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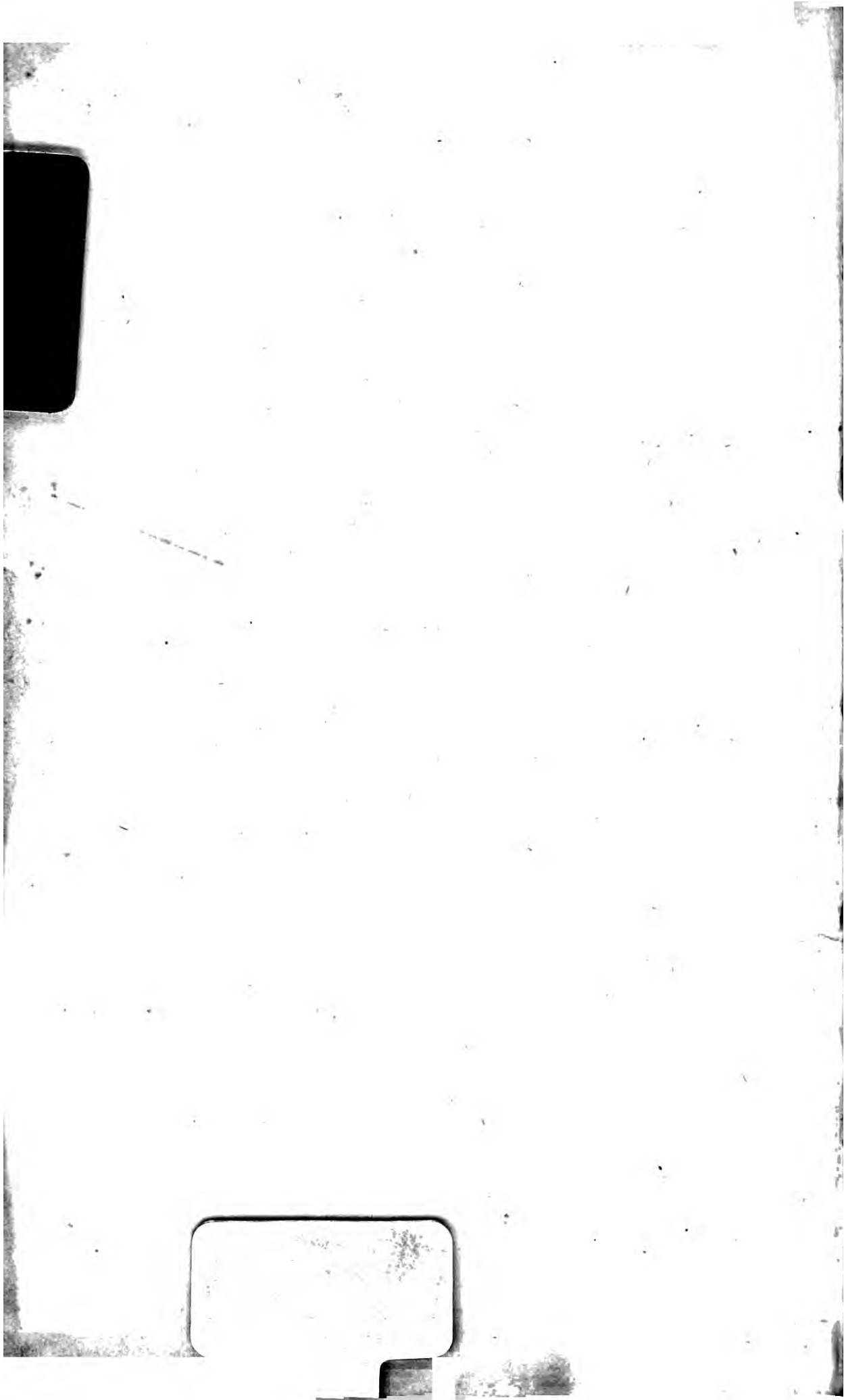
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THE
ANALOGY
OF
RELIGION
NATURAL and REVEALED,
TO THE
Constitution and Course of NATURE.

To which are added

Two Brief DISSERTATIONS:

I. Of PERSONAL IDENTITY.

II. Of the NATURE of VIRTUE.

By JOSEPH BUTLER, LL.D.
Late Lord Bishop of DURHAM.

Ejus (Analogiæ) hæc vis est, ut id quod dubium est, ad aliquid simile de quo non quæritur, referat; ut incerta certis probet.

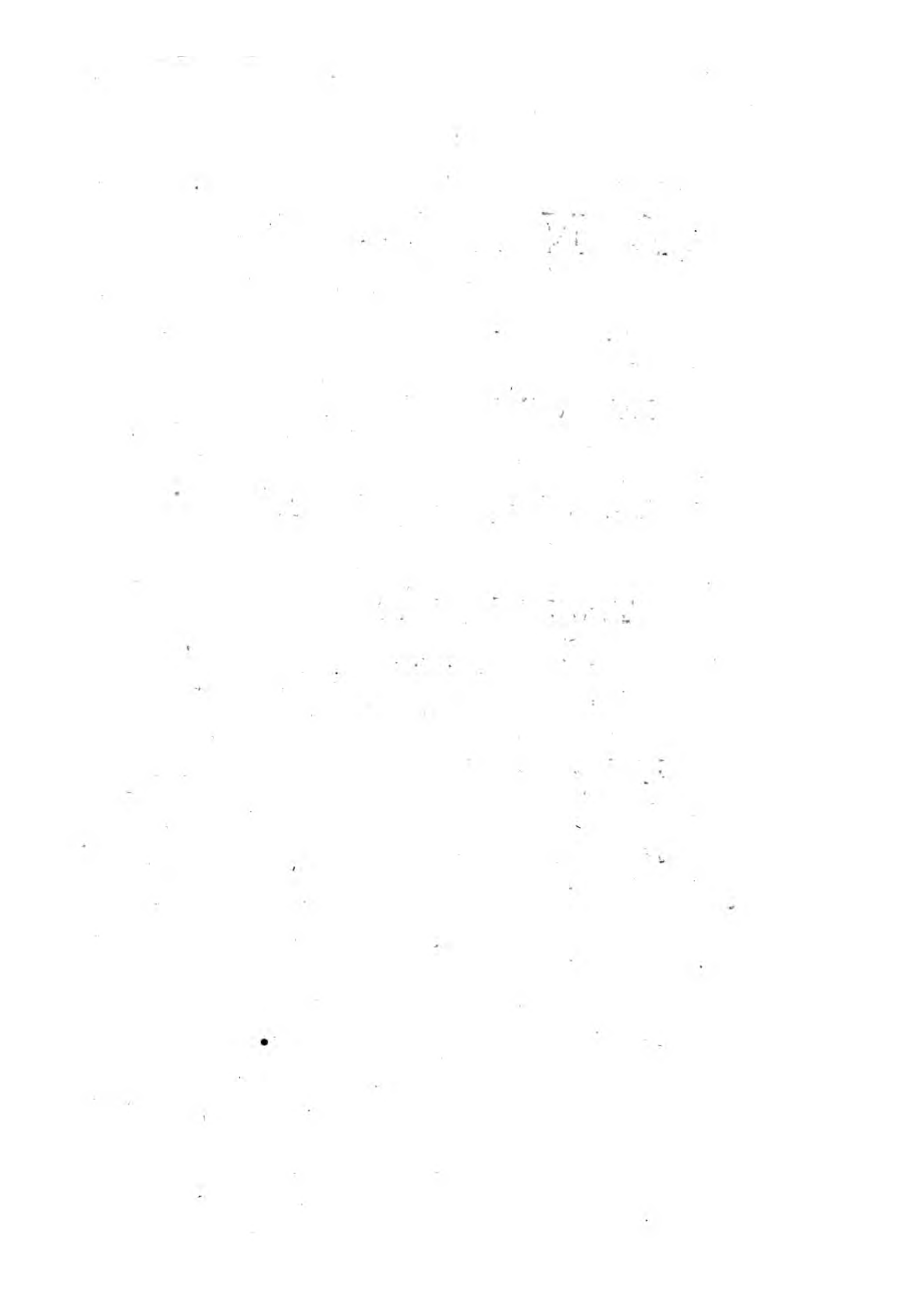
Quint. Inst. Orat. L. I. c. vi.

The FIFTH EDITION.

L O N D O N:

Printed for ROBERT HORSFIELD, at the
CROWN, in LUDGATE-STREET.

MDCCLXV.



TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE
CHARLES Lord TALBOT
Baron of HENSOL,
Lord High Chancellor of GREAT BRITAIN,

The following TREATISE is with all
Respect, Inscribed, in Acknowledgment of
the Highest Obligations to the late Lord Bishop
of DURHAM and to HIMSELF,

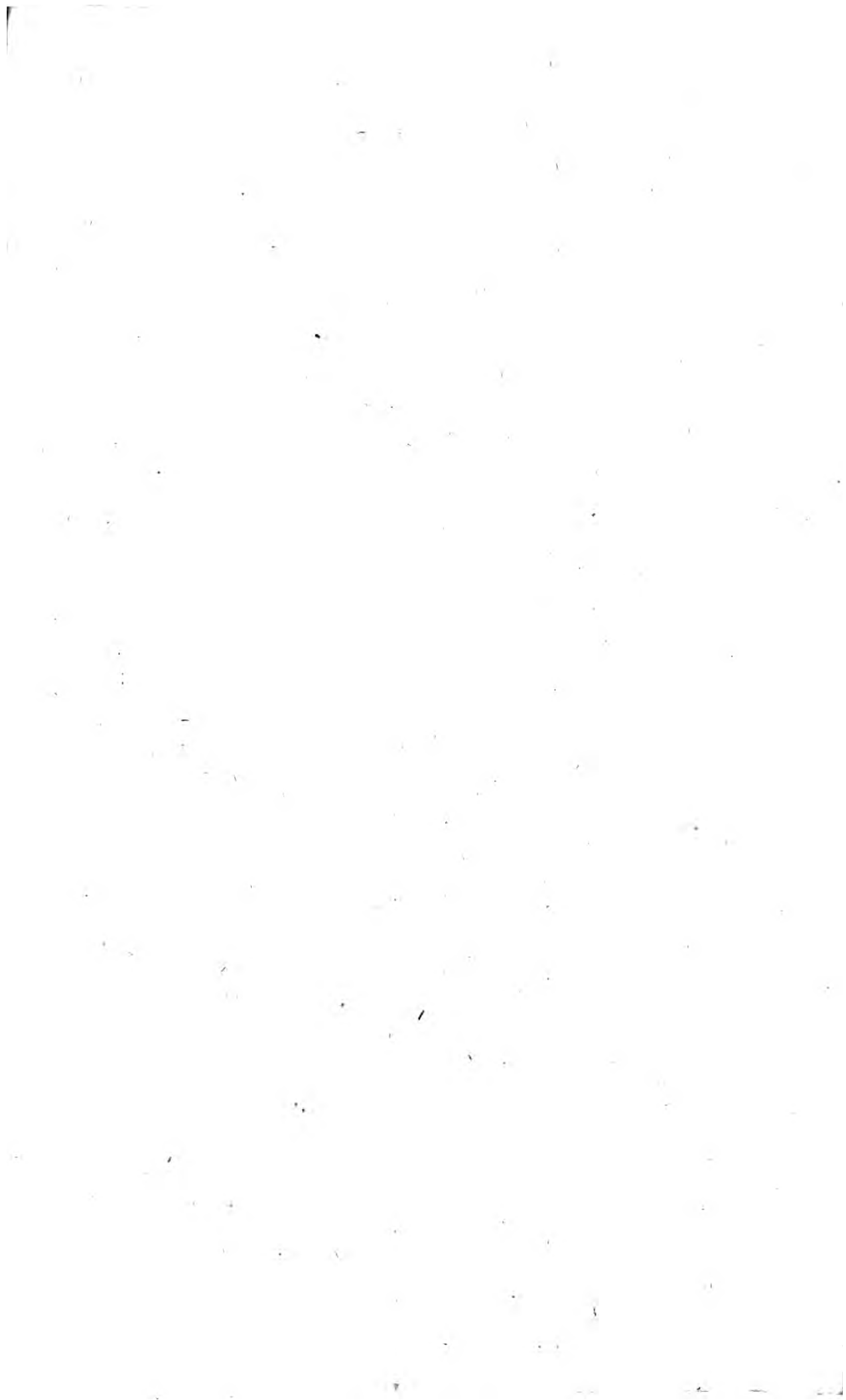
By His LORDSHIP'S

most dutiful,

most devoted,

and most humble Servant,

JOSEPH BUTLER.



ADVERTISEMENT.

IF the Reader should meet here with any thing, which he had not before attended to, it will not be in the Observations upon the Constitution and Course of Nature, these being all obvious; but in the Application of them: In which, though there is nothing but what appears to me of some real Weight, and therefore of great Importance; yet he will observe several things, which will appear to him of very little, if he can think things to be of little Importance, which are of any real Weight at all, upon such a Subject as Religion. However, the pro-

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per Force of the following Treatise, lies in the whole general Analogy considered together.

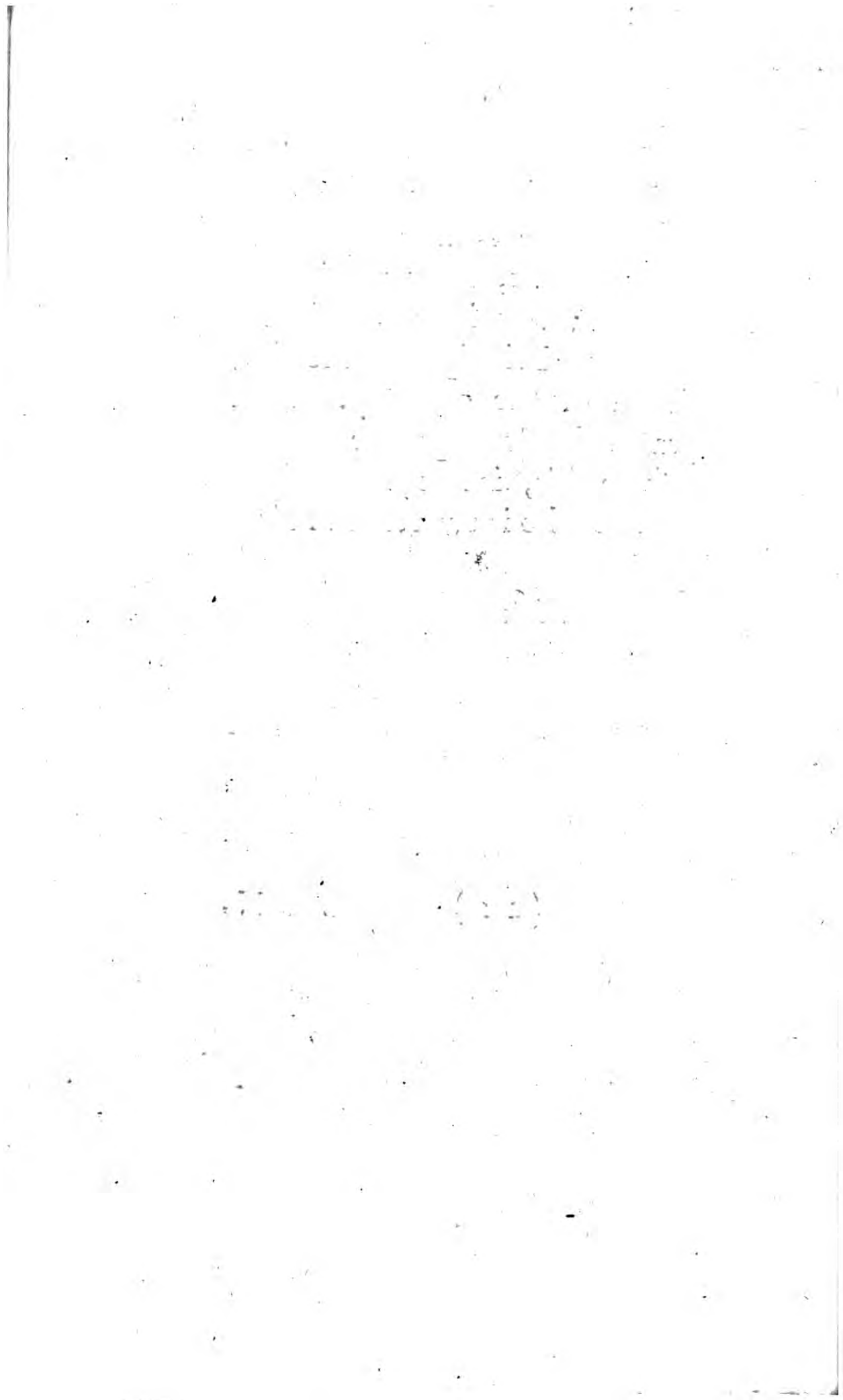
It is come, I know not how, to be taken for granted, by many Persons, that Christianity is not so much as a Subject of Inquiry; but that it is, now at length, discovered to be fictitious. And accordingly they treat it, as if, in the present Age, this were an agreed Point, among all People of Discernment; and nothing remained, but to set it up as a principal Subject of Mirth and Ridicule, as it were by Way of Reprisals, for its having so long interrupted the Pleasures of the World. On the contrary, thus much, at least, will be here found, not taken for granted, but proved, that any reasonable Man, who will thoroughly consider the Matter, may be as much assured, as he is of his own Being, that

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that it is not, however, so clear a Case, that there is nothing in it. There is, I think, strong Evidence of its Truth; but it is certain no one can, upon Principles of Reason, be satisfied of the contrary. And the practical Consequence to be drawn from this, is not attended to, by every one who is concerned in it.

May, 1736.

(a 2) C O N-



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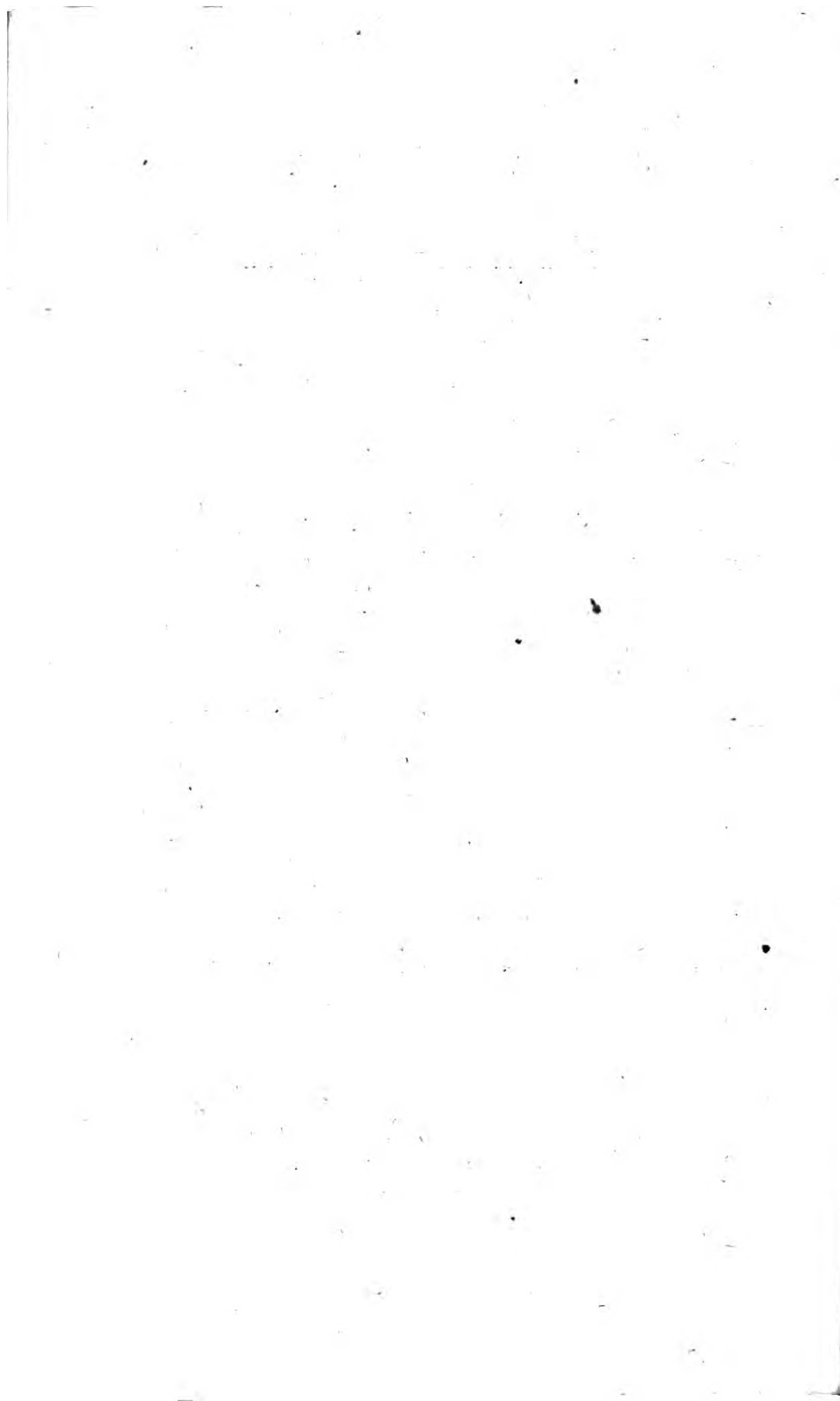
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I N T R O-



INTRODUCTION.

PROBABLE Evidence is essentially distinguished from demonstrative by this, that it admits of Degrees; and of all Variety of them, from the highest moral Certainty, to the very lowest Presumption. We cannot indeed say a thing is probably true upon one very slight Presumption for it; because, as there may be Probabilities on both sides of a Question, there may be some against it: and though there be not, yet a slight Presumption does not beget that Degree of Conviction, which is implied in saying a thing is probably true. But that the slightest possible Presumption is of the nature of a Probability, appears from hence; that such low Presumption often repeated, will amount even to moral Certainty. Thus a Man's having observed the Ebb and Flow of the Tide to Day, affords some sort of Presumption, though the lowest imaginable, that it may happen again To-morrow: But the Observation of this Event for so many Days, and Months, and Ages together, as it has been observed by
B Man-

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

Mankind, gives us a full Assurance that it will.

That which chiefly constitutes Probability is expressed in the Word Likely, *i. e.* like some Truth^a, or true Event; like it, in itself, in its Evidence, in some more or fewer of its Circumstances. For when we determine a thing to be probably true, suppose that an Event has or will come to pass, 'tis from the Mind's remarking in it a Likeness to some other Event, which we have observed has come to pass. And this Observation forms, in numberless daily Instances, a Presumption, Opinion, or full Conviction, that such Event has or will come to pass; according as the Observation is, that the like Event has sometimes, most commonly, or always so far as our Observation reaches, come to pass at like Distances of Time, or Place, or upon like Occasions. Hence arises the Belief, that a Child, if it lives twenty years, will grow up to the Stature and Strength of a Man; that Food will contribute to the Preservation of its Life, and the Want of it for such a Number of Days, be its certain Destruction. So likewise the Rule and Measure of our Hopes and Fears concerning the Success of our Pursuits; our Expectations that Others will act so and so in such Circumstances; and our Judgment

^a Verisimile.

that

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that such Actions proceed from such Principles; all These rely upon our having observed the like to what we hope, fear, expect, judge; I say upon our having observed the like, either with respect to Others or Ourselves. And thus, whereas the Prince^b who had always lived in a warm Climate, naturally concluded in the way of Analogy, that there was no such thing as Water's becoming hard; because he had always observed it to be fluid and yielding: We on the contrary, from Analogy conclude, that there is no Presumption at all against This: that 'tis supposeable, there may be Frost in *England* any given Day in *January* next; probable that there will on some Day of the Month; and that there is a moral Certainty, *i. e.* Ground for an Expectation without any Doubt of it, in some Part or other of the Winter.

Probable Evidence, in its very Nature, affords but an imperfect kind of Information; and is to be considered as relative only to Beings of limited Capacities. For Nothing which is the possible object of Knowledge, whether past, present, or future, can be probable to an infinite Intelligence; since it cannot but be discerned absolutely as it is in itself,

^b The Story is told by Mr. *Locke* in the Chapter of Probability.

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certainly true, or certainly false. But to Us, Probability is the very Guide of Life.

From these things it follows, that in Questions of Difficulty, or such as are thought so, where more satisfactory Evidence cannot be had, or is not seen; if the Result of Examination be, that there appears upon the whole, any the lowest Presumption on One side, and none on the Other, or a greater Presumption on One side, though in the lowest Degree greater; this determines the Question, even in matters of Speculation; and in matters of Practice, will lay us under an absolute and formal Obligation, in point of Prudence and of Interest, to act upon that Presumption or low Probability, though it be so low as to leave the Mind in very great Doubt which is the Truth. For surely a Man is as really bound in Prudence, to do what upon the whole appears, according to the best of his Judgment, to be for his Happiness, as what he certainly knows to be so. Nay further, in Questions of great Consequence, a reasonable Man will think it concerns him to remark lower Probabilities and Presumptions than these; such as amount to no more than showing One side of a Question to be as supposeable and credible as the Other: nay such as but amount to much less even than this. For numberless Instances might be mentioned respecting

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respecting the common Pursuits of Life, where a Man would be thought, in a literal Sense, distracted, who would not act, and with great Application too, not only upon an even Chance, but upon much less, and where the Probability or Chance was greatly against his succeeding^c.

It is not my Design to enquire further into the Nature, the Foundation, and Measure of Probability; or whence it proceeds that *Likeness* should beget that Presumption, Opinion, and full Conviction, which the human Mind is formed to receive from it, and which it does necessarily produce in every one; or to guard against the Errors, to which Reasoning from Analogy is liable. This belongs to the Subject of Logick; and is a part of that Subject which has not yet been thoroughly considered. Indeed I shall not take upon me to say, how far the Extent, Compass, and Force, of analogical Reasoning, can be reduced to general Heads and Rules; and the Whole be formed into a System. But though so little in this Way has been attempted by those who have treated of our intellectual Powers, and the Exercise of them; this does not hinder but that we may be, as we unquestionably are, assured, that Analogy is of Weight, in various Degrees, towards determining our Judgment,

^c See Chap. vi. Part II.

and our Practice. Nor does it in any wise cease to be of Weight in those Cases, because Persons, either given to dispute, or who require things to be stated with greater Exactness than our Faculties appear to admit of in practical Matters, may find other Cases in which 'tis not easy to say, whether it be, or be not, of any Weight; or Instances of seeming Analogies, which are really of none. It is enough to the present Purpose to observe, that this general Way of arguing is evidently natural, just and conclusive. For there is no Man can make a Question but that the Sun will rise to-morrow; and be seen, where it is seen at all, in the Figure of a Circle, and not in that of a Square.

Hence, namely from analogical Reasoning, *Origen*^d has with singular Sagacity observed, that *he who believes the Scripture to have proceeded from Him who is the Author of Nature, may well expect to find the same sort of Difficulties in it, as are found in the Constitution of Nature.* And in a like way of Reflection it may be added, that he who denies the Scripture to have been from God upon Account of these Difficulties, may, for the very

^d Χρὴ μὲν τοι γε τὸν ἅπασι παραδεξάμενον τῷ κτίσαντος τὸν κόσμον εἶναι ταύτας τὰς γραφὰς πεπεισθαι, ὅτι ἕσα περὶ τῆς κτίσεως ἀπαντὰ τοῖς ζητοῦσι τὸν περὶ αὐτῆς λόγον, ταῦτα καὶ περὶ τῶν γραφῶν. Philocal. p. 23. Ed. Cant.

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same Reason, deny the World to have been formed by him. On the other hand, if there be an Analogy or Likeness between that System of Things and Dispensation of Providence, which Revelation informs us of, and that System of Things and Dispensation of Providence, which Experience together with Reason informs us of, *i. e.* the known Course of Nature; this is a Presumption, that they have both the same Author and Cause; at least so far as to answer Objections against the former's being from God, drawn from any thing which is analogical or similar to what is in the latter, which is acknowledged to be from Him: for an Author of Nature is here supposed.

Forming our Notions of the Constitution and Government of the World upon Reasoning, without Foundation for the Principles which we assume, whether from the Attributes of God or any thing else; is building a World upon Hypothesis, like *Des Cartes*. Forming our Notions upon Reasoning from Principles which are certain, but applied to Cases to which we have no Ground to apply them, (like those who explain the Structure of the human Body, and the Nature of Diseases and Medicines from mere Mathematicks without sufficient *Data*;) is an Error much a-kin to the former: since what is assumed in order to make the Reason-

ing applicable, is Hypothesis. But it must be allowed just, to join abstract Reasonings with the Observations of Facts, and argue from such Facts as are known, to others that are like them; from that Part of the Divine Government over intelligent Creatures which comes under our View, to that larger and more general Government over them, which is beyond it; and from what is present, to collect, what is likely, credible, or not incredible, will be hereafter.

This Method then of concluding and determining being practical, and what, if we will act at all, we cannot but act upon in the common Pursuits of Life; being evidently conclusive, in various Degrees, proportionable to the Degree and Exactness of the whole Analogy or Likeness; and having so great Authority for its Introduction into the Subject of Religion, even revealed Religion; my Design is to apply it to that Subject in general, both natural and revealed: taking for proved, that there is an intelligent Author of Nature, and natural Governor of the World. For as there is no Presumption against This prior to the Proof of it; so it has been often proved with accumulated Evidence; from this Argument of Analogy and final Causes; from abstract Reasonings; from the most antient Tradition and Testimony; and from the general
Con-

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Consent of Mankind. Nor does it appear, so far as I can find, to be denied, by the Generality of those who profess themselves dissatisfied with the Evidence of Religion.

As there are Some, who, instead of thus attending to what is in Fact the Constitution of Nature, form their Notions of God's Government upon Hypothesis: so there are Others, who indulge themselves in vain and idle Speculations, how the World might possibly have been framed otherwise than it is; and upon Supposition that Things might, in imagining that they should, have been disposed and carried on after a better Model, than what appears in the present Disposition and Conduct of them. Suppose now a Person of such a Turn of Mind, to go on with his Reveries, till he had at length fixt upon some particular Plan of Nature, as appearing to him the best.—One shall scarce be thought guilty of Detraction against human Understanding, if one should say, even beforehand, that the Plan which this speculative Person would fix upon, though he were the wisest of the Sons of Men, probably would not be the very best, even according to his own Notions of *best*; whether he thought That to be so, which afforded Occasions and Motives for the Exercise of the greatest Virtue, or which was productive of the greatest Happiness, or that These two
I were

INTRODUCTION.

were necessarily connected, and run up into one and the same Plan. However, it may not be amiss once for all to see, what would be the Amount of these Emendations and imaginary Improvements upon the System of Nature, or how far they would mislead us. And it seems there could be no stopping, till we came to some such Conclusions as these: That all Creatures should at first be made as perfect and as happy, as they were capable of ever being: That Nothing, to be sure, of Hazard or Danger should be put upon them to do; some indolent Persons would perhaps think Nothing at all: Or certainly, that effectual Care should be taken, that they should, whether necessarily or not, yet eventually and in Fact, always do what was right and most conducive to Happiness, which would be thought easy for infinite Power to effect: either by not giving them any Principles which would endanger their going wrong; or by laying the right Motive of Action in every Instance before their Minds continually in so strong a Manner, as would never fail of inducing them to act conformably to it: And that the whole Method of Government by Punishments should be rejected, as absurd; as an awkward round-about Method of carrying things on; nay as contrary to a principal Purpose, for which it would be supposed Creatures were made, namely Happiness.

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Now, without considering what is to be said in particular to the several Parts of this Train of Folly and Extravagance; what has been above intimated, is a full direct general Answer to it, namely, that we may see beforehand that we have not Faculties for this kind of Speculation. For though it be admitted, that from the first Principles of our Nature, we unavoidably judge or determine Some Ends to be absolutely in themselves preferable to Others, and that the Ends now mentioned, or if they run up into one, that this One is absolutely the best; and consequently that we must conclude the ultimate End designed, in the Constitution of Nature and Conduct of Providence, is the most Virtue and Happiness possible: Yet we are far from being able to judge, what particular Disposition of things would be most friendly and assistant to Virtue; or what Means might be absolutely necessary to produce the most Happiness in a System of such Extent as our own World may be, taking in all that is past and to come, though we should suppose it detached from the Whole of things. Indeed we are so far from being able to judge of this; that we are not Judges what may be the necessary Means of raising and conducting one Person to the highest Perfection and Happiness of his Nature, Nay even in the little Affairs of the present
Life,

Life, we find Men of different Educations and Ranks are not competent Judges of the Conduct of each other. Our whole Nature leads us to ascribe all moral Perfection to God, and to deny all Imperfection of him. And this will for ever be a practical Proof of his moral Character, to such as will consider what a practical Proof is; because it is the Voice of God speaking in us. And from hence we conclude, that Virtue must be the Happiness, and Vice the Misery, of every Creature; and that Regularity and Order and Right cannot but prevail finally in a Universe under his Government. But we are in no sort Judges, what are the necessary Means of accomplishing this End.

Let us then, instead of that idle and not very innocent Employment of forming imaginary Models of a World, and Schemes of governing it, turn our Thoughts to what we experience to be the Conduct of Nature with respect to intelligent Creatures; which may be resolved into general Laws or Rules of Administration, in the same Way as many of the Laws of Nature respecting inanimate Matter may be collected from Experiments. And let us compare the known Constitution and Course of Things, with what is said to be the moral System of Nature; the acknowledged Dispositions of Providence, or that Government which

which we find ourselves under, with what Religion teaches us to believe and expect; and see whether they are not analogous and of a Piece. And upon such a Comparison, it will I think be found, that they are very much so: that both may be traced up to the same general Laws, and resolved into the same Principles of divine Conduct.

The Analogy here proposed to be considered, is of pretty large Extent, and consists of several Parts; in Some, more, in Others, less, exact. In some few Instances perhaps it may amount to a real practical Proof; in others not so. Yet in these it is a Confirmation of what is proved other Ways. It will undeniably show, what too many want to have shewn them, that the System of Religion both natural and revealed, considered only as a System, and prior to the Proof of it, is not a Subject of Ridicule, unless That of Nature be so too. And it will afford an Answer to almost all Objections against the System both of natural and revealed Religion; though not perhaps an Answer in so great a Degree, yet in a very considerable Degree an Answer, to the Objections against the Evidence of it: For Objections against a Proof, and Objections against what is said to be proved, the Reader will observe are different Things.

Now

Now the divine Government of the World, implied in the Notion of Religion in general and of Christianity, contains in it; That Mankind is appointed to live in a future State^e; That There, every one shall be rewarded or punished^f; rewarded or punished respectively for all that Behaviour Here, which we comprehend under the Words, Virtuous or Vitious, morally good or evil^g: That our present Life is a Probation, a State of Trial^h, and of Disciplineⁱ, for that future one; Notwithstanding the Objections which Men may fancy they have, from Notions of Necessity, against there being any such moral Plan as this at all^k; And whatever Objections may appear to lie against the Wisdom and Goodness of it, as it stands so imperfectly made known to us at present^l: That this World being in a State of Apostacy and Wickedness, and consequently of Ruin, and the Sense both of their Condition and Duty being greatly corrupted amongst Men, this gave Occasion for an additional Dispensation of Providence; of the utmost Importance^m; proved by Miraclesⁿ; but containing in it many Things appearing to us strange and not to have been expected^o; a Dispensation of Providence, which

^e Ch. i. ^f Ch. ii. ^g Ch. iii. ^h Ch. iv.
ⁱ Ch. v. ^k Ch. vi. ^l Ch. vii. ^m Part II. Ch. i.
ⁿ Ch. ii. ^o Ch. iii.

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is a Scheme or System of Things^p; carried on by the Mediation of a divine Person, the Messiah, in order to the Recovery of the World^q; yet not revealed to all Men, nor proved with the strongest possible Evidence to all those to whom it is revealed; but only to such a Part of Mankind, and with such particular Evidence as the Wisdom of God thought fit^r. The Design then of the following Treatise will be to shew, that the several Parts principally objected against in this Moral and Christian Dispensation, including its Scheme, its Publication, and the Proof which God has afforded us of its Truth; that the particular Parts principally objected against in this whole Dispensation, are analagous to what is experienced in the Constitution and Course of Nature, or Providence; that the chief Objections themselves which are alledged against the former, are no other, than what may be alledged with like Justness against the latter, where they are found in Fact to be inconclusive; and that this Argument from Analogy is in general, unanswerable, and undoubtedly of Weight on the side of Religion^s; notwithstanding the Objections which may seem to lie against it, and the real Ground which there may be for Difference of Opinion, as to the particular Degree of Weight

^p Ch. iv. ^q Ch. v. ^r Ch. vi, vii. ^s Ch. viii.

which

which is to be laid upon it. This is a general Account of what may be looked for in the following Treatise. And I shall begin it with that which is the Foundation of all our Hopes and of all our Fears; all our Hopes and Fears, which are of any Consideration; I mean a future Life.

T H E

THE
ANALOGY
OF
RELIGION
TO THE
Constitution and Course of NATURE,

PART I.
Of NATURAL RELIGION.

CHAP. I.
Of a Future Life.

STRANGE Difficulties have been raised by some concerning personal Identity, or the Sameness of living Agents, implied in the Notion of our existing Now and Hereafter; or in any two successive Moments;

CHAP. I.

C

PART ments; which whoever thinks it worth
 I. while, may see considered in the first Dissertation at the End of This Treatise. But without Regard to any of them here, let us consider what the Analogy of Nature, and the several Changes which we have undergone, and those which we know we may undergo without being destroyed, suggest, as to the Effect which Death may, or may not, have upon us; and whether it be not from thence probable, that we may survive this Change, and exist in a future State of Life and Perception.

I. From our being born into the present World in the helpless imperfect State of Infancy, and having arrived from thence to mature Age, we find it to be a general Law of Nature in our own Species, that the same Creatures, the same Individuals, should exist in Degrees of Life and Perception, with Capacities of Action, of Enjoyment and Suffering, in one Period of their Being, greatly different from those appointed them in another Period of it. And in other Creatures the same Law holds. For the Difference of their Capacities and States of Life at their Birth (to go no higher) and in Maturity; the Change of Worms into Flies, and the vast Enlargement of their locomotive Powers by such Change: and Birds and Insects bursting the
 Shell

Shell their Habitation, and by this means entering into a new World, furnished with new Accommodations for them, and finding a new Sphere of Action assigned them; these are Instances of this general Law of Nature. Thus all the various and wonderful Transformations of Animals are to be taken into Consideration here. But the States of Life in which we ourselves existed formerly in the Womb and in our Infancy, are almost as different from our present in mature Age, as it is possible to conceive any two States or Degrees of Life can be. Therefore, that we are to exist hereafter in a State as different (suppose) from our present, as this is from our former, is but according to the Analogy of Nature; according to a natural Order or Appointment of the very same Kind, with what we have already experienced.

II. We know we are endued with Capacities of Action, of Happiness and Misery: for we are conscious of acting, of enjoying Pleasure and suffering Pain. Now that we have these Powers and Capacities before Death, is a Presumption that we shall retain them through and after Death; indeed a Probability of it abundantly sufficient to act upon, unless there be some positive Reason to think that Death is the Destruction of those living Powers: Because there is in every Case a

PART Probability, that all things will continue as
 I. we experience they are, in all Respects, ex-
 cept those in which we have some Reason to
 think they will be altered. This is that *Kind*^a
 of Presumption or Probability from Analogy,
 express'd in the very Word *Continuance*, which
 seems our only natural Reason for believing
 the Course of the World will continue To-
 morrow, as it has done so far as our Experi-
 ence or Knowledge of History can carry us
 back. Nay it seems our only Reason for be-
 lieving, that any one Substance now existing,
 will continue to exist a Moment longer; the
 Self-existent Substance only excepted. Thus
 if Men were assured that the unknown E-
 vent, Death, was not the Destruction of our
 Faculties of Perception and of Action, there
 would be no Apprehension, that any other
 Power or Event unconnected with this of Death,
 would destroy these Faculties just at the In-
 stant of each Creature's Death; and there-
 fore no Doubt but that they would remain
 after it: which shows the high Probability
 that our living Powers will continue after
 Death, unless there be some Ground to think
 that Death is their Destruction^b. For, if it
 would

^a I say *Kind* of Presumption or Probability; for I do not mean to affirm that there is the same *Degree* of Conviction, that our living Powers will continue after Death, as there is, that our Substances will.

^b *Destruction of living Powers*, is a manner of Expression unavoidably

would be in a manner certain that we should survive Death, provided it were certain that Death would not be our Destruction, it must be highly probable we shall survive it, if there be no Ground to think Death will be our Destruction.

CHAP.
I.

Now though I think it must be acknowledged, that prior to the natural and moral Proofs of a future Life commonly insisted upon, there would arise a general confused Suspicion, that in the great Shock and Alteration which we shall undergo by Death, We, *i. e.* our living Powers, might be wholly destroyed; yet even prior to those Proofs, there is really no particular distinct Ground or Reason for this Apprehension at all, so far as I can find. If there be, it must arise either, from *the Reason of the thing*, or from *the Analogy of Nature*.

unavoidably ambiguous; and may signify either *the Destruction of a living Being, so as that the same living Being shall be incapable of ever perceiving or acting again at all: Or the Destruction of those Means and Instruments by which it is capable of its present Life, of its present State of Perception and of Action.* It is here used in the former Sense. When it is used in the latter, the Epithet *present* is added. The Loss of a Man's Eye is a Destruction of living Powers in the latter Sense. But we have no Reason to think the Destruction of living Powers, in the former Sense, to be possible. We have no more Reason to think a Being endued with living Powers, ever loses them during its whole existence, than to believe that a Stone ever acquires them.

PART But we cannot argue from *the Reason of*
 I. *the thing*, that Death is the Destruction of
 living Agents, because we know not at all
 what Death is in itself; but only some of its
 Effects, such as the Dissolution of Flesh,
 Skin, and Bones. And these Effects do in
 no wise appear to imply the Destruction of a
 living Agent. And besides, as we are greatly
 in the Dark, upon what the Exercise of our
 living Powers depends, so we are wholly igno-
 rant what the Powers themselves depend up-
 on; the Powers themselves as distinguished,
 not only from their actual Exercise, but also
 from the present Capacity of exercising them;
 and as opposed to their Destruction: For
 Sleep, or however a Swoon, shews us, not
 only that these Powers exist when they are
 not exercised, as the passive Power of Motion
 does in inanimate Matter; but shews also that
 they exist, when there is no present Capa-
 city of exercising them: or that the Capaci-
 ties of exercising them for the present, as well
 as the actual Exercise of them, may be sus-
 pended, and yet the Powers themselves remain
 undestroyed. Since then we know not at all
 upon what the Existence of our living Pow-
 ers depends, this shews further, there can no
 Probability be collected from the Reason of
 the thing, that Death will be their Destruc-
 tion; because their Existence may depend,
 upon

upon somewhat in no Degree affected by CHAP.
Death; upon somewhat quite out of the I.
reach of this King of Terrors. So that there
is nothing more certain, than that *the Reason*
of the thing shews us no Connection between
Death, and the Destruction of living Agents.
Nor can we find any thing throughout the
whole *Analogy of Nature*, to afford us even
the slightest Presumption, that Animals ever
lose their living Powers; much less, if it were
possible, that they lose them by Death: for
we have no Faculties wherewith to trace any
beyond or through it, so as to see what be-
comes of them. This Event removes them
from our View. It destroys the *sensible* Proof,
which we had before their Death, of their
being possessed of living Powers, but does not
appear to afford the least Reason to believe
that they are, then, or by that Event, de-
prived of them.

And our knowing, that they were possessed
of these Powers, up to the very Period to
which we have Faculties capable of tracing
them, is itself a Probability of their retaining
them, beyond it. And this is confirmed, and
a sensible Credibility is given to it, by obser-
ving the very great and astonishing Changes
which we have experienced; so great, that
our Existence in another State of Life, of
Perception and of Action, will be but ac-
C 4 cording

PART according to a Method of providential Conduct,
II the like to which has been already exercised
 even with regard to Ourselves; according to
 a Course of Nature, the like to which, we
 have already gone through.

However, as one cannot but be greatly sensible, how difficult it is to silence Imagination enough to make the Voice of Reason even distinctly heard in this Case; as we are accustomed, from our Youth up, to indulge that forward delusive Faculty, ever obtruding beyond its Sphere; of some Assistance indeed to Apprehension, but the Author of all Error: As we plainly lose Ourselves in gross and crude Conceptions of things, taking for granted that we are acquainted with, what indeed we are wholly ignorant of; it may be proper to consider the imaginary Presumptions, that Death will be our Destruction, arising from these Kinds of early and lasting Prejudices; and to shew how little they can really amount to, even though we cannot wholly divest ourselves of Them. And,

I. All Presumption of Death's being the Destruction of living Beings, must go upon Supposition that they are compounded; and so, discernible. But since Consciousness is a single and indivisible Power, it should seem that the Subject in which it resides, must be

so too. For were the Motion of any Particle of Matter absolutely one and indivisible, so as that it should imply a Contradiction to suppose Part of this Motion to exist, and Part not to exist, *i. e.* Part of this Matter to move, and Part to be at rest; then its Power of Motion would be indivisible; and so also would the Subject in which the Power inheres, namely the Particle of Matter: for if this could be divided into two, one Part might be moved and the other at rest, which is contrary to the Supposition. In like manner it has been argued^o, and, for any thing appearing to the contrary, justly, that since the Perception or Consciousness, which we have of our own Existence, is indivisible, so as that it is a Contradiction to suppose one Part of it should be here and the other there; the perceptive Power, or the Power of Consciousness, is indivisible too: and consequently the Subject in which it resides; *i. e.* the conscious Being. Now upon Supposition That living Agent each Man calls himself, is thus a single Being, which there is at least no more Difficulty in conceiving than in conceiving it to be a Compound, and of which there is the Proof now mentioned; it follows, that our organized Bodies are no more ourselves or Part of ourselves, than any other Matter around us. And it is

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I.

^o See Dr. Clarke's Letter to Mr. Dodwell, and the Defences of it.

PART as easy to conceive, how Matter, which is

I. no Part of ourselves, may be appropriated to us in the Manner which our present Bodies are; as how we can receive Impressions from, and have Power over any Matter. It is as easy to conceive, that we may exist out of Bodies, as in them: that we might have animated Bodies of any other Organs and Senses wholly different from these now given us, and that we may hereafter animate the same or new Bodies variously modified and organized; as to conceive how we can animate such Bodies as our present. And lastly, the Dissolution of all these several organized Bodies, supposing ourselves to have successively animated them, would have no more conceivable Tendency to destroy the living Beings Ourselves, or deprive us of living Faculties, the Faculties of Perception and of Action, than the Dissolution of any foreign Matter, which we are capable of receiving Impressions from, and making use of for the common Occasions of Life.

II. The Simplicity and absolute Oneness of a living Agent cannot indeed, from the Nature of the thing, be properly proved by experimental Observations. But as these *fall in* with the Supposition of its Unity, so they plainly lead us to *conclude* certainly, that our gross organized Bodies, with which we perceive the
Objects

Objects of Sense, and with which we act, are CHAP. I.
no Part of ourselves ; and therefore shew us, I.
that we have no Reason to believe Their De-
struction to be ours : even without determin-
ing whether our living Substances be material
or immaterial. For we see by Experience,
that Men may lose their Limbs, their Organs
of Sense, and even the greatest Part of these
Bodies, and yet remain the same living A-
gents. And Persons can trace up the Exis-
tence of themselves to a Time, when the
Bulk of their Bodies was extremely small, in
Comparison of what it is in mature Age :
and we cannot but think, that they might
then have lost a considerable Part of that
small Body, and yet have remained the same
living Agents ; as they may now lose great
Part of their present Body, and remain so.
And it is certain, that the Bodies of all Ani-
mals are in a constant Flux, from that never-
ceasing Attrition, which there is in every Part
of them. Now things of this Kind un-
avoidably teach us to distinguish, between
these living Agents Ourselves, and large Quan-
tities of Matter, in which we are very nearly
interested : since these may be alienated, and
actually are in a daily Course of Succession,
and changing their Owners ; whilst we are
assured, that each living Agent remains one
and the same permanent Being *. And this

* See *Dissertation* 1.

PART general Observation leads us on to the following ones,
 I.

First, That we have no Way of determining by Experience, what is the certain Bulk of the living Being each Man calls himself: and yet, till it be determined that it is larger in Bulk than the solid elementary Particles of Matter, which there is no Ground to think any natural Power can dissolve, there is no sort of Reason to think Death to be the Diffolution of it, of the living Being, even though it should not be absolutely indiscerptible.

Secondly, From our being so nearly related to and interested in certain Systems of Matter, suppose our Flesh and Bones, and afterwards ceasing to be at all related to them, the living Agents ourselves remaining all this while undestroyed notwithstanding such Alienation; and consequently these Systems of Matter not being Ourselves: it follows further, that we have no Ground to conclude any other, suppose *internal Systems* of Matter, to be the living Agents Ourselves; because we can have no Ground to conclude This, but from our Relation to and Interest in such other Systems of Matter: and therefore we can have no Reason to conclude, what befalls those Systems of Matter at Death, to be the
 De-

Destruction of the living Agents. We have **CHAP.**
already several Times over lost a great Part or **I.**
perhaps the whole of our Body, according to
certain common established Laws of Nature;
yet we remain the same living Agents: When
we shall lose as great a Part, or the Whole, by
another common established Law of Nature,
Death; why may we not also remain the
same? That the Alienation has been gradual
in one Case, and in the other will be more at
once, does not prove any thing to the con-
trary. We have passed undestroyed through
those many and great Revolutions of Matter,
so peculiarly appropriated to us ourselves;
why should we imagine Death will be so fa-
tal to us? Nor can it be objected, that what is
thus alienated or lost, is no Part of our origi-
nal solid Body, but only adventitious Matter;
because we may lose intire Limbs, which must
have contained many solid Parts and Vessels of
the original Body: or if this be not admitted,
we have no Proof, that any of these solid
Parts are dissolved or alienated by Death.
Though, by the way, we are very nearly
related to that extraneous or adventitious Mat-
ter, whilst it continues united to and distend-
ing the several Parts of our solid Body. But
after all; the Relation a Person bears to those
Parts of his Body, to which he is the most
nearly related; what does it appear to amount
to but this, that the living Agent, and those
Parts

PART. Parts of the Body, mutually affect each other? And the same thing, the same thing in Kind though not in Degree, may be said of *all foreign* Matter, which gives us Ideas, and which we have any Power over. From these Observations the whole Ground of the Imagination is removed, that the Dissolution of any Matter, is the Destruction of a living Agent, from the Interest he once had in such Matter.

Thirdly, If we consider our Body somewhat more distinctly, as made up of Organs and Instruments of Perception and of Motion, it will bring us to the same Conclusion. Thus the common optical Experiments show, and even the Observation how Sight is assisted by Glasses shows, that we see with our Eyes in the same Sense as we see with Glasses. Nor is there any Reason to believe, that we see with them in any other Sense; any other, I mean, which would lead us to think the Eye itself a Percipient. The like is to be said of Hearing: and our Feeling distant solid Matter by means of somewhat in our Hand, seems an Instance of the like Kind, as to the Subject we are considering. All these are Instances of foreign Matter, or such as is no Part of our Body, being instrumental in preparing Objects for, and conveying them to, the perceiving Power, in a Manner similar or like
to

to the Manner, in which our Organs of Sense CHAP.
prepare and convey them. Both are in a like I.
Way Instruments of our receiving such Ideas
from external Objects, as the Author of Na-
ture appointed those external Objects to be
the Occasions of exciting in us. However,
Glasses are evidently instances of this; namely
of Matter which is no Part of our Body,
preparing Objects for and conveying them to-
wards the perceiving Power, in like Manner
as our bodily Organs do. And if we see
with our Eyes only in the same Manner as
we do with Glasses, the like may justly be
concluded, from Analogy, of all our other
Senses. It is not intended, by any thing here
said, to affirm, that the whole Apparatus of
Vision, or of Perception by any other of our
Senses, can be traced, through all its Steps,
quite up to the living Power of seeing, or per-
ceiving: But that so far as it can be traced
by experimental Observations, so far it ap-
pears, that our Organs of Sense prepare and
convey on Objects, in order to their being
perceived, in like Manner as foreign Matter
does, without affording any Shadow of Ap-
pearance, that they themselves perceive. And
that we have no Reason to think our Organs
of Sense Percipients, is confirmed by Instan-
ces of Persons losing some of them, the liv-
ing Beings Themselves, their former Occu-
piers, remaining unimpaired. It is confirmed
also

PART also by the Experience of Dreams ; by which
I. we find we are at present possessed of a latent,
 and, what would otherwise be, an unimagined unknown Power of perceiving sensible Objects, in as strong and lively a Manner without our external Organs of Sense as with them.

So also with regard to our Power of moving, or directing Motion by Will and Choice : upon the Destruction of a Limb, this active Power remains, as it evidently seems, unlesened ; so as that the living Being, who has suffered this Loss, would be capable of moving as before, if it had another Limb to move with. It can walk by the Help of an artificial Leg ; just as it can make use of a Pole or a Leaver, to reach towards itself and to move Things, beyond the Length and the Power of its natural Arm : And this last it does in the same Manner as it reaches and moves, with its natural Arm, Things nearer and of less Weight. Nor is there so much as any Appearance of our Limbs being endued with a Power of moving or directing themselves ; though they are adapted, like the several Parts of a Machine, to be the Instruments of Motion to each other ; and some Parts of the same Limb, to be Instruments of Motion to other Parts of it.

Thus

Thus a Man determines; that he will look CHAP.
at such an Object through a Microscope; or I.
or being lame suppose, that he will walk to such
a Place with a Staff a Week hence. His Eyes
and his Feet no more determine in these
Cases, than the Microscope and the Staff.
Nor is there any Ground to think they any
more put the Determination in Practice; or
that his Eyes are the Seers or his Feet the
Movers, in any other Sense than as the
Microscope and the Staff are. Upon the
whole then, our Organs of Sense and our
Limbs are certainly Instruments, which the
living Persons ourselves make use of to per-
ceive and move with: There is not any Pro-
bability, that they are any more; nor conse-
quently, that we have any other Kind of Re-
lation to them, than what we may have to
any other foreign Matter formed into Instru-
ments of Perception and Motion, suppose in-
to a Microscope or a Staff; (I say any other
Kind of Relation, for I am not speaking of
the Degree of it) nor consequently is there
any Probability, that the Alienation or Dissol-
ution of these Instruments is the Destruction
of the perceiving and moving Agent.

And thus our finding, that the Dissolution
of Matter, in which living Beings were most
nearly interested, is not their Dissolution; and

D

that

PART that the Destruction of several of the Organs
I. and Instruments of Perception and of Motion belonging to them, is not their Destruction; shows demonstratively, that there is no Ground to think that the Dissolution of any other Matter, or Destruction of any other Organs and Instruments, will be the Dissolution or Destruction of living Agents, from the like Kind of Relation. And we have no Reason to think we stand in any other Kind of Relation to any thing which we find dissolved by Death.

But it is said these Observations are equally applicable to Brutes: and it is thought an insuperable Difficulty, that they should be immortal, and by consequence capable of everlasting Happiness. Now this Manner of Expression is both invidious and weak: but the thing intended by it, is really no Difficulty at all, either in the way of natural or moral Consideration. For *1st*. Suppose the invidious Thing, designed in such a Manner of Expression, were really implied, as it is not in the least, in the natural Immortality of Brutes; namely, that they must arrive at great Attainments, and become rational and moral Agents; even this would be no Difficulty: since we know not what latent Powers and Capacities they may be endued with. There was once, prior to Experience, as great Pre-
 sumption

sumption against human Creatures, as there is CHAP.
against the brute Creatures, arriving at that I.
Degree of Understanding, which we have in ~
mature Age. For we can trace up our own
Existence to the same Original with Theirs.
And we find it to be a general Law of Na-
ture, that Creatures endued with Capacities of
Virtue and Religion, should be placed in a
Condition of Being, in which they are alto-
gether without the Use of Them, for a con-
siderable Length of their Duration ; as in In-
fancy and Childhood. And great Part of the
human Species go out of the present World,
before they come to the Exercise of these Ca-
pacities in any Degree at all. But then *2dly.*
The natural Immortality of Brutes, does not
in the least imply, that they are endued with
any latent Capacities of a rational or moral
Nature. And the Oeconomy of the Universe
might require, that there should be living
Creatures without any Capacities of this
Kind. And all Difficulties as to the Manner
how they are to be disposed of, are so ap-
parently and wholly founded in our Igno-
rance, that it is wonderful they should be in-
sisted upon by any, but such as are weak
enough to think they are acquainted with
the whole System of Things. There is then
absolutely nothing at all in this Objection,
which is so rhetorically urged, against the
greatest Part of the natural Proofs or Pre-
sumptions

PART sumptions of the Immortality of human

I. Minds : I say the greatest Part ; for it is less applicable to the following Observation, which is more peculiar to Mankind :

III. That as it is evident our *present* Powers and Capacities of Reason, Memory, and Affection, do not depend upon our gross Body in the Manner in which Perception by our Organs of Sense does ; so they do not appear to depend upon it at all in any such Manner, as to give Ground to think, that the Dissolution of this Body, will be the Destruction of these our *present* Powers of Reflection, as it will of our Powers of Sensation ; or to give Ground to conclude, even that it will be so much as a Suspension of the former.

Human Creatures exist at present in two States of Life and Perception, greatly different from each other ; each of which has its own peculiar Laws, and its own peculiar Enjoyments and Sufferings. When any of our Senses are affected or Appetites gratified with the Objects of Them, we may be said to exist or live in a State of Sensation. When none of our Senses are affected or Appetites gratified ; and yet we perceive and reason and act ; we may be said to exist or live in a State of Reflection. Now it is by no means certain,

tain, that any thing which is dissolved by Death, is any way necessary to the living Being in this its State of Reflection, after Ideas are gained. For, though from our present Constitution and Condition of Being, our external Organs of Sense are necessary for conveying in Ideas to our reflecting Powers, as Carriages and Leavers and Scaffolds are in Architecture: yet when these Ideas are brought in, we are capable of reflecting in the most intense Degree, and of enjoying the greatest Pleasure, and feeling the greatest Pain, by Means of that Reflection, without any Assistance from our Senses; and without any at all, which we know of, from that Body, which will be dissolved by Death. It does not appear then, that the Relation of this gross Body to the reflecting Being, is, in any Degree, necessary to Thinking; to our intellectual Enjoyments or Sufferings: nor consequently, that the Dissolution or Alienation of the former by Death, will be the Destruction of those present Powers, which render us capable of this State of Reflection. Further, there are Instances of mortal Diseases, which do not at all affect our present intellectual Powers; and this affords a Presumption, that those Diseases will not destroy these present Powers. Indeed, from the Observations made above^e, it appears, that there is no

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^e P. 28, 29, 30.

PART Presumption, from their mutually affecting
 I. each other, that the Dissolution of the Body
 is the Destruction of the living Agent. And
 by the same Reasoning, it must appear too,
 that there is no Presumption, from their mu-
 tually affecting each other, that the Dissolu-
 tion of the Body is the Destruction of our
 present reflecting Powers; But Instances of their
 not affecting each other, afford a Presumption
 of the contrary. Instances of mortal Dis-
 eases not impairing our present reflecting Pow-
 ers, evidently turn our Thoughts even from
 imagining such Diseases to be the Destruc-
 tion of them. Several Things indeed greatly
 affect all our living Powers, and at length sus-
 pend the Exercise of them; as for Instance
 Drowsiness, increasing till it ends in sound
 Sleep: and from hence we might have ima-
 gined it would destroy them, till we found
 by Experience the Weakness of this Way of
 judging. But in the Diseases now mentioned,
 there is not so much as this Shadow of Pro-
 bability, to lead us to any such Conclusion, as
 to the reflecting Powers which we have at
 present. For in those Diseases, Persons the
 Moment before Death appear to be in the
 highest Vigour of Life. They discover Ap-
 prehension, Memory, Reason, all entire;
 with the utmost Force of Affection; Sense of
 a Character, of Shame and Honour; and the
 highest mental Enjoyments and Sufferings,
 even

even to the last Gasp : and these surely prove even greater Vigour of Life than bodily Strength does. Now what Pretence is there for thinking, that a progressive Disease when arrived to such a Degree, I mean that Degree which is mortal, will destroy those Powers, which were not impaired, which were not affected by it, during its whole Progress quite up to that Degree? And if Death by Diseases of this Kind, is not the Destruction of our present reflecting Powers, it will scarce be thought that Death by any other Means is.

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I.

It is obvious that this general Observation may be carried on further : and there appears so little Connection between our bodily Powers of Sensation, and our present Powers of Reflection, that there is no Reason to conclude, that Death, which destroys the former, does so much as suspend the Exercise of the latter, or interrupt our *continuing* to exist in the like State of Reflection which we do now. For Suspension of Reason, Memory, and the Affections which they excite, is no Part of the Idea of Death, nor is implied in our Notion of it. And our daily experiencing these Powers to be exercised, without any Assistance, that we know of, from those Bodies, which will be dissolved by Death; and our finding often, that the Exercise of them is so lively to the last ; these Things afford a

PART sensible Apprehension, that Death may not
 I. perhaps be so much as a Discontinuance of
 the Exercise of these Powers, nor of the En-
 joyments and Sufferings which it implies ^f,
 So that our posthumous Life, whatever there
 may be in it additional to our present, yet
 may not be entirely beginning anew ; but go-
 ing on. Death may, in some Sort, and in
 some Respects, answer to our Birth ; which
 is not a Suspension of the Faculties which we
 had before it, or a total Change of the State
 of Life in which we existed when in the
 Womb ; but a Continuation of both, with
 such and such great Alterations.

Nay, for ought we know of Ourselves, of
 our present Life and of Death ; Death may
 immediately, in the natural Course of Things,
 put us into a higher and more enlarged State
 of Life, as our Birth does ^g ; a State in which
 our

^f There are three distinct Questions, relating to a future
 Life, here considered : Whether Death be the Destruction of
 living Agents ; If not, Whether it be the Destruction of their
present Powers of Reflection, as it certainly is the Destruction
 of their present Powers of Sensation ; And if not, Whether it
 be the Suspension, or Discontinuance of the Exercise, of these
 present reflecting Powers. Now if there be no Reason to be-
 lieve the last, there will be, if that were possible, less for the
 next, and less still for the first.

^g This according to *Strabo* was the Opinion of the *Brach-*
mans, νομίζειν μὲν γὰρ δὴ τὸν μὲν ἐνθάδε βίον, ὡς ἂν
 ἀκμὴν κυομένων εἶναι τὸν δὲ θάνατον, γένεσιν εἰς τὸν
 ὄντως βίον, καὶ τὸν εὐδαιμόνα τοῖς φιλοσοφῆσαι. Lib. XV.
 p. 1039. Ed. Amst. 1707. To which Opinion perhaps *An-*
toninus

our Capacities, and Sphere of Perception and of Action, may be much greater than at present. For as our Relation to our external Organs of Sense, renders us capable of existing in our present State of Sensation; so it may be the only natural Hindrance to our existing, immediately and of course, in a higher State of Reflection. The Truth is, Reason does not at all shew us, in what State Death naturally leaves us. But were we sure, that it would suspend all our perceptive and active Powers; yet the Suspension of a Power and the Destruction of it, are Effects so totally different in Kind, as we experience from Sleep and a Swoon, that we cannot in any wise argue from one to the other; or conclude even to the lowest Degree of Probability, that the same Kind of Force which is sufficient to suspend our Faculties, though it be increased ever so much, will be sufficient to destroy them.


CHAP.
I.

These Observations together may be sufficient to shew, how little Presumption there is, that Death is the Destruction of human Creatures. However, there is the Shadow of an Analogy, which may lead us to imagine

toninus may allude in these Words, *ὡς νῦν περιμένεις, πότε ἐμβρυον ἐκ τῆς γαστρὸς τῆς γυναικὸς σου ἐξέλθῃ, ὅπως ἐκδέχῃσαι τὴν ὥραν ἐν ἧ τὸ ψυχάριον σου τοῦ ἐλύτρου τέτυκται.* Lib. IX. c. 3.

PART it is; the supposed Likeness which is observed between the Decay of Vegetables, and of living Creatures. And this Likeness is indeed sufficient to afford the Poets very apt Allusions to the Flowers of the Field, in their Pictures of the Frailty of our present Life. But in Reason, the Analogy is so far from holding, that there appears no Ground even for the Comparison, as to the present Question: because one of the two Subjects compared, is wholly void of That, which is the principal and chief thing in the other, the Power of Perception and of Action; and which is the only thing we are enquiring about the continuance of. So that the Destruction of a Vegetable, is an Event not similar or analogous to the Destruction of a living Agent.

But if, as was above intimated, leaving off the delusive Custom of substituting Imagination in the room of Experience, we would confine ourselves to what we do know and understand; if we would argue only from That, and from That form our Expectations; it would appear at first Sight, that as no Probability of living Beings ever ceasing to be so, can be concluded from the Reason of the thing; so none can be collected from the Analogy of Nature; because we cannot trace any living Beings beyond Death. But as we

are conscious, that we are endued with Capa- **CHAP.**
cities of Perception and of Action, and are **I.**
living Persons ; what we are to go upon is, 
that we shall continue so, till we foresee some
Accident or Event, which will endanger those
Capacities, or be likely to destroy us : which
Death does in no wise appear to be.

