city*, a *kingdom*, which yet may be order'd very wisely and justly, because we have not been let into the secret of affairs, and are unacquainted with the interests of the society, and the characters and actions of the members of it, will prove us not to have a proper idea of the wisdom, justice, and goodness, which belong to the character of the *master of a family*, a *magistrate*, or a *sovereign prince*; or that, because we are not competent judges of the fitness of some things, there is nothing concerning which we can pronounce that it would be unfit.

§ 6. What we are concern'd to remember is that the *larger any society*, and the more extensive any *plan*, the less likely is it that we should be qualified to pass a definitive sentence upon the wisdom of the *whole plan*, or the propriety of any *part*;

part; since to the *latter* it is necessary, that we should have all the parts, even the most distant, with which such a part is connected, lying before us; and to the *former*, that we should be able to take in at once, that plan and all other plans or schemes, with which it must be compared, before it can be known to be, or not to be, the best. Consequently, as the government of a *universe*, compos'd of several worlds, is a plan or design, with regard to us, of a kind of *infinite extent*, and not to be executed, but in the course of *many ages*; creatures, like us, of narrow faculties, a very scanty duration, and but poorly situated to make observations, should not be very hasty to reject a thing as unfit, because we do not discern the fitness of it, and, thereupon, to resolve with ourselves that it is unworthy of God, and cannot have him for its author; altho there be very good reasons to demonstrate that *it is of God and not of Men*. The thing may be very fit, and yet the fitness of it not appear to us; unless our understandings are commensurate to the natures and relations of things, and God can have no reasons for any particular *act* or *Æconomy* of providence which lie conceal'd from our searches. Nay, supposing we are not only ignorant of any reasons for God's acting after this or that manner, but can assign plausible reasons, why he should not so act, yet we ought to be very sure that these reasons are at least a *counterpoise* to the *evidence* we have of God's having *really* acted, or revealed his design to act, so, before we determine against it. If instead of using this modest caution, we peremptorily decree, that such a thing cannot be, notwithstanding the evidence for the truth of the fact is vastly superior to the pretended reasons against the *expediency* of it, we are guilty of inexcusable rashness and presumption. Whether this is not the

the case (to make the best of it) when men argue against the truth of the *Jewish revelation* from the numerous *positive institutions* which it contain'd; and against the truth of the *Christian*, from its *imperfect promulgation*, may be left to every serious and impartial person to judge.

§ 7. Let me add this farther, that no man can be justified to treat the *gospel* as an *imposture*; only for the sake of certain representations of the deity, that pass for *doctrines of the gospel*, but, after the most heedful examination, appear *manifestly unfit*, and therefore *false*. Be we never so positive, and upon never so good grounds, of the falsity of the doctrine, that will be no proof at all, that the *religion of Christ* is false, if it cannot be shewn to be a *doctrine of christianity*. Is there no finding out any other meaning of the words and expressions of *scripture*, but this, which we cannot help thinking absurd? and is this absurd sense *evidently* their true one? Nothing less than a kind of absolute certainty of these things, is fit to be oppos'd to the numerous and most convincing arguments of the truth of the *christian religion*, which will come in the way of any one that seeks for them. Better suppose the greater part of the christian world to have been in an error, one age after another, especially if the error hath not been of dangerous consequence to *morals*, (tho' one would not be forward to do this) than that *christianity* itself is a mere *fable* and *delusion*.

§ 8. 2. Notwithstanding the diversity of the objects, the principle of God's moral perfections is one and the same; viz. His knowledge of, and delight in, that which is right and good. What the school-divines talk of the identity of the *essence* and *attributes* of God, and of *all* the attributes, one with another, is

is true enough of the *moral attributes*, in the sense now assign'd. The *identity* they meant, (if indeed, they had properly any meaning) was a *metaphysical abstraction*, quite out of the reach of plain understandings; and holds alike of all the attributes and operations of the divine mind, which, according to them, have no real distinction among themselves; the *understanding* is the same thing as the *will* of God; and his *power* as his *holiness*. And yet, which is a little odd, the same men who with so much zeal, contend for this *unintelligible simplicity* in the divine Nature, at other times forget themselves so far as to make some of the attributes not only *seemingly*, but really, clash and interfere with each other; while *mercy* is not to be satisfied without the *pardon of sin*, nor *justice* and *holiness* without exacting the *full punishment* of it. On one side is *tender compassion*, on the other an *unrelenting rigour*. It cannot, indeed, be denied, that they have found a way, as they think, to reconcile this difference, by such an *exchange of persons* between the *sinner* and his *surety*, that the surety hath *all* the guilt of the sinner *properly* transfer'd on him, and *properly* bears *all* the punishment due to that guilt; and, on the other hand, the sinner, united by faith to his surety, hath not only the *effects* of his righteousness; but his righteousness *itself* imputed to him. But, I fear, if it be essential to the notion of *justice* to insist on the *entire* payment of the sinner's debt, the method of reconciliation here propos'd falls short of the end aim'd at by it, and so must be look'd upon as of *man's devising*, not as the *counsel of God*. For (not to urge the absurdity of making the sufferings of an *innocent* person for a *few hours* in any proper sense equal to the punishment of millions of *guilty* creatures (whose sufferings being the effect of *guilt* must be of a quite different kind, throughout *innumerable*

rable ages, which is much such another whim, as that of crowding *eternity* into an *instant*; without urging of this) let it only be considered, that to appease the justice of God, as they describe it, (not as the justice of a *Creator* and *Governor*, but *analogous* to the passion of *revenge* in a weak man, when he hath receiv'd a personal injury, to appease, I say, such a justice as this) the punishment must not only be adequate to the guilt of the sin, but must light on the sinner himself. *Vicarious* sufferings will never satisfy such a justice as is rather a *physical affection* than a *moral attribute* under the direction of wisdom. What pleases the offended person is to see the offender himself smart for his fault. Or, if they will needs have it to be otherwise; will not the consequence be, that, for the same reason that justice excuses the sinner from suffering *in his own person*, it might, in such a degree as wisdom should judge proper, abate of the *punishment*?

§ 9. But now, as the *unity* of God's *moral perfections* is an easy intelligible notion, as *before explain'd*, signifying nothing else, but their being connected together by one general idea, and resolv'd into one common principle, *viz.* the will of God directed by his wisdom, or a wise love of all that is good, according to the *degree* of its goodness, and of nothing else; in which respect it differs widely from the inexplicable divinity of the *schools*; so this plain and simple way of conceiving of these attributes does at once shut out that *unyielding justice* which some have taught, and that *easy flexible goodness* that hath been dreamt of by others. *Divine justice* will take that way and observe that degree and measure in *punishing*, which *wisdom* prescribes, going *no farther* than is *fit*, and, therefore, we have reason to think, unless

less in case of *final obstinacy*, not to the *extremity* of things; since the *original design* of God, regarded only the *happiness* of his creatures, not their *grief* and *punishment*, which becomes fit only thro' their voluntary abuse of those capacities of happiness, and opportunities and advantages for obtaining it, which God hath given them. *Happiness* (either actually enjoy'd, or capable of being enjoy'd) is the remote foundation of all *moral fitness*: abstracted from the connexion it hath with happiness, nothing in the world is of the least value. Any farther, therefore, than the obligations of the reasonable creature to his Maker, for the capacities and means of happiness, which he hath violated, render it fit and necessary, God will not be severe to mark *iniquity*. And who will pretend to say that this must always be to the extent of its *demerit*? One would rather think, that forasmuch as the only conceivable motive to God's communicating being was, that he might bestow the capacities of happiness, if the creature hath not made that use of these capacities which he ought to have done, it should not be morally fit and necessary for God *immediately* to put the guilty creature out of *all possibility* of recovering that happiness, for which it was originally intended; especially, when the natural weaknesses of the creature are such, and the temptations in the midst of which he is plac'd, are so numerous and strong, as in a manner to *entitle* him to compassion; one would not think, I say, if we only considered the reason of things, that this should be fit; as we certainly know from *revelation* that God hath not proceeded with this severity.

§ 10. Nor may we therefore regard the *goodness* of God, as such an *easy flexible* thing as others have imagin'd it. God cannot but disapprove every *ac-*
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tion, and much more every *character*, that is *moral-ly evil*; and the *question* is, whether as it is fit that he should disapprove it, it be not likewise fit and congruous, that he *show* his disapprobation? The disapprobation being perfectly just, and relating to the creature, is it not reasonable, that the creature should be made sensible of it, that he may be the more affected with the sense of his own ill conduct? And how can this be if sin go altogether unpunish'd? or if the punishment be next to none? or be not distributed by some rules of proportion, so as that the *most guilty* shall be the *most miserable*? Which yet we know is not always done in *this life*? there must, *therefore*, be a *future state*. Nor do I see any necessity of supposing that *all* punishment hath the nature of an *admonition*, either to the *sufferer* himself, whose amendment is designed by it, or by way of *example* to others. Did the incorrigibleness of the offender take away all prospect of his profiting by his punishment, and we should set aside the consideration of any other being concern'd in the example, it seems highly fit that the sinner should be made to know the evil of his ways, and his having incurr'd the displeasure of his Maker; and that in order to his *knowing* this, he should *feel* it. And *here* it is that I should place the expediency of punishment as far as it relates solely to the *impenitent sinner*: not in the bare congruity between guilt and punishment, but in the sinner's knowledge of his guilt, and the design of his punishment to work in him a stronger conviction of it, and to express the displeasure of his offended sovereign against him upon that account; that he may be *self-condemn'd*, and, tho' unwillingly, do homage, in his own thoughts, to the holiness of God, giving him also the glory of that goodness which he hath abus'd. So that, should we suppose the sinner to have lost all consciousness of his

his deserving what he suffers, and to esteem his sufferings the pure effect of arbitrary will and pleasure, not a proof of God's abhorrence of sin; as, on the one hand, there would be no *injustice* in the sufferings of such a sinner, because they were deserv'd; so neither, on the other, would there be any *fitness* in them, if the notion, I have here offer'd, be right.

§ II. As to *vicarious* punishment, or punishment by *substitution*, the wisdom and fitness of it is not difficult to be shewn in the *only example* we have of that kind, for there being in the sufferings and obedience of *Christ*, taken in connection with the glory that followed, a peculiar fitness to shew God's disapprobation and abhorrence of sin, and his approbation and love of holiness, *Christ*, by his sufferings, may very properly be said to have made *satisfaction* for sin; *that phrase* not necessarily implying that Christ hath paid an *equivalent*; but only that he hath done and suffer'd what God was pleas'd, in his infinite wisdom, to accept in lieu of the punishment due to the sinner himself; so as to require nothing farther of him, in order to his obtaining a happy and glorious immortality, but his compliance with certain necessary terms, which the grace of God will render possible to him. God, the wise and righteous Governor of the world, was *satisfied* with the death of Christ, as a *sufficient foundation* for a *new covenant*, a covenant of life and immortality upon the condition of sincere, tho' imperfect, obedience; because he knew this death, with all its concomitants, was fitted to declare both his *love* to *sinners*, and his *hatred* of *sin* in the most conspicuous manner that could have been chosen for the illustration of *both*; and, thereby, most effectually to answer, at the same time, all the ends and designs of the divine government.

This I apprehend to be the *scripture doctrine* of *satisfaction*, in which I see nothing but what, instead of offering violence to the acknowledg'd principles of reason, is perfectly consonant to them.

