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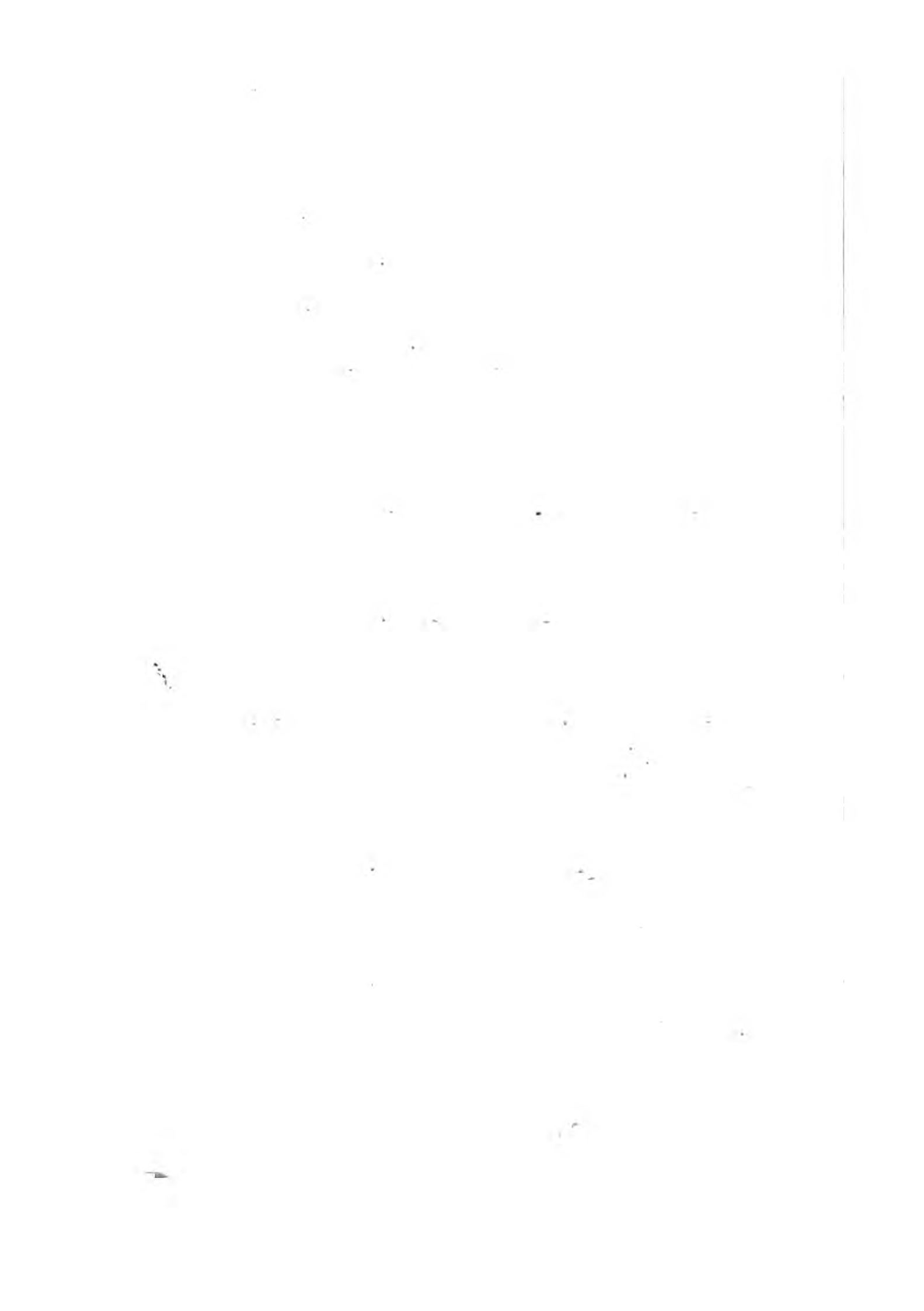
Some Additional

L E T T E R S

T O T H E

Rev. Mr. JACKSON, &c.

[Price One Shilling.]



Some Additional
LETTERS
TO THE

Rev^d. Mr. JACKSON,
FROM
WILLIAM DUDGEON a Gentleman
in *Berwickshire*.