And thus, when we go out of this World,
we may pass into new Scenes, and a new
State of Life and Action, just as naturally as
we came into the present. And this new
State may naturally be a social one. And the
Advantages of it, Advantages of every Kind,
may naturally be bestowed, according to some
fixt general Laws of Wisdom, upon every
one in Proportion to the Degrees of his Vir-
tue. And though the Advantages of that fu-
ture natural State, should not be bestowed, as
these of the present in some Measure are, by
the Will of the Society ; but entirely by his
more immediate Action, upon whom the
whole Frame of Nature depends : Yet this
Distribution may be just as natural as their
being distributed here by the Instrumentality
of Men. And indeed, though one were to
allow any confused undetermined Sense, which
People please to put upon the Word *natural*,
it would be a Shortness of Thought scarce
credible, to imagine, that no System or Course
of Things can be so, but only what we see
at

PART at present ^b: especially whilst the Probability
 I. of a future Life, or the natural Immortality
 of the Soul, is admitted upon the Evidence of Reason; because this is really both admitting and denying at once, a State of Being different from the present to be natural. But the only distinct Meaning of that Word is *stated, fixed, or settled*: since what is natural, as much requires and presupposes an intelligent Agent to render it so, *i. e.* to effect it continually, or at stated Times; as what is supernatural or miraculous does to effect it for once. And from hence it must follow, that Persons Notion of what is natural, will be enlarged in Proportion to their greater Knowledge of the Works of God, and the Dispensations of his Providence. Nor is there any Absurdity in supposing, that there may be Beings in the Universe, whose Capacities, and Knowledge, and Views, may be so extensive, as that the whole Christian Dispensation may to them appear natural, *i. e.* analogous or conformable to God's Dealings with other Parts of his Creation; as natural as the visible known Course of Things appears to us. For there seems scarce any other possible Sense to be put upon the Word, but that only in which it is here used; similar, stated, or uniform.

^b See Part II. Ch. ii. p. 238, &c. & Part II. Ch. iii. p. 276.

This

This Credibility of a future Life, which has been here insisted upon, how little soever it may satisfy our Curiosity, seems to answer all the Purposes of Religion, in like manner as a demonstrative Proof would. Indeed a Proof, even a demonstrative one, of a future Life, would not be a Proof of Religion. For, that we are to live Hereafter, is just as reconcilable with the Scheme of Atheism, and as well to be accounted for by it, as that we are now alive, is: and therefore nothing can be more absurd than to argue from That Scheme, that there can be no future State. But as Religion implies a future State, any Presumption against such a State, is a Presumption against Religion. And the foregoing Observations remove all Presumptions of that Sort, and prove, to a very considerable Degree of Probability, one fundamental Doctrine of Religion; which, if believed, would greatly open and dispose the Mind seriously to attend to the general Evidence of the Whole.


CHAP.
I.

C H A P.

C H A P. II.

Of the Government of God by Rewards and Punishments; and particularly of the latter.

PART
I. **T**HAT which makes the Question concerning a future Life to be of so great Importance to us, is our Capacity of Happiness and Misery. And that which makes the Consideration of it to be of so great Importance to us, is the Supposition of our Happiness and Misery Hereafter, depending upon our Actions Here. Without this indeed, Curiosity could not but sometimes bring a Subject, in which we may be so highly interested, to our Thoughts; especially upon the Mortality of others, or the near Prospect of our own. But reasonable Men would not take any farther Thought about Hereafter, than what should happen thus occasionally to rise in their Minds, if it were certain, that our future Interest no way depended upon our present Behaviour: Whereas on the contrary, if there be Ground, either from Analogy or any thing else, to think it does; then there is Reason also for the most active Thought and Sollicitude, to secure that Interest; to behave so as that

that we may escape That Misery, and obtain **CHAP.**
That Happiness in another Life, which we **II.**
not only suppose ourselves capable of, but 
which we apprehend also is put in our own
Power. And whether there be Ground for
this last Apprehension, certainly would de-
serve to be most seriously considered, were
there no other Proof of a future Life and In-
terest, than That presumptive one, which
the foregoing Observations amount to.

Now in the present State, all which we
enjoy, and a great Part of what we suffer, *is*
put in our own Power. For Pleasure and
Pain are the Consequences of our Actions;
and we are endued by the Author of our Na-
ture with Capacities of foreseeing these Con-
sequences. We find by Experience He does
not so much as preserve our Lives, exclusively
of our own Care and Attention, to provide
ourselves with, and to make use of, that Sus-
tenance, by which he has appointed our
Lives shall be preserved; and without which,
he has appointed, they shall not be preserved
at all. And in general we foresee, that the
external things, which are the Objects of our
various Passions, can neither be obtained nor
enjoyed, without exerting ourselves in such
and such Manners: But by thus exerting Our-
selves, we obtain and enjoy these Objects, in
which our natural Good consists; or by this
Means

PART Means God gives us the Possession and En-

I. } joyment of them. I know not, that we have any one Kind or Degree of Enjoyment, but by the Means of our own Actions. And by Prudence and Care, we may, for the most part, pass our Days in tolerable Ease and Quiet: Or, on the contrary, we may by Rashness, ungoverned Passion, Willfulness, or even by Negligence, make Ourselves as miserable as ever we please. And many do please to make themselves extremely miserable, *i. e.* to do what they know beforehand will render them so. They follow those ways, the Fruit of which they know, by Instruction, Example, Experience, will be Disgrace, and Poverty, and Sicknes, and untimely Death. This every one observes to be the general Course of things; though it is to be allowed, we cannot find by Experience, that all our Sufferings are owing to our own Follies.

Why the Author of Nature does not give his Creatures promiscuously such and such Perceptions, without Regard to their Behaviour; why he does not make them happy without the Instrumentality of their own Actions, and prevent their bringing any Sufferings upon themselves; is another Matter. Perhaps there may be some Impossibilities in the Nature of Things, which we are unacquainted

quainted with¹. Or less happiness, it may be, would upon the whole be produced by such a Method of Conduct, than is by the present. Or perhaps divine Goodness, with which, if I mistake not, we make very free in our Speculations, may not be a bare single Disposition to produce Happiness; but a Disposition to make the good, the faithful, the honest Man happy. Perhaps an infinitely perfect Mind may be pleased, with seeing his Creatures behave suitably to the Nature which he has given them; to the Relations which he has placed them in to each other; and to That, which they stand in to Himself: That Relation to Himself, which, during their Existence, is even necessary, and which is the most important one of all: perhaps, I say, an infinitely perfect Mind may be pleased with this moral Piety of moral Agents, in and for itself; as well as upon Account of its being essentially conducive to the Happiness of his Creation. Or the whole End, for which God made, and thus governs the World, may be utterly beyond the Reach of our Faculties: There may be somewhat in it as impossible for us to have any Conception of, as for a blind Man to have a Conception of Colours. But however this be, it is certain Matter of universal Experience, that the general Method of divine Ad-

CHAP.
II.
}¹ Ch. vii. p. 185, &c.

PART ministration, is forewarning us, or giving us

I. Capacities to foresee, with more or less Clearness, that if we act so and so, we shall have such Enjoyments, if so and so, such Sufferings; and giving us those Enjoyments, and making us feel those Sufferings, in Consequence of our Actions.

“ But all this is to be ascribed to the general Course of Nature.” True. This is the very thing which I am observing. It is to be ascribed to the general Course of Nature: *i. e.* not surely to the Words or Ideas, *Course of Nature*; but to him who appointed it, and put things into it: Or to a Course of Operation, from its Uniformity or Constancy, called natural^k; and which necessarily implies an operating Agent. For when Men find themselves necessitated to confess an Author of Nature, or that God is the natural Governor of the World; they must not deny this again, because his Government is uniform: They must not deny that he does all things at all, because he does them constantly; because the Effects of his acting are permanent, whether his acting be so or not; though there is no Reason to think it is not. In short, every Man, in every thing he does, naturally acts upon the Forethought and Apprehension of avoiding Evil or obtain-

^k P. 43, 44.

ing Good: And if the natural Course of things be the Appointment of God, and our natural Faculties of Knowledge and Experience, are given us by him; then the good and bad Consequences which follow our Actions, are his Appointment, and our Foresight of those Consequences, is a Warning given us by Him, how we are to act.

CHAP.
II.

“ Is the Pleasure then, naturally accompanying every particular Gratification of Passion, intended, to put us upon gratifying Ourselves in every such particular Instance, and as a Reward to us for so doing?” No certainly. Nor is it to be said, that our Eyes were naturally intended to give us the Sight of each particular Object, to which they do or can extend; Objects which are destructive of them, or which, for any other Reason, it may become us to turn our Eyes from. Yet there is no Doubt, but that our Eyes were intended for us to see with. So neither is there any Doubt, but that the foreseen Pleasures and Pains belonging to the Passions, were intended, in general, to induce Mankind to act in such and such Manners.

Now from this general Observation, obvious to every one, that God has given us to understand, he has appointed Satisfaction and Delight to be the Consequence of our acting

PART in one Manner, and Pain and Uneasiness of
 I. our acting in another, and of our not acting at
 all; and that we find the Consequences, which
 we were beforehand informed of, uniformly
 to follow; we may learn, that we are at pre-
 sent actually under his Government, in the
 strictest and most proper Sense; in such a
 Sense, as that he rewards and punishes us for
 our Actions. An Author of Nature being
 supposed, it is not so much a Deduction of
 Reason, as a Matter of Experience, that we
 are thus under his Government: under his
 Government, in the same Sense, as we are
 under the Government of civil Magistrates.
 Because the annexing Pleasure to some Ac-
 tions, and Pain to others, in our Power to do
 or forbear, and giving Notice of this Ap-
 pointment beforehand to those whom it con-
 cerns; is the proper formal Notion of Go-
 vernment. Whether the Pleasure or Pain
 which thus follows upon our Behaviour, be
 owing to the Author of Nature's acting up-
 on us every Moment which we feel it; or to
 his having at once contrived and executed his
 own Part in the Plan of the World; makes
 no Alteration as to the Matter before us. For
 if civil Magistrates could make the Sanctions
 of their Laws take Place, without interposing
 at all, after they had passed them; without a
 Trial and the Formalities of an Execution:
 If they were able to make their Laws execute
 them-

themselves, or every Offender to execute them upon himself; we should be just in the same Sense under their Government then, as we are now, but in a much higher Degree, and more perfect Manner.—Vain is the Ridicule, with which one foresees, some Persons will divert themselves, upon finding lesser Pains considered as Instances of divine Punishment. There is no Possibility of answering or evading the general thing here intended, without denying all final Causes. For final Causes being admitted, the Pleasures and Pains now mentioned must be admitted too as Instances of them. And if they are; if God annexes Delight to some Actions, and Uneasiness to others, with an apparent Design to induce us to act so and so; then He not only dispenses Happiness and Misery, but also rewards and punishes Actions. If, for Example, the Pain which we feel, upon doing what tends to the Destruction of our Bodies, suppose upon too near approaches to Fire, or upon wounding Ourselves, be appointed by the Author of Nature to prevent our doing what thus tends to our Destruction; this is altogether as much an Instance of his punishing our Actions, and consequently of our being under his Government, as declaring by a Voice from Heaven, that if we acted so, he would inflict such Pain upon us, and inflicting it, whether it be greater or less.

CHAP.
II.

PART

I.

Thus we find, that the true Notion or Conception of the Author of Nature, is That of a Master or Governor, prior to the Consideration of his moral Attributes. The Fact of our Case, which we find by Experience, is, that He actually exercises Dominion or Government over us at present, by rewarding and punishing us for our Actions, in as strict and proper a Sense of these Words, and even in the same Sense, as Children, Servants, Subjects, are rewarded and punished by those who govern them.

And thus the whole Analogy of Nature, the whole present Course of things, most fully shows, that there is nothing incredible in the general Doctrine of Religion; that God will reward and punish Men for their Actions Hereafter: nothing incredible, I mean, arising out of the Notion of rewarding and punishing. For the whole Course of Nature is a present Instance of his exercising That Government over us, which implies in it rewarding and punishing.

BUT as divine Punishment is what Men chiefly object against, and are most unwilling to allow; it may be proper to mention some Circumstances in the natural Course
of

of Punishments at present, which are analogous to what Religion teaches us concerning a future State of Punishment: Indeed so analogous, that as they add a farther Credibility to it, so they cannot but raise a most serious Apprehension of it in those who will attend to them.

CHAP.
II.

It has been now observed, that such and such Miseries naturally follow such and such Actions of Imprudence and Willfulness, as well as Actions more commonly and more distinctly considered as vitious; and that these Consequences, when they may be foreseen, are properly natural Punishments annexed to such Actions. For the general thing here insisted upon, is, not that we see a great deal of Misery in the World, but a great deal which Men bring upon themselves by their own Behaviour, which they might have foreseen and avoided. Now the Circumstances of these natural Punishments, particularly deserving our Attention, are such as these; That oftentimes they follow, or are inflicted in consequence of Actions, which procure many present Advantages, and are accompanied with much present Pleasure: for Instance, Sickness and untimely Death is the Consequence of Intemperance, though accompanied with the highest Mirth and Jollity: That these Punishments are often much greater, than the

PART Advantages or Pleasures obtained by the Ac-
 I. tions, of which they are the Punishments or
 Consequences: That though we may ima-
 gine a Constitution of Nature, in which these
 natural Punishments, which are in Fact to
 follow, would follow, immediately upon
 such Actions being done, or very soon after ;
 we find on the contrary in our World, that
 they are often delayed a great while, some-
 times even till long after the Actions occasion-
 ing them are forgot ; so that the Constitution
 of Nature is such, that Delay of Punish-
 ment is no Sort nor Degree of Presumption
 of final Impunity : That after such Delay,
 these natural Punishments or Miseries often
 come, not by Degrees, but suddenly, with
 Violence, and at once ; however, the chief
 Misery often does : That as Certainty of
 such distant Misery following such Actions,
 is never afforded Persons ; so perhaps during
 the Actions, they have seldom a distinct full
 Expectation of its following¹ : And many
 Times the Case is only thus, that they see in
 general, or may see, the Credibility, that In-
 temperance, suppose, will bring after it Dis-
 eases ; civil Crimes, civil Punishments ; when
 yet the real Probability often is, that they
 shall escape ; but things notwithstanding take
 their destined Course, and the Misery inevi-
 tably follows at its appointed Time, in very

¹ See Part II. Ch. vi.

many

many of these Cases. Thus also though **CHAP.**
Youth may be alledged as an Excuse for **II.**
Rashness and Folly, as being naturally thought-
less, and not clearly foreseeing all the Con-
sequences of being untractable and profligate;
this does not hinder, but that these Conse-
quences follow, and are grievously felt through-
out the whole Course of mature Life. Habits
contracted even in that Age, are often utter
Ruin: And Men's Success in the World, not
only in the common Sense of worldly Success,
but their real Happiness and Misery, depends
in a great Degree, and in various Ways, upon
the Manner in which they pass their Youth;
which Consequences they for the most part
neglect to consider, and perhaps seldom can
properly be said to believe, beforehand. It
requires also to be mentioned, that in num-
berless Cases, the natural Course of Things af-
fords us Opportunities for procuring Advan-
tages to Ourselves at certain Times, which we
cannot procure when we will; nor ever recall
the Opportunities, if we have neglected them.
Indeed the general Course of Nature is an
Example of this. If, during the Opportu-
nity of Youth, Persons are indocile and self-
willed; they inevitably suffer in their future
Life, for Want of those Acquirements, which
they neglected the natural Season of attaining.
If the Husbandman lets his Seed-time pass
without sowing, the whole Year is lost to
him

PART him beyond Recovery. In like Manner,
 I. though after Men have been guilty of Folly
 and Extravagance *up to a certain Degree*, it
 is often in their Power, for instance, to re-
 trieve their Affairs, to recover their Health
 and Character; at least in good Measure: yet
 real Reformation is, in many Cases, of no
 Avail at all towards preventing the Miseries,
 Poverty, Sicknes, Infamy, naturally annexed
 to Folly and Extravagance *exceeding that De-
 gree*. There is a certain Bound to Impru-
 dence and Misbehaviour, which being trans-
 gressed, there remains no Place for Repent-
 ance in the natural Course of Things. It is
 further very much to be remarked, that Neg-
 lects from Inconsiderateness, Want of Atten-
 tion^m, not looking about us to see what we
 have to do, are often attended with Conse-
 quences altogether as dreadful, as any active
 Misbehaviour, from the most extravagant
 Passion. And lastly, civil Government being
 natural, the Punishments of it are so too:
 And some of these Punishments are capital;
 as the Effects of a dissolute Course of Plea-
 sure are often mortal. So that many natural
 Punishments are finalⁿ to him, who incurs
 them,

^m Part II. Chap. vi.

ⁿ The general Consideration of a future State of Punish-
 ment, most evidently belongs to the Subject of natural Reli-
 gion. But if any of these Reflections should be thought to
 relate more peculiarly to this Doctrine as taught in Scripture;
 the

them, if considered only in his temporal Capacity: and seem inflicted by natural Appointment, either to remove the Offender out of the Way of being further mischievous; or as an Example, though frequently a disregarded one, to those who are left behind.

CHAP.
II.

These Things are not, what we call accidental, or to be met with only now and then; but they are Things of every Day's Experience: They proceed from general Laws, very general ones, by which God governs the World, in the natural Course of his Providence. And they are so analogous, to what Religion teaches us concerning the future Punishment

the Reader is desired to observe, that Gentile Writers, both Moralists and Poets, speak of the future Punishment of the Wicked, both as to the Duration and Degree of it, in a like Manner of Expression and of Description, as the Scripture does. So that all which can positively be asserted to be Matter of mere Revelation, with regard to this Doctrine, seems to be, that the great Distinction between the Righteous and the Wicked, shall be made at the End of this World; that each shall *Then* receive according to his Deserts. Reason did, as it well might, conclude that it should, finally and upon the whole, be well with the Righteous, and ill with the Wicked: But it could not be determined, upon any Principles of Reason, whether human Creatures might not have been appointed to pass through other States of Life and Being, before that distributive Justice should, finally and effectually take Place. Revelation teaches us, that the next State of Things after the present, is appointed for the Execution of this Justice; that it shall be no longer delayed: But *the Mystery of God*, the great Mystery of his suffering Vice and Confusion to prevail, shall *then be finished*; and he will take to him his great Power and will reign, by rendering to every one according to his Works.

of

PART of the Wicked, so much of a Piece with it,

I. *that Both would naturally be expressed in the very same Words, and Manner of Description. In the Book of Proverbs^o, for Instance, Wisdom is introduced, as frequenting the most publick Places of Resort, and as rejected when she offers herself as the natural appointed Guide of human Life. How long, speaking to those who are passing through it, how long, ye simple ones, will ye love Folly, and the scorner delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn ye at my Reproof. Behold, I will pour out my Spirit upon you, I will make known my words unto you. But upon being neglected, Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all my Counsel, and would none of my Reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me. This Passage, every one sees, is poetical, and some Parts of it are highly figurative; but their Meaning is obvious. And the Thing intended is expressed more literally in the following Words; For that they hated knowledge, and did not chuse*

^o Chap. i.

the fear of the Lord—therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the Security of the simple shall slay them, and the Prosperity of fools shall destroy them. And the whole Passage is so equally applicable, to what we experience in the present World, concerning the Consequences of Men's Actions, and to what Religion teaches us is to be expected in another, that it may be questioned which of the two was principally intended.

CHAP.
II.

Indeed when one has been recollecting the proper Proofs of a future State of Rewards and Punishments, nothing methinks can give one so sensible an Apprehension of the latter, or Representation of it to the Mind; as observing, that after the many disregarded Checks, Admonitions and Warnings, which People meet with in the Ways of Vice and Folly and Extravagance; Warnings from their very Nature; from the Examples of Others; from the lesser Inconveniences which they bring upon themselves; from the Instructions of wise and virtuous Men: After these have been long despised, scorned, ridiculed: after the chief bad Consequences, temporal Consequences, of their Follies, have been delayed for a great while; at length they break in irresistibly, like an armed Force: Repentance is too late to relieve, and can

PART serve only to aggravate, their Distress: The

I. Case is become desperate: and Poverty and Sick-
ness, Remorse and Anguish, Infamy and Death, the Effects of their own Doings, overwhelm them, beyond Possibility of Remedy or Escape. This is an Account of what is in Fact the general Constitution of Nature.

It is not in any sort meant, that according to what appears at present of the natural Course of Things, Men are always uniformly punished in Proportion to their Misbehaviour: But that there are very many Instances of Misbehaviour punished in the several Ways now mentioned, and very dreadful Instances too; sufficient to show what the Laws of the Universe may admit; and, if thoroughly considered, sufficient fully to answer all Objections against the Credibility of a future State of Punishments, from any Imaginations, that the Frailty of our Nature and external Temptations, almost annihilate the Guilt of human Vices: as well as Objections of another Sort; from Necessity; from Suppositions, that the Will of an infinite Being cannot be contradicted, or that he must be incapable of Offence and Provocation^p.

^p See Chap. iv. & vi.

Reflections of this Kind are not without their Terrors to serious Persons, the most free from Enthusiasm, and of the greatest Strength of Mind: But it is fit Things be stated and considered as they really are. And there is, in the present Age, a certain Fearlessness, with regard to what may be hereafter under the Government of God, which, nothing but an universally acknowledged Demonstration on the Side of Atheism, can justify; and which makes it quite necessary, that Men be reminded, and if possible made to feel, that there is no Sort of Ground for being thus presumptuous, even upon the most sceptical Principles. For, may it not be said of any Person upon his being born into the World, he may behave so, as to be of no Service to it, but by being made an Example of the woful Effects of Vice and Folly? That he may, as any one may, if he will, incur an infamous Execution, from the Hands of civil Justice; or in some other Course of Extravagance shorten his Days: or bring upon himself Infamy and Diseases worse than Death? So that it had been better for him, even with regard to the present World, that he had never been born. And is there any Pretence of Reason, for People to think themselves
secure,

64 *Of the Government of God, &c.*

PART secure, and talk as if they had certain Proof,
I. that let them act as licentiously as they will,
there can be nothing analogous to This,
with regard to a future and more general
Interest, under the Providence and Govern-
ment of the same God.

C H A P.

C H A P. III.

Of the Moral Government of God.

AS the manifold Appearances of Design CHAP.
III.
and of final Causes, in the Constitution of the World, prove it to be the Work of an intelligent Mind; so the particular final Causes of Pleasure and Pain distributed amongst his Creatures, prove that they are under his Government; what may be called His natural Government of Creatures endued with Sense and Reason. This, however, implies somewhat more than seems usually attended to, when we speak of God's natural Government of the World. It implies Government of the very same Kind with That, which a Master exercises over his Servants, or a civil Magistrate over his Subjects. These latter Instances of final Causes, as really prove an intelligent *Governor* of the World, in the Sense now mentioned, and before ^a distinctly treated of; as any other Instances of final Causes prove an intelligent *Maker* of it.

But this alone does not appear at first Sight to determine any thing certainly, con-

^a Chap. ii.

F

cerning

66 *Of the Moral Government of God.*

PART cerning the moral Character of the Author of
I. Nature, considered in this Relation of Govern-
nor; does not ascertain his Government to be
moral, or prove that he is the righteous Judge
of the World. Moral Government consists,
not barely in rewarding and punishing Men
for their Actions, which the most tyrannical
Person may do: but in rewarding the Right-
eous and punishing the Wicked; in rendering
to Men according to their Actions, considered
as good or evil. And the Perfection of moral
Government consists in doing this, with re-
gard to all intelligent Creatures, in an exact
Proportion to their personal Merits or De-
merits.

Some Men seem to think the only Character of the Author of Nature to be That of simple absolute Benevolence. This, considered as a Principle of Action and infinite in Degree, is a Disposition to produce the greatest possible Happiness, without Regard to Persons Behaviour, otherwise than as such Regard would produce higher Degrees of it. And supposing this to be the only Character of God, Veracity and Justice in Him would be nothing but Benevolence conducted by Wisdom. Now surely this ought not to be asserted, unless it can be proved; for we should speak with cautious Reverence upon such a Subject. And whether it can be proved

or no, is not the thing here to be inquired CHAP.
into; but whether in the Constitution and III.
Conduct of the World, a righteous Govern- ~
ment be not discernibly planned out: which
necessarily implies a righteous Governor. There
may possibly be in the Creation Beings, to
whom the Author of Nature manifests him-
self under this most amiable of all Charac-
ters, this of infinite absolute Benevolence; for
it is the most amiable, supposing it not, as
perhaps it is not, incompatible with Justice:
but he manifests himself to Us under the
Character of a righteous Governor. He may,
consistently with this, be simply and absolute-
ly benevolent, in the Sense now explained:
But he is, for he has given us a Proof in the
Constitution and Conduct of the World that
he is, a Governor over Servants, as he rewards
and punishes us for our Actions. And in the
Constitution and Conduct of it, he may also
have given, besides the Reason of the Thing,
and the natural Presages of Conscience, clear
and distinct Intimations, that his Govern-
ment is righteous or moral: clear to such as
think the Nature of it deserving their Atten-
tion; and yet not to every careless Person,
who casts a transient Reflection upon the
Subject ^b.

But

^b The Objections against Religion, from the Evidence of
it not being universal, nor so strong as might possibly have
been,

PART But it is particularly to be observed, that
 I. the divine Government, which we experience
 } Ourselves under in the present State, taken
 alone, is allowed not to be the Perfection of
 moral Government. And yet this by no
 means hinders, but that there may be some-
 what, be it more or less, truly moral in it.
 A righteous Government may plainly appear
 to be carried on to some Degree: enough to
 give us the Apprehension that it shall be com-
 pleted, or carried on to that Degree of Per-
 fection which Religion teaches us it shall;
 but which cannot appear, till much more of
 the divine Administration be seen, than can
 in the present Life. And the Design of this
 Chapter is to enquire, how far this is the Case:
 how far, over and above the moral Nature^c
 which God has given us, and our natural No-
 tion of Him as righteous Governor of those
 his Creatures, to whom he has given this Na-
 ture^d; I say how far besides this, the Princi-
 ples and Beginnings of a moral Government

been, may be urged against natural Religion, as well as
 against revealed. And therefore the Consideration of them
 belongs to the first Part of this Treatise, as well as the second.
 But as these Objections are chiefly urged against revealed Re-
 ligion, I chose to consider them in the second Part. And
 the Answer to them there, Ch. vi. as urged against Christia-
 nity, being almost equally applicable to them as urged against
 the Religion of Nature; to avoid Repetition, the Reader is
 referred to that Chapter.

^c *Dissertation 2.*

^d Chap. vi. p. 167, &c.

over the World may be discerned, notwithstanding and amidst all the Confusion and Disorder of it. CHAP.
III.

Now one might mention here, what has been often urged with great Force, that in general, less Uneasiness and more Satisfaction, are the natural Consequences ° of a virtuous than of a vitious Course of Life, in the present State, as an Instance of a moral Government established in Nature; an Instance of it, collected from Experience and present Matter of Fact. But it must be owned a Thing of Difficulty to weigh and balance Pleasures and Uneasinesses, each amongst themselves, and also against each other, so as to make an Estimate with any Exactness, of the Overplus of Happiness on the Side of Virtue. And it is not impossible, that, amidst the infinite Disorders of the World, there may be Exceptions to the Happiness of Virtue; even with regard to those Persons, whose Course of Life from their Youth up, has been blameless; and more with regard to those, who have gone on for some time in the Ways of Vice, and have afterwards reformed. For suppose an Instance of the latter Case; a Person with his Passions inflamed, his natural Faculty of Self-Government impaired by Habits of Indulgence, and with all his Vices

° See Lord Shaftesbury's Inquiry concerning Virtue, Part II.

PART about him, like so many Harpies, craving for
 I. their accustomed Gratification: who can say
 how long it might be, before such a Person
 would find more Satisfaction in the Reason-
 ableness and present good Consequences of
 Virtue, than Difficulties and Self-denial in
 the Restraints of it? Experience also shows,
 that Men can, to a great Degree, get over
 their Sense of Shame, so as that by professing
 themselves to be without Principle, and
 avowing even direct Villainy, they can sup-
 port themselves against the Infamy of it. But
 as the ill Actions of any one will probably be
 more talked of, and oftener thrown in his
 Way, upon his Reformation; so the Infamy
 of them will be much more felt, after the na-
 tural Sense of Virtue and of Honour is re-
 covered. Uneasinesses of this Kind ought in-
 deed to be put to the Account of former
 Vices: yet it will be said, they are in Part the
 Consequences of Reformation. Still I am far
 from allowing it doubtful, whether Virtue,
 upon the whole, be happier than Vice in the
 present World. But if it were, yet the Be-
 ginnings of a righteous Administration may
 beyond all Question be found in Nature, if
 we will attentively inquire after them. And,

I. In whatever Manner the Notion of
 God's moral Government over the World
 might be treated, if it did not appear, whe-
 ther

ther he were in a proper Sense our Governor CHAP.
at all: yet when it is certain Matter of Ex- III.
perience, that He does manifest himself to us
under the Character of a Governor, in the
Sense explained^f; it must deserve to be con-
sidered, whether there be not Reason to ap-
prehend, that he may be a righteous or mo-
ral Governor. Since it appears to be Fact, that
God does govern Mankind by the Method
of Rewards and Punishments, according to
some settled Rules of Distribution; it is
surely a Question to be asked, What Presump-
tion is there against his finally rewarding and
punishing them, according to this particular
Rule, namely, as they act reasonably or un-
reasonably, virtuously or vitiously? Since ren-
dering Men happy or miserable by this Rule,
certainly falls in, much more falls in, with our
natural Apprehensions and Sense of Things,
than doing so by any other Rule whatever:
Since rewarding and punishing Actions by any
other Rule, would appear much harder to
be accounted for, by Minds formed as He has
formed ours. Be the Evidence of Religion
then more or less clear, the Expectation which
it raises in us, that the Righteous shall, upon
the whole, be happy, and the Wicked miser-
able, cannot however possibly be considered
as absurd or chimerical; because it is no more
than an Expectation, that a Method of Go-

^f Chap. ii.

PART vernment already begun, shall be carried on,
 I. the Method of rewarding and punishing Ac-
 tions; and shall be carried on by a particular
 Rule, which unavoidably appears to us at first
 Sight more natural than any other, the Rule
 which we call distributive Justice. Nor,

II. Ought it to be entirely passed over, that
 Tranquillity, Satisfaction, and external Ad-
 vantages, being the natural Consequences of
 prudent Management of Ourselves, and our
 Affairs; and Rashness, profligate Negligence,
 and willful Folly, bringing after them many
 Inconveniences and Sufferings; these afford
 Instances of a Right Constitution of Nature:
 as the Correction of Children, for their own
 Sakes, and by way of Example, when they
 run into Danger or hurt themselves, is a Part
 of right Education. And thus, that God go-
 verns the World by general fixt Laws, that
 He has endued us with Capacities of reflect-
 ing upon this Constitution of Things, and
 foreseeing the good and bad Consequences of
 our Behaviour; plainly implies some Sort of
 Moral Government; since from such a Con-
 stitution of Things it cannot but follow, that
 Prudence and Imprudence, which are of the
 Nature of Virtue and Vice, * must be, as they
 are, respectively rewarded and punished.

* See Dissert. II.

III. From

III. From the natural Course of Things, CHAP.
vicious Actions are, to a great Degree, actually III.
punished as mischievous to Society: And be-
sides Punishment actually inflicted upon this
Account, there is also the Fear and Appre-
hension of it in those Persons, whose Crimes
have render'd them obnoxious to it, in case of
a Discovery; this State of Fear being itself
often a very considerable Punishment. The
natural Fear and Apprehension of it too, which
restrains from such Crimes, is a Declaration
of Nature against them. It is necessary to
the very Being of Society, that Vices destruc-
tive of it, should be punished *as being so*; the
Vices of Falshood, Injustice, Cruelty: Which
Punishment therefore is as natural as Society;
and so is an Instance of a Kind of moral Go-
vernment, naturally established and actually
taking place. And, since the certain natural
Course of Things, is the Conduct of Provi-
dence or the Government of God, though
carried on by the Instrumentality of Men;
the Observation here made amounts to this,
that Mankind find themselves placed by Him
in such Circumstances, as that they are un-
avoidably accountable for their Behaviour, and
are often punished, and sometimes rewarded
under His Government, in the View of their
being mischievous, or eminently beneficial to
Society.

If

PART If it be objected that good Actions, and
I. such as are beneficial to Society, are often punished, as in the Case of Persecution and in other Cases; and that ill and mischievous Actions are often rewarded: It may be answered distinctly; first, that this is in no sort necessary, and consequently not natural, in the Sense in which it is necessary, and therefore natural, that ill or mischievous Actions should be punished: And in the next Place, that good Actions are never punished, considered as beneficial to Society, nor ill Actions rewarded, under the View of their being hurtful to it. So that it stands good, without any thing on the side of Vice to be set over against it, that the Author of Nature has as truly directed, that vitious Actions considered as mischievous to Society, should be punished, and put Mankind under a Necessity of thus punishing them; as he has directed and necessitated us to preserve our Lives by Food.

IV. In the natural Course of Things, Virtue *as such* is actually rewarded, and Vice *as such* punished: which seems to afford an Instance or Example, not only of Government, but of moral Government, begun and established; moral in the strictest Sense; though not in that Perfection of Degree, which Religion teaches us to expect. In order to see
 this

this more clearly, we must distinguish between Actions themselves, and That Quality ascribed to them, which we call virtuous or vitious. The Gratification itself of every natural Passion, must be attended with Delight: And Acquisitions of Fortune, however made, are Acquisitions of the Means or Materials, of Enjoyment. An Action then, by which any natural Passion is gratified or Fortune acquired, procures Delight or Advantage; abstracted from all Consideration of the Morality of such Action. Consequently the Pleasure or Advantage in this Case, is gained by the Action itself, not by the Morality, the Virtuousness or Vitiousness of it; though it be, perhaps, virtuous or vitious. Thus, to say such an Action or Course of Behaviour, procured such Pleasure or Advantage, or brought on such Inconvenience and Pain, is quite a different thing from saying, that such good or bad Effect was owing to the Virtue or Vice of such Action or Behaviour. In one Case, an Action abstracted from all moral Consideration, produced its Effect: In the other Case, for it will appear that there are such Cases, the Morality of the Action, the Action under a moral Consideration, *i. e.* the Virtuousness or Vitiousness of it, produced the Effect. Now I say Virtue as such, naturally procures considerable Advantages to the Virtuous, and Vice as such, naturally occasions

PART caſions great Inconvenience and even Miſery
 I. to the Vitious, in very many Inſtances. The
 immediate Effects of Virtue and Vice upon
 the Mind and Temper, are to be mentioned
 as Inſtances of it. Vice as ſuch is naturally
 attended with ſome fort of Uneaſineſs, and,
 not uncommonly, with great Diſturbance and
 Apprehenſion. That inward Feeling, which,
 reſpecting leſſer Matters, and in familiar
 Speech, we call being vexed with oneſelf, and
 in Matters of Importance and in more ſerious
 Language, Remorſe; is an Uneaſineſs natu-
 rally ariſing from an Action of a Man's own,
 reflected upon by himſelf as wrong, unrea-
 ſonable, faulty, *i. e.* Vitious in greater or leſſ
 Degrees: And this manifeſtly is a different
 Feeling from that Uneaſineſs, which ariſes
 from a Senſe of mere Loſs or Harm. What
 is more common, than to hear a Man lament-
 ing an Accident or Event, and adding——
 but however he has the Satisfaction that he
 cannot blame himſelf for it; or on the con-
 trary, that he has the Uneaſineſs of being
 ſenſible it was his own doing? Thus alſo the
 Diſturbance and Fear, which often follow
 upon a Man's having done an Injury, ariſe from
 a Senſe of his being blame-worthy; otherwiſe
 there would, in many Caſes, be no Ground
 of Diſturbance, nor any Reaſon to fear Re-
 ſentment or Shame. On the other hand, in-
 ward Security and Peace, and a Mind open
 to

to the several Gratifications of Life, are the natural Attendants of Innocence and Virtue. To which must be added the Complacency, Satisfaction, and even Joy of Heart, which accompany the Exercise, the real Exercise, of Gratitude, Friendship, Benevolence.

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III.

And here, I think, ought to be mentioned, the Fears of future Punishment, and peaceful Hopes of a better Life, in those who fully believe, or have any serious Apprehension of Religion: because these Hopes and Fears are present Uneasiness and Satisfaction to the Mind; and cannot be got rid of by great Part of the World, even by Men who have thought most thoroughly upon that Subject of Religion. And no one can say, how considerable this Uneasiness and Satisfaction may be, or what upon the whole it may amount to.

In the next Place comes in the Consideration, that all honest and good Men are disposed to befriend honest good Men as such, and to discountenance the vicious as such, and do so in some Degree; indeed in a considerable Degree: from which Favour and Discouragement cannot but arise considerable Advantage and Inconvenience. And though the Generality of the World have little Regard to the Morality of their own Actions,
and

PART and may be supposed to have less to that of
 I. Others, when they Themselves are not concerned; yet let any one be known to be a Man of Virtue, some how or other he will be favoured, and good Offices will be done him, from Regard to his Character without remote Views, occasionally, and in some low Degree, I think, by the Generality of the World, as it happens to come in their Way. Publick Honours too and Advantages are the natural Consequences, are sometimes at least the Consequences in Fact, of virtuous Actions; of eminent Justice, Fidelity, Charity, Love to our Country, considered in the View of being virtuous. And sometimes even Death itself, often Infamy and external Inconveniencies, are the publick Consequences of Vice as Vice. For Instance, the Sense which Mankind have of Tyranny, Injustice, Oppression, additionl to the meer Feeling or Fear of Misery, has doubtless been instrumental in bringing about Revolutions, which make a Figure even in the History of the World. For it is plain, Men resent Injuries as implying Faultiness, and retaliate, not merely under the Notion of having received Harm, but of having received Wrong; and they have this Resentment in Behalf of Others, as well as of Themselves. So likewise even the Generality are, in some Degree, grateful and disposed to return good Offices, not merely because
 because

because such an one has been the Occasion of good to Them, but under the View, that such good Offices implied kind Intention and good Desert in the Doer. To all this may be added two or three particular things, which, many Persons will think frivolous; but to me nothing appears so, which at all comes in towards determining a Question of such Importance, as, whether there be, or be not, a moral Institution of Government, in the strictest Sense moral, *visibly* established and begun in nature. The particular things are these: That in domestick Government, which is doubtless natural, Children and Others also are very generally punished for Falshood and Injustice and Ill-behaviour, as such, and rewarded for the contrary; which are Instances where Veracity, and Justice, and right Behaviour as such, are naturally inforced by Rewards and Punishments, whether more or less considerable in Degree: That, though civil Government be supposed to take Cognizance of Actions in no other View than as prejudicial to Society, without respect to the Immorality of them; yet as such Actions are immoral, so the Sense which Men have of the Immorality of them, very greatly contributes, in different Ways, to bring Offenders to Justice: And that intire Absence of all Crime and Guilt in the moral Sense, when plainly appearing, will almost of course procure,

PART cure, and Circumstances of aggravated Guilt
I. prevent, a Remission of the Penalties annexed
 to civil Crimes, in many Cases, though by
 no means at all.

Upon the Whole then, besides the good and bad Effects of Virtue and Vice upon Men's own Minds, the Course of the World does, in some Measure, turn upon the Approbation and Disapprobation of them as such, in Others. The Sense of well and ill Doing, the Presages of Conscience, the Love of good Characters and Dislike of bad ones, Honour, Shame, Resentment, Gratitude; all these, considered in themselves, and in their Effects, do afford manifest real Instances of Virtue as such naturally favoured, and of Vice as such discountenanced, more or less, in the daily Course of human Life; in every Age, in every Relation, in every general Circumstance of it. That God has given us a moral Nature^a, may most justly be urged as a Proof of our being under his moral Government: But that he has placed us in a Condition, which gives this Nature, as one may speak, Scope to operate, and in which it does unavoidably operate; *i. e.* influence Mankind to act, so as thus to favour and reward Virtue, and discountenance and punish Vice; this is not the same, but a further, additio-

^a See Differt. II.

nal Proof of his moral Government: for it is an Instance of it. The first is a Proof, that he will finally favour and support Virtue effectually: The second is an Example of His favouring and supporting it at present, in some Degree.

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III.

If a more distinct Inquiry be made, whence it arises, that Virtue as such is often rewarded, and Vice as such is punished, and this Rule never inverted: it will be found to proceed, in Part, immediately from the moral Nature itself, which God has given us; and also in Part, from his having given Us, together with this Nature, so great a Power over each other's Happiness and Misery. For *first*, it is certain, that Peace and Delight, in some Degree and upon some Occasions, is the necessary and present Effect of virtuous Practice; an Effect arising immediately from that Constitution of our Nature. We are so made, that Well-doing as such gives us Satisfaction, at least, in some Instances; Ill-doing as such, in none. And *secondly*, From our Moral Nature, joined with God's having put our Happiness and Misery in many Respects in each other's Power, it cannot but be, that Vice as such, some Kinds and Instances of it at least, will be infamous, and Men will be disposed to punish it as in itself detestable; and the Villain will by no means be able al-

G

ways

PART ways to avoid feeling that Infamy, any more
 I. than he will be able to escape this further Punishment, which Mankind will be disposed to inflict upon him, under the Notion of his deserving it. But there can be nothing on the side of Vice, to answer this; because there is nothing in the human Mind, contradictory, as the Logicians speak, to Virtue. For Virtue consists in a Regard to what is Right and Reasonable, as being so; in a Regard to Veracity, Justice, Charity, in themselves: and there is surely no such thing, as a like natural Regard to Falshood, Injustice, Cruelty. If it be thought, that there are Instances of an Approbation of Vice, as such, in itself, and for its own sake, (though it does not appear to me, that there is any such thing at all; but supposing there be,) it is evidently monstrous: as much so, as the most acknowledged Perversion of any Passion whatever. Such Instances of Perversion then being left out, as merely imaginary, or, however, unnatural; It must follow, from the Frame of our Nature, and from our Condition, in the Respects now described, that Vice cannot at all be, and Virtue cannot but be, favoured as such by others, upon some Occasions; and happy in itself, in some Degree. For what is here insisted upon, is not the Degree in which Virtue and Vice are thus distinguished, but only the thing itself, that they

they are in some Degree; though the whole good and bad Effect of Virtue and Vice as such, is not inconsiderable in Degree. But that they must be thus distinguished in some Degree, is in a manner necessary: It is Matter of Fact of daily Experience, even in the greatest Confusion of human Affairs.

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III.

It is not pretended, but that in the natural Course of Things, Happiness and Misery appear to be distributed by other Rules, than only the personal Merit and Demerit of Characters. They may sometimes be distributed by way of mere Discipline. There may be the wisest and best Reasons, why the World should be governed by general Laws, from whence such promiscuous Distribution perhaps must follow; and also why our Happiness and Misery should be put in each other's Power, in the Degree which they are. And these things, as in general they contribute to the rewarding Virtue and punishing Vice, as such: so they often contribute also, not to the Inversion of this, which is impossible; but to the rendring Persons prosperous, though wicked; afflicted, though righteous; and, which is worse, to the *Rewarding some Actions*, though vicious; and *Punishing other Actions*, though virtuous. But all this cannot drown the Voice of Nature in the Conduct of Providence, plainly declaring itself

84 *Of the Moral Government of God.*

PART for Virtue, by way of Distinction from Vice,
I. and Preference to it. For, our being so constituted, as that Virtue and Vice are thus naturally favoured and discountenanced, rewarded and punished respectively as such, is an intuitive Proof of the Intent of Nature, that it should be so: otherwise the Constitution of our Mind, from which it thus immediately and directly proceeds, would be absurd. But it cannot be said, because virtuous Actions are sometimes punished, and vicious Actions rewarded, that Nature intended it. For, though this great Disorder is brought about, as all Actions are done, by means of some natural Passion; yet *This may be*, as it undoubtedly is, brought about by the Perversion of such Passion, implanted in us for other, and those very good Purposes. And indeed these other and good Purposes, even of every Passion, may be clearly seen.

We have then a Declaration, in some Degree of present Effect, from Him who is supreme in Nature, which Side He is of, or what Part He takes: a Declaration for Virtue, and against Vice. So far therefore as a Man is true to Virtue, to Veracity and Justice, to Equity and Charity, and the Right of the Case, in whatever he is concerned; so far he is on the Side of the divine Administration, and co-operates with it: and from hence, to such
a Man,

a Man, arises naturally a secret Satisfaction
and Sense of Security, and implicit Hope of
somewhat further. And,

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III.
⏟

V. This Hope is confirmed by the necessary Tendencies of Virtue, which, though not of present Effect, yet are at present discernible in Nature; and so afford an Instance of somewhat moral in the essential Constitution of it. There is, in the Nature of Things, a Tendency in Virtue and Vice to produce the good and bad Effects now mentioned, in a greater Degree than they do in Fact produce them. For Instance; good and bad Men would be much more rewarded and punished as such, were it not, that Justice is often artificially eluded, that Characters are not known, and many, who would thus favour Virtue and discourage Vice are hindered from doing so by accidental Causes. These Tendencies of Virtue and Vice are obvious with regard to *Individuals*. But it may require more particularly to be considered, that Power in a *Society*, by being under the Direction of Virtue, naturally increases, and has a necessary Tendency to prevail over opposite Power, not under the Direction of it; in like Manner as Power, by being under the Direction of Reason, increases, and has a Tendency to prevail over brute Force. There are several brute Creatures of equal,

PART and several of superior Strength, to That of
I. Men; and possibly the Sum of the whole
 Strength of Brutes, may be greater than That
 of Mankind: But Reason gives us the Advantage and Superiority over them; and thus Man is the acknowledged governing Animal upon the Earth. Nor is this Superiority considered by any as accidental; but as what Reason has a Tendency, in the Nature of the Thing, to obtain. And yet perhaps Difficulties may be raised about the Meaning, as well as the Truth, of the Assertion, that Virtue has the like Tendency.

To obviate these Difficulties, let us see more distinctly, how the Case stands with Regard to Reason; which is so readily acknowledged to have this advantageous Tendency. Suppose then two or three Men, of the best and most improved Understanding, in a desolate open Plain, attacked by ten times the Number of Beasts of Prey: Would their Reason secure them the Victory in this unequal Combat? Power then, though joined with Reason, and under its Direction, cannot be expected to prevail over opposite Power, though merely brutal, unless the one bears some Proportion to the other. Again: Put the imaginary Case, that rational and irrational Creatures were of like external Shape and Manner; it is certain, before there were Opportunities

tunities for the first to distinguish each other; to separate from their Adversaries, and to form an Union among themselves, they might be upon a Level, or in several Respects upon great Disadvantage; though united they might be vastly superior: Since Union is of such Efficacy, that ten Men united, might be able to accomplish, what ten thousand of the same natural Strength and Understanding wholly ununited, could not. In this Case then, brute Force might more than maintain its Ground against Reason, for Want of Union among the rational Creatures. Or suppose a Number of Men to land upon an Island inhabited only by wild Beasts; a Number of Men, who, by the Regulations of civil Government, the Inventions of Art, and the Experience of some Years, could they be preserved so long, would be really sufficient, to subdue the wild Beasts, and to preserve themselves in Security from them: Yet a Conjunction of Accidents might give such Advantage to the irrational Animals, as that they might at once overpower, and even extirpate, the whole Species of rational ones. Length of Time then, proper Scope and Opportunities, for Reason to exert itself, may be absolutely necessary to its prevailing over brute Force. Further still: There are many Instances of Brutes succeeding in Attempts, which they could not have undertaken, had not their irrational Nature