§ 12. We learn from hence in what sense *infinity* may be predicated of the *moral attributes* of God: not *absolutely* and *separately* as of the rest, but *relatively* to the *wisdom* of God, and the *internal energy* of his nature; both which together, produce a love of adherence to that which is good, that requires (if I may so say) a more than infinite contrary attraction to overcome it. It is with relation to *these*, not to the *actual display* of the moral attributes, *ad extra*, that we are to estimate the degree of these attributes. The attributes exist in the divine nature before they are exercised; nor, when they are exercised, must we imagine the *effects* to be an *adequate measure* of the perfections themselves; any more than from the *power* of God, which is infinite, we can infer that the things produc'd by it are likewise infinite. All the fitnesses of things, and actions, in all possible circumstances and combinations are clearly seen by the divine understanding; *moral good* in all its excellency and beauty, and *moral evil* in all its turpitude and deformity; the entire and unchangeable difference between them, so that as no reason *is to be offer'd* against the *one* and for the *other*, none can be offer'd by means of *any change* that can happen out in the course of everlasting ages. This prospect of the divine mind is boundless. And forasmuch as God's love of that which is good, his adherence to it (if I may so express myself) and delight in it; must correspond to the knowledge he has of it, and the active force of his most blessed nature; no bounds can be set to this *love*, this *adherence*,

rence, this *delight* ; nor can the will of God be otherwise than right in all its determinations. In this sense principally the scripture is to be understood, when it affirms *there is none holy as the Lord, none good but one, that is God*. As all other beings are holy and good only by *derivation* from God, not *originally* and *independently* as he is, so they come *infinitely short* of him in these perfections, and therefore, are not, by the perfection of their natures, absolutely immutable, like him. If we consider only the *negative* part of holiness, consisting in an actual freedom from all moral evil, or the mere abstract rectitude of the will, there is a kind of equality between one innocent *creature* and another, of a superior order, and between the innocent *creature* and the *Creator*. But when we speak of *positive* holiness, or the *force* with which the will is carried to that which is good, and the *approbation* of, and *delight* the mind hath in it, the equality vanishes ; this, where other things are equal, being always in proportion to the wisdom and active force of each nature. Take several bodies of unequal quantities of matter, tho' all gravitate the same way, yet their gravities are as their quantities of matter ; which is the reason that a force sufficient to stop one, will not hinder the descent of another. We may use this instead of a better illustration of the disproportion in point of *moral excellence*, between an *angelical* and *human* mind, and between the *supreme Being* and the *highest* angel. The *understanding* of an *angel* will be own'd to be much larger than the understanding of a *man*, and the determination of the *will* to virtue in a *good angel*, to be as much stronger and more unconquerable than in an *innocent* man, as his understanding is more capacious, and the activity of his nature greater. But what is the highest angel in this regard to the *most high* God ? The *moral impossibility*

bility that God should be unjust, unmerciful, unfaithful, in a single instance, is as much greater than the security which any of his creatures have *in themselves*, against their being so, as the compass of his understanding, and the energy of his ever blessed nature, exceed theirs. The temptation had need to be *infinitely* strong, to be a *balance* to infinite perfection; and *more* than infinite (which is a contradiction) to prevail over it; whereas, such is the rectitude of the divine nature, and such the extent of the divine power, that *God cannot be tempted with evil* in the least conceivable degree; so far is he from being liable to be tempted to such a degree, as would endanger his acting contrary to the dictates of his all-perfect mind. Till I view'd things in this light, I must confess myself to have ascrib'd infinity to the *moral* attributes of God from a sort of implicit faith, or in compliance with the language establish'd, without having any proper distinct idea of what I said.

§ 13. From hence, by the way, I would observe, that *Cartes's* account of the *human will* is not entirely just. “ It deserves, saith he *, to be re-
 “ mark'd, that as to other things I find not any
 “ power or quality in myself, which I possess to
 “ such a degree of perfection, that I cannot con-
 “ ceive how the same can be greater and more
 “ perfect: *e. g.* If I consider the faculty of *intelli-*
 “ *gence*, I am presently sensible of its being ex-
 “ ceedingly short and confin'd, as it is in me; and
 “ at the same time I form the idea of another
 “ understanding much greater, yea, the greatest
 “ that can be, and even *infinite*; and, for this
 “ very reason that I am able to form an idea of it,
 “ I conclude it to belong to the nature of God;

* *Meditat.* 4.

“ and so of other faculties. The *will* is the only
 “ power which I experience to be of such extent
 “ in myself, that I cannot have a conception of any
 “ greater; infomuch that it is in respect of *this*,
 “ more especially, that I bear a sort of image and
 “ likeness of God; for tho’ the will be without
 “ all comparison greater in God than in me, both
 “ with regard to the *knowledge* and *power* that
 “ are joined with it, and render it more firm and
 “ efficacious, and the *object*, as it extends itself to
 “ more things; yet, *precisely consider’d*, it doth
 “ not seem greater, because it consists in nothing
 “ else but this, that we can either do or not do a
 “ thing (*i. e.* either *affirm* or *deny*, *pursue* or *avoid*
 “ it) or, rather, only in this, that we are carried to
 “ affirm or deny, to pursue or avoid what is pro-
 “ posed by the understanding in such a manner,
 “ that we perceive ourselves to be determin’d to
 “ it by no external force.” But must not the *in-*
trinsic original force of the *will*, bear a constant pro-
 portion to the perfections of the being in other
 respects? Is a being infinite in *presence*, in power,
 in understanding? And must not the *quantity* of
will (I beg leave to use the expression for want
 of a better) be answerable; so as that we may be
 allowed to say there is more *will* in God, as well
 as more *understanding*, more *power*, more *presence*.
 That we are not able to form a clear distinct idea
 of the internal force and extent of the *will*, is not
 to be wonder’d at, since we are as little able
 to conceive what the *power* of willing itself is,
 absolutely consider’d—As for what he brings in
 proof of his notion, *viz.* “ that in willing we per-
 “ ceive ourselves to be determin’d by no external
 “ force,” I cannot, for my own part, discern any
 thing like an argument in it; for besides that the
 will, tho’ self-determin’d, is not determin’d with
 that internal spring and vigour in me as in the
 Deity,

Deity, and therefore cannot be reckon'd equal in two agents so infinitely unlike ; there is another thing to be observ'd, and that is the fallacy in the expression of *not being determin'd by an external force*. The will cannot be determin'd by an external force, much less can we perceive it to be so determin'd, in *this sense* that we are compell'd to *will* a thing *against our will* ; yet in this *other* sense of the words the will may be determin'd by an external force, that by a *superior influence* we may be so irresistibly carried, to will a thing as not to be able to will the contrary, while we are under that influence. Which very thing shews that there is no proportion between the *will*, any more than between the *understanding* of *God* and the *Creature*.

Fourth Corollary.

§ 1. **T**HE blessedness of the Deity, is not at all lessen'd by the misconduct of his free creatures, and the severity which this obliges him to make use of either by way of correction, or final punishment. For, whence doth the blessedness of that adoreable Being, according to our conceptions of it, flow, but from the all-comprehending views of his mind, the perfect and unchangeable rectitude of his will, and his being possess'd of power without bounds, and a nature not liable to change ? Now neither of these can be affected by any thing *without* him. His understanding is a region of pure unmixed light, that can never be overcast with a cloud, in which there is an endless variety of the most beautiful scenes. His will never deviates from the rule of right mark'd out by his wisdom ; nor can his power ever fail in the execution of what he wills ; nor his being, or any of his perfections, decay, or be other than they are. And, as he can never be
disap-

disappointed, in respect of *himself*, by ignorance or impotence ; by being not able to effect his designs, or not knowing the most proper manner in which to do it ; so nor in respect of any of his *creatures*, by their refusing to do what he would have them. For, if we take the matter right, the will of God *directly* regards his *own* actions, and only *indirectly* those of his *creatures*. He directly and absolutely wills the *existence* of intelligent and free beings ; such beings therefore shall exist, nor can any thing hinder. He absolutely wills to *command* these his intelligent creatures, either by the voice of reason or revelation, to do some things, and forbear others ; and withal he wills to put it in their *power*, immediately or remotely, by the exercise of their natural faculties, or the aids of supernatural grace, to act or forbear acting agreeably to his commands ; this is *absolutely* his will, and because it is so, his creatures will be *oblig'd* to do, and *able* to do whatever God requires of them. So far the will of God is not liable to be defeated. For let men act never so wickedly, it will not cease to be true, that it was *their duty* to have acted otherwise ; and in like manner that it was *in their power* ; which was all that God will'd ; he did not *directly* will their *acting* right, seeing, then, they would certainly have so acted (the immediate object of such a will being something to be done by himself, *viz.* exerting such a powerful influence, as often as it was needful to secure the event, as would determine his creatures to act according to his pleasure) but he *directly* will'd his laying them under an *obligation*, and giving them a *power* to act right.

§ 2. But is not the happiness of created beings contingent ? depending upon the use they make of their *liberty* ? Very true ; it is so ; because God wills it should. The *original capacities* of happiness

are bestow'd without any condition ; but not *actual* happiness. The creatures may make themselves miserable, because the will of God is that, if they are happy, their happiness should be the result of their own choice. They are therefore made capable of avoiding misery, and obtaining happiness ; and, for this very reason, that they are capable of obtaining happiness, and will not be perswaded to make use of the only proper means for that end, it is the will of their Creator that they should not enjoy it. Wherefore, since God always wills what is right, and his will is never without effect, what possible room is there for *uneasiness* and *disappointment* ? having done all that it became him, both as a *wise* and *good* Being, to do, he can have no pain from the knowledge of his own conduct, but, on the contrary, must have the highest satisfaction : nor can he receive any pain, by way of *involuntary sensation*, from the deserved and necessary punishment of any of his creatures, because he hath no *mechanical affection* by crossing which such sensations must arise. Indeed, were God inclin'd to make his creatures happy, antecedently to the consideration of their moral character and qualifications, it would be difficult, perhaps impossible, to explain how any of his creatures could suffer, and he not suffer with them (that expression of *scripture* not seeming to have any thing figurative in it, upon this supposition, *in all their affliction he was afflicted*) the consequence of which would have been, that *for his own sake*, he would have made none of his creatures *liable to sin and misery*.

Fifth Corollary.

§ 1. **T**HIS will help to solve that difficult problem concerning the origin of evil. If all things as they came out of the Creator's hand were very good, by what way had evil its entrance into the world? It could not be without a cause. Was that cause good or evil? If good, how could it produce evil? Might not darkness spring from light as soon as evil out of good? If the cause was evil; then there was something that was originally evil, and so evil had no beginning.

§ 2. The answer lies plain, that God made every thing good, but, for wise reasons, not immutably so. He saw fit to make his reasonable creatures free, and to suspend both their future highest happiness, and the continuance of the present, upon the right use of their freedom. This freedom they abuse, this abuse is a moral evil, and productive of pain, both of body and mind, which is natural evil. That there would not have been pain and uneasiness of some sorts, and in a lesser degree, while the state of trial lasted, tho' there had been no sin, I shall not pretend to affirm. But then, if there had, yet as this pain and uneasiness would have been only an appendage to a state of trial, and no more than that state, tho' a state of innocence, requir'd, and therefore, we may be confident, not incompatible with a very happy life; the condition of innocent creatures, on their trial, with all its disadvantages and imperfections, would have born little or no resemblance to the present scene of things, in which the evils of life are so numerous and weighty, as in many cases to render it disputable which deserves the preference, such a state

of existence (were there no better in prospect) or not to be at all. Surely, the *primeval state* of man, must have been as different from this, as the world, after God had finished his six days works, was from the *Chaos*. The present state of things, could only be introduc'd by some voluntary defection of man from his Creator and Lord ; agreeably to the account of things in the *sacred records*. And if *moral evil* must have been prior to those *natural evils* which are the portion of the *present life*, much more must it be so to all that evil which is *final*, and separate from any good sufficient to compensate for it. Natural evil, *at present*, is *corrective* of moral, or a *preservative* from it, and, by exercising and improving the virtuous dispositions of the mind, may be the occasion of greater natural good in the issue. In this sense *Plato's* * reasoning is very just, “ That if men suffer, it must “ not be said that they are miserable, and that God “ makes them so ; but, rather, that sinful men, “ being miserable, need correction, and when “ corrected are herein favour'd and assisted by the “ Deity.” But the case is so very much alter'd, when, no good remaining to counterbalance the evil, existence itself becomes a burthen and a torment, or at best ceases to be worth any thing, that there is no possible way, that I can see, to reconcile God's putting a reasonable being into such a state of existence, but supposing, that he hath deserv'd it by the perverse use of his liberty ; or obstinate refusal to be made happy. And this, indeed, will effectually do it ; the *fitness*, being first prov'd or granted, of God's creating *free agents*. Now one way of proving the *fitness* of this is from the *existence* of liberty ; *God hath made free beings, therefore it was fit such beings should be made*. And this

* *De Rep. lib. 2.*

should satisfy all who believe that infinite wisdom presides over the universe, tho' they did not perceive what was the ground of this fitness, about which the advocates for fitness themselves are not perfectly agreed.