With Mr. JACKSON'S
ANSWERS to Them,

CONCERNING
GOD'S Moral Government of the World;
The Nature of Necessity and Fate, and
of Liberty of Action: and the Founda-
tion, Distinction, and Consequences of
Virtue and Vice, Good and Evil.

WRITTEN
In the Year 1737; and occasioned by two Books
written by Mr. *Jackson*.

ONE Entituled,
*The Existence and Unity of God proved from his
Nature and Attributes.*

The OTHER being the *Defence* of it.

L O N D O N:
Printed for JOHN and PAUL KNAPTON, at the Crown in
Ludgate-Street. M DCC XXXVII.



Some Additional

LETTERS

TO THE

Rev. Mr. JACKSON, &c.

LETTER X.

Reverend SIR,

I Received the Favour of Your's of *May* the 28th, and the Copies of the Letters. I am very sensible of the Obligation I lie under to you for your kind Intention towards me. Some of my Friends blame me much for suffering my Name to be affix'd to these Letters; being apprehensive that our Clergy will thereupon renew my Prosecution. The Consequences that are usually tack'd to the Principles I espouse, are *unpopular*; and when such as these, in your last printed Letter, *excusing unreasonable Passions*, and being *favourable to Vice*, are drawn from them by one of your Moderation and good Sense, what may be expected from Bigots? therefore I hope you will allow me to explain my self a little farther on these Subjects, in Answer to your last Letter, which I saw not before it was printed.

B I. How

1. How Matter can *excite* Ideas in us by its *Inactivity*, I do not at all understand; for whatever *excites* Ideas in us I can't but infer to be *active*; and if *Impulse* is not *Action*, you would seem to alter the ordinary Meaning of Words; nor do I see the Propriety of calling the *Vis Inertiæ*, a passive Principle, seeing Re-action is always *equal* to Action. If God, or any other Being, moves Matter, and thereby *excites* Ideas in us, it is not *Matter* that excites the Ideas in us, but *God*, or that Being who moves or *impells* it: But the Objections to the Operation of quite *different* Substances, such as *Spirit* and *Matter* are imagin'd to be, upon one another, are unanswerable. God, you own, may, and I believe does, excite Ideas in us without the Existence of *material* Substances or Bodies; and the Argument taken from God's *deceiving* us, if there is no material Substance, is weak and inconclusive; for the Bulk of Mankind take Bodies to be *colour'd*, and yet Philosophers prove that it is a *Mistake*, and the same may be shewn of *Extension* and the *Solidity* of Bodies.

2. *Goodness* and *Agency* have their Foundation in the Divine *Substance*, as all other Attributes have, and not in his *Intelligence*, as you suppose: And a Disposition, whether benevolent or not, is in Order of Idea or Conception, *antecedent* both to Will and Intelligence, and is the Motive *ad intra* to Action; for all these, without a Disposition to use them, either to benevolent or selfish Ends, would lie *dormant*. If God, suppose, knew perfectly well

The Tenth Letter. 3

well *how* to communicate Happiness to all possible Existences, yet if he had no *natural Desire* of their Happiness, or no Disposition to communicate Happiness to them, *He would never do it.* And if perfect Wisdom knew that a *Variety* of Creatures, the less perfect of which could not but from their very weak and *imperfect* Natures occasion to themselves and their Neighbours many *real Evils*, I know not how you can suppose it *right* and *best* to create them: But, on the contrary, all Creatures should have been made of an *equal* Degree of Perfection, if that would have been the best System of Things to prevent real Evils, as you seem to think; yet this is not the *Fact*; and if the present Administration cannot be justified, what shall we say----

3. If it was *consistent* to find Fault with the Creation, without accusing the Creator, one of a tender Constitution, persecuted by some, and oppressed by others, might be allowed to complain; yet I think that Afflictions produce real Good, and if the *End* is *necessary*, the *Means* to it are also *necessary*. And there is little Difference between God's being immediately or mediately the Author of Pain, or whatever occasions it, to which all Evil is reduceable, whether by *ordaining* or *permitting* imperfect Creatures voluntarily to adhere to Vice for any Time. For if such a *Permission* of Vice serv'd no *good End*, but was downright Blemish, Discord and *real Evil*, God might, in *Consistency* with that Free-agency which you suppose, have *prevented* it, by sug-
B 2 gesting

gesting *sufficient* Motives to incline their Wills another Way.