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PART rendered them incapable of foreseeing the
 I. Danger of such Attempts; or the Fury of
 ~~~~~ Passion hindred their attending to it; and  
 there are Instances of Reason and real Pru-  
 dence preventing Men's undertaking what, it  
 hath appeared afterwards, they might have  
 succeeded in by a lucky Rashness. And in  
 certain Conjunctions, Ignorance and Folly,  
 Weakness and Discord, may have their Ad-  
 vantages. So that rational Animals have not  
 necessarily the Superiority over irrational ones:  
 but, how improbable soever it may be, it is  
 evidently possible, that, in some Globes, the  
 latter may be superior. And were the former  
 wholly at Variance and disunited, by false  
 Self-interest and Envy, by Treachery and In-  
 justice, and consequent Rage and Malice a-  
 gainst each other, whilst the latter were firm-  
 ly united among themselves by Instinct; this  
 might greatly contribute to the introducing  
 such an inverted Order of Things. For every  
 one would consider it as inverted: Since Rea-  
 son has, in the Nature of it, a Tendency to  
 prevail over brute Force; notwithstanding  
 the Possibility it may not prevail, and the Ne-  
 cessity, which there is, of many concurring  
 Circumstances to render it prevalent.

Now I say, Virtue in a Society has a like  
 Tendency to procure Superiority and addition-  
 al Power; whether this Power be consi-  
 dered

dered as the Means of Security from opposite Power, or of obtaining other Advantages. And it has this Tendency, by rendering publick Good, an Object and End, to every Member of the Society; by putting every one upon Consideration and Diligence, Recollection and Self-government, both in order to see what is the most effectual Method, and also in order to perform their proper Part, for obtaining and preserving it; by uniting a Society within itself, and so increasing its Strength; and, which is particularly to be mentioned, uniting it by Means of Veracity and Justice. For as these last are principal Bonds of Union, so Benevolence or publick Spirit, undirected, unrestrained by them, is, no body knows what.

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And suppose the invisible World, and the invisible Dispensations of Providence, to be, in any sort, analogous to what appears: or that both together make up one uniform Scheme, the two Parts of which, the Part which we see, and that which is beyond our Observation, are analogous to each other: Then, there must be a like natural Tendency in the derived Power, throughout the Universe, under the Direction of Virtue, to prevail in general over That, which is not under its Direction; as there is in Reason, derived Reason in the Universe, to prevail over brute Force.

**PART** Force. But then, in order to the Prevalence  
**I.** of Virtue, or that it may actually produce,  
 what it has a Tendency to produce; the like  
 Concurrences are necessary, as are, to the  
 Prevalence of Reason. There must be some  
 Proportion, between the natural Power or  
 Force which is, and That which is not, under  
 the Direction of Virtue: There must be suf-  
 ficient Length of Time; for the compleat  
 Success of Virtue, as of Reason, cannot,  
 from the Nature of the Thing, be otherwise  
 than gradual: There must be, as one may  
 speak, a fair Field of Trial, a Stage large and  
 extensive enough, proper Occasions and Op-  
 portunities, for the Virtuous to join together,  
 to exert themselves against lawless Force, and  
 to reap the Fruit of their united Labours.  
 Now indeed it is to be hoped, that the Dif-  
 proportion between the good and bad, even  
 here on Earth, is not so great, but that the  
 former have natural Power sufficient to their  
 prevailing to a considerable Degree, if Cir-  
 cumstances would permit this Power to be  
 united. For, much less, very much less, Pow-  
 er under the Direction of Virtue, would pre-  
 vail over much greater not under the Direc-  
 tion of it. However, good Men over the  
 Face of the Earth cannot unite; as for  
 other Reasons, so because they cannot be suf-  
 ficiently ascertained of each other's Charac-  
 ters. And the known Course of human  
 Things,

Things, the Scene we are now passing through, particularly the Shortness of Life, denies to Virtue its full Scope in several other Respects. CHAP.  
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The natural Tendency, which we have been considering, though real, is *hindred* from being carried into Effect in the present State : But these Hindrances may be removed in a future one. Virtue, to borrow the Christian Allusion, is militant Here; and various untoward Accidents contribute to its being often overborne : But it may combat with greater Advantage Hereafter, and prevail compleatly, and enjoy its consequent Rewards, in some future States. Neglected as it is, perhaps unknown, perhaps despised and oppressed, here ; there may be Scenes in Eternity, lasting enough, and in every other Way adapted, to afford it a sufficient Sphere of Action ; and a sufficient Sphere for the natural Consequences of it to follow in Fact. If the Soul be naturally immortal, and this State be a Progress towards a future one, as Childhood is towards mature Age ; good Men may naturally unite, not only amongst themselves, but also with other Orders of virtuous Creatures, in that future State. For Virtue, from the very Nature of it, is a Principle and Bond of Union, in some Degree, amongst all who are endued with it, and known to each other ; so as that by it, a good Man cannot but recommend himself to the Favour and Protection of all  
vir-

**PART** virtuous Beings, throughout the whole Universe, who can be acquainted with his Character, and can any way interpose in his Behalf in any Part of his Duration. And one might add, that suppose all this advantageous Tendency of Virtue to become Effect, amongst one or more Orders of Creatures, in any distant Scenes and Periods, and to be seen by any Orders of vicious Creatures, throughout the universal Kingdom of God; this happy Effect of Virtue, would have a Tendency, by way of Example, and possibly in other Ways, to amend those of them, who are capable of Amendment, and being recovered to a just Sense of Virtue. If our Notions of the Plan of Providence were enlarged, in any sort proportionable to what late Discoveries have enlarged our Views with Respect to the material World; Representations of this Kind would not appear absurd or extravagant. However they are not to be taken, as intended for a literal Delineation of what is in Fact the particular Scheme of the Universe, which cannot be known without Revelation: for Suppositions are not to be looked on as true, because not incredible: But they are mentioned to shew, that our finding Virtue to be hindered from procuring to itself such Superiority and Advantages, is no Objection against its having, in the essential Nature of the Thing, a Tendency to procure them.

them. And the Suppositions now mention-  
ed do plainly shew this: For they shew,  
that these Hindrances are so far from being  
necessary, that we ourselves can easily con-  
ceive, how they may be removed in future  
States, and full Scope be granted to Virtue.  
And all these advantageous Tendencies of it,  
are to be considered as Declarations of God  
in its Favour. This however is taking a  
pretty large Compass: though it is certain,  
that, as the material World appears to be, in  
a manner, boundless and immense; there  
must be *some* Scheme of Providence vast in  
Proportion to it.

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But let us return to the Earth our Habitation; and we shall see this happy Tendency of Virtue, by imagining an Instance not so vast and remote: by supposing a Kingdom or Society of Men upon it, perfectly virtuous, for a Succession of many Ages; to which, if you please, may be given a Situation advantageous for universal Monarchy. In such a State, there would be no such thing as Faction: but Men of the greatest Capacity would of course, all along, have the chief Direction of Affairs willingly yielded to them; and they would share it among themselves without Envy. Each of these would have the Part assigned him, to which his Genius was peculiarly adapted: and others,  
who

**PART** who had not any distinguished Genius, would  
**I.** be safe, and think themselves very happy, by  
 being under the Protection and Guidance of  
 those who had. Publick Determinations  
 would really be the Result of the united Wis-  
 dom of the Community: and they would  
 faithfully be executed, by the united Strength  
 of it. Some would in a higher Way con-  
 tribute, but all would in some Way contri-  
 bute, to the publick Prosperity: and in it,  
 each would enjoy the Fruits of his own Vir-  
 tue. And as Injustice, whether by Fraud or  
 Force, would be unknown among themselves;  
 so they would be sufficiently secured from it  
 in their Neighbours. For Cunning and false  
 Self-Interest, Confederacies in Injustice, ever  
 slight, and accompanied with Faction and  
 intestine Treachery; these on one hand  
 would be found mere childish Folly and  
 Weakness, when set in Opposition against  
 Wisdom, publick Spirit, Union inviolable,  
 and Fidelity on the other: allowing both a  
 sufficient Length of Years to try their Force.  
 Add the general Influence, which such a  
 Kingdom would have over the Face of the  
 Earth, by Way of Example particularly, and  
 the Reverence which would be paid it. It  
 would plainly be superior to all others, and  
 the World must gradually come under its  
 Empire: not by Means of lawless Violence;  
 but partly by what must be allowed to be just  
 Conquest;

Conquest; and partly by other Kingdoms submitting themselves voluntarily to it, throughout a Course of Ages, and claiming its Protection, one after another, in successive Exigencies. The Head of it would be an universal Monarch, in another Sense than any Mortal has yet been; and the eastern Stile would be literally applicable to him, that *all People, Nations, and Languages should serve him*. And though indeed our Knowledge of human Nature, and the whole History of Mankind, shew the Impossibility, without some miraculous Interposition, that a Number of Men, here on Earth, should unite in one Society or Government, in the Fear of God and universal Practice of Virtue: and that such a Government should continue so united for a Succession of Ages: yet admitting or supposing this, the Effect would be as now drawn out. And thus, for Instance, the wonderful Power and Prosperity promised to the Jewish Nation in the Scripture, would be, in a great Measure, the Consequence of what is predicted of them; that the *People should be all righteous and inherit the Land for ever*<sup>a</sup>; were we to understand the latter Phrase of a long Continuance only, sufficient to give things Time to work. The Predictions of this Kind, for there are many of them, cannot come to pass, in the present known Course

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<sup>a</sup> Isa. lx. 21.

of



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PART of Nature; but suppose them come to pass,  
I. and then, the Dominion and Pre-eminence  
promised must naturally follow, to a very  
considerable Degree.

Consider now, the general System of Religion: that the Government of the World is uniform, and one, and moral; that Virtue and Right shall finally have the Advantage, and prevail over Fraud and lawless Force, over the Deceits as well as the Violence of Wickedness, under the Conduct of one supreme Governor: And from the Observations above made, it will appear, that God has, by our Reason, given us to see a peculiar Connection in the several Parts of this Scheme, and a Tendency towards the Completion of it arising out of the very Nature of Virtue: which Tendency is to be considered as somewhat moral in the essential Constitution of Things. If any one should think all this to be of little Importance; I desire him to consider, what he would think, if Vice had, essentially, and in its Nature, these advantageous Tendencies; or if Virtue had essentially the direct contrary ones.

But it may be objected, that, notwithstanding all these natural Effects and these natural Tendencies of Virtue; yet Things may be Now going on throughout the Universe, and may go  
on

on Hereafter, in the same mixt way as here at present upon Earth : Virtue sometimes prosperous, sometimes depressed ; Vice sometimes punished, sometimes successful. The Answer to which is, that it is not the Purpose of this Chapter, nor of this Treatise, properly to prove God's perfect moral Government over the World, or the Truth of Religion ; but to observe what there is in the Constitution and Course of Nature, to confirm the proper Proof of it, supposed to be known : And that the Weight of the foregoing Observations to this Purpose, may be thus distinctly proved. Pleasure and Pain are indeed to a certain Degree, say to a very high Degree, distributed amongst us without any apparent Regard to the Merit or Demerit of Characters. And were there nothing else, concerning this Matter, discernible in the Constitution and Course of Nature ; there would be no Ground from the Constitution and Course of Nature, to hope or to fear, that Men would be rewarded or punished hereafter according to their Deserts : which however, it is to be remarked, implies, that even then there would be no Ground from Appearances to think, that Vice upon the whole would have the Advantage, rather than that Virtue would. And thus the Proof of a future State of Retribution, would rest upon the usual known Arguments for it : which are I think plainly unanswerable ; and

H would

PART would be so, though there were no additional  
 I. Confirmation of them from the Things above  
 insisted on. But these Things are a very  
 strong Confirmation of them. For,

*First,* They shew, that the Author of Nature is not indifferent to Virtue and Vice. They amount to a Declaration from Him, determinate and not to be evaded, in Favour of one, and against the other: such a Declaration, as there is nothing to be set over against or answer, on the Part of Vice. So that were a Man, laying aside the proper Proof of Religion, to determine from the Course of Nature only, whether it were most probable, that the Righteous or the Wicked, would have the Advantage in a future Life; there can be no Doubt, but that he would determine the Probability to be, that the former would. The Course of Nature then, in the View of it now given, furnishes us with a real practical Proof of the Obligations of Religion.

*Secondly,* When, conformably to what Religion teaches us, God shall reward and punish Virtue and Vice as such, so as that every one shall, upon the whole, have his Deserts; this distributive Justice will not be a thing different in *Kind*, but only in *Degree*, from what we experience in His present Government.

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ment. It will be That in *Effect*, toward CHAP.  
which we now see a *Tendency*. It will be no III.  
more than the *Completion* of that moral Go-  
vernment, the *Principles and Beginning* of  
which, have been shewn, beyond all Dispute,  
discernible in the present Constitution and  
Course of Nature. And from hence it  
follows,

*Thirdly*, That, as under the natural Government of God, our Experience of those Kinds and Degrees of Happiness and Misery, which we do experience at present, gives just Ground to hope for and to fear, higher Degrees, and other Kinds of both in a future State, supposing a future State admitted: so under his moral Government, our Experience, that Virtue and Vice are, in the Manners above-mentioned, actually rewarded and punished at present, in a certain Degree, gives just Ground to hope and to fear, that they *may be* rewarded and punished in an higher Degree Hereafter. It is acknowledged indeed, that This alone is not sufficient Ground to think, that they *actually will be* rewarded and punished in a higher Degree, rather than in a lower: But then,

*Lastly*, There is sufficient Ground to think so, from the good and bad Tendencies of Virtue and Vice. For these Tendencies are  
H 2 essential,

PART essential, and founded in the Nature of

I. Things: whereas the Hindrances to their becoming Effect, are, in numberless Cases, not necessary, but artificial only. Now it may be much more strongly argued, that these Tendencies, as well as the actual Rewards and Punishments, of Virtue and Vice, which arise directly out of the Nature of Things, will remain Hereafter, than that the accidental Hindrances of them will. And if these Hindrances do not remain; those Rewards and Punishments cannot but be carried on much farther towards the Perfection of Moral Government: *i. e.* the Tendencies of Virtue and Vice will become Effect: But when, or where, or in what particular Way, cannot be known at all, but by Revelation.

Upon the whole: There is a Kind of moral Government implied in God's natural Government: <sup>i</sup> Virtue and Vice are naturally rewarded and punished as beneficial and mischievous to Society; <sup>k</sup> and rewarded and punished directly as Virtue and Vice. <sup>l</sup> The Notion then of a moral Scheme of Government, is not fictitious, but natural; for it is suggested to our Thoughts by the Constitution and Course of Nature: and the Execution of this Scheme is actually begun, in the

<sup>i</sup> p. 72.

<sup>k</sup> p. 73.

<sup>l</sup> p. 74, &c.

Instances

Instances here mentioned. And these things are to be considered, as a Declaration of the Author of Nature, for Virtue, and against Vice: They give a Credibility to the Supposition of their being rewarded and punished Hereafter; and also Ground to hope and to fear, that they may be rewarded and punished in higher Degrees than they are Here. And as all this is confirmed, so the Argument for Religion, from the Constitution and Course of Nature, is carried on farther, by observing, that there are natural Tendencies, and, in innumerable Cases, only artificial Hindrances, to this moral Scheme's being carried on much farther towards Perfection, than it is at present<sup>m</sup>. The Notion then of a moral Scheme of Government, much more perfect than what is seen, is not a fictitious, but a natural Notion: for it is suggested to our Thoughts, by the essential Tendencies of Virtue and Vice. And these Tendencies are to be considered as Intimations, as implicit Promises and Threatnings, from the Author of Nature, of much greater Rewards and Punishments to follow Virtue and Vice, than do at present. And indeed, every *natural* Tendency, which is to continue, but which is hindred from becoming Effect by only *accidental* Causes, affords a Presumption, that such Tendency will, some Time or other,

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<sup>m</sup> p. 85, &c.

PART become Effect: a Presumption in Degree  
 I. proportionable to the Length of the Duration,  
 through which such Tendency will continue.  
 And from these things together, arises a real  
 Presumption, that the Moral Scheme of Government established in Nature, shall be carried on much farther towards Perfection hereafter; and, I think, a Presumption that it will be absolutely compleated. But from these things, joined with the moral Nature which God has given us, considered as given us by Him, arises a practical Proof<sup>n</sup> that it will be compleated: a Proof from Fact; and therefore a distinct one from That, which is deduced from the eternal and unalterable Relations, the Fitness and Unfitness of Actions.

<sup>n</sup> See this Proof drawn out briefly, Ch. vi. p. 167, &c.

## C H A P. IV.

*Of a State of Probation, as implying  
Trial, Difficulties and Danger.*

THE general Doctrine of Religion, that  
 our present Life is a State of Proba-  
 tion for a future one, comprehends under it  
 several particular things, distinct from each  
 other. But the first, and most common Mean-  
 ing of it, seems to be, that our future Inte-  
 rest is now depending, and depending upon  
 Ourselves; that we have Scope and Opportu-  
 nities Here, for that good and bad Behaviour,  
 which God will reward and punish Hereaf-  
 ter; together with Temptations to one, as  
 well as Inducements of Reason to the other.  
 And this is, in a great measure, the same with  
 saying, that we are under the moral Govern-  
 ment of God, and to give an Account of our  
 Actions to Him. For the Notion of a future  
 Account and general righteous Judgment, im-  
 plies some Sort of Temptations to what is  
 Wrong: otherwise there would be no moral  
 Possibility of doing Wrong, nor Ground for  
 Judgment, or Discrimination. But there is  
 this Difference, that the Word *Probation* is  
 more distinctly and particularly expressive of

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H 4

Allure-



PART Allurements to Wrong, or Difficulties in adhering uniformly to what is Right, and of the Danger of Miscarrying by such Temptations, than the Words *Moral Government*. A State of Probation then, as thus particularly implying in it Trial, Difficulties and Danger, may require to be considered distinctly by itself.

And as the moral Government of God, which Religion teaches us, implies, that we are in a State of Trial with regard to a future World: so also his natural Government over us, implies, that we are in a State of Trial, in the like Sense, with regard to the present World. Natural Government by Rewards and Punishments, as much implies natural Trial, as moral Government does moral Trial. The natural Government of God here meant<sup>2</sup>, consists in his annexing Pleasure to some Actions, and Pain to others, which are in our Power to do or forbear, and in giving us Notice of such Appointment beforehand. This necessarily implies, that he has made our Happiness and Misery, or our Interest, to depend in Part upon Ourselves. And so far as Men have Temptations to any Course of Action, which will probably occasion them greater temporal Inconvenience and Uneasiness, than Satisfaction; so far their temporal

<sup>2</sup> Chap. ii.

Interest is in Danger from themselves, or they are in a State of Trial with respect to it. Now People often blame others, and even themselves, for their Misconduct in their temporal Concerns. And we find many are greatly wanting to themselves, and miss of that natural Happiness, which they might have obtained in the present Life: perhaps every one does in some Degree. But many run themselves into great Inconvenience, and into extreme Distress and Misery: not through Incapacity of knowing better, and doing better for themselves, which would be nothing to the present Purpose; but through their own Fault. And these things necessarily imply Temptation, and Danger of miscarrying, in a greater or less Degree, with respect to our worldly Interest or Happiness. Every one too, without having Religion in his Thoughts, speaks of the Hazards which young People run, upon their setting out in the World: Hazards from other Causes, than merely their Ignorance, and unavoidable Accidents. And some Courses of Vice, at least, being contrary to Men's worldly Interest or Good; Temptations to these, must at the same Time be Temptations to forego our present, and our future Interest. Thus in our natural or temporal Capacity, we are in a State of Trial, *i. e.* of Difficulty and Danger, analogous, or like to our moral and religious Trial.

This

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PART This will more distinctly appear to any one,  
 I. who thinks it worth while, more distinctly,  
 to consider, what it is which constitutes our  
 Trial in both Capacities, and to observe, how  
 Mankind behave under it.

And that which constitutes this our Trial, in both these Capacities, must be somewhat either in our external Circumstances, or in our Nature. For, on the one hand, Persons may be betrayed into wrong Behaviour upon Surprise, or overcome upon any other very singular and extraordinary external Occasions; who would, otherwise, have preserved their Character of Prudence and of Virtue: in which Cases, every one, in speaking of the wrong Behaviour of these Persons, would impute it to such particular external Circumstances. And on the other hand, Men who have contracted Habits of Vice and Folly of any Kind, or have some particular Passions in Excess, will seek Opportunities, and, as it were, go out of their Way, to gratify themselves in these Respects, at the Expence of their Wisdom and their Virtue; led to it, as every one would say, not by external Temptations, but by such Habits and Passions. And the Account of this last Case is, that particular Passions are no more coincident with Prudence, or That reasonable Self-love, the End of which

which is our worldly Interest, than they are with the Principle of Virtue and Religion; but often draw contrary Ways to one, as well as to the other: and so such particular Passions are as much Temptations, to act imprudently with regard to our worldly Interest, as to act vitiously<sup>b</sup>. However, as when we say, Men are misled by external Circumstances of Temptation; it cannot but be understood, that there is somewhat within themselves, to render those Circumstances Temptations, or to render them susceptible of Impressions from them: So when we say, they are misled by Passions; it is always supposed, that there are Occasions, Circumstances, and Objects, exciting these Passions, and affording Means for gratifying them. And therefore Temptations from within, and from without, coincide, and mutually imply each other. Now the several external Objects of the Appetites, Passions, and Affections, being present to the Senses, or offering themselves to the Mind, and so exciting Emotions suitable to their Nature; not only in Cases where they can be gratified consistently with Innocence and Prudence, but also in Cases where they cannot, and yet can be gratified imprudently and vitiously: this as really puts them in Danger of voluntarily foregoing their present

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<sup>b</sup> See Sermons preached at the *Rolls*, 1726, 5th Ed. p. 205, &c. Pref. 25, &c. Serm. p. 21, &c.

PART Interest or Good, as their future ; and as really renders Self-denial necessary to secure one, as the other : *i. e.* We are in a like State of Trial with Respect to Both, by the very same Passions, excited by the very same Means. Thus Mankind having a temporal Interest depending upon themselves, and a prudent Course of Behaviour being necessary to secure it ; Passions inordinately excited, whether by Means of Example, or by any other external Circumstance, towards such Objects, at such Times, or in such Degrees, as that they cannot be gratified consistently with worldly Prudence ; are Temptations, dangerous, and too often successful Temptations, to forego a greater temporal Good for a less ; *i. e.* to forego what is, upon the whole, our temporal Interest, for the Sake of a present Gratification. This is a Description of our State of Trial in our temporal Capacity. Substitute now the Word *future* for *temporal*, and *Virtue* for *Prudence* ; and it will be just as proper a Description of our State of Trial in our religious Capacity : so analogous are they to each other.

If, from Consideration of this our like State of Trial in both Capacities, we go on to observe farther, how Mankind behave under it ; we shall find there are some, who have so little Sense of it, that they scarce look beyond  
 2 the

the passing Day: They are so taken up with present Gratifications, as to have, in a manner, no Feeling of Consequences, no Regard to their future Ease or Fortune in this Life; any more than to their Happiness in another. Some appear to be blinded and deceived by inordinate Passion, in their worldly Concerns, as much as in Religion. Others are, not deceived, but, as it were, forcibly carried away by the like Passions, against their better Judgment, and feeble Resolutions too of acting better. And there are Men, and truly they are not a few, who shamelessly avow, not their Interest, but their mere Will and Pleasure, to be their Law of Life: and who, in open Defiance of every thing that is reasonable, will go on in a Course of vicious Extravagance, foreseeing, with no Remorse and little Fear, that it will be their temporal Ruin; and some of them, under the Apprehension of the Consequences of Wickedness in another State. And to speak in the most moderate Way, human Creatures are not only continually liable to go wrong voluntarily, but we see likewise that they often actually do so, with respect to their temporal Interests, as well as with respect to Religion.

Thus our Difficulties and Dangers, or our Trials, in our temporal and our religious Capacity, as they proceed from the same Causes,  
and

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PART and have the same Effect upon Men's Behaviour, are evidently analogous, and of the same Kind.

It may be added, that as the Difficulties and Dangers of Miscarrying in our religious State of Trial, are greatly increased, and one is ready to think, in a manner wholly *made*, by the ill Behaviour of Others; by a Wrong Education, wrong in a moral Sense, sometimes positively vitious; by general bad Example; by the dishonest Artifices, which are got into Business of all Kinds; and, in very many Parts of the World, by Religion's being corrupted into Superstitions, which indulge Men in their Vices: So in like manner, the Difficulties of conducting ourselves prudently in respect to our present Interest, and our Danger of being led aside from pursuing it, are greatly increased, by a foolish Education; and, after we come to mature Age, by the Extravagance and Carelessness of Others, whom we have Intercourse with; and by mistaken Notions, very generally prevalent, and taken up for common Opinion, concerning temporal Happiness, and wherein it consists. And Persons, by their own Negligence and Folly in their temporal Affairs, no less than by a Course of Vice, bring themselves into new Difficulties; and, by Habits of Indulgence, become less qualified to go through them:

them : And one Irregularity after another, CHAP. embarrasses things to such a Degree, that IV. they know not where about they are ; and often makes the Path of Conduct so intricate and perplexed, that it is difficult to trace it out ; difficult even to determine what is the prudent or the moral Part. Thus, for Instance, wrong Behaviour in one Stage of Life, Youth ; wrong, I mean, considering ourselves only in our temporal Capacity, without taking in Religion ; this, in several Ways, increases the Difficulties of right Behaviour in mature Age ; *i. e.* puts us into a more disadvantageous State of Trial in our temporal Capacity.

We are an inferior Part of the Creation of God. There are natural Appearances of our being in a State of Degradation<sup>c</sup>. And we certainly are in a Condition, which *does not seem*, by any means, the most advantageous we could imagine or desire, either in our natural or moral Capacity, for securing either our present or future Interest. However, this Condition, low and careful and uncertain as it is, does not afford any just Ground of Complaint. For, as Men may manage their temporal Affairs with Prudence, and so pass their Days here on Earth in tolerable Ease and Satisfaction, by a moderate Degree of Care : so

<sup>c</sup> Part II. Chap. v. p. 298.

likewise



**PART** likewise with regard to Religion, there is no  
**I.** more required than what they are well able to  
 do, and what they must be greatly wanting  
 to themselves, if they neglect. And for Per-  
 sons to have That put upon them, which they  
 are well able to go through, and no more,  
 we naturally consider as an equitable thing;  
 supposing it done by proper Authority. Nor  
 have we any more Reason to complain of it,  
 with regard to the Author of Nature, than  
 of his not having given us other Advantages,  
 belonging to other Orders of Creatures.

But the thing here insisted upon is, that  
 the State of Trial which Religion teaches us  
 we are in, is rendered credible, by its being  
 throughout uniform and of a piece with the  
 general Conduct of Providence towards us,  
 in all other Respects within the Compass of  
 our Knowledge. Indeed if Mankind, consi-  
 dered in their natural Capacity, as Inhabitants  
 of this World only, found themselves, from  
 their Birth to their Death, in a settled State of  
 Security and Happiness; without any Sollici-  
 tude or Thought of their own: or if they  
 were in no Danger of being brought into In-  
 conveniences and Distress, by Carelessness,  
 or the Folly of Passion, through bad Exam-  
 ple, the Treachery of others, or the deceit-  
 ful Appearances of Things: Were This our  
 natural Condition; then it might seem  
 strange,

strange, and be some Presumption against the Truth of Religion, that it represents our future and more general Interest, as not secure of course, but as depending upon our Behaviour, and requiring Recollection and Self-government to obtain it. For it might be alledged, "What you say is our Condition in one Respect, is not in any wise of a Sort with what we find, by Experience, our Condition is in another. Our whole present Interest is secured to our Hands, without any Sollicitude of ours; and why should not our future Interest, if we have any such, be so too?" But since, on the contrary, Thought and Consideration, the voluntary denying ourselves many Things which we desire, and a Course of Behaviour, far from being always agreeable to us; are absolutely necessary to our acting even a common decent, and common prudent Part, so as to pass with any Satisfaction through the present World, and be received upon any tolerable good Terms in it: since this is the Case, all Presumption against Self-denial and Attention being necessary to secure our higher Interest, is removed. Had we not Experience, it might, perhaps speciously, be urged, that it is improbable any thing of Hazard and Danger should be put upon us by an infinite Being; when every thing which is Hazard and Danger in our manner of Conception,

I

and

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PART and will end in Error, Confusion, and Misery, is now already certain in his Fore-knowledge. And indeed, why any thing of Hazard and Danger should be put upon such frail Creatures as we are, may well be thought a Difficulty in Speculation; and cannot but be so, till we know the whole, or, however, much more of the Case. But still the Constitution of Nature is as it is, Our Happiness and Misery are trusted to our Conduct, and made to depend upon it. Somewhat, and, in many Circumstances, a great deal too, is put upon Us, either to do, or to suffer, as we chuse. And all the various Miseries of Life, which People bring upon themselves by Negligence and Folly, and might have avoided by proper Care, are Instances of this: Which Miseries are beforehand, just as contingent and undetermined as their Conduct, and left to be determined by it.

These Observations are an Answer to the Objections against the Credibility of a State of Trial, as implying Temptations, and real Danger of miscarrying with regard to our general Interest, under the moral Government of God: and they shew, that, if we are at all to be considered in such a Capacity, and as having such an Interest; the general Analogy of Providence must lead us to apprehend ourselves in Danger of miscarrying, in different

rent Degrees, as to his Interest, by our neglecting to act the proper Part belonging to us in that Capacity. For we have a present Interest, under the Government of God which we experience here upon Earth. And this Interest, as it is not forced upon us, so neither is it offered to our Acceptance, but to our Acquisition; in such Sort, as that we are in Danger of missing it, by means of Temptations to neglect, or act contrary to it; and without Attention and Self-denial, must and do miss of it. It is then perfectly credible, that this may be our Case, with Respect to that chief and final Good, which Religion proposes to us.

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IV.

## C H A P. V.

*Of a State of Probation, as intended  
for moral Discipline and Improve-  
ment.*

PART  
I. FROM the Consideration of our being  
in a Probation-state, of so much Dif-  
ficulty and Hazard, naturally arises the Que-  
tion, how we came to be placed in it. But  
such a general Inquiry as this, would be found  
involved in insuperable Difficulties. For,  
though some of these Difficulties would be  
lessened by observing, that all Wickedness is  
voluntary, as is implied in its very Notion;  
and that many of the Miseries of Life have  
apparent good Effects: yet, when we con-  
sider other Circumstances belonging to both,  
and what must be the Consequence of the  
former in a Life to come; it cannot but be  
acknowledged plain Folly and Presumption,  
to pretend to give an Account of the whole  
Reasons of this Matter: the whole Reasons  
of our being allotted a Condition, out of  
which so much Wickedness and Misery, so  
circumstanced, would in Fact arise. Whether  
it be not beyond our Faculties, not only to  
find out, but even to understand, the whole  
Account

Account of This; or, though we should be supposed capable of understanding it, yet, whether it would be of Service or Prejudice to us to be informed of it; is impossible to say. But as our present Condition can in no wise be shewn inconsistent with the perfect moral Government of God: so Religion teaches us we were placed in it, that we might qualify ourselves, by the Practice of Virtue, for another State which is to follow it. And this, though but a partial Answer, a very partial one indeed, to the Inquiry now mentioned; yet, is a more satisfactory Answer to Another, which is of real, and of the utmost Importance to us to have answered: the Inquiry, What is our Business here? The known End then, why we are placed in a State of so much Affliction, Hazard, and Difficulty, is, our Improvement in Virtue and Piety, as the requisite Qualification for a future State of Security and Happiness.

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Now the Beginning of Life, considered as an Education for mature Age in the present World, appears plainly, at first Sight, analogous to this our Trial for a future one: the former being in our temporal Capacity, what the latter is in our religious Capacity. But some Observations common to both of them, and a more distinct Consideration of each, will more distinctly shew the

PART Extent and Force of the Analogy between  
 I. them ; and the Credibility, which arises from  
 hence, as well as from the Nature of the  
 thing, that the present Life was intended to  
 be a State of Discipline for a future one.

I. Every Species of Creatures is, we see, designed for a particular Way of Life ; to which, the Nature, the Capacities, Temper, and Qualifications, of each Species, are as necessary, as their external Circumstances. Both come into the Notion of such State, or particular Way of Life, and are constituent Parts of it. Change a Man's Capacities or Character to the Degree, in which it is conceivable they may be changed ; and he would be altogether incapable of a human Course of Life, and human Happiness : as incapable, as if, his Nature continuing unchanged, he were placed in a World, where he had no Sphere of Action, nor any Objects to answer his Appetites, Passions, and Affections of any Sort. One thing is set over against another, as an antient Writer expresses it. Our Nature corresponds to our external Condition. Without this Correspondence, there would be no Possibility of any such thing as human Life and human Happiness : which Life and Happiness are, therefore, a *Result* from our Nature and Condition jointly ; meaning by human Life, not living in the literal Sense, but the whole com-

complex Notion commonly understood by those Words. So that, without determining what will be the Employment and Happiness, the particular Life of good Men hereafter; there must be some determinate Capacities, some necessary Character and Qualifications, without which Persons cannot but be utterly incapable of it: in like manner, as there must be some, without which Men would be incapable of their present State of Life. Now,

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II. The Constitution of human Creatures, and indeed of all Creatures which come under our Notice, is such, as that they are capable of naturally becoming qualified for States of Life, for which they were once wholly unqualified. In Imagination we may indeed conceive of Creatures, as incapable of having any of their Faculties naturally enlarged, or as being unable naturally to acquire any new Qualifications: But the Faculties of every Species known to us, are made for Enlargement; for Acquirements of Experience and Habits. We find ourselves in particular indued with Capacities, not only of perceiving Ideas, and of Knowledge or perceiving Truth, but also of storing up our Ideas and Knowledge by Memory. We are capable, not only of acting, and of having different momentary Impressions made upon us; but of getting a new Facility in any Kind of Action,




PART and of settled Alterations in our Temper or  
 I. Character. The Power of the two last is the  
 Power of Habits. But neither the Perception  
 of Ideas, nor Knowledge of any Sort, are  
 Habits; though absolutely necessary to the  
 forming of them. However, Apprehension,  
 Reason, Memory, which are the Capacities  
 of acquiring Knowledge, are greatly im-  
 proved by Exercise. Whether the Word Ha-  
 bit is applicable to all these Improvements, and  
 in particular how far the Powers of Memory  
 and of Habits may be Powers of the same  
 Nature, I shall not inquire. But that Per-  
 ceptions come into our Minds readily and of  
 course, by means of their having been there  
 before, seems a thing of the same Sort, as  
 Readiness in any particular Kind of Action,  
 proceeding from being accustomed to it. And  
 Aptness to recollect practical Observations of  
 Service in our Conduct, is plainly Habit in  
 many Cases. There are Habits of Percep-  
 tion, and Habits of Action. An Instance of  
 the former, is our constant and even involun-  
 tary Readiness, in correcting the Impressions  
 of our Sight concerning Magnitudes and Dis-  
 tances, so as to substitute Judgment in the  
 Room of Sensation imperceptible to ourselves.  
 And it seems as if all other Associations of  
 Ideas not naturally connected, might be called  
 passive Habits; as properly as our Readiness  
 in understanding Languages, upon Sight or  
 hearing

hearing of Words. And our Readiness in speaking and writing them is an Instance of the latter, of active Habits. For Distinctness, we may consider Habits, as belonging to the Body, or the Mind: and the latter will be explained by the former. Under the former are comprehended all bodily Activities or Motions whether graceful or unbecoming, which are owing to Use: Under the latter, general Habits of Life and Conduct; such as those of Obedience and Submission to Authority, or to any particular Person; those of Veracity, Justice, and Charity; those of Attention, Industry, Self-government, Envy, Revenge. And Habits of this latter Kind seem produced by repeated Acts, as well as the former. And in like manner as Habits belonging to the Body are produced by external Acts: so Habits of the Mind are produced by the Exertion of inward practical Principles, *i. e.* by carrying them into Act, or acting upon them; the Principles of Obedience, of Veracity, Justice, and Charity. Nor can those Habits be formed by any external Course of Action, otherwise than as it proceeds from these Principles: because it is only these inward Principles exerted, which are strictly Acts of Obedience, of Veracity, of Justice, and of Charity. So likewise Habits of Attention, Industry, Self-government, are in the same Manner acquired by Exercise; and Habits of Envy and Revenge

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PART venge by Indulgence, whether in outward

I.  Act, or in Thought and Intention, *i. e.* inward Act: for such Intention is an Act. Resolutions also to do well, are properly Acts. And endeavouring to enforce upon our own Minds, a practical Sense of Virtue, or to beget in Others that practical Sense of it, which a Man really has himself, is a virtuous Act. All these, therefore, may and will contribute towards forming good Habits. But going over the Theory of Virtue in one's Thoughts, talking well, and drawing fine Pictures, of it; this is so far from necessarily or certainly conducing to form an Habit of it, in him who thus employs himself; that it may harden the Mind in a contrary Course, and render it gradually more insensible, *i. e.* form an Habit of Insensibility, to all moral Considerations. For, from our very Faculty of Habits, passive Impressions, by being repeated, grow weaker. Thoughts, by often passing through the Mind, are felt less sensibly: Being accustomed to Danger, begets Intrepidity, *i. e.* lessens Fear; to Distress, lessens the Passion of Pity; to Instances of Others Mortality, lessens the sensible Apprehension of our own. And from these two Observations together; that practical Habits are formed and strengthened by repeated Acts, and that passive Impressions grow weaker by being repeated upon us; it must follow, that active Habits may be gradually

dually forming and strengthening, by a Course  
of acting upon such and such Motives and  
Excitements, whilst these Motives and Ex-  
citements themselves are, by proportionable  
Degrees, growing less sensible, *i. e.* are con-  
tinually less and less sensibly felt, even as the  
active Habits strengthen. And Experience  
confirms this: For active Principles, at the  
very time that they are less lively in Percep-  
tion than they were, are found to be, some  
how, wrought more thoroughly into the Tem-  
per and Character, and become more effectual  
in influencing our Practice. The three things  
just mentioned may afford Instances of it.  
Perception of Danger, is a natural Excite-  
ment of passive Fear, and active Caution:  
And by being inured to Danger, Habits of  
the latter are gradually wrought, at the same  
time that the former gradually lessens. Per-  
ception of Distress in others, is a natural  
Excitement, passively to pity, and actively to  
relieve it: But let a Man set himself to at-  
tend to, inquire out, and relieve distressed  
Persons, and he cannot but grow less and less  
sensibly affected with the various Miseries of  
Life, with which he must become acquaint-  
ed; when yet, at the same time, Benevolence,  
considered not as a Passion, but as a practical  
Principle of Action, will strengthen: and  
whilst he passively compassionates the Distres-  
sed less, he will acquire a greater Aptitude  
actively

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PART actively to assist and befriend them. So also  
 L at the same time that the daily Instances of  
 Men's dying around us, give us daily a less  
 sensible passive Feeling or Apprehension of our  
 own Mortality, such Instances greatly contribute to the strengthening a practical Regard to it in serious Men; *i. e.* to forming an Habit of acting with a constant View to it. And this seems again further to shew, that passive Impressions made upon our Minds by Admonition, Experience, Example, though they may have a remote Efficacy, and a very great one, towards forming active Habits, yet, can have this Efficacy no otherwise than by inducing us to such a Course of Action: and that it is, not being affected so and so, but Acting, which forms those Habits: Only it must be always remembered, that real Endeavours to enforce good Impressions upon ourselves, are a Species of virtuous Action. Nor do we know how far it is possible, in the Nature of Things, that Effects should be wrought in us at once, equivalent to Habits, *i. e.* what is wrought by Use and Exercise. However, the thing insisted upon is, not what may be possible, but what is in Fact the Appointment of Nature: which is, that active Habits are to be formed by Exercise. Their Progress may be so gradual, as to be imperceptible of its Steps: It may be hard to explain the Faculty, by which we are capable of Habits,  
 through-

throughout its several Parts; and to trace it up to its Original, so as to distinguish it from all others in our Mind: And it seems as if contrary Effects were to be ascribed to it. But the thing in general, that our Nature is formed to yield, in some such Manner as this, to Use and Exercise, is Matter of certain Experience.

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Thus, by accustoming ourselves to any Course of Action, we get an Aptness to go on, a Facility, Readiness, and often Pleasure, in it. The Inclinations which rendered us averse to it, grow weaker: the Difficulties in it, not only the imaginary but the real ones, lessen: the Reasons for it, offer themselves of course to our Thoughts upon all Occasions: and the least Glimpse of them is sufficient to make us go on, in a Course of Action, to which we have been accustomed. And practical Principles appear to grow stronger, absolutely in themselves, by Exercise; as well as relatively, with regard to contrary Principles; which, by being accustomed to submit, do so habitually, and of course. And thus a new Character, in several Respects, may be formed; and many Habitues of Life, not given by Nature, but which Nature directs us to acquire.

III. Indeed

PART III. Indeed we may be assured, that we  
 I. should never have had these Capacities of improving by Experience, acquired Knowledge, and Habits, had they not been necessary, and intended to be made use of. And accordingly we find them so necessary, and so much intended, that without them we should be utterly incapable of That, which was the End for which we were made, considered in our temporal Capacity only: the Employments and Satisfaction of our mature State of Life.

Nature does in no wise qualify us wholly, much less at once, for this mature State of Life. Even Maturity of Understanding and bodily Strength, are not only arrived to gradually, but are also very much owing to the continued Exercise of our Powers of Body and Mind, from Infancy. But if we suppose a Person brought into the World with both these in Maturity, as far as this is conceivable; he would plainly at first be as unqualified for the human Life of mature Age, as an Idiot. He would be in a manner distracted, with Astonishment, and Apprehension, and Curiosity, and Suspence: Nor can one guess, how long it would be, before he would be familiarized to himself and the Objects about him enough, even to set himself to any thing. It may be questioned too, whether

ther the natural Information of his Sight and Hearing, would be of any manner of use at all to him in acting, before Experience. And it seems, that Men would be strangely headstrong and self-willed, and disposed to exert themselves with an Impetuosity, which would render Society insupportable, and the living in it impracticable; were it not for some acquired Moderation and Self-government, some Aptitude and Readiness in restraining themselves, and concealing their Sense of Things. Want of every thing of this Kind which is learnt, would render a Man as incapable of Society, as Want of Language would: or as his natural Ignorance of any of the particular Employments of Life, would render him incapable of providing himself with the common Conveniences, or supplying the necessary Wants of it. In these Respects, and probably in many more, of which we have no particular Notion, Mankind is left, by Nature, an unformed, unfinished Creature; utterly deficient and unqualified, before the Acquisition of Knowledge, Experience, and Habits, for that mature State of Life, which was the End of his Creation, considering him as related only to this World.

But then, as Nature has endued us with a Power of supplying those Deficiencies, by acquired Knowledge, Experience, and Habits:



**PART** bits: so likewise we are placed in a Condition, in Infancy, Childhood, and Youth, fitted for it; fitted for our acquiring those Qualifications of all Sorts, which we stand in need of in mature Age. Hence Children, from their very Birth, are daily growing acquainted, with the Objects about them, with the Scene in which they are placed, and to have a future Part; and learning somewhat or other, necessary to the Performance of it. The Subordinations, to which they are accustomed in domestick Life, teach them Self-government in common Behaviour abroad, and prepare them for Subjection and Obedience to civil Authority. What passes before their Eyes, and daily happens to them, gives them Experience, Caution against Treachery and Deceit, together with numberless little Rules of Action and Conduct, which we could not live without; and which are learnt so insensibly and so perfectly, as to be mistaken perhaps for Instinct: though they are the Effect of long Experience and Exercise; as much so as Language, or Knowledge in particular Business, or the Qualifications and Behaviour belonging to the several Ranks and Professions. Thus the Beginning of our Days is adapted to be, and is, a State of Education in the Theory and Practice of mature Life. We are much assisted in it by Example, Instruction, and the Care of Others; but a great deal is

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left

left to Ourselves to do. And of this, as Part CHAP.  
is done easily and of Course; so Part requires V.  
Diligence and Care, the voluntary Foregoing }  
many things which we desire, and setting  
ourselves to what we should have no Inclina-  
tion to, but for the Necessity or Expedience  
of it. For, That Labour and Industry, which  
the Station of so many absolutely requires,  
they would be greatly unqualified for, in Ma-  
turity; as those in other Stations would be,  
for any other Sorts of Application; if both  
were not accustomed to them in their Youth.  
And according as Persons behave themselves,  
in the general Education which all go through,  
and in the particular ones adapted to particu-  
lar Employments; their Character is formed,  
and made appear; they recommend them-  
selves more or less; and are capable of, and  
placed in, different Stations in the Society of  
Mankind.

The former Part of Life then, is to be  
considered as an important Opportunity, which  
Nature puts into our Hands; and which,  
when lost, is not to be recovered. And our  
being placed in a State of Discipline through-  
out this Life, for another World, is a provi-  
dential Disposition of things, exactly of the  
same Kind, as our being placed in a State of  
Discipline during Childhood, for mature Age.  
Our Condition in both Respects is uniform  
K and

**PART** and of a piece, and comprehended under one  
**I.** and the same general Law of Nature.



And if we were not able at all to discern, how or in what Way the present Life could be our Preparation for another; this would be no Objection against the Credibility of its being so. For we do not discern, how Food and Sleep contribute to the Growth of the Body: nor could have any Thought that they would, before we had Experience. Nor do Children at all think, on the one hand, that the Sports and Exercifes, to which they are so much addicted, contribute to their Health and Growth; nor on the other, of the Necessity which there is for their being restrained in them: Nor are they capable of understanding the Use of many Parts of Discipline, which nevertheless they must be made to go through, in order to qualify them for the Business of mature Age. Were we not able then to discover, in what Respects the present Life could form us for a future one: yet nothing would be more supposeable than that it might, in some Respects or other, from the general Analogy of Providence. And this, for ought I see, might reasonably be said, even though we should not take in the Consideration of God's moral Government over the World. But,

IV. Take

IV. Take in this Consideration, and consequently, that the Character of Virtue and Piety is a necessary Qualification for the future State; and then we may distinctly see, how, and in what Respects, the present Life may be a Preparation for it: since we *want, and are capable of, Improvement in That Character, by moral and religious Habits; and the present Life is fit to be a State of Discipline for such Improvement*: In like manner as we have already observed, how, and in what Respects, Infancy, Childhood, and Youth, are a necessary Preparation, and a natural State of Discipline, for mature Age.

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Nothing which we at present see, would lead us to the Thought of a solitary unactive State hereafter: but, if we judge at all from the Analogy of Nature, we must suppose, according to the Scripture Account of it, that it will be a Community. And there is no Shadow of any thing unreasonable in conceiving, though there be no Analogy for it, that this Community will be, as the Scripture represents it, under the more immediate, or, if such an Expression may be used, the more sensible Government of God. Nor is our Ignorance, what will be the Employments of this happy Community, nor our consequent Ignorance, what particular Scope or Occasion

PART there will be for the Exercise of Veracity,  
 I. Justice, and Charity, amongst the Members  
 of it with regard to each other; any Proof,  
 that there will be no Sphere of Exercise for  
 those Virtues. Much less, if that were possible,  
 is our Ignorance any Proof, that there  
 will be no Occasion for that Frame of Mind,  
 or Character, which is formed by the daily  
 Practice of those particular Virtues here, and  
 which is a Result from it. This at least must  
 be owned in general, that, as the Govern-  
 ment established in the Universe is moral, the  
 Character of Virtue and Piety must, in some  
 way or other, be the Condition of our Hap-  
 piness, or the Qualification for it.

Now from what is above observed, concerning our natural Power of Habits, it is easy to see, that we are *capable* of moral Improvement by Discipline. And how greatly we *want* it, need not be proved to any one who is acquainted with the great Wickedness of Mankind; or even with those Imperfections, which the best are conscious of. But it is not perhaps distinctly attended to by every one, that the Occasion which human Creatures have for Discipline, to improve in them this Character of Virtue and Piety, is to be traced up higher than to Excess in the Passions, by Indulgence and Habits of Vice. Mankind, and perhaps all finite Creatures,  
 from

from the very Constitution of their Nature, before Habits of Virtue, are deficient, and in danger of deviating from what is right: and therefore stand in need of virtuous Habits, for a Security against this Danger. For, together with the general Principle of moral Understanding, we have in our inward Frame various Affections towards particular external Objects. These Affections are naturally, and of right, subject to the Government of the moral Principle, as to the Occasions upon which they may be gratified; as to the Times, Degrees, and Manner, in which the Objects of them may be pursued: But then the Principle of Virtue can neither excite them, nor prevent their being excited. On the contrary, they are naturally felt, when the Objects of them are present to the Mind, not only before all Consideration, whether they can be obtained by lawful Means, but after it is found they cannot. For the natural Objects of Affection continue so; the Necessaries, Conveniences, and Pleasures of Life, remain naturally desireable; though they cannot be obtained innocently: nay, though they cannot possibly be obtained at all. And when the Objects of any Affection whatever cannot be obtained without unlawful Means; but may be obtained by them: such Affection, though its being excited, and its continuing some time in the Mind, be as innocent as it

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V.  
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PART is natural and necessary; yet cannot but be  
 I. conceived to have a Tendency to incline Per-  
 sons to venture upon such unlawful Means:  
 and therefore must be conceived as putting  
 them in some Danger of it. Now what is  
 the general Security against this Danger, a-  
 gainst their actually deviating from Right? As  
 the Danger is, so also must the Security be,  
 from within: from the practical Principle of  
 Virtue<sup>a</sup>. And the strengthening or improv-  
 ing this Principle, considered as practical, or  
 as a Principle of Action, will lessen the Dan-  
 ger, or increase the Security against it. And  
 this moral Principle is capable of Improve-  
 ment, by proper Discipline and Exercise: by  
 recollecting the practical Impressions which

<sup>a</sup> It may be thought, that Sense of Interest would as ef-  
 fectually restrain Creatures from doing wrong. But if by a  
*Sense of Interest* is meant a speculative Conviction or Belief,  
 that such and such Indulgence would occasion them greater  
 Uneasiness, upon the whole, than Satisfaction: it is contrary  
 to present Experience to say, that this *Sense of Interest* is suffi-  
 cient to restrain them from thus indulging themselves. And  
 if by a *Sense of Interest* is meant a practical Regard to what is  
 upon the whole our Happiness: this is not only coincident  
 with the Principle of Virtue or moral Rectitude, but is a Part  
 of the Idea itself. And it is evident this reasonable Self-love  
 wants to be improved, as really as any Principle in our Nature.  
 For we daily see it overmatched, not only by the more boif-  
 terous Passions, but by Curiosity, Shame, Love of Imitation,  
 by any thing, even Indolence: especially if the Interest,  
 the temporal Interest, suppose, which is the End of such Self-  
 love, be at a Distance. So greatly are profligate Men mis-  
 taken, when they affirm they are wholly governed by In-  
 terestedness and Self-love. And so little Cause is there for  
 Moralists to disclaim this Principle. See p. 106, 107.

Exam-

Example and Experience have made upon us: and, instead of following Humour and mere Inclination, by continually attending to the Equity and Right of the Case, in whatever we are engaged, be it in greater or less Matters; and accustoming ourselves always to act upon it; as being itself the just and natural Motive of Action: and as this moral Course of Behaviour, must necessarily, under divine Government, be our final Interest. *Thus the Principle of Virtue, improved into an Habit, of which Improvement we are thus capable, will plainly be, in Proportion to the Strength of it, a Security against the Danger which finite Creatures are in, from the very Nature of Propension, or particular Affections.* This way of putting the Matter, supposes particular Affections to remain in a future State; which it is scarce possible to avoid supposing. And if they do; we clearly see, that acquired Habits of Virtue and Self-government may be necessary for the Regulation of them. However, though we were not distinctly to take in this Supposition, but to speak only in general; the thing really comes to the same. For Habits of Virtue, thus acquired by Discipline, are Improvement in Virtue: and Improvement in Virtue, must be Advancement in Happiness, if the Government of the Universe be moral.

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PART From these things we may observe, and it  
 I. will farther shew this our natural and original  
 ~~~~~ Need of being improved by Discipline, how  
 it comes to pass, that Creatures made upright
 fall; and that those who preserve their Up-
 rightness, by so doing, raise themselves to a
 more secure State of Virtue. To say that the
 former is accounted for by the Nature of Li-
 berty, is to say no more, than that an Event's
 actually happening is accounted for by a mere
 Possibility of its happening. But it seems
 distinctly conceivable from the very Nature of
 particular Affections or Propensions. For,
 suppose Creatures intended for such a parti-
 cular State of Life, for which such Propen-
 sions were necessary: Suppose them endued
 with such Propensions, together with moral
 Understanding, as well including a practical
 Sense of Virtue, as a speculative Perception
 of it; and that all these several Principles, both
 natural and moral, forming an inward Consti-
 tution of Mind, were in the most exact Pro-
 portion possible; *i. e.* in a Proportion the most
 exactly adapted to their intended State of
 Life: Such Creatures would be made up-
 right, or finitely perfect. Now particular
 Propensions, from their very Nature, must be
 felt, the Objects of them being present;
 though they cannot be gratified at all, or not
 with the Allowance of the moral Principle.
 But

But if they can be gratified without its Allow-
ance, or by contradicting it; then they must
be conceived to have some Tendency, in how
low a Degree soever, yet some Tendency,
to induce Persons to such forbidden Grati-
fication. This Tendency, in some one par-
ticular Propension, may be increased, by the
greater Frequency of Occasions naturally ex-
citing it, than of Occasions exciting others.
The least voluntary Indulgence in forbidden
Circumstances, though but in Thought, will
increase this wrong Tendency; and may in-
crease it further, till, peculiar Conjunctions
perhaps conspiring, it becomes Effect; and
Danger of deviating from Right, ends in ac-
tual Deviation from it: a Danger necessarily
arising from the very Nature of Propension;
and which therefore could not have been pre-
vented, though it might have been escaped,
or got innocently through. The Case would
be, as if we were to suppose a strait Path
marked out for a Person, in which such a
Degree of Attention would keep him steady:
But if he would not attend in this Degree,
any one of a thousand Objects, catching his
Eye, might lead him out of it. Now it is
impossible to say, how much, even the first
full overt Act of Irregularity, might disorder
the inward Constitution; unsettle the Adjust-
ments, and alter the Proportions, which
formed it, and in which the Uprightness of

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PART its Make consisted: But Repetition of Irregularities would produce Habits. And thus

I.  the Constitution would be spoiled; and Creatures made upright, become corrupt and depraved in their settled Character, proportionably to their repeated Irregularities in occasional Acts. But on the contrary, these Creatures might have improved and raised themselves, to an higher and more secure State of Virtue, by the contrary Behaviour: by steadily following the moral Principle, supposed to be one Part of their Nature; and thus withstanding that unavoidable Danger of Defection, which necessarily arose from Propension, the other Part of it. For, by thus preserving their Integrity for some Time, their Danger would lessen; since Propensions by being inured to submit, would do it more easily and of Course: and their Security against this lessening Danger would increase; since the moral Principle would gain additional Strength by Exercise: both which things are implied in the Notion of virtuous Habits. Thus then vicious Indulgence, is not only criminal in itself, but also depraves the inward Constitution and Character. And virtuous Self-government, is not only right in itself, but also improves the inward Constitution or Character: and may improve it to such a Degree, that though we should suppose it impossible, for particular Affections to be absolutely coincident

dent

dent with the moral Principle; and consequently should allow, that such Creatures as have been above supposed, would for ever remain defectible; yet their Danger of actually deviating from Right, may be almost infinitely lessened, and they fully fortified against what remains of it: if That may be called Danger, against which, there is an adequate effectual Security. But still, this their higher Perfection may continue to consist in Habits of Virtue formed in a State of Discipline, and this their more compleat Security remain to proceed from them. And thus it is plainly conceivable, that Creatures without Blemish, as they came out of the Hands of God, may be in Danger of going wrong; and so may stand in need of the Security of virtuous Habits, additional to the moral Principle wrought into their Natures by Him. That which is the Ground of their Danger, or their Want of Security, may be considered as a Deficiency in them, to which virtuous Habits are the natural Supply. And as they are naturally capable of being raised and improved by Discipline, it may be a thing fit and requisite, that they should be placed in Circumstances with an Eye to it: in Circumstances peculiarly fitted to be, to them, a State of Discipline for their Improvement in Virtue.

But

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PART But how much more strongly must this
I. hold with Respect to those, who have corrupted their Natures, are fallen from their original Rectitude, and whose Passions are become excessive by repeated Violations of their inward Constitution? Upright Creatures may want to be improved: depraved Creatures want to be renewed. Education and Discipline, which may be in all Degrees and Sorts of Gentleness and of Severity, is expedient for those: but must be absolutely necessary for these. For these, Discipline of the severer Sort too, and in the higher Degrees of it, must be necessary, in order to wear out vicious Habits; to recover their primitive Strength of Self-government, which Indulgence must have weakened; to repair, as well as raise into an Habit, the moral Principle, in order to their arriving at a secure State of virtuous Happiness.

Now whoever will consider the thing, may clearly see, that the present World is *peculiarly fit* to be a State of Discipline for this Purpose, to such as will set themselves to mend and improve. For, the various Temptations with which we are surrounded; our Experience of the Deceits of Wickedness; having been in many Instances led wrong Ourselves; the great Vitiousness of the World;
 the

the infinite Disorders consequent upon it; our being made acquainted with Pain and Sorrow, either from our own Feeling of it, or from the Sight of it in Others; these things, though some of them may indeed produce wrong Effects upon our Minds, yet when duly reflected upon, have, all of them, a direct Tendency to bring us to a settled Moderation and Reasonableness of Temper: the contrary both to thoughtless Levity, and also to that unrestrained Self-will, and violent Bent to follow present Inclination, which may be observed in undisciplined Minds. Such Experience, as the present State affords, of the Frailty of our Nature; of the boundless Extravagance of ungoverned Passion; of the Power which an infinite Being has over us, by the various Capacities of Misery which he has given us; in short, that Kind and Degree of Experience, which the present State affords us, that the Constitution of Nature is such as to admit the Possibility, the Danger, and the actual Event, of Creatures losing their Innocence and Happiness, and becoming vicious and wretched; hath a Tendency to give us a practical Sense of things, very different from a mere speculative Knowledge, that we are liable to Vice, and capable of Misery. And who knows, whether the Security of Creatures in the highest and most settled State of Perfection, may not in part arise, from their

PART their having had such a Sense of things as
I. this, formed, and habitually fixt within them,
 in some State of Probation. And passing
 through the present World with that moral
 Attention, which is necessary to the acting a
 right Part in it, may leave everlasting Im-
 pressions of this Sort upon our Minds. But
 to be a little more distinct: Allurements to
 what is wrong; Difficulties in the Discharge
 of our Duty; our not being able to act an
 uniform right Part without some Thought
 and Care; and the Opportunities which we
 have, or imagine we have, of avoiding what
 we dislike, or obtaining what we desire, by
 unlawful Means, when we either cannot do
 it at all, or at least not so easily, by lawful
 ones; These things, *i. e.* the Snares and
 Temptations of Vice, are what render the
 present World peculiarly fit to be a State of
 Discipline, to those who will preserve their
 Integrity: because they render being upon our
 Guard, Resolution, and the Denial of our
 Passions, necessary in order to That End. And
 the Exercise of such particular Recollection,
 Intention of Mind, and Self-government, in
 the Practice of Virtue, has, from the Make
 of our Nature, a peculiar Tendency to form
 Habits of Virtue; as implying, not only a
 real, but also a more continued, and a more
 intense Exercise of the virtuous Principle; or
 a more constant and a stronger Effort of Vir-
 tue

tue exerted into Act. Thus suppose a Per- CHAP.
son to know himself to be in particular Dan- V.
ger, for some Time, of doing any thing
wrong, which yet he fully resolves not to do:
Continued Recollection, and keeping upon his
Guard, in order to make good his Resolution,
is a *continued* exerting of that Act of Virtue
in a *high Degree*, which need have been, and
perhaps would have been, only *instantaneous*
and *weak*, had the Temptation been so. It
is indeed ridiculous to assert, that Self-denial
is essential to Virtue and Piety: But it would
have been nearer the Truth, though not
strictly the Truth itself, to have said, that it is
essential to Discipline and Improvement. For
though Actions materially virtuous, which have
no Sort of Difficulty, but are perfectly agree-
able to our particular Inclinations, may possi-
bly be done only from these particular Inclina-
tions, and so may not be any Exercise of the
Principle of Virtue, *i. e.* not be virtuous Ac-
tions at all; yet on the contrary, they may be
an Exercise of that Principle: and when they
are, they have a Tendency to form and fix
the Habit of Virtue. But when the Exercise
of the virtuous Principle is more continued,
oftener repeated, and more intense; as it
must be in Circumstances of Danger, Temp-
tation and Difficulty, of any Kind and in
any Degree; this Tendency is increased pro-
por-

PART portionably, and a more confirmed Habit is
 I. the Consequence.



This undoubtedly holds to a certain Length: but how far it may hold, I know not. Neither our intellectual Powers, nor our bodily Strength, can be improved beyond such a Degree: and both may be over-wrought. Possibly there may be somewhat analogous to this, with respect to the moral Character; which is scarce worth considering. And I mention it only, lest it should come into some Persons Thoughts, not as an Exception to the foregoing Observations, which perhaps it is; but as a Confutation of them, which it is not. And there may be several other Exceptions. Observations of this Kind cannot be supposed to hold minutely, and in every Case. It is enough that they hold in general. And these plainly hold so far, as that from them may be seen distinctly, which is all that is intended by them, that *the present World is peculiarly fit to be a State of Discipline, for our Improvement in Virtue, and Piety*: in the same Sense as some Sciences, by requiring and engaging the Attention, not to be sure of such Persons as will not, but of such as will, set themselves to them; are fit to form the Mind to Habits of Attention.

Indeed


Indeed the present State is so far from proving, in Event, a Discipline of Virtue to the Generality of Men, that, on the contrary, they seem to make it a Discipline of Vice. And the Viciousness of the World is, in different Ways, the great Temptation, which renders it a State of virtuous Discipline, in the Degree it is, to good Men. The whole End, and the whole Occasion, of Mankind's being placed in such a State as the present, is not pretended to be accounted for. That which appears amidst the general Corruption, is, that there are some Persons, who, having within them the Principle of Amendment and Recovery, attend to and follow the Notices of Virtue and Religion, be they more clear or more obscure, which are afforded them; and that the present World is, not only an Exercise of Virtue in these Persons, but an Exercise of it in Ways and Degrees, peculiarly apt to improve it: apt to improve it, in some Respects, even beyond what would be, by the Exercise of it required in a perfectly virtuous Society, or in a Society of equally imperfect Virtue with themselves. But that the present World does not actually become a State of moral Discipline to many, even to the Generality, *i. e.* that they do not improve or grow better in it, cannot be urged as a Proof, that it was not intended for mo-

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PART ral Discipline, by any who at all observe the

I. *Analogy of Nature.* For, of the numerous  Seeds of Vegetables and Bodies of Animals, which are adapted and put in the Way, to improve to such a Point or State of natural Maturity and Perfection, we do not see perhaps that one in a million actually does. Far the greatest Part of them decay before they are improved to it; and appear to be absolutely destroyed. Yet no one, who does not deny all final Causes, will deny, that those Seeds and Bodies, which do attain to that Point of Maturity and Perfection, answer the End for which they were really designed by Nature; and therefore that Nature designed them for such Perfection. And I cannot forbear adding, though it is not to the present Purpose, that the *Appearance* of such an amazing *Waste* in Nature, with Respect to these Seeds and Bodies, by foreign Causes, is to us as unaccountable, as, what is much more terrible, the present and future Ruin of so many moral Agents by themselves, *i. e.* by Vice.

Against this whole Notion of moral Discipline, it may be objected, in another Way; that so far as a Course of Behaviour, materially virtuous, proceeds from Hope and Fear, so far it is only a Discipline and Strengthening of Self-love. But Doing what God commands,

mands, because he commands it, is Obedience, though it proceeds from Hope or Fear. And a Course of such Obedience will form Habits of it. And a constant Regard to Veracity, Justice and Charity, may form distinct Habits of these particular Virtues; and will certainly form Habits of Self-government, and of denying our Inclinations, whenever Veracity, Justice or Charity requires it. Nor is there any Foundation for this great Nicety, with which some affect to distinguish in this Case, in order to depreciate all Religion proceeding from Hope or Fear. For, Veracity, Justice and Charity, Regard to God's Authority, and to our own chief Interest, are not only all three coincident: but each of them is, in itself, a just and natural Motive or Principle of Action. And he who begins a good Life from any one of them, and perseveres in it, as he is already in some Degree, so he cannot fail of becoming more and more, of That Character, which is correspondent to the Constitution of Nature as moral; and to the Relation, which God stands in to us as moral Governor of it: nor consequently can he fail of obtaining That Happiness, which this Constitution and Relation necessarily suppose connected with that Character.

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V.

These several Observations, concerning the active Principle of Virtue and Obedience to

PART God's Commands, are applicable to passive

I. Submission or Resignation to his Will: which is another essential Part of a right Character, connected with the former, and very much in our Power to form ourselves to. It may be imagined, that nothing but Afflictions can give Occasion for, or require this Virtue; that it can have no Respect to, nor be any way necessary to qualify for, a State of perfect Happiness: But it is not Experience which can make us think thus. Prosperity itself, whilst any thing supposed desirable is not ours, begets extravagant and unbounded Thoughts. Imagination is altogether as much a Source of Discontent, as any thing in our external Condition. It is indeed true, that there can be no Scope for Patience, when Sorrow shall be no more: but there may be Need of a Temper of Mind, which shall have been formed by Patience. For, though Self-love, considered merely as an active Principle leading us to pursue our chief Interest, cannot but be uniformly coincident with the Principle of Obedience to God's Commands, our Interest being rightly understood; because this Obedience, and the Pursuit of our own chief Interest, must be in every Case one and the same thing: yet it may be questioned, whether Self-love, considered merely as the Desire of our own Interest or Happiness, can, from

from its Nature, be thus absolutely and uniformly coincident with the Will of God; any more than particular Affections can^b: coincident in such Sort, as not to be liable to be excited upon Occasions and in Degrees, impossible to be gratified consistently with the Constitution of things, or the divine Appointments. So that *Habits* of Resignation may, upon this Account, be requisite for all Creatures; Habits, I say; which signify what is formed by Use. However, in general it is obvious, that both Self-love and particular Affections in human Creatures, considered only as passive Feelings, distort and rend the Mind; and therefore stand in need of Discipline. Now Denial of those particular Affections, in a Course of active Virtue and Obedience to God's Will, has a Tendency to moderate them; and seems also to have a Tendency to habituate the Mind, to be easy and satisfied with that Degree of Happiness which is allotted us, *i. e.* to moderate Self-love. But the proper Discipline for Resignation, is Affliction. For a right Behaviour under That Trial; Recollecting ourselves so as to consider it in the View, in which Religion teaches us to consider it, as from the Hand of God; Receiving it as what He appoints, or thinks

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<sup>b</sup> p. 133.

PART proper to permit, in His World and under  
 I. His Government; this will habituate the  
 { Mind to a dutiful Submission. And such  
 Submission, together with the active Principle  
 of Obedience, make up the Temper and  
 Character in Us, which answers to His So-  
 vereignty; and which absolutely belongs to  
 the Condition of our Being, as dependent  
 Creatures. Nor can it be said, that this is  
 only breaking the Mind to a Submission to  
 mere Power; for mere Power may be acci-  
 dental, and precarious, and usurped: But it  
 is forming within ourselves the Temper of  
 Resignation to His rightful Authority, who  
 is, by Nature, supreme over all.

Upon the whole: Such a Character, and  
 such Qualifications, are necessary for a ma-  
 ture State of Life in the present World, as  
 Nature alone does in no wise bestow; but  
 has put it upon us, in great Part, to acquire,  
 in our Progress from one Stage of Life to an-  
 other, from Childhood to mature Age: put  
 it upon us to acquire them, by giving us Ca-  
 pacities of Doing it, and by placing us, in  
 the Beginning of Life, in a Condition fit for  
 it. And this is a general Analogy to our  
 Condition in the present World, as in a State  
 of moral Discipline for another. It is in  
 vain then to object against the Credibility of  
 the

the present Life's being intended for this Purpose, that all the Trouble and the Danger, unavoidably accompanying such Discipline, might have been saved us, by our being made at once the Creatures and the Characters, *which we were to be*. For we experience, that *what we were to be*, was to be the Effect of *what we would Do*: and that the general Conduct of Nature is, not to save us Trouble or Danger, but to make us capable of going through them, and to put it upon us to do so. Acquirements of our own, Experience and Habits, are the *natural* Supply to our Deficiencies, and Security against our Dangers: since it is as plainly natural to set ourselves to acquire the Qualifications, as the external things, which we stand in need of. In particular, it is as plainly a general Law of Nature, that we should, with regard to our temporal Interest, form and cultivate practical Principles within us, by Attention, Use and Discipline, as any thing whatever is a natural Law; chiefly in the Beginning of Life, but also throughout the whole Course of it. And the Alternative is left to our Choice: either to improve Ourselves, and better our Condition: or, in Default of such Improvement, to remain deficient and wretched. It is therefore perfectly credible, from the Analogy of Nature, that the same may


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PART be our Case, with respect to the Happiness  
 I. of a future State, and the Qualifications necessary for it.

There is a third thing, which may seem implied in the present World's being a State of Probation; that it is a Theatre of Action, for the Manifestation of Persons Characters, with respect to a future one: not to be sure to an All-knowing Being, but to his Creation or Part of it. This may, perhaps, be only a Consequence of our being in a State of Probation in the other Senses. However, it is not impossible, that Men's shewing and making manifest, what is in their Heart, what their real Character is, may have Respect to a future Life, in Ways and Manners which we are not acquainted with: particularly it may be a Means, for the Author of Nature does not appear to do any thing without Means, of their being disposed of suitably to their Characters; and of its being known to the Creation, by way of Example, that they are thus disposed of. But not to enter upon any conjectural Account of this; One may just mention, that the Manifestation of Persons Characters, contributes very much, in various Ways, to the carrying on a great Part of that general Course of Nature, respecting

pecting Mankind, which comes under our **CHAP.**  
Observation at present. I shall only add, that **V.**  
Probation, in both these Senses, as well as in   
That treated of in the foregoing Chapter, is  
implied in moral Government: since by Per-  
sons Behaviour under it, their Characters can-  
not but be manifested, and if they behave  
well, improved.

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## C H A P. VI.

*Of the Opinion of Necessity, considered  
as influencing Practice.*PART  
I.

**T**HROUGHOUT the foregoing Treatise it appears, that the Condition of Mankind, considered as Inhabitants of this World only, and under the Government of God which we experience; is greatly analogous to our Condition, as designed for another World, or under that farther Government, which Religion teaches us. If therefore any assert, as a Fatalist must, that the Opinion of universal Necessity is reconcileable with the former; there immediately arises a Question in the way of Analogy, whether he must not also own it to be reconcileable with the latter, *i. e.* with the System of Religion itself, and the Proof of it. The Reader then will observe, that the Question now before us is not absolute, Whether the Opinion of Fate be reconcileable with Religion; but hypothetical, Whether, upon Supposition of its being reconcileable with the Constitution of Nature, it be not reconcileable with Religion also: Or, what Pretence a Fatalist, not other Persons, but a Fatalist, has to conclude  
from

from his Opinion, that there can be no such thing as Religion. And as the Puzzle and Obscurity, which must unavoidably arise from arguing upon so absurd a Supposition as That of universal Necessity, will, I fear, easily be seen ; it will, I hope, as easily be excused.

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But since it has been all along taken for granted, as a thing proved, that there is an intelligent Author of Nature, or natural Governor of the World ; and since an Objection may be made against the Proof of this, from the Opinion of universal Necessity, as it may be supposed, that such Necessity will itself account for the Origin and Preservation of all things : it is requisite, that this Objection be distinctly answered ; or that it be shewn, that a Fatality, supposed consistent with what we certainly experience, does not destroy the Proof of an intelligent Author and Governor of Nature ; before we proceed to consider, whether it destroys the Proof of a moral Governor of it, or of our being in a State of Religion.

Now, when it is said by a Fatalist, that the whole Constitution of Nature, and the Actions of Men, that every thing, and every Mode and Circumstance of every thing, is necessary and could not possibly have been otherwise ; it is to be observed, that this Ne-

PART cessity does not exclude Deliberation, Choice,

I. Preference, and acting from certain Principles, and to certain Ends: because all this is matter of undoubted Experience, acknowledged by all, and what every man may, every moment, be conscious of. And from hence it follows, that Necessity, alone and of itself, is in no sort an Account of the Constitution of Nature, and how Things came *to be* and *to continue* as they are; but only an Account of this *Circumstance*, relating to their Origin and Continuance, that they could not have been otherwise, than they are and have been. The Assertion that every thing is by Necessity of Nature, is not an Answer to the Question; Whether the World came into Being as it is, by an intelligent Agent forming it thus, or not: But to quite another Question: Whether it came into Being as it is, in that Way and Manner which we call *necessarily*, or in that Way and Manner which we call *freely*. For suppose farther, that one who was a Fatalist, and one who kept to his natural Sense of things, and believed himself a free Agent, were disputing together, and vindicating their respective Opinions; and they should happen to instance in a House; They would agree, that it was built by an Architect. Their Difference concerning Necessity and Freedom, would occasion no Difference of Judgment concerning this; but only concerning another Matter;

Matter; whether the Architect built it necessarily or freely. Suppose then they should proceed to enquire concerning the Constitution of Nature: In a lax way of speaking, One of them might say, it was by Necessity; and the Other by Freedom: But if they had any Meaning to their Words, as the latter must mean a free Agent, so the former must at length be reduced to mean an Agent, whether he would say one or more, acting by Necessity: for abstract Notions can do nothing. Indeed we ascribe to God a necessary Existence, uncaused by any Agent. For we find within Ourselves the Idea of Infinity, *i. e.* Immensity and Eternity, impossible, even in Imagination, to be removed out of Being. We seem to discern intuitively, that there must, and cannot but be somewhat, external to ourselves, answering this Idea, or the Archetype of it. And from hence (for *This abstract*, as much as any other, implies a *Concrete*) we conclude, that there is and cannot but be, an infinite, an immense eternal Being existing, prior to all Design contributing to his Existence, and exclusive of it. And from the Scantiness of Language, a manner of speaking has been introduced; that Necessity is the Foundation, the Reason, the Account of the Existence of God. But it is not alledged, nor can it be at all intended, that *every thing* exists as it does, by this Kind  
of

PART of Necessity; a Necessity antecedent in Nature to Design: it cannot, I say, be meant that every thing exists as it does, by this Kind of Necessity, upon several Accounts; and particularly because it is admitted, that Design, in the Actions of Men, contributes to many Alterations in Nature. For if any deny this, I shall not pretend to reason with them.

From these things it follows; *First*, That when a Fatalist asserts, that every thing is *by Necessity*, he must mean, *by an Agent acting necessarily*; he must I say mean this, for I am very sensible, he would not chuse to mean it: And *Secondly*, That the Necessity, by which such an Agent is supposed to act, does not exclude Intelligence and Design. So that, were the System of Fatality admitted; it would just as much account for the Formation of the World, as for the Structure of an House, and no more. Necessity as much requires and supposes a necessary Agent, as Freedom requires and supposes a free Agent, to be the Former of the World. And the Appearances of *Design* and of *final Causes* in the Constitution of Nature, as really prove this acting Agent, to be an *intelligent Designer*, or to act from Choice; upon the Scheme of Necessity, supposed possible, as upon That of Freedom.

It

It appearing thus, that the Notion of Ne-  
cessity does not destroy the Proof that there  
is an intelligent Author of Nature and natu-  
ral Governor of the World ; the present Que-  
tion, which the Analogy before mentioned<sup>a</sup>  
suggests, and which, I think it will answer,  
is this : Whether the Opinion of Necessity,  
supposed consistent with Possibility, with the  
Constitution of the World, and the natural  
Government which we experience exercised  
over it ; destroys all reasonable Ground of Be-  
lief, that we are in a State of Religion : or  
whether That Opinion be reconcileable with  
Religion ; with the System, and the Proof  
of it.

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Suppose then a Fatalist to educate any one,  
from his Youth up, in his own Principles ;  
that the Child should reason upon them, and  
conclude, that since he cannot possibly be-  
have otherwise than he does, he is not a Sub-  
ject of Blame or Commendation, nor can de-  
serve to be rewarded or punished : Imagine  
him to eradicate the very Perceptions of Blame  
and Commendation out of his Mind, by  
means of this System ; to form his Temper,  
and Character, and Behaviour to it ; and from  
it to judge of the Treatment he was to ex-  
pect, say, from reasonable Men, upon his

<sup>a</sup> p. 154.

coming



PART coming abroad into the World : as the Fata-

I.  list judges from this System, what he is to expect from the Author of Nature, and with regard to a future State. I cannot forbear stopping here to ask, whether any one of common Sense would think fit, that a Child should be put upon these Speculations, and be left to apply them to Practice. And a Man has little Pretence to Reason, who is not sensible, that we are all Children in Speculations of this Kind. However, the Child would doubtless be highly delighted to find himself freed from the Restraints of Fear and Shame, with which his Play-fellows were fettered and embarrassed ; and highly conceited in his superior Knowledge, so far beyond his Years. But Conceit and Vanity would be the least bad Part of the Influence, which these Principles must have, when thus reasoned and acted upon, during the Course of his Education. He must either be allowed to go on and be the Plague of all about him, and himself too, even to his own Destruction : or else Correction must be continually made use of, to supply the Want of those natural Perceptions of Blame and Commendation, which we have supposed to be removed ; and to give him a practical Impression, of what he had reasoned himself out of the Belief of, that he was in Fact an accountable Child, and to be punished for doing what he was forbid. It  
is

is therefore in reality impossible, but that the Correction which he must meet with, in the Course of his Education, must convince him, that if the Scheme he was instructed in were not false; yet that he reasoned inconclusively upon it, and some how or other misapplied it to Practice and common Life: As what the Fatalist experiences of the Conduct of Providence at present, ought in all reason to convince him, that this Scheme is misapplied, when applied to the Subject of Religion<sup>b</sup>. But supposing the Child's Temper could remain still formed to the System, and his Expectation of the Treatment he was to have in the World be regulated by it; so as to expect that no reasonable Man would blame or punish him, for any thing which he should do, because he could not help doing it: Upon this Supposition, it is manifest he would, upon his coming abroad into the World, be insupportable to Society, and the Treatment which he would receive from it, would render it so to him; and he could not fail of doing somewhat, very soon, for which he would be delivered over into the hands of civil Justice. And thus, in the End, he would be convinced of the Obligations he was under to his wise Instructor. Or suppose this Scheme of Fatality, in any other Way, applied to Practice, such practical Application of

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<sup>b</sup> p. 176.

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it,

PART it, will be found equally absurd; equally fallacious in a practical Sense: For instance, that

I.  if a Man be destined to live such a Time, he shall live to it, though he take no Care of his own Preservation; or if he be destined to die before that Time, no Care can prevent it: therefore all Care about preserving one's Life is to be neglected: which is the Fallacy instanced in by the Ancients. But now on the contrary, none of these practical Absurdities can be drawn, from reasoning upon the Supposition, that we are free; but all such Reasoning with regard to the common Affairs of Life, is justified by Experience. And therefore, though it were admitted that this Opinion of Necessity were speculatively true; yet, with regard to Practice, it is as if it were false, so far as our Experience reaches; that is, to the whole of our present Life. For, the Constitution of the present World, and the Condition in which we are actually placed, is, as if we were free. And it may perhaps justly be concluded, that since the whole Process of Action, through every Step of it, Suspence, Deliberation, inclining one way, determining, and at last Doing as we determine, is as if we were free, therefore we are so. But the thing here insisted upon is, that under the present natural Government of the World, we find we are treated and dealt with, as if we were free, prior to all Consideration

deration whether we are or not. Were this CHAP.  
Opinion therefore of Necessity admitted to be VI.  
ever so true; yet such is in Fact our Condi-  
tion and the natural Course of Things, that  
whenever we apply it to Life and Practice,  
this Application of it always misleads us,  
and cannot but mislead us, in a most dread-  
ful Manner, with regard to our present In-  
terest. And how can People think them-  
selves so very secure then; that the same Ap-  
plication of the same Opinion may not mis-  
lead them also, in some analogous Manner,  
with respect to a future, a more general and  
more important Interest? For, Religion, be-  
ing a practical Subject; and the Analogy of  
Nature shewing us, that we have not Facul-  
ties to apply this Opinion, were it a true one,  
to practical Subjects; whenever we do apply  
it to the Subject of Religion, and thence  
conclude, that we are free from its Oblig-  
ations, it is plain this Conclusion cannot be de-  
pended upon. There will still remain just  
Reason to think, whatever Appearances are,  
that we deceive Ourselves; in somewhat of a  
like Manner, as when People fancy they  
can draw contradictory Conclusions from the  
Idea of Infinity.

From these things together, the attentive  
Reader will see it follows, that if upon Sup-  
position of Freedom the Evidence of Religion

PART be conclusive, it remains so, upon Supposition of Necessity; because the Notion of Necessity is not applicable to practical Subjects: *i. e.* with respect to them, is as if it were not true. Nor does this contain any Reflection upon Reason; but only upon what is unreasonable. For to pretend to act upon Reason, in Opposition to practical Principles, which the Author of our Nature gave us to act upon; and to pretend to apply our Reason to Subjects, with regard to which, our own short Views, and even our Experience, will shew us, it cannot be depended upon; and such, at best, the Subject of Necessity must be; this is Vanity, Conceit, and Unreasonableness.