§ 3. " God (saith one) could not approve his
 " own work, without regarding and consulting
 " the *order* of the universe ; and how could
 " that order have been establish'd, or how
 " the system of creatures have been completed,
 " if no liberty had been granted, no agents creat-
 " ed? had not men and angels been free, they
 " could have been no more than *conscious instru-*
 " *ments, and intelligent machines* ." But, with the
 leave of this excellent author, and others that talk
 after the same manner, the true idea of liberty
 ought *first* to have been clear'd and distinguish'd,
 before they had affirm'd that without liberty men
 and angels would not have been *agents*, but only
conscious instruments, and intelligent machines. This
 is very true, if by liberty no more be meant than
 a *self-determining power*, without which, 'tis plain,
 there can be no proper agency, and (were it no
 where to be found) no motion in the universe, but
 an eternal *quietism*. But *that* liberty which is given
 to rational creatures as the foundation of their *trial*
 means something more than this. † It is a power

to

* Divine Rectitude, p. 25.

† It must be carefully observ'd, that the liberty, to be accounted for, is that power which the *event* too often proves rational beings to have of making themselves *guilty* and *miserable*. So that the thing is not only *naturally* but *morally* possible, and may be suppos'd to happen without any manner of absurdity. What is the *ground* of this freedom, particularly in *mankind*? does it not proceed from the imperfection of reason, the difficulties attending the steady practice of virtue, and the enticements of objects and enjoyments suited to the appetites
 and

to determine wrong, so circumstanc'd that the agent eventually may, and sometimes does, act wrong. Now either there is no occasion for such a liberty as this, that a being may pass for a proper agent, or God himself is no more than an intelligent machine. The truth is, the only liberty requir'd to the notion of agency is that of *self-determination*; and such a liberty there might have been in men and angels, without the least hazard of their ever deviating from *the rule of righteousness*.

§ 4. “ But it is farther argued, that liberty is
 “ requisite, as in respect of *order*, so in respect of
 “ *happiness*, to which it not only conduces, but is
 “ essential, so far that no happiness can be perfect,
 “ or rais'd to any considerable height, without
 it *.” Here again, the distinction of liberty just now mention'd, is overlook'd. Were there not a self-determining power, the happiness of the best and greatest of all beings, and so in proportion of his

and affections of human nature? Let us then only suppose such a *uniformity* in the nature of man, that reason and inclination point the same way, such a strength and vigour that no instance of duty costs him any labour and pain, and that moreover his knowledge hath all the clearness and extent of which it is capable; and, by this means, tho' we shall not destroy *moral agency*, we shall leave little or no room for *moral evil* to come into the world. *Why then is man form'd and situated so very differently?* Here's the *difficulty*; which the reason for liberty taken from *agency* doth not at all touch. Since there might be *free agency* (and is so, as was shewn before, in considering the freedom of the Deity) where there is no such liberty as *this*, which, as it implies a *moral possibility*, and, in some cases, even a *probability*, of acting wrong, is, *comparatively only*, a *perfection*, but, *absolutely* consider'd, a *defect*: upon which account I must own the expression of this liberty being *given* is hardly proper; that which is given being, *directly*, a *power to act right*, attended with a power to act *wrong* from the imperfection of the agent, and the circumstances of being which he is plac'd in.

Divine Rectitude, p. 26.

intelligent

intelligent creatures, would not be so great as it is: But where there is this self-determining power, what need of any farther liberty? Is it necessary to the complete happiness of any being that he hath a power, or once had a power, of making himself miserable? a power, properly so call'd; or that may, without the least absurdity and contradiction, be suppos'd reduc'd into act? from whence then is the perfect felicity of the supreme Being? Not but I believe, that men and angels, having successfully pass'd thro' a state of trial, are the happier for having been once free; not *merely* from a consciousness of having approv'd themselves in a state of trial, when they might have done otherwise; but from the apprehension they have of an antecedent or original fitness, that they should be plac'd in such a state. And here, as I take it, the whole weight of the argument rests, which I shall endeavour very briefly to explain.

§ 5. There is something in the idea of a reasonable creature that makes it immediately fit, that he should be free; to the end, his virtue and happiness may be suited to his nature. The being of a creature is *contingent*; for he might not have been; so, therefore, ought the *moral goodness* of the creature to be, that it may carry the marks of the being it belongs to. The creature might not have existed, or tho he existed, he might not have been in that state of elevated and confirmed goodness, to which, *by patient continuance in well doing*, he is finally advanc'd. The creature is dependent upon his Maker; every thing he hath is borrowed; it is highly fit he should acknowledge this debt, and that his acknowledgment should be so entirely from himself, as not to be extorted by the conviction of his understanding, and the regularity of his will, in the absence of all temptation to the

CONTRARY.

contrary. The happiness of all other intelligent beings, besides God himself, being the happiness of *creatures*, there seems to be a double fitness, why it should depend upon their own free choice, *viz.* that it may be contingent like the beings who enjoy it, and wrought out by those reasonable and active powers, which they have receiv'd from their Maker. The blessedness of the Deity being necessary, like his existence and perfections, his wisdom and power can be only employ'd in promoting the happiness of his creatures, not in contriving and executing means for the accomplishment of his own. Whereas, the active powers of the reasonable creature, as they may, so, ought to be exercis'd in contributing both to the good of others, and to his own final felicity. Thus does it appear congruous, even to our imperfect views of things, that reasonable creatures should be made free, as no one will dispute that being made free, it is fit they should be treated and govern'd according to that character. And were it *otherwise* (that the fitness of God's making free agents could not be *prov'd*) yet the thing being *fact*, we have no reason to doubt of the *fitness* of it.

§ 6. This account of the *origin* of *evil* from the *freedom* of intelligent creatures is, I believe, the first that offers itself to every man's thoughts, who is not prepossess'd, when he is upon this inquiry. And I will venture to add, that it is the only true one. No *hypothesis*, that hath yet been started ; will serve the purpose. *That* of two *independent* and *contrary principles* dividing the world between them, one inclining and prompting us to virtuous deeds, the other solliciting us to vicious ones, one throwing sweet, the other bitter, ingredients into the same cup, from whence comes the mixture of good and evil in every man's condition,

one

one building, the other destroying, one doing, the other undoing; this notion, I say, hath been long since given up as indefensible. The whole frame of nature, and the laws of motion by which it is govern'd, proclaim the *unity* of the *first cause*; I mean not here a *unity of being*, in opposition to a *plurality* of Gods of the *same kind*; tho' this be a most evident truth, but a *unity of perfection* in opposition to two or more Gods of *different moral characters*. Such a vast and complicated machine as this of the world is, in which amidst the greatest variety there reigns a most admirable unity could not be contriv'd by any wisdom less than infinite nor actually fram'd and put in motion, so as to go on from age to age, and answer a thousand most valuable ends and uses, but by infinite power. The *wisdom* that is display'd in this great work could belong to none but a *good principle*, since a perfectly wise being can never judge any thing to be good that is evil; or that *evil* can ever be a proper object of a free and deliberate choice, or *good* of aversion and refusal; and, always making this judgment, must always be determin'd to that which is good. He knows his own happiness to depend upon it, and therefore may as soon consent to be less happy, or even to be miserable, as be tempted with evil or tempt any one to it. And if all the *wisdom* belongs to the *good principle*, so doth all the *power*. Power without wisdom can never be a match for power and wisdom confederated. The creation, therefore, is entirely the work of an infinitely wise and good Being.

§ 7. Shall we lay all the fault, as others have done, on the *stubborn nature*, and *malignant influence* of *matter*? They who believ'd *matter* to be co-eternal with *mind*, (as most, if not all, the *Pagan philosophers* did) might do this with a better colour,

than those who believe the *matter* as well as *form* of the world, to be the offspring of *creative power*. But, in whatsoever way, matter be imagin'd to have come by its existence, it is plainly innocent of the things laid to its charge. *Matter* cannot operate but by *motion*; between which and an inclination or perception of the mind, whether virtuous or vicious, agreeable or painful, we can discern no natural connexion. Nor is motion the growth of matter; or at any time, as to the *vis motrix*, residing in it, but something altogether foreign and external. And when all the motions of matter are deriv'd from *immaterial principle*, can the happiness or misery, the good or bad dispositions of immaterial beings be necessarily tied to certain motions? Or cannot the *first mover* impress only such motions on the several portions of matter, as will have a friendly influence on percipient beings? Were the body the unavoidable source of evil, why do not all souls suffer alike by their union with matter? how comes one man to have a happier constitution than another? Might not that ease and health and vigour, that calm and chearful serenity of the spirits, that smooth and regular flow of the passions, which is enjoyed by a few, have been the portion of all? If a terrestrial body does not *necessarily* hinder *one* man's virtue or happiness, neither can it hinder those of *another*. It is not therefore a *necessary* consequence of the nature of matter, that the soul should be subject to irregular inclinations, to violent passions, and to painful and grievous sensations by its union with the body. All this is not to be ascribed to *matter*, but to the *laws of union*, freely establish'd by the Creator. Nor, even now, that these laws are establish'd, is any one necessarily vicious or miserable.

§ 8. Dr. *More* * hath a notion that angels themselves are cloathed with bodies of a more subtle kind. And his reason for it is, “ that some
 “ of them became evil by their own voluntary
 “ act. But now a spirit purely and perfectly im-
 “ material, cannot, he thinks, be obnoxious to
 “ any stain or lapse; for, being of a nature so
 “ simple, whence should it be tempted to desert
 “ its station?” Not to examine the ground of this conjecture, I shall, at present, only remark that tho matter, be by the *Dr.* supposed the *causa sine qua non* of evil, yet not the proper *efficient*, much less *necessary*, cause of it. A spirit by its commerce with body, becomes *liable* to fall, and by that to suffer; but is under no *necessity* of falling, in which the *Dr.*'s opinion differs widely from that which makes matter the immediate necessary original of all the evil that is in the world.

§ 9. What way then shall we try next in order to get out of this labyrinth? Can we find any other besides that of *moral fitness*? Or God's having fix'd upon the present scheme, because his wisdom approv'd and pronounc'd it best? This I should think to be the right way. But all are not of this mind. Rather than admit of any original fitnesses in things, by the idea of which God determin'd himself, there are those who have recourse to a *natural benevolence*, prompted by which the Deity exerts his almighty power in producing the *greatest sum* of happiness that can possibly be. This greatest happiness of the whole system of rational beings taken together God *absolutely wills*, not because it is *fit*, but because his *inclinations oblige him* to it; and, accordingly, the *sum total* of happiness, let

* Responf. ad fragment. *Cartesii.*

men and other free beings act how they please, will, in the event, be the greatest that infinite power and wisdom could possibly produce. Or (in the words of a late author *) “ the greatest of which the “ universe of creatures which God hath made, “ is capable: still supposing that *their original capacities* for happiness were fixed by his *will* and “ *pleasure.*” I shall not take advantage of this author’s manner of expressing himself, when he saith, that the original capacities for happiness were fix’d by the will and pleasure of God, which, according to the propriety of language, should signify that the *very same beings* might have been created with greater or lesser capacities than those which God hath actually assign’d them ; from which if true, it follows, that they were capable of greater or lesser *capacities of happiness*, that is, were originally capable of greater or lesser *degrees of happiness* ; a capacity to receive a greater capacity of happiness, being, in effect, the same as a capacity of greater happiness ; and, *consequently*, God bestows upon no being the utmost happiness of which he is capable. Letting this pass, I shall confine myself to the general notion, which, if some men are not mistaken, is such a glorious discovery as does at once dispel the darkness, wipe off every aspersion, and shew us the face of providence in its full beauty. Let us see whether it does so or no.