4. But you are sensible that it is not mere Natural Power, or Freedom from external Impediments, that capacitates Beings for Happiness or the contrary, *but good or bad Dispositions of Mind and Habits of Virtue or Vice proceeding from them ; which admit, the one of various Degrees of Perfection, the other of Imperfection.* And you say, *That various and different Species of Creatures with various and different Degrees of Perfection, do most illustrate the Power and Wisdom of the Creator.* This being so, the necessary Consequences of such a Variety of Tempers and Capacities, the Mixture of these selfish Passions, and mutual interfering of Interests, which you think are *Discords, and the Sources of all human Vices and Worldly Unhappiness,* are also necessary to illustrate God's infinite Wisdom and Power. And hence you infer, *p. 78, a future State, where a Reformation and Amendment will be brought about.* This Way of Reasoning is very unsatisfactory to me ; *Goodness,* it seems, was *least* concerned in such Productions ; neither can I see much *Wisdom* display'd in producing such a *Variety* of Creatures, the unavoidable Consequences of which would be a mutual interfering of Interests, Vices, and *real Evils,* that serve no good End, but are to be amended ; much less do I see the *Justice* of first making *imperfect* Creatures, and then punishing them for the *natural Consequences* of their Imperfection. Infinite Wisdom and Power,
directed

directed by perfect Goodness, could not fail to produce the *best* System of Things, and to preserve it in Order, and carry it on towards Perfection, without *After-mendings*: I must still therefore be of Opinion, That the Things that be, are the *best*, viz. a *Variety* of Creatures with Variety of Tempers, Capacities, Circumstances, and their necessary Consequences, a Mixture of Virtue and Vice; none of which are *real Evils*, but produce *Good* upon the Whole.

If I should allow you that the mutual interferences of Interests in the present Scheme were *real Evils*, I might press home the *Epicurean* Arguments against you, which I seriously believe to be unanswerable: For, if there be a God, he is certainly both *able* and *willing* to prevent, not to say remove, all Evil Natural and Moral; But as I am convinced there is a God, I seriously believe that all *real Evil* is excluded: But after all, the *Appearance* of Evil is necessary; for as we have but partial, nay extremely minute, Conceptions of the universal System of Things, and their Relations to one another and to the Whole, we must of Necessity often perceive many Things as imperfect, thus *partially view'd*, though altogether *perfect in respect of the Whole*.

5. Though a Subordination of intelligent Beings does, and probably will, you own, always subsist in every Part of the Creation, yet you think this not necessary in regard of God's moral Government of the Universe. And you instance that an Equality of Dispositions, Capacities and Circum-

Circumstances of Men, All as good and perfect as possible, [so they could admit of no Improvement] would have been a better Constitution. By this you would shew, that Things are not necessarily for the best, as I allege they are, being the Production of perfect Power and Wisdom directed by the natural necessary Goodness of God.

It is not, Sir, so easy a Matter to alter the present Constitution of Things for the better as one would at first imagine. Your *Sett of equally perfect Creatures* (you say) *would employ themselves better than the present generally do: They might, and naturally would associate together with the most benevolent Affections, in mutual Conversation and Exercises both of Body and Mind; and in an uniform Worship of God, and Obedience to his Will.* Perhaps this is all you think they could do; but I think they could not even do so much. For as to the first, They being all equally perfect in every Respect, and so of *equal Knowledge*, they would have nothing to converse about, but what they all equally knew; and there being no *Foundation* for mutual good Offices, which involves mutual interfering of Interests, there could be no *ties of Affection*. And it seems very inconsistent in you to suppose these Creatures would exercise brotherly Affections to one another, where there is no mutual Relation and Dependence. In *fact*, our highest Enjoyment, or greatest Happiness, consists in the Exercise of the noble Passions of Generosity, Gratitude, Compassion, Fortitude; Hence the Necessity
of