But this is not all. For we find within ourselves a Will, and are conscious of a Character. Now if this, in us, be reconcileable with Fate, it is reconcileable with it, in the Author of Nature. And besides, natural Government and final Causes, imply a Character and a Will in the Governor and Designer<sup>c</sup>; a Will concerning the Creatures whom He governs. The Author of Nature then being certainly by some Character or other,

<sup>c</sup> By *Will* and *Character* is meant That, which, in speaking of Men, we should express, not only by these Words, but also by the Words, *Temper, Taste, Dispositions, practical Principles, That whole Frame of Mind, from whence we act in one Manner rather than another.*

notwithstanding Necessity; it is evident this Necessity is as reconcileable with the particular Character of Benevolence, Veracity, and Justice in Him, which Attributes are the Foundation of Religion, as with any other Character: Since we find this Necessity no more hinders *Men* from being benevolent, than cruel; true, than faithless; just, than unjust; or if the Fatalist pleases, what we call unjust. For it is said indeed, that what, upon Supposition of Freedom, would be just Punishment; upon Supposition of Necessity, becomes manifestly unjust: because it is Punishment inflicted for Doing That, which, Persons could not avoid doing. As if the Necessity, which is supposed to destroy the Injustice of Murder, for Instance, would not also destroy the Injustice of punishing it. However, as little to the Purpose as this Objection is in itself, it is very much to the Purpose to observe from it, how the Notions of Justice and Injustice remain, even whilst we endeavour to suppose them removed; how they force themselves upon the Mind, even whilst we are making Suppositions destructive of them: For there is not, perhaps, a Man in the World, but would be ready to make this Objection at first Thought.

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But though it is most evident, that universal Necessity, if it be reconcileable with any

**PART** thing, is reconcileable with That Character in  
**I.** the Author of Nature, which is the Founda-  
 tion of Religion; “ Yet, does it not plainly  
 “ destroy the Proof, that he is of That  
 “ Character, and consequently the Proof of  
 “ Religion?” By no means. For we find,  
 that Happiness and Misery are not our Fate,  
 in any such Sense as not to be the Consequen-  
 ces of our Behaviour; but that they are the  
 Consequences of it<sup>d</sup>. We find God exercises  
 the same kind of Government over us, with  
 That, which a Father exercises over his Chil-  
 dren, and a civil Magistrate over his Subjects.  
 Now, whatever becomes of abstract Ques-  
 tions concerning Liberty and Necessity, it evi-  
 dently appears to us, that Veracity and Jus-  
 tice must be the natural Rule and Measure of  
 exercising this Authority or Government, to  
 a Being, who can have no Competitions, or  
 Interfering of Interests, with his Creatures  
 and his Subjects.

But as the Doctrine of Liberty, though we  
 experience its Truth, may be perplexed with  
 Difficulties, which run up into the most ab-  
 struse of all Speculations; and as the Opini-  
 on of Necessity seems to be the very Basis,  
 upon which Infidelity grounds itself; it may  
 be of some Use to offer a more particular

<sup>d</sup> Ch. ii.

Proof of the Obligations of Religion, which may distinctly be shewn not to be destroyed by this Opinion. CHAP.  
VI.

The Proof from final Causes of an intelligent Author of Nature, is not affected by the Opinion of Necessity; supposing Necessity a thing possible in itself, and reconcilable with the Constitution of Things<sup>d</sup>. And it is a Matter of Fact, independent on this or any other Speculation, that he governs the World by the Method of Rewards and Punishments<sup>e</sup>: and also that he hath given us a moral Faculty, by which we distinguish between Actions, and approve some as virtuous and of Good-desert, and disapprove others as vicious and of Ill-desert<sup>f</sup>. Now this moral Discernment implies, in the Notion of it, a Rule of Action, and a Rule of a very peculiar Kind; for it carries in it Authority and a right of Direction; Authority in such a Sense, as that we cannot depart from it without being Self-condemned<sup>g</sup>. And that the Dictates of this moral Faculty, which are by Nature a Rule to us, are moreover the Laws of God, Laws in a Sense including Sanctions; may be thus proved. Consciousness of a Rule or Guide of Action, in Creatures who are capable of considering it as given them by their

<sup>d</sup> P. 155, &c.

<sup>e</sup> Ch. ii.

<sup>f</sup> Differt. II.

<sup>g</sup> Serm. 2. at the *Rolls*.



PART I. Maker, not only raises immediately a Sense of Duty, but also a Sense of Security in following it, and of Danger in deviating from it. A Direction of the Author of Nature, given to Creatures capable of looking upon it as such, is plainly a Command from Him: and a Command from Him necessarily includes in it, at least, an implicit Promise in Case of Obedience, or Threatning in Case of Disobedience. But then the Sense or Perception of good and ill Desert<sup>h</sup>, which is contained in the moral Discernment, renders the Sanction explicit, and makes it appear, as one may say, expressed. For since his Method of Government is to reward and punish Actions, His having annexed to some Actions an inseparable Sense of good Desert, and to others of ill, this surely amounts to declaring, upon whom his Punishments shall be inflicted, and his Rewards be bestowed. For he must have given us this Discernment and Sense of Things, as a Pre-sentiment of what is to be hereafter: that is, by way of Information beforehand, what we are finally to expect in His World. There is then most evident Ground to think, that the Government of God, upon the whole, will be found to correspond to the Nature which he has given us: and that in the Upshot and Issue of things, Happiness and Misery shall, in Fact

<sup>h</sup> Dissert. II.

and

and Event, be made to follow Virtue and Vice CHAP.  
respectively ; as He has already, in so pecu- VI.  
liar a Manner, associated the Ideas of them  
in our Minds. And from hence might easily  
be deduced the Obligations of religious Wor-  
ship, were it only to be considered as a Means  
of preserving upon our Minds a Sense of this  
moral Government of God, and securing our  
Obedience to it: which yet is an extremely  
imperfect View of that most important Duty.

Now I say, no Objection from Necessity  
can lie against this general Proof of Religion.  
None against the Proposition reasoned upon,  
that we have such a moral Faculty and Dis-  
cernment ; because this is a mere Matter of  
Fact, a thing of Experience, that human  
Kind is thus constituted : None against the  
Conclusion ; because it is immediate and  
wholly from this Fact. For the Conclusion,  
that God will finally reward the Righteous and  
punish the Wicked, is not here drawn, from  
its appearing to us fit<sup>1</sup>, that *He should* ; but  
from

<sup>1</sup> However, I am far from intending to deny, that the  
Will of God is determined, by what is fit, by the Right and  
Reason of the Case ; though one chuses to decline Matters of  
such abstract Speculation, and to speak with Caution when  
one does speak of them. But if it be intelligible to say, that  
*it is fit and reasonable for every one to consult his own Happiness,*  
then, *Fitness of Action, or the Right and Reason of the Case,* is  
an intelligible manner of speaking. And it seems as incon-  
ceivable, to suppose God to approve one Course of Action,  
or

PART from its appearing, that he has told us, *He*  
 I. *will.* And this he hath certainly told us, in  
 the Promise and Threatning, which it hath  
 been observed the Notion of a Command im-  
 plies, and the Sense of good and ill Desert  
 which he has given us, more distinctly ex-  
 presses. And this Reasoning from Fact is  
 confirmed, and in some Degree even verified,  
 by other Facts; by the natural Tendencies of  
 Virtue and of Vice<sup>k</sup>; and by this, that God,  
 in the natural Course of his Providence, pu-  
 nishes vicious Actions as mischievous to Socie-  
 ty; and also vicious Actions as such in the  
 strictest Sense<sup>l</sup>. So that the general Proof of  
 Religion is unanswerably real, even upon the  
 wild Supposition which we are arguing upon.

It must likewise be observed farther, that  
 natural Religion hath, besides this, an exter-  
 nal Evidence; which the Doctrine of Necessi-  
 ty, if it could be true, would not affect. For  
 suppose a Person, by the Observations and

or one End, preferably to another, which yet His acting at  
 all from Design implies that he does, without supposing  
 somewhat prior in That End, to be the Ground of the Pre-  
 ference; as to suppose Him to discern an abstract Proposition  
 to be true, without supposing somewhat prior in it, to be the  
 Ground of the Discernment. It doth not therefore appear,  
 that moral Right is any more relative to Perception, than ab-  
 stract Truth is: Or that it is any more improper, to speak of  
 the Fitness and Rightness of Actions and Ends, as founded  
 in the Nature of Things, than to speak of abstract Truth, as  
 thus founded.

<sup>k</sup> p. 85.

<sup>l</sup> p. 73, &c.

Reasoning above, or by any other, convinced of the Truth of Religion; that there is a God, who made the World, who is the moral Governor and Judge of Mankind, and will upon the whole deal with every one according to his Works: I say, suppose a Person convinced of this by Reason; but to know nothing at all of Antiquity, or the present State of Mankind. It would be natural for such an one to be inquisitive, what was the History of this System of Doctrine; at what Time, and in what Manner, it came first into the World; and whether it were believed by any considerable Part of it. And were he upon Inquiry to find, that a particular Person, in a late Age, first of all proposed it, as a Deduction of Reason, and that Mankind were before wholly ignorant of it: then, though its Evidence from Reason would remain, there would be no additional Probability of its Truth, from the Account of its Discovery. But instead of this being the Fact of the Case, on the contrary, he would find, what could not but afford him a very strong Confirmation of its Truth: *First*, That somewhat of this System, with more or fewer Additions and Alterations, hath been professed in all Ages and Countries, of which we have any certain Information relating to this Matter. *Secondly*, That it is certain historical Fact, so far as we can trace things up, that this whole System

PART System of Belief, that there is one God, the

I. Creator and moral Governor of the World, and that Mankind is in a State of Religion, was received in the first Ages. And *Thirdly*, That as there is no Hint or Intimation in History, that this System was first reasoned out; so there is no express historical or traditional Evidence, as antient as History, that it was taught first by Revelation. Now these things must be allowed to be of great Weight. The first of them, general Consent, shews this System to be conformable to the common Sense of Mankind. The Second, namely, that Religion was believed in the first Ages of the World, especially as it does not appear that there were then any superstitious or false Additions to it, cannot but be a farther Confirmation of its Truth. For it is a Proof of this Alternative: either that it came into the World by Revelation; or that it is natural, obvious, and forces itself upon the Mind. The former of these is the Conclusion of learned Men. And whoever will consider, how unapt for Speculation rude and uncultivated Minds are, will, perhaps from hence alone, be strongly inclined to believe it the Truth. And as it is shewn in the second Part<sup>m</sup> of this Treatise, that there is nothing of such peculiar Presumption against a Revelation in the Beginning of the World, as there

is supposed to be against subsequent ones: a Sceptick could not, I think, give any Account, which would appear more probable even to himself, of the early Pretences to Revelation; than by supposing some real original one, from whence they were copied. And the third thing abovementioned, that there is express historical or traditional Evidence as antient as History, of the System of Religion being taught Mankind by Revelation; this must be admitted as some Degree of real Proof, that it was so taught. For why should not the most antient Tradition be admitted, as some additional Proof of a Fact, against which there is no Presumption? And this Proof is mentioned here, because it has its Weight to shew, that Religion came into the World by Revelation, prior to all Consideration of the proper Authority of any Book supposed to contain it: and even prior to all Consideration, whether the Revelation itself be uncorruptly handed down and related, or mixed and darkned with Fables. Thus the historical Account, which we have, of the Origin of Religion, taking in all Circumstances, is a real Confirmation of its Truth, no way affected by the Opinion of Necessity. And the *external* Evidence, even of natural Religion, is by no means inconsiderable.


But

**PART** But it is carefully to be observed, and ought  
**I.** to be recollected after all Proofs of Virtue and  
 Religion, which are only general; that as  
 speculative Reason may be neglected, pre-  
 judiced, and deceived: so also may our moral  
 Understanding be impaired and perverted,  
 and the Dictates of it not impartially attended  
 to. This indeed proves nothing against the  
 Reality of our speculative or practical Facul-  
 ties of Perception; against their being in-  
 tended by Nature, to inform us in the Theo-  
 ry of Things, and instruct us how we are to  
 behave, and what we are to expect in Con-  
 sequence of our Behaviour. Yet our Liableness,  
 in the Degree we are liable, to Preju-  
 dice and Perversion, is a most serious Admo-  
 nition to us to be upon our Guard, with re-  
 spect to what is of such Consequence, as our  
 Determinations concerning Virtue and Reli-  
 gion: And particularly not to take Custom,  
 and Fashion, and slight Notions of Honour,  
 or Imaginations of present Ease, Use and  
 Convenience to Mankind, for the only moral  
 Rule<sup>n</sup>.

The foregoing Observations, drawn from  
 the Nature of the thing, and the History of  
 Religion, amount, when taken together, to  
 a real practical Proof of it, not to be con-

<sup>n</sup> Differt. II.

futed:

futed : Such a Proof as, considering the in- CHAP.  
finite Importance of the thing, I apprehend, VI.  
would be admitted fully sufficient, in Reason,   
to influence the Actions of Men, who act  
upon Thought and Reflection ; if it were ad-  
mitted, that there is no Proof of the con-  
trary. But it may be said : “ There are  
“ many Probabilities, which cannot indeed be  
“ confuted, *i. e.* shewn to be no Probabilities,  
“ and yet may be overbalanced, by greater  
“ Probabilities on the other Side ; much more  
“ by Demonstration. And there is no Occa-  
“ sion to object against particular Arguments  
“ alledged for an Opinion, when the Opinion  
“ itself may be clearly shewn to be false, with-  
“ out meddling with such Arguments at all,  
“ but leaving them just as they are °. Now  
“ the Method of Government by Rewards  
“ and Punishments, and especially rewarding  
“ and punishing good and ill Desert as such  
“ respectively, must go upon Supposition, that  
“ we are free and not necessary Agents. And  
“ it is incredible, that the Author of Nature  
“ should govern us upon a Supposition as  
“ true, which he knows to be false : and  
“ therefore absurd to think, he will reward  
“ or punish us for our Actions hereafter ;  
“ especially that he will do it under the No-  
“ tion, that they are of good or ill Desert.”  
Here then the Matter is brought to a Point.

° p. 1, 13.

And



PART And the Answer to all this is full, and not to  
 I. be evaded: that the whole Constitution and  
 Course of Things, the whole Analogy of Providence, shews beyond Possibility of Doubt, that the Conclusion from this Reasoning is false; wherever the Fallacy lies. The Doctrine of Freedom indeed clearly shews where: in supposing ourselves necessary, when in Truth we are free Agents. But upon the Supposition of Necessity, the Fallacy lies in taking for granted, that it is incredible necessary Agents should be rewarded and punished. But that, some how or other, the Conclusion now mentioned is false, is most certain. For it is Fact, that God does govern even Brute Creatures by the Method of Rewards and Punishments, in the natural Course of Things. And Men are rewarded and punished for their Actions, punished for Actions mischievous to Society as being so, punished for vicious Actions as such; by the natural Instrumentality of each other, under the present Conduct of Providence. Nay even the Affection of Gratitude, and the Passion of Repentment, and the Rewards and Punishments following from them, which in general are to be considered as natural, *i. e.* from the Author of Nature; these Rewards and Punishments, being naturally <sup>r</sup> annexed to Actions considered as implying good Inten-

<sup>r</sup> Serm. 8th, at the *Rolls*.

tion

tion and good Desert, ill Intention and ill De- CHAP.  
fert ; these natural Rewards and Punishments, VI.  
I say, are as much a Contradiction to the  
Conclusion above, and shew its Falshood, as  
a more exact and compleat rewarding and pu-  
nishing of good and ill Desert as such. So that  
if it be incredible, that necessary Agents should  
be thus rewarded and punished ; then, Men  
are not necessary but free : since it is matter  
of Fact, that they are thus rewarded and pu-  
nished. But if, on the contrary, which is the  
Supposition we have been arguing upon, it be  
insisted, that Men are necessary Agents ;  
then, there is nothing incredible in the farther  
Supposition of necessary Agents being thus  
rewarded and punished : since we Ourselves  
are thus dealt with.

From the whole therefore it must follow,  
that a Necessity supposed possible, and re-  
concilable with the Constitution of Things,  
does in no sort prove that the Author of Na-  
ture will not, nor destroy the Proof that he  
will, finally and upon the whole, in his eter-  
nal Government, render his Creatures happy  
or miserable, by some means or other, as they  
behave well or ill. Or, to express this Con-  
clusion in Words conformable to the Title of  
the Chapter, the Analogy of Nature shews  
us, that the Opinion of Necessity, conside-  
red as practical, is false. And if Necessity,  
N upon

**PART** upon the Supposition abovementioned, doth  
**I.** not destroy the Proof of natural Religion, it  
evidently makes no Alteration in the Proof of  
revealed.


From these things likewise we may learn, in what Sense to understand That general Assertion, that the Opinion of Necessity is essentially destructive of all Religion. First in a practical Sense; that by this Notion, atheistical Men pretend to satisfy and encourage Themselves in Vice, and justify to Others their Disregard to all Religion. And secondly, in the strictest Sense; that it is a Contradiction to the whole Constitution of Nature, and to what we may every moment experience in Ourselves, and so overturns every thing. But by no means is this Assertion to be understood, as if Necessity, supposing it could possibly be reconciled with the Constitution of things and with what we experience, were not also reconcileable with Religion: for upon this Supposition, it demonstrably is so.

## C H A P. VII.

*Of the Government of God, considered as a Scheme or Constitution, imperfectly comprehended.*

**T**HOUGH it be, as it cannot but be, CHAP.  
VII. acknowledged, that the Analogy of Nature gives a strong Credibility, to the general Doctrine of Religion, and to the several particular things contained in it, considered as so many Matters of Fact; and likewise that it shews this Credibility not to be destroyed by any Notions of Necessity: Yet still, Objections may be insisted upon, against the Wisdom, Equity and Goodness of the divine Government implied in the Notion of Religion, and against the Method by which this Government is conducted; to which Objections Analogy can be no direct Answer. For the Credibility, or the certain Truth, of a Matter of Fact, does not immediately prove any thing concerning the Wisdom or Goodness of it: and Analogy can do no more, immediately or directly, than shew such and such things to be true or credible, considered only as Matters of Fact. But still, if, upon Supposition of a moral Constitution of Nature

PART ture and a moral Government over it, Ana-

I. logy suggests and makes it credible, that this Government must be a Scheme, System or Constitution of Government, as distinguished from a number of single unconnected Acts of distributive Justice and Goodness; and likewise, that it must be a Scheme, so imperfectly comprehended, and of such a Sort in other Respects, as to afford a direct general Answer to all Objections against the Justice and Goodness of it: then Analogy is, remotely, of great Service in answering those Objections; both by suggesting the Answer, and shewing it to be a credible one.

Now this, upon Inquiry, will be found to be the Case. For, *First*, Upon Supposition that God exercises a moral Government over the World, the Analogy of his natural Government suggests and makes it credible, that his moral Government must be a Scheme quite beyond our Comprehension: and this affords a general Answer to all Objections against the Justice and Goodness of it. And, *Secondly*, A more distinct Observation of some particular things contained in God's Scheme of natural Government, the like things being supposed, by Analogy, to be contained in his moral Government, will farther shew, how little Weight is to be laid upon these Objections.

I. Upon Supposition that God exercises a moral Government over the World, the Analogy of his natural Government suggests and makes it credible, that his moral Government must be a Scheme, quite beyond our Comprehension: And this affords a general Answer to all Objections against the Justice and Goodness of it. It is most obvious, Analogy renders it highly credible, that upon Supposition of a moral Government, it must be a Scheme; for the World, and the whole natural Government of it, appears to be so: to be a Scheme, System or Constitution, whose Parts correspond to each other, and to a Whole; as really as any Work of Art, or as any particular Model of a civil Constitution and Government. In this great Scheme of the natural World, Individuals have various peculiar Relations to other Individuals of their own Species. And whole Species are, we find, variously related to other Species, upon this Earth. Nor do we know, how much farther these Kinds of Relations may extend. And, as there is not any Action or natural Event, which we are acquainted with, so single and unconnected, as not to have a Respect to some other Actions and Events: so possibly each of them, when it has not an immediate, may yet have a remote, natural Relation to other Actions and Events, much

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VII.

PART beyond the Compass of this present World.

I. There seems indeed nothing, from whence we can so much as make a Conjecture, whether all Creatures, Actions and Events, throughout the whole of Nature, have Relations to each other. But, as it is obvious, that all Events have future unknown Consequences; so, if we trace any, as far as we can go, into what is connected with it; we shall find, that if such Event were not connected with somewhat farther in Nature unknown to us, somewhat both past and present, such Event could not possibly have been at all. Nor can we give the whole Account of any one thing whatever: of all its Causes, Ends, and necessary Adjuncts; those Adjuncts, I mean, without which it could not have been. By this most astonishing Connection, these reciprocal Correspondencies and mutual Relations, every thing which we see in the Course of Nature, is actually brought about. And things seemingly the most insignificant imaginable, are perpetually observed to be necessary Conditions to other things of the greatest Importance: So that any one thing whatever, may, for aught we know to the contrary, be a necessary Condition to any other. The natural World then, and natural Government of it, being such an incomprehensible Scheme; so incomprehensible, that a Man must, really in the literal Sense, know  
 4 nothing

nothing at all, who is not sensible of his Ignorance in it: this immediately suggests, and strongly shews the Credibility, that the moral World and Government of it may be so too. CHAP.  
VII.  
Indeed the natural and moral Constitution and Government of the World are so connected, as to make up together but one Scheme: and it is highly probable, that the first is formed and carried on merely in Subserviency to the latter; as the vegetable World is for the animal, and organized Bodies for Minds. But the thing intended here, is, without inquiring how far the Administration of the natural World is subordinate to That of the moral, only to observe the Credibility, that one should be analogous or similar to the other: that therefore every Act of divine Justice and Goodness, may be supposed to look much beyond itself, and its immediate Object; may have some Reference to other Parts of God's moral Administration, and to a general moral Plan: and that every Circumstance of this his moral Government, may be adjusted beforehand with a View to the whole of it. Thus for Example: the determined Length of Time, and the Degrees and Ways, in which Virtue is to remain in a State of Warfare and Discipline, and in which Wickedness is permitted to have its Progress; the Times appointed for the Execution of Justice; the appointed Instruments of it; the Kinds of



PART Rewards and Punishments, and the Manners

I. of their Distribution; all particular Instances  
 of divine Justice and Goodness, and every  
 Circumstance of them, may have such Re-  
 spects to each other, as to make up altogether  
 a Whole, connected and related in all its  
 Parts: a Scheme or System, which is as pro-  
 perly One as the natural World is, and of the  
 like Kind. And supposing this to be the  
 Case; it is most evident, that we are not com-  
 petent Judges of this Scheme, from the small  
 Parts of it, which come within our View in  
 the present Life: and therefore no Objecti-  
 ons against any of these Parts, can be insisted  
 upon by reasonable Men.

This our Ignorance, and the Consequence  
 here drawn from it, are universally acknow-  
 ledged, upon other Occasions; and, though  
 scarce denied, yet are universally forgot, when  
 Persons come to argue against Religion. And  
 it is not perhaps easy, even for the most rea-  
 sonable Men, always to bear in Mind the De-  
 gree of our Ignorance, and make due Allow-  
 ances for it. Upon these Accounts, it may  
 not be useless to go on a little farther, in or-  
 der to shew more distinctly, how just an An-  
 swer our Ignorance is, to Objections against  
 the Scheme of Providence. Suppose then  
 a Person boldly to assert, that the things com-  
 plained of, the Origin and Continuance of  
 Evil,

Evil, might easily have been prevented by repeated Interpositions<sup>a</sup>; Interpositions so guarded and circumstanced, as would preclude all Mischief arising from them: Or, if this were impracticable, that a *Scheme* of Government is itself an Imperfection; since more Good might have been produced, without any Scheme, System, or Constitution at all, by continued single unrelated Acts of distributive Justice and Goodness; because these would have occasioned no Irregularities. And farther than this, it is presumed, the Objections will not be carried. Yet the Answer is obvious: that were these Assertions true, still the Observations above, concerning our Ignorance in the Scheme of divine Government, and the Consequence drawn from it, would hold, in great measure; enough to vindicate Religion, against all Objections from the Disorders of the present State. Were these Assertions true, yet the Government of the World might be just and good notwithstanding; for, at the most, they would infer nothing more than that it might have been better. But indeed they are mere arbitrary Assertions: no Man being sufficiently acquainted with the Possibilities of things, to bring any Proof of them, to the lowest Degree of Probability. For however possible what is as-

<sup>a</sup> p. 190, 191.

**PART** ferted may seem ; yet many Instances may  
**I.** be alledged, in things much less out of our  
 Reach, of Suppositions absolutely impossible,  
 and reducible to the most palpable Self-contradictions, which, not every one by any means would perceive to be such, nor perhaps any one at first sight suspect. From these things, it is easy to see distinctly, how our Ignorance, as it is the common, is really a satisfactory Answer to all Objections against the Justice and Goodness of Providence. If a Man contemplating any one providential Dispensation, which had no Relation to any others, should object, that he discerned in it a Disregard to Justice, or a Deficiency of Goodness ; Nothing would be less an Answer to such Objection, than our Ignorance in other Parts of Providence, or in the Possibilities of things, no way related to what he was contemplating. But when we know not, but the Parts objected against may be relative to other Parts unknown to us ; and when we are unacquainted with what is, in the Nature of the thing, practicable in the Case before us ; then our Ignorance is a satisfactory Answer : Because, some unknown Relation, or some unknown Impossibility, may render what is objected against, just and good ; nay good in the highest practicable Degree.

II. And

II. And how little Weight is to be laid upon such Objections, will farther appear, by a more distinct Observation of some particular things contained in the natural Government of God, the like to which may be supposed, from Analogy, to be contained in his moral Government.

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*First*, As in the Scheme of the natural World, no Ends appear to be accomplished without Means: so we find that Means very undesirable, often conduce to bring about Ends in such a Measure desirable, as greatly to overbalance the Disagreeableness of the Means. And in Cases where such Means are conducive to such Ends, it is not Reason, but Experience, which shews us, that they are thus conducive. Experience also shews many Means to be conducive and necessary to accomplish Ends, which Means, before Experience, we should have thought, would have had even a contrary Tendency. Now from these Observations relating to the natural Scheme of the World, the moral being supposed analogous to it, arises a great Credibility, that the putting our Misery in each other's Power to the Degree it is, and making Men liable to Vice to the Degree we are; and in general, that those things, which are objected against the moral Scheme of Providence, may be,

PART be, upon the whole, friendly and assistant to  
 I. Virtue, and productive of an Over-balance of  
 Happiness: *i. e.* The Things objected against,  
 may be Means, by which an Over-balance of  
 Good will, in the End, be found produced.  
 And from the same Observations, it appears  
 to be no Presumption against This, that we  
 do not, if indeed we do not, see those Means  
 to have any such Tendency; or that they  
 seem to us to have a contrary one. Thus  
 those things, which we call Irregularities, may  
 not be so at all: because they may be Means  
 of accomplishing wise and good Ends more  
 considerable. And it may be added, as a-  
 bove<sup>c</sup>, that they may also be the only Means,  
 by which these wise and good Ends are capa-  
 ble of being accomplished.

After these Observations it may be proper  
 to add, in order to obviate an absurd and  
 wicked Conclusion from any of them, that  
 though the Constitution of our Nature from  
 whence we are capable of Vice and Misery,  
 may, as it undoubtedly does, contribute to the  
 Perfection and Happiness of the World; and  
 though the actual Permission of Evil may be  
 beneficial to it: (*i. e.* it would have been more  
 mischievous, not that a wicked Person had  
 himself abstained from his own Wickedness,  
 but that any one had forcibly prevented it,

<sup>c</sup> p. 186.

than

than that it was permitted :) Yet notwithstanding, it might have been much better for the World, if this very Evil had never been done. Nay, it is most clearly conceivable, that the very Commission of Wickedness may be beneficial to the World, and yet, that it would be infinitely more beneficial for Men to refrain from it. For thus, in the wise and good Constitution of the natural World, there are Disorders which bring their own Cures; Diseases, which are themselves Remedies. Many a Man would have died, had it not been for the Gout or a Fever; yet it would be thought Madness to assert, that Sickness is a better or more perfect State than Health; though the like, with regard to the moral World, has been asserted. But,

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*Secondly,* The natural Government of the World is carried on by general Laws. For this there may be wise and good Reasons: the wisest and best, for aught we know to the contrary. And that there are such Reasons, is suggested to our Thoughts, by the Analogy of Nature; by our being made to experience good Ends to be accomplished, as indeed all the Good which we enjoy is accomplished, by this Means, that the Laws, by which the World is governed, are general. For we have scarce any Kind of Enjoyments, but what we are, in some way or other, instrumen-

**PART** instrumental in procuring ourselves, by acting  
**I.** in a Manner which we foresee likely to procure them: Now this Foresight could not be at all, were not the Government of the World carried on by general Laws. And though, for aught we know to the contrary, every single Case may be, at length, found to have been provided for even by these: yet to prevent all Irregularities, or remedy them as they arise, by the wisest and best general Laws, may be impossible in the Nature of things; as we see it is absolutely impossible in civil Government. But then we are ready to think, that, the Constitution of Nature remaining as it is, and the Course of things being permitted to go on, in other Respects, as it does, there might be Interpositions to prevent Irregularities; though they could not have been prevented or remedied by any general Laws. And there would indeed be reason to wish, which, by the way, is very different from a Right to claim, that all Irregularities were prevented or remedied by present Interpositions, if these Interpositions would have no other Effect than this. But it is plain they would have some visible and immediate bad Effects: for Instance, they would encourage Idleness and Negligence; and they would render doubtful the natural Rule of Life, which is ascertained by this very thing, that the Course of the World is carried on by general  
neral

neral Laws. And farther, it is certain they would have distant Effects, and very great ones too; by means of the wonderful Connexions before mentioned<sup>c</sup>. So that we cannot so much as guess, what would be the whole Result of the Interpositions desired. It may be said, any bad Result might be prevented by farther Interpositions, whenever there was occasion for them: But this again is talking quite at random, and in the dark<sup>d</sup>. Upon the whole then, we see wise Reasons, why the Course of the World should be carried on by general Laws, and good Ends accomplished by this Means: And, for aught we know, there may be the wisest Reasons for it, and the best Ends accomplished by it. We have no Ground to believe, that all Irregularities could be remedied as they arise, or could have been precluded, by general Laws. We find that Interpositions would produce Evil, and prevent Good: And, for aught we know, they would produce greater Evil than they would prevent; and prevent greater Good than they would produce. And if this be the Case, then the not interposing is so far from being a Ground of Complaint, that it is an Instance of Goodness. This is intelligible and sufficient: and going farther, seems beyond the utmost Reach of our Faculties.

<sup>c</sup> p. 181, &c.<sup>d</sup> p. 185, 186.

But



PART     But it may be said, that “ after all, these  
 I.     “ supposed Impossibilities and Relations are  
 “ what we are unacquainted with ; and we  
 “ must judge of Religion, as of other things,  
 “ by what we do know, and look upon the  
 “ rest as Nothing : Or however, that the  
 “ Answers here given to what is objected  
 “ against Religion, may equally be made use  
 “ of to invalidate the Proof of it ; since their  
 “ Strefs lies so very much upon our Igno-  
 “ rance.” But,

*First,* Though total Ignorance in any Mat-  
 ter, does indeed equally destroy, or rather  
 preclude, all Proof concerning it, and Objec-  
 tions against it : yet partial Ignorance does  
 not. For we may in any Degree, be con-  
 vinced, that a Person is of such a Character,  
 and consequently will pursue such Ends ;  
 though we are greatly ignorant, what is the  
 proper Way of acting, in order, the most ef-  
 fectually, to obtain those Ends : And in this  
 Case, Objections against his Manner of acting,  
 as seemingly not conducive to obtain them,  
 might be answered by our Ignorance ; though  
 the Proof that such Ends were intended,  
 might not at all be invalidated by it. Thus,  
 the Proof of Religion is a Proof of the mor-  
 ral Character of God, and consequently that  
 his Government is moral, and that every one  
 upon

upon the whole shall receive according to his Deserts; a Proof that this is the designed End of his Government. But we are not competent Judges, what is the proper Way of acting, in order the most effectually to accomplish this End°. Therefore our Ignorance is an Answer to Objections against the Conduct of Providence, in permitting Irregularities, as seeming contradictory to this End. Now, since it is so obvious, that our Ignorance may be a satisfactory Answer to Objections against a thing, and yet not affect the Proof of it; till it can be shewn, it is frivolous to assert, that our Ignorance invalidates the Proof of Religion, as it does the Objections against it.

*Secondly,* Suppose unknown Impossibilities, and unknown Relations, might justly be urged to invalidate the Proof of Religion, as well as to answer Objections against it: And that in Consequence of this, the Proof of it were doubtful. Yet still, let the Assertion be despised, or let it be ridiculed, it is undeniably true, that moral Obligations would remain certain, though it were not certain what would, upon the whole, be the Consequences of observing or violating them. For, these Obligations arise immediately and necessarily from the Judgment of our own

<sup>c</sup> p. 11, 12.

**PART** Mind, unless perverted, which we cannot  
**I.** violate without being Self-condemned. And  
 they would be certain too, from Considerations of Interest. For though it were doubtful, what will be the future Consequences of Virtue and Vice; yet it is, however, credible, that they may have those Consequences, which Religion teaches us they will: And this Credibility is a certain <sup>f</sup> Obligation in point of Prudence, to abstain from all Wickedness, and to live in the conscientious Practice of all that is Good. But,

*Thirdly,* The Answers above given to the Objections against Religion, cannot equally be made Use of to invalidate the Proof of it. For, upon Supposition that God exercises a moral Government over the World, Analogy does most strongly lead us to conclude, that this moral Government must be a Scheme, or Constitution, beyond our Comprehension. And a thousand particular Analogies shew us, that Parts of such a Scheme, from their Relation to other Parts, may conduce to accomplish Ends, which we should have thought, they had no Tendency at all to accomplish: nay Ends, which before Experience, we should have thought such Parts were contradictory to, and had a Tendency to prevent. And therefore all these Analogies shew, that

<sup>f</sup> p. 4. And Part II. Ch. vi.

the Way of arguing made use of in objecting against Religion, is delusive: because they shew it is not at all incredible, that, could we comprehend the Whole, we should find the Permission of the Disorders objected against, to be consistent with Justice and Goodness; and even to be Instances of them. Now This is not applicable to the Proof of Religion, as it is to the Objections against it<sup>2</sup>; and therefore cannot invalidate That Proof, as it does these Objections.

CHAP.  
VII.

*Lastly*, From the Observation now made, it is easy to see, that the Answers above given to the Objections against Providence, though, in a general way of speaking, they may be said to be taken from our Ignorance; yet are by no means taken merely from That, but from somewhat which Analogy shews us concerning it. For Analogy shews us positively, that our Ignorance in the Possibilities of things, and the various Relations in Nature, renders us incompetent Judges, and leads us to false Conclusions, in Cases similar to This, in which we pretend to judge and to object. So that the things above insisted upon, are not mere Suppositions of unknown Impossibilities and Relations:

<sup>2</sup> Serm. at the *Rolls*, p. 312. 5th Edit.

**PART** but they are suggested to our Thoughts, and  
**I.** even forced upon the Observation of serious  
Men, and rendered credible too, by the Ana-  
logy of Nature. And therefore, to take these  
things into the Account, is to judge by Expe-  
rience and what we do know: and it is not  
judging so, to take no Notice of them.

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C O N-  

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## CONCLUSION.

THE Observations of the last Chapter, lead us to consider this little Scene of human Life, in which we are so busily engaged, as having a Reference, of some Sort or other, to a much larger Plan of things. Whether we are, any way, related to the more distant Parts of the boundless Universe, into which we are brought, is altogether uncertain. But it is evident, that the Course of things, which comes within our View, is connected with somewhat past, present, and future, beyond it<sup>a</sup>. So that we are placed, as one may speak, in the Middle of a Scheme, not a fixt but a progressive one, every way incomprehensible: incomprehensible, in a manner equally, with respect to what has been, what now is, and what shall be hereafter. And this Scheme cannot but contain in it somewhat, as wonderful, and as much beyond our Thought and Conception<sup>b</sup>, as any thing in That of Religion. For, will any Man in his Senses say, that it is less difficult

PART  
I.

<sup>a</sup> p. 181, &c.

<sup>b</sup> See Part II. Ch. ii.

PART to conceive, how the World came to be and

I. to continue as it is, without, than with, an intelligent Author and Governor of it? Or, admitting an intelligent Governor of it, that there is some other Rule of Government, more natural, and of easier Conception, than That, which we call moral? Indeed, without an intelligent Author and Governor of Nature, no Account at all can be given, how this Universe, or the Part of it particularly in which we are concerned, came to be, and the Course of it to be carried on, as it is; Nor any, of its general End and Design, without a Moral Governor of it. That there is an intelligent Author of Nature, and natural Governor of the World, is a Principle gone upon in the foregoing Treatise, as proved, and generally known and confessed to be proved. And the very Notion of an intelligent Author of Nature, proved by particular final Causes, implies a Will and a Character\*. Now, as our whole Nature, the Nature which He has given us, leads us to conclude His Will and Character to be moral, just, and good: so we can scarce in Imagination conceive, what it can be otherwise. However, in Consequence of this his Will and Character, whatever it be, he formed the Universe as it is, and carries on the Course of it as he does, rather than in any other Manner; and has af-

\* p. 164.

signed

signed to Us, and to all living Creatures, a PART  
 Part and a Lot in it. Irrational Creatures I.  
 act this their Part, and enjoy and undergo the Pleasures and the Pains allotted them, without any Reflection. But one would think it impossible, that Creatures endued with Reason could avoid reflecting sometimes upon all This: reflecting, if not from whence we came, yet, at least, whither we are going; and what the mysterious Scheme in the Midst of which we find ourselves, will, at length, come out, and produce: a Scheme in which it is certain we are highly interested, and in which we may be interested even beyond Conception. For many things prove it palpably absurd to conclude, that we shall cease to be, at Death. Particular Analogies do most sensibly shew us, that there is nothing to be thought strange, in our being to exist in another State of Life. And that we are now living Beings, affords a strong Probability, that we shall *continue* so; unless there be some positive Ground, and there is none from Reason or Analogy, to think Death will destroy us. Were a Persuasion of this Kind ever so well grounded, there would, surely, be little Reason to take Pleasure in it. But indeed it can have no other Ground, than some such Imagination, as That of our gross Bodies being Ourselves: which is contrary to Experience. Experience too most clearly



PART shews us the Folly of concluding, from the  
 I. Body and the living Agent affecting each other  
 mutually, that the Dissolution of the former is  
 the Destruction of the latter. And there are  
 remarkable Instances of their not affecting  
 each other, which lead us to a contrary Con-  
 clusion. The Supposition then, which in all  
 Reason we are to go upon, is, that our living  
 Nature will *continue* after Death. And it is  
 infinitely unreasonable to form an Institution of  
 Life, or to act, upon any other Supposition.  
 Now all Expectation of Immortality, whether  
 more or less certain, opens an unbounded  
 Prospect to our Hopes and Fears: since  
 we see the Constitution of Nature is such, as  
 to admit of Misery as well as to be productive  
 of Happiness, and experience ourselves to  
 partake of both in some Degree; and since  
 we cannot but know, what higher Degrees of  
 both we are capable of. And there is no Pre-  
 sumption against believing farther, that our  
 future Interest depends upon our present Be-  
 haviour: For we see our present Interest doth;  
 and that the Happiness and Misery, which  
 are naturally annexed to our Actions, very  
 frequently do not follow, till long after the  
 Actions are done, to which they are respec-  
 tively annexed. So that were Speculation to  
 leave us uncertain, whether it were likely,  
 that the Author of Nature, in giving Happi-  
 ness and Misery to his Creatures, hath Regard  
 to

to their Actions or not: yet, since we find by Experience that he hath such Regard, the whole Sense of things which he has given us, plainly leads us, at once and without any elaborate Inquiries, to think, that it may, indeed must, be to good Actions chiefly that he hath annexed Happiness, and to bad Actions Misery; or that he will, upon the whole, reward those who do well, and punish those who do evil. To confirm this from the Constitution of the World, it has been observed; that some sort of moral Government is necessarily implied in That natural Government of God, which we experience ourselves under: that good and bad Actions, at present, are naturally rewarded and punished, not only as beneficial and mischievous to Society: but also as virtuous and vicious: and that there is, in the very Nature of the thing, a Tendency to their being rewarded and punished in a much higher Degree, than they are at present. And though this higher Degree of distributive Justice, which Nature thus points out and leads towards, is prevented for a Time from taking place: it is by Obstacles, which the State of this World unhappily throws in its Way, and which therefore are in their Nature temporary. Now, as these things in the natural Conduct of Providence, are observable on the Side of Virtue; so there is Nothing to be set against them, on the Side of Vice. A  
moral

PART  
I.

**PART** moral Scheme of Government then, is visibly  
**I.** established, and, in some Degree, carried in-  
 to Execution: And this, together with the  
 essential Tendencies of Virtue and Vice duly  
 considered, naturally raise in us an Appre-  
 hension, that it will be carried on farther to-  
 wards Perfection, in a future State, and that  
 every one shall there receive according to his  
 Deserts. And if this be so, then our future  
 and general Interest, under the moral Go-  
 vernment of God, is appointed to depend up-  
 on our Behaviour; notwithstanding the Dif-  
 ficulty, which this may occasion, of securing  
 it, and the Danger of losing it: just in the  
 same Manner as our temporal Interest, under  
 his natural Government, is appointed to de-  
 pend upon our Behaviour; notwithstanding  
 the like Difficulty and Danger. For, from  
 our original Constitution and That of the  
 World which we inhabit, we are naturally  
 trusted with ourselves; with our own Con-  
 duct and our own Interest. And from the  
 same Constitution of Nature, especially joined  
 with That Course of Things which is owing  
 to Men, we have Temptations to be unfaith-  
 ful in this Trust; to forfeit this Interest, to  
 neglect it, and run ourselves into Misery and  
 Ruin. From these Temptations arise, the  
 Difficulties of behaving so as to secure our  
 temporal Interest, and the Hazard of be-  
 having so as to miscarry in it. There is there-  
 fore

fore nothing incredible in supposing, there may be the like Difficulty and Hazard with regard to that chief and final Good, which Religion lays before us. Indeed the whole Account, how it came to pass, that we were placed in such a Condition as this; must be beyond our Comprehension. But it is in part accounted for by what Religion teaches us, that the Character of Virtue and Piety must be a necessary Qualification for a future State of Security and Happiness, under the moral Government of God; in like Manner, as some certain Qualifications or other are necessary for every particular Condition of Life, under his natural Government: And that the present State was intended to be a School of Discipline, for improving in Ourselves That Character. Now this Intention of Nature is rendered highly credible by observing; that we are plainly made for Improvement of all Kinds: that it is a general Appointment of Providence, that we cultivate practical Principles, and form within Ourselves Habits of Action, in order to become fit for, what we were wholly unfit for before: that in particular, Childhood and Youth is naturally appointed to be a State of Discipline for mature Age: and that the present World is peculiarly fitted for a State of moral Discipline. And, whereas Objections are urged against the whole Notion of moral Government and a Probation-  
state,

PART  
I.

PART state, from the Opinion of Necessity ; it has  
 I. been shewn, that God has given us the Evi-  
 dence, as it were, of Experience, that all  
 Objections against Religion, on this Head, are  
 vain and delusive. He has also, in his natu-  
 ral Government, suggested an Answer to all  
 our short-sighted Objections, against the Equi-  
 ty and Goodness of his moral Government :  
 And in general He has exemplified to us the  
 latter by the former.

These things, which, it is to be remem-  
 bered, are Matters of Fact, ought, in all com-  
 mon Sense, to awaken Mankind ; to induce  
 them to consider in earnest their Condition,  
 and what they have to do. It is absurd, ab-  
 surd to the Degree of being ridiculous, if the  
 Subject were not of so serious a kind, for  
 Men to think themselves secure, in a vicious  
 Life ; or even in that immoral Thoughtless-  
 ness, which far the greatest Part of them are  
 fallen into. And the Credibility of Religion,  
 arising from Experience and Facts here con-  
 sidered, is fully sufficient, in Reason, to en-  
 gage them to live in the general Practice of  
 all Virtue and Piety ; under the serious Ap-  
 prehension, though it should be mixed with  
 some Doubt <sup>d</sup>, of a righteous Administration  
 established in Nature, and a future Judgment  
 in Consequence of it : Especially when we

<sup>d</sup> Part II. Chap. vi.

consider,

consider, how very questionable it is, whether any thing at all can be gained by Vice<sup>e</sup>; how unquestionably little, as well as precarious, the Pleasures and Profits of it are at the best; and how soon they must be parted with at the longest. For, in the Deliberations of Reason, concerning what we are to pursue, and what to avoid, as Temptations to any thing from mere Passion, are supposed out of the Case: So Inducements to Vice, from cool Expectations of Pleasure and Interest so small and uncertain and short, are really so insignificant, as, in the View of Reason, to be almost Nothing in themselves: And in Comparison with the Importance of Religion, they quite disappear and are lost. Mere Passion indeed may be alledged, though not as a Reason, yet as an Excuse, for a vicious Course of Life. And how sorry an Excuse it is, will be manifest by observing, that we are placed in a Condition, in which we are unavoidably inured to govern our Passions, by being necessitated to govern them; and to lay ourselves under the same Kind of Restraints, and as great ones too, from temporal Regards, as Virtue and Piety, in the ordinary Course of things, require. The Plea of ungovernable Passion then, on the Side of Vice, is the poorest of all things: for it is no Reason, and but a poor Excuse. But the proper

PART  
I.

<sup>e</sup> p. 69.

**PART** Motives to Religion, are the proper Proofs of  
**I.** it, from our moral Nature, from the Prefages  
 of Conscience, and our natural Apprehension  
 of God under the Character of a righteous  
 Governor and Judge; a Nature and Consci-  
 ence and Apprehension given us by Him:  
 and from the Confirmation of the Dictates of  
 Reason, by *Life and Immortality brought to  
 light by the Gospel; and the wrath of God re-  
 vealed from Heaven, against all ungodliness,  
 and unrighteousness of Men.*

The End of the First **PART.**

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**T H E**

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THE  
ANALOGY  
OF  
RELIGION  
TO THE  
Constitution and Course of NATURE.

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PART II.  
OF REVEALED RELIGION.

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CHAP. I.

*Of the Importance of Christianity.*

SOME Persons, upon Pretence of the CHAP:  
Sufficiency of the Light of Nature, a- I.  
vowedly reject all Revelation, as, in its  
very Notion, incredible, and what must be  
fictitious. And indeed it is certain, no Re-  
velation



PART velation would have been given, had the

II. Light of Nature been sufficient in such a Sense, as to render one not wanting and useless. But no Man, in Seriousness and Simplicity of Mind, can possibly think it so, who considers the State of Religion in the heathen World, before Revelation, and its present State in those Places which have borrowed no Light from it: particularly, the Doubtfulness of some of the greatest Men, concerning things of the utmost Importance, as well as the natural Inattention and Ignorance of Mankind in general. It is impossible to say, who would have been able to have reasoned out That whole System, which we call natural Religion, in its genuine Simplicity, clear of Superstition: but there is certainly no Ground to affirm, that the Generality could. If they could, there is no Sort of Probability, that they would. Admitting there were, they would highly want a standing Admonition, to remind them of it, and inculcate it upon them. And farther still, were they as much disposed to attend to Religion, as the better Sort of Men are: yet even upon this Supposition, there would be various Occasions for supernatural Instruction and Assistance, and the greatest Advantages might be afforded by them. So that to say, Revelation is a thing superfluous, what there was no Need of, and what can be of no Service; is, I think,  
to

to talk quite wildly and at random. Nor CHAP. I.  
would it be more extravagant to affirm, that  
Mankind is so entirely at ease in the present  
State, and Life so compleatly happy; that it  
is a Contradiction to suppose our Condition  
capable of being, in any Respect, better.

There are other Persons, not to be ranked with these, who seem to be getting into a way of neglecting, and, as it were, overlooking Revelation, as of small Importance, provided natural Religion be kept to. With little Regard, either to the Evidence of the former, or to the Objections against it, and even upon Supposition of its Truth; “the only Design of it,” say they, “must be, to establish a Belief of the moral System of Nature, and to enforce the Practice of natural Piety and Virtue. The Belief and Practice of these things were, perhaps, much promoted by the first Publication of Christianity: But whether they are believed and practised, upon the Evidence and Motives of Nature or of Revelation, is no great matter<sup>a</sup>”. This way of considering

<sup>a</sup> Invenis multos ——— propterea nolle fieri Christianos, quia quasi sufficiunt sibi de bona vita sua. Bene vivere Opus est, ait. Quid mihi præceptorus est Christus? Ut bene vivam? Jam bene vivo. Quid mihi necessarius est Christus? Nullum homicidium, nullum furtum, nullam rapinam facio, res alienas non concupisco, nullo adulterio contaminor. Nam inveniatur in vita mea aliquid quod reprehendatur, & qui reprehenderit faciat Christianum. *Aug. in Psal. xxxi.*

PART Revelation, though it is not the same with the  
 II. former, yet borders nearly upon it, and very  
 much, at length, runs up into it: and re-  
 quires to be particularly considered, with re-  
 gard to the Persons, who seem to be getting  
 into this Way. The Consideration of it will  
 likewise farther shew the Extravagance of the  
 former Opinion, and the Truth of the Ob-  
 servations in Answer to it, just mentioned.  
 And an Inquiry into the Importance of Chri-  
 stianity, cannot be an improper Introduction  
 to a Treatise concerning the Credibility of  
 it.

Now if God has given a Revelation to Mankind, and commanded those things, which are commanded in Christianity; it is evident, at first sight, that it cannot in any wise be an indifferent matter, whether we obey or disobey those Commands: unless we are certainly assured, that we know all the Reasons for them, and that all those Reasons are now ceased, with regard to Mankind in general, or to Ourselves in particular. And it is absolutely impossible, we can be assured of this. For our Ignorance of these Reasons proves nothing in the Case: since the whole Analogy of Nature shews, what is indeed in itself evident, that there may be infinite Reasons for things, with which we are not acquainted.

But

But the Importance of Christianity will CHAP. more distinctly appear, by considering it I. more distinctly: *First*, as a Republication, and external Institution, of natural or essential Religion, adapted to the present Circumstances of Mankind, and intended to promote natural Piety and Virtue: And *Secondly*, as containing an Account of a Dispensation of things, not discoverable by Reason, in Consequence of which, several distinct Precepts are enjoined us. For though natural Religion is the Foundation and principal Part of Christianity, it is not in any Sense the whole of it.

I. Christianity is a Republication of natural Religion. It instructs Mankind in the moral System of the World: that it is the Work of an infinitely perfect Being, and under his Government; that Virtue is his Law, and that He will finally judge Mankind in Righteousness, and render to all according to their Works, in a future State. And, which is very material, it teaches natural Religion, in its genuine Simplicity; free from those Superstitions, with which it was totally corrupted, and under which it was in a manner lost.

PART II. Revelation is farther, an authoritative Publication of natural Religion, and so affords the Evidence of Testimony for the Truth of it. Indeed the Miracles and Prophecies recorded in Scripture, were intended to prove a particular Dispensation of Providence, the Redemption of the World by the Messiah: But this does not hinder, but that they may also prove God's general Providence over the World, as our moral Governor and Judge. And they evidently do prove it; because This Character of the Author of Nature, is necessarily connected with, and implied in That particular revealed Dispensation of things: It is likewise continually taught expressly, and insisted upon, by those Persons, who wrought the Miracles and delivered the Prophecies. So that indeed natural Religion seems as much proved by the Scripture Revelation, as it would have been, had the Design of Revelation been nothing else than to prove it.

But it may possibly be disputed, how far Miracles can prove natural Religion; and notable Objections may be urged against this Proof of it, considered as a Matter of Speculation: But considered as a practical thing, there can be none. For suppose a Person to teach natural Religion to a Nation, who had lived in total Ignorance or Forgetfulness of it; and

and to declare he was commissioned by God CHAP.  
so to do: Suppose him, in Proof of his Com- I.  
mission, to foretel things future, which no  
human Foresight could have guessed at; to  
divide the Sea with a Word; feed great Mul-  
titudes with Bread from Heaven; cure all  
manner of Diseases; and raise the Dead, even  
himself, to Life: Would not this give addi-  
tional Credibility to his Teaching, a Credibi-  
lity beyond what That of a common Man  
would have; and be an authoritative Publica-  
tion of the Law of Nature, *i. e.* a new Proof  
of it? It would be a practical one, of the  
strongest Kind, perhaps, which human Crea-  
tures are capable of having given them. The  
Law of Moses then, and the Gospel of  
Christ, are authoritative Publications of the  
Religion of Nature: They afford a Proof of  
God's general Providence, as moral Governor  
of the World; as well as of his particular Dis-  
pensations of Providence towards sinful Crea-  
tures, revealed in the Law and the Gospel.  
As they are the only Evidence of the latter,  
so they are an additional Evidence of the  
former.

To shew this further, let us suppose a Man  
of the greatest and most improved Capacity,  
who had never heard of Revelation, convin-  
ced upon the whole, notwithstanding the Dif-  
orders of the World, that it was under the

PART Direction and moral Government of an infinitely perfect Being; but ready to question, whether he were not got beyond the Reach of his Faculties: Suppose him brought, by this Suspicion, into great Danger of being carried away by the universal bad Example of almost every one around him, who appeared to have no Sense, no practical Sense at least, of these things: And this, perhaps, would be as advantageous a Situation with regard to Religion, as Nature alone ever placed any Man in. What a Confirmation now must it be to such a Person, all at once, to find, that this moral System of things was revealed to Mankind, in the name of That infinite Being, whom he had from Principles of Reason believed in; and that the Publishers of the Revelation proved their Commission from Him, by making it appear, that he had intrusted them with a Power of suspending and changing the general Laws of Nature.

Nor must it by any means be omitted, for it is a thing of the utmost Importance, that Life and Immortality are eminently brought to Light by the Gospel. The great Doctrines of a future State, the Danger of a Course of Wickedness, and the Efficacy of Repentance, are not only confirmed in the Gospel, but are taught, especially the last is, with a Degree

Degree of Light, to which That of Nature  
is but Darkness. CHAP.  
I.

Farther : As Christianity served these Ends and Purposes, when it was first published, by the miraculous Publication itself ; so it was intended to serve the same Purposes, in future Ages, by Means of the Settlement of a visible Church : of a Society, distinguished from common ones, and from the rest of the World, by peculiar religious Institutions ; by an instituted Method of Instruction, and an instituted Form of external Religion. Miraculous Powers were given to the first Preachers of Christianity, in order to their introducing it into the World : A visible Church was established, in order to continue it, and carry it on successively throughout all Ages. Had Moses and the Prophets, Christ and his Apostles, only taught, and by Miracles proved, Religion to their Cotemporaries ; the Benefits of their Instructions would have reached but to a small Part of Mankind. Christianity must have been, in a great Degree, sunk and forgot in a very few Ages. To prevent this, appears to have been one Reason, why a visible Church was instituted : to be, like a City upon a Hill, a standing Memorial to the World of the Duty which we owe our Maker : to call Men continually, both by Example and Instruction, to attend to it ; and



PART by the Form of Religion ever before their  
 II. Eyes, remind them of the Reality: to be  
 the Repository of the Oracles of God: to hold up the Light of Revelation in Aid to That of Nature, and propagate it throughout all Generations to the End of the World—— the Light of Revelation, considered here in no other View, than as designed to enforce natural Religion. And in Proportion as Christianity is professed and taught in the World, Religion, natural or essential Religion, is thus distinctly and advantageously laid before Mankind; and brought again and again to their Thoughts, as a Matter of infinite Importance. A visible Church has also a farther Tendency to promote natural Religion, as being an instituted Method of Education, originally intended to be of more peculiar Advantage to those who would conform to it. For one End of the Institution was, that by Admonition and Reproof, as well as Instruction; by a general regular Discipline, and publick Exercises of Religion; *the body of Christ*, as the Scripture speaks, should be *edified, i. e.* trained up in Piety and Virtue, for a higher and better State. This Settlement then appearing thus beneficial; tending in the Nature of the thing to answer, and in some Degree actually answering, those Ends; it is to be remembered, that the very Notion of it implies positive Institutions: for the Visibility of the  
 Church

Church consists in them. Take away every thing of this Kind, and you lose the very Notion itself. So that if the things now mentioned are Advantages, the Reason and Importance of positive Institutions in general, is most obvious; since without them, these Advantages could not be secured to the World. And it is mere idle Wantonness, to insist upon knowing the Reasons, why such particular ones were fixt upon, rather than others.

CHAP.  
I.

The Benefit arising from this supernatural Assistance, which Christianity affords to natural Religion, is what some Persons are very slow in apprehending. And yet it is a thing distinct in itself, and a very plain obvious one. For will any in good earnest really say, that the Bulk of Mankind in the heathen World, were in as advantageous a Situation, with regard to natural Religion, as they are now amongst us: That it was laid before them, and enforced upon them, in a manner as distinct, and as much tending to influence their Practice?

The Objections against all this, from the Perversion of Christianity, and from the Supposition of its having had but little good Influence, however innocently they may be proposed, yet cannot be insisted upon as conclusive, upon any Principles, but such as  
lead

PART lead to downright Atheism : Because the Ma-  
 II. nifestation of the Law of Nature by Reason,  
 which, upon all Principles of Theism, must  
 have been from God, has been perverted and  
 rendered ineffectual in the same Manner. It  
 may indeed, I think, truly be said, that the  
 good Effects of Christianity have not been  
 small : nor its supposed ill Effects, any Ef-  
 fects at all of it, properly speaking. Perhaps  
 too the things themselves done, have been ag-  
 gravated : And if not, Christianity hath been  
 often only a Pretence : And the same Evils in  
 the Main would have been done, upon some  
 other Pretence. However, great and shock-  
 ing as the Corruptions and Abuses of it have  
 really been, they cannot be insisted upon as  
 Arguments against it, upon Principles of  
 Theism. For one cannot proceed one Step in  
 reasoning upon natural Religion, any more  
 than upon Christianity, without laying it  
 down as a first Principle, that the Dispen-  
 sations of Providence are not to be judged of,  
 by their Perversions, but by their genuine  
 Tendencies : not by what they do actually  
 seem to effect, but by what they would effect  
 if Mankind did their Part ; That Part which  
 is justly put and left upon them. It is alto-  
 gether as much the Language of one, as of the  
 other ; *He that is unjust, let him be unjust  
 still : and he that is holy, let him be holy still*<sup>b</sup>.

<sup>b</sup> Rev. xxii. 11.

The Light of Reason does not, any more CHAP.  
than That of Revelation, force Men to sub- I.  
mit to its Authority: Both admonish them }  
of what they ought to do and avoid, toge-  
ther with the Consequences of each; and af-  
ter this, leave them at full Liberty to act just  
as they please, till the appointed Time of  
Judgment. Every Moment's Experience  
shews, that this is God's general Rule of Go-  
vernment.

To return then: Christianity being a Pro-  
mulgation of the Law of Nature; being  
moreover an authoritative Promulgation of it;  
with new Light, and other Circumstances of  
peculiar Advantage, adapted to the Wants of  
Mankind; these things fully shew its Impor-  
tance. And it is to be observed farther,  
that, as the Nature of the Case requires, so  
all Christians are commanded to contribute,  
by their Profession of Christianity, to preserve  
it in the World, and render it such a Pro-  
mulgation and Enforcement of Religion. For  
it is the very Scheme of the Gospel, that  
each Christian should, in his Degree, contri-  
bute towards continuing and carrying it on:  
all by uniting in the publick Profession and  
external Practice of Christianity; some by  
instructing, by having the Oversight and  
taking Care of this religious Community, the  
Church of God. Now this farther shews the  
Impor-

PART Importance of Christianity; and, which is  
 II. what I chiefly intend, its Importance in a  
 practical Sense: or the high Obligations we  
 are under, to take it into our most serious Con-  
 sideration; and the Danger there must neces-  
 sarily be, not only in treating it despitefully,  
 which I am not now speaking of, but in dis-  
 regarding and neglecting it. For this is neg-  
 lecting to do what is expressly enjoined us,  
 for continuing those Benefits to the World,  
 and transmitting them down to future Times.  
 And all this holds, even though the only thing  
 to be considered in Christianity, were its Sub-  
 serviency to natural Religion. But,

II. Christianity is to be considered in a  
 further View: as containing an Account of  
 a Dispensation of things, not at all discover-  
 able by Reason, in Consequence of which se-  
 veral distinct Precepts are enjoined us. Christi-  
 anity is not only an external Institution of na-  
 tural Religion, and a new Promulgation of  
 God's general Providence, as righteous Go-  
 vernor and Judge of the World; but it con-  
 tains also a Revelation of a particular Dispen-  
 sation of Providence, carrying on by his Son  
 and Spirit, for the Recovery and Salvation of  
 Mankind, who are represented, in Scripture,  
 to be in a State of Ruin. And in Conse-  
 quence of this Revelation being made, we  
 are commanded *to be baptized*, not only *in*  
*the*

*the name of the Father, but also, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:* and other Obligations of Duty, unknown before, to the Son and the Holy Ghost, are revealed. Now the Importance of these Duties may be judged of, by observing that they arise, not from positive Command merely; but also from the Offices, which appear, from Scripture, to belong to those divine Persons in the Gospel Dispensation; or from the Relations, which, we are there informed, they stand in to us. By Reason is revealed the Relation, which God the Father stands in to us. Hence arises the Obligation of Duty, which we are under to Him. In Scripture are revealed the Relations, which the Son and Holy Spirit stand in to us. Hence arise the Obligations of Duty, which we are under to them. The Truth of the Case, as one may speak, in each of these three Respects being admitted: that God is the Governor of the World, upon the Evidence of Reason; that Christ is the Mediator between God and Man, and the Holy Ghost our Guide and Sanctifier, upon the Evidence of Revelation: the Truth of the Case, I say, in each of these Respects being admitted; it is no more a Question, why it should be commanded, that we be baptized in the Name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, than that we be baptized in the Name  
of

PART of the Father. This Matter seems to require  
 II. to be more fully stated<sup>c</sup>.

Let it be remembered then, that Religion comes under the twofold Consideration of internal and external: for the latter is as real a Part of Religion, of true Religion, as the former. Now when Religion is considered under the first Notion, as an inward Principle, to be exerted in such and such inward Acts of the Mind and Heart; the Essence of natural Religion may be said to consist in religious Regards to *God the Father Almighty*: and the Essence of revealed Religion, as distinguished from natural, to consist in religious Regards to *the Son*, and to *the Holy Ghost*. And the Obligation we are under, of paying these religious Regards to each of these divine Persons respectively, arises from the respective Relations, which they each stand in to us. How these Relations are made known, whether by Reason or Revelation, makes no Alteration in the Case: because the Duties arise out of the Relations themselves, not out of the Manner in which we are informed of them. The Son and Spirit have each his proper Office, in that great Dispensation of Providence, the Redemption of the World: the

<sup>c</sup> See, The Nature, Obligation, and Efficacy, of the Christian Sacraments, &c. and *Colliber* of revealed Religion, as there quoted.

one our Mediator, the other our Sanctifier. **CHAP.**  
Does not then the Duty of religious Regards **I.**  
to both these divine Persons, as immediately  
arise, to the View of Reason, out of the  
very Nature of these Offices and Relations;  
as the inward Good-will and kind Intention,  
which we owe to our Fellow-creatures, arises  
out of the common Relations between us and  
them? But it will be asked, "What are the  
" inward religious Regards, appearing thus  
" obviously due to the Son and Holy Spirit;  
" as arising, not merely from Command in  
" Scripture, but from the very Nature of  
" the revealed Relations, which they stand in  
" to us?" I answer, the religious Regards of  
Reverence, Honour, Love, Trust, Grati-  
tude, Fear, Hope. In what external Man-  
ner, this inward Worship is to be expressed,  
is a Matter of pure revealed Command; as  
perhaps the external Manner, in which God  
the Father is to be worshipped, may be more  
so, than we are ready to think: But the  
Worship, the internal Worship itself, to the  
Son and Holy Ghost, is no farther Matter of  
pure revealed Command, than as the Rela-  
tions they stand in to us are Matter of pure  
Revelation: for the Relations being known,  
the Obligations to such internal Worship are  
Obligations of Reason, arising out of those  
Relations themselves. In short, the History  
of the Gospel as immediately shews us the  
Reason



PART Reason of these Obligations, as it shews us  
 II. the Meaning of the Words, Son and Holy  
 Ghost.

If this Account of the Christian Religion be just; those Persons who can speak lightly of it, as of little Consequence, provided natural Religion be kept to, plainly forget, that Christianity, even what is peculiarly so called, as distinguished from natural Religion, has yet somewhat very important, even of a moral Nature. For the Office of our Lord being made known, and the Relation he stands in to us, the Obligation of religious Regards to Him, is plainly moral; as much as Charity to Mankind is; since this Obligation arises, before external Command, immediately out of That his Office and Relation itself. Those Persons appear to forget, that Revelation is to be considered, as informing us of somewhat New, in the State of Mankind, and in the Government of the World: as acquainting us with some Relations we stand in, which could not otherwise have been known. And these Relations being real, (though before Revelation we could be under no Obligations from them, yet upon their being revealed) there is no Reason to think, but that Neglect of behaving suitably to them, will be attended with the same Kind of Consequences under God's Government; as neglecting to be-  
 have

have suitably to any other Relations made known to us by Reason. And Ignorance, whether unavoidable or voluntary; so far as we can possibly see, will, just as much, and just as little, excuse in one Case as in the other: the Ignorance being supposed equally unavoidable, or equally voluntary, in both Cases.

CHAP.  
I.