§ 10. I imagine that in the preceding discourse I have overturn’d the very *foundation* of this *theory* ; viz. the notion of *benevolent inclinations* in the Deity, of which his wisdom is not the *exciting cause* or reason, but merely the *servant* or *minister* to execute what they order. At present, without insist-

* Divine Benevolence, p. 71.

ing upon that, I shall endeavour to demonstrate, that granting the existence of such a *natural benevolence*, it will by no means account for the origin of evil. For if all the works of creation and providence owe their birth to *mere benevolence*, without all regard to *moral fitness*; why is not every creature of God, that is capable of happiness, as happy as it is capable of being made? Why is there any such thing as misery in the world? Particularly, in the world of mankind? The answer, I apprehend, must be, that evil, or rather a liability to evil, is the unavoidable consequence of something which the greatest happiness of man, or the entire system of rational beings, made necessary. But I very much doubt this is not so easily prov'd as said. Let them tell us what that is which, while man, or other beings of a higher order than man, cannot be happy without it, is yet the unhappy occasion of misery?

§ 11. It cannot be any thing in the *frame of the world without us*, and the connexion between *that* and the portion of matter to which the soul is united; since these external things might be so order'd and directed by the continual agency of the supreme cause as to produce nothing but good, and all the good they can possibly produce. I confess, supposing the world to be govern'd by those few general laws that now obtain, and the course of nature always left to proceed according to these laws, it is hardly conceivable but some inconveniences must arise to particular members of the system. But, forasmuch as the *supreme agent* is not determin'd by *fitness*, but *natural benevolence*, what should hinder him, being *omnipotent* and *almighty*, from interposing to prevent any ill effects, that might attend the natural working of *second causes*? Would it be inconsistent with the wisdom of providence, having

having fettled general laws, to be perpetually breaking in upon them? It might be so, had the wisdom of God any other aim besides the happiness of his creatures, as the only way of gratifying his natural benevolence. But wisdom being wholly employ'd about the means to this end (according to the scheme I am now considering) the wisdom of God is then most of all display'd, when this end is most effectually answer'd, in whatever way it be, whether by *more*, or *fewer*, laws of nature, or by *none* at all that are so fix'd as not to be set aside, every time the creature may suffer by them.

§ 12. We *christians* believe (nor are we singular in our notion) that there will be a more advantageous state of things than the present, in which the happiness of intelligent beings, as far as it depends upon the *material world*, shall have nothing wanting to it, nothing to disturb and interrupt it. Now what will *at any time hereafter* be, might be *immediately*. Why then is it not? Why is not every thing fitted to give pleasure? And why are we not better form'd to receive it? Why should there be any thing injurious to health, or disagreeable to any of the senses? "It would by no means, be
 " a satisfactory answer, that God may make beings
 " with different degrees of perfection. That 'tis
 " an imperfection in us men, that, we want a perfect
 " knowledge of our own frame and constitution,
 " to supply which want of knowledge in us, God
 " hath affix'd the idea of pain to our nature, which
 " is design'd to give us warning of any thing that
 " might hurt us. Pain is a real evil, and yet if
 " we were not admonish'd by it, we should never
 " know when our frame was out of order till it
 " was too late *." Such an answer, from the per-

* Gordon at Boyle's Lect. *Serm.* 3.

sions I am now debating with, would either prove *nothing* or *too much*; viz. that in a *state of innocence* we should have been as liable to pains and disorders of body as we are now; and that the *just* shall not be free from them *after the resurrection*. Should it be said, than *then* we shall be otherwise framed, the *question* returns, why are we not so fram'd *at first*, if *more* goodness, or goodness as a *natural*, not a *moral*, attribute, as *leading* wisdom, not *led* by it, is the spring of all divine actions? Must a more imperfect state take place first, that we may know to *value a state of perfection*? Is it necessary that we should drink of the cup of adversity, to set our taste right for the joys of immortality? Will these be insipid if not heighten'd by the remembrance of the other? If so, what can we think of those beings who know good, but never knew evil; there is at least one such Being, and why could not that one happy Being, have made others like him in this respect?

§ 13. But perhaps, there is something in the *frame of man himself*; essential to the perfection of his being, and yet the fountain of all the evils he complains of. Man is a *rational* and a *free* agent. From hence comes his distinguishing happiness; and from hence likewise it proceeds that he is liable to misery. His happiness arises from the right use of his reason and liberty, his misery from the abuse of them. But is reason the *natural cause* of misery? the highest degree of reason would then be conjoin'd with the greatest degree of misery; nor could a reasonable being, *as such*, be happy. Or is reason the foundation of misery? Only by *accident*, or, as it happens to be *imperfect*? So it must be, or not at all. But why then had not God given us (if not larger faculties, which perhaps, was impossible; other faculties supposing
other

other beings, yet) opportunities for improving the faculties we have to greater advantage? And why is not every man's share of happiness in proportion to his share of reason? Reason *alone* then cannot be the occasion of misery.

§ 14. We must, therefore, have recourse to *liberty*, in order to explain this wonderful phænomenon. Now liberty implies a power to do evil as well as good; and he that doth evil freely (as *moral evil* must be done *freely*, if at all) can have no ground of complaint, when he reaps the fruit of his own doings. *True*, he that *does evil* cannot. But can there be any evil, *moral evil*, where there is no *moral fitness* in actions? No doing what ought not to be done? How can that be *evil* which is not *unfit*? and which the agent is not to be blamed for doing? Nay; how can there be *liberty*, where the *reasonableness* of the thing neither is, nor ever can be, a motive to action; the *only exciting*, or moving, reason being *inclination*?

§ 15. The opposers of moral fitness, must give me leave to implore their help in getting over some other difficulties. As, *why liberty* (if it be possible upon their principles) *is bestow'd*? *Is it universal*? *Might there not be liberty, and yet all men be happy, tho' not in the same degree*? Let me, in the *first place*, beseech them to inform me *why this fatal gift, call'd liberty, is confer'd on man*? * Should they say, that it is an inseparable companion of *finite intelligence*, I don't see how the consequence can be avoided, that no created being, much less man who enjoys so small a scantling

* The objections in *Tully* against the goodness of the Gods in giving reason to man, upon the notion of a God mov'd only by natural affections would be but too just, and, I think, unanswerable. *De Nat. Deor.* l. 2. §. 26, &c.

of this intellectual light, can ever attain to a state of happiness which he is not liable to lose ; in express contradiction to the *christian revelation*, that *the righteous shall go into life eternal* ; not to be doom'd to *endless vicissitudes*. I mention this for the sake of those who will allow the argument from *authority*, when it is that of *Jesus Christ*. Nor does it appear, that there is any such necessary connexion between the *liberty* (as it must here be understood, of a power to do good or evil) and *imperfect intelligence*, or reason. For how easy is it for the supreme intelligence, being present throughout his works, by occasional illuminations and assistances, to supply the defective intelligence of any of his creatures, and to guide them, by an unerring hand, in the way of innocence and felicity, the most perfect innocence, the highest felicity? I believe, I may add, it is not the imperfection of reason, *separately consider'd*, that is the foundation of liberty, but the weakness of reason *compar'd* with the strength of inclination. The weakest degree of reason may be sufficient to secure the performance of all that duty which it discovers, were there *no temptation* on the other side ; nay, is not barely sufficient for this end, but would certainly and infallibly attain it, it being morally impossible that a reasonable being should counteract the lowest degree of reason, without any motive or inducement whatsoever. And why is there any temptation to evil? Why have we inclinations that are not *directly* subservient to virtue? Why do not inclination and reason always go hand in hand, as we christians believe they will in the blessed state that follows *next*? These questions are asked of those who resolve the divine actions into *unguided benevolence*, not into *fitness*, as the original reason of them.

§ 16. Will they say that liberty is given (not because it cannot be with-held where reason is first bestow'd, but) because liberty is necessary to happiness? It will then be ask'd, *whether liberty is a universal thing*, so that in the whole system of reasonable agents there are none, who, that they may be compleatly happy, are not made free? And the happiest of created beings would not be so happy, were their happiness the effect of necessity, and not of their own free choice? But why so, when the *blessed God* is necessarily and unchangeably blessed? They may reply, that the happiness of God, and the happiness of creatures are of different kinds; that the happiness of the one is therefore the highest possible, because it is *necessary*; while that of the others is the highest they are capable of, because it is *free*. Should a reason of this difference be demanded, I fancy the patrons of *blind benevolence* would be hard put to it to find one. It can be no addition to my present happiness to reflect that I might not have been happy, unless it was previously fit that I should be left to my own choice, whether I would be happy or not. Fitness, I own, is a reasonable ground of pleasure. 'Tis a pleasure to think that God hath done what was fit in making me free, and that I, as was fit and becoming, have made a good use of my liberty. But, without this antecedent fitness, which is a thing these gentlemen will laugh at, I see not why I should be better pleas'd with the happiness of my condition, for being the issue and reward of a course of virtue freely chosen and continued in by me. Is it any trouble to me, when arriv'd to my journey's end, that there was but *one road* to it which I could not possibly miss? To be able to go astray is not a thing of itself desirable; nor is the consideration that we were once so, tho' now

now so no more, any way necessary to recommend our present felicity, if it was never suitable to our *nature*, as created, dependent beings, and therefore fit, that we should, for some time, be left in the hands of our own choice. This I say, is not at all necessary to give an accent to our happiness, provided we take our estimate of the happiness we enjoy, not from *fancy*, but from *reason*, as all the happy spirits of heaven will do. And therefore, I cannot but think the *Jew* was quite out in his reasoning, who told Mr. *Boyle**, “ that he thought *men* ow’d more to God’s goodness than the very *angels* do. For, said he, where- as God without any good works of theirs, purely out of his goodness, conferr’d on them that blest condition they enjoy; by giving man a *free will*, by the good use of which he may glorify his Maker, when by abusing it ’tis in his power to dishonour him, he allows man that highest satisfaction and privilege of co-operating to his own felicity.” Not to observe the great improbability of the *supposition*, that the *good angels* were confirm’d in blis without any *trial* preceding (since the fall of the *evil angels* is a proof of *their* having been tried) the very *supposition* seems to imply, that a *state of probation* is not antecedently fit, which takes away the foundation of that satisfaction, which the *Jew* fancy’d a man must have from co-operating to his own felicity. This *by the way*.

§ 17. This bold failing; will it be said, that all intelligent beings are not created free, but only some of them, for the sake of *variety*, which variety is for the sake of *happiness*, rendering’ the whole a more entertaining spectacle? More enter-

* Seraphick Love, p. 117.

aining to whom? To them who, by the abuse of their liberty, are capable of making themselves unhappy? Or to those, who have no freedom which they can abuse? The *former* will be apt to think, that any such variety might very well be spar'd. Nor can the latter need it, unless that they may be able to triumph upon the comparison. A worthy satisfaction truly! like that of a man who lolls at ease in his gilt chariot, and laughs to see the crowd trudging along by him on foot. 'Tis the pleasure of a *Domitian*, who lov'd to exhibit his *naval fights* in rainy weather; often shifting his cloke to keep himself dry, which he would not permit any one else to do; at the same time compelling them to stay out the shew *. All variety does not please the *sense*, much less the *mind*, which had much rather have one *uniform prospect*, than a prospect diversified by the absence of something, of much greater importance than a fanciful variety. All *happy minds* must needs be *benevolent*, and, because they are so, must delight more to see the happiness of their fellow-creatures fix'd like their own, where there is no reason for the contrary, than to see any of them in danger of having their whole fortune shipwrack'd. The poet †, indeed, hath observ'd,

*Suave mari magno turbantibus æquora ventis,
E terra magnum alterius spectare laborem.*

'Tis sweet to behold, from shore, the weather-beaten vessel tost on a tempestuous sea, and ready to perish in a storm.

*Non quia vexari quenquam est jucunda voluptas,
Sed quibus ipse malis careas quia cernere suave est.*

* Vid. Sueton. † Lucret.

Not, saith he, that we are pleas'd with other people's calamities, but to be spectators of those dangers which we ourselves are out of the reach of.

But even this indirect pleasure proceeds from a reflection the mind makes, that their case might have been ours, or at least that our condition is not absolutely fenc'd against the strokes of fortune. Nor would a *generous soul* be ever the *less happy*, if he had no such examples of wretchedness before him; but *more so*, the pain he hath from a sympathetick sense of another's evils, being more than equal to the pleasure of congratulating himself upon his own exemption from them. Hath God made some beings *mortal*, that others may have a quicker sense of their *immortality*? Or is the *contrast*, between the imperfections of *created* beings, and the absolute perfection of the Creator, that which completes his satisfaction in the infinite fulness of his essence?