of *suitable Objects* arising from the *Variety* of Creatures mutually dependent; and which Variety, you think, does, and probably always will subsist in every Part of the Creation: And which Variety, mutual Dependence and Relation of Parts, is, I think, absolutely necessary to constitute the World *one Administration* or Government, to be carried on *for ever*. But upon your Supposition they being all equally as perfect and good, as they are *capable of being at first*, they could not advance or *improve in Goodness* or Perfection; which evidently shews the Absurdity of your Supposition. And though a Subordination of intelligent Beings will always subsist, and a consequent *Mixture* of Vice [which is not real Evil, but Imperfection, necessarily included in the Idea of every *Creature* however perfect] and Virtue; yet it by no means follows that Creatures, more improv'd by Experience, should be guilty of such Blunders and Mistakes, which carry their own Punishment along with them, as they are in this *infant State*; For as to Pride, Envy, Injustice, [which you instance, *Disinterested Malice* and Cruelty, there is none] these depending on our *Ignorance*, the more we improve in Knowledge, these will vanish: And if there is no need of Meat, Drink, and the Propagation of the Species in a *future State*, our sensual Appetites will be entirely *cut off*, and their Consequent both Pleasures and Pains. But as no Creature can ever arrive at *infinite Perfection*, some Vices, Mistakes, and their consequent Punishments will always obtain,

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obtain, and Advances in Virtue and Perfection will for ever be attended with proportionable Happiness.

As to the second Thing you mention, *That a Set of equally perfect Creatures might and would naturally associate together in an uniform Worship of God, and Obedience to his Will*, I reply, That all religious Worship is altogether a *personal Thing*, an internal Disposition of Mind, a Love of God, and Gratitude to Him, Submission to his Will, and Trust in his Providence ; which no Creature, more or less perfect, can avoid rendering to God in Proportion to their true Knowledge of Him ; For all *Irreligion* arises from our not having a good *Character* of God, which we *necessarily love*. And, as I observ'd in a former Letter, there is no greater Support of, and Encouragement to Religion, than a being confirm'd in the Opinion of *Necessity*, or that God wills and acts *necessarily* and *voluntarily* for the *best* in consequence of his natural Disposition, which is necessarily benevolent or good. And of this every one may be convinced, who considers that the *general* Mind can have no *particular* Interest, but the general Good or the Good of the Whole ; and his own private Good must of Necessity *be one and the same*. Hence appears the Inconsiderateness of those, who oppose *Will* to Necessity, which can only be oppos'd to Co-action or *Force*, that can no way operate on the Will. And I think such should be more cautious of crying out that the Maintainers of Necessity are *Enemies to Religion*

The Tenth Letter. 9

gion and Virtue, seeing these Clamours arise from their Ignorance of the Matter.

6. To conclude, As I have sincerely, and to the best of my Knowledge, [contrary to my worldly Interest] follow'd *Nature* and *Truth* in my Enquiries, I am not afraid of their Consequences in Respect of *Irreligion* and *Immorality*. For, if I am *mistaken*, Error is easily confuted; and while I am treated with Moderation, Charity and good Manners, I care not how much my Mistakes are exposed in the way of fair Reasoning. It is a *Favour* done me. And indeed my settled Opinion of *every thing* [in which I include the Natural Rewards and Punishments of Virtue and Vice] *taking the Course that God designs, and all conspiring to a good Issue*, makes me tolerably easy in all Circumstances; though I cannot reconcile *every Appearance* to the eternal unchangeable Rule of *Truth, Right, and Goodness*. I am with sincere Affection and Esteem,

Reverend Sir,

Your most humble Servant.

June 10, 1737.

10 Answer to the Tenth Letter.

ANSWER TO LETTER X.

S I R,

July 5, 1737.

AFTER my Return home on July the first from a Journey, I received the Favour of Your's of the 10th of June; and in Answer assure you that I want not good Will, but a Power to serve you in a Manner which might make your worldly Circumstances easy and comfortable. With regard to your Apprehension of being prosecuted on Account of your Letters, as there is no Ground or Pretence for it, so I hope there are none amongst your Clergy, so unchristian as to attempt to trouble you; and I think there is less Danger now than ever of suffering for honest Free-thinking. I have [you know] all along treated your Notions [whatever may be the Consequences of them] with great Tenderness and Charity; and what I have said in my last Letter of your Notion in one Respect *seeming too favourable to Vice*, was intended only as a Motive to a virtuous Mind to review it, but cannot at all give any reasonable Handle against you. You are at Liberty to publish an Answer to it, if you please; and I am willing that you should write last, if that can be of any Service to you. Indeed I have said what I think proper on the several Subjects; and in comparing your Reply with my last Letter, I do not find that it is a sufficient or proper Answer to any Part of it: and I judge it no way necessary to add any more. However,
for