If therefore Christ be indeed the Mediator between God and Man, *i. e.* if Christianity be true; if he be indeed our Lord, our Saviour, and our God; no one can say, what may follow, not only the obstinate, but the careless Disregard to him, in those high Relations. Nay no one can say, what may follow such Disregard, even in the way of natural Consequence<sup>d</sup>. For, as the natural Consequences of Vice in this Life, are doubtless to be considered, as judicial Punishments inflicted by God; so likewise, for aught we know, the judicial Punishments of the future Life may be, in a like Way or a like Sense, the natural Consequence of Vice<sup>e</sup>: of Men's violating or disregarding the Relations, which God has placed them in here, and made known to them.

Again: If Mankind are corrupted and depraved in their moral Character, and so are

<sup>d</sup> p. 43, 44.

<sup>e</sup> Ch. v.

Q

unfit

PART unfit for that State, which Christ is gone to  
 II. prepare for his Disciples; and if the Assistance of God's Spirit be necessary to renew their Nature, in the Degree requisite to their being qualified for That State; all which is implied in the express, though figurative Declaration, *Except a Man be born of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*<sup>f</sup>: Supposing this, is it possible any serious Person can think it a slight matter, whether or no he makes use of the Means, expressly commanded by God, for obtaining this divine Assistance? Especially since the whole Analogy of Nature shews, that we are not to expect any Benefits, without making use of the appointed Means for obtaining or injoying them. Now Reason shews us nothing, of the particular immediate Means of obtaining, either temporal or spiritual Benefits. This therefore we must learn, either from Experience or Revelation. And Experience, the present Case does not admit of.

The Conclusion from all this evidently is; that, Christianity being supposed either true or credible, it is unspeakable Irreverence, and really the most presumptuous Rashness, to treat it as a light Matter. It can never justly be esteemed of little Consequence, till it be positively supposed false. Nor do I know a

<sup>f</sup> John iii. 5.

higher

higher and more important Obligation which we are under, than That, of examining most seriously into the Evidence of it, supposing its Credibility; and of embracing it, upon Supposition of its Truth. CHAP. I.

The two following Deductions may be proper to be added, in order to illustrate the foregoing Observations, and to prevent their being mistaken.

*First,* Hence we may clearly see, where lies the Distinction between what is positive and what is moral in Religion. Moral *Precepts* are Precepts, the Reasons of which we see: Positive *Precepts* are Precepts, the Reasons of which we do not see<sup>s</sup>. Moral *Duties* arise out of the Nature of the Case itself, prior to external Command. Positive *Duties* do not arise out of the Nature of the Case; but from external Command: Nor would they be Duties at all, were it not for such Command, received from Him whose Creatures and Subjects we are. But the Manner in

<sup>s</sup> This is the Distinction between moral and positive Precepts, considered respectively as such. But yet, since the latter have somewhat of a moral Nature, we may see the Reason of them, considered in this View. Moral and positive Precepts are, in some Respects alike, in other Respects different. So far as they are alike, we discern the Reasons of both: So far as they are different, we discern the Reasons of the former, but not of the latter. See p. 215, &c. and p. 229.

PART which the Nature of the Case, or the Fact  
 II. of the Relation, is made known, this doth  
 not denominate any Duty either positive or  
 moral. That we be baptized in the Name  
 of the Father, is as much a positive Duty, as  
 that we be baptized in the Name of the Son ;  
 because both arise equally from revealed Com-  
 mand : though the Relation which we stand  
 in to God the Father, is made known to us  
 by Reason ; the Relation we stand in to  
 Christ, by Revelation only. On the other  
 hand, the Dispensation of the Gospel admit-  
 ted, Gratitude as immediately becomes due to  
 Christ, from his being the voluntary Minister  
 of this Dispensation ; as it is due to God the  
 Father, from his being the Fountain of all  
 Good : though the first is made known to us,  
 by Revelation only ; the second, by Reason.  
 Hence also we may see, and, for Distinctness  
 sake, it may be worth mentioning, that po-  
 sitive Institutions come under a two-fold Con-  
 sideration. They are either Institutions found-  
 ed on natural Religion, as Baptism in the  
 Name of the Father ; though this has also a  
 particular Reference to the Gospel-dispen-  
 sation, for it is in the Name of God, as the  
 Father of our Lord Jesus Christ : Or they  
 are external Institutions founded on revealed  
 Religion : as Baptism in the Name of the Son,  
 and of the Holy Ghost.


*Secondly,*

Secondly, From the Distinction between what is moral and what is positive in Religion, appears the Ground of That peculiar Preference, which the Scripture teaches us to be due to the former. CHAP. I.

The Reason of positive Institutions in general, is very obvious: though we should not see the Reason, why such particular ones are pitched upon, rather than others. Whoever therefore, instead of cavilling at Words, will attend to the thing itself, may clearly see, that positive Institutions in general, as distinguished from this or that particular one, have the Nature of moral Commands: since the Reasons of them appear. Thus, for Instance, the *external* Worship of God is a moral Duty, though no particular Mode of it be so. Care then is to be taken, when a Comparison is made between positive and moral Duties, that they be compared, no farther than as they are different: no farther than as the former are positive, or arise out of mere external Command, the Reasons of which we are not acquainted with; and as the latter are moral, or arise out of the apparent Reason of the Case, without such external Command. Unless this Caution be observed, we shall run into endless Confusion.

PART Now this being premised, suppose two  
 II. standing Precepts enjoined by the same Au-  
 thority; that, in certain Conjunctions, it is  
 impossible to obey both; that the former is  
 moral, *i. e.* a Precept of which we see the  
 Reasons, and that they hold in the particular  
 Case before us; but that the latter is positive,  
*i. e.* a Precept of which we do not see the  
 Reasons: it is indisputable that our Obligations  
 are to obey the former; because there is  
 an apparent Reason for this Preference, and  
 none against it. Farther, positive Institutions,  
 I suppose all those which Christianity enjoins,  
 are Means to a moral End: and the End  
 must be acknowledged more excellent, than  
 the Means. Nor is Observance of these In-  
 stitutions any religious Obedience at all, or  
 of any Value, otherwise than as it proceeds  
 from a moral Principle. This seems to be  
 the strict, logical Way of stating and deter-  
 mining this Matter: but will, perhaps, be  
 found less applicable to Practice, than may be  
 thought at first sight.

And therefore, in a more practical, though  
 more lax way of consideration, and taking  
 the Words, *moral Law* and *positive Institu-*  
*tions*, in the popular Sense; I add, that the  
 whole moral Law is as much Matter of re-  
 vealed Command, as positive Institutions are:  
 for

for the Scripture enjoins every moral Virtue. CHAP.  
In this Respect then they are both upon a I.  
Level. But the moral Law is, moreover,   
written upon our Hearts; interwoven into  
our very Nature. And this is a plain Inti-  
mation of the Author of it, which is to be  
preferred, when they interfere.

But there is not altogether so much Neces-  
sity for the Determination of this Question,  
as some Persons seem to think. Nor are we  
left to Reason alone to determine it. For,  
*First*, Though Mankind have, in all Ages,  
been greatly prone to place their Religion in  
peculiar positive Rites, by way of Equivalent  
for Obedience to moral Precepts; yet, with-  
out making any Comparison at all between  
them, and consequently without determining  
which is to have the Preference, the Nature  
of the thing abundantly shews all Notions of  
That Kind to be utterly subversive of true  
Religion: as they are, moreover, contrary to  
the whole general Tenor of Scripture; and  
likewise to the most express particular De-  
clarations of it, that nothing can render us  
accepted of God, without moral Virtue. *Se-*  
*condly*, Upon the Occasion of mentioning to-  
gether positive and moral Duties, the Scrip-  
ture always puts the Stress of Religion upon  
the latter, and never upon the former;  
Which, though no Sort of Allowance to neg-



PART I. lest the former, when they do not interfere  
 II. with the latter, yet is a plain Intimation,  
 that when they do, the latter are to be preferred. And farther, as Mankind are for placing the Strefs of their Religion any where, rather than upon Virtue; lest both the Reason of the thing, and the general Spirit of Christianity, appearing in the Intimation now mentioned, should be ineffectual against this prevalent Folly: Our Lord himself, from whose Command alone the Obligation of positive Institutions arises, has taken Occasion to make the Comparison between Them and moral Precepts; when the Pharisees censured him, for *eating with Publicans and Sinners*; and also when they censured his Disciples, for *plucking the ears of corn on the Sabbath-day*. Upon this Comparison, he has determined expressly, and in Form, which shall have the Preference when they interfere. And by delivering his authoritative Determination in a proverbial Manner of Expression, he has made it general: *I will have Mercy, and not Sacrifice*<sup>h</sup>. The Propriety of the Word, *proverbial*, is not the thing insisted upon: though I think the Manner of speaking is to be called so. But that the Manner of speaking very remarkably renders the Determination general, is surely indisputable. For, had it, in the latter Case, been said only, that

<sup>h</sup> Matth. ix. 13. and xii. 7.

God preferred Mercy to the rigid Observance of the Sabbath; even then, by Parity of Reason, most justly might we have argued, that he preferred Mercy likewise, to the Observance of other ritual Institutions; and in general, moral Duties, to positive ones. And thus the Determination would have been general; though its being so, were inferred and not expressed. But as the Passage really stands in the Gospel, it is much stronger. For the Sense and the very literal Words of our Lord's Answer, are as applicable to any other Instance of a Comparison, between positive and moral Duties, as to This upon which they were spoken. And if, in case of Competition, Mercy is to be preferred to positive Institutions, it will scarce be thought, that Justice is to give place to them. It is remarkable too, that, as the Words are a Quotation from the Old Testament, they are introduced, on both the forementioned Occasions, with a Declaration, that the Pharisees did not understand the Meaning of them. This, I say, is very remarkable. For, since it is scarce possible, for the most ignorant Person, not to understand the literal Sense of the Passage, in the Prophet<sup>i</sup>; and since understanding the literal Sense would not have prevented Their *condemning the guiltless*<sup>k</sup>; it can hardly be doubted, that the thing which our Lord really

<sup>i</sup> Hof. vi.

<sup>k</sup> See Matth. xii. 7.

intended

PART intended in That Declaration, was, that the  
 II. Pharisees had not learnt from it, as they might,  
 } wherein the *general* Spirit of Religion consists: that it consists in moral Piety and Virtue, as distinguished from Forms, and ritual Observances. However, it is certain we may learn this from his divine Application of the Passage, in the Gospel.

But, as it is one of the peculiar Weaknesses of human Nature, when, upon a Comparison of two things, one is found to be of greater Importance than the other, to consider this other as of scarce any Importance at all: it is highly necessary that we remind ourselves, how great Presumption it is, to make light of any Institutions of Divine Appointment; that our Obligations to obey all God's Commands whatever, are absolute and indispensable; And that Commands merely positive, admitted to be from Him, lay us under a moral Obligation to obey them: an Obligation moral in the strictest and most proper Sense.

To these things I cannot forbear adding, that the Account now given of Christianity, most strongly shews and enforces upon us the Obligation of searching the Scriptures, in order to see, what the Scheme of Revelation really is; instead of determining beforehand,  
 from

*Of the Importance of Christianity.* 235

from Reason, what the Scheme of it must be<sup>†</sup>. Indeed if in Revelation there be found any Passages, the seeming Meaning of which, is contrary to natural Religion; we may most certainly conclude, such seeming Meaning not to be the real one. But it is not any Degree of a Presumption against an Interpretation of Scripture, that such Interpretation contains a Doctrine, which the Light of Nature cannot discover<sup>m</sup>; or a Precept, which the Law of Nature does not oblige to.

CHAP.  
I.

† See Ch. iii.

<sup>m</sup> p. 238, 239.

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CHAP.

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## C H A P. II.

*Of the supposed Presumption against  
a Revelation, considered as mira-  
culous.*

PART II. **H**AVING shewn the Importance of the Christian Revelation, and the Obligations which we are under seriously to attend to it, upon Supposition of its Truth, or its Credibility: The next thing in Order, is to consider, the supposed Presumptions against Revelation in general; which shall be the Subject of this Chapter: and the Objections against the Christian in particular; which shall be the Subject of some following ones<sup>a</sup>. For it seems the most natural Method, to remove these Prejudices against Christianity; before we proceed to the Consideration of the positive Evidence for it, and the Objections against that Evidence<sup>b</sup>.

It is, I think, commonly supposed, that there is some peculiar Presumption, from the Analogy of Nature, against the Christian Scheme of things; at least against Miracles:

<sup>a</sup> Ch. iii, iv, v, vi.

<sup>b</sup> Ch. vii.

so as that stronger Evidence is necessary to CHAP.  
prove the Truth and Reality of them, than II.  
would be sufficient to convince us of other Events, or Matters of Fact. Indeed the Consideration of this supposed Presumption, cannot but be thought very insignificant, by many Persons. Yet, as it belongs to the Subject of this Treatise; so it may tend to open the Mind, and remove some Prejudices; however needless the Consideration of it be, upon its own Account.

I. I find no Appearance of a Presumption, from the Analogy of Nature, against the general Scheme of Christianity, that God created and invisibly governs the World by Jesus Christ; and by him also will hereafter judge it in Righteousness, *i. e.* render to every one according to his Works: and that good Men are under the secret Influence of his Spirit. Whether these things are, or are not, to be called miraculous, is, perhaps, only a Question about Words; or however, is of no Moment in the Case. If the Analogy of Nature raises any Presumption against this general Scheme of Christianity, it must be, either because it is not discoverable by Reason or Experience; or else, because it is unlike That Course of Nature, which is. But Analogy raises no Presumption against the Truth of this Scheme, upon either of these Accounts.

*First,*

**PART** *First*, There is no Presumption, from Analogy, against the Truth of it, upon account of its not being discoverable by Reason or Experience. For suppose one who never heard of Revelation, of the most improved Understanding, and acquainted with Our whole System of natural Philosophy and natural Religion: such an one could not but be sensible, that it was but a very small Part of the natural and moral System of the Universe, which he was acquainted with. He could not but be sensible, that there must be innumerable things, in the Dispensations of Providence past, in the invisible Government over the World at present carrying on, and in what is to come; of which he was wholly ignorant<sup>c</sup>, and which could not be discovered without Revelation. Whether the Scheme of Nature be, in the strictest Sense, infinite or not; it is evidently vast, even beyond all possible Imagination. And doubtless That Part of it, which is opened to our View, is but as a Point, in Comparison of the whole Plan of Providence, reaching throughout Eternity past and future; in Comparison of what is even now going on, in the remote Parts of the boundless Universe; nay in Comparison of the whole Scheme of this World. And therefore, that Things lie beyond the

<sup>c</sup> p. 182.

natural Reach of our Faculties, is no Sort of CHAP.  
Presumption against the Truth and Reality of II.  
them: because it is certain, there are innumerable things, in the Constitution and Government of the Universe, which are thus beyond the natural Reach of our Faculties. *Secondly*, Analogy raises no Presumption, against any of the things contained in this general Doctrine of Scripture now mentioned, upon account of their being unlike the known Course of Nature. For there is no Presumption at all from Analogy, that the *whole* Course of things, or divine Government, naturally unknown to us, and *every thing* in it, is like to any thing in That which is known; and therefore no peculiar Presumption against any thing in the former, upon account of its being unlike to any thing in the latter. And in the Constitution and natural Government of the World, as well as in the moral Government of it, we see things, in a great Degree, unlike one another: and therefore ought not to wonder at such Unlikeness between things visible and invisible. However, the Scheme of Christianity is by no means entirely unlike the Scheme of Nature; as will appear in the following Part of this Treatise.

The Notion of a Miracle, considered as a Proof of a divine Mission, has been stated  
2 with



PART with great Exactness by Divines; and is, I  
 II. think, sufficiently understood by every one.

There are also invisible Miracles, the Incarnation of Christ, for Instance, which, being secret, cannot be alledged as a Proof of such a Mission; but require themselves to be proved by visible Miracles. Revelation itself too is miraculous; and Miracles are the Proof of it: and the supposed Presumption against these, shall presently be considered. All which I have been observing here is, that, whether we chuse to call every thing in the Dispensations of Providence, not discoverable without Revelation, nor like the known Course of things, miraculous; and whether the general Christian Dispensation now mentioned, is to be called so, or not; the foregoing Observations seem certainly to shew, that there is no Presumption against it, from the Analogy of Nature.

II. There is no Presumption, from Analogy, against some Operations, which, we should now call miraculous; particularly none against a Revelation, at the Beginning of the World: nothing of such Presumption against it, as is supposed to be implied or expressed in the Word, *miraculous*. For a Miracle, in its very Notion, is relative to a Course of Nature; and implies somewhat different from it, considered as being so. Now, either there

was no Course of Nature at the Time which we are speaking of: or if there were, we are not acquainted, what the Course of Nature is, upon the first peopling of Worlds. And therefore the Question, whether Mankind had a Revelation made to them at That Time, is to be considered, not as a Question concerning a Miracle, but as a common Question of Fact. And we have the like Reason, be it more or less, to admit the Report of Tradition, concerning this Question, and concerning common Matters of Fact of the same Antiquity; for Instance, what Part of the Earth was first peopled.

CHAP.  
II.

Or thus: When Mankind was first placed in this State, there was a Power exerted, totally different from the present Course of Nature. Now, whether this Power, thus wholly different from the present Course of Nature, for we cannot properly apply to it the Word *miraculous*; whether This Power stopped immediately after it had made Man, or went on, and exerted itself farther in giving him a Revelation, is a Question of the same Kind, as whether an ordinary Power exerted itself in such a particular Degree and Manner, or not.

Or suppose the Power exerted in the Formation of the World, be considered as miraculous

R

culous

PART culous, or rather, be called by that Name ;  
 II. the Case will not be different : since it must be  
 acknowledged, that such a Power was exerted. For supposing it acknowledged, that our Saviour spent some Years in a Course of working Miracles : there is no more Presumption, worth mentioning, against his having exerted this miraculous Power, in a certain Degree greater, than in a certain Degree less ; in one or two more Instances, than in one or two fewer ; in this, than in another Manner.

It is evident then, that there can be no peculiar Presumption, from the Analogy of Nature, against supposing a Revelation, when Man was first placed upon the Earth.

Add, that there does not appear the least Intimation in History or Tradition, that Religion was first reasoned out : but the whole of History and Tradition makes for the other Side, that it came into the World by Revelation. Indeed the State of Religion in the first Ages, of which we have any Account, seems to suppose and imply, that this was the Original of it amongst Mankind. And these Reflections together, without taking in the peculiar Authority of Scripture, amount to real and a very material Degree of Evidence, that there was a Revelation at the Beginning  
 of

of the World. Now this, as it is a Confirmation of natural Religion, and therefore mentioned in the former Part of this Treatise<sup>d</sup>; so likewise it has a Tendency to remove any Prejudices against a subsequent Revelation.

CHAP.  
II.

III. But still it may be objected, that there is some peculiar Presumption, from Analogy, against Miracles; particularly against Revelation, after the Settlement and during the Continuance of a Course of Nature.

Now with regard to this supposed Presumption, it is to be observed in general; that before we can have Ground for raising what can, with any Propriety, be called an *Argument* from Analogy, for or against Revelation considered as somewhat miraculous, we must be acquainted with a similar or parallel Case. But the History of some other World, seemingly in like Circumstances with our own, is no more than a parallel Case: and therefore Nothing short of This, can be so. Yet, could we come at a presumptive Proof, for or against a Revelation, from being informed, whether such World had one, or not; such a Proof being drawn from one single Instance only, must be infinitely precarious. More particularly: *First* of all; There is a

<sup>d</sup> p. 170, &c.

PART II. very strong Presumption against common speculative Truths, and against the most ordinary Facts, before the Proof of them; which yet is overcome by almost any Proof. There is a Presumption of Millions to one, against the Story of *Cæsar*, or of any other Man. For suppose a Number of common Facts so and so circumstanced, of which one had no kind of Proof, should happen to come into one's Thoughts; every one would, without any possible Doubt, conclude them to be false. And the like may be said of a single common Fact. And from hence it appears, that the Question of Importance, as to the Matter before us, is concerning the Degree of the peculiar Presumption supposed against Miracles; not whether there be any peculiar Presumption at all against them. For, if there be the Presumption of Millions to one, against the most common Facts; What can a small Presumption, additional to this, amount to, though it be peculiar? It cannot be estimated, and is as Nothing. The only material Question is, whether there be any such Presumption against Miracles, as to render them in any sort incredible. *Secondly*, If we leave out the Consideration of Religion, we are in such total Darkness, upon what Causes, Occasions, Reasons, or Circumstances, the present Course of Nature depends; that there does not appear any Improbability for or

against supposing, that five or six thousand Years may have given Scope for Causes, Occasions, Reasons or Circumstances, from whence miraculous Interpositions may have arisen. And from this, joined with the foregoing Observation, it will follow, that there must be a Presumption, beyond all Comparison, greater, against the *particular* common Facts just now instanced in, than against Miracles *in general*; before any Evidence of either. But, *Thirdly*, Take in the Consideration of Religion, or the moral System of the World, and then we see distinct particular Reasons for Miracles: to afford Mankind Instruction additional to that of Nature, and to attest the Truth of it. And this gives a real Credibility to the Supposition, that it might be Part of the original Plan of things, that there should be miraculous Interpositions. Then, *Lastly*, Miracles must not be compared to common natural Events; or to Events which, though uncommon, are similar to what we daily experience: but to the extraordinary Phenomena of Nature. And then, the Comparison will be between the Presumption against Miracles, and the Presumption against such uncommon Appearances, suppose, as Comets, and against there being any such Powers in Nature as Magnetism and Electricity, so contrary to the Properties of other Bodies not endued with these Powers. And

CHAP.  
II.  
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PART before any one can determine, whether there  
 II. be any peculiar Presumption against Miracles,  
 more than against other extraordinary things; he must consider, what, upon first hearing, would be the Presumption against the last mentioned Appearances and Powers, to a Person acquainted only with the daily, monthly, and annual, Course of Nature respecting this Earth, and with those common Powers of Matter which we every Day see.

Upon all this I conclude; That there certainly is no such Presumption against Miracles, as to render them in any wise incredible; That on the contrary, our being able to discern Reasons for them, gives a positive Credibility to the History of them, in Cases where those Reasons hold: And That it is by no means certain, that there is any peculiar Presumption at all, from Analogy, even in the lowest Degree, against Miracles, as distinguished from other extraordinary Phenomena: though it is not worth while to perplex the Reader, with Inquiries into the abstract Nature of Evidence, in order to determine a Question, which, without such Inquiries, we see is of no Importance.

P. 244.

C H A P.

## C H A P. III.

*Of our Incapacity of judging, what were to be expected in a Revelation; and the Credibility, from Analogy, that it must contain things appearing liable to Objections.*

**B**ESIDES the Objections against the Evidence for Christianity, many are al-  
 ledged against the Scheme of it; against the whole Manner in which it is put and left with the World; as well as against several particular Relations in Scripture: Objections drawn, from the Deficiencies of Revelation; from things in it appearing to Men *Foolishness*<sup>a</sup>; from its containing matters of Offence, which have led, and it must have been foreseen would lead, into strange Enthusiasm and Superstition, and be made to serve the Purposes of Tyranny and Wickedness; from its not being universal; and, which is a thing of the same Kind, from its Evidence not being so convincing and satisfactory as it might have been: for this last is sometimes turned into a positive Argument against its Truth<sup>b</sup>. It

CHAP.  
III.

<sup>a</sup> 1 Cor. i. 28.

<sup>b</sup> See Ch. vi.



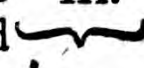
PART would be tedious, indeed impossible, to enumerate the several Particulars comprehended under the Objections here referred to; they being so various, according to the different Fancies of Men. There are Persons, who think it a strong Objection against the Authority of Scripture, that it is not composed by Rules of Art, agreed upon by Criticks, for polite and correct Writing. And the Scorn is inexpressible, with which some of the prophetick Parts of Scripture are treated: partly through the Rashness of Interpreters; but very much also, on account of the hieroglyphical and figurative Language, in which they are left us. Some of the principal things of this Sort shall be particularly considered, in the following Chapters. But my Design at present, is to observe in general, with respect to this whole way of arguing, that, upon Supposition of a Revelation, it is highly credible beforehand, we should be incompetent Judges of it, to a great Degree: and that it would contain many things appearing to us liable to great Objections; in case we judge of it otherwise, than by the Analogy of Nature. And therefore, though Objections against the Evidence of Christianity are most seriously to be considered; yet Objections against Christianity itself are, in a great measure, frivolous: almost all Objections against it, excepting those which are alledged against  
the

the particular Proofs of its coming from God. I express myself with Caution, lest I should be mistaken to vilify Reason: which is indeed the only Faculty we have where-  
with to judge concerning any thing, even Revelation itself: or be misunderstood to assert, that a supposed Revelation cannot be proved false, from internal Characters. For, it may contain clear Immoralities or Contradictions: and either of these would prove it false. Nor will I take upon me to affirm, that Nothing else can possibly render any supposed Revelation incredible. Yet still the Observation above is, I think, true beyond Doubt; that Objections against Christianity, as distinguished from Objections against its Evidence, are frivolous. To make out This, is the general Design of the present Chapter. And with regard to the whole of it, I cannot but particularly wish, that the Proofs might be attended to; rather than the Assertions cavilled at, upon account of any unacceptable Consequences, whether real or supposed, which may be drawn from them. For, after all, That which is true, must be admitted, though it should shew us the Shortness of our Faculties; and that we are in no wise Judges of many things, of which we are apt to think ourselves very competent ones. Nor will this be any Objection with reasonable Men, at least upon second Thought it will  
not

CHAP.  
III.

PART not be any Objection with such, against the  
 II. Justness of the following Observations.

As God governs the World, and instructs his Creatures, according to certain Laws or Rules, in the known Course of Nature; known by Reason together with Experience: so the Scripture informs us of a Scheme of divine Providence, additional to this. It relates, that God has, by Revelation, instructed Men in things concerning his Government, which they could not otherwise have known; and reminded them of things, which they might otherwise know: and attested the Truth of the whole, by Miracles. Now if the natural and the revealed Dispensation of things are both from God, if they coincide with each other, and together make up one Scheme of Providence: our being incompetent Judges of one, must render it credible, that we may be incompetent Judges also of the other. Since, upon Experience, the acknowledged Constitution and Course of Nature is found to be greatly different from what, before Experience, would have been expected; and such as, Men fancy, there lie great Objections against; this renders it beforehand highly credible, that they may find the revealed Dispensation likewise, if they judge of it as they do of the Constitution of Nature, very different from Expectations formed beforehand;

forehand ; and liable, in Appearance, to **CHAP.**  
great Objections ; Objections against the **III.**  
Scheme itself, and against the Degrees and   
Manners of the miraculous Interpositions, by  
which it was attested and carried on. Thus  
suppose a Prince to govern his Dominions in  
the wisest Manner possible, by common  
known Laws ; and that upon some Exigen-  
cies he should suspend these Laws ; and go-  
vern, in several Instances, in a different  
Manner : If one of his Subjects were not a  
competent Judge beforehand, by what com-  
mon Rules the Government should or would  
be carried on ; it could not be expected, that  
the same Person would be a competent Judge,  
in what Exigencies, or in what Manner, or  
to what Degree, those Laws commonly ob-  
served would be suspended or deviated from.  
If he were not a Judge of the Wisdom of  
the ordinary Administration ; there is no Rea-  
son to think, he would be a Judge of the  
Wisdom of the extraordinary. If he thought  
he had Objections against the former ; doubt-  
less, it is highly supposeable, he might think  
also, that he had Objections against the latter.  
And thus, as we fall into infinite Follies and  
Mistakes, whenever we pretend, otherwise  
than from Experience and Analogy, to judge  
of the Constitution and Course of Nature ;  
it is evidently supposeable beforehand, that  
we should fall into as great, in pretending to  
judge,

PART judge, in like manner, concerning Revela-  
 II. tion. Nor is there any more Ground to ex-  
 ~~~~~ pect, that this latter should appear to us clear  
 of Objections, than that the former should.

These Observations, relating to the Whole of Christianity, are applicable to Inspiration in particular. As we are in no sort Judges beforehand, by what Laws or Rules, in what Degree, or by what Means, it were to have been expected, that God would naturally instruct us: so upon Supposition of his affording us Light and Instruction by Revelation, additional to what he has afforded us by Reason and Experience, we are in no sort Judges, by what Methods and in what Proportion, it were to be expected, that this supernatural Light and Instruction would be afforded us. We know not beforehand, what Degree or Kind of natural Information, it were to be expected God would afford Men, each by his own Reason and Experience: nor how far He would enable, and effectually dispose them to communicate it, whatever it should be, to each other: nor whether the Evidence of it would be, certain, highly probable, or doubtful: nor whether it would be given with equal Clearness and Conviction to all. Nor could we guess, upon any good Ground I mean, whether natural Knowledge, or even the Faculty itself, by which we are capable
 of

of attaining it, Reason, would be given us CHAP.
at once, or gradually. In like manner, we III,
are wholly ignorant what Degree of new }
Knowledge, it were to be expected, God
would give Mankind by Revelation, upon
Supposition of his affording one: or how far,
or in what Way, he would interpose miracu-
lously, to qualify them, to whom he should
originally make the Revelation, for commu-
nicating the Knowledge given by it; and to
secure their doing it to the Age in which they
should live; and to secure its being transmit-
ted to Posterity. We are equally ignorant,
whether the Evidence of it would be, certain,
or highly probable, or doubtful^c: or whe-
ther all who should have any Degree of In-
struction from it, and any Degree of Evidence
of its Truth, would have the same: or whe-
ther the Scheme would be revealed at once,
or unfolded gradually. Nay we are not in
any sort able to judge, whether it were to
have been expected, that the Revelation
should have been committed to Writing; or
left to be handed down, and consequently
corrupted by verbal Tradition, and at length
sunk under it, if Mankind so pleased, and
during such Time as they are permitted,
in the Degree they evidently are, to act
as they will.

^c See Ch. vi.

But

PART But it may be said, " that a Revelation in
 II. " some of the abovementioned Circumstances; one, for Instance, which was not
 " committed to Writing, and thus secured
 " against Danger of Corruption, would not
 " have answered its Purpose." I ask, what Purpose? It would not have answered all the Purposes which it has now answered, and in the same Degree: but it would have answered others, or the same in different Degrees. And which of these were the Purposes of God, and best fell in with his general Government, we could not at all have determined beforehand.

Now since it has been shewn, that we have no Principles of Reason, upon which to judge beforehand, how it were to be expected Revelation should have been left, or what was most suitable to the divine Plan of Government, in any of the forementioned Respects; it must be quite frivolous to object afterwards as to any of them, against its being left in one Way, rather than another: For this would be to object against Things, upon account of their being different from Expectations, which have been shewn to be without Reason. And thus we see, that the only Question concerning the Truth of Christianity, is, whether it be a real Revelation: not whether it be attended

tended with every Circumstance which we should have looked for: and concerning the Authority of Scripture, whether it be what it claims to be; not whether it be a Book of such Sort, and so promulged, as weak Men are apt to fancy, a Book containing a divine Revelation should. And therefore, neither Obscurity, nor seeming Inaccuracy of Stile, nor various Readings, nor early Disputes about the Authors of particular Parts; nor any other things of the like Kind, though they had been much more considerable in Degree than they are, could overthrow the Authority of the Scripture: unless the Prophets, Apostles, or our Lord, had promised, that the Book containing the divine Revelation, should be secure from those things. Nor indeed can any Objections overthrow such a Kind of Revelation as the Christian claims to be, since there are no Objections against the Morality of it^d, but such as can shew, that there is no Proof of Miracles wrought originally in Attestation of it; no Appearance of any thing miraculous in its obtaining in the World; nor any of Prophecy, that is, of Events foretold, which human Sagacity could not foresee. If it can be shewn, that the Proof alledged for all these, is absolutely none at all, then is Revelation overturned. But were it allowed, that the Proof of any one

CHAP.
III.

^d p. 266.

PART or all of them, is lower than is allowed ;
 II. yet, whilst any Proof of them remains, Re-
 ~~~~~  
 velation will stand upon much the same Foot  
 it does at present, as to all the Purposes of Life  
 and Practice, and ought to have the like In-  
 fluence upon our Behaviour.

From the foregoing Observations too, it will follow, and those who will thoroughly examine into Revelation, will find it worth remarking ; that there are several Ways of arguing, which, though just with regard to other Writings, are not applicable to Scripture : at least not to the prophetick Parts of it. We cannot argue, for Instance, that This cannot be the Sense or Intent of such a Passage of Scripture ; for if it had, it would have been expressed more plainly, or have been represented under a more apt Figure or Hieroglyphick : Yet we may justly argue thus, with respect to common Books. And the Reason of this Difference is very evident ; that in Scripture, we are not competent Judges, as we are in common Books, how plainly it were to have been expected, what is the true Sense should have been exprest, or under how apt an Image figured. The only Question is, what Appearance there is, that This is the Sense ; and scarce at all, how much more determinately or accurately it might have been exprest or figured.

“ But

“ But is it not self-evident, that internal  
“ Improbabilities of all Kinds, weaken exter-  
“ nal probable Proof?” Doubtless. But to  
what practical Purpose can this be alledged  
here, when it has been proved before\*, that  
real internal Improbabilities which rise even  
to moral Certainty, are overcome by the most  
ordinary Testimony; and when it now has  
been made appear, that we scarce know what  
are Improbabilities, as to the Matter we are  
here considering: as it will farther appear  
from what follows.

CHAP.  
III.

For though from the Observations above  
made, it is manifest, that we are not in any  
sort competent Judges, what supernatural In-  
struction were to have been expected; and  
though it is self-evident, that the Objections  
of an incompetent Judgment must be frivo-  
lous: Yet it may be proper to go one Step  
farther, and observe; that if Men will be re-  
gardless of these things, and pretend to judge  
of the Scripture by preconceived Expectati-  
ons; the Analogy of Nature shews before-  
hand not only that it is highly credible they  
may, but also probable that they will, ima-  
gine they have strong Objections against it,  
however really unexceptionable: for so, prior  
to Experience, they would think they had,

\* p. 244.

S

against

PART II. against the Circumstances and Degrees and the whole Manner of That Instruction, which is afforded by the ordinary Course of Nature.

Were the Instruction which God affords to brute Creatures by Instincts and mere Propensions, and to Mankind by these together with Reason, Matter of probable Proof, and not of certain Observation; it would be rejected as incredible, in many Instances of it, only upon account of the Means by which this Instruction is given, the seeming Disproportions, the Limitations, necessary Conditions, and Circumstances of it. For Instance: Would it not have been thought highly improbable, that Men should have been so much more capable of discovering, even to Certainty, the general Laws of Matter, and the Magnitudes, Paths and Revolutions of the heavenly Bodies; than the Occasions and Cures of Distempers, and many other things, in which Human Life seems so much more nearly concerned, than in Astronomy? How capricious and irregular a Way of Information, would it be said, is That of *Invention*, by Means of which, Nature instructs us in Matters of Science, and in many things, upon which the Affairs of the World greatly depend: That a Man should, by this Faculty, be made acquainted with a Thing in an Instant, when perhaps he is thinking of somewhat else, which he has in vain been searching

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ing

*must appear liable to Objections.*

828  
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ing after, it may be, for Years. So likewise CHAP.  
the Imperfections attending the only Method, III.  
by which Nature enables and directs us to  
communicate our Thoughts to each other,  
are innumerable. Language is, in its very  
Nature, inadequate, ambiguous, liable to in-  
finite Abuse, even from Negligence; and so  
liable to it from Design, that every Man can  
deceive and betray by it. And, to mention  
but one Instance more; that Brutes, without  
Reason, should act, in many Respects, with  
a Sagacity and Foresight, vastly greater than  
what Men have in those Respects, would be  
thought impossible. Yet it is certain they do  
act with such superior Foresight: whether it  
be their own indeed, is another Question.  
From these things, it is highly credible be-  
forehand, that upon Supposition God should  
afford Men some additional Instruction by Re-  
velation, it would be with Circumstances, in  
Manners, Degrees and Respects, which we  
should be apt to fancy we had great Objec-  
tions against the Credibility of. Nor are the  
Objections against the Scripture, nor against  
Christianity in general, at all more or greater,  
than the Analogy of Nature would before-  
hand—not perhaps give Ground to expect;  
for this Analogy may not be sufficient, in  
some Cases, to ground an Expectation upon;  
but no more nor greater, than Analogy would  
shew it, beforehand, to be supposable and  
S 2 credible,

**PART** credible, that there might seem to lie against

**III.** Revelation.

By applying these general Observations to a particular Objection, it will be more distinctly seen, how they are applicable to others of the like Kind: and indeed to almost all Objections against Christianity, as distinguished from Objections against its Evidence. It appears from Scripture, that, as it was not unusual in the Apostolick Age, for Persons, upon their Conversion to Christianity, to be endued with miraculous Gifts; so, some of those Persons exercised these Gifts in a strangely irregular and disorderly Manner: And this is made an Objection against their being really miraculous. Now the foregoing Observations quite remove this Objection, how considerable soever it may appear at first sight. For, consider a Person endued with any of these Gifts; for Instance, That of Tongues: It is to be supposed, that he had the same Power over this miraculous Gift, as he would have had over it, had it been the Effect of Habit, of Study and Use, as it ordinarily is; or the same Power over it, as he had over any other natural Endowment. Consequently, he would use it in the same Manner he did any other; either regularly and upon proper Occasions only, or irregularly and upon improper ones: according to his Sense of Decency, and his Charac-

**Character of Prudence.** Where then is the **CHAP.**  
**Objection?** Why, if this miraculous Power **III.**  
was indeed given to the World, to propagate  
Christianity and attest the Truth of it, we  
might, it seems, have expected, that other  
sort of Persons should have been chosen to be  
invested with it; or that these should, at the  
same Time have been endued with Pru-  
dence; or that they should have been, con-  
tinually, restrained and directed in the Exer-  
cise of it: *i. e.* that God should have mira-  
culously interposed, if at all, in a different  
Manner or higher Degree. But from the  
Observations made above, it is undeniably  
evident, that we are not Judges, in what De-  
grees and Manners, it were to have been ex-  
pected, he should miraculously interpose:  
upon Supposition of his doing it in some De-  
gree and Manner. Nor, in the natural Course  
of Providence, are superior Gifts of Memo-  
ry, Eloquence, Knowledge, and other Ta-  
lents of great Influence, conferred only on  
Persons of Prudence and Decency, or such as  
are disposed to make the properest Use of  
them. Nor is the Instruction and Admoni-  
tion naturally afforded us for the Conduct of  
Life, particularly in our Education, com-  
monly given in a Manner the most suited to  
recommend it: but often with Circumstances  
apt to prejudice us against such Instruction.

PART  
II.

One may go on to add, that there is a great Resemblance between the Light of Nature and of Revelation, in several other Respects. Practical Christianity, or That Faith and Behaviour which renders a Man a Christian, is a plain and obvious thing: like the common Rules of Conduct, with respect to our ordinary temporal Affairs. The more distinct and particular Knowledge of those things, the Study of which the Apostle calls *going on unto Perfection*<sup>f</sup>, and of the prophetic Parts of Revelation, like many Parts of natural and even civil Knowledge, may require very exact Thought, and careful Consideration. The Hindrances too, of natural, and of supernatural Light and Knowledge, have been of the same Kind. And as, it is owned, the whole Scheme of Scripture is not yet understood; so, if it ever comes to be understood, before the *Restitution of all things*<sup>g</sup>, and without miraculous Interpositions; it must be in the same Way as natural Knowledge is come at: by the Continuance and Progress of Learning and of Liberty; and by particular Persons attending to, comparing and pursuing, Intimations scattered up and down it, which are overlooked and disregarded by the Generality of the World. For this is the Way, in which all Improvements are

<sup>f</sup> Heb. vi. 1.<sup>g</sup> Acts iii. 21.

made;

made; by thoughtful Mens tracing on obscure Hints, as it were, dropped us by Nature accidentally, or which seem to come into our Minds by Chance. Nor is it at all incredible, that a Book, which has been so long in the Possession of Mankind, should contain many Truths as yet undiscovered. For, all the same Phenomena, and the same Faculties of Investigation, from which such great Discoveries in natural Knowledge have been made in the present and last Age, were equally in the Possession of Mankind, several thousand Years before. And possibly it might be intended, that Events, as they come to pass, should open and ascertain the Meaning of several Parts of Scripture.

It may be objected, that this Analogy fails in a material Respect: for that natural Knowledge is of little or no Consequence. But I have been speaking of the general Instruction, which Nature does or does not afford us. And besides, some Parts of natural Knowledge, in the more common restrained Sense of the Words, are of the greatest Consequence to the Ease and Convenience of Life. But suppose the Analogy did, as it does not, fail in this Respect; yet it might be abundantly supplied, from the whole Constitution and Course of Nature: which shews, that God does not dispense his Gifts, according to our Notions



264 *The Credibility, that a Revelation*

PART of the Advantage and Consequence they would  
II. be of to us. And this in general, with his  
Method of dispensing Knowledge in particular, would together make out an Analogy full to the Point before us.

But it may be objected still farther and more generally; "The Scripture represents the World as in a State of Ruin, and Christianity as an Expedient to recover it, to help in these Respects where Nature fails: in particular, to supply the Deficiencies of natural Light. Is it credible then, that so many Ages should have been let pass, before a Matter of such a Sort, of so great and so general Importance, was made known to Mankind; and then that it should be made known to so small a Part of them? Is it conceivable, that this Supply should be so very deficient, should have the like Obscurity and Doubtfulness, be liable to the like Perversions, in short, lie open to all the like Objections, as the Light of Nature itself<sup>h</sup>" Without determining how far this in Fact is so, I answer; It is by no means incredible, that it might be so, if the Light of Nature and of Revelation be from the same Hand. Men are naturally liable to Diseases: for which God, in his good Providence, has provided natural Remedies. But Remedies existing in Nature, have been un-

<sup>h</sup> Ch. vi.

<sup>i</sup> See Ch. v.

known

known to Mankind for many Ages: are known but to few now: probably many valuable ones are not known yet. Great has been and is the Obscurity and Difficulty, in the Nature and Application of them. Circumstances seem often to make them very improper, where they are absolutely necessary. It is after long Labour and Study, and many unsuccessful Endeavours, that they are brought to be as useful, as they are; after high Contempt and absolute Rejection of the most useful we have; and after Disputes and Doubts, which have seemed to be endless. The best Remedies too, when unskillfully, much more if dishonestly applied, may produce new Diseases: and with the rightest Application, the Success of them is often doubtful. In many Cases, they are not at all effectual: where they are, it is often very slowly: and the Application of them, and the necessary Regimen accompanying it, is not uncommonly, so disagreeable, that some will not submit to them; and satisfy themselves with the Excuse, that if they would, it is not certain, whether it would be successful. And many Persons, who labour under Diseases, for which there are known natural Remedies, are not so happy as to be always, if ever, in the Way of them. In a Word, the Remedies which Nature has provided for Diseases, are neither certain, perfect, nor universal.

CHAP.  
III.

PART *verfal.* And indeed the same Principles of  
 II. arguing, which would lead us to conclude,  
 that they must be so, would lead us likewise  
 to conclude, that there could be no Occasion  
 for them; *i. e.* that there could be no Diseases  
 at all. And therefore, our Experience that  
 there are Diseases, shews, that it is credible  
 beforehand, upon Supposition Nature has  
 provided Remedies for them, that these Re-  
 medies may be, as by Experience we find  
 they are, not certain, nor perfect, nor uni-  
 versal; because it shews, that the Principles  
 upon which we should expect the contrary,  
 are fallacious.

And now, what is the just Consequence  
 from all these things? Not that Reason is no  
 Judge of what is offered to us as being of  
 divine Revelation. For this would be to in-  
 fer, that we are unable to judge of any thing,  
 because we are unable to judge of all things.  
 Reason can, and it ought to judge, not only  
 of the Meaning, but also of the Morality and  
 the Evidence, of Revelation. *First,* It is  
 the Province of Reason to judge of the Mo-  
 rality of the Scripture; *i. e.* not whether it  
 contains Things different from what we should  
 have expected, from a wise, just and good  
 Being; for Objections from hence have been  
 now obviated: but whether it contains things  
 plainly contradictory to Wisdom, Justice or  
 Goodness;

Goodness; to what the Light of Nature **CHAP.**  
teaches us of God. And I know nothing of **III.**  
this Sort objected against Scripture, excepting  
such Objections as are formed upon Supposi-  
tions, which would equally conclude, that the  
Constitution of Nature is contradictory to  
Wisdom, Justice or Goodness; which most  
certainly it is not. Indeed there are some  
particular Precepts in Scripture, given to par-  
ticular Persons, requiring Actions, which  
would be immoral and vicious, were it not  
for such Precepts. But it is easy to see, that  
all these are of such a Kind, as that the Pre-  
cept changes the whole Nature of the Case  
and of the Action; and both constitutes, and  
shews That not to be unjust or immoral,  
which, prior to the Precept, must have ap-  
peared and really have been so; which may  
well be, since none of these Precepts are  
contrary to immutable Morality. If it were  
commanded, to cultivate the Principles, and  
act from the Spirit of Treachery, Ingrati-  
tude, Cruelty; the Command would not al-  
ter the Nature of the Case or of the Action,  
in any of these Instances. But it is quite  
otherwise in Precepts, which require only the  
doing an external Action: for Instance, taking  
away the Property or Life of any. For Men  
have no Right to either Life or Property, but  
what arises solely from the Grant of God;  
When this Grant is revoked, they cease to  
have

PART have any Right at all, in either: And when  
 II. this Revocation is made known, as surely it is  
 possible it may be, it must cease to be unjust  
 to deprive them of either. And though a  
 Course of external Acts, which without Com-  
 mand would be immoral, must make an im-  
 moral Habit; yet a few detached Commands  
 have no such natural Tendency. I thought  
 proper to say thus much of the few Scripture  
 Precepts, which require, not vicious Actions,  
 but Actions which would have been vicious  
 had it not been for such Precepts; because  
 they are sometimes weakly urged as immo-  
 ral, and great Weight is laid upon Objec-  
 tions drawn from them. But to me there  
 seems no Difficulty at all in these Precepts,  
 but what arises from their being Offences: *i. e.*  
 from their being liable to be perverted, as in-  
 deed they are, by wicked designing Men, to  
 serve the most horrid Purposes; and perhaps,  
 to mislead the weak and enthusiastick. And  
 Objections from this Head, are not Objec-  
 tions against Revelation; but against the  
 whole Notion of Religion, as a Trial; and  
 against the general Constitution of Nature.  
*Secondly*, Reason is able to judge, and must,  
 of the Evidence of Revelation, and of the  
 Objections urged against That Evidence:  
 which shall be the Subject of a following  
 Chapter<sup>k</sup>.

<sup>k</sup> Ch. vii.

But

*must appear liable to Objections.*

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But the Consequence of the foregoing Observations is, that the Question, upon which the Truth of Christianity depends, is scarce at all, what Objections there are against its Scheme, since there are none against the Morality of it; but *what Objections there are against its Evidence:* or, *what Proof there remains of it after due Allowances made for the Objections against that Proof:* Because it has been shewn that the *Objections against Christianity, as distinguished from Objections against its Evidence, are frivolous.* For surely very little Weight, if any at all, is to be laid upon a way of arguing and objecting, which, when applied to the general Constitution of Nature, Experience shows not to be conclusive: and such, I think, is the Whole way of objecting treated of throughout this Chapter. It is resolveable into Principles, and goes upon Suppositions, which mislead us to think, that the Author of Nature would not act, as we experience He does; or would act, in such and such Cases, as we experience he does not in like Cases. But the Unreasonableness of this Way of objecting, will appear yet more evidently from hence, that the chief things thus objected against, are justified, as

<sup>1</sup> Ch. iv. latter part. And v, vi.

lar,

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III.

PART lar, and full Analogies, in the Constitution  
 II. and Course of Nature.

But it is to be remembred, that, as frivolous as Objections of the foregoing Sort against Revelation are, yet, when a supposed Revelation is more consistent with itself, and has a more general and uniform Tendency to promote Virtue, than, all Circumstances considered, could have been expected from Enthusiasm and political Views; this is a presumptive Proof of its not proceeding from Them, and so of its Truth: because we are competent Judges, what might have been expected, from Enthusiasm and political Views.

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C H A P.

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## C H A P. IV.

*Of Christianity, considered as a Scheme  
or Constitution, imperfectly compre-  
hended.*

**I**T hath been now shewn <sup>a</sup> that the Ana- CHAP.  
IV.  
logy of Nature renders it highly credi-  
ble beforehand, that supposing a Revelation  
to be made, it must contain many things  
very different from what we should have ex-  
pected, and such as appear open to great Ob-  
jections: And that this Observation, in good  
measure, takes off the Force of those Objec-  
tions, or rather precludes them. But it may  
be alledged, that this is a very partial Answer  
to such Objections, or a very unsatisfactory  
Way of obviating them: because it doth not  
shew at all, that the Things objected against  
can be wise, just, and good; much less, that  
it is credible they are so. It will therefore be  
proper to shew this distinctly; by applying  
to these Objections against the Wisdom, Jus-  
tice, and Goodness of Christianity, the Answer  
above <sup>b</sup> given to the like Objections against  
the Constitution of Nature: before we con-

<sup>a</sup> In the foregoing Chapter.

<sup>b</sup> Part I. Ch. vii: To which This all along refers.

sider



**PART** sider the particular Analogies in the latter, to  
**II.** the particular things objected against in the  
 former. Now that which affords a sufficient  
 Answer to Objections against the Wisdom,  
 Justice and Goodness of the Constitution of  
 Nature, is its being a Constitution, a System  
 or Scheme, imperfectly comprehended; a  
 Scheme, in which Means are made use of  
 to accomplish Ends; and which is carried on  
 by general Laws. For from these things it  
 has been proved, not only to be possible, but  
 also to be credible, that those things which  
 are objected against, may be consistent with  
 Wisdom, Justice and Goodness; nay, may  
 be Instances of them: and even that the  
 Constitution and Government of Nature may  
 be perfect in the highest possible Degree. If  
 Christianity then be a Scheme, and of the  
 like Kind; it is evident, the like Objections  
 against it, must admit of the like Answer.  
 And,

**I.** Christianity is a Scheme, quite beyond  
 our Comprehension. The moral Government  
 of God is exercised, by gradually conducting  
 things so in the Course of his Providence, that  
 every one, at length and upon the whole,  
 shall receive according to his Deserts; and  
 neither Fraud nor Violence, but Truth and  
 Right, shall finally prevail. Christianity is a  
 particular Scheme under this general Plan of  
 Providence,

Providence, and a Part of it, conducive to CHAP.  
its Completion, with regard to Mankind: IV.  
consisting itself also of various Parts, and a  
mysterious Oeconomy, which has been car-  
rying on from the Time the World came in-  
to its present wretched State, and is still car-  
rying on, for its Recovery, by a divine Per-  
son, the Messiah; who is to *gather together*  
*in one, the children of God, that are scattered*  
*abroad<sup>c</sup>; and establish an everlasting King-*  
*dom, wherein dwelleth Righteousness<sup>d</sup>.* And  
in order to it; after various Manifestations of  
things, relating to this great and general  
Scheme of Providence, through a Succession  
of many Ages: (For *the Spirit of Christ*  
*which was in the Prophets, testified beforehand*  
*his sufferings, and the glory that should follow:*  
*Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto*  
*themselves, but unto us they did minister the*  
*things which are now reported unto us by them*  
*that have preached the Gospel; which things*  
*the Angels desire to look into<sup>e</sup>;) — after va-*  
rious Dispensations, looking forward, and pre-  
paratory, to this final Salvation: *in the full-*  
*ness of time,* when infinite Wisdom thought  
fit; He, *being in the form of God, — made*  
*himself of no reputation, and took upon him*  
*the form of a Servant, and was made in the*  
*likeness of Men: And being found in fashion*

<sup>c</sup> John xi. 52.

<sup>d</sup> 2 Pet. iii. 13.

<sup>e</sup> 1 Pet. i. 11, 12.

PART as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the Cross:  
 II. *Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in the earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father<sup>f</sup>. Parts likewise of this Oeconomy, are the miraculous Mission of the Holy Ghost, and His ordinary Assistances given to good Men: the invisible Government, which Christ at present exercises over his Church: That which he himself refers to in these words, <sup>g</sup> *In my Father's house are many Mansions—I go to prepare a place for you: and his future Return to judge the World in Righteousness, and compleatly re-establish the Kingdom of God. For the Father judgeth no Man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all Men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father<sup>h</sup>. All power is given unto him in heaven and in earth<sup>i</sup>. And he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. And**

<sup>f</sup> Phil. ii.<sup>h</sup> John v. 22, 23.<sup>g</sup> John xiv. 2.<sup>i</sup> Matth. xxviii. 18.

*imperfectly comprehended.*

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*when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all*<sup>k</sup>. Now little, surely, need be said to shew, that this System, or Scheme of things, is but imperfectly comprehended by us. The Scripture expressly asserts it to be so. And indeed one cannot read a Passage relating to this *great Mystery of Godliness*<sup>l</sup>, but what immediately runs up into something which shews our Ignorance in it; as every thing in Nature shews us our Ignorance in the Constitution of Nature. And whoever will seriously consider That Part of the Christian Scheme, which is revealed in Scripture, will find so much more unrevealed, as will convince him, that, to all the Purposes of judging and objecting, we know as little of it, as of the Constitution of Nature. Our Ignorance, therefore, is as much an Answer to our Objections against the Perfection of one, as against the Perfection of the other<sup>m</sup>.

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II. It is obvious too, that in the Christian Dispensation, as much as in the natural Scheme of things, Means are made use of to accomplish Ends. And the Observation of this furnishes us with the same Answer, to Objections against the Perfection of Christia-

<sup>k</sup> 1 Cor. xv.    <sup>l</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 16.    <sup>m</sup> p. 181, &c.

PART nity, as to Objections of the like kind, a-  
 II. gainst the Constitution of Nature. It shews  
 the Credibility, that the things objected a-  
 gainst, how *foolish*<sup>n</sup> soever they appear to  
 Men, may be the very best Means of accom-  
 plishing the very best Ends. And their ap-  
 pearing *Foolishness* is no Presumption against  
 this, in a Scheme so greatly beyond our Com-  
 prehension<sup>o</sup>,

III. The Credibility, that the Christian Dis-  
 pensation may have been, all along, carried  
 on by general Laws<sup>p</sup>, no less than the Course  
 of Nature, may require to be more distinctly  
 made out. Consider then, upon what Ground  
 it is we say, that the whole common Course  
 of Nature is carried on according to general  
 fore-ordained Laws. We know indeed sever-  
 al of the general Laws of Matter: and a  
 great Part of the natural Behaviour of living  
 Agents, is reducible to general Laws. But we  
 know in a manner nothing, by what Laws,  
 Storms and Tempests, Earthquakes, Famine,  
 Pestilence, become the Instruments of De-  
 struction to Mankind. And the Laws, by  
 which Persons born into the World at such a  
 Time and Place, are of such Capacities, Ge-  
 nius's, Tempers; the Laws, by which  
 Thoughts come into our Mind, in a multi-

<sup>n</sup> 1 Cor. i.    <sup>o</sup> p. 187, 188.    <sup>p</sup> p. 189, 190.

tude of Cafes ; and by which innumerable CHAP  
things happen, of the greateft Influence upon IV.  
the Affairs and State of the World ; thefe  
Laws are fo wholly unknown to us, that we  
call the Events which come to pafs by them,  
accidental : though all reasonable Men know  
certainly, that there cannot, in reality, be  
any fuch thing as Chance ; and conclude, that  
the things which have this Appearance are the  
Refult of general Laws, and may be reduced  
into them. It is then but an exceeding little  
Way, and in but a very few Refpects, that  
we can trace up the natural Courfe of things  
before us, to general Laws. And it is only  
from Analogy, that we conclude the Whole  
of it to be capable of being reduced into  
them : only from our feeing, that Part is fo.  
It is from our finding, that the Courfe of  
Nature, in fome Refpects and fo far, goes on  
by general Laws, that we conclude this of the  
reft. And if That be a juft Ground for fuch  
a Conclusion, it is a juft Ground alfo, if not  
to conclude, yet to apprehend, to render it  
fuppofeable and credible, which is fufficient  
for answering Objections, that God's miracu-  
lous Interpositions may have been, all along  
in like manner, by *general* Laws of Wifdom.  
Thus, that miraculous Powers fhould be ex-  
erted, at fuch Times, upon fuch Occafions,  
in fuch Degrees and Manners, and with re-

PART gard to such Persons, rather than others ;

II. that the Affairs of the World, being permitted to go on in their natural Course so far, should, just at such a Point, have a new Direction given them by miraculous Interpositions ; that these Interpositions should be exactly in such Degrees and Respects only ; all this may have been by general Laws. These Laws are unknown indeed to us ; but no more unknown, than the Laws from whence it is, that Some die as soon as they are born, and Others live to extream Old-age ; that One Man is so superior to Another in Understanding ; with innumerable more things, which, as was before observed, we cannot reduce to any Laws or Rules at all, though it is taken for granted, they are as much reducible to general ones, as Gravitation. Now, if the revealed Dispensations of Providence, and miraculous Interpositions, be by general Laws, as well as God's ordinary Government in the Course of Nature, made known by Reason and Experience ; there is no more Reason to expect, that every Exigence, as it arises, should be provided for by these general Laws of miraculous Interpositions, than that every Exigence in Nature should, by the general Laws of Nature. Yet there might be wise and good Reasons, that miraculous Interpositions should be by general Laws : and that

these Laws should not be broken in upon, or deviated from, by other Miracles.

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Upon the whole then : The Appearance of Deficiencies and Irregularities of Nature, is owing to its being a Scheme but in part made known, and of such a certain particular Kind in other Respects. Now we see no more Reason, why the Frame and Course of Nature should be such a Scheme, than why Christianity should. And that the former is such a Scheme, renders it credible, that the latter, upon Supposition of its Truth, may be so too. And as it is manifest, that Christianity is a Scheme revealed but in part, and a Scheme in which Means are made use of to accomplish Ends ; like to That of Nature : So the Credibility, that it may have been all along carried on by general Laws, no less than the Course of Nature, has been distinctly proved. And from all this it is beforehand credible, that there might, I think probable that there would, be the like Appearance of Deficiencies and Irregularities in Christianity, as in Nature : *i. e.* that Christianity would be liable to the like Objections, as the Frame of Nature. And these Objections are answered by these Observations concerning Christianity ; as the like Objections against the Frame of Nature, are answered by the like



PART like Observations concerning the Frame of  
 II. Nature.



THE Objections against Christianity, considered as a Matter of Fact<sup>1</sup>, having, in general, been obviated in the preceding Chapter; and the same, considered as made against the Wisdom and Goodness of it, having been obviated in this; the next thing, according to the Method proposed, is to shew, that the principal Objections, in particular, against Christianity, may be answered, by particular and full Analogies in Nature. And as one of them is made against the whole Scheme of it together, as just now described, I chuse to consider it here, rather than in a distinct Chapter by itself. The thing objected against this Scheme of the Gospel, is, “ that it seems to suppose, God was reduced to the Necessity of a long Series of intricate Means, in order to accomplish his Ends, the Recovery and Salvation of the World: In like sort as Men, for want of Understanding or Power, not being able to come at their Ends directly, are forced to go round-about Ways, and make use of many perplexed Contrivances to arrive at them.” Now

<sup>1</sup> p. 179.

every

every thing which we see, shews the Folly of This, considered as an Objection against the Truth of Christianity. For, according to our Manner of Conception, God makes use of Variety of Means, what we often think tedious ones, in the natural Course of Providence, for the Accomplishment of all his Ends. Indeed it is certain, there is somewhat in this Matter quite beyond our Comprehension : But the Mystery is as great in Nature, as in Christianity. We know what we ourselves aim at, as final Ends : and what Courses we take, merely as Means conducing to those Ends. But we are greatly ignorant, how far things are considered by the Author of Nature, under the single Notion of Means and Ends ; so as that it may be said, This is merely an End, and That merely Means, in His Regard. And whether there be not some peculiar Absurdity in our very Manner of Conception, concerning this Matter, somewhat contradictory arising from our extremely imperfect Views of things, it is impossible to say. However, thus much is manifest, that the whole natural World and Government of it is a Scheme or System ; not a fixt, but a progressive one : a Scheme, in which the Operation of various Means takes up a great Length of Time, before the Ends they tend to can be attained.

The

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IV.

PART The Change of Seasons, the Ripening of the  
 II. Fruits of the Earth, the very History of a  
 Flower, is an Instance of this: And so is  
 human Life. Thus vegetable Bodies, and  
 those of Animals, though possibly formed at  
 once, yet grow up by Degrees to a mature  
 State. And thus rational Agents, who ani-  
 mate these latter Bodies, are naturally directed  
 to form, each his own Manners and Cha-  
 racter, by the gradual gaining of Knowledge  
 and Experience, and by a long Course of  
 Action. Our Existence is not only succes-  
 sive, as it must be of Necessity; but one  
 State of our Life and Being, is appointed by  
 God, to be a Preparation for Another; and  
 That, to be the Means of attaining to ano-  
 ther succeeding one: Infancy to Childhood,  
 Childhood to Youth; Youth to mature  
 Age. Men are impatient, and for preci-  
 pitating things: but the Author of Nature  
 appears deliberate throughout his Operations;  
 accomplishing his natural Ends, by slow  
 successive Steps. And there is a Plan of  
 things beforehand laid out, which, from the  
 Nature of it, requires various Systems of  
 Means, as well as Length of Time, in or-  
 der to the carrying on its several Parts into  
 Execution. Thus, in the daily Course of  
 natural Providence, God operates in the very  
 same Manner, as in the Dispensation of  
 Christia-

*imperfectly comprehended.*

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Christianity: making one thing subservient to another; This, to somewhat farther; and so on, through a progressive Series of Means, which extend, both backward and forward, beyond our utmost View. Of this Manner of Operation, every thing we see in the Course of Nature, is as much an Instance, as any Part of the Christian Dispensation.

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IV.

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## C H A P. V.

*Of the particular System of Christianity; the Appointment of a Mediator, and the Redemption of the World by him.*

PART II. **T**HERE is not, I think, any thing relating to Christianity, which has been more objected against, than the Mediation of Christ, in some or other of its Parts. Yet, upon thorough Consideration, there seems nothing less justly liable to it. For,

I. The whole Analogy of Nature removes all imagined Presumption against the general Notion of *a Mediator between God and Man*<sup>a</sup>. For we find all living Creatures are brought into the World, and their Life in Infancy is preserved, by the Instrumentality of Others: And every Satisfaction of it, some way or other, is bestowed by the like Means. So that the visible Government, which God exercises over the World, is by the Instrumentality and Mediation of Others. And how far his invisible Government be or be not so,

<sup>a</sup> 1 Tim. ii. 5.

it is impossible to determine at all by Reason. CHAP.  
And the Supposition, that Part of it is so, V.  
appears, to say the least, altogether as credible, as the contrary. There is then no Sort of Objection, from the Light of Nature, against the general Notion of a Mediator between God and Man, considered as a Doctrine of Christianity, or as an Appointment in this Dispensation: since we find by Experience, that God does appoint Mediators, to be the Instruments of Good and Evil to us; the Instruments of his Justice and his Mercy. And the Objection here referred to is urged, not against Mediation in That high, eminent and peculiar Sense, in which Christ is our Mediator; but absolutely against the whole Notion itself of a Mediator at all.

II. As we must suppose, that the World is under the proper moral Government of God, or in a State of Religion, before we can enter into Consideration of the revealed Doctrine, concerning the Redemption of it by Christ; so that Supposition is here to be distinctly taken Notice of. Now the divine moral Government which Religion teaches us, implies, that the Consequence of Vice shall be Misery, in some future State, by the righteous Judgment of God. That such consequent Punishment shall take Effect by his Appointment, is necessarily implied. But, as it is not  
in

**PART** in any sort to be supposed, that we are made  
**II.** acquainted with all the Ends or Reasons, for  
 which it is fit future Punishments should be  
 inflicted, or why God has appointed, such  
 and such consequent Misery should follow  
 Vice; and as we are altogether in the dark,  
 how or in what Manner it shall follow, by  
 what immediate Occasions, or by the Instru-  
 mentality of what Means; there is no Ab-  
 surdity in supposing, it may follow in a Way  
 analogous to That, in which many Miseries  
 follow such and such Courses of Action at pre-  
 sent; Poverty, Sickness, Infamy, untimely  
 Death by Diseases; Death from the Hands of  
 civil Justice. There is no Absurdity in sup-  
 posing future Punishment may follow Wick-  
 edness of Course, as we speak, or in the Way  
 of natural Consequence from God's original  
 Constitution of the World; from the Nature  
 He has given us, and from the Condition in  
 which he places us: Or in a like Manner, as  
 a Person rashly trifling upon a Precipice, in  
 the way of natural Consequence, falls down;  
 in the way of natural Consequence, breaks  
 his Limbs, suppose; in the way of natural  
 Consequence of this, without Help, perishes.