§ 18. Besides the insuperable difficulties which I find myself encounter'd with on the two former questions, why *is liberty given?* and *is this gift universal?* there is this inquiry still behind; *might there not be liberty, and yet all men be happy, tho' not in the same degree?* They who have made the *best* use of their liberty, we will say, are *happiest*; they who have made the *worst* use the *least happy*? But why may not even these be tried again and again, till they have learn'd to be wiser? Why must one trial decide their fate? Or if there must be but one trial, and that trial hath issued unhappily, what forbids their being put into a state of *inferior*, but *certain* happiness, in which their faculties being restor'd to their soundness, and their broken fortunes repair'd, they have all the other pleasures of which they were originally made capable, besides those

those which flow from a consciousness of having acted well in a state of trial ; which, by the way, cannot be very considerable, if he that acts best does not what is morally more fit than he who acts worst. What room can there be for a state of *final punishment*, tho only *negative*, or such as consists in the everlasting absence of any good of which they are capable? Why any punishment *at all*, when no past evil conduct of the sufferer can render it *morally fit*, if there be no such thing as *moral fitness*? As for its *usefulness to instruct and warn others*; surely, a Being of infinite knowledge might think of some other way as effectual to preserve his creatures in their duty as this; without making one part of the creation happy at the expence of the other. Or supposing he could not, yet why must some be *miserable*, that others may be *more happy*, without any reason for it in the thing itself?

§ 19. Where *moral fitness* is out of the question, a lesser sum of happiness divided among a system of percipient beings, without a *single instance* of vice and misery, must carry it before a greater quantity of good, where evil is not excluded; even tho, after the subtraction of so much good as is equal to the evil, the good that remains should exceed that in the other case. The first thing that *self-love* prompts us to, is to flee from *pain*; the next to pursue *pleasure*. And in the like way, must natural benevolence work, with regard to others. The first concern will be that there be no miserable object to jar upon the heart-strings; the next to procure all the happiness that is in the power of the benevolent person to bestow. Would it not be a greater satisfaction to one, whose kindness was nothing else but a *natural impulse*, to make *ten* persons *moderately* happy, than *nine* in a much higher

higher degree, if that could not be done without leaving the *tenth* in the most deplorable circumstances, without all help and hope? This reasoning holds much stronger, when applied to the Deity, consider'd as having a universe of *his own children* to take care of, and suppos'd to have no rule to proceed by, but *kind inclinations*, separate from every other motive to action. A being wholly actuated by such inclinations would be more *shock'd* and *offended* with the view of *one thousand* wretches, in his family, than *pleas'd* with the sight of *ten thousand* beings that were happy, and hereupon would immediately *thus decree*; let not a groan or sigh be heard thro' the whole creation; let pain and fear be for ever banish'd; not one eye drop a tear, not one heart be oppress'd with anxiety and sorrow. Let every class of beings, and every individual in each class, be pleas'd, and of the many millions that people my wide dominions, not one be found, who does not bless the bounty of his Creator. Such would be the decree, if *inclination* held the throne, and wisdom and power only waited as ministring attributes to perform what that dictated. And, did the creation wear such a universal smile, there would be more ground to suspect, that wisdom and power were under the command of inclination, than there is at present, that such a dark cloud hangs upon the face of nature. To shut up this debate,

§ 20. Were it not antecedently fit, that a reasonable creature should have *good* and *evil*, *life* and *death* set before him, let him that can give me a satisfactory reason, why any creature should be expos'd to the hazard of such a choice? Put the case that a great number might be made happy, by placing a single being, as soon as he existed, in a state of misery, would this justify such treatment
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of an innocent being? Surely no. Let me take leave to say, it is not a whit more justifiable to make any one miserable, whatever be his character, for the advantage from hence accruing to others, if there was not an *original moral fitness* that a creature endowed with understanding and freedom of choice, should act in one way rather than another. If there cannot be a *moral difference* in actions, there ought not to be a *natural* one; since, without a moral difference, no man, act how he will, can *properly* deserve to be made miserable.—The *sum* is, supposing the will of God to be guided by wisdom, and wisdom to be measured by fitness, it may be shewn how *evil* came to have a beginning; otherwise, not.

Sixth Corollary.

§ 1. **T**HE love of God to his creatures is easily conceivable upon these principles. I doubt the notion of it advanc'd by some ought to be rectified; as being neither worthy of God, nor adapted to afford any stable comfort and satisfaction to the creature. The love of God, if they say right, is his making choice of some to be the objects of his munificence, while others, and they the vastly greater number are left destitute of all power, to emerge out of that miserable condition, into which they are fallen thro' no fault of their own. Is there not too much reason to say, that this notion of the love of God to man is utterly unworthy of him? What does the Deity discover by such a love (if it must be call'd by that name) but *uncontrollable power*; an attribute in which the *best* of all beings differs not from the *worst*, but only with regard to the *degree* of it? Yes, it may be said, he shews his *goodness* too to his *elect*.
Tell.

Tell me *how*, if in all that he does for them he hath no direct regard to their happiness; but determines their happiness rather than misery, just to shew his arbitrary will and pleasure; not from any pleasure he hath in beneficent actions *as such*? And that so it must be is plain; since, were it *goodness* that wrought so strongly towards some, as to decree their salvation by an irresistible grace, without respect to any meetness and concurrence of theirs, the same goodness, *to say the least*, could not but make the attainment of happiness, or, if not that, yet the avoiding of misery, everlasting misery and damnation, *possible to all*; who can never deserve *that* misery which it was never possible for them to avoid.

§ 2. And as this notion of divine love is unworthy of God, so it is big with terror and affrightment to the creature; unless a man hath the good luck to be of a temper to believe every thing, *with reason* or *without* it, that he is willing to believe. For say that this love proceeds by a *decimation*, taking one out of ten; there will then be nine to one against every single person, that he is not of the happy number. Nor, to speak truth, can I perceive any great ground of rejoicing that the *favourites* themselves have, provided they use their reason, or have any spark of generosity in them; for when they think of the principle on which they imagine the Deity to act, in selecting them from the common mass of mankind, and using so much severity towards others, how can they have any dependence on the favour of such a Being? He that hath no other reason for all that he does but mere will and pleasure, may alter his will without reason. What is there more dishonourable to God in deceiving his creatures with

fair promises, which he never intends to fulfil, than in putting them under an inevitable necessity of being for ever miserable? This being suppos'd *no disparagement* to the Deity, is there any thing else that can be so? Could a person who aim'd to conform all his own actions to reason, and esteem'd it the greatest glory of a being, to do good to *all* according to his ability, have much satisfaction in the friendship of a prince, who, while he carest'd a few of his Subjects, had form'd a design of ruining all the rest, and making them feel the weight of his power, for no other reason, but that it so pleas'd him? To those whom such a prince should call near him, and load with honours, one might apply the words of the *Roman Satyrift*.

*In quorum facie, miseræ magnæq; sedebat
Pallor amicitiaë.*———Juv. Sat. 4.

§ 3. It must be confess'd, the love of God to his creatures, as others describe it, in the manner of an *immediate emanation* from the very *essence* of the Deity, diffusing itself on all sides, is more agreeable to reason than this, and infinitely more amiable. God absolutely wills the greatest happiness of the system he hath made. But tho' this must be own'd to be an *amiable affection*, it hath not all the beauty of a *moral excellence*. A *wise love* is that alone which becomes the Deity. And there are *three periods* in which this love may be consider'd; *first*, as delighting to bestow, in various degrees, the *capacities* and *opportunities* of happiness upon a world of intelligent creatures; *then*, as having a *peculiar complacency* in those of his creatures who *improve* the capacities and opportunities they have receiv'd. And, *finally*, as delighting to crown *persevering virtue* with the highest *actual felicity* that his wisdom judges fit and proper. This

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is such an account of the Love of God, as gives the greatest encouragement to all sincere and honest souls, and to none but such. To know whether I am belov'd of God I have nothing else to do but to enquire, whether I have a *prevailing* love to that which is good. *The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, his countenance beholds the upright.* The love of God terminates first on *things*, and then on *persons*. He loves the *righteous*, because he loveth *righteousness*; so far is that notion from being true which represents God as first absolutely determining to make a certain number of his creatures happy, and, after that, by an irresistible operation of his grace, making them holy, as the indispensable means of their being happy; not to add, that it is pretty hard to conceive, what can be meant by holiness, and by necessity of holiness in the creature, when the holiness of God, as by them delineated, is nothing else but sovereign will and pleasure. *N. B.* Tho' *reason* will discover, that in the same degree as any man loves that which is good, he himself is belov'd by the best of all beings, yet the only certainty of God's *so loving* creatures whose virtues are so imperfect, as to design them for *complete* and *everlasting* felicity, is from *Revelation*.

Seventh Corollary.

§ 1. **T**HE truth of the present scheme being suppos'd, *the fundamental duties of religion* (such as these following, *obedience, resignation, love, gratitude, imitation, prayer, and glorifying God*) appear plain and obvious in the theory, and highly reasonable in the practise. Here is *one* ground of *obedience*: I do not say, the *only* one; but such a one, that, if there were no other, we should yet be in-

dispensibly oblig'd to obey God; and now that there are other reasons of obedience; this is a reason of that use and importance, that it ought not to be overlook'd. For having the utmost assurance that God can never do or command what is not fit, we from hence know the fitness of any thing commanded, that God hath commanded it; when, *perhaps*, it is not knowable in any other way, and being sure that it is fit, upon some account or other, to be commanded, we cannot reasonably refuse to do it. If it be said, that, in this case, we only consider the command of God as the *medium* by which we discover the fitness of the action, not as the *formal reason* or *motive* by which we are influenc'd in performing it; and so, notwithstanding we do *what* is commanded, yet not doing it *because* commanded, we do it not in obedience to God; *I answer*, that this would be very true, if this were our *only* inducement to the Action; but when *there is another reasonable inducement*, it is impossible that he, who hath a due regard to the one, should be regardless of the other. The inducement, I mean, is *authority* founded in the several *relations* of *Creator*, *Preserver* and *Redeemer*, which God stands in to us, and the *benefits* communicated in consequence of these relations; which authority no one can chuse but reverence, who does an action, because, from God's commanding it, he believes it to be fit; for as it is fit that he should have an eye to the divine authority, so the consideration of this fitness, will have its share of influence, as well as of the fitness of the action to be commanded, which he infers from God's commanding it. Whoever *habitually* and *prevailingly* loves what is fit, as *fit*, for the same reason that he pays a constant regard to *one sort* of fitness, will do the same to *another*, and to that most, which is most fit; as nothing can be more fit than that we

should do whatever God hath commanded, because he hath commanded it, and not *merely* because, he having commanded it, we are satisfied of its being fit, that is, conducive to some valuable end. And, *much less*, merely because of the *promise* or *threatning* annex'd to the command. If I have respect merely to these, or so much more to these than to any other motive, that no other motive, without these, would be effectual, every body sees that it is not the *authority of God* that sways me, or not principally; but *hope*, or *fear* of being made happy or miserable by his *power*; and so what I do, is not really out of obedience to God, and for *conscience sake*. So little reason have they to triumph in the piety of their sentiments, who resolve all obligations into the *will of God*, and, when they come to explain themselves, give us to know they mean not the will of God, as signifying *what he would have us do*, but *what he intends to do* by way of reward and punishment, to which we may add, that there is no such *immediate* connexion between a respect to *self-interest*, and to the *authority of God*, in the performance of one and the same action, as there is between a respect to the *fitness* of an action to be commanded (however we come to be inform'd of that fitness) and a respect to the *authority of God* commanding that action; the latter of which is as apparently fit as any thing can be; and as likely to influence a person who hath made it a rule to himself always to follow that which is right. One thing that proves this connexion between a regard to fitness, and to the authority of God, is, that the *chief*, if not *only*, ground of the fitness of an action commanded may *sometimes* be its being a fit, or proper trial of our obedience. *After all*; it deserves to be remark'd, that of these *two sorts* of obedience, or rather *two ways* of considering the same obedience

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(viz. obedience from a sense of God's authority, and obedience from a persuasion of the fitness of whatever God commands to be, for some good reason or other, done) the *latter* seems *directly* and *immediately* to do most honour to God, as it implies an apprehension of his always acting in the most perfect manner; the most honourable apprehension that a creature can have of his creator; while the *former*, consider'd as a practical acknowledgment of God's authority, or rightful power to command, immediately signifies the regard which *the creature* in obeying God, because of his right to command, *hath to what is fit, rather* than his belief of *God's regard to it* in commanding it. And therefore, whichsoever of these is suppos'd to be most *acceptable* to God (which must depend upon the disposition of the heart from whence they flow) the *former*, as I said, arguing the highest esteem and veneration of God himself, is plainly most *honourable* to him.