Answer to the Tenth Letter I I

for a Conclusion, be pleased to take my Thoughts as follows :

1. To your saying, *whatever excites Ideas in you, you can't but infer to be active* ; I answer, it is evident that we excite Ideas in one another, and this is as evidently done not by the immediate Presence of our Minds to each other, but by means of *Matter*, and its Properties and bodily Organs which convey Ideas to the Mind : Yet Matter is not hereby prov'd to be an *Agent*, though Philosophers call Impulse, *Action* ; and you seem to confound the *natural* Action or Impulse of Body with *metaphysical* Agency of intelligent Beings. These I distinguish'd in my Letter, and you should have done so too in your Answer.

2. To your Argument against the Existence of Matter from the Mistake of Men's taking Bodies to be *Colour'd*, &c. I reply, That there is no Mistake but in applying to the external Object what more properly belongs to the internal Sensation, or Perception in us : And to say that Bodies are *Colour'd*, is a mere incorrect and unphilosophical way of speaking : but there is no Mistake in supposing Bodies to have Properties which excite by means of Light, (which is also *Body*) the Idea of *Colour* in us ; and these Properties infer the Substance of Body, which you will never be able to confute. I wonder you should persist to argue against the Evidence of Sense without any Reason that I can see for so doing.

Next you say, *Goodness and Agency have their Foundation in the Divine Substance, as all*

12 Answer to the Tenth Letter.

other Attributes have, and not in his Intelligence, as you suppose. I never suppos'd or doubted but that all the Divine Attributes existed in the Divine Substance; and are indeed but partial Considerations of it: but yet in our *Conceptions*, one Attribute is *prior* or *posterior* to another, *flows from*, or is *consequential to*, or is the *Ground* of another. And thus Goodness and Agency are consequential to Intelligence and Will, and without the Supposition of them cannot be conceiv'd; and naturally in Order of Conception follows the Pre-supposition of them. This to me is evident; and your Notion, that a *Disposition* whether benevolent or not, is in order of Idea or Conception *antecedent* both to Will and Intelligence, is plainly wrong and unnatural; And your adding that it is *the Motive ad intra to Action* might, had you added likewise its being the Motive to *Intelligence*, have shewn you the Absurdity of such Reasoning. All Disposition then in God to act, and to act right, can proceed only from the Perfection of his Knowledge and Power of Action; all *precedent* Benevolence or Desire to these is utterly unintelligible.

To what you observe next, I say that the *present Administration of Divine Providence is justified*, because one Agent cannot necessarily cause (as you suppose) real or moral Evil to another; and every Degree of Moral Evil and of Misery attending it, may be, the one reform'd, and the other put an end to, by persevering finally in Virtue, and obtaining thereby

Answer to the Tenth Letter. 13

thereby final Happiness, which is in every one's Power: the very Notion of a Divine Providence supposeth this; and this is a sufficient Reason for God's Permission of Sin.

In your next Paragraph you seem to confound natural and moral Evil, as if bodily Pain was the same kind of Evil with Pain arising from Consciousness of Guilt and Self-Condernnation: the Difference plainly is, *natural* Evil, or bodily Pain, in the Administration of Providence tends to produce Happiness, by producing the Virtues of Patience, Fortitude and Resignation to the Divine Will, and so is not real Evil; but *moral* Evil or Vice tends to produce Misery, and cannot produce real Happiness in the Agent where it is; and so is real Evil. It may, as I observed, be the Cause of Happiness, by producing Virtue in other Agents, whom at present it injures or oppresseth; but it is an Evil in it self, and must be ever so to the Agent who is acted by it; and God's Creation is least perfect [thro' the Perverseness of the Creatures] where it most abounds; and will be most perfect where it shall least exist: though the Creature will and must always be imperfect, and cannot be impectable like the Creator.