Some good Men may perhaps be offended,  
 with hearing it spoken of as a supposeable  
 thing, that the future Punishments of Wick-  
 edness may be in the way of natural Conse-  
 quence:

quence: as if this were taking the Execution CHAP.  
of Justice out of the Hands of God, and V.  
giving it to Nature. But they should re-  
member, that when things come to pass ac-  
cording to the Course of Nature, this does  
not hinder them from being His Doing, who  
is the God of Nature: And that the Scrip-  
ture ascribes those Punishments to divine  
Justice, which are known to be natural; and  
which must be called so, when distinguished  
from such as are miraculous. But after all,  
this Supposition, or rather this Way of speak-  
ing, is here made use of only by way of Il-  
lustration of the Subject before us. For since  
it must be admitted, that the future Punish-  
ment of Wickedness is not a Matter of arbi-  
trary Appointment, but of Reason, Equity  
and Justice; it comes, for aught I see, to the  
same thing, whether it is supposed to be in-  
flicted in a Way analogous to That, in which  
the temporal Punishments of Vice and Folly  
are inflicted, or in any other Way. And  
though there were a Difference, it is allow-  
able, in the present Case, to make this Sup-  
position, plainly not an incredible one; that  
future Punishment may follow Wickedness in  
the way of natural Consequence, or according  
to some general Laws of Government already  
established in the Universe.

III. Upon



PART III. Upon this Supposition, or even without it, we may observe somewhat, much to the present Purpose, in the Constitution of Nature or Appointments of Providence: the Provision which is made, that all the bad natural Consequences of Mens Actions, should not always actually follow; or that such bad Consequences, as, according to the settled Course of things, would inevitably have followed if not prevented, should in certain Degrees, be prevented. We are apt presumptuously to imagine, that the World might have been so constituted, as that there would not have been any such thing as Misery or Evil. On the contrary we find the Author of Nature permits it: But then he has provided Reliefs, and, in many Cases, perfect Remedies for it, after some Pains and Difficulties: Reliefs and Remedies even for That Evil, which is the Fruit of our own Misconduct; and which, in the Course of Nature, would have continued, and ended in our Destruction, but for such Remedies. And this is an Instance both of Severity and Indulgence, in the Constitution of Nature. Thus all the bad Consequences, now mentioned, of a Man's trifling upon a Precipice, might be prevented. And though all were not, yet some of them might, by proper Interposition, if not rejected: by Another's coming to the rash

Man's Relief, with his own laying hold on that Relief, in such Sort as the Case required. Persons may do a great deal themselves towards preventing the bad Consequences of their Follies: and more may be done by themselves, together with the Assistance of others their Fellow-creatures; which assistance Nature requires and prompts us to. This is the general Constitution of the World. Now suppose it had been so constituted, that after such Actions were done, as were foreseen naturally to draw after them Misery to the Doer, it should have been no more in human Power to have prevented That naturally consequent Misery, in any Instance, than it is, in all; no one can say, whether such a more severe Constitution of things might not yet have been really good. But, that on the contrary, Provision is made by Nature, that we may and do, to so great Degree, prevent the bad natural Effects of our Follies; this may be called Mercy or Compassion in the original Constitution of the World: Compassion, as distinguished from Goodness in general. And, the whole known Constitution and Course of things affording us Instances of such Compassion, it would be according to the Analogy of Nature, to hope, that, however ruinous the natural Consequences of Vice might be, from the general Laws of God's Government over the Universe; yet Provision might be made,

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possibly

PART possibly might have been originally made, for  
 II. preventing those ruinous Consequences from  
 inevitably following: at least from following  
 univervally, and in all Cases.

Many, I am sensible, will wonder at finding this made a Question, or spoken of as in any Degree doubtful. The Generality of Mankind are so far from having that awful Sense of things, which the present State of Vice and Misery and Darknes seems to make but reasonable, that they have scarce any Apprehension or Thought at all about this Matter, any way: and some serious Persons may have spoken unadvisedly concerning it. But let us observe, what we experience to be, and what, from the very Constitution of Nature, cannot but be, the Consequences of irregular and disorderly Behaviour; even of such Rashness, Wilfulness, Neglects, as we scarce call vicious. Now it is natural to apprehend, that the bad Consequences of Irregularity will be greater, in Proportion as the Irregularity is so. And there is no Comparison between these Irregularities, and the greater Instances of Vice, or a dissolute profligate Disregard to all Religion; if there be any thing at all in Religion. For consider what it is for Creatures, moral Agents, presumptuously to introduce that Confusion and Misery into the Kingdom of God, which Mankind have in Fact introduced;

duced; to blaspheme the Sovereign Lord of all; to contemn his Authority; to be injurious, to the Degree they are, to their Fellow-Creatures, the Creatures of God. Add that the Effects of Vice in the present World, are often extreme Misery, irretrievable Ruin, and even Death. And upon putting all this together, it will appear, that as no one can say, in what Degree fatal, the unprevented Consequences of Vice may be, according to the general Rule of divine Government; so it is by no means intuitively certain, how far these Consequences could possibly, in the Nature of the thing, be prevented, consistently with the eternal Rule of Right, or with what is, in Fact, the moral Constitution of Nature. However, there would be large Ground to hope, that the universal Government was not so severely strict, but that there was room for Pardon, or for having those penal Consequences prevented. Yet,

IV. There seems no Probability, that any thing we could do, would alone and of itself prevent them: prevent their following, or being inflicted. But one would think, at least, it were impossible, that the contrary should be thought certain. For we are not acquainted with the whole of the Case. We are not informed of all the Reasons, which render it fit that future Punishments should be in-

PART II. flicted: and therefore cannot know, whether any thing we could do, would make such an Alteration, as to render it fit that they should be remitted. We do not know, what the whole natural or appointed Consequences of Vice are; nor in what Way they would follow, if not prevented: and therefore can in no sort say, whether we could do any thing which would be sufficient to prevent them. Our Ignorance being thus manifest, let us recollect the Analogy of Nature or Providence. For, though this may be but a slight Ground to raise a positive Opinion upon, in this Matter; yet it is sufficient to answer a mere arbitrary Assertion, without any kind of Evidence, urged by way of Objection against a Doctrine, the Proof of which is not Reason, but Revelation. Consider then: People ruin their Fortunes by Extravagance; they bring Diseases upon themselves by Excess; they incur the Penalties of civil Laws, and surely civil Government is natural: Will Sorrow for the Follies past, and behaving well for the future, alone and of itself, prevent the natural Consequences of them? On the contrary, Men's natural Abilities of helping themselves are often impaired: Or, if not, yet they are forced to be beholden to the Assistance of Others, upon several Accounts, and in different Ways: Assistance which they would have had no Occasion for, had it not been

for their Misconduct; but which, in the dis-  
advantageous Condition they have reduced  
themselves to, is absolutely necessary to their  
Recovery, and Retrieving their Affairs. Now  
since this is our Case, considering ourselves  
merely as Inhabitants of this World, and as  
having a temporal Interest here, under the na-  
tural Government of God, which however  
has a great deal moral in it: Why is it not  
supposeable, that this may be our Case also, in  
our more important Capacity, as under His  
perfect moral Government, and having a more  
general and future Interest depending? If we  
have misbehaved in this higher Capacity, and  
rendered ourselves obnoxious to the future Pu-  
nishment, which God has annex to Vice: it  
is plainly credible, that behaving well for the  
Time to come, may be——not useless, God  
forbid——but wholly insufficient alone and  
of itself, to prevent that Punishment; or to  
put us in the Condition, which we should  
have been in, had we preserved our Inno-  
cence.

And though we ought to reason with all  
Reverence, whenever we reason concerning  
the divine Conduct: yet it may be added,  
that it is clearly contrary to all our Notions of  
Government, as well as to what is, in Fact,  
the general Constitution of Nature, to suppose  
that Doing well for the future, should, in all

PART II. Cases, prevent all the judicial bad Consequences of having done Evil, or all the Punishment annexed to Disobedience. And we have manifestly nothing from hence to determine, in what Degree and in what Cases, Reformation would prevent this Punishment, even supposing that it would in some. And though the Efficacy of Repentance itself alone, to prevent what Mankind had rendered themselves obnoxious to, and recover what they had forfeited, is now insisted upon, in Opposition to Christianity: yet, by the general Prevalence of propitiatory Sacrifices over the heathen World, this Notion, of Repentance alone being sufficient to expiate Guilt, appears to be contrary to the general Sense of Mankind.

Upon the whole then: Had the Laws, the general Laws of God's Government been permitted to operate, without any Interposition in our Behalf, the future Punishment, for aught we know to the contrary, or have any Reason to think, must inevitably have followed, notwithstanding any thing we could have done to prevent it. Now,

V. In this Darkness, or this Light of Nature, call it which you please, Revelation comes in; confirms every doubting Fear, which could enter into the Heart of Man, concern-

concerning the future unprevented Consequence of Wickedness ; supposes the World to be in a State of Ruin ; (a Supposition which seems the very Ground of the Christian Dispensation, and which, if not proveable by Reason, yet is in no wise contrary to it;) teaches us too, that the Rules of divine Government are such, as not to admit of Pardon immediately and directly upon Repentance, or by the sole Efficacy of it : But then teaches at the same Time, what Nature might justly have hoped, that the moral Government of the Universe was not so rigid, but that there was Room for an Interposition, to avert the fatal Consequences of Vice ; which therefore, by this Means, does admit of Pardon. Revelation teaches us, that the unknown Laws of God's more general Government, no less than the particular Laws by which we experience he governs us at present, are compassionate<sup>b</sup>, as well as good in the more general Notion of Goodness : And that he hath mercifully provided, that there should be an Interposition to prevent the Destruction of human Kind ; whatever that Destruction unprevented would have been. *God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth, not, to be sure, in a speculative, but in a practical Sense, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish<sup>c</sup> :*

<sup>b</sup> p. 288, &c.

<sup>c</sup> John iii. 16.



PART Gave his Son in the same Way of Goodness  
 II. to the World, as he affords particular Persons  
 the friendly Assistance of their Fellow-Crea-  
 tures; when, without it, their temporal Ruin  
 would be the certain Consequence of their Fol-  
 lies: in the same Way of Goodness, I say;  
 though in a transcendent and infinitely higher  
 Degree. And the Son of God *loved us and  
 gave himself for us*, with a Love, which he  
 himself compares to That of human Friend-  
 ship: though, in this Case, all Comparisons  
 must fall infinitely short of the thing intend-  
 ed to be illustrated by them. He interposed  
 in such a Manner, as was necessary and effec-  
 tual to prevent that Execution of Justice up-  
 on Sinners, which God had appointed should  
 otherwise have been executed upon them:  
 Or in such a Manner, as to prevent That  
 Punishment from actually following, which,  
 according to the general Laws of divine Go-  
 vernment, must have followed the Sins of  
 the World, had it not been for such Interpo-  
 sition<sup>d</sup>.

If

<sup>d</sup> It cannot, I suppose, be imagined even by the most cursory Reader, that it is, in any sort, affirmed or implied in any thing said in this Chapter, that none can have the Benefit of the general Redemption, but such as have the Advantage of being made acquainted with it in the present Life. But it may be needful to mention, that several Questions, which have been brought into the Subject before us, and determined, are not in the least entered into here: Questions which have been, I fear, rashly determined, and perhaps with equal

If any thing here said, should appear, upon first Thought, inconsistent with divine Goodness; a second, I am persuaded, will intirely remove that Appearance. For were we to suppose the Constitution of things to be such, as that the whole Creation must have perished, had it not been for somewhat, which God had appointed should be, in order to prevent that Ruin: even this Supposition would not be inconsistent, in any Degree, with the most absolutely perfect Goodness. But still it may be thought, that this whole Manner of treating the Subject before us, supposes Mankind to be naturally in a very strange State. And truly so it does. But it is not Christianity, which has put us into this State. Whoever will consider the manifold Miseries, and the extream Wickedness

CHAP.  
V.

equal Rashness contrary Ways. For Instance, Whether God could have saved the World by other Means than the Death of Christ, consistently with the general Laws of his Government. And had not Christ come into the World, What would have been the future Condition of the better Sort of Men; those just Persons over the Face of the Earth, for whom *Manasses* in his Prayer asserts, Repentance was not appointed. The Meaning of the first of these Questions is greatly ambiguous. And neither of them can properly be answered, without going upon That infinitely absurd Supposition, that we know the whole of the Case. And perhaps the very Inquiry, *What would have followed if God had not done as he has*, may have in it some very great Impropriety; and ought not to be carried on any farther, than is necessary to help our partial and inadequate Conceptions of things.

of

PART of the World: that the best have great  
 II. Wrongnesses within themselves, which they  
 complain of, and endeavour to amend; but  
 that the Generality grow more profligate and  
 corrupt with Age: that heathen Moralists  
 thought the present State to be a State of Pun-  
 ishment: and, what might be added, that  
 the Earth our Habitation has the Appearances  
 of being a Ruin: whoever, I say, will con-  
 sider all these, and some other obvious things,  
 will think he has little Reason to object against  
 the Scripture Account, that Mankind is in a  
 State of Degradation; against this being the  
 Fact: how difficult soever he may think it  
 to account for, or even to form a distinct  
 Conception of the Occasions and Circum-  
 stances of it. But that the Crime of our  
 first Parents was the Occasion of our being  
 placed in a more disadvantageous Condition,  
 is a thing throughout and particularly analo-  
 gous to what we see, in the daily Course of  
 natural Providence; as the Recovery of the  
 World by the Interposition of Christ, has  
 been shewn to be so in general.

VI. The particular Manner in which  
 Christ interposed in the Redemption of the  
 World, or his Office as *Mediator*, in the  
 largest Sense, *between God and Man*, is thus  
 represented to us in the Scripture. *He is the  
 light*

*light of the World*<sup>e</sup>; the Revealer of the Will of God in the most eminent Sense. He is a propitiatory Sacrifice<sup>f</sup>; *the Lamb of God*<sup>g</sup>: and, as he voluntarily offered himself up, he is stiled our High-priest<sup>h</sup>. And, which seems of peculiar Weight, he is described beforehand in the Old Testament, under the same Characters of a Priest, and an expiatory Victim<sup>i</sup>. And whereas it is objected, that all this is merely by way of Allusion to the Sacrifices of the Mosaick Law, the Apostle on the contrary affirms, that the *Law was a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things*<sup>k</sup>: and that the *Priests that offer gifts according to the law—serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God, when he was about to make the tabernacle. For see, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount*<sup>l</sup>. *i. e.* the levitical Priesthood was a shadow of the Priesthood of Christ; in like manner as the Tabernacle made by *Moses*, was according to That shewed him in the Mount. The Priesthood of Christ, and the Tabernacle in the Mount, were the Originals: of the for-

<sup>e</sup> John i. and viii. 12.      <sup>f</sup> Rom. iii. 25. and v. 11.  
<sup>g</sup> Cor. v. 7. Eph. v. 2.    <sup>h</sup> John ii. 2. Matth. xxvi. 28.  
<sup>i</sup> Joh. i. 29, 36. and throughout the Book of Revelation.  
<sup>k</sup> Throughout the Epistle to the Hebrews.      <sup>l</sup> Isai. liii.  
Dan. ix. 24. Pf. cx. 4.      <sup>m</sup> Heb. x. 1.      <sup>n</sup> viii. 4, 5.

PART mer of which, the levitical Priesthood was a

II. Type; and of the latter, the Tabernacle  
 made by *Moses* was a Copy. The Doctrine  
 of this Epistle then plainly is, that the legal  
 Sacrifices were Allusions to the great and  
 final Atonement, to be made by the Blood of  
 Christ; and not that This was an Allusion to  
 Those. Nor can any thing be more exprefs  
 and determinate, than the following Passage.  
*It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of  
 goats should take away Sin. Wherefore when  
 he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice  
 and offering, i. e. of bulls and of goats, thou  
 wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me  
 — Lo I come to do thy will O God — By  
 which will we are sanctified, through the of-  
 fering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all<sup>m</sup>.  
 And to add one Passage more of the like  
 Kind: Christ was once offered to bear the Sins  
 of many; and unto them that look for him  
 shall he appear the second time, without Sin;  
 i. e. without bearing Sin, as he did at his first  
 coming, by being an offering for it; without  
 having our Iniquities again laid upon him,  
 without being any more a Sin-offering:—  
 unto them that look for him shall he appear the  
 second time, without sin, unto salvation<sup>n</sup>. Nor  
 do the inspired Writers at all confine them-  
 selves to this Manner of speaking concerning  
 the Satisfaction of Christ; but declare an Ef-*

<sup>m</sup> Heb. x. 4, 5, 7, 9, 10.

<sup>n</sup> ix, 28.

ficacy

ficacy in what he did and suffered for us, ad- CHAP.  
ditional to and beyond meer Instruction, Ex- V.  
ample and Government, in great Variety of  
Expression: *That Jesus should die for that  
nation the Jews: And not for that nation only,  
but that also, plainly by the Efficacy of his  
Death, he should gather together in one, the  
children of God that were scattered abroad<sup>o</sup>:  
That he suffered for sins, the just for the un-  
just<sup>p</sup>: That he gave his life, himself, a ran-  
som<sup>q</sup>: That we are bought, bought with a  
price<sup>r</sup>: That he redeemed us with his blood;  
redeemed us from the curse of the law, being  
made a curse for us<sup>s</sup>: That he is our Advo-  
cate, Intercessor and Propitiation<sup>t</sup>: That he  
was made perfect, or consummate, through  
sufferings: and being thus made perfect, he be-  
came the author of salvation<sup>u</sup>: That God was  
in Christ reconciling the World to himself; by  
the death of his Son, by the cross; not imputing  
their trespasses unto them<sup>w</sup>: And lastly, that  
through death he destroyed him that had the  
power of death<sup>x</sup>. Christ then having thus  
humbled himself, and become obedient to death,  
even the death of the cross; God also hath*

<sup>o</sup> John xi. 51. 52.      <sup>p</sup> 1 Pet. iii. 18.      <sup>q</sup> Matth.  
xx. 28.      Mark x. 45.      <sup>r</sup> 2 Pet. ii. 1.  
Rev. xiv. 4.      <sup>s</sup> 1 Pet. i. 19.      Rev. v.  
9.      Gal. iii. 13.      <sup>t</sup> Heb. vii. 25.      1 John ii. 1, 2.  
<sup>u</sup> Heb. ii. 10. & v. 9.      <sup>w</sup> 2 Cor. v. 19.      Rom. v.  
10.      Eph. ii. 16.      <sup>x</sup> Heb. ii. 14.      See also a remark-  
able Passage in the Book of Job, xxxiii. 24.

*highly*

PART *highly exalted him, and given him a name*  
 II. *which is above every name: hath given all*  
 things into his hands: hath committed all judgment unto him; that all Men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father<sup>y</sup>. For, worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, heard I, saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever<sup>z</sup>.

These Passages of Scripture seem to comprehend and express the chief Parts of Christ's Office, as Mediator between God and Man, so far, I mean, as the Nature of this his Office is revealed; and it is usually treated of by Divines under three Heads.

*First*, He was, by way of Eminence, The Prophet: *That Prophet that should come into the world<sup>a</sup>*, to declare the divine Will. He published anew the Law of Nature, which Men had corrupted; and the very Knowledge of which to some Degree, was lost among them. He taught Mankind, taught us authoritatively to *live soberly, righteously and godly*

<sup>y</sup> Phil. ii. 8, 9. John iii. 35. and v. 22, 23.

<sup>z</sup> Rev. v. 12, 13.

<sup>a</sup> John vi. 14.

*in this present World, in expectation of the future Judgment of God. He confirmed the Truth of this moral System of Nature, and gave us additional Evidence of it; the Evidence of Testimony<sup>b</sup>. He distinctly revealed, the Manner in which God would be worshipped, the Efficacy of Repentance, and the Rewards and Punishments of a future Life. Thus he was a Prophet in a Sense, in which no other ever was. To which is to be added, that he set us a perfect Example that we should follow his Steps.*

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*Secondly, He has a Kingdom which is not of this World. He founded a Church, to be to Mankind a standing Memorial of Religion, and Invitation to it; which he promised to be with always even to the End. He exercises an invisible Government over it, himself, and by his Spirit: Over that Part of it, which is militant here on Earth, a Government of Discipline, for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying his body: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ<sup>c</sup>. Of this Church, all Persons scattered over the World, who live in Obedience to his Laws, are Members. For these he is gone to prepare a Place, and will come again*

<sup>b</sup> p. 212, &c.

<sup>c</sup> Eph. iv. 12, 13.



PART *to receive them unto himself, that where he is,*

II. *there they may be also: and reign with him  
 for ever and ever<sup>d</sup>: and likewise to take ven-  
 geance on them that know not God, and obey  
 not his gospel<sup>e</sup>.*

Against these Parts of Christ's Office, I find no Objections, but what are fully obviated in the beginning of this Chapter.

*Lastly,* Christ offered himself a propitiatory Sacrifice, and made Atonement for the Sins of the World: Which is mentioned last, in regard to what is objected against it. Sacrifices of Expiation were commanded the Jews, and obtained amongst most other Nations, from Tradition, whose Original probably was Revelation. And they were continually repeated, both occasionally, and at the Returns of stated Times; and made up great Part of the external Religion of Mankind. *But now once in the end of the world Christ appeared to put away Sin by the Sacrifice of himself<sup>f</sup>.* And this Sacrifice was, in the highest Degree and with the most extensive Influence, of that Efficacy for obtaining Pardon of Sin, which the Heathens may be supposed to have thought their Sacrifices to have been, and which the Jewish Sacrifices

<sup>d</sup> John xiv. 2, 3. Rev. iii. 21. and xi. 15.

<sup>e</sup> 2 Theff. i. 8.

<sup>f</sup> Heb. ix. 26.

really were in some Degree, and with regard to some Persons.

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How and in what particular Way it had this Efficacy, there are not wanting Persons who have endeavoured to explain: but I do not find that the Scripture has explained it. We seem to be very much in the dark, concerning the Manner in which the Ancients understood Atonement to be made, *i. e.* Pardon to be obtained by Sacrifices. And if the Scripture has, as surely it has, left this Matter of the Satisfaction of Christ mysterious, left somewhat in it unrevealed, all Conjectures about it must be, if not evidently absurd, yet at least uncertain. Nor has any one Reason to complain for Want of farther Information, unless he can shew his Claim to it.

Some have endeavoured to explain the Efficacy of what Christ has done and suffered for us, beyond what the Scripture has authorized: Others, probably because they could not explain it, have been for taking it away, and confining His Office as Redeemer of the World, to his Instruction, Example and Government of the Church. Whereas the Doctrine of the Gospel appears to be; not only that He taught the Efficacy of Repentance, but rendered it of the Efficacy

X which

PART which it is, by what he did and suffered for  
 II. us: That he obtained for us the Benefit of  
 having our Repentance accepted unto eternal  
 Life: Not only that he revealed to Sinners,  
 that they were in a Capacity of Salvation,  
 and how they might obtain it; but moreover  
 that he put them into this Capacity of Salva-  
 tion, by what he did and suffered for them;  
 put us into a Capacity of escaping future Pu-  
 nishment, and obtaining future Happiness.  
 And it is our Wisdom thankfully to accept  
 the Benefit, by performing the Conditions,  
 upon which it is offered, on our Part, with-  
 out disputing how it was procured, on His.  
 For,

VII. Since we neither know, by what  
 Means Punishment in a future State would  
 have followed Wickedness in this; nor in  
 what Manner it would have been inflicted,  
 had it not been prevented; nor all the Reasons  
 why its Infliction would have been needful;  
 nor the particular Nature of that State of  
 Happiness, which Christ is gone to prepare  
 for his Disciples: And since we are ignorant  
 how far any thing which we could do, would,  
 alone and of itself, have been effectual to pre-  
 vent that Punishment, to which we were ob-  
 noxious, and recover that Happiness, which  
 we had forfeited; it is most evident we are  
 not Judges, antecedently to Revelation, whe-  
 I ther

ther a Mediator, was or was not necessary, to obtain those Ends: to prevent That future Punishment, and bring Mankind to the final Happiness of their Nature. And for the very same Reasons, upon Supposition of the Necessity of a Mediator, we are no more Judges, antecedently to Revelation, of the whole Nature of his Office, or the several Parts of which it consists; of what was fit and requisite to be assigned him, in order to accomplish the Ends of Divine Providence in the Appointment. And from hence it follows, that to object against the Expediency or Usefulness of particular things, revealed to have been done or suffered by him, because we do not see how they were conducive to those Ends; is highly absurd. Yet nothing is more common to be met with, than this Absurdity. But if it be acknowledged beforehand, that we are not Judges in the Case, it is evident that no Objection can, with any Shadow of Reason, be urged against any particular Part of Christ's mediatorial Office revealed in Scripture, till it can be shewn positively, not to be requisite or conducive to the Ends proposed to be accomplished; or that it is in itself unreasonable.

And there is one Objection made against the Satisfaction of Christ, which looks to be of this positive Kind: that the Doctrine of

PART II. His being appointed to suffer for the Sins of the World, represents God as being indifferent whether he punished the Innocent or the Guilty. Now from the foregoing Observations we may see the extream Slightness of all such Objections; and (though it is most certain all who make them do not see the Consequence) that they conclude altogether as much against God's whole original Constitution of Nature, and the whole daily Course of Divine Providence in the Government of the World, *i. e.* against the whole Scheme of Theism and the whole Notion of Religion; as against Christianity. For the World is a Constitution or System, whose Parts have a mutual Reference to each other: and there is a Scheme of things gradually carrying on, called the Course of Nature, to the carrying on of which, God has appointed us, in various ways, to contribute. And when, in the daily Course of natural Providence, it is appointed that innocent People should suffer for the Faults of the guilty, this is liable to the very same Objection, as the Instance we are now considering. The infinitely greater Importance of that Appointment of Christianity which is objected against, does not hinder but it may be, as it plainly is, an Appointment of the very same Kind, with what the World affords us daily Examples of. Nay if there were any Force at all in the Objection,

it would be stronger in one Respect, against CHAP.  
natural Providence, than against Christianity: V.  
because under the former, we are in many  
Cases commanded, and even necessitated whether we will or no, to suffer for the Faults of others; whereas the Sufferings of Christ were voluntary. The World's being under the righteous Government of God, does indeed imply, that finally and upon the whole every one shall receive according to his personal Deserts: And the general Doctrine of the whole Scripture is, that this shall be the Completion of the divine Government. But during the Progress, and, for aught we know, even in order to the Completion of this moral Scheme, vicarious Punishments may be fit, and absolutely necessary. Men by their Follies run themselves into extreme Distress: into Difficulties which would be absolutely fatal to them, were it not for the Interposition and Assistance of Others. God commands by the Law of Nature, that we afford them this Assistance, in many Cases where we cannot do it without very great Pains, and Labour, and Sufferings to Ourselves. And we see in what Variety of Ways one Person's Sufferings contribute to the Relief of another: and how, or by what particular Means, this comes to pass or follows, from the Constitution and Laws of Nature, which come under our Notice: and, being familiarized to it, Men are

PART not shocked with it. So that the Reason of  
 II. their insisting upon Objections of the foregoing Kind against the Satisfaction of Christ, is, either that they do not consider God's settled and uniform Appointments as His Appointments at all : Or else, they forget that vicarious Punishment is a providential Appointment of every Day's Experience : And then, from their being unacquainted with the more general Laws of Nature or divine Government over the World, and not seeing how the Sufferings of Christ could contribute to the Redemption of it, unless by arbitrary and tyrannical Will ; they conclude his Sufferings could not contribute to it any other Way. And yet, what has been often alledged in Justification of this Doctrine, even from the apparent natural Tendency of this Method of our Redemption ; its Tendency to vindicate the Authority of God's Laws, and deter His Creatures from Sin ; this has never yet been answered, and is I think plainly unanswerable : though I am far from thinking it an Account of the whole of the Case. But without taking this into Consideration, it abundantly appears, from the Observations above made, that this Objection is, not an Objection against Christianity, but against the whole general Constitution of Nature. And if it were to be considered as an Objection against Christianity, or considering it as it is,  
 an

an Objection against the Constitution of Nature ; it amounts to no more in Conclusion than this, that a divine Appointment cannot be necessary or expedient, because the Objector does not discern it to be so : though he must own that the Nature of the Case is such, as renders him incapable of judging, whether it be so or not ; or of seeing it to be necessary, though it were so.

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V.

It is indeed a Matter of great Patience to reasonable Men, to find People arguing in this Manner : objecting against the Credibility of such particular things revealed in Scripture, that they do not see the Necessity or Expediency of them. For though it is highly right, and the most pious Exercise of our Understanding, to enquire with due Reverence into the Ends and Reasons of God's Dispensations : Yet when those Reasons are concealed, to argue from our Ignorance, that such Dispensations cannot be from God, is infinitely absurd. The Presumption of this Kind of Objections, seems almost lost in the Folly of them. And the Folly of them is yet greater, when they are urged, as usually they are, against things in Christianity analogous or like to those natural Dispensations of Providence, which are Matter of Experience. Let Reason be kept to : and if any Part of the Scripture-account of the Redemption of



PART the World by Christ, can be shewn to be  
 II. really contrary to it, let the Scripture, in the  
 Name of God, be given up: But let not such  
 poor Creatures as we, go on objecting against  
 an infinite Scheme, that we do not see  
 the Necessity or Usefulness of all its Parts,  
 and call this Reasoning; And, which still  
 farther heightens the Absurdity in the present  
 Case, Parts which we are not actively con-  
 cerned in. For it may be worth mentioning,

*Lastly,* That not only the Reason of the  
 thing, but the whole Analogy of Nature,  
 should teach us, not to expect to have the  
 like Information concerning the divine Con-  
 duct, as concerning our own Duty. God  
 instructs us by Experience, (for it is not Rea-  
 son, but Experience which instructs us) what  
 good or bad Consequences will follow from  
 our acting in such and such Manners; and by  
 this he directs us, how we are to behave  
 ourselves. But, though we are sufficiently  
 instructed for the common Purposes of Life:  
 yet it is but an almost infinitely small Part  
 of natural Providence, which we are at all let  
 into. The Case is the same with regard to  
 Revelation. The Doctrine of a Mediator be-  
 tween God and Man, against which it is  
 objected, that the Expediency of some things  
 in it is not understood, relates only to what  
 was done on God's Part in the Appointment,  
 and

and on the Mediator's in the Execution of it. **CHAP.**  
For what is required of us, in Consequence **V.**  
of this gracious Dispensation, is another Sub-  
ject, in which none can complain for want  
of Information. The Constitution of the  
World and God's natural Government over  
it, is all Myſtery, as much as the Christian  
Dispensation. Yet under the firſt, He has  
given Men all things pertaining to Life; and  
under the other, all things pertaining unto  
Godlineſs. And it may be added, that there  
is nothing hard to be accounted for in any of  
the common Precepts of Chriſtianity: though  
if there were, ſurely a Divine Command is  
abundantly ſufficient to lay us under the  
ſtrongeſt Obligations to Obedience. But the  
Fact is, that the Reaſons of all the Chriſtian  
Precepts are evident. Poſitive Inſtitutions are  
manifeſtly neceſſary to keep up and propagate  
Religion amongſt Mankind. And our Duty  
to Chriſt, the internal and external Worſhip  
of him; this Part of the Religion of the  
Goſpel, manifeſtly ariſes out of what he has  
done and ſuffered, his Authority and Domi-  
nion, and the Relation, which He is revealed  
to ſtand in to us<sup>s</sup>.

<sup>s</sup> p. 220, &c.

## C H A P. VI.

*Of the Want of Universality in Revelation: and of the supposed Deficiency in the Proof of it.*

PART II. **I**T has been thought by some Persons, that if the Evidence of Revelation appears doubtful, this itself turns into a positive Argument against it: because it cannot be supposed, that if it were true, it would be left to subsist upon doubtful Evidence. And the Objection against Revelation from its not being universal, is often insisted upon as of great Weight.

Now the Weakness of these Opinions may be shewn, by observing the Suppositions on which they are founded: Which are really such as these; that it cannot be thought God would have bestowed any Favour at all upon us, unless in the Degree, which, we think, he might, and which, we imagine, would be most to our particular Advantage; and also that it cannot be thought he would bestow a Favour upon any, unless he bestowed the same upon all: Suppositions which we find contradicted

dicted, not by a few Instances in God's natural Government of the World, but by the general Analogy of Nature together.

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Persons who speak of the Evidence of Religion as doubtful, and of this supposed Doubtfulness as a positive Argument against it, should be put upon considering, what That Evidence indeed is, which they act upon with regard to their temporal Interests. For, it is not only extremely difficult, but, in many Cases, absolutely impossible, to balance Pleasure and Pain, Satisfaction and Uneasiness, so as to be able to say, on which Side the Overplus is. There are the like Difficulties and Impossibilities in making the due Allowances, for a Change of Temper and Taste, for Satiety, Disgusts, Ill-health : any of which render Men incapable of injoying, after they have obtained, what they most eagerly desired. Numberless too are the Accidents, besides that one of untimely Death, which may even probably disappoint the best concerted Schemes : And strong Objections are often seen to lie against them, not to be removed or answered, but which seem overbalanced by Reasons on the other Side ; so as that the certain Difficulties and Dangers of the Pursuit are, by every one, thought justly disregarded, upon account of the appearing greater Advantages in Case of Success, though there be
but

PART but little Probability of it. Lastly, every one
 H. observes our Liableness, if we be not upon
 our Guard, to be deceived by the Falshood of
 Men, and the false Appearances of things:
 And this Danger must be greatly increased,
 if there be a strong Bias within, suppose
 from indulged Passion, to favour the Deceit.
 Hence arises that great Uncertainty and Doubt-
 fulness of Proof, wherein our temporal Inte-
 rest really consists; what are the most proba-
 ble Means of attaining it; and whether those
 Means will eventually be successful. And
 numberless Instances there are, in the daily
 Course of Life, in which all Men think it
 reasonable to engage in Pursuits, though the
 Probability is greatly against succeeding; and
 to make such Provision for themselves, as it is
 supposeable they may have Occasion for,
 though the plain acknowledged Probability is,
 that they never shall. Then those who think
 the Objection against Revelation, from its
 Light not being universal, to be of Weight,
 should observe, that the Author of Nature,
 in numberless Instances, bestows That upon
 some, which he does not upon others, who
 seem equally to stand in need of it. Indeed
 he appears to bestow all his Gifts, with the
 most promiscuous Variety, among Creatures
 of the same Species: Health and Strength,
 Capacities of Prudence and of Knowledge,
 Means of Improvement, Riches, and all ex-
 ternal

ternal Advantages. And as there are not any two Men found, of exactly like Shape and Features: so it is probable there are not any two, of an exactly like Constitution, Temper and Situation, with regard to the Goods and Evils of Life. Yet, notwithstanding these Uncertainties and Varieties, God does exercise a natural Government over the World: and there is such a thing as a prudent and imprudent Institution of Life, with regard to our Health and our Affairs, under that his natural Government.

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As neither the Jewish nor Christian Revelation have been universal; and as they have been afforded to a greater or less Part of the World, at different Times: so likewise, at different Times, both Revelations have had different Degrees of Evidence. The Jews who lived during the Succession of Prophets, that is, from *Moses* till after the Captivity, had higher Evidence of the Truth of their Religion, than those had, who lived in the Interval between the last mentioned Period, and the Coming of Christ. And the first Christians had higher Evidence of the Miracles wrought in Attestation of Christianity, than what we have now. They had also a strong presumptive Proof of the Truth of it, perhaps of much greater Force, in way of Argument, than many think, of which we have

PART have very little remaining ; I mean the pre-
 II. sumptive Proof of its Truth, from the In-
 fluence which it had upon the Lives of the
 Generality of its Professors. And we, or fu-
 ture Ages, may possibly have a Proof of it,
 which they could not have, from the Confor-
 mity between the prophetick History, and the
 State of the World and of Christianity. And
 farther : If we were to suppose the Evidence,
 which some have of Religion, to amount to
 little more, than seeing that it may be true ;
 but that they remain in great Doubts and Un-
 certainties about both its Evidence and its
 Nature, and great Perplexities concerning the
 Rule of Life : Others to have a full Convic-
 tion of the Truth of Religion, with a distinct
 Knowledge of their Duty : and Others severally
 to have all the intermediate Degrees of reli-
 gious Light and Evidence, which lie between
 these two——If we put the Case, that for
 the present, it was intended, Revelation should
 be no more than a small Light, in the midst
 of a World greatly overspread, notwithstand-
 ing it, with Ignorance and Darknes : that cer-
 tain Glimmerings of this Light should extend,
 and be directed, to remote Distances, in such
 a Manner as that those who really partook of
 it, should not discern from whence it origi-
 nally came : that Some in a nearer Situation
 to it, should have its Light obscured, and, in
 different Ways and Degrees, intercepted : and
 that

that Others should be placed within its clearer Influence, and be much more enlivened, cheared and directed by it ; but yet that even to these, it should be no more than *a Light shining in a dark Place* : All this would be perfectly uniform and of a piece with the Conduct of Providence, in the Distribution of its other Blessings. If the Fact of the Case really were, that Some have received no Light at all from the Scripture ; as many Ages and Countries in the heathen World : that Others, though they have, by Means of it, had essential or natural Religion enforced upon their Consciences, yet have never had the genuine Scripture-revelation, with its real Evidence, proposed to their Consideration ; and the antient *Persians*, and modern *Mahometans*, may possibly be Instances of People in a Situation somewhat like to this : that Others, though they have had the Scripture laid before them as of divine Revelation, yet have had it with the System and Evidence of Christianity so interpolated, the System so corrupted, the Evidence so blended with false Miracles, as to leave the Mind in the utmost Doubtfulness and Uncertainty about the whole ; which may be the State of some thoughtful Men, in most of those Nations who call themselves Christians : And lastly, that Others have had Christianity offered to them in its genuine Simplicity, and with its
proper

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PART proper Evidence, as Persons in Countries and
 II. Churches of civil and of christian Liberty;
 but however that even these Persons are left
 in great Ignorance in many Respects, and have
 by no means Light afforded them enough to
 satisfy their Curiosity, but only to regulate
 their Life, to teach them their Duty and en-
 courage them in the careful Discharge of it:
 I say, if we were to suppose This somewhat
 of a general true Account of the Degrees of
 moral and religious Light and Evidence,
 which were intended to be afforded Man-
 kind, and of what has actually been and is
 their Situation, in their moral and religious
 Capacity; there would be nothing in all this
 Ignorance, Doubtfulness and Uncertainty, in
 all these Varieties, and supposed Disadvant-
 ages of some in Comparison of others, re-
 specting Religion, but may be paralleled by
 manifest Analogies in the natural Dispensa-
 tions of Providence at present, and considering
 ourselves merely in our temporal Capacity.

Nor is there any thing shocking in all This,
 or which would seem to bear hard upon the
 moral Administration in Nature, if we would
 really keep in Mind, that every one shall be
 dealt equitably with: instead of forgetting
 this, or explaining it away, after it is ac-
 knowledged in Words. All Shadow of In-
 justice, and indeed all harsh Appearances, in
 this

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this various Oeconomy of Providence, would be lost; if we would keep in Mind, that every merciful Allowance shall be made, and no more be required of any one, than what might have been equitably expected of him, from the Circumstances in which he was placed; and not what might have been expected, had he been placed in other Circumstances: *i. e.* in Scripture Language, that every Man shall be *accepted according to what he had, not according to what he had not*^a. This however doth not by any Means imply, that all Persons Condition here, is equally advantageous with respect to Futurity. And Providence's designing to place Some in greater Darkness with respect to religious Knowledge, is no more a Reason why they should not endeavour to get out of that Darkness, and Others to bring them out of it; than why ignorant and slow People, in Matters of other Knowledge, should not endeavour to learn, or should not be instructed.

It is not unreasonable to suppose, that the same wise and good Principle, whatever it was, which disposed the Author of Nature to make different Kinds and Orders of Creatures, disposed him also to place Creatures of like Kinds, in different Situations: And that the same Principle which disposed him to make

^a 2 Cor. viii. 12.

PART Creatures of different moral Capacities, disposed him also to place Creatures of like moral Capacities, in different religious Situations; and even the same Creatures, in different Periods of their Being. And the Account or Reason of This, is also most probably the Account, why the Constitution of things is such, as that Creatures of moral Natures or Capacities, for a considerable Part of that Duration in which they are living Agents, are not at all Subjects of Morality and Religion; but grow up to be so, and grow up to be so more and more, gradually from Childhood to mature Age.

What, in particular, is the Account or Reason of these things, we must be greatly in the Dark, were it only that we know so very little even of our own Case. Our present State may possibly be the Consequence of somewhat past, which we are wholly ignorant of: as it has a Reference to somewhat to come, of which we know scarce any more than is necessary for Practice. A System or Constitution, in its Notion, implies Variety; and so complicated an one as this World, very great Variety. So that were Revelation universal, yet from Men's different Capacities of Understanding, from the different Lengths of their Lives, their different Educations and other external Circumstances, and from their

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Difference of Temper and bodily Constitution ; their religious Situations would be widely different, and the Disadvantage of Some in Comparison of Others, perhaps altogether as much as at present. And the true Account, whatever it be, why Mankind or such a Part of Mankind are placed in this Condition of Ignorance, must be supposed also the true Account of our farther Ignorance, in not knowing the Reasons, why, or whence it is, that they are placed in this Condition. But the following practical Reflections may deserve the serious Consideration of those Persons, who think the Circumstances of Mankind or their own, in the forementioned Respects, a Ground of Complaint.

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First, The Evidence of Religion not appearing obvious, may constitute one particular Part of Some Men's Trial in the religious Sense : as it gives Scope, for a virtuous Exercise, or vitious Neglect of their Understanding, in examining or not examining into That Evidence. There seems no possible Reason to be given, why we may not be in a State of moral Probation, with regard to the Exercise of our Understanding upon the Subject of Religion, as we are with regard to our Behaviour in common Affairs. The former is as much a thing within our Power and Choice, as the latter. And I suppose it is to be laid

PART down for certain, that the same Character,
 II. the same inward Principle, which, after a
 { Man is convinced of the Truth of Religion,
 renders him obedient to the Precepts of it,
 would, were he not thus convinced, set him
 about an Examination of it, upon its System
 and Evidence being offered to his Thoughts:
 And that in the latter State, his Examination
 would be with an Impartiality, Seriousness and
 Sollicitude, proportionable to what his Obedi-
 ence is in the former. And as Inattention,
 Negligence, Want of all serious Concern,
 about a Matter of such a Nature and such
 Importance, when offered to Men's Consid-
 eration, is, before a distinct Conviction of its
 Truth, as real immoral Depravity and Dissol-
 uteness; as Neglect of religious Practice af-
 ter such Conviction: so active Sollicitude a-
 bout it, and fair impartial Consideration of its
 Evidence before such Conviction, is as really
 an Exercise of a morally right Temper; as is
 religious Practice after. Thus, that Religion
 is not intuitively true, but a Matter of De-
 duction and Inference; that a Conviction of
 its Truth is not forced upon every one, but
 left to be, by some, collected with heedful
 Attention to Premises; this as much consti-
 tutes religious Probation, as much affords
 Sphere, Scope, Opportunity, for right and
 wrong Behaviour, as any thing whatever
 does. And their Manner of treating this
 Subject

Subject when laid before them, shews what is
in their Heart, and is an Exertion of it. CHAP.
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Secondly, It appears to be a thing as evident, though it is not so much attended to, that if upon Consideration of Religion, the Evidence of it should seem to any Persons doubtful, in the highest supposeable Degree; even this doubtful Evidence will, however, put them into a *general State of Probation* in the moral and religious Sense. For, suppose a Man to be really in Doubt, Whether such a Person had not done him the greatest Favour; or, Whether his whole temporal Interest did not depend upon that Person: No one, who had any Sense of Gratitude and of Prudence, could possibly consider himself in the same Situation, with regard to such Person, as if he had no such Doubt. In truth, it is as just to say, that Certainty and Doubt are the same; as to say, the Situations now mentioned, would leave a Man as entirely at Liberty in point of Gratitude or Prudence, as he would be, were he certain he had received no Favour from such Person, or that he no way depended upon him. And thus, though the Evidence of Religion which is afforded to some Men, should be little more than that they are given to see, the System of Christianity, or Religion in general, to be supposeable and credible; this ought in all Reason to

PART beget a serious practical Apprehension, that it
 II. may be true. And even this will afford
 } Matter of Exercise, for religious Suspence and
 Deliberation, for moral Resolution and Self-
 government; because the Apprehension that
 Religion may be true, does as really lay Men
 under Obligations, as a full Conviction that it
 is true. It gives Occasion and Motives to
 consider farther the important Subject; to
 preserve attentively upon their Minds, a gene-
 ral implicit Sense, that they may be under di-
 vine moral Government, an awful Sollicitude
 about Religion, whether natural or revealed.
 Such Apprehension ought to turn Men's Eyes
 to every Degree of new Light which may be
 had, from whatever Side it comes; and in-
 duce them to refrain, in the mean Time,
 from all Immoralities, and live in the consci-
 entious Practice of every common Virtue.
 Especially are they bound to keep at the
 greatest Distance from all dissolute Profane-
 ness; for this the very Nature of the Case
 forbids; and to treat with highest Reverence
 a Matter, upon which their own whole In-
 terest and Being, and the Fate of Nature de-
 pends. This Behaviour, and an active En-
 deavour to maintain within themselves this
 Temper, is the Business, the Duty and the
 Wisdom of those Persons, who complain of
 the Doubtfulness of Religion: is what they
 are under the most proper Obligations to.
 And


And such Behaviour is an exertion of, and has a Tendency to improve in Them, That Character, which the Practice of all the several Duties of Religion, from a full Conviction of its Truth, is an Exertion of, and has a Tendency to improve in Others: Others, I say, to whom God has afforded such Conviction. Nay, considering the infinite Importance of Religion, revealed as well as natural, I think it may be said in general, that whoever will weigh the Matter thoroughly may see, there is not near so much Difference, as is commonly imagined, between what ought in Reason to be the Rule of Life, to those Persons who are fully convinced of its Truth, and to those who have only a serious doubting Apprehension, that it may be true. Their Hopes and Fears and Obligations will be in various Degrees: But, as the Subject-matter of their Hopes and Fears is the same; so the Subject-matter of their Obligations, what they are bound to do and to refrain from, is not so very unlike.

It is to be observed farther, that from a Character of Understanding, or a Situation of Influence in the World, some Persons have it in their Power to do infinitely more Harm or Good, by setting an Example of Profaneness and avowed Disregard to all Religion, or, on the contrary, of a serious, though per-

PART haps doubting, Apprehension of its Truth,
 II. and of a reverend Regard to it under this
 ~~~~~ Doubtfulness; than they can do by acting  
 well or ill in all the common Intercourses  
 amongst Mankind. And consequently they  
 are most highly accountable for a Behaviour,  
 which, they may easily foresee, is of such Im-  
 portance, and in which there is most plainly  
 a Right and a Wrong; even admitting the  
 Evidence of Religion to be as doubtful, as is  
 pretended.

The Ground of these Observations, and  
 That which renders them just and true, is,  
 that Doubting necessarily implies some De-  
 gree of Evidence for That, of which we  
 doubt. For no Person would be in Doubt,  
 concerning the Truth of a Number of Facts  
 so and so circumstanced, which should acci-  
 dentally come into his Thoughts, and of  
 which he had no Evidence at all. And  
 though in the Case of an even Chance, and  
 where consequently we were in Doubt, we  
 should in common Language say, that we  
 had no Evidence at all for either Side; yet  
 That Situation of Things, which renders it an  
 even Chance, and no more, that such an E-  
 vent will happen, renders this Case equiva-  
 lent to all others, where there is such Evi-  
 dence on both Sides of a Question<sup>b</sup>, as leaves

<sup>b</sup> Introduction.

the Mind in Doubt concerning the Truth. CHAP.  
Indeed in all these Cases, there is no more VI.  
Evidence on one Side, than on the other;   
but there is (what is equivalent to) much more  
for either, than for the Truth of a Number  
of Facts which come into one's Thoughts at  
random. And thus in all these Cases, Doubt  
as much presupposes Evidence, lower De-  
grees of Evidence; as Belief presupposes  
higher, and Certainty higher still. Any one,  
who will a little attend to the Nature of Evi-  
dence, will easily carry this Observation on,  
and see, that between no Evidence at all,  
and That Degree of it which affords Ground  
of Doubt, there are as many intermediate  
Degrees; as there are, between That Degree  
which is the Ground of Doubt, and Demon-  
stration. And though we have not Faculties  
to distinguish these Degrees of Evidence, with  
any Sort of Exactness; yet, in Proportion as  
they are discerned, they ought to influence our  
Practice. For it is as real an Imperfection in  
the moral Character, not to be influenced in  
Practice by a lower Degree of Evidence when  
discerned, as it is, in the Understanding, not  
to discern it. And as, in all Subjects which  
Men consider, they discern the lower as well  
as higher Degrees of Evidence, proportiona-  
bly to their Capacity of Understanding: so,  
in practical Subjects, they are influenced in  
Practice, by the lower as well as higher De-  
grees

PART grees of it, proportionably to their Fairness  
 II. and Honesty. And as, in Proportion to Defects in the Understanding, Men are unapt to see lower Degrees of Evidence, are in Danger of overlooking Evidence when it is not glaring, and are easily imposed upon in such Cases: so, in Proportion to the Corruption of the Heart, they seem capable of satisfying themselves with having no Regard in Practice to Evidence acknowledged real, if it be not overbearing. From these things it must follow, that Doubting concerning Religion implies such a Degree of Evidence for it, as, joined with the Consideration of its Importance, unquestionably lays Men under the Obligations before-mentioned, to have a dutiful Regard to it in all their Behaviour.


*Thirdly,* The Difficulties in which the Evidence of Religion is involved, which Some complain of, is no more a just Ground of Complaint, than the external Circumstances of Temptation, which others are placed in; or than Difficulties in the Practice of it, after a full Conviction of its Truth. Temptations render our State a more improving State of Discipline<sup>c</sup>, than it would be otherwise: as they give Occasion for a more attentive Exercise of the virtuous Principle, which confirms and strengthens it more, than an easier

<sup>c</sup> Part I. Ch. v.

or less attentive Exercise of it could. Now CHAP.  
VI. speculative Difficulties are, in this Respect, of the very same Nature with these external Temptations. For the Evidence of Religion not appearing obvious, is, to some Persons, a Temptation to reject it, without any Consideration at all; and therefore requires such an attentive Exercise of the virtuous Principle, seriously to consider That Evidence, as there would be no Occasion for, but for such Temptation. And the supposed Doubtfulness of its Evidence, after it has been in some Sort considered, affords Opportunity to an unfair Mind of explaining away, and deceitfully hiding from itself, That Evidence which it might see; and also for Men's encouraging themselves in Vice from Hopes of Impunity, though they do clearly see thus much at least, that these Hopes are uncertain: In like Manner as the common Temptation to many Instances of Folly which end in temporal Infamy and Ruin, is, the Ground for Hope of not being detected, and of escaping with Impunity; *i. e.* the Doubtfulness of the Proof beforehand, that such foolish behaviour will thus end in Infamy and Ruin. On the contrary, supposed Doubtfulness in the Evidence of Religion calls for a more careful and attentive Exercise of the virtuous Principle, in fairly yielding themselves up to the proper Influence of any real Evidence, though doubtful;

PART II. ful; and in practising conscientiously all Virtue, though under some Uncertainty, whether the Government in the Universe may not possibly be such, as that Vice may escape with Impunity. And in general, Temptation, meaning by this Word, the lesser Allurements, the Wrong and Difficulties in the Discharge of our Duty, as well as the greater ones; Temptation, I say, as such and of every Kind and Degree, as it calls forth some virtuous Efforts, additional to what would otherwise have been wanting, cannot but be an additional Discipline and Improvement of Virtue, as well as Probation of it in the other Senses of that Word<sup>d</sup>. So that the very same Account is to be given, why the Evidence of Religion should be left in such a Manner, as to require, in Some, an attentive, solicitous, perhaps painful Exercise of their Understanding about it; as why others should be placed in such Circumstances, as that the Practice of its common Duties, after a full Conviction of the Truth of it, should require Attention, Sollicitude and Pains: Or, why appearing Doubtfulness should be permitted to afford Matter of Temptation to Some; as why external Difficulties and Allurements should be permitted to afford Matter of Temptation to Others. The same Account also is to be given, why Some should be exercised with

<sup>d</sup> Part I. Ch. iv. and p 152.

Temptations of both these Kinds ; as why CHAP.  
Others should be exercised with the latter in VI.  
such very high Degrees, as some have been,   
particularly as the primitive Christians were.

Nor does there appear any Absurdities in supposing, that the speculative Difficulties in which the Evidence of Religion is involved, may make even the principal Part of some Persons Trial. For, as the chief Temptations of the Generality of the World, are, the ordinary Motives to Injustice or unrestrained Pleasure ; or to live in the Neglect of Religion from That Frame of Mind, which renders many Persons almost without Feeling as to any thing distant, or which is not the Object of their Senses : So there are other Persons without this Shallowness of Temper, Persons of a deeper Sense as to what is invisible and future ; who not only see, but have a general practical Feeling, that what is to come will be present, and that things are not less real for their not being the Objects of Sense ; and who, from their natural Constitution of Body and of Temper, and from their external Condition, may have small Temptations to behave ill, small Difficulty in behaving well, in the common Course of Life. Now when these latter Persons have a distinct full Conviction of the Truth of Religion, without any possible Doubts or Difficulties,

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**PART** the Practice of it is to them unavoidable, unless they will do a constant Violence to their own Minds ; and Religion is scarce any more a Discipline to Them, than it is to Creatures in a State of Perfection. Yet these Persons may possibly stand in Need of moral Discipline and Exercise in a higher Degree, than they would have by such an easy Practice of Religion. Or it may be requisite, for Reasons unknown to us, that they should give some farther Manifestation \* what is their moral Character, to the Creation of God, than such a Practice of it would be. Thus in the great Variety of religious Situations in which Men are placed, what constitutes, what chiefly and peculiarly constitutes, the Probation, in all Senses, of some Persons, may be the Difficulties in which the Evidence of Religion is involved : and their principal and distinguished Trial, may be, how they will behave under and with Respect to these Difficulties. Circumstances in Men's Situation in their temporal Capacity, analogous in good Measure to This respecting Religion, are to be observed. We find some Persons are placed in such a Situation in the World, as that their chief Difficulty with regard to Conduct, is not the Doing what is prudent when it is known ; for this, in numberless Cases, is as easy as the contrary : but to some the princi-

\* p. 152.

pal Exercise is, Recollection, and being upon their Guard against Deceits, the Deceits suppose of those about them; against false Appearances of Reason and Prudence. To Persons in some Situations, the principal Exercise with respect to Conduct, is, Attention in order to inform themselves what is proper, what is really the reasonable and prudent Part to act.

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But as I have hitherto gone upon Supposition, that Men's Dissatisfaction with the Evidence of Religion is not owing to their Neglects or Prejudices; it must be added, on the other hand, in all common Reason, and as what the Truth of the Case plainly requires should be added, that such Dissatisfaction possibly may be owing to those, possibly may be Men's own Fault. For,

If there are any Persons, who never set themselves heartily and in earnest to be informed in Religion: if there are any, who secretly wish it may not prove true; and are less attentive to Evidence than to Difficulties, and more to Objections than to what is said in answer to them: these Persons will scarce be thought in a likely Way of seeing the Evidence of Religion, though it were most certainly true, and capable of being ever so fully proved. If any accustom themselves to  
consider



PART consider this Subject usually in the Way of

II. Mirth and Sport: if they attend to Forms and Representations and inadequate Manners of Expression, instead of the real Things intended by them: (for Signs often can be no more than inadequately expressive of the things signified:) or if they substitute human Errors, in the Room of divine Truth: Why may not all, or any of these things, hinder some Men from seeing that Evidence, which really is seen by Others; as a like Turn of Mind, with Respect to Matters of common Speculation and Practice, does, we find by Experience, hinder them from attaining That Knowledge and right Understanding, in Matters of common Speculation and Practice, which more fair and attentive Minds attain to? And the Effect will be the same, whether their Neglect of seriously considering the Evidence of Religion, and their indirect Behaviour with regard to it, proceed from meer Carelessness, or from the grosser Vices; or whether it be owing to this, that Forms and figurative Manners of Expression, as well as Errors, administer Occasions of Ridicule, when the Things intended, and the Truth itself, would not. Men may indulge a ludicrous Turn so far as to lose all Sense of Conduct and Prudence in worldly Affairs, and even, as it seems, to impair their Faculty of Reason. And in general, Levity, Carelessness,

ness, Passion, and Prejudice, do hinder us from being rightly informed, with respect to common things: And they may, in like Manner, and perhaps in some farther providential Manner, with respect to moral and religious Subjects: may hinder Evidence from being laid before us, and from being seen when it is. The Scripture<sup>f</sup> does declare, that every one shall not understand. And it makes no Difference, by what providential Conduct, this comes to pass: Whether the Evidence of Christianity was, originally and with Design, put and left so, as that those who are desirous of evading moral Obligations, should not see it; and that honest-minded Persons should: Or, Whether it comes to pass by any other Means.

Farther: The general Proof of natural Religion and of Christianity, does, I think, lie Level to common Men; even those, the

<sup>f</sup> Dan. xii. 10. See also If. xxix. 13, 14. Mat. vi. 23. and xi. 25. and xiii. 11, 12. John iii. 19. John v. 44. 1 Cor. ii. 14. and 2 Cor. iv. 4. 2 Tim. iii. 13. and That affectionate, as well as authoritative Admonition, so very many Times inculcated, *He that bath Ears to hear, let him hear.* Grotius saw so strongly the thing intended in these and other Passages of Scripture of the like Sense, as to say, that the Proof given us of Christianity was less than it might have been, for this very Purpose: *Ut ita Sermo Evangelii tanquam lapis esset Lydius ad quem ingenia sanabilia explorarentur.* De Ver. R. C. L. 2. towards the End.

PART greatest Part of whose Time, from Child-  
 II. hood to Old-age, is taken up with provi-  
 ~~~~~ ding, for themselves and their Families, the  
 common Conveniencies perhaps Necessaries
 of Life: those, I mean, of this Rank, who
 ever think at all of asking after Proof or at-
 tending to it. Common Men, were they as
 much in Earnest about Religion, as about
 their temporal Affairs, are capable of being
 convinced upon real Evidence, that there is a
 God who governs the World: and they feel
 themselves to be of a moral Nature, and ac-
 countable Creatures. And as Christianity
 intirely falls in with this their natural Sense
 of Things; so they are capable, not only of
 being persuaded, but of being made to see,
 that there is Evidence of Miracles wrought
 in Attestation of it, and many appearing
 Completions of Prophecy. But though this
 Proof is real and conclusive, yet it is liable to
 Objections, and may be run up into Difficul-
 ties; which, however, Persons who are ca-
 pable, not only of talking of, but of really
 seeing, are capable also of seeing through:
i. e. not of clearing up and answering them,
 so as to satisfy their Curiosity, for of such
 Knowledge we are not capable with respect
 to any one thing in Nature; but capable of
 seeing that the Proof is not lost in these Dif-
 ficulties, or destroyed by these Objections.

But then a thorough Examination into Religion, with regard to these Objections, which cannot be the Business of every Man, is a Matter of pretty large Compass, and, from the Nature of it, requires some Knowledge, as well as Time and Attention; to see, how the Evidence comes out, upon balancing one thing with another, and what, upon the whole, is the Amount of it. Now if Persons who have picked up these Objections from Others, and take for granted they are of Weight, upon the Word of those from whom they received them, or, by often retailing of them, come to see or fancy they see them to be of Weight; will not prepare themselves for such an Examination, with a competent Degree of Knowledge; or will not give that Time and Attention to the Subject, which, from the Nature of it, is necessary for attaining such Information: in this Case, they must remain in Doubtfulness, Ignorance or Error; in the same Way as they must, with regard to common Sciences and Matters of common Life, if they neglect the necessary Means of being informed in them.

But still perhaps it will be objected, that if a Prince or common Master were to send Directions to a Servant, he would take Care,

PART that they should always bear the certain
 II. Marks, who they came from, and that their
 Sense should be always plain: so as that
 there should be no possible Doubt, if he
 could help it, concerning the Authority or
 Meaning of them. Now the proper An-
 swer to all this Kind of Objections is, that,
 wherever the Fallacy lies, it is even certain
 we cannot argue thus with respect to
 Him, who is the Governor of the World:
 and particularly that he does not afford us
 such Information, with respect to our tem-
 poral Affairs and Interest, as Experience a-
 bundantly shews. However, there is a full
 Answer to this Objection, from the very
 Nature of Religion. For the Reason why
 a Prince would give his Directions in this
 plain Manner, is, that he absolutely desires
 such an external Action should be done,
 without concerning himself with the Mo-
 tive or Principle upon which it is done: *i. e.*
 he regards only the external Event, or the
 Thing's being done; and not at all, properly
 speaking, the Doing of it, or the Action.
 Whereas the whole of Morality and Reli-
 gion consisting merely in Action itself, there
 is no Sort of Parallel between the Cases.
 But if the Prince be supposed to regard only
 the Action; *i. e.* only to desire to exercise,
 or in any Sense prove, the Understanding or

Loyalty of a Servant; he would not always give his Orders in such a plain Manner. CHAP. VI.

It may be proper to add, that the Will of God, respecting Morality and Religion, may be considered, either as absolute, or as only conditional. If it be absolute, it can only be thus, that we should act virtuously in such given Circumstances; not that we should be brought to act so, by his changing of our Circumstances. And if God's Will be thus absolute, then it is in our Power, in the highest and strictest Sense, to Do or to Contradict his Will; which is a most weighty Consideration. Or His Will may be considered only as conditional, that if we act so and so, we shall be rewarded; if otherwise, punished: of which conditional Will of the Author of Nature, the whole Constitution of it affords most certain Instances.

Upon the whole: that We are in a State of Religion necessarily implies, that we are in a State of Probation: and the Credibility of our being at all in such a State being admitted, there seems no peculiar Difficulty in supposing Our Probation to be, just as it is, in those Respects which are above objected against. There seems no Pretence, from *the Reason of the thing*, to say, that the

PART II. Trial cannot equitably be any thing, but whether Persons will act suitably to certain Information, or such as admits no Room for Doubt; so as that there can be no Danger of Miscarriage, but either from their not attending to what they certainly know, or from overbearing Passion hurrying them on to act contrary to it. For, since Ignorance and Doubt afford Scope for Probation in all Senses, as really as intuitive Conviction or Certainty; and since the two former are to be put to the same Account, as Difficulties in Practice; Men's moral Probation may also be, whether they will take due Care to inform themselves by impartial Consideration, and afterwards whether they will act as the Case requires, upon the Evidence which they have, however doubtful. And this we find by *Experience*, is frequently our Probation^s, in our temporal Capacity. For, the Information which we want with Regard to our worldly Interests, is by no means always given us of Course, without any Care of our own. And we are greatly liable to Self-deceit from inward secret Prejudices, and also to the Deceits of others. So that to be able to judge what is the prudent Part, often requires much and difficult Consideration.

^s p. 56, 334, 334, 335.

Then

Then after we have judged the very best we can, the Evidence upon which we must act, if we will live and act at all, is perpetually doubtful to a very high Degree. And the Constitution and Course of the World in Fact is such, as that Want of impartial Consideration what we have to do, and venturing upon extravagant Courses because it is doubtful what will be the Consequence, are often naturally, *i. e.* providentially, altogether as fatal, as Misconduct occasioned by heedless Inattention to what we certainly know, or disregarding it from overbearing Passion.

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VI.

Several of the Observations here made, may well seem strange, perhaps unintelligible, to many good Men; but if the Persons for whose Sake they are made think so; Persons who object as above, and throw off all Regard to Religion under Pretence of Want of Evidence; I desire Them to consider again, whether their thinking so, be owing to any thing unintelligible in these Observations, or to their own not having such a Sense of Religion and serious Sollicitude about it, as even their State of Scepticism does in all Reason require? It ought to be forced upon the Reflection of these Persons, that our Nature and Condition necessarily require us, in the daily Course of Life, to act upon Evi-

PART, dence much lower than what is commonly cal-
 II. led probable ; to guard, not only against what
 we fully believe will, but also against what
 we think it supposable may, happen ; and to
 engage in Pursuits when the Probability is
 greatly against Success, if it be credible, that
 possibly we may succeed in them.

CHAP.

C H A P. VII.

*Of the particular Evidence for
Christianity.*

THE Presumptions against Revelation, **CHAP.**
and Objections against the general **VII.**
Scheme of Christianity, and particular things
relating to it, being removed; there remains
to be considered, What positive Evidence we
have for the Truth of it: chiefly in order to
see, What the Analogy of Nature suggests
with regard to That Evidence, and the Objec-
tions against it: or to see what is, and is al-
lowed to be, the plain natural Rule of Judg-
ment and of Action, in our temporal Con-
cerns, in Cases where we have the same Kind
of Evidence, and the same Kind of Objec-
tions against it, that we have in the Case be-
fore us.