§ 2. Let a man have this notion of *divine providence* as in every part and step of it conducted by the highest reason, and duely attend to it; and he can have no doubt concerning that *resignation*, which is his duty always to practise towards the great Governor of the world. What more just and reasonable than that a *finite* and *fallible understanding* should submit to an *understanding* that *never errs*; and a *will* liable to be misled and over-rul'd by *irregular inclinations*, to a *will* that is always *holy*, and *just*, and *good*; and that *passion* should not be permitted to cavil at that which *reason* cannot but approve? To sit down easy and contented, because we can get nothing by complaining, is not enough. Did chance and necessity, or humour, govern all, a wise man for the sake of his own quiet, would not struggle with his chain, but endeavour to make
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the best of a bad matter. This is not our case ; the world is the care of an infinitely wise and good being. Our part, therefore, is to behave as those whose resignation is voluntary and cheerful, not forc'd ; or, if forc'd, is the effect of no other compulsion, but that which proceeds from a full conviction of mind, that every thing is order'd for the best. This resignation, *cæteris paribus*, will be most easy to that man who, as he *believes* so, frequently *considers* and reflects, that whatever *is done* was *fittest to be done*, and that the *measure* of this fitness is the tendency of all God's providential dispensations, to promote the *final happiness* of all the sincere lovers of truth and goodness.

§ 3. Keeping the same rule in our hand, we shall be led directly into the true notion of the *love of God* ; be able to prove the obligation to it, and furnish'd with the most certain mark and token of it. Love to God may be consider'd as a love to the *character*, or to the *person*. The love of God in the former sense, or as *characteristical*, is the delight we take in the thought of an all-perfect being ; in contemplating the idea of such a being, and believing that this idea is not a creature of the brain ; but a copy taken from an original really existing, and possess'd of greater perfection than the most exact copy can possibly express. *Moral excellence* is that part of the idea, which is the principal attractive of love, *that* which is lov'd for its own sake, and communicates a loveliness to the other perfections, giving them their beauty and lustre. The contemplation of an *eternal, self-existent all-knowing, all-powerful, and omnipresent* Being, immediately excites admiration, with a sentiment of the profoundest awe and reverence. But that this reverence, this awe, and admiration, may have pleasure mingled with it, such a pleasure in the *theory*
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of these perfections, as makes us sincerely exult and triumph in the abundant proofs we have of their *real existence*, we must have reasons to believe, that the most *absolute perfection* in every other kind, is conjoin'd with the most *perfect rectitude of will*; for then our notion of an eternal Almighty, immense, and omniscient Deity, is that of a being, in whom all these perfections have the utmost *value* and *excellence* they can derive from the truest and noblest *direction* of them. *Eternity* and *immensity*, without *knowledge* and *power*, affect the mind no otherwise, than an infinite eternal *Chaos* might be suppos'd to do; together with some knowledge and power superadded, without *moral perfections*, they cause much the same terror, as *clouds* big with thunders, and lightnings, and storms, when it is not known where they will fall. But now, only add *moral rectitude*, and the whole scene is chang'd, and what before was *wonderful* only, or *dreadful*, becomes *amiable*; amiable in the sublimest and most extensive sense, or so as to challenge a love attended with *approbation* and esteem, and supported by it; which the most diffusive benevolence, not founded in fitness, would not do. We should approve such a benevolence, with Almighty power in its retinue, much after the same manner as we should the beneficial operations of *nature*, were nature imagin'd to have had no other parent but *necessity*.

§ 4. The *personal love* of the Deity (if I may be allow'd the expression) is the pleasure we have in believing, that the *best* and most *beneficent* of all beings is the *happiest*; that his *beatitude* as much transcends that of all other beings, as his *moral perfections* do theirs. There is no room for us to wish God *happier* than he is, or to wish him the *continuance* of his happiness; for his blessedness is
 infinite

infinite, unchangeable, and everlasting. But the thought of such a happy being may give us pleasure ; we may rejoice, with joy unspeakable, in the eternal indissoluble union of *love* and *majesty*, of *infinite holiness* and *unbounded blessedness*. The obligation to love God (as the duty hath been now explain'd) or to rejoice in the fulness and perfection of his nature, and in the unrivall'd greatness and permanent duration of his felicity, arises partly from the immediate perception of his *loveliness*, and partly from our having partook of the *effects* and emanations of his *love*. God hath made us capable of judging of *moral excellence* ; we cannot exercise those intellectual powers which God hath given us as we ought, but we must perceive that *every degree* of moral excellence is amiable ; and consequently the *highest degree* of it *most* amiable ; that the fittest conjunction of happiness is with holiness ; and of the most perfect happiness with the most perfect holiness ; this we cannot but *immediately* perceive, if we make a *right use* of our faculties ; and our obligation to *this* seems to me self-evident. The obligation to love God arising from the *divine benefits* I shall consider presently.

§ 5. The most certain *criterion* or *mark* of our thus loving God, or delighting in the contemplation of a being who always does that which is right, and in the thought of his happiness upon that account, is our approving and practising that which is right ourselves, according to the measure of our capacities. This right temper and disposition of mind in ourselves, is the ground of our delight in the perfection and happiness of the divine nature. For being restored to this excellent temper, we are better able to judge of what is really excellent and good, and cannot but delight in it, and in that most which is most excellent, and there-

fore most of all in that God, whose excellencies are without comparison superior to all. Our hearts being rightly affected to that which is good, we participate with the supreme Being in his perfections and felicity. We enjoy both at second hand, and, without considering the benefits which we receive from him, or do farther hope for, we are wonderfully refresh'd with the meditation of a self-sufficient, and all-sufficient being, who, having the fountain of being and happiness in himself, can never stand in need of any other. *My goodness cannot extend to thee, O Lord*; and I rejoice to think thou art so great and happy, that all the services of men and angels can add nothing to thy happiness and glory. Is not this a much better account of love to God? Does it not give more satisfaction to the reason of our minds, and more plainly shew the necessity of a holy life, if we would deserve the name of *lovers of God*, than *theirs* who place the love of God in blind passions, and confus'd emotions and elevations of soul, as often as they *read, or hear, or think, of God, and Christ*, and such like objects; such emotions as the understanding or judgment have little or no part in; and who, as a distinguishing proof of their love, please themselves beyond measure, with the frequency and length of their devotions, without attending to the habitual temper of their minds, or observing what fruits their religion produces in the course of their lives and actions? This sort of devotion borders so nearly upon the *mystical*, and is so very like the enthusiastical raptures of some famous saints in the Romish church, that one would almost suspect it to have been originally borrow'd from thence.

§ 6. The love of God (even that which I have nam'd *personal*) may be distinguish'd into three kinds,

kinds, *pure, interested, and grateful.* *Pure love* is the delight we have in the perfection and happiness of the Deity, from the self-recommending nature of these objects. Happiness so seated gives pleasure to a mind, rightly dispos'd, as naturally as light, the first of all created beauties, does to the eye. *Interested love* is the delight we take in the same things, from the expectation of some great advantage that we shall have by them. 'Tis a pleasing thought that the world is the workmanship of an all-perfect Being, and the continual object of his wise and watchful providence, that this God will be our God, if we make choice of him as such, our guide until death, and after death, our exceeding great reward. The consideration of this is a very reasonable ground of pleasure and satisfaction. Nor is this pleasure, tho' it regards our own interest and happiness, at all inconsistent with what merits to be call'd love to God, but is, indeed, necessarily implied in the love of indigent creatures; insomuch that if we did not desire the favour of God, and highly value the hopes of obtaining it, if we could be contented to give up all farther pretensions to the divine approbation, and to retire out of being, without knowing and enjoying more of God than we have already done, there could not be a surer sign that we did not love God; since in the same proportion as we love any person, we prize his friendship, and study to recommend ourselves to it. *Grateful love* is the delight we have in the same objects, from the goodness of God already manifested to us, and the obligations he hath laid upon us, by his *gifts, or promises.*

§ 7. *Gratitude* is nothing else but love awaken'd into act by particular favours and benefits. These are proper incentives to love; and when they prove

so, *love* loses its own name, and assumes that of *gratitude*. Among the many reasons we have to rejoice that God is the happiest of all beings, and the head and Lord of the universe, this is one, that he hath been so kind and gracious to us. And tho' the infinite disparity of condition between God and the creature, must for ever put it out of our power to return the kindness (which is what gratitude never fails of doing where it can) yet nothing shall hinder us from acknowledging it in every proper *way*, and on every proper *occasion*, particularly by religious and solemn *thanksgiving*. I am sensible that some allow of no other foundation for gratitude to the Deity but *natural benevolence*. "We have hardly any notion (saith one *) " of a good and amiable action, but that it proceeds from this principle (*viz.* a benevolence in " God, corresponding to kind instincts in us.) If " kindness, or a good disposition be not the spring, " no matter what the nature or consequence of the " action be; however beneficial it may be to us, " we like the being that produc'd it never the " better, we don't think ourselves oblig'd to grati- " tude, or imagine him any way the more perfect, " as to his moral character, on the account of it." Most surprizing news! that I should have no reason to be grateful to God, because he had his reason for being kind to me, tho' that reason was not borrowed from any merit of mine. This will appear more strange, when it is consider'd that the very reason of God's esteeming what he does for his creatures to be fit, tho' not founded in their *merit*, is taken from their *happiness*; to which for the *creatures sake*, not *his own* (he having no prospect of any accession to his own riches by that means) God delights to contribute, in every way,

* *Divine Benevolence*, p. 27.

and to the greatest degree that infinite wisdom will permit. So far is God's being mov'd by the fitness of the thing from *diminishing*, and much more from *annihilating* the merit of his goodness to us, that in reality we can hardly frame an idea of it upon any other foot. The being that acts from *pure* benevolence of *temper*, does so far act like a necessary being; his goodness sheds abroad its influences after much the same manner as the sun shines, and the water flows. 'Tis true he *knows* what he does, and he *wills* the doing it, which the others do not. But he *wills* it, not as a *moral*, but a *natural*, agent. His benevolence, in a *physical*, not *moral*, way, determines his will to all those actions, which to his wisdom appear necessary for the bringing about the greatest good, or happiness of the rational system: not that this greatest happiness is esteem'd by him morally better, or fitter to be chosen than their greatest misery; but only is what his inclinations (of which no account is to be given) lead him to promote.