To what you say next in your fourth Paragraph I observe, that in the greatest possible Variety of Creatures of all possibly different Degrees of Perfection, there is no Necessity at all for these Discords and Interferings which I said were the Source of all Vice and Worldly Unhap-

14 Answer to the Tenth Letter.

Unhappiness, and which you think necessary, and therefore no Evils. There is no such Thing as natural or necessary selfish Passions which interfere with the reasonable Passions and Rights of others: All this, as I observ'd, is a Perversion of Nature, which casts the Blame where it ought to lie, on the Creature, and not on the Creator: *God made Man upright, but they have sought out many Inventions and hurtful Vices.* There may exist Creatures of all possible various Degrees of Perfection, without any vicious or immoral Behaviour to one another, if each will always exert these Degrees of Perfection they are capable of or endued with; No one Degree of Perfection can interfere with another, or produce any Vice or real Evil: No such Consequences (as you suppose) follow unavoidably from the Imperfections which are natural to every Creature; because, as often said, natural Evils are not real Evils; and moral Evil or Vice, which is real Evil, does not unavoidably follow from any suppos'd Differences of Capacities or Circumstances in the moral Agents; though it may more easily follow in some Capacities and Circumstances than in others: And it is very absurd to suppose the present State with a Mixture of Virtue and Vice to be the best; this is evidently contrary both to Reason and Revelation. You say, *If there is a God, He is certainly both able and willing to prevent, not to say remove all Evil natural and moral; and you believe all real Evil is excluded:* This certainly is talking against all Experience,
and

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and against what every one feels more or less, and in consequence supposes no Difference between Virtue and Vice, Good and Evil, Moral Happiness and Misery. If the Misery of Vice and Guilt be an Evil, a real Evil, then all real Evil is not excluded; if it is not, then no real Evil can be conceived, and we may call Evil *Good* if we please. God to be sure might have prevented all real Evil, *i. e.* the Evil of Sin and Vice, either by not creating rational Beings at all, or by taking away the Possibility of Virtue and Vice, moral Good and Evil, and making us necessary Beings or no Agents: But such a Scheme or Notion of Providence is neither wise nor fit. So that the present State of Things is far from being perfect or the best that can be; and the *whole Creation groaneth to be deliver'd* from this evil State of Corruption, into a more glorious and happy Condition, which will be a State of Renovation, where there will be none of the selfish Passions and Interfering Interests, which make Men miserable here.

In order to support your strange Notion, That if Men were of *equally good Dispositions, Capacities and Circumstances*, and in all these Respects were as good and perfect as they are capable of being, they would make a Set of absurd Creatures, and be less happy than in their present Condition. You say, *They being equal in Knowledge, would have nothing to converse about but what they all equally knew; and there being no Foundation for mutual good Offices, which involves mutual Interferings of Interests*
there

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there could be no Ties of Affection; and it seems (you think) very inconsistent to suppose these Creatures would exercise brotherly Affection to one another where there is no mutual Relation or Dependence. All this surely is very inadvertently said. Is there then no Pleasure of Mind in conversing about the most important and excellent Truths which we know? And does not the mutual Conversation of equally knowing and well disposed Persons afford the greatest Satisfaction, and really improve the Mind in the mutual Admiration, Praise and Adoration of the Fountain of Truth and all Perfection? And surely Minds equally loving and capable of knowing Truth, must love their own perfect Likeness [where there are no interfering Passions or Interests] as they love themselves. Likeness of Dispositions, Capacities and Circumstances is the proper Foundation of Friendship and Love, directly contrary to what you suppose. Such Minds will also naturally excite one another to the Pursuit of farther Truth, and the mutual Communication of their Progress in it to each other. And as it does not follow that Persons of equally good moral Dispositions, and of equal Capacities and Circumstances shall always employ themselves in the Investigation of the same Truths, so there is Room for their mutual Improvement of one another, and a mutual happy Communication of these Truths, which are either first known to or revealed to any of them.