Now in the Evidence of Christianity, there
seem to be several things of great Weight,
not reducible to the Head, either of Miracles,
or the Completion of Prophecy, in the com-
mon Acceptation of the Words. But these
two are its direct and fundamental Proofs:
And those other things, however considerable
they

PART they are, yet ought never to be urged apart
 II. from its direct Proofs, but always to be joined
 with them. Thus the Evidence of Christiani-
 nity will be a long Series of things, reaching,
 as it seems, from the Beginning of the World
 to the present Time, of great Variety and
 Compass, taking in both the direct, and also
 the collateral, Proofs; and making up, all of
 them together, one Argument: the Convic-
 tion arising from which Kind of Proof may
 be compared to what they call *the Effect* in
 Architecture or other Works of Art; a Re-
 sult from a great Number of Things so and
 so disposed, and taken into one View. I
 shall therefore, *FIRST*, make some Obser-
 vations relating to Miracles, and the appear-
 ing Completions of Prophecy; and consider
 what Analogy suggests, in Answer to the
 Objections brought against this Evidence.
 And, *SECONDLY*, I shall endeavour to
 give some Account of the general Argument
 now mentioned, consisting both of the di-
 rect and collateral Evidence, considered as
 making up one Argument: this being the
 kind of Proof upon which we determine
 most Questions of Difficulty, concerning
 common Facts, alledged to have happened
 or seeming likely to happen; especially Que-
 stions relating to Conduct.

FIRST

FIRST I shall make some Observations CHAP.
upon the direct Proof of Christianity from VII.
Miracles and Prophecy, and upon the Objec-
tions alledged against it.

I. Now the following Observations, relating to the historical Evidence of Miracles wrought in Attestation of Christianity, appear to be of great Weight.

I. The Old Testament affords us the same historical Evidence of the Miracles of *Moses* and of the Prophets, as of the common civil History of *Moses* and the Kings of *Israel*; or, as of the Affairs of the Jewish Nation. And the *Gospels* and the *Acts* afford us the same historical Evidence of the Miracles of *Christ* and the Apostles, as of the common Matters related in them. This indeed could not have been affirmed by any reasonable Man, if the Authors of these Books, like many other Historians, had appeared to make an entertaining Manner of Writing their Aim; though they had interspersed Miracles in their Works, at proper Distances and upon proper Occasions. These might have animated a dull Relation, amused the Reader and engaged his Attention. And the same Account would naturally have been given of them, as, of the Speeches and Descriptions
of

PART of such Authors: the same Account, in a
 II. Manner, as is to be given, why the Poets
 make Use of Wonders and Prodigies. But
 the Facts, both miraculous and natural, in
 Scripture, are related in plain unadorned Nar-
 ratives: and both of them appear, in all Re-
 spects, to stand upon the same Foot of histo-
 rical Evidence. Farther: Some Parts of Scrip-
 ture, containing an Account of Miracles ful-
 ly sufficient to prove the Truth of Christia-
 nity, are quoted as genuine, from the Age in
 which they are said to be written, down to
 the present: And no other Parts of them,
 material in the present Question, are omitted
 to be quoted in such Manner, as to afford any
 Sort of Proof of their not being genuine.
 And, as common History, when called in
 Question in any Instance, may often be great-
 ly confirmed by cotemporary or subsequent
 Events more known and acknowledged; and
 as the common Scripture-history; like many
 others, is thus confirmed: so likewise is the
 miraculous History of it, not only in parti-
 cular Instances, but in general. For, the
 Establishment of the Jewish and Christian
 Religions, which were Events cotemporary
 with the Miracles related to be wrought in
 Attestation of both, or subsequent to them,
 these Events are just what we should have ex-
 pected, upon Supposition such Miracles were
 really wrought to attest the Truth of those
 Reli-

Religions. These Miracles are a satisfactory Account of those Events : of which, no other satisfactory Account can be given ; ; nor any Account at all, but what is imaginary merely and invented. It is to be added, that the most obvious, the most easy and direct Account of this History, how it came to be written and to be received in the World, as a true History ; is, that it really is so : nor can any other Account of it be easy and direct. Now, though an Account, not at all obvious, but very far-fetched and indirect, may indeed be, and often is, the true Account of a Matter ; yet it cannot be admitted on the Authority of its being asserted. Mere Guess, Supposition, and Possibility, when opposed to historical Evidence, prove nothing, but that historical Evidence is not demonstrative.

Now the just Consequence from all this, I think, is, that the Scripture-history in general is to be admitted as an authentick genuine History, till somewhat positive be alledged sufficient to invalidate it. But no Man will deny the Consequence to be, that it cannot be rejected, or thrown by as of no Authority, till it can be proved to be of none ; even though the Evidence now mentioned for its Authority, were doubtful. This Evidence may be confronted, by historical Evidence on the other Side, if there be any : or general
Incre-

PART II. Incredibility in the things related, or Inconsistence in the general Turn of the History, would prove it to be of no Authority. But since, upon the Face of the Matter, upon a first and general View, the Appearance is, that it is an authentick History; it cannot be determined to be fictitious without some Proof, that it is so. And the following Observations, in Support of these and coincident with them, will greatly confirm the historical Evidence for the Truth of Christianity.

2. The Epistles of St. *Paul*, from the Nature of epistolary Writings, and moreover from several of them being written, not to particular Persons, but to Churches; carry in them Evidences of their being genuine, beyond what can be in a mere historical Narrative, left to the World at large. This Evidence, joined with That which they have in common with the rest of the New Testament, seems not to leave so much as any particular Pretence for denying their Genuineness, considered as an ordinary Matter of Fact, or of Criticism: I say *particular* Pretence, for *denying* it; because any single Fact, of such a Kind and such Antiquity, may have *general Doubts* raised concerning it, from the very Nature of human Affairs and human Testimony. There is also to be mentioned, a distinct and particular Evidence of
the

the Genuineness of the Epistle chiefly referred to here, the first to the Corinthians; from the Manner in which it is quoted by *Clemens Romanus*, in an Epistle of his own to That Church^a. Now these Epistles afford a Proof of Christianity, detached from all others, which is, I think, a thing of Weight; and also a Proof of a Nature and Kind peculiar to itself. For,

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In them the Author declares, that he received the Gospel in general, and the Institution of the Communion in particular, not from the rest of the Apostles, or jointly together with them, but alone, from Christ himself; whom he declares likewise, conformably to the History in the *Acts*, that he saw after his Ascension^b. So that the Testimony of *St. Paul* is to be considered, as detached from That of the rest of the Apostles.

And he declares farther, that he was endowed with a Power of working Miracles, as what was publickly known to those very People, speaks of frequent and great Variety of miraculous Gifts as then subsisting in those very Churches, to which he was writing; which he was reprovng for several Irregularities; and where he had personal Opposers:

^a Clem. Rom. Ep. I. c. 47.

^b Gal. i. Cor. xi. 23, &c. 1 Cor. xv. 8.

PART He mentions these Gifts incidentally, in the most easy Manner and without Effort; by **II.** way of Reproof to those who had them, for their indecent Use of them; and by way of depreciating them, in Comparison of moral Virtues; In short he speaks to these Churches, of these miraculous Powers, in the Manner, any one would speak to another of a thing, which was as familiar and as much known in common to them both, as any thing in the World^c. And this, as hath been observed by several Persons, is surely a very considerable thing.

2. It is an acknowledged historical Fact, that Christianity offered itself to the World, and demanded to be received, upon the Allegation, *i. e.* as Unbelievers would speak, upon the Pretence, of Miracles, publicly wrought to attest the Truth of it, in such an Age; and that it was actually received by great Numbers in that very Age, and upon the professed Belief of the Reality of these Miracles. And Christianity, including the Dispensation of the Old Testament, seems distinguished by This from all other Religions. I mean, that this does not appear to be the Case with regard to any other: for surely it

^c Rom. xv. 19. 1 Cor. xii. 8, 9, 10 — 28, &c. and c. xiii. 1, 2, 8, and the whole xivth ch. 2 Cor. xii. 12, 13. Gal. iii. 2, 5.

will not be supposed to lie upon any Person, to prove by positive historical Evidence, that it was not. It does in no Sort appear, that Mahometanism was first received in the World upon the Foot of supposed Miracles^d, *i. e.* publick ones: for, as Revelation is itself miraculous, all Pretence to it must necessarily imply some Pretence of Miracles. And it is a known Fact, that it was immediately, at the very first, propagated by other Means. And as particular Institutions, whether in Paganism or Popery, said to be confirmed by Miracles after those Institutions had obtained, are not to the Purpose: So, were there what might be called Historical Proof, that any of them were introduced by a supposed divine Command, believed to be attested by Miracles; these would not be in any wise parallel. For single things of this Sort are easy to be accounted for, after Parties are formed, and have Power in their Hands; and the Leaders of them are in Veneration with the Multitude; and political Interests are blended with religious Claims, and religious Distinctions. But before any thing of this Kind, for a few Persons, and those of the lowest Rank, all at once, to bring over such great Numbers to a new Religion, and get it to be received upon the particular Evidence of Miracles; this is quite another thing. And I think it will be

^d See the Koran, c. xiii. and c. xvii.

PART allowed by any fair Adversary, that the
 II. Fact now mentioned, taking in all the Circumstances of it, is peculiar to the Christian Religion. However, the Fact itself is allowed, that Christianity obtained, *i. e.* was professed to be received in the World, upon the Belief of Miracles, immediately in the Age in which it is said those Miracles were wrought: Or that This is what its first Converts would have alledged, as the Reason for their embracing it. Now certainly it is not to be supposed, that such Numbers of Men, in the most distant Parts of the World, should forsake the Religion of their Country, in which they had been educated; separate themselves from their Friends, particularly in their festival Shows and Solemnities, to which the common People are so greatly addicted, and which were of a Nature to engage them much more, than any thing of That Sort amongst us; and embrace a Religion, which could not but expose them to many Inconveniences, and indeed must have been a giving up the World in a great Degree, even from the very first, and before the Empire engaged in Form against them: it cannot be supposed, that such Numbers should make so great, and, to say the least, so inconvenient a Change in their whole Institution of Life, unless they were really convinced of the Truth of those Miracles, upon the Knowledge or Belief of which,

which, they professed to make it. And it CHAP.
will, I suppose, readily be acknowledged, VII.
that the Generality of the first Converts to
Christianity, must have believed them : that
as by becoming Christians, they declared to
the World, they were satisfied of the Truth
of those Miracles ; so this Declaration was to
be credited. And this their Testimony is the
same Kind of Evidence for those Miracles,
as if they had put it in Writing, and these
Writings had come down to us. And it is
real Evidence, because it is of Facts, which
they had Capacity and full Opportunity to
inform themselves of. It is also distinct from
the direct or express historical Evidence,
though it is of the same Kind ; and it would
be allowed to be distinct in all Cases. For
were a Fact expressly related by one or more
antient Historians, and disputed in after Ages ;
that this Fact is acknowledged to have been
believed, by great Numbers of the Age in
which the Historian says it was done, would
be allowed an additional Proof of such Fact,
quite distinct from the express Testimony of
the Historian. The Credulity of Mankind
is acknowledged : and the Suspicions of Man-
kind ought to be acknowledged too ; and
their Backwardness even to believe, and great-
er still to practise, what makes against their
Interest. And it must particularly be re-
membered, that Education, and Prejudice,

PART and Authority, were against Christianity, in
 II. the Age I am speaking of. So that the im-
 mediate Conversion of such Numbers, is a
 real Presumption of somewhat more than hu-
 man in this Matter: I say Presumption, for
 it is not alledged as a Proof alone and by it-
 self. Nor need any one of the things men-
 tioned in this Chapter, be considered as a
 Proof by itself: and yet all of them together
 may be one of the strongest^e,

Upon the whole: As there is large histori-
 cal Evidence, both direct and circumstantial,
 of Miracles wrought in Attestation of Chris-
 tianity, collected by those who have writ up-
 on the Subject: it lies upon Unbelievers to
 shew, why this Evidence is not to be credit-
 ed. This Way of speaking is, I think, just;
 and what Persons who write in Defence of
 Religion, naturally fall into. Yet, in a Mat-
 ter of such unspeakable Importance, the pro-
 per Question is, not whom it lies upon, ac-
 cording to the Rules of Argument, to main-
 tain or confute Objections: but, whether
 there really are any, against this Evidence,
 sufficient, in Reason, to destroy the Credit
 of it. However, Unbelievers seem to take
 upon them the part of shewing that there are.

^e p. 399, &c.

They

They alledge, that numberless enthusias-
tick People, in different Ages and Countries,
expose themselves to the same Difficulties
which the primitive Christians did; and are
ready to give up their Lives, for the most idle
Follies imaginable. But it is not very
clear, to what Purpose this Objection is
brought. For every one, surely, in every
Case, must distinguish between Opinions and
Facts. And though Testimony is no Proof
of enthusiastick Opinions, or of any Opi-
nions at all; yet it is allowed, in all other
Cases, to be a Proof of Facts. And a Per-
son's laying down his Life in Attestation of
Facts or of Opinions, is the strongest Proof of
his believing them. And if the Apostles and
their Cotemporaries did believe the Facts, in
Attestation of which they exposed themselves
to Sufferings and Death; this their Belief, or
rather Knowledge, must be a Proof of those
Facts: for they were such as came under
the Observation of their Senses. And though
it is not of equal Weight, yet it is of Weight,
that the Martyrs of the next Age, notwith-
standing they were not Eye-witnesses of those
Facts, as were the Apostles and their Coten-
poraries, had, however, full Opportunity to
inform themselves, whether they were true
or not, and gave equal Proof of their belie-
ving them to be true.

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PART But Enthusiasm, it is said, greatly weakens
 II. the Evidence of Testimony even for Facts, in
 Matters relating to Religion: Some seem' to
 think, it totally and absolutely destroys the
 Evidence of Testimony upon this Subject.
 And indeed the Powers of Enthusiasm, and
 of Diseases too which operate in a like Man-
 ner, are very wonderful, in particular Instan-
 ces. But if great Numbers of Men, not ap-
 pearing in any peculiar Degree weak, nor un-
 der any peculiar Suspicion of Negligence, af-
 firm that they saw and heard such things
 plainly with their Eyes and their Ears, and
 are admitted to be in earnest; such Testi-
 mony is Evidence of the strongest Kind we
 can have, for any Matter of Fact. Yet
 possibly it may be overcome, strong as it is,
 by Incredibility in the things thus attested, or
 by contrary Testimony. And in an Instance
 where one thought it was so overcome, it
 might be just to consider, how far such Evi-
 dence could be accounted for, by Enthusiasm:
 for it seems as if no other imaginable Ac-
 count were to be given of it. But till such
 Incredibility be shewn, or contrary Testimony
 produced, it cannot surely be expected, that
 so far-fetched, so indirect and wonderful an
 Account of such Testimony, as that of En-
 thusiasm must be; an Account so strange,
 that the Generality of Mankind can scarce be
 made

made to understand what is meant by it: it cannot, I say, be expected, that such Account will be admitted of such Evidence; when there is this direct, easy and obvious Account of it, that People really saw and heard a thing not incredible, which they affirm sincerely and with full Assurance, they did see and hear. Granting then that Enthusiasm is not (strictly speaking) an absurd, but a possible Account of such Testimony: it is manifest that the very Mention of it, goes upon the previous Supposition, that the things so attested are incredible; and therefore need not be considered, till they are shewn to be so. Much less need it be considered, after the contrary has been proved. And I think it has been proved, to full Satisfaction, that there is no Incredibility in a Revelation, in general; or in such an one as the Christian, in particular. However; as Religion is supposed peculiarly liable to Enthusiasm, it may just be observed, that Prejudices almost without Number and without Name, Romance, Affectation, Humour, a Desire to engage Attention or to surprize, the Party-spirit, Custom, little Competitions, unaccountable Likings and Dislikings, these influence Men strongly in common Matters. And as these Prejudices are often scarce known or reflected upon by the Persons themselves who are influenced by them, they are to be

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PART considered as Influences of a like Kind to
 II. Enthusiasm. Yet human Testimony in com-
 mon Matters is naturally and justly believed
 notwithstanding.

It is intimated farther, in a more refined Way of Observation, that though it should be proved, that the Apostles and first Christians could not, in some Respects, be deceived themselves, and, in other Respects, cannot be thought to have intended to impose upon the World; yet it will not follow, that their general Testimony is to be believed, though truly handed down to us: because they might still in Part, *i. e.* in other Respects, be deceived Themselves, and in Part also designedly impose upon Others; which, it is added, is a Thing very credible, from that Mixture of real Enthusiasm, and real Knavery, to be met with in the same Characters. And, I must confess, I think the Matter of Fact contained in this Observation upon Mankind, is not to be denied; and that somewhat very much a-kin to it, is often supposed in Scripture as a very common Case, and most severely reprov'd. But it were to have been expected, that Persons capable of applying this Observation, as applied in the Objection, might also frequently have met with the like mixt Character, in Instances where Religion was quite out of the Case.
 The

The Thing plainly is, that Mankind are naturally endued with Reason, or a Capacity of distinguishing between Truth and Falseness; and as naturally they are endued with Veracity, or a Regard to Truth in what they say: But from many Occasions, they are liable to be prejudiced and biased and deceived Themselves, and capable of intending to deceive Others, in every different Degree: In-
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 somuch that, as we are all liable to be deceived by Prejudice, so likewise it seems to be not an uncommon thing, for Persons, who, from their Regard to Truth, would not invent a Lie entirely without any Foundation at all, to propagate it with heightning Circumstances, after it is once invented and set a-going. And Others, though they would not *propagate* a Lie, yet, which is a lower Degree of Falseness, will let it pass without Contradiction. But notwithstanding all this, human Testimony remains still a natural Ground of Assent; and this Assent, a natural Principle of Action.

It is objected farther, that however it has happened, the *Fact* is, that Mankind have, in different Ages, been strangely deluded with Pretences to Miracles and Wonders. But it is by no means to be admitted, that they have been oftener, or are at all more liable to be deceived by these Pretences, than by others.

It

PART It is added, that there is a very considerable
 II. Degree of historical Evidence for Miracles, which are, on all hands, acknowledged to be fabulous. But suppose there were even *the like* historical Evidence for These, to what there is for Those alledged in Proof of Christianity, which yet is in no wise allowed, but suppose this; the Consequence would not be, that the Evidence of the latter is not to be admitted. Nor is there a Man in the World who, in common Cases, would conclude thus. For, what would such a Conclusion really amount to but this, that Evidence confuted by contrary Evidence, or any way over-balanced, destroys the Credibility of other Evidence, neither confuted, nor over-balanced? To argue, that because there is, if there were, like Evidence from Testimony, for Miracles acknowledged false, as for those in Attestation of Christianity, therefore the Evidence in the latter Case is not to be credited; this is the same as to argue, that if two Men of equally good Reputation, had given Evidence in different Cases no way connected, and One of them had been convicted of Perjury, this confuted the Testimony of the Other.

Upon the whole then, the general Observation that human Creatures are so liable to be

be deceived, from Enthusiasm in Religion, and Principles equivalent to Enthusiasm in common Matters, and in both from Negligence; and that they are so capable of dishonestly endeavouring to deceive others; this does indeed weaken the Evidence of Testimony in all Cases, but does not destroy it in any. And these things will appear, to different Men, to weaken the Evidence of Testimony, in different Degrees: in Degrees proportionable to the Observations they have made, or the Notions they have any way taken up, concerning the Weakness and Negligence and Dishonesty of Mankind; or concerning the Powers of Enthusiasm, and Prejudices equivalent to it. But it seems to me, that People do not know what they say, who affirm these things to destroy the Evidence from Testimony, which we have of the Truth of Christianity. Nothing can destroy the Evidence of Testimony in any Case, but a Proof of Probability, that Persons are not competent Judges of the Facts to which they give Testimony; or that they are actually under some indirect Influence in giving it, in such particular Case. Till this be made out, the *natural* Laws of human Actions require, that Testimony be admitted. It can never be sufficient to overthrow direct historical Evidence, indolently to say, that there are so many Principles, from whence Men are liable

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PART II. ble to be deceived themselves and disposed to deceive others, especially in Matters of Religion, that one knows not what to believe. And it is surprizing Persons can help reflecting, that this very Manner of speaking, supposes they are not satisfied that there is nothing in the Evidence, of which they speak thus; or that they can avoid observing, if they do make this Reflection, that it is, on such a Subject, a very material one ^f.

And over-against all these Objections, is to be set, the Importance of Christianity, as what must have engaged the Attention of its first Converts, so as to have rendered them less liable to be deceived from Carelessness, than they would in common Matters; and likewise the strong Obligations to Veracity, which their Religion laid them under: So that the first and most obvious Presumption is, that they could not be deceived themselves, nor would deceive others. And this Presumption in this Degree, is peculiar to the Testimony we have been considering.

In Argument, Assertions are nothing in themselves, and have an Air of Positiveness, which sometimes is not very easy: Yet they are necessary, and necessary to be repeated; in order to connect a Discourse, and distinctly

^f See the foregoing Chapter.

to lay before the View of the Reader, what **CHAP.**
is proposed to be proved, and what is left as **VII.**
proved. Now the Conclusion from the fore-
going Observations is, I think, beyond all
Doubt, this: That Unbelievers must be
forced to admit the external Evidence for
Christianity, *i. e.* the Proof of Miracles
wrought to attest it, to be of real Weight
and very considerable; though they cannot
allow it to be sufficient, to convince them of
the Reality of those Miracles. And as they
must, in all Reason, admit this; so it seems
to me, that upon Consideration they would,
in Fact, admit it; those of them, I mean,
who know any thing at all of the Matter:
In like Manner as Persons, in many Cases,
own, they see strong Evidence from Testi-
mony, for the Truth of things, which yet
they cannot be convinced are true: Cases,
suppose, where there is contrary Testimony:
or things which they think, whether with or
without Reason, to be incredible. But there
is no Testimony contrary to That which we
have been considering: and it has been fully
proved, that there is no Incredibility, in
Christianity in general, or in any Part of it.

II. As to the Evidence for Christianity
from Prophecy, I shall only make some few
general Observations, which are suggested by
the Analogy of Nature; *i. e.* by the ac-
knowledged

PART knowledged natural Rules of judging in com-
II. mon Matters, concerning Evidence of a like
 Kind to this from Prophecy.

1. The Obscurity or Unintelligibleness of one Part of a Prophecy, does not, in any Degree, invalidate the Proof of Foresight, arising from the appearing Completion of those other Parts which are understood. For the Case is evidently the same, as if those Parts, which are not understood, were lost, or not written at all, or written in an unknown Tongue. Whether this Observation be commonly attended to or not, it is so evident, than one can scarce bring oneself to set down an instance in common Matters, to exemplify it. However; Suppose a Writing, partly in Cypher, and partly in plain Words at Length; and that in the Part one understood, there appeared Mention of several known Facts: It would never come into any Man's Thoughts to imagine, that if he understood the Whole, perhaps he might find, that those Facts were not in Reality known by the Writer. Indeed, both in this Example and the thing intended to be exemplified by it, our not understanding the Whole (the whole suppose of a Sentence or a Paragraph) might sometimes occasion a Doubt, whether one understood the literal Meaning of such a Part: But this comes under another Consideration.

For

For the same Reason, though a Man should be incapable, for Want of Learning, or Opportunities of Inquiry, or from not having turned his Studies this Way, even so much as to judge, whether particular Prophecies, have been throughout compleatly fulfilled; yet he may see, in general, that they have been fulfilled to such a Degree, as, upon very good Ground, to be convinced of Foresight more than human in such Prophecies, and of such Events being intended by them. For the same Reason also, though, by Means of the Deficiencies in civil History, and the different Accounts of Historians, the most learned should not be able to make out to Satisfaction, that such Parts of the Prophetick History have been minutely and throughout fulfilled; yet a very strong Proof of Foresight may arise, from That general Completion of them, which is made out: As much Proof of Foresight, perhaps, as the Giver of Prophecy intended should ever be afforded by such Parts of Prophecy.

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2. A long Series of Prophecy being applicable to such and such Events, is itself a Proof, that it was intended of them: as the Rules, by which we naturally judge and determine, in common Cases parallel to this, will shew. This Observation I make in Answer to the
common

PART common Objection against the Application of
II. the Prophecies, that considering each of
 them distinctly by itself, it does not at all
 appear, that they were intended of those
 particular Events to which they are applied
 by Christians; and therefore it is to be sup-
 posed, that, if they meant any thing, they
 were intended of other Events unknown to
 us, and not of these at all.

Now there are two Kinds of writing, which bear a great Resemblance to Prophecy, with Respect to the Matter before us: the Mythological, and the Satirical where the Satire is, to a certain Degree, concealed. And a Man might be assured, that he understood what an Author intended by a Fable or Parable, related without any Application or Moral, merely from seeing it to be easily capable of such Application, and that such a Moral might naturally be deduced from it. And he might be fully assured, that such Persons and Events were intended in a Satirical Writing, merely from its being applicable to them. And, agreeably to the last Observation, he might be in a good Measure satisfied of it, though he were not enough informed in Affairs, or in the Story of such Persons, to understand half the Satire. For, his Satisfaction, that he understood the Meaning, the intended Meaning, of these Writings, would


be greater or less, in Proportion as he saw the general Turn of them to be capable of such Application: and in Proportion to the Number of particular things capable of it. And thus, if a long Series of Prophecy is applicable to the present State of the Church, and to the political Situations of the Kingdoms of the World, some thousand Years after these Prophecies were delivered, and a long Series of Prophecy delivered before the Coming of Christ is applicable to him; these things are in themselves a Proof, that the prophetick History was intended of Him, and of those Events: in proportion as the general Turn of it is capable of such Application, and to the Number and Variety of particular Prophecies capable of it. And though, in all just way of Consideration, the appearing Completion of Prophecies, is to be allowed to be thus explanatory of, and to determine their Meaning; yet it is to be remembered farther, that the ancient Jews applied the Prophecies to a Messiah before his Coming, in much the same Manner as Christians do now: And that the primitive Christians interpreted the Prophecies respecting the State of the Church and of the World in the last Ages, in the Sense, which the Event seems to confirm and verify. And from these things, it may be made appear:

B b

3. That

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PART 3. That the shewing even to a high Probability, if that could be, that the Prophets thought of some other Events, in such and such Predictions, and not those at all, which Christians alledge to be Completions of those Predictions; or that such and such Prophecies are capable of being applied to other Events than those, to which Christians apply them——that this would not confute or destroy the Force of the Argument from Prophecy, even with regard to those very Instances. For, observe how this Matter really is. If one knew such a Person to be the sole Author of such a Book, and was certainly assured, or satisfied to any Degree, that one knew the Whole of what he intended in it; one should be assured or satisfied to such Degree, that one knew the whole Meaning of that Book: for the Meaning of a Book, is nothing but the Meaning of the Author. But if one knew a Person to have compiled a Book out of Memoirs, which he received from Another, of vastly superior Knowledge in the Subject of it, especially if it were a Book full of great Intricacies and Difficulties; it would in no wise follow, that one knew the whole Meaning of the Book, from knowing the whole Meaning of the Compiler: for the original Memoirs, *i. e.* the Author of them, might have, and there would be
no

no Degree of Presumption, in many Ca- CHAP.
ses, against supposing him to have, some VII.
farther Meaning, than the Compiler saw. 

To say then, that the Scriptures and the things contained in them can have no other or farther Meaning, than those Persons thought or had, who first recited or wrote them; is evidently saying, that those Persons were the original, proper, and sole Authors of those Books, *i. e.* that they are not inspired: which is absurd, whilst the Authority of these Books is under Examination; *i. e.* till you have determined they are of no divine Authority at all. Till this be determined, it must in all Reason be supposed, not indeed that they have, for this is taking for granted that they are inspired, but that they may have, some farther Meaning than what the Compilers saw or understood. And upon this Supposition, it is supposeable also, that this farther Meaning may be fulfilled. Now Events corresponding to Prophecies, interpreted in a different Meaning from That, in which the Prophets are supposed to have understood them; this affords, in a Manner, the same Proof, that this different Sense was originally intended, as it would have afforded, if the Prophets had not understood their Predictions in the Sense it is supposed they did: because there is no Presumption of Their Sense of them, being the whole Sense of

PART them. And it has been already shewn, that
 II. the apparent Completions of Prophecy, must
 be allowed to be explanatory of its Meaning. So that the Question is, whether a Series of Prophecy has been fulfilled, in a natural or proper, *i. e.* in any real, Sense of the Words of it. For such Completion is equally a Proof of Foresight more than human, whether the Prophets are, or are not, supposed, to have understood it in a different Sense. I say, supposed: for, though I think it clear, that the Prophets did not understand the full Meaning of their Predictions; it is another Question, how far they thought they did, and in what Sense they understood them.

Hence may be seen, to how little Purpose those Persons busy themselves, who endeavour to prove, that the prophetick History is applicable to Events, of the Age in which it was written, or of Ages before it. Indeed to have proved this before there was any Appearance of a farther Completion of it, might have answered some Purpose; for it might have prevented the Expectation of any such farther Completion. Thus could *Porphry* have shewn, that some principal Parts of the Book of *Daniel*, for Instance, the seventh Verse of the seventh Chapter, which the Christians interpreted of the latter Ages, was applicable to Events, which happened
 before

before or about the Age of *Antiochus Epi-* CHAP.
phanes; this might have prevented them from VII.
 expecting any farther Completion of it. And, 
 unless there was then, as I think there must
 have been, external Evidence concerning that
 Book, more than is come down to us; such
 a Discovery might have been a Stumbling-
 block in the Way of Christianity itself: con-
 sidering the Authority which our Saviour has
 given to the Book of *Daniel*, and how much
 the general Scheme of Christianity presup-
 poses the Truth of it. But even This Dis-
 covery, had there been any such^s, would be
 of very little Weight with reasonable Men
 Now; if this Passage, thus applicable to E-
 vents before the Age of *Porphry*, appears to
 be applicable also to Events, which succeeded
 the Dissolution of the Roman Empire. I
 mention this, not at all as intending to insinu-
 ate, that the Division of this Empire into ten
 Parts, for it plainly was divided into about
 that Number, were, alone and by itself, of
 any Moment in verifying the prophetick His-
 tory: but only as an Example of the thing I

^s It appears, that *Porphry* did nothing worth mentioning
 in this Way. For *Jerom* on the Place says: *Duas posteriores*
bestias—in uno Macedonum regno ponit. And as to the ten
 Kings; *Decem reges enumerat, qui fuerunt sævissimi: ipsosque*
reges non unius ponit regni, verbi gratia, Macedoniæ, Syriæ,
Asiæ, et Ægypti; sed de diversis regnis unum efficit regum or-
dinem. And in this way of Interpretation, any thing may be
 made of any thing.

PART am speaking of. And thus upon the whole,
 II. the Matter of Enquiry evidently must be, as
 above put, Whether the Prophecies are applic-
 cable, to Christ, and to the present State of
 the World and of the Church; applicable
 in such a Degree, as to imply Foresight:
 Not whether they are capable of any other
 Application; though I know no Pretence for
 saying, the general Turn of them is capable
 of any other.

These Observations are, I think, just; and
 the Evidence referred to in them, real:
 Though there may be People who will not
 accept of such imperfect Information from
 Scripture. Some too have not Integrity and
 Regard enough to Truth, to attend to Evi-
 dence, which keeps the Mind in Doubt,
 perhaps Perplexity, and which is much of a
 different Sort from what they expected. And
 it plainly requires a Degree of Modesty and
 Fairness, beyond what every one has, for a
 Man to say, not to the World, but to Him-
 self, that there is a real Appearance of some-
 what of great Weight in this Matter, though
 he is not able thoroughly to satisfy himself
 about it; but it shall have its Influence upon
 him, in Proportion to its appearing Reality
 and Weight. It is much more easy, and
 more falls in with the Negligence, Presump-
 tion and Wilfulness of the Generality, to de-
 termine

termine at once, with a decisive Air, There is nothing in it. The Prejudices arising from that absolute Contempt and Scorn, with which this Evidence is treated in the World, I do not mention. For what indeed can be said to Persons, who are weak enough in their Understandings, to think This any Presumption against it; or, if they do not, are yet weak enough in their Temper to be influenced, by such Prejudices, upon such a Subject.

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I shall now, *SECONDLY*, endeavour to give some Account of the general Argument for the Truth of Christianity, consisting both of the direct and circumstantial Evidence, considered as making up one Argument. Indeed to state and examine this Argument fully, would be a Work much beyond the Compass of this whole Treatise: Nor is so much as a proper Abridgment of it to be expected here. Yet the present Subject requires to have some brief Account of it given. For it is the Kind of Evidence, upon which most Questions of Difficulty, in common Practice, are determined: Evidence arising from various Coincidences, which support and confirm each other, and in this Manner prove, with more or less Certainty, the Point under Consideration. And I chuse to do it also: First, because it seems to be of the greatest Importance, and not duly attend-

PART II. ed to by every one, that the Proof of Revelation is, not some direct and express things only, but a great Variety of circumstantial things also; and that though each of these direct and circumstantial things, is indeed to be considered separately, yet they are afterwards to be joined together; for that the proper Force of the Evidence, consists in the Result of those several things, considered in their Respects to each other, and united into one View: And in the next Place, because it seems to me, that the matters of Fact here set down, which are acknowledged by Unbelievers, must be acknowledged by them also to contain together a Degree of Evidence of great Weight, if they could be brought to lay these several things before themselves distinctly, and then with Attention consider them together; instead of that cursory Thought of them, to which we are familiarised. For being familiarised to the cursory Thought of things, as really hinders the Weight of them from being seen, as from having its due Influence upon Practice.

The thing asserted, and the Truth of which is to be enquired into, is this: That over and above our Reason and Affections, which God has given us for the Information of our Judgment and the Conduct of our Lives, he has also, by external Revelation, given us an Account of Himself, and his moral Government

vernment over the World, implying a future State of Rewards and Punishments ; *i. e.* hath revealed the System of natural Religion : for natural Religion may be externally ^h revealed by God, as the Ignorant may be taught it by Mankind, their Fellow-creatures — that God, I say, has given us the Evidence of Revelation, as well as the Evidence of Reason, to ascertain this moral System ; together with an Account of a particular Dispensation of Providence, which Reason could no way have discovered, and a particular Institution of Religion founded on it, for the Recovery of Mankind out of their present wretched Condition, and raising them to the Perfection and final Happiness of their Nature.

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This Revelation, whether real or supposed, may be considered as wholly historical. For Prophecy is nothing but the History of Events before they come to pass : Doctrines also are Matters of Fact : and Precepts come under the same Notion. And the general Design of Scripture, which contains in it this Revelation, thus considered as historical, may be said to be, to give us an Account of the World, in this one single View, as God's World : by which it appears essentially distinguished from all other Books, so far as I have found, except such as are copied from it. It begins with an Account of God's Creation of

^h p. 211, &c.

the

PART the World, in order to ascertain, and distinguish from all Others, Who is the Object of our Worship, by what he has done: In order to ascertain, who He is, concerning whose Providence, Commands, Promises and Threatnings, this sacred Book, all along, treats; the Maker and Proprietor of the World, He whose Creatures we are, the God of Nature: In order likewise to distinguish him from the Idols of the Nations, which are either imaginary Beings, *i. e.* no Beings at all; or else Part of that Creation, the historical Relation of which is here given. And St. *John*, not improbably, with an Eye to this Mosaic Account of the Creation, begins his Gospel with an Account of our Saviour's Pre-existence, and that *All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made*ⁱ: agreeably to the Doctrine of St. *Paul*, that *God created all things by Jesus Christ*^k. This being premised, the Scripture, taken together, seems to profess to contain a kind of an Abridgment of the History of the World, in the View just now mentioned: that is, a general Account of the Condition of Religion and its Professors, during the Continuance of that Apostacy from God, and State of Wickedness, which it every where supposes the World to lie in. And this Account of the State of Religion, carries

ⁱ John i. 3^k Eph. iii. 9.

with

with it some brief Account of the political CHAP. State of things, as Religion is affected by it. VII. Revelation indeed considers the common Affairs of this World, and what is going on in it, as a mere Scene of Distraction; and cannot be supposed to concern itself with foretelling, at what Time, *Rome* or *Babylon* or *Greece*, or any particular Place, should be the most conspicuous Seat of that Tyranny and Diffoluteness, which all Places equally aspire to be; cannot, I say, be supposed to give any Account of this wild Scene for its own Sake. But it seems to contain some very general Account of the chief Governments of the World, as the general State of Religion, has been, is, or shall be, affected by them, from the first Transgression, and during the whole Interval of the World's continuing in its present State, to a certain future Period, spoken of both in the Old and New Testament, very distinctly, and in great Variety of Expression: *The times of the restitution of all things*¹: *When the mystery of God shall be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets*^m: *When the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: And the kingdom shall not be left to other people*ⁿ, as it is represented to be during this Apostacy, *but Judgment shall be given to*

¹ Acts iii. 21.^m Rev. x. 7.ⁿ Dan. ii.

PART *the saints*^o, and *they shall reign*^p: And the
 II. *kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of*
 { *the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be*
given to the people of the saints of the most
Highb^q.

Upon this general View of the Scripture, I would remark, how great a Length of Time, the whole Relation takes up, near six thousand Years of which are past: and how great a Variety of things it treats of; the natural and moral System or History of the World, including the Time when it was formed, all contained in the very first Book, and evidently written in a rude and unlearned Age; and in subsequent Books, the various common and prophetick History, and the particular Dispensation of Christianity. Now all this together gives the largest Scope for Criticism; and for Confutation of what is capable of being confuted, either from Reason or from common History, or from any Inconsistence in its several Parts. And it is a thing which deserves, I think, to be mentioned, that whereas some imagine, the supposed Doubtfulness of the Evidence for Revelation implies a positive Argument that it is not true; it appears, on the contrary, to imply a positive Argument that it is true. For, could any common Relation, of such Antiquity,

• Dan. vii. 22.

p Rev.

q Dan. vii.

Extent,

Extent, and Variety (for in these things the CHAP. Strefs of what I am now observing lies) be VII. proposed to the Examination of the World: that it could not, in an Age of Knowledge and Liberty, be confuted, or shewn to have nothing in it, to the Satisfaction of reasonable Men; this would be thought a strong presumptive Proof of its Truth. And indeed it must be a Proof of it, just in Proportion to the Probability, that if it were false, it might be shewn to be so: and this, I think, is scarce pretended to be shewn, but upon Principles and in Ways of arguing, which have been clearly obviated*. Nor does it at all appear, that any Sett of Men who believe natural Religion, are of the Opinion, that Christianity has been thus confuted. But to proceed;

Together with the moral System of the World, the Old Testament contains a chronological Account of the Beginning of it, and from thence, an unbroken Genealogy of Mankind for many Ages before common History begins; and carried on as much farther, as to make up a continued Thread of History of the Length of between three and four thousand Years. It contains an Account of God's making a Covenant with a particular Nation, that they should be his People, and He would

* Ch. ii, iii, &c.

PART be their God, in a peculiar Sense; of his
 II. often interposing miraculously in their Affairs;
 giving them the Promise, and, long after, the Possession, of a particular Country; assuring them of the greatest national Prosperity in it, if they would worship him, in Opposition to the Idols which the rest of the World worshipped, and obey his Commands; and threatening them with unexampled Punishments, if they disobeyed him, and fell into the general Idolatry: insomuch that this one Nation should continue to be the Observation and the Wonder of all the World. It declares particularly, that *God would scatter them among all people, from one end of the earth unto the other: but that when they should return unto the Lord their God, he would have compassion upon them, and gather them from all the nations, whither he had scattered them: that Israel should be saved in the Lord, with an everlasting salvation; and not be ashamed or confounded world without end.* And as some of these Promises are conditional, others are as absolute, as any thing can be expressed: That the Time should come, when *the people should be all righteous, and inherit the land for ever: that though God would make a full end of all nations whither he had scattered them, yet would he not make a full end of them: that he would bring again the captivity of his people Israel, and plant them upon their land,*
 and

and they should be no more pulled up out of their land: that the seed of Israel should not cease from being a nation for ever^s. It foretells, that God would raise them up a particular Person, in whom all his Promises should finally be fulfilled; the Messiah, who should be, in an high and eminent Sense, their anointed Prince and Saviour. This was foretold in such a Manner, as raised a general Expectation of such a Person in the Nation, as appears from the New Testament, and is an acknowledged Fact; an Expectation of his coming at such a particular Time, before any one appeared claiming to be That Person, and when there was no Ground for such an Expectation but from the Prophecies: which Expectation, therefore, must in all Reason be presumed to be explanatory of those Prophecies, if there were any doubt about their Meaning. It seems moreover to foretell, that this Person should be rejected by that Nation, to whom he had been so long promised, and though he was so much desired by them^t. And it expressly foretells, that he should be the Saviour of the Gentiles; and even that the Completion of the Scheme, contained in this Book, and then begun, and in its Progress,

^s Deut. xxviii. 64. Ch. xxx. 2, 3. Is. xlv. 17. Ch. lx. 21. Jer. xxx. 11. Ch. xlvi. 28. Amos ix. 15. Jer. xxxi. 36. ^t Is. viii. 14, 15. Ch. xlix. 5. Ch. liii. Mal. i. 10, 11. and Ch. iii.

should

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PART should be somewhat so great, that, in Comparison with it, the Restoration of the Jews alone would be but of small Account. *It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayst be for salvation unto the end of the earth. And, In the last days, the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow into it—for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations—and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day, And the Idols be shall utterly abolish*^u. The Scripture farther contains an Account, that at the Time the Messiah was expected, a Person rose up, in this Nation, claiming to be that Messiah, to be the Person, whom all the Prophecies referred to, and in whom they should center: that he spent some Years in a continued Course of miraculous Works; and endued his immediate Disciples and Followers, with a Power of doing the same, as a Proof of the Truth of that

^u Isa. xlix. 6. Ch. ii. Ch. xi. Ch. lvi. 7. Mal. i. 11. To which must be added, the other Prophecies of the like Kind, several in the New Testament, and very many in the Old; which describe what shall be the Completion of the revealed Plan of Providence.

Religion, which he commiffioned them to CHAP.
publish: that, invested with this Authority VII.
and Power, they made numerous Converts in
the remotest Countries, and fettled and eſta-
bliſhed his Religion in the World; to the
End of which, the Scripture profeſſes to give
a prophetick Account of the State of this Re-
ligion amongſt Mankind.

Let us now ſuppoſe a Perſon utterly igno-
rant of Hiſtory, to have all this related to him,
out of the Scripture. Or ſuppoſe ſuch an
one, having the Scripture put into his hands,
to remark theſe things in it, not knowing but
that the Whole, even its civil Hiſtory, as well
as the other Parts of it, might be, from Be-
ginning to End, an entire Invention; and to
aſk, What Truth was in it, and whether the
Revelation here related, was real or a Fiction?
And inſtead of a direct Answer, ſuppoſe him,
all at once, to be told the following confeſt
Facts; and then to unite them into one
View.

Let him firſt be told, in how great a De-
gree the Profeſſion and Eſtabliſhment of na-
tural Religion, the Belief that there is one
God to be worſhipped, that Virtue is his Law,
and that Mankind ſhall be rewarded and pu-
niſhed Hereafter, as they obey and diſobey it
Here; in how very great a Degree, I ſay, the

PART Profession and Establishment of this moral
 II. System in the World, is owing to the Reve-
 { lation, whether real or supposed, contained in
 this Book : the Establishment of this moral
 System, even in those Countries which do not
 acknowledge the proper Authority of the
 Scripture*. Let him be told also, what
 Number of Nations do acknowledge its pro-
 per Authority. Let him then take in the
 Consideration, of what Importance Religion
 is to Mankind. And upon these things, he
 might, I think, truly observe, that this sup-
 posed Revelation's obtaining and being receiv-
 ed in the World, with all the Circumstances
 and Effects of it, considered together as one
 Event, is the most conspicuous and important
 Event in the Story of Mankind : that a Book
 of this Nature, and thus promulged and re-
 commended to our Consideration, demands,
 as if by a Voice from Heaven, to have its
 Claims most seriously examined into : and
 that, before such Examination, to treat it
 with any Kind of Scoffing and Ridicule, is
 an Offence against natural Piety. But it is
 to be remembred, that how much soever the
 Establishment of natural Religion in the
 World is owing to the Scripture-revelation,
 this does not destroy the Proof of Religion from
 Reason ; any more than the Proof of *Eu-
 clid's Elements* is destroyed, by a Man's know-

* p. 319.

ing or thinking, that he should never have seen the Truth of the several Propositions contained in it, nor had those Propositions come into his Thoughts, but for that Mathematician.

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Let such a Person as we are speaking of, be, in the next Place, informed, of the acknowledged Antiquity of the first Parts of this Book: And that its Chronology, its Account of the Time when the Earth, and the several Parts of it, were first peopled with human Creatures, is no way contradicted, but is really confirmed, by the natural and civil History of the World, collected from common Historians, from the State of the Earth, and from the late Invention of Arts and Sciences. And as the Scripture contains an unbroken Thread of common and civil History, from the Creation to the Captivity, for between three and four thousand Years: Let the Person we are speaking of be told in the next place, that this general History, as it is not contradicted, but is confirmed by prophane History as much as there would be reason to expect, upon Supposition of its Truth; so there is nothing in the whole History *itself*, to give any reasonable Ground of Suspicion, of its not being, in the general, a faithful and literally true Genealogy of Men, and Series of things. I speak here only of the com-

PART mon Scripture history, or of the Course of
 II. ordinary Events related in it; as distinguished
 from Miracles, and from the prophetick History. In all the Scripture-narrations of this Kind, following Events arise out of foregoing ones, as in all other Histories. There appears nothing related as done in any Age, not conformable to the Manners of that Age: nothing in the Account of a succeeding Age, which, one would say, could not be true, or was improbable, from the Account of things in the preceding one. There is nothing in the Characters, which would raise a Thought of their being feigned; but all the internal Marks imaginable of their being real. It is to be added also, that mere Genealogies, bare Narratives of the Number of Years, which Persons called by such and such Names lived, do not carry the Face of Fiction; perhaps do carry some Presumption of Veracity: and all unadorned Narratives, which have nothing to surprize, may be thought to carry somewhat of the like Presumption too. And the domestick and the political History is plainly credible. There may be Incidents in Scripture, which taken alone in the naked way they are told, may appear strange; especially to Persons of other Manners, Temper, Education: But there are also Incidents of undoubted Truth, in many or most Persons Lives, which, in the same Circumstances,

2

would

would appear to the full as strange. There may be Mistakes of Transcribers, there may be other real or seeming Mistakes, not easy to be particularly accounted for: But there are certainly no more things of this Kind in the Scripture, than what were to have been expected in Books of such Antiquity: and Nothing, in any wise, sufficient to discredit the general Narrative. Now, that a History claiming to commence from the Creation, and extending in one continued Series, through so great a Length of Time, and Variety of Events, should have such Appearances of Reality and Truth in its whole Contexture, is surely a very remarkable Circumstance in its Favour. And as all this is applicable to the common History of the New Testament; so there is a farther Credibility, and a very high one, given to it, by profane Authors: many of these writing of the same Times, and confirming the Truth of Customs and Events, which are incidentally as well as more purposely mentioned in it. And this Credibility of the common Scripture-history, gives some Credibility to its miraculous History: especially as this is interwoven with the common, so as that they imply each other, and both together make up one Relation.

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PART II. Let it then be more particularly observed to this Person, that it is an acknowledged Matter of Fact, which is indeed implied in the foregoing Observation, that there was such a Nation as the *Jews*, of the greatest Antiquity, whose Government and general Polity was founded on the Law, here related to be given them by *Moses* as from Heaven: that natural Religion, though with Rites additional yet no way contrary to it, was their established Religion, which cannot be said of the Gentile World: and that their very Being as a Nation, depended upon their Acknowledgment of one God, the God of the Universe. For, suppose in their Captivity in *Babylon*, they had gone over to the Religion of their Conquerors, there would have remained no Bond of Union, to keep them a distinct People. And whilst they were under their own Kings, in their own Country, a total Apostacy from God would have been the Dissolution of their whole Government. They, in such a Sense, nationally acknowledged and worshipped the Maker of Heaven and Earth, when the rest of the World were sunk in Idolatry, as rendered them, in Fact, the peculiar People of God. And this so remarkable an Establishment and Preservation of natural Religion amongst them, seems to add some peculiar Credibility to the historical Evidence for the
Miracles

Miracles of *Moses* and the Prophets: Because these Miracles are a full satisfactory Account of this Event, which plainly wants to be accounted for, and cannot otherwise.

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Let this Person, supposed wholly ignorant of History, be acquainted farther, that One claiming to be the Messiah, of Jewish Extraction, rose up at the Time when this Nation, from the Prophecies abovementioned, expected the Messiah: that he was rejected, as it seemed to have been foretold he should, by the Body of the People, under the Direction of their Rulers: that in the Course of a very few Years, he was believed on and acknowledged as the promised Messiah, by great Numbers among the Gentiles, agreeably to the Prophecies of Scripture, yet not upon the Evidence of Prophecy, but of Miracles^y, of which Miracles we also have strong historical Evidence; (by which I mean here no more than must be acknowledged by Unbelievers, for let pious Frauds and Follies be admitted to weaken, it is absurd to say they destroy, our Evidence of Miracles wrought in Proof of Christianity^z;) that this Religion approving itself to the Reason of Mankind, and carrying its own Evidence with it, so far as Reason is a Judge of its System, and being no way contrary to Reason, in those Parts of it which

^y p. 352, &c.

^z p. 363, &c.

PART require to be believed upon the mere Authority of its Author; that this Religion, I say, gradually spread and supported itself, for some hundred Years, not only without any Assistance from temporal Power, but under constant Discouragements, and often the bitterest Persecutions from it; and then became the Religion of the World: that in the mean Time the Jewish Nation and Government were destroyed, in a very remarkable Manner, and the People carried away captive and dispersed through the most distant Countries; in which State of Dispersion, they have remained fifteen hundred Years: and that they remain a numerous People, united amongst themselves, and distinguished from the rest of the World, as they were in the Days of *Moses*, by the Profession of his Law; and every where looked upon in a Manner, which one scarce knows how distinctly to express, but in the Words of the prophetick Account of it, given so many Ages before it came to pass; *Thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word, among all nations, whither the Lord shall lead thee* ^a.

The Appearance of a standing Miracle, in the *Jews* remaining a distinct People in their Dispersion, and the Confirmation which this Event appears to give to the Truth of Reve-

^a Deut. xxviii. 37.

lation;

lation ; may be thought to be answered, by their Religion's forbidding them Inter-marriages with those of any other, and prescribing them a great many Peculiarities in their Food, by which they are debarred from the Means of incorporating with the People, in whose Countries they live. This is not, I think, a satisfactory Account of That which it pretends to account for. But what does it pretend to account for? The Correspondence between this Event and the Prophecies ; or the Coincidence of both, with a long Dispensation of Providence of a peculiar Nature, towards that People formerly? No. It is only the Event itself, which is offered to be thus accounted for ; which single Event taken alone, abstracted from all such Correspondence and Coincidence, perhaps would not have appeared miraculous : but That Correspondence and Coincidence may be so, though the Event itself be supposed not. Thus the Concurrence of our Saviour's being born at *Bethlehem*, with a long foregoing Series of Prophecy and other Coincidences, is doubtless miraculous, the Series of Prophecy and other Coincidences, and the Event, being admitted : though the Event itself, his Birth at that Place, appears to have been brought about in a natural Way ; of which, however, no one can be certain.

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And

PART And as several of these Events seem, in
II. some Degree, expressly, to have verified the
 prophetic History already: so likewise they
 may be considered farther, as having a peculiar Aspect towards the full Completion of it; as affording some Presumption that the Whole of it shall, one time or other, be fulfilled. Thus, that the *Jews* have been so wonderfully preserved in their long and wide Dispersion; which is indeed the direct Fulfilling of some Prophecies, but is now mentioned only as looking forward to somewhat yet to come: that natural Religion came forth from *Judea*, and spread, in the Degree it has done over the World, before lost in Idolatry; which, together with some other things, have distinguished that very Place, in like Manner, as the People of it are distinguished: that this great Change of Religion over the Earth, was brought about under the Profession and Acknowledgment, that Jesus was the promised Messiah: Things of this Kind naturally turn the Thoughts of serious Men, towards the full Completion of the prophetic History, concerning the final Restoration of that People; concerning the Establishment of the everlasting Kingdom among them, the Kingdom of the Messiah; and the future State of the World, under this sacred Government. Such Circumstances and
 Events

Events compared with these Prophecies, though no Completions of them, yet would not, I think, be spoken of as Nothing in the Argument, by a Person upon his first being informed of them. They fall in with the prophetick History of things still future, give it some additional Credibility, have the Appearance of being somewhat in order to the full Completion of it.


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VII.

Indeed it requires a good Degree of Knowledge, and great Calmness and Consideration, to be able to judge, thoroughly, of the Evidence for the Truth of Christianity, from that Part of the prophetick History, which relates to the Situation of the Kingdoms of the World, and to the State of the Church, from the Establishment of Christianity to the present Time. But it appears, from a general View of it, to be very material. And those Persons who have thoroughly examined it, and some of them were Men of the coolest Tempers, greatest Capacities, and least liable to Imputations of Prejudice, insist upon it as determinately conclusive.

Suppose now a Person quite ignorant of History, first to recollect the Passages above-mentioned out of Scripture, without knowing but that the Whole was a late Fiction, then to be informed of the correspondent
Facts

PART Facts now mentioned, and to unite them all
II. into one View : That the Profession and Establishment of natural Religion in the World, is greatly owing, in different Ways, to this Book, and the supposed Revelation, which it contains ; that it is acknowledged to be of the earliest Antiquity ; that its Chronology and common History are entirely credible ; that this ancient Nation, the *Jews*, of whom it chiefly treats, appear to have been, in Fact, the People of God, in a distinguished Sense ; that, as there was a national Expectation amongst them, raised from the Prophecies, of a Messiah to appear at such a Time, so one at this Time appeared claiming to be that Messiah ; that He was rejected by this Nation ; but received by the Gentiles, not upon the Evidence of Prophecy, but of Miracles ; that the Religion he taught supported itself, under the greatest Difficulties, gained Ground and at length became the Religion of the World ; that in the mean Time the Jewish Polity was utterly destroyed, and the Nation dispersed over the Face of the Earth ; that notwithstanding this, they have remained a distinct numerous People for so many Centuries, even to this Day ; which not only appears to be the express Completion of several Prophecies concerning them ; but also renders it, as one may speak, a visible and easy Possibility, that the Promises made to them as a Nation,

Nation,

Nation, may yet be fulfilled. And to these **CHAP.**
acknowledged Truths, let the Person we have **VII.**
been supposing, add, as I think he ought, 
whether every one will allow it or no, the
obvious Appearances which there are, of the
State of the World, in other Respects besides
what relates to the *Jews*, and of the Chris-
tian Church, having so long answered, and
still answering to the prophetick History.
Suppose, I say, these Facts set over against
the things before mentioned out of the Scrip-
ture, and seriously compared with them; The
joint View of both together, must, I think,
appear of very great Weight to a considerate
reasonable Person: of much greater indeed,
upon having them first laid before him, than
is easy for us, who are so familiarised to
them, to conceive, without some particular
Attention for that Purpose.

All these things, and the several Particu-
lars contained under them, require to be dis-
tinctly and most thoroughly examined into;
that the Weight of each may be judged of,
upon such Examination, and such Conclu-
sion drawn as results from their united Force.
But this has not been attempted here. I
have gone no farther than to show, that the
general imperfect View of them now given,
the confessed historical Evidence for Miracles,
and

PART and the many obvious appearing Completions
II. of Prophecy, together with the collateral
 things^b here mentioned, and there are several
 others of the like sort; that all this together,
 which, being Fact, must be acknowledged
 by Unbelievers, amounts to real Evidence of
 somewhat more than human in this Matter:
 Evidence much more important, than care-
 less Men, who have been accustomed only
 to transient and partial Views of it, can ima-
 gine; and indeed abundantly sufficient to act
 upon. And these things, I apprehend, must
 be acknowledged by Unbelievers. For though
 they may say, that the historical Evidence
 of Miracles wrought in Attestation of Chris-
 tianity, is not sufficient to convince them
 that such Miracles were really wrought; they
 cannot deny, that there is such historical
 Evidence, it being a known matter of Fact,
 that there is. They may say, the Confor-
 mity between the Prophecies and Events, is
 by accident: but there are many Instances,
 in which such Conformity itself cannot be
 denied. They may say, with regard to such
 Kind of collateral things as those above-
 mentioned, that any odd accidental Events,
 without Meaning, will have a Meaning found

^b All the particular things mentioned in this chapter, not reducible to the Head, of certain Miracles, or determinate Completions of Prophecy. See p. 345, 346.

in them by fanciful People: and that such as are fanciful in any one certain Way, will make out a thousand Coincidences, which seem to favour their peculiar Follies. Men, I say, may talk thus: But no one who is serious, can possibly think these things to be nothing, if he considers the Importance of collateral things, and even of lesser Circumstances, in the Evidence of Probability, as distinguished, in Nature, from the Evidence of Demonstration. In many Cases indeed it seems to require the truest Judgment, to determine with Exactness the Weight of circumstantial Evidence: but it is very often altogether as convincing, as That, which is the most express and direct.

This general View of the Evidence for Christianity, considered as making one Argument, may also serve to recommend to serious Persons, to set down every thing, which they think may be of any real Weight at all in Proof of it, and particularly the many seeming Completions of Prophecy: and they will find, that, judging by the natural Rules, by which we judge of probable Evidence in common Matters, they amount to a much higher Degree of Proof, upon such a joint Review, than could be supposed upon considering them separately, at different Times; how strong soever the Proof might

PART before appear to them, upon such separate
 II. Views of it. For probable Proofs, by being
 added, not only increase the Evidence, but
 multiply it. Nor should I dissuade any one
 from setting down, what he thought made
 for the contrary Side. But then it is to be
 remembred, not in order to influence his
 Judgment, but his Practice, that a Mistake
 on one side, may be, in its Consequences,
 much more dangerous, than a Mistake on
 the other. And what Course is most safe,
 and what most dangerous, is a Consideration
 thought very material, when we deliberate,
 not concerning Events, but concerning Con-
 duct in our temporal Affairs. To be in-
 fluenced by this Consideration in our Judg-
 ment, to believe or disbelieve upon it, is in-
 deed as much Prejudice, as any thing what-
 ever. And, like other Prejudices, it operates
 contrary Ways, in different Men. For Some
 are inclined to believe, what they hope; and
 Others, what they fear. And it is manifest
 Unreasonableness, to apply to Men's Passions
 in order to gain their Assent. But in Delibe-
 rations concerning Conduct, there is nothing
 which Reason more requires to be taken into
 the Account, than the Importance of it. For,
 suppose it doubtful, what would be the Con-
 sequence of acting in this, or in a contrary
 Manner: still, that taking one Side could be
 attended with little or no bad Consequence,
 and

and taking the other might be attended with the greatest, must appear, to unprejudiced Reason, of the highest Moment towards determining, how we are to act. But the Truth of our Religion, like the Truth of common Matters, is to be judged of by all the Evidence taken together. And unless the whole Series of things which may be alledged in this Argument, and every particular thing in it, can reasonably be supposed to have been by Accident; (for here the Stress of the Argument for Christianity lies;) then is the Truth of it proved: In like manner, as if in any common Case, numerous Events acknowledged, were to be alledged in Proof of any other Event disputed; the Truth of the disputed Event would be proved, not only if any one of the acknowledged ones did of itself clearly imply it, but, though no one of them singly did so, if the Whole of the acknowledged Events taken together, could not in Reason be supposed to have happened, unless the disputed one were true.

It is obvious, how much Advantage, the Nature of this Evidence gives to those Persons, who attack Christianity, especially in Conversation. For it is easy to shew, in a short and lively Manner, that such and such things are liable to Objection, that this and another thing, is of little Weight in itself;

PART but impossible to shew, in like Manner, the
II. united Force of the whole Argument in one
View.

However, Lastly, as it has been made appear, that there is no Presumption against a Revelation as miraculous; that the general Scheme of Christianity, and the principal Parts of it, are conformable to the experienced Constitution of things, and the Whole perfectly credible: So the Account now given of the positive Evidence for it, shews, that this Evidence is such, as from the Nature of it, cannot be destroyed; though it should be lessened.

CHAP.

C H A P. VIII.

*Of the Objections which may be made
against arguing from the Analogy
of Nature, to Religion.*

IF every one would consider, with such CHAP.
VIII.
Attention as they are bound, even in Point of Morality, to consider, what they judge and give Characters of; the Occasion of this Chapter would be, in some good Measure at least, superseded. But since this is not to be expected; for some we find do not concern themselves to understand even what they write against: Since this Treatise, in common with most others, lies open to Objections, which may appear very material to thoughtful Men at first sight; And, besides That, seems peculiarly liable to the Objections, of such as can judge without thinking, and of such as can censure without judging; it may not be amiss to set down the chief of these Objections which occur to me, and consider them to their Hands. And they are such as these;

PART II. “ That it is a poor thing to solve Difficul-
 “ ties in Revelation, by saying, that there
 “ are the same in natural Religion ; when
 “ what is wanting is to clear both of them,
 “ of these their common, as well as other
 “ their respective, Difficulties : But that it is
 “ a strange Way indeed of convincing Men
 “ of the Obligations of Religion, to shew
 “ them, that they have as little Reason for
 “ their worldly Pursuits : And a strange Way
 “ of vindicating the Justice and Goodness of
 “ the Author of Nature, and of removing
 “ the Objections against both, to which the
 “ System of Religion lies open, to shew,
 “ that the like Objections lie against natural
 “ Providence ; a way of answering Objecti-
 “ ons against Religion, without so much as
 “ pretending to make out, that the System of
 “ it, or the particular things in it objected a-
 “ gainst, are reasonable — especially, per-
 “ haps some may be inattentive enough to
 “ add, must this be thought strange when
 “ it is confessed that Analogy is no Answer to
 “ such Objections : That when this Sort of
 “ Reasoning is carried to the utmost length
 “ it can be imagined capable of, it will yet
 “ leave the Mind in a very unsatisfied State :
 “ And that it must be unaccountable Igno-
 “ rance of Mankind, to imagine they will
 “ be


“ be prevailed with to forego their present
“ Interests and Pleasures, from Regard to Re-
“ ligion, upon doubtful Evidence.”

CHAP.
VIII.



Now, as plausible as this Way of talking may appear, that Appearance will be found in a great Measure owing, to Half-views, which shew but Part of an Object, yet shew That indistinctly; and to undeterminate Language. By these Means weak Men are often deceived by others, and ludicrous Men, by themselves. And even those, who are serious and considerate, cannot always readily disintangle, and at once clearly see through the Perplexities, in which Subjects themselves are involved; and which are heightened by the Deficiencies and the Abuse of Words. To this latter sort of Persons, the following Reply to each Part of this Objection severally, may be of some Assistance; as it may also tend a little to stop and silence Others.

First, The thing wanted, *i. e.* what Men require, is to have all Difficulties cleared. And this is, or, at least for any thing we know to the contrary, it may be, the same, as requiring to comprehend the divine Nature, and the whole Plan of Providence from everlasting to everlasting. But it hath always been allowed to argue, from what is acknowledged, to what is disputed. And it is in no other

PART Sense a poor thing, to argue from natural Religion to revealed, in the Manner found
 II.  Fault with, than it is to argue in numberless other ways of probable Deduction and Inference, in Matters of Conduct, which we are continually reduced to the Necessity of doing. Indeed the Epithet *poor*, may be applied, I fear as properly, to great Part or the whole of human Life, as it is to the things mentioned in the Objection. Is it not a poor thing, for a Physician to have so little Knowledge in the Cure of Diseases, as even the most eminent have? To act upon Conjecture and Guess, where the Life of Man is concerned? Undoubtedly it is: but not in Comparison of having no skill at all in that useful Art, and being obliged to act wholly in the Dark.

Further: since it is as unreasonable, as it is common, to urge Objections against Revelation, which are of equal Weight against natural Religion; and Those who do this, if they are not confused Themselves, deal unfairly with Others, in making it seem, that they are arguing only against Revelation, or particular Doctrines of it, when in Reality they are arguing against moral Providence; it is a thing of Consequence to show, that such Objections are as much levelled against natural Religion, as against revealed. And Objections, which are equally applicable to both,
 are

are properly speaking answered, by its being shown that they are so, provided the former be admitted to be true. And without taking in the Consideration how distinctly This is admitted, it is plainly very material to observe, that as the things objected against in natural Religion, are of the same Kind with what is certain Matter of Experience in the Course of Providence, and in the Information which God affords us concerning our temporal Interest under his Government; so the Objections against the System of Christianity and the Evidence of it, are of the very same Kind with Those which are made against the System and Evidence of natural Religion. However, the Reader upon Review may see, that most of the Analogies insisted upon, even in the latter Part of this Treatise, do not necessarily require to have more taken for granted than is in the former; that there is an Author of Nature, or natural Governor of the World: and Christianity is vindicated, not from its Analogy to natural Religion, but chiefly, from its Analogy to the experienced Constitution of Nature.