§ 8. The thinking part of mankind, have always agreed to place the chief part of religion in the *imitation* of the Deity. But we must first know what the duty is, denoted by this phrase, *the imitation of God*, before we can judge of the reasonableness of it, or pretend to practise it. The imitation of God hath respect to the *general principle of action*, or to *particular attributes*. This *principle*, in all the works of God, hath been shewn to be an inflexible regard to the reason and fitness of things. The universal *frame* and *course* of nature speaks to the reason of every man, that there is a *first cause* of infinite *power* and *wisdom*; and, having not the least ground to surmise a wrong inclination in the Deity, by which he may be misguided in his judgment or choice, we conclude
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without hesitation, that he always sees what is best and most becoming him to do, and as he always sees this, so is ever determin'd to do it. Would we then be *like God* in this respect, we have but this one general rule to mind, that as God, without the least variableness or shadow of turning, pursues that which his infinite wisdom dictates to be best, so we, according to the measure of our abilities, diligently enquire after, and constantly prefer, throughout the whole course of our actions, that which appears best to that imperfect understanding, and in that dimmer light, which our Maker hath given us. The more enlarg'd and accurate our judging faculty, and the more sagacious to discern between good and evil, the greater is the resemblance it bears to the divine understanding. The more careful we are to preserve the subordination of passion to reason, the nearer approaches do we make to the Deity, who hath no passions at all to mislead him. And *finally*, that which completes our imitation of the divine Being, as to the general principle of our conduct, is when, having fix'd our aim right, *i. e.* our general purpose or intention to do nothing unreasonable, nor to leave any thing undone that is reasonable and fit, we keep as close as we can to this our aim and purpose, not knowingly and wilfully declining from it. We follow the Deity in making fitness our rule, *as* he does, and also *because* he does; without which it would not be *complete* imitation, since that word does not simply denote a resemblance, but a *design'd, studied* resemblance. Or, at least, a resemblance occasion'd by a familiar converse with the object of it, and so likewise in the *common measure* of this fitness, we conform to the Deity. *To him* the measure of this fitness is his own perfect nature, the several natures of his creatures, and the relations he stands in to them. In like manner, the
 measure

measure or rule of fitness to the creature is the nature he partakes of, and the relations subsisting between him and his Maker, and between him and his fellow-creatures. Is it not undeniable that every one who makes this fitness the measure of his actions, imitates the Deity, endeavouring to be holy as he is holy, and perfect as he is perfect; perfect in his little sphere, as God is in his, which is boundless? I am willing to believe that in all this I talk very intelligibly. But whether they talk thus, or indeed can do it, who are in a quite different way of thinking, deserves to be consider'd.

§ 9. In the first place, what can they mean by the imitation of God who believe God to have no other reason of his conduct towards his creatures, but arbitrary will and pleasure. To absolute will in the Creator, there seems to be nothing to answer on the side of the creature, but absolute submission. What room can there be for imitation unless men of the most obstinate and imperious temper, whose will is their law, are reckon'd among the imitators of God; which I do not find they have yet been even by themselves. They have more reverence for their Maker, than to pretend their having learnt this temper from him; tho' this temper, 'tis to be fear'd, makes them have the better liking to those high and rigid notions, which represent God much such a one as themselves. Should it be said in favour of this scheme, that in never acting without a reason, we act according to our nature, as created, dependent beings, and in acting according to our nature, we imitate God, who acts according to his, when he substitutes his will in the room of all other reasons; my answer would be, that I should own this to be very much to the purpose, if our estimate of the nature of God was to be taken from the absoluteness of his will, and not from the

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the *perfection* of it. The independence of God upon all *other beings*, expresses his greatness and perfection. Not so the imaginary independence of his *will* on the *reason* and *fitness of things*. At least, it does not seem so to me.

§ 10. Let us now try whether those in the *benevolent scheme* can come off any better. After what manner will they explain the *imitation of God*, so as to give a rational and consistent account of it? The supreme Being, they may say, is an example of benevolence to all other intelligent beings. True, if his benevolence be any thing more than a *natural inclination*. But if this is the best can be said of it, then, in giving the *sum total* of the divine actions, we must put it down thus, the Deity *always* and *only* follows *inclination*. And may not the *sensual*, the *injurious*, the *revengeful* man plead that he follows his? Notwithstanding which, no one will presume to say that such men are followers of God. But their inclinations are not like those of the Deity. And can they help that, as far as they are *purely natural*, or even as *acquir'd* or strengthened by custom, if in every action of which this custom is made up, they were prompted by some inclination or other, which they could not refuse to obey? But they ought to have over-rul'd inclination by the force and authority of reason. I would gladly know *how*; supposing inclination, in every the least movement, to be the only *exciting* reason to action. And if reason *could* have done this, and *had* done it, *reason* would then have been the *principle* of their conduct, and not *inclination*, and in following *reason* they would have departed from the pattern set them by God, of all whose actions, the first and master-spring (if some men say right) is *inclination*. Yes; but his inclination is *to do good*, in doing good, therefore, we imitate God,

God, tho it be only in obedience to reason, not in compliance with inclination, in the *effects* we do; not in the *original cause* or *principle*; this in *us*, being of a *higher order* than in the *Deity*, if, while we are govern'd by reason, he is wholly led by inclination. Which *single reflection* should, methinks, be enough to disgrace this opinion.

§ II. Proceed we next to consider the *imitation of God* as it respects *particular attributes*. God is *just*, and *true*, and *faithful*, and *good*; and in all these characters, we are to set him before us as the great exemplar and original of moral perfection; keeping him continually in our eye, so as not only to be just and good, upon other grounds and motives, but to strive to be so with a view of bearing the *image of God*, and being followers of him as dear children. In this divine image the *ruling feature* is *universal benevolence*, the lineament that is most obvious and lovely, and in which the likeness chiefly consists. The *first view* of the Deity is *universal good*, to the production of which, in a way agreeable to the nature of intelligent and free beings, he employs his infinite power. Our *power* is confin'd within narrow limits: but our *wills* and *affections* are more boundless. We can *wish* happiness to every being that is capable of it, *rejoice* in every instance of happiness that comes to our knowledge; and, the less we are able to do for the benefit of mankind, should think ourselves more oblig'd not to omit doing any part of that little. Here a thought comes in my way; what title the *selfish generation* can have to be called *imitators of God*; they who frankly declare that they have no affection but for themselves, no concern for the interest of other men, farther than their own is interwoven with it, so that in their most beneficent actions self-love only verifies the *old proverb*,

proverb, that *the farthest way about is the nearest way home*? If *nature* and *practice*, in this sect of philosophers, be not better than *principle*, they will be hard put to it, to make out their *relation* to God from *likeness*. While God in creating and governing the world, hath no happiness of his own in view, but only that of other beings, chiefly of those that are intelligent; they for their parts, tho' capable of proposing, with their own, the happiness of their fellow-creatures, and of concurring to it, would never be at the expence of a wish for the happiness of others, were it not as a means of their private good. In any other view, the happiness of the *whole world*, of their *country*, of their *best friends*, is nothing to them. Say, ye idolizers of *self* where, in the mean while, is your imitation of the true God?

§ 12. It may be of use to observe, that the *infinite distance* between God and his creatures is no bar at all to their *imitation* of him. And therefore, when *Pufendorf* * says, " that he does not see
 " how the sovereign right which God exercises to-
 " wards his creatures, can be the model of that
 " right which ought to take place between beings
 " naturally equal; or how a law that imposes on
 " men mutual obligations can pass for an image
 " of the divine authority, essentially independent
 " of all law and of all obligation:" If hereby he would insinuate that there is, and can be, no proper similitude between *divine* justice, goodness, truth, and faithfulness, and *human*, I think the considerations that have been laid before the reader in the progress of this discourse prove this to be a mistake. Nor does the inequality of the *beings*, or

* Of the law of nature and nations, B. 2. c. 3. § 5. *Barbeyrac's* translation.

of their *stations* in the universe, or the *reflection* added by *Pufendorf's* annotator, at all affect this Question. Are not *superiors*, when they behave worthily in their stations, *examples* to their *inferiors*, teaching them, in like manner, to fulfil the duties of *theirs*? And whatever difference there may be in the *instances* and *occasions* of exercising any virtue, where the *general foundation of action* is the same, the same virtue exemplified in any one case, is just ground of imitation in every other, how widely distant so ever it may be, as long as these dissimilar cases are objects of the same virtue. “ Mr. *Barbeyrac* may therefore, if he pleases, call it an *important* reflection, “ but to me it appears *trifling*, that there are many acts of *human justice* which cannot agree to “ God, because of the excellence of his nature. “ Such are a great number of acts of *universal* “ *justice*; and those of *particular justice*, which regulate contracts invented for a supply to the “ wants and necessities of life. Who would dare, “ for example, to reason thus, pay your debts “ because God pays his; be grateful, because God “ is to those who have done him good; obey your “ sovereign, because God obeys his superiors; “ honour your parents, because God honours his. “ Are not these reasonings manifestly absurd?” They are so: and the more manifest the absurdity of such reasonings, the more needless was the remark. But what then? because in the *particular instances*, there is no resemblance, does it follow, there is none in the *virtue* that govern'd the action? A steady purpose to make the reason of things our rule, agreeably to the example of the creator of all things, and fountain of all perfection, and on no account whatsoever, to break in upon *right* and *order*, will have that influence upon a man, as to engage him to pay his creditors what he owes them; if he is able, to

be grateful to his benefactors, obedient to his parents and civil governors, &c. And, in that virtue which discovers itself in an uninterrupted course of these and all other virtuous actions, he will *truly*, tho' *imperfectly*, imitate the great author of his existence.

§ 13. As to Bishop *Cumberland's* * observation, "that we must first know what justice is, before we can distinctly know that justice is to be ascrib'd to God, and that his justice is to be kept in view by us as our example: because, we cannot know God by an immediate *intuition* of his perfections, but by the *effects* first known from sense and experience;" I grant the truth of it so far as this, that we must have *some* knowledge of *effects* before we can have any knowledge of a *first cause*, but that our *whole* knowledge of the perfections of the first cause is *immediately* deduc'd from effects, I deny; having, I think, prov'd the contrary in this *essay*; viz. that being inform'd, from a survey of the works of nature, of the power and wisdom of their author, we are able from his wisdom, to demonstrate his moral perfections, from which we are supplied with an additional proof of *the law of nature*, and the most perfect pattern for our imitation.

§ 14. A *learned divine* † is pleas'd to express himself on this subject in the following manner. "There is something previous to imitating of God, and more acceptable to him, which is obeying him. Otherwise, the duties of the first table would be set behind the second. We may endeavour faintly to imitate God in our be-

* Proleg. to his discourse of the law of nature, § 6.

† Dr. *Waterland's* obligat. and efficacy of the Christian Sacraments, p. 42.

“ nevolence toward man ; but the love of God,
 “ and all the duties which a creature owes imme-
 “ diately to his Creator, are the prior duties, and
 “ they are more strictly and properly the business
 “ of every creature, than imitating God. To imi-
 “ tate his example, is paying him a dutiful re-
 “ spect ; but submitting to his authority in all
 “ things, is most highly honouring him, and shews
 “ the profoundest reverence, resignation and hu-
 “ mility.” My general remark here is, that
 the *comparison is not justly stated* ; which, when
 fairly made, is not between *benevolence to man*
 (which is but one *particular instance* of imitation,
 and a duty of the *second table*) and *obedience to God*
in general, but between a proper, thorough, imita-
 tion of God, and a sincere universal obedience.
 When the matter is thus propos’d, there are two
 or three things, about which, I fancy, there will
 be no controversy, *viz.* that imitation and obe-
 dience, are both alike necessary, being indispen-
 sibly requir’d by the law of reason, and inseparable
 from the character of a good man, that one of
 these cannot exist without the other, imitation with-
 out obedience, or obedience without imitation, and
 that, in both these, we honour God and are accepted
 by him. These things, I imagine, will not be
 disputed. The *question*, therefore, that remains must
 be, which of these is prior to the other, most ac-
 ceptable to God, and does most highly honour
 him ? I think, *imitation*. Imitation is *prior* to obe-
 dience. My reason for asserting this is, that to obey
 God, presupposes our having made a right use of
 our intellectual powers and faculties, the result of
 which is a *conviction* that God hath given us a law
 which we are bound to obey, and a *resolution* to
 obey it. Now in this right use of our faculties,
 we evidently imitate the supreme of all beings who
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constantly exerts his most perfect knowledge and power after the most perfect manner.

§ 15. I hope too, one may venture to say, that imitation is more *acceptable* than obedience, if all that is acceptable in this *latter* be, when traced to its *original*, borrowed from the *former*; which is really the case. That which gives an act of obedience its whole worth and significancy, is the temper and posture of the mind in performing it; a right affection towards truth and goodness. And what is there so *like God*, in the imitable part of his nature, as such a temper of soul? And, for what this author saith that the love of God is a prior duty to imitation, if he means to *all* imitation of him, it is certainly false. The love of God which is characteristical (*i. e.* a love of goodness, especially as existing after the most transcendent manner in God) being the noblest imitation of him, and that which either includes, or draws after it, every thing that comes under the name of imitation. If he means that it is prior to some *particular* and *outward* acts of imitation; tho' this be true, it makes nothing to his purpose, proving no more than this, that *one* imitation of God is prior to *another*; *inward* to *outward*, a similitude of *spirit* to a similitude of conduct. Nothing can be plainer than that love, as the *principle* of obedience, must be prior to that obedience which flows from it.