Secondly, Religion is a practical thing, and consists in such a determinate Course of Life; as being what there is Reason to think, is commanded by the Author of Nature, and will, upon the whole, be our Happiness un-

PART der His Government. Now if Men can be
 II. convinced, that they have the like Reason to
 believe this, as to believe, that taking Care of
 their temporal Affairs will be to their Advantage; such Conviction cannot but be an Argument to them for the Practice of Religion. And if there be really any Reason for believing one of these, and endeavouring to preserve Life, and secure ourselves the Necessaries and Conveniencies of it: then there is Reason also for believing the other, and endeavouring to secure the Interest it proposes to us. And if the Interest, which Religion proposes to us, be infinitely greater than our whole temporal Interest; then there must be proportionably greater Reason, for endeavouring to secure one, than the other: since, by the Supposition, the Probability of our securing one, is equal to the Probability of our securing the other. This seems plainly unanswerable; and has a Tendency to influence fair Minds, who consider what our Condition really is, or upon what Evidence we are naturally appointed to act; and who are disposed to acquiesce in the Terms upon which we live, and attend to and follow That practical Instruction, whatever it be, which is afforded us,

But the chief and proper Force of the Argument referred to in the Objection, lies in another Place. For, it is said that the Proof
 of

of Religion is involved in such inextricable CHAP. Difficulties, as to render it doubtful; and that VIII. it cannot be supposed, that if it were true, it would be left upon doubtful Evidence. Here then, over and above the Force of each particular Difficulty or Objection, these Difficulties and Objections taken together, are turned into a positive Argument against the Truth of Religion: which Argument would stand thus. If Religion were true, it would not be left doubtful, and open to Objections to the Degree in which it is: therefore that it is thus left, not only renders the Evidence of it weak, and lessens its Force, in Proportion to the Weight of such Objections; but also shews it to be false, or is a general Presumption of its being so. Now the Observation, that from the natural Constitution and Course of things, we must in our temporal Concerns, almost continually, and in Matters of great Consequence, act upon Evidence of a like Kind and Degree to the Evidence of Religion; is an Answer to this Argument: because it shews, that it is according to the Conduct and Character of the Author of Nature, to appoint we should act upon Evidence like to That, which this Argument presumes He cannot be supposed to appoint we should act upon: It is an Instance, a general one made up of numerous particular ones, of somewhat in His Dealing with us, similar to what
is

PART is said to be incredible. And as the Force of
 II. this Answer lies merely in the Parallel, which
 there is between the Evidence for Religion
 and for our temporal Conduct; the Answer is
 equally just and conclusive, whether the Pa-
 rallel be made out, by shewing the Evidence
 of the former to be higher, or the Evidence of
 the latter to be lower.

Thirdly, The Design of this Treatise is not to vindicate the Character of God, but to shew the Obligations of Men: It is not to justify His Providence, but to shew what belongs to Us to do. These are two Subjects, and ought not to be confounded. And though they may at length run up into each other, yet Observations may immediately tend to make out the latter, which do not appear, by any immediate Connection, to the Purpose of the former; which is less our Concern than many seem to think. For, 1st. It is not necessary we should justify the Dispensations of Providence against Objections, any farther than to shew, that the things objected against may, for ought we know, be consistent with Justice and Goodness. Suppose then, that there are things in the System of this World, and Plan of Providence relating to it, which taken alone would be unjust: yet it has been shewn unanswerably, that if we could take in the Reference, which these things may have,

have, to other things present, past and to CHAP. come; to the whole Scheme, which the VIII. things objected against are Parts of; these very things might, for ought we know, be found to be, not only consistent with Justice, but Instances of it. Indeed it has been shewn, by the Analogy of what we see, not only possible that this may be the Case, but credible that it is. And thus Objections, drawn from such things, are answered, and Providence is vindicated, as far as Religion makes its Vindication necessary. Hence it appears, 2dly, that Objections against the divine Justice and Goodness are not endeavoured to be removed, by shewing that the like Objections, allowed to be really conclusive, lie against natural Providence: but those Objections being supposed and shewn not to be conclusive, the things objected against, considered as Matters of Fact, are farther shewn to be credible, from their Conformity to the Constitution of Nature; for Instance, that God will reward and punish Men for their Actions Hereafter, from the Observation, that He does reward and punish them for their Actions Here. And this, I apprehend, is of Weight. And I add, 3dly, It would be of Weight, even though those Objections were not answered. For, there being the Proof of Religion above set down; and Religion implying several Facts; for Instance again,

PART again, the Fact last mentioned, that God will

II. reward and punish Men for their Actions
 Hereafter; the Observation that his present Method of Government is by Rewards and Punishments, shews That future Fact not to be incredible: whatever Objections Men may think they have against it, as unjust or unmerciful, according to their Notions of Justice and Mercy; or as improbable from their Belief of Necessity. I say, *as improbable*: for it is evident no Objection against it, *as unjust*, can be urged from Necessity; since this Notion as much destroys Injustice, as it does Justice. Then 4thly, Though Objections against the Reasonableness of the System of Religion, cannot indeed be answered without entering into Consideration of its Reasonableness; yet Objections against the Credibility or Truth of it, may. Because the System of it is reducible into what is properly Matter of Fact: And the Truth, the probable Truth, of Facts, may be shewn without Consideration of their Reasonableness. Nor is it necessary, though, in some Cases and Respects, it is highly useful and proper, yet it is not necessary, to give a Proof of the Reasonableness of every Precept enjoined us, and of every particular Dispensation of Providence, which comes into the System of Religion. Indeed the more thoroughly a Person of a right Disposition is convinced of the Perfection of the
 divine

divine Nature and Conduct, the farther he will advance towards that Perfection of Religion, which St. *John*^a speaks of. But the general Obligations of Religion are fully made out, by proving the Reasonableness of the Practice of it. And that the Practice of Religion *is* reasonable, may be shewn, though no more could be proved, than that the System of it *may be so*, for ought we know to the contrary: and even without entring into the distinct Consideration of this. And from hence, 5thly, It is easy to see, that though the Analogy of Nature is not an immediate Answer to Objections against the Wisdom, the Justice or Goodness, of any Doctrine or Precept of Religion: yet it may be, as it is, an immediate and direct Answer to what is really intended by such Objections; which is, to shew that the things objected against are incredible.

Fourthly, It is most readily acknowledged, that the foregoing Treatise is by no means satisfactory; very far indeed from it: But so would any natural Institution of Life appear, if reduced into a System, together with its Evidence. Leaving Religion out of the Case, Men are divided in their Opinions, Whether our Pleasures overbalance our Pains: And Whether it be, or be not, eligible to live in

^a 1 John iv. 18.

this

PART this World. And were all such Controversies
 II. settled, which perhaps, in Speculation, would
 be found involved in great Difficulties; and
 were it determined upon the Evidence of Reason, as Nature has determined it to our Hands, that Life is to be preserved: Yet still, the Rules which God has been pleased to afford us, for escaping the Miseries of it and obtaining its Satisfaction, the Rules, for Instance, of preserving Health and recovering it when lost, are not only fallible and precarious, but very far from being exact. Nor are we informed by Nature, in future Contingencies and Accidents, so as to render it at all certain, what is the best Method of managing our Affairs. What will be the Success of our temporal Pursuits, in the common Sense of the Word Success, is highly doubtful. And what will be the Success of them, in the proper Sense of the Word; *i. e.* what Happiness or Enjoyment we shall obtain by them, is doubtful in a much higher Degree. Indeed the unsatisfactory Nature of the Evidence, with which we are obliged to take up, in the daily Course of Life, is scarce to be expressed. Yet Men do not throw away Life, or disregard the Interest of it, upon Account of this Doubtfulness. The Evidence of Religion then being admitted real, those who object against it, as not satisfactory, *i. e.* as not being what they wish it, plainly forget the very
 Condition

Condition of our Being: For Satisfaction, in this Sense, does not belong to such a Creature as Man. And, which is more material, they forget also the very Nature of Religion. For, Religion presupposes, in all those who will embrace it, a certain Degree of Integrity and Honesty; which it was intended to try whether Men have or not, and to exercise in such as have it, in order to its Improvement. Religion presupposes this as much, and in the same sense, as speaking to a Man, presupposes he understands the Language in which you speak; or as warning a Man of any Danger, presupposes that he hath such a Regard to himself, as that he will endeavour to avoid it. And therefore the Question is not at all, Whether the Evidence of Religion be satisfactory; but Whether it be, in Reason, sufficient to prove and discipline That Virtue, which it presupposes. Now the Evidence of it is fully sufficient for all those Purposes of Probation; how far soever it is from being satisfactory, as to the Purposes of Curiosity, or any other: And indeed it answers the Purposes of the former in several Respects, which it would not do, if it were as overbearing as is required. One might add farther; that Whether the Motives or the Evidence for any Course of Action be satisfactory, meaning here by that Word, what satisfies a Man, that such a Course of Action will in Event be

PART for his Good; this need never be, and I
 II. think, strictly speaking, never is, the practical Question in common Matters. But the practical Question in all Cases, is, Whether the Evidence for a Course of Action be such, as, taking in all Circumstances, makes the Faculty within us, which is the Guide and Judge of Conduct^b, determine that Course of Action to be prudent. Indeed Satisfaction that it will be for our Interest or Happiness, abundantly determines an Action to be prudent: But Evidence almost infinitely lower than this, determines Actions to be so too; even in the Conduct of every Day.

Fifthly, As to the Objection concerning the Influence which this Argument, or any Part of it, may, or may not, be expected to have upon Men: I observe, as above, that Religion being intended for a Trial and Exercise of the Morality of every Person's Character, who is a Subject of it; And there being, as I have shewn, such Evidence for it, as is sufficient, in Reason, to influence Men to embrace it: To object, that it is not to be imagined Mankind will be influenced by such Evidence, is nothing to the Purpose of the foregoing Treatise. For the Purpose of it is not to inquire, what Sort of Creatures Mankind are; but what the Light and Know-

^b See Dissert. II.

ledge,

ledge, which is afforded them, requires they should be: to shew how, in Reason, they ought to behave; not how, in Fact, they will behave. This depends upon themselves, and is their own Concern; the personal Concern of each Man in particular. And how little Regard the Generality have to it, Experience indeed does too fully shew. But Religion, considered as a Probation, has had its End upon all Persons, to whom it has been proposed with Evidence sufficient in Reason to influence their Practice: For by this Means they have been put into a State of Probation; let them behave as they will in it. And thus, not only Revelation, but Reason also, teaches us, that by the Evidence of Religion being laid before Men, the Designs of Providence are carrying on, not only with regard to those who will, but likewise with regard to those who will not, be influenced by it. However, Lastly, The Objection here referred to, allows the things insisted upon in this Treatise to be of some Weight: And if so, it may be hoped it will have some Influence. And if there be a Probability that it will have any at all, there is the same Reason in Kind, though not in Degree, to lay it before Men, as there would be, if it were likely to have a greater Influence.

PART And farther, I desire it may be considered,
 II. with respect to the Whole of the foregoing
 } Objections, that in this Treatise I have argued
 upon the Principles of Others^c, not my own :
 and have omitted what I think true, and of
 the utmost Importance, because by Others
 thought unintelligible, or not true. Thus I
 have argued upon the Principles of the Fata-
 lists, which I do not believe : and have omit-
 ted a thing of the utmost Importance which
 I do believe, the moral Fitness and Unfitness
 of Actions, prior to all Will whatever ; which
 I apprehend as certainly to determine the di-
 vine Conduct, as speculative Truth and False-
 hood necessarily determine the divine Judg-
 ment. Indeed the Principle of Liberty and
 That of moral Fitness so force themselves up-
 on the Mind, that Moralists, the Ancients as
 well as Moderns, have formed their Language
 upon it. And probably it may appear in
 mine : though I have endeavoured to avoid
 it ; and in order to avoid it, have sometimes
 been obliged to express myself in a Manner,
 which will appear strange to such as do not
 observe the Reason for it : But the general

^c By *arguing upon the Principles of Others*, the Reader will observe is meant ; not proving any thing *from* those Principles, but *notwithstanding* them. Thus Religion is proved, not *from* the Opinion of Necessity ; which is absurd : But, *notwithstanding* or *even though* That Opinion were admitted to be true.

Argument here pursued, does not at all suppose, or proceed upon, these Principles. Now, these two abstract Principles of Liberty and moral Fitness being omitted, Religion can be considered in no other View, than merely as a Question of Fact: And in this View, it is here considered. It is obvious, that Christianity, and the Proof of it, are both historical. And even natural Religion is, properly, a Matter of Fact. For, that there is a righteous Governor of the World, is so: And this Proposition contains the general System of natural Religion. But then, several abstract Truths, and in particular those two Principles, are usually taken into Consideration in the Proof of it: Whereas it is here treated of only as a Matter of Fact. To explain this: That the three Angles of a Triangle are equal to two right ones, is an abstract Truth: but that they appear so to our Mind, is only a Matter of Fact. And this last must have been admitted, if any thing was, by those ancient Scepticks, who would not have admitted the former; but pretended to doubt, Whether there were any such thing as Truth, or Whether we could certainly depend upon our Faculties of Understanding for the Knowledge of it, in any Case. So likewise, that there is, in the Nature of things, an original Standard of Right and Wrong in Actions, independent upon all Will, but which un-

CHAP. VIII.

E e 2 alterably

PART alterably determines the Will of God, to exercise That moral Government over the World which Religion teaches, *i. e.* finally and upon the whole to reward and punish Men respectively as they act right or wrong; this Assertion contains an abstract Truth, as well as Matter of Fact. But suppose in the present State, every Man, without Exception, was rewarded and punished, in exact Proportion, as he followed or transgressed That Sense of Right and Wrong, which God has implanted in the Nature of every Man: this would not be at all an abstract Truth, but only a Matter of Fact. And though this Fact were acknowledged by every one; yet the very same Difficulties might be raised, as are now, concerning the abstract Questions of Liberty and moral Fitness: And we should have a Proof, even the certain one of Experience, that the Government of the World was perfectly moral, without taking in the Consideration of those Questions: and this Proof would remain, in what way soever they were determined. And thus, God having given Mankind a moral Faculty, the Object of which is Actions, and which naturally approves some Actions as Right and of Good-desert, and condemns others as Wrong, and of Ill-desert; that He will, finally and upon the whole, reward the former and punish the latter, is not an Assertion of an abstract Truth, but

but of what is as meer a Fact, as his doing so at present would be. This future Fact I have, not indeed proved with the Force with which it might be proved, from the Principles of Liberty and moral Fitness; but without them have given a really conclusive practical Proof of it, which is greatly strengthened by the general Analogy of Nature: a Proof, easily cavilled at, easily shewn not to be demonstrative, for it is not offered as such; but impossible, I think, to be evaded or answered. And thus the Obligations of Religion are made out, exclusively of the Questions concerning Liberty and moral Fitness; which have been perplexed with Difficulties and abstruse Reasonings, as every thing may.

CHAP.
VIII.

Hence therefore may be observed distinctly, what is the Force of this Treatise. It will be, to such as are convinced of Religion upon the Proof arising out of the two last mentioned Principles, an additional Proof and a Confirmation of it: To such as do not admit those Principles, an original Proof of it^d, and a Confirmation of that Proof. Those who believe, will here find the Scheme of Christianity cleared of Objections, and the Evidence of it in a peculiar Manner strengthened: Those who do not believe, will at least be shewn the Absurdity of all Attempts to prove

^d p. 167, &c.

PART Christianity false, the plain undoubted Credi-
 II. bility of it; and, I hope, a good deal more.

And thus, though some perhaps may seriously think, that Analogy as here urged, has too great Strefs laid upon it; and Ridicule, unanswerable Ridicule, may be applied, to shew the Argument from it in a disadvantageous Light: yet there can be no Question, but that it is a real one. For Religion, both natural and revealed, implying in it numerous Facts; Analogy, being a Confirmation of all Facts to which it can be applied, as it is the only Proof of most, cannot but be admitted by every one to be a material thing, and truly of Weight on the Side of Religion, both natural and revealed: And it ought to be particularly regarded by such as profess to follow Nature, and to be less satisfied with abstract Reasonings.

CONCLUSION.

WHATEVER Account may be gi- PART
 ven, of the strange Inattention and II.
 Disregard, in some Ages and Countries, to a }
 Matter of such Importance as Religion; it
 would, before Experience, be incredible, that
 there should be the like Disregard in those,
 who have had the moral System of the World
 laid before them, as it is by Christianity, and
 often inculcated upon them: Because this
 moral System carries in it a good Degree of
 Evidence for its Truth, upon its being barely
 proposed to our Thoughts. There is no Need
 of abstruse Reasonings and Distinctions, to
 convince an unprejudiced Understanding, that
 there is a God who made and governs the
 World, and will judge it in Righteousness;
 though they may be necessary to answer ab-
 struse Difficulties, when once such are raised:
 When the very Meaning of those Words,
 which express most intelligibly the general
 Doctrine of Religion, is pretended to be un-
 certain; and the clear Truth of the thing it-
self
 E c 4

PART self is obscured, by the Intricacies of Speculation. But to an unprejudiced Mind, ten thousand thousand Instances of Design, cannot but prove a Designer. And it is intuitively manifest, that Creatures ought to live under a dutiful Sense of their Maker; and that Justice and Charity must be his Laws, to Creatures whom He has made social, and placed in Society. Indeed the Truth of revealed Religion, peculiarly so called, is not self-evident; but requires external Proof, in order to its being received. Yet Inattention, among Us, to revealed Religion, will be found to imply the same dissolute immoral Temper of Mind, as Inattention to natural Religion; Because, when both are laid before us, in the Manner they are in Christian Countries of Liberty; our Obligations to inquire into both, and to embrace both upon Supposition of their Truth, are Obligations of the same Nature. For, Revelation claims to be the Voice of God: and our Obligation to attend to His Voice, is, surely, moral in all Cases. And as it is insisted, that its Evidence is conclusive, upon thorough Consideration of it; so, it offers itself to us with manifest obvious Appearances of having something more than human in it, and therefore in all Reason requires, to have its Claims most seriously examined into. It is to be added, that though Light and Knowledge, in what Manner so ever

ever afforded us, is equally from God; yet a PART
 miraculous Revelation has a peculiar Tendency, from the first Principles of our Nature, to awaken Mankind, and inspire them with Reverence and Awe: And this is a peculiar Obligation, to attend to what claims to be so with such Appearances of Truth. It is therefore most certain, that our Obligations to enquire seriously into the Evidence of Christianity, and, upon Supposition of its Truth, to embrace it; are of the utmost Importance, and moral in the highest and most proper Sense. Let us then suppose, that the Evidence of Religion in general, and of Christianity, has been seriously inquired into, by all reasonable Men among us. Yet we find many professedly to reject both, upon speculative Principles of Infidelity. And all of them do not content themselves with a bare Neglect of Religion, and enjoying their imaginary Freedom from its Restraints. Some go much beyond this. They deride God's moral Government over the World. They renounce his Protection, and defy his Justice. They ridicule and vilify Christianity, and blaspheme the Author of it; and take all Occasions to manifest a Scorn and Contempt of Revelation. This amounts to an active setting themselves against Religion; to what may be considered as a positive Principle of Irreligion: Which they cultivate within themselves, and, whether

PART whether they intend this Effect or not, render habitual, as a good Man does the contrary Principle. And Others, who are not chargeable with all this Profligateness, yet, are in avowed Opposition to Religion, as if discovered to be groundless. Now admitting, which is the Supposition we go upon, that these Persons act upon what they think Principles of Reason, and otherwise they are not to be argued with; it is really inconceivable, that they should imagine they clearly see the whole Evidence of it, considered in itself, to be Nothing at all: Nor do they pretend this. They are far indeed from having a just Notion of its Evidence: but they would not say its Evidence was Nothing, if they thought the System of it, with all its Circumstances, were credible, like other Matters of Science or History. So that their Manner of treating it must proceed, either from such Kind of Objections against all Religion, as have been answered or obviated in the former Part of this Treatise; or else from Objections and Difficulties, supposed more peculiar to Christianity. Thus, they entertain Prejudices against the whole Notion of a Revelation, and miraculous Interpositions. They find things in Scripture, whether in incidental Passages, or in the general Scheme of it, which appear to them unreasonable. They take for granted, that if Christianity were true, the Light of it
 must

must have been more general, and the Evidence of it more satisfactory, or rather overbearing: that it must and would have been, in some Way, otherwise put and left, than it is. Now this is not imagining they see the Evidence 'itself to be Nothing, or inconsiderable; but quite another thing. It is being fortified against the Evidence, in some Degree acknowledged, by thinking they see the System of Christianity, or somewhat which appears to them necessarily connected with it, to be incredible or false: fortified against That Evidence, which might, otherwise, make great Impression upon them. Or, Lastly, if any of these Persons are, upon the whole, in Doubt concerning the Truth of Christianity; their Behaviour seems owing to their taking for granted, through strange Inattention, that such Doubting is, in a manner, the same thing, as being certain against it.

To these Persons, and to this State of Opinion concerning Religion, the foregoing Treatise is adapted. For, all the general Objections against the moral System of Nature having been obviated, it is shewn, that there is not any peculiar Presumption at all against Christianity, either considered as not discoverable by Reason, or as unlike to what is so discovered; nor any worth mentioning;
 against

PART
II.

PART against it as miraculous, if any at all ; none

II. certainly, which can render it in the least incredible. It is shewn, that upon Supposition of a divine Revelation, the Analogy of Nature renders it beforehand highly credible, I think probable, that many things in it must appear liable to great Objections ; and that we must be incompetent Judges of it, to a great Degree. This Observation is, I think, unquestionably true, and of the very utmost Importance : But it is urged, as I hope it will be understood, with great Caution of not vilifying the Faculty of Reason, which is *the candle of the Lord within us*^a ; though it can afford no Light, where it does not shine ; nor judge, where it has no Principles to judge upon. The Objections here spoken of, being first answered in the View of Objections against Christianity as a Matter of Fact, are in the next Place considered as urged, more immediately, against the Wisdom, Justice and Goodness of the Christian Dispensation. And it is fully made out, that they admit of exactly the like Answer, in every Respect, to what the like Objections against the Constitution of Nature admit of : That, as partial Views give the Appearance of Wrong to things, which, upon farther Consideration and Knowledge of their Relations to other things, are found just and good ; so it is perfectly credi-


^a Prov. xx. 27.

ble,

ble, that the things objected, against the Wisdom and Goodness of the Christian Dispensation, may be rendered Instances of Wisdom and Goodness, by their Reference to other things beyond our View : Because Christianity is a Scheme as much above our comprehension, as That of Nature ; and like That, a Scheme in which Means are made use of to accomplish Ends, and which, as is most credible, may be carried on by general Laws. And it ought to be attended to, that this is not an Answer taken, merely or chiefly, from our Ignorance ; but from somewhat positive, which our Observation shews us. For, to like Objections, the like Answer is experienced to be just, in numberless parallel Cases. The Objections against the Christian Dispensation, and the Method by which it is carried on, having been thus obviated, in general and together ; the chief of them are considered distinctly, and the particular things objected to are shewn credible, by their perfect Analogy, each apart, to the Constitution of Nature. Thus ; If Man be fallen from his primitive State, and to be restored, and infinite Wisdom and Power engages in accomplishing our Recovery : it were to have been expected, it is said, that this should have been effected at once ; and not by such a long Series of Means, and such a various Oeconomy of Persons and things ; one Dispensation preparatory to another,

PART
II.

PART ther, this to a farther one, and so on through

II.  an indefinite Number of Ages, before the End of the Scheme proposed can be completely accomplished: a Scheme conducted by infinite Wisdom, and executed by almighty Power. But now on the contrary, our finding that every thing in the Constitution and Course of Nature is Thus carried on, shews such Expectations concerning Revelation to be highly unreasonable; and is a satisfactory Answer to them, when urged as Objections against the Credibility, that the great Scheme of Providence in the Redemption of the World may be of this Kind, and to be accomplished in this Manner. As to the particular Method of our Redemption, the Appointment of a Mediator between God and Man: this has been shewn to be most obviously analogous to the general Conduct of Nature, *i. e.* the God of Nature, in appointing Others to be the Instruments of his Mercy, as we experience in the daily Course of Providence. The Condition of this World, which the Doctrine of our Redemption by Christ presupposes, so much falls in with natural Appearances, that heathen Moralists inferred it from those Appearances: inferred, that human Nature was fallen from its original Rectitude, and, in Consequence of this, degraded from its primitive Happiness. Or, however this Opinion came into the World,

I

these

these Appearances must have kept up the PART
 Tradition, and confirmed the Belief of it. II.
 And as it was the general Opinion under the ~
 Light of Nature, that Repentance and Re-
 formation, alone and by itself, was not suffi-
 cient to do away Sin, and procure a full Re-
 mission of the Penalties annexed to it; and as
 the Reason of the thing does not at all lead
 to any such Conclusion: So every Day's Ex-
 perience shews us, that Reformation is not,
 in any Sort, sufficient to prevent the present
 Disadvantages and Miseries, which, in the
 natural Course of things, God has annexed
 to Folly and Extravagance. Yet there may
 be Ground to think, that the Punishments,
 which, by the general Laws of divine Go-
 vernment, are annexed to Vice, may be pre-
 vented: that Provision may have been, even
 originally, made, that they should be pre-
 vented by some Means or other, though they
 could not by Reformation alone. For we
 have daily Instances of *such Mercy*, in the
 general Conduct of Nature: Compassion
 provided for Misery ^b, Medicines for Dis-
 eases, Friends against Enemies. There is
 Provision made, in the original Constitution
 of the World, that much of the natural bad
 Consequences of our Follies, which Persons
 themselves alone cannot prevent, may be pre-

^b Serm. at the Rolls, p. 106.

vented

PART vented by the Assistance of Others; Affis-
 II. tance, which Nature enables, and disposes,
 and appoints them to afford. By a Method
 of Goodness analogous to this, when the
 World lay in Wickedness and consequently in
 Ruin, *God so loved the world, that he gave
 his only begotten Son to save it: And he being
 made perfect by suffering, became the author of
 eternal salvation to all them that obey him*^c.
 Indeed neither Reason nor Analogy would
 lead us to think, in particular, that the In-
 terposition of Christ, in the Manner in which
 he did interpose, would be of that Efficacy for
 Recovery of the World, which the Scripture
 teaches us it was: But neither would Reason
 nor Analogy lead us to think, that other par-
 ticular Means would be of the Efficacy, which
 Experience shews they are, in numberless In-
 stances. And therefore, as the Case before us
 does not admit of Experience; so, that nei-
 ther Reason nor Analogy can shew, how or
 in what particular Way, the Interposition of
 Christ, as revealed in Scripture, is of that
 Efficacy, which it is there represented to be;
 this is no Kind nor Degree of Presumption
 against its being really of That Efficacy.
 Farther: The Objections against Chris-
 tianity, from the Light of it not being uni-
 versal, nor its Evidence so strong as might

^c John iii. 16. Heb. v. 9.


possibly

possibly be given us, have been answered by PART II.
 the general Analogy of Nature. That God has made such Variety of Creatures, is indeed an Answer to the former: But that he dispenses his Gifts in such Variety, both of Degrees and Kinds, amongst Creatures, of the same Species, and even to the same Individuals at different Times; is a more obvious and full Answer to it. And it is so far from being the Method of Providence in other Cases, to afford us such overbearing Evidence, as some require in Proof of Christianity; that on the contrary, the Evidence upon which we are naturally appointed to act in common Matters, throughout a very great Part of Life, is doubtful in a high Degree. And admitting the Fact, that God has afforded to some, no more than doubtful Evidence of Religion: the same Account may be given of it, as of Difficulties and Temptations with regard to Practice. But as it is not impossible^d, surely, that this alledged doubtfulness may be Men's own Fault; it deserves their most serious Consideration, whether it be not so. However, it is certain, that Doubting implies a Degree of Evidence for that, of which we doubt: and that this Degree of Evidence, as really lays us under Obligations, as demonstrative Evidence.

^d p. 335, &c.

PART
II.

The whole then of Religion is throughout credible: Nor is there, I think, any thing relating to the revealed Dispensation of things, more different from the experienced Constitution and Course of Nature, than some Parts of the Constitution of Nature are from other Parts of it. And if so, the only Question which remains is, what positive Evidence can be alledged for the Truth of Christianity. This too in general has been considered, and the Objections against it estimated. Deduct therefore, what is to be deducted from that Evidence, upon Account of any Weight which may be thought to remain in these Objections, after what the Analogy of Nature has suggested in Answer to them: and then consider, what are the practical Consequences from all this, upon the most sceptical Principles, one can argue upon: (for I am writing to Persons who entertain these Principles:) And upon such Consideration, it will be obvious, that Immorality, as little Excuse as it admits of in itself, is greatly aggravated, in Persons who have been made acquainted with Christianity, whether they believe it, or not: Because the moral System of Nature, or natural Religion, which Christianity lays before us, approves itself, almost intuitively, to a reasonable Mind upon seeing it proposed. In the next Place, with regard to Christianity,
it

it will be observed; that there is a Middle, PART
 between a full Satisfaction of the Truth of it, II.
 and a Satisfaction of the contrary. The mid- 
 dle State of Mind between these two, con-
 sists in a serious Apprehension, that it may be
 true; joined with Doubt, whether it be so.
 And This, upon the best Judgment I am
 able to make, is as far towards speculative In-
 fidelity, as any Sceptick, can at all be supposed
 to go, who has had true Christianity, with the
 proper Evidence of it, laid before him, and
 has in any tolerable Measure considered them.
 For I would not be mistaken to comprehend
 all, who have ever heard of it: Because it
 seems evident that in many Countries, called
 Christian, neither Christianity, nor its Evi-
 dence are fairly laid before Men. And in
 Places where both are, there appear to be
 some, who have very little attended to either,
 and who reject Christianity with a Scorn pro-
 portionate to their Inattention; and yet are
 by no means without Understanding in other
 Matters. Now it has been shewn, that a se-
 rious Apprehension that Christianity may be
 true, lays Persons under the strictest Obliga-
 tions of a serious regard to it, throughout
 the whole of their Life: a Regard not the
 same exactly, but in many respects nearly the
 same, with what a full Conviction of its
 Truth would lay them under. Lastly, it
 will appear, that Blasphemy and Prophane-

PART nefs, I mean with regard to Christianity, are
 II. absolutely without Excuse. For there is no

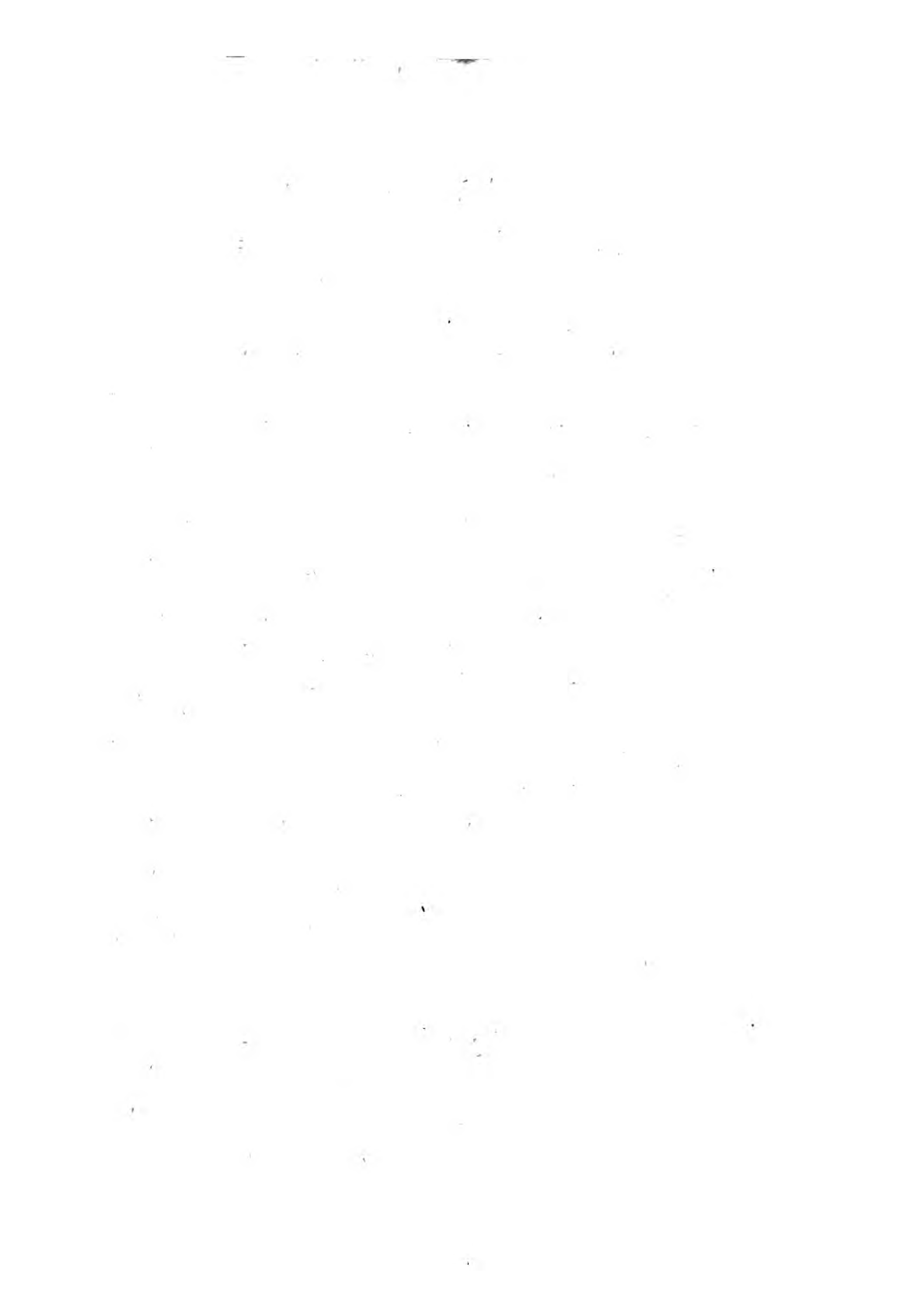
⎵ Temptation to it, but from the Wantonness
 of Vanity or Mirth: And these, considering
 the Infinite Importance of the Subject, are no
 such Temptations as to afford any Excuse for
 it. If this be a just Account of things, and
 yet Men can go on to vilify or disregard
 Christianity, which is to talk and act, as if
 they had a Demonstration of its Falshood;
 there is no Reason to think they would alter
 their Behaviour to any Purpose, though there
 were a Demonstration of its Truth.

The End of the second Part.

A D V E R.

ADVERTISEMENT.

I*N the first Copy of these Papers, I had inserted the two following Dissertations into the Chapters, Of a future Life, and, Of the moral Government of God, with which they are so closely connected. But as they do not directly fall under the Title of the foregoing Treatise, and would have kept the Subject of it too long out of Sight; it seemed more proper to place them by themselves.*



DISSERTATION I.

Of personal Identity.

WHETHER we are to live in a fu- D I S S.
 ture State, as it is the most impor- I.
 tant Question which can possibly be asked, so
 it is the most intelligible one which can be
 expressed in Language. Yet strange Perplexi-
 ties have been raised about the Meaning of
 That Identity or Sameness of Person, which
 is implied in the Notion of our living Now
 and Hereafter, or in any two successive Mo-
 ments. And the Solution of these Difficulties
 hath been stranger, than the Difficulties them-
 selves. For, personal Identity has been ex-
 plained so by Some, as to render the Inquiry
 concerning a future Life, of no Consequence
 at all to Us the Persons who are making it.
 And though few Men can be misled by such
 Subtleties; yet it may be proper a little to
 consider them.

Now when it is asked, Wherein personal
 Identity consists, the Answer should be the
 same, as if it were asked, wherein consists
 Similitude or Equality; that all Attempts to
 define, would but perplex it. Yet there is

D I S S. no Difficulty at all in ascertaining the Idea.

I. For as, upon two Triangles being compared
 or viewed together, there arises to the Mind
 the Idea of Similitude ; or upon twice two
 and four, the Idea of Equality : so likewise,
 upon comparing the Consciousnesses of one's
 self, or one's own Existence in any two Mo-
 ments, there as immediately arises to the
 Mind the Idea of personal Identity. And as
 the two former Comparisons not only give
 us the Ideas of Similitude and Equality ; but
 also shews us, that two Triangles are alike,
 and twice two and four are equal : so the lat-
 ter Comparison not only gives us the Idea of
 personal Identity, but also shews us the Iden-
 tity of ourselves in those two Moments ; the
 present, suppose, and that immediately past ;
 or the present, and That, a Month, a Year,
 or twenty Years past. Or in other Words, by
 reflecting upon That, which is my Self now,
 and That, which was my Self twenty Years
 ago, I discern they are not two, but one and
 the same Self.

But though Consciousness of what is past
 does thus ascertain our personal Identity to
 Ourselves, yet to say, that it makes personal
 Identity, or is necessary to our being the same
 Persons, is to say, that a Person has not ex-
 isted a single Moment, nor done one Action,
 but what he can remember ; indeed none but
 what

what he reflects upon. And one should really think it Self-evident, that Consciousness of personal Identity presupposes, and therefore cannot constitute, personal Identity; any more than Knowledge, in any other Case, can constitute Truth, which it presupposes.

This wonderful Mistake may possibly have arisen from hence, that to be indued with Consciousness, is inseparable from the Idea of a Person, or intelligent Being. For, this might be expressed inaccurately thus, that Consciousness makes Personality: And from hence it might be concluded to make personal Identity. But though present Consciousness of what we at present do and feel, is necessary to our being the Persons we now are; Yet present Consciousness of past Actions or Feelings, is not necessary to our being the same Persons who performed those Actions or had those Feelings,

The Inquiry, what makes Vegetables the Same in the common Acceptation of the Word, does not appear to have any Relation to This of personal Identity: because the Word, *same*, when applied to Them and to Person, is not only applied to different Subjects, but it is also used in different Senses. For when a Man swears to the same Tree, as having stood fifty Years in the same Place, he means

D I S S. means only the same as to all the Purposes of

I. Property and Uses of common Life, and not
 that the Tree has been all that Time the
 same in the strict philosophical Sense of the
 Word. For he does not know, whether any
 one Particle of the present Tree, be the
 same with any one Particle of the Tree which
 stood in the same Place fifty Years ago. And
 if they have not one common Particle of Mat-
 ter, they cannot be the same Tree in the pro-
 per philosophick Sense of the Word *same*: it
 being evidently a Contradiction in Terms, to
 say they are, when no Part of their Substance,
 and no one of their Properties is the same: no
 Part of their Substance, by the Supposition:
 no one of their Properties, because it is al-
 lowed, that the same Property cannot be trans-
 ferred from one Substance to another. And
 therefore, when we say the Identity or Same-
 ness of a Plant consists in a Continuation of
 the same Life, communicated under the same
 Organization, to a Number of Particles of
 Matter, whether the same or not; the Word
same, when applied to Life and to Organiza-
 tion, cannot possibly be understood to signify,
 what it signifies in this very Sentence, when
 applied to Matter. In a loose and popular
 Sense then, the Life and the Organization
 and the Plant are justly said to be the same,
 notwithstanding the perpetual Change of the
 Parts. But in a strict and philosophical Man-

ner of Speech, no Man, no Being, no Mode **D I S S.**
of Being, no Any-thing, can be the same **I.**
with That, with which it hath indeed No-
thing the same. Now Sameness is used in
this latter Sense when applied to Persons. The
Identity of these, therefore, cannot subsist
with Diversity and Substance.

The thing here considered, and, demonstratively, as I think, determined, is proposed by Mr. *Locke* in these Words, *Whether it, i. e. the same Self or Person, be the same identical Substance?* And he has suggested what is a much better Answer to the Question, than That which he gives it in Form. For he defines Person, *a thinking intelligent Being, &c.* and personal Identity, *the Sameness of a rational Being*^a. The Question then is, whether the same rational Being is the same Substance: which needs no Answer, because Being and Substance, in this Place, stand for the same Idea. The Ground of the Doubt, whether the same Person be the same Substance, is said to be This; that the Consciousness of our own Existence, in Youth and in Old-age, or in any two joint successive Moments, is not *the same individual Action*^b, i. e. not the same Consciousness, but different successive Consciousnesses. Now it is strange that

^a *Locke's Works*, Vol. I. p. 146.

^b *Locke*, p. 146, 147.

this

DISS. this should have occasioned such Perplexities.

I. For it is surely conceivable, that a Person may have a Capacity of knowing some Object or other to be the same now, which it was when he contemplated it formerly : Yet in this Case, where, by the Supposition, the Object is perceived to be the same, the Perception of it in any two Moments cannot be one and the same Perception. And thus, though the successive Consciousnesses which we have of our own Existence are not the same, yet are they Consciousnesses of one and the same Thing or Object ; of the same Person, Self, or living Agent. The Person, of whose Existence the Consciousness is felt now, and was felt an Hour or a Year ago, is discerned to be, not two Persons, but one and the same Person ; and therefore is one and the same.

Mr. *Locke's* Observations upon this Subject appear hasty : and he seems to profess himself dissatisfied with Suppositions, which he has made relating to it^c. But some of those hasty Observations have been carried to a strange Length by Others, whose Notion, when traced and examined to the bottom, amounts, I think, to this^d : “ That Personality is not a permanent, but a transient

^c *Locke*, p. 152.

^d See an Answer to Dr. *Clarke's* third Defence of his Letter to Mr. *Dodwell*, 2d Edit. p. 44, 56, &c.

“ thing :

“ thing : That it lives and dies, begins and D I S S.
“ ends continually : That no one can any I.
“ more remain one and the same Person two
“ Moments together, than two successive
“ Moments can be one and the same Mo-
“ ment : That our Substance is indeed con-
“ tinually changing ; but whether this be so
“ or not, is, it seems, nothing to the Purpose ;
“ since it is not Substance, but Consciouf-
“ ness alone, which constitutes Personality ;
“ which Consciousness, being successive, can-
“ not be the same in any two Moments, nor
“ consequently the Personality constituted by
“ it.” And from hence it must follow, that
it is a Fallacy upon Ourselves, to charge our
present Selves with any thing we did, or to
imagine our present Selves interested in any
thing which befell us, Yesterday ; or that
our present Self will be interested in what
will befall us to-morrow : since our present
Self is not, in reality, the same with the
Self of Yesterday, but another like Self or
Person coming in its Room, and mistaken
for it ; to which another Self will succeed to-
morrow. This, I say, must follow : for if
the Self or Person of to-day, and That of
to-morrow, are not the same, but only like
Persons ; the Person of to-day, is really no
more interested in what will befall the Per-
son of to-morrow, than in what will befall

DISS. any other Person. It may be thought perhaps,
 I. that this is not a just Representation of the
 Opinion we are speaking of: because those
 who maintain it allow, that a Person is the
 same as far back as his Remembrance reaches.
 And indeed they do use the *Words, Identity*
 and *same Person*. Nor will Language permit
 these Words to be laid aside: since if they
 were, there must be, I know not what ridic-
 culous Periphrasis, substituted in the Room
 of them. But they cannot, consistently with
 themselves, mean, that the Person is really
 the same. For, it is self-evident, that the
 Personality cannot be really the same, if, as
 they expressly assert, That in which it con-
 sists, is not the same. And as, consistently
 with themselves, they cannot, so, I think it
 appears, they do not, mean, that the Person
 is *really* the same, but only that he is so in a
 fictitious Sense: in such a Sense only as they
 assert, for this they do assert, that any Num-
 ber of Persons whatever may be the same
 Person. The bare unfolding this Notion, and
 laying it thus naked and open, seems the
 best Confutation of it. However, since great
 Stress is said to be put upon it, I add the fol-
 lowing things.

First, This Notion is absolutely contradic-
 tory to that certain Conviction, which neces-
 sarily

farily and every Moment rises within us, when. D I S S.
we turn our Thoughts upon ourselves, when. I.
we reflect upon what is past, and look for-
ward upon what is to come. All Imagina-
tion of a daily Change of that living Agent
which each Man calls himself, for another,
or of any such Change throughout our whole
present Life, is intirely borne down by our na-
tural Sense of things. Nor is it possible for
a Person in his wits, to alter his Conduct,
with regard to his Health or Affairs, from a
Suspicion, that though he should live to-mor-
row, he should not however, be the same
Person he is to-day. And yet, if it be rea-
sonable to act, with respect to a future Life,
upon this Notion that Personality is transient;
it is reasonable to act upon it, with respect to
the present. Here then is a Notion equally
applicable to Religion and to our temporal
Concerns: And every one sees and feels the
inexpressible Absurdity of it in the latter Case.
If therefore any can take up with it in the
former, this cannot proceed from the Reason
of the thing, but must be owing to an in-
ward Unfairness, and secret Corruption of
Heart.

Secondly, It is not an Idea, or abstract No-
tion, or Quality, but a Being only, which is
capable of Life and Action, of Happiness
and Misery. Now all Beings confessedly
continue

DISS. continue the same, during the whole Time

I. of their Existence. Consider then a living Being now existing, and which has existed for any Time alive: this living Being must have done and suffered and enjoyed, what it has done and suffered and enjoyed formerly, (this living Being, I say, and not another,) as really as it does and suffers and enjoys, what it does and suffers and enjoys this Instant. All these successive Actions, Enjoyments, and Sufferings, are Actions, Enjoyments, and Sufferings, of the same living Being. And they are so, prior to all Consideration of its remembering or forgetting: since remembering or forgetting can make no Alteration in the Truth of past Matter of Fact. And suppose this Being endued with limited Powers of Knowledge and Memory, there is no more Difficulty in conceiving it to have a Power, of knowing itself to be the same living Being which it was some time ago, of remembering some of its Actions, Sufferings, and Enjoyments, and forgetting others, than in conceiving it to know or remember or forget any thing else.

Thirdly, Every Person is conscious, that he is now the same Person or Self he was, as far back as his Remembrance reaches: since when any one reflects upon a past Action of his own, he is just as certain of the Person who

who did that Action, namely, Himself, the Person who now reflects upon it, as he is certain that the Action was at all done. Nay very often a Person's Assurance of an Action having been done, of which he is absolutely assured, arises wholly from the Consciousness that he himself did it. And this He, Person, or Self, must either be a Substance, or the Property of some Substance. If He, if Person, be a Substance; then Consciousness that He is the same Person, is Consciousness that He is the same Substance. If the Person, or He, be the Property of a Substance; still Consciousness that He is the same Property is as certain a Proof that his Substance remains the same, as Consciousness that he remains the same Substance would be: since the same Property cannot be transferred from one Substance to another.

But though we are thus certain, that we are the same Agents, living Beings, or Substances, Now, which we were as far back as our Remembrance reaches; yet it is asked, Whether we may not possibly be deceived in it? And this Question may be asked at the End of any Demonstration whatever: because it is a Question concerning the Truth of Perception by Memory. And he who can doubt, whether Perception by Memory can in this Case be depended upon, may

D I S S. doubt also, whether Perception by Deduction
I. and Reasoning, which also include Memory,
or indeed whether intuitive Perception can.
Here then we can go no farther. For it is
ridiculous to attempt to prove the Truth of
those Perceptions, whose Truth we can no
otherwise prove, than by other Perceptions
of exactly the same Kind with them, and
which there is just the same Ground to sus-
pect; or to attempt to prove the Truth of
our Faculties, which can no otherwise be
proved, than by the Use or Means of those
very suspected Faculties themselves.

D I S-

DISSERTATION II.

Of the Nature of Virtue.

THAT which renders Beings capable of moral Government, is their having a moral Nature, and moral Faculties of Perception and of Action. Brute Creatures are impressed and actuated by various Instincts and Propensions: so also are We. But additional to this, We have a Capacity of reflecting upon Actions and Characters, and making them an Object to our Thought: And on doing this, we naturally and unavoidably approve some Actions, under the peculiar View of their being virtuous and of Good-desert; and disapprove Others, as vicious and of Ill-desert. That we have this moral approving and disapproving ^a Faculty, is certain

DISS.
II.

^a This way of speaking is taken from *Epicetus* *, and is made use of as seeming the most full, and least liable to Cavil. And the moral Faculty may be understood to have these two Epithets, *δοκιμασικὴ* and *ἀποδοκιμασικὴ*, upon a double Account: Because, upon a Survey of Actions, whether before or after they are done, it determines them to be good or evil; and also because it determines itself to be the Guide of Action and of Life, in Contradistinction from all other Faculties, or natural Principles of Action: in the very same Manner, as speculative Reason *directly* and naturally judges of speculative Truth and Falshood; and, at the same Time, is attended with a Consciousness upon *Reflection*, that the natural Right to judge of them belongs to it.

* Arr. Epict. L. I. c. I.

DISS. from our experiencing it in Ourselves, and
 II. recognizing it in each other. It appears from
 our exercising it unavoidably, in the Appro-
 bation and Disapprobation even of feigned
 Characters: From the Words, right and
 wrong, odious and amiable, base and wor-
 thy, with many others of like Signification
 in all Languages, applied to Actions and Cha-
 racters: From the many written Systems of
 Morals which suppose it; since it cannot be
 imagined, that all these Authors, throughout
 all these Treatises, had absolutely no Mean-
 ing at all to their Words, or a Meaning mere-
 ly chimerical: From our natural Sense of
 Gratitude, which implies a Distinction be-
 tween merely being the Instrument of Good,
 and intending it: From the like Distinction,
 every one makes, between Injury and mere
 Harm, which, *Hobbs* says, is peculiar to
 Mankind; And between Injury and just Pu-
 nishment, a Distinction plainly natural, prior
 to the Consideration of human Laws. It is
 manifest great Part of common Language,
 and of common Behaviour over the World, is
 formed upon Supposition of such a Moral
 Faculty; whether called Conscience, moral
 Reason, moral Sense, or divine Reason;
 whether considered as a Sentiment of the
 Understanding, or as a Perception of the
 Heart, or, which seems the Truth, as in-
 cluding both. Nor is it at all doubtful in the
 general


general, what Course of Action this Faculty, or practical discerning Power within us, approves, and what it disapproves. For, as much as it has been disputed wherein Virtue consists, or whatever Ground for Doubt there may be about Particulars; yet, in general, there is in reality an universally acknowledged Standard of it. It is That, which all Ages and all Countries have made Profession of in Publick: it is That, which every Man you meet, puts on the Shew of: it is That, which the primary and fundamental Laws of all civil Constitutions, over the Face of the Earth, make it their Business and Endeavour to enforce the Practice of upon Mankind; namely, Justice, Veracity, and Regard to common Good. It being manifest then, in general, that we have such a Faculty or Discernment as this; it may be of Use to remark some things, more distinctly, concerning it.

DISS.
II.

First, It ought to be observed, that the Object of this Faculty is Actions^b, comprehending under that Name active or practical Principles: those Principles from which Men would act, if Occasions and Circumstances

^b οὐδὲ ἡ ἀρετὴ ἢ κακία—ἐν πείσει, ἀλλὰ ἐνεργείᾳ.
M. Anton. L. 9. 16. Virtutis laus omnis in Actione consistit. Cic. Off. 1. 1. c. 6.


DISS. gave them Power; and which, when fixed
 II. and habitual in any Person, we call, his
 Character. It does not appear, that Brutes
 have the least reflex Sense of Actions, as distinguished from Events: or that Will and Design, which constitute the very Nature of Actions as such, are at all an Object to their Perception. But to ours they are: And they are the Object, and the only one, of the approving and disapproving Faculty. Acting, Conduct, Behaviour, abstracted from all Regard to what is, in Fact and Event, the Consequence of it, is itself the natural Object of the moral Discernment; as speculative Truth and Falshood is, of speculative Reason. Intention of such and such Consequences, indeed, is always included; for it is Part of the Action itself: but though the intended good or bad Consequences do not follow, we have exactly the same Sense of the Action as if they did. In like Manner we think well or ill of Characters, abstracted from all Consideration of the good or the evil, which Persons of such Characters have it actually in their Power to do. We never, in the moral Way, applaud or blame either ourselves or others, for what we enjoy or what we suffer, or for having Impressions made upon us which we consider as altogether out of our Power: but only for what
 we

we do, or would have done had it been in D I S S.
our Power; or for what we leave undone II.
which we might have done, or would have 
left undone though we could have done it.

Secondly, Our Sense or Discernment of Actions as morally good or evil, implies in it a Sense or Discernment of them as of good or ill Desert. It may be difficult to explain this Perception, so as to answer all the Questions which may be asked concerning it: But every one speaks of such and such Actions as deserving Punishment; and it is not, I suppose, pretended that they have absolutely no Meaning at all to the Expression. Now the Meaning plainly is not, that we conceive it for the Good of Society, that the Doer of such Actions should be made to suffer. For if unhappily it were resolved, that a Man who, by some innocent Action, was infected with the Plague, should be left to perish, left, by other People's coming near him, the Infection should spread: no one would say, he deserved this Treatment. Innocence and Ill-desert are inconsistent Ideas. Ill-desert always supposes Guilt: and if one be no Part of the other, yet they are evidently and naturally connected in our Mind. The Sight of a Man in Misery raises our Compassion

DISS. towards him ; and, if this Misery be inflicted on him by another, our Indignation against the Author of it. But when we are informed, that the Sufferer is a Villain, and is punished only for his Treachery or Cruelty ; our Compassion exceedingly lessens, and, in many Instances, our Indignation wholly subsides. Now what produces this Effect, is the Conception of That in the Sufferer, which we call Ill-desert. Upon considering then, or viewing together, our Notion of Vice and That of Misery, there results a Third, That of Ill-desert. And thus there is in human Creatures an Association of the two Ideas, natural and moral Evil, Wickedness and Punishment. If this Association were merely artificial or accidental, it were nothing : but being most unquestionably natural, it greatly concerns us to attend to it, instead of endeavouring to explain it away.

It may be observed farther, concerning our Perception of good and of ill Desert, that the former is very weak with respect to common Instances of Virtue. One Reason of which may be, that it does not appear to a Spectator, how far such Instances of Virtue proceed from a virtuous Principle, or in what Degree this Principle is prevalent ;
since

since a very weak Regard to Virtue may be D I S S.
sufficient to make Men act well in many II.
common Instances. And on the other hand, 
our Perception of Ill-desert in vicious Ac-
tions lessens, in Proportion to the Tempta-
tions Men are thought to have had to such
Vices. For, Vice in human Creatures con-
sisting chiefly in the Absence or Want of
the virtuous Principle; though a Man be
overcome, suppose by Tortures, it does not
from thence appear, to what Degree the vir-
tuous Principle was wanting. All that ap-
pears is, that he had it not in such a De-
gree, as to prevail over the Temptation;
But possibly he had it in a Degree, which
would have rendered him Proof against com-
mon Temptations.

Thirdly, Our Perception of Vice and Ill-
desert arises from, and is the Result of, a
Comparison of Actions with the Nature
and Capacities of the Agent. For, the mere
Neglect of doing what we ought to do,
would, in many Cases, be determined by
all Men to be in the highest Degree vicious.
And this Determination must arise from
such Comparison, and be the Result of it;
because such Neglect would not be vicious
in Creatures of other Natures and Capaci-
ties, as Brutes. And it is the same also
with

DISS. with respect to positive Vices, or such as
 II. consist in doing what we ought not. For,
 every one has a different Sense of Harm
 done by an Idiot, Madman, or Child, and
 by one of mature and common Under-
 standing; though the Action of both, in-
 cluding the Intention which is Part of the
 Action, be the same: as it may be, since
 Idiots and Madmen, as well as Children,
 are capable not only of doing Mischief, but
 also of intending it. Now this Difference
 must arise from somewhat discerned in the
 Nature or Capacities of one, which renders
 the Action vicious; and the Want of which
 in the other, renders the same Action in-
 nocent or less vicious: And this plainly
 supposes a Comparison, whether reflected
 upon or not, between the Action and Ca-
 pacities of the Agent, previous to our de-
 termining an Action to be vicious. And
 hence arises a proper Application of the
 Epithets, incongruous, unsuitable, dispropor-
 tionate, unfit, to Actions which our moral
 Faculty determines to be vicious.

Fourthly, It deserves to be considered,
 whether Men are more at Liberty, in Point
 of Morals, to make Themselves miserable
 without Reason, than to make other Peo-
 ple so: or dissolutely to neglect their own
 greater

greater Good, for the sake of a present less
Gratification, than they are to neglect
the Good of others, whom Nature has com-
mitted to their Care. It should seem, that
a due Concern about our own Interest or
Happiness, and a reasonable Endeavour to
secure and promote it, which is, I think,
very much the Meaning of the Word, Pru-
dence, in our Language; it should seem,
that this is Virtue, and the contrary Beha-
viour faulty and blameable: Since, in the
calmest way of Reflection, we approve of
the first, and condemn the other Conduct,
both in Ourselves and Others. This Ap-
probation and Disapprobation are altoge-
ther different from mere Desire of our own
or of their Happiness, and from Sorrow up-
on missing it. For the Object or Occasion
of this last Kind of Perception, is Satisfac-
tion, or Uneasiness: whereas the Object of
the first is active Behaviour. In one Case,
what our Thoughts fix upon, is our Con-
dition: in the other, our Conduct. It is
true indeed, that Nature has not given us so
sensible a Disapprobation of Imprudence and
Folly, either in *Ourselves* or *Others*, as of
Falseness, Injustice and Cruelty: I suppose,
because that constant habitual Sense of pri-
vate Interest and Good, which we always
carry about with us, render such sensible

DISS.
II.


DISS. Disapprobation less necessary, less wanting,
 II. to keep us from imprudently neglecting our
 own Happiness, and foolishly injuring Our-
 selves, than it is necessary and wanting to
 keep us from injuring Others, to whose
 Good we cannot have so strong and con-
 stant a Regard: And also because Impru-
 dence and Folly, appearing to bring its own
 Punishment more immediately and constant-
 ly than injurious Behaviour, it less needs
 the additional Punishment, which would be
 inflicted upon it by Others, had they the
 same sensible Indignation against it, as a-
 gainst Injustice and Fraud and Cruelty. Be-
 sides, Unhappiness being in itself the natural
 Object of Compassion; the Unhappiness
 which People bring upon Themselves, though
 it be wilfully, excites in us some Pity for
 them: and this of course lessens our Dis-
 pleasure against them. But still it is mat-
 ter of Experience, that we are formed so,
 as to reflect very severely upon the greater
 Instances of imprudent Neglects and foolish
 Rashness, both in Ourselves and Others. In
 Instances of this Kind, Men often say of
 Themselves with Remorse, and of Others
 with some Indignation, that they deserved
 to suffer such Calamities, because they brought
 them upon themselves, and would not take
 Warning. Particularly when Persons come to
 Poverty

Poverty and Distress by a long course of Ex-DISS. II.
travagance, and after frequent Admonitions, though without Falshood or Injustice; we plainly do not regard such People as alike Objects of Compassion with those, who are brought into the same Condition by unavoidable Accidents. From these things it appears, that Prudence is a Species of Virtue, and Folly of Vice: meaning by *Folly*, somewhat quite different from mere Incapacity; a thoughtless Want of that Regard and Attention to our own Happiness, which we had Capacity for. And this the Word properly includes; and, as it seems, in its usual Acceptation; for we scarce apply it to brute Creatures.

However, if any Person be disposed to dispute the Matter, I shall very willingly give him up the Words Virtue and Vice, as not applicable to Prudence and Folly; but must beg leave to insist, that the Faculty within us, which is the Judge of Actions, approves of prudent Actions, and disapproves imprudent ones; I say prudent and imprudent *Actions* as such, and considered distinctly from the Happiness or Misery which they occasion. And by the way, this Observation may help to determine, what Justness there is in that Objection against Religion, that it teaches us to be interested and selfish.

Fifthly,

DISS. *Fifthly*, Without inquiring how far, and
 II. in what Sense, Virtue is resolvable into Benevolence, and Vice into the Want of it; it
 { may be proper to observe, that Benevolence and the Want of it, singly considered, are in no sort the Whole of Virtue and Vice. For if this were the Case, in the Review of ones own Character or That of Others, our moral Understanding and moral Sense would be indifferent to every thing, but the Degrees in which Benevolence prevailed, and the Degrees in which it was wanting. That is, we should neither approve of Benevolence to Some Persons rather than to Others, nor disapprove Injustice and Falshood upon any other Account, than merely as an Overbalance of Happiness, was foreseen likely to be produced by the first, and of Misery by the second. But now on the contrary, suppose two Men Competitors for any thing whatever, which would be of equal Advantage to each, of them: Though nothing indeed would be more impertinent, than for a Stranger to busy himself to get One of them preferred to the Other; yet such Endeavour would be Virtue, in Behalf of a Friend or Benefactor, abstracted from all Consideration of distant Consequences: as that Examples of Gratitude, and the Cultivation of Friendship, would be of general Good to the World. Again, suppose
 one

one Man should, by Fraud or Violence, take D I S S.
from another the Fruit of his Labour, with II.
Intent to give it to a third, who, he thought, 
would have as much Pleasure from it, as
would balance the Pleasure which the first
Possessor would have had in the Enjoyment,
and his Vexation in the Loss of it; suppose
also that no bad Consequences would follow;
yet such an Action would surely be vicious.
Nay farther, were Treachery, Violence and
Injustice, no otherwise vicious, than as fore-
seen likely to produce an Overbalance of Mi-
sery to Society; then, if in any Case a Man
could procure to himself as great Advantage
by an Act of Injustice, as the whole foreseen
Inconvenience, likely to be brought upon O-
thers by it, would amount to; such a Piece
of Injustice would not be faulty or vicious at
all: Because it would be no more than, in
any other Case, for a Man to prefer his own
Satisfaction to Another's in equal Degrees.
The Fact then appears to be, that we are con-
stituted so as to condemn Falshood, unpro-
voked Violence, Injustice, and to approve of
Benevolence to Some preferably to Others, ab-
stracted from all Consideration, which Con-
duct is likeliest to produce an Overbalance of
Happiness or Misery. And therefore, were
the Author of Nature to propose nothing to
himself as an End but the Production of
Happiness, were His moral Character merely
That

D I S S. That of Benevolence; yet ours is not so.

II. Upon that Supposition indeed, the only Reason of his giving us the abovementioned Approbation of Benevolence to Some Persons rather than Others, and Disapprobation of Falshood, unprovoked Violence, and Injustice, must be, that He foresaw, this Constitution of our Nature would produce more Happiness, than forming us with a Temper of mere general Benevolence. But still, since this is our Constitution; Falshood, Violence, Injustice must be Vice in us, and Benevolence to Some preferably to Others, Virtue; abstracted from all Consideration of the Overbalance of Evil or Good, which they may appear likely to produce.

Now if human Creatures are endued with such a moral Nature as we have been explaining, or with a moral Faculty, the natural Object of which is Actions: moral Government must consist, in rendring them happy and unhappy, in rewarding and punishing them, as they follow, neglect, or depart from, the moral Rule of Action interwoven in their Nature, or suggested and enforced by this moral Faculty; in rewarding and punishing them upon Account of their so doing.

* p. 174.

I am not sensible, that I have, in this fifth **D I S S.**
Observation, contradicted what any Author **H.**
designed to assert. But some of great and distinguished Merit, have, I think, expressed themselves in a Manner, which may occasion some Danger to careless Readers, of imagining the whole of Virtue to consist in singly aiming, according to the best of their Judgment, at promoting the Happiness of Mankind in the present State; and the whole of Vice, in doing what they foresee, or might foresee, is likely to produce an Overbalance of Unhappiness in it: than which Mistakes, none can be conceived more terrible. For it is certain, that some of the most shocking Instances of Injustice, Adultery, Murder, Perjury, and even of Persecution, may, in many supposable Cases, not have the Appearance of being likely to produce an Overbalance of Misery in the present State: perhaps sometimes may have the contrary Appearance. For this Reflection might easily be carried on, but I forbear—The Happiness of the World is the Concern of Him, who is the Lord and the Proprietor of it: Nor do we know what we are about, when we endeavour to promote the Good of Mankind in any Ways, but those which He has directed; that is indeed in all Ways, not contrary to Veracity and Justice. I speak thus
H h upon

DISS. upon Supposition of Persons really endeavouring, in some Sort, to do good without Regard to these. But the Truth seems to be, that such supposed Endeavours proceed, almost always, from Ambition, the Spirit of Party, or some indirect Principle, concealed perhaps in great Measure from Persons themselves. And though it is our Business and our Duty to endeavour, within the Bounds of Veracity and Justice, to contribute to the Ease, Convenience, and even Cheerfulness and Diversion of our Fellow-Creatures: yet from our short Views, it is greatly uncertain, whether this Endeavour will, in particular Instances, produce an Overbalance of Happiness upon the whole; since so many and distant things must come into the Account. And That which makes it our Duty, is, that there is some Appearance that it will, and no positive Appearance sufficient to balance this, on the contrary Side; and also, that such benevolent Endeavour is a Cultivation of that most excellent of all virtuous Principles, the active Principle of Benevolence.

However, though Veracity, as well as Justice, is to be our Rule of Life; it must be added, otherwise a Snare will be laid in the way of some plain Men, that the Use of common Forms of Speech generally understood, cannot be Falshood; and, in general,
that

that there can be no designed Falshood without designing to deceive. It must likewise be observed, that in numberless Cafes, a Man may be under the strictest Obligations to what he foresees will deceive, without his intending it. For it is impossible not to foresee, that the Words and Actions of Men in different Ranks and Employments, and of different Educations, will perpetually be mistaken by each other: And it cannot but be so, whilst they will judge with the utmost Carelessness, as they daily do, of what they are not, perhaps, enough informed to be competent Judges of, even though they considered it with great Attention.

D I S S.

II.

F I N I S.

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