§ 16. That *imitation* more *highly* honours God than *obedience*, is, if possible, still more evident. For only consider the *direct* and *immediate* language of one and of the other. *Obedience* directly and properly respects the *authority* and *power* of God; *imitation* his *wisdom* and *goodness*. And which is most honourable to God, the acknowledgment of his having the *command* of all other beings, or that
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he is *infinitely more excellent* than they? Would it not be much more for the honour of a prince to have it said that his subjects, in every part of his dominions, made it their highest ambition to *be* and *do* likehim, as far as the disparity of circumstances would admit, believing that in the same proportion as they advanc'd in the imitation of their sovereign, they should advance in perfection and happiness, than that they obey'd him with an implicit resignation, never presuming to controul or dispute any of his commands? The instruction to be drawn from hence is, that tho' every way of considering the divine Being yields great advantage; which is a very good reason why we should not forget him under any character and relation, as particularly that of our *rightful* and *Almighty Sovereign*; yet our thoughts should be most frequently conversant about the *moral attributes* of God, whether as the *rule* to which every part of his government of the world is conform'd, or the *pattern* which we are to follow, and to come as near as we can, that we may have more of the light of it deriv'd into our conversation to make it *shine before men*. By repeated contemplation we may grow more intimately acquainted with these perfections; be more sensible of their beauty, and feel their attractive influence; the consequence of which will be, that knowing God better, in those things which are his very nature as a *moral agent*, we shall love and resemble him more; upon the same account as we shall be transform'd into his perfect image, when, in the sublime language of *inspiration*, we shall *see him as he is*, and *face to face*. The more we place our religion in the love and imitation of God, the less will the danger be of our omitting *the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and truth*, and shuffling into their room, a feigned sanctity of behaviour, and punctuality

tuality in some outward forms of devotion, which will never atone for the want of a *good and honest heart*, and the substantial virtues of a christian life.

§ 17. *Prayer*, by this *rule of fitness*, may seem to be excluded from being a necessary part of religion. “ For he that asks is worthy to receive “ what he asks, or he is not worthy. If worthy, “ he will receive it tho’ he doth not ask ; if not “ worthy, tho’ he ask, he will not receive *.” The fallacy of which argument lies in *supposing* what ought to have been *prov’d* ; that there is no antecedent fitness in prayer. For if there are several considerations which shew it fit that creatures, circumstanc’d as we are, should pray to God, then it cannot be fit that God should make no difference between those who wholly neglect prayer, and those that are constant and devout in the discharge of their duty : nor can the former be worthy of the favours of heaven in the same sense that the latter are so, not being in a right disposition to receive them. Prayer, regularly perform’d, and with attention of mind, supposes and promotes the true knowledge of ourselves, an habitual regard to the presence and providence of God ; a sincere endeavour after those things which we make the subject of our prayer ; of those *chiefly* which in our prayers we acknowledge to be of the *greatest importance* ; and, *finally*, a kind and friendly disposition towards our fellow-creatures. The knowledge of ourselves, among other things, includes the knowledge of our unworthiness, and of our weakness, and indigence ; of all which prayer is a *plain acknowledgement* ; the more necessary, because without putting ourselves in mind of these humbling

* Maxim. Tyr. Diss. 30.

truths, we might be apt in the pride of our hearts to forget them ; and, for want of reflecting upon them, to behave unsuitably to our real character of infirm, necessitous, and sinful creatures, who have nothing they can challenge in the way of exchange from the hand of God, and neither *enjoy*, nor can *do*, any thing without him.

§ 18. By the same means the mind is render'd more attentive to the *presence* of an *invisible God*, and to his *providence*, both universal and special, directing and ordering all things without us, and operating upon our minds. Who have the most stedfast belief of a super-intending providence, and reliance upon it, *they* who live without prayer, or *they* who would as soon choose to be without their necessary food ? Were the *petitionary* part of divine worship to be laid aside, *thanksgiving* would not continue long after : for what more natural than not to reflect on our having *receiv'd every thing* from the bountiful hand of God when we *ask nothing* of him ? To be unaffected with the effusions of God's paternal goodness on the creation, and look upon all that happens in the common train of events, with the same indifference as if the whole proceeded from an undesigning cause ? The unavoidable effect of all which will be, that we shall neither enjoy the satisfaction in what we have that we should otherwise do, nor trouble ourselves about the use we make of it. Prayer is so far from superseding our own care and industry, as to be one of the most powerful arguments and incentives to them. For, I hope, we are none of us so unreasonable, to pray that God would do *all* while we sit still and do *nothing* ; that is, that he would do both his own part, and ours too ; and put us in possession of all the blessings we need, without our making use of the most likely means to obtain

tain them. The only construction that a reasonable prayer will bear, is *that God would succeed our best endeavours* ; which shews that in every prayer, there is a virtual promise of vigilance and activity on our part, according to the nature and importance of the things desir'd. A man would be ashamed to pray every day, deliberately and seriously, for his *daily bread*, who by idleness and extravagance took the certain way to *make or keep* himself poor ; to pray that God would give him his grace to lead a virtuous and useful life, who would not be at the least pains to practise any one virtue, to deny any one vicious inclination, or to observe any one rule, tho' never so necessary, for the eradicating of evil habits, or planting of good. And for the tendency which mens praying *with* and *for* one another, hath to beget and cherish *social affections*, they need only consult their own *reason* and *experience*. Does not joint and mutual intercession to the *Common Parent* of mankind, and in a peculiar sense the Father of just and good men, *dispose* as well as *teach* them, to look upon one another as *brethren*, and at the same time widen both their *views* and their *affections* ? How could any one, without being challeng'd for it by his own mind, recommend others to the favour and compassion of the Deity, and himself refuse to give them any assistance, or perform the least office of humanity for them, how much soever needed ? For should all be thus backward to lend their helping hand (as all may with as much reason as any one person can) how shall they be succour'd, in many cases, without a *miracle* ? which, according to the true intent of our prayers one for another, we do not beg ; the meaning of our prayers for others being no more than this, that God, in the ordinary course of his providence, would direct things in their favour, and so influence

ence the minds of men, that, as far as they can be mutually helpful to one another, they may be excited, each according to his several ability, to contribute to the publick good. These considerations, with others that might be mention'd, shewing the *fitness* of prayer (at least in the present state of things) do at the same time prove the *necessity* of it, if we would please that sovereign Being who does what is fit himself, and cannot but require it from his reasonable creatures.

§ 19. To demonstrate the fitness of *glorifying God*, and apprehend the design of God in exacting this tribute from us, nothing more is necessary than to explain the terms. It is the glory of God that he *is*, and *hath*, and *does*, every thing that can enter into the notion of an infinitely *great*, and *perfect*, and *happy Being*, that he *gives all*, and *receives nothing*. His Majesty is not like that of earthly princes, which, for the most part, arises from things *without them*, such as *sumptuous palaces*, a crowd of *courtiers, attendants, and guards*, a great deal of state and ceremony, and other like things which make a *seeming distinction* between the prince and the subject, where, very often, there is not *the least real one*; and have their chief use from supplying the place of true grandeur and majesty. To *glorify God* is to *think of him as he is*, and to *love* him, in proportion to our capacities, *as he deserves*. Of our going *beyond* the truth there is no danger, but only of our falling *vastly short* of it. Were there but one *reasonable creature*, this would be his *duty and happiness*, to turn his eyes towards this glorious sun, and gaze for ever on his beauty and brightness. This is the *first part* of the idea of glorifying God, or rather the *first step* to it. *The next*, and that which most *properly and formally* constitutes the duty, is when intelligent be-

ings take the most effectual course, to *testify* their own just sense of a Deity one to another, and to *excite*, and *cherish*, and *improve*, one in another, the same worthy apprehensions of God, and predominant affections towards him. He glorifies God *most*, whose words and actions are best calculated to *propagate* right and honourable notions of the Deity, and correspondent dispositions of mind towards him. From whence, by the way, let me observe, that an *active life* appears to be ordinarily preferable to a life of *lazy retirement*, and *barren contemplation*; and to be really *more perfect*. Confession of the truth, and zeal to promote it; solemn and publick acts of worship; a reverent use of the name of God in our common discourse, and (may I not say) above all the rest, a regular, useful, and holy life, are all comprehended under the general expression of *glorifying God*, being apparently necessary to maintain and spread the knowledge and love of God in this part of his reasonable creation. Among these means, it is not without reason, that I have given the preheminance to a useful and good life. The greatest person that ever liv'd upon earth hath told us, *herein is God glorified that we bear much fruit; so* (saith he) *shall ye be my disciples*. Glorious character of a *disciple of Christ*, that he is one that abounds in the fruits of righteousness and goodness! Can any thing be more for the glory of the *master*, than to make this a mark of his disciples, leaving them an example that they should follow his steps? or of the *disciple* than to follow, obey, and imitate such a master.

§ 20. Whoever attends to what hath been now said to explain the duty of glorifying God, cannot mistake the *design* of God in requiring it. It is a most certain truth *that God made all things, even the whole frame of heaven and earth, for his own glory;*

glory; that is, so as that they might be visibly adapted to lead up the *intelligent observer* to the *first Cause*; to excite in the mind, the most elevated thoughts of God, and to impress those sentiments of awe, and reverence, and delight, which are suitable to his infinite perfections. He made intelligent beings to glorify him in an *active manner*. Not that he *needed* or *propos'd* the glory resulting from the works of creation, or from the praises and adorations of the intelligent part of it; *to complete his own happiness*. He was not mov'd by the desire of *fame* as the children of men many times are, in their greatest and most shining actions; who, without considering that in such an action, they shall discharge their own duty, and be useful to mankind, and being urg'd by this reflection, think of nothing but the renown it will procure them, and how their names will be mention'd with honour, by those that are strangers to their persons, and, as they flatter themselves, by remote posterity. Such a desire of fame, *for its own sake*, may be the *infirmity of great minds*, but still it is an *infirmity*, and therefore not consistent with a perfect nature. Alas! what are the applauses of a world, of ten thousand worlds, to him whose greatness and glory is all inherent in himself, and independent of any other being? What are their *united praises* to the *single approbation* of his own eternal mind? He hath a more *solid* and *divine satisfaction* in himself than to be capable of delighting in a *sound* or a *shadow*. All that God does, and all that he would have his creatures do, *is fit*, and he does it, and would have them do it, *because it is fit*; and forasmuch as this is for the glory of God that he does *that*, and nothing else but that which is fit for a being of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, to do, and because it is highly fit, that reasonable creatures should think, and speak, and act in that manner

manner which is most for the glory of God; in *this sense* God may be said to design his own glory, *materially consider'd*, or what declares and shews forth his *essential glory*; but not any glory *without himself* that terminates his view. It is very true, that a great deal of glory will redound from the works of God to their Creator, yea, and farther, that he expects such of his creatures, as can do it, should serve and glorify him. But as for the glory that redounds from his works, it is a necessary appendage of their being, much after the same manner as a noble production in any art is an honour to the artificer. *The work of the Lord is glorious*, and 'tis glorious because expressive of the idea or platform of it in his own mind; and as thus agreeing with his design, he cannot but approve it; it is really lovely and beautiful. And if God challenges the service and praises of his creatures, it is not that he reaps any advantage from them, or delights in them for their own sake, but because it is fit and reasonable, and for the benefit and happiness of the creature, that he should serve and worship the Creator, and because what is fit, and becoming, and productive of pleasure and happiness, God who is a lover of *truth*, and *order*, and of *mankind*, cannot but *approve*, and, as the wise Governor of the world, *command*, under pain of his displeasure. — *Upon the whole*, since we can have no reason to doubt of the truth of that notion which *best consults* the honour of the divine perfections, *best agrees* with the universal sense of mankind, and is *best adapted* to promote the cause of virtue and religion, and to answer the most difficult questions on the subject of *creation* and *providence*; I take leave to conclude, that *wisdom* (and not *arbitrary will* or *blind inclination*) is *the first spring of action in the Deity*.

F I N I S.