2. There

Answer to *the Tenth* Letter. 17

2. There cannot but be a mutual Relation of these Creatures to one another, as being Fellow-Creatures, and properly Brethren, and their Independency on one another, and Equality of Circumstance, [which exclude all interfering Interests and Passions] render their mutual Affection more free and unreserv'd and permanent, and so more perfect. And all these noble Passions [as you call them] of Generosity, Gratitude, Compassion and Fortitude, in the Exercise of which, you think, our greatest Happiness consists, are only the Result of our weak and imperfect State; and I suppose will have no Place in the more perfect future Life: Or though in some Sense Generosity and Gratitude may be suppos'd where all will not be equal; yet there can be no Room for Compassion and Fortitude where we shall want nothing but what shall be in our own Power, and our Happiness shall not depend on any other Being but God.

You mistake in thinking I supposed [in putting your own Case] a Sett of Men here all equally as good and perfect as they are capable of being in a future or continued Existence: I only supposed them equal in Capacities of Knowledge, and of equal Dispositions and Circumstances, and these to be as good and perfect as they are capable of being here; And you can't reasonably think I supposed them so perfect as not to be capable of any Increase of their Knowledge and Virtue, [tho' it would be hard from such Perfection to infer them to be less happy than in a more imperfect

D fect

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fect State] and you are forc'd so far to agree with me as to allow this State of Mixture of Good and Evil not to be the best, but to be succeeded by a better, where the Faults of the present will be mended by Experience, and Men in the future State will have less Errors and Mistakes, and so feel less Punishment or Evil attending them; which evidently contradicts your Assertion, *That the Things which be are the best.*

I need say nothing to what you further allege, to prove that Men in the present State are happier than in that which I suppos'd under an Equality of Circumstances, and the best Dispositions and Capacities, viz. *That all Religious Worship is altogether a personal Thing, a Love of God, and Gratitude to Him, Submission to his Will, and Trust in his Providence, which no Creature more or less perfect can avoid rendering to God, in proportion to their true Knowledge of Him.* This is supposing every one to be as pious and virtuous as he ought to be or can be. If I understand you here, your Notion is amazingly erroneous.

You still pursue your Notion of *Necessity*, which I think is inconsistent with Virtue, and in consequence with rational and moral Happiness; and you in a very contradictory Manner say, *That God wills and acts necessarily and voluntarily for the best, &c.* No rational Being can ever be justly satisfied that God acts for the Good of the Whole; if by his Will and Power any Particular is necessarily subjected to the Evil of Sin or Vice, and the
Misery

Answer to the Tenth Letter 19

Misery that naturally attends it. You are forc'd to allow that Vice is always attended with Punishment or Misery : and so 'tis hence demonstrable that we are not *necessarily* drawn into it, if we were, it could not be just that Misery should always follow it.

I am,

Your sincere affectionate Friend,

and Servant.

L E T T E R XI.

Reverend S I R,

I Am favour'd with Your's of *July* the 5th, and own my self obliged to you for the genteel and charitable Treatment I have had from you, in the Course of our Correspondence; but I have suffer'd much already for well-meant *Free-thinking* from our Clergy; and though you can treat a weak Fellow-Creature with Candour, Moderation and due Allowances, notwithstanding you take his Opinions to be *amazingly erroneous* *; Yet I cannot expect the like Usage from our Clergy, who are just now prosecuting a Gentleman for publishing two excellent moral Discourses, preach'd in *London*. I wish that the unavoidable Differences of Opinions, even about common Things, which we daily perceive among Men, would teach them Charity and mutual Forbearance. Writing the last Letter in a Controversy, is of no Moment to those who can judge of the *Merits* of the Cause, and not by its *alleged* Consequences; Therefore I desire you to write the last Letter, as it is your due, only I would see it before it is printed. Believe me, Sir, I write for *Instruction*, not Victory.

* Add to the Part you cite of my Letter, For all *Irreligion* arises from our not having a *good Character* of God, which we *necessarily* love, and you'll see that you draw a wrong Consequence from it.

The Eleventh Letter. 21

1. I have in my former Letters said all I judge needful about the *Non-existence* of material Substance, and so shall trouble you no more upon that Head; only I forgot to take Notice of part of what you say in your Answer to my ninth Letter, *viz. That an Idea is the Perception of an Object, not it self a sensible Object, &c.* In this we differ, The *Act* of Perception, and the *Idea* or Thing *perceiv'd*, I take to be different Things, existing both in the Mind, from whence I infer the Existence of an *active* Being who affects my Mind with those Ideas or Objects; and herein I persist to argue for my own Experience and Evidence of my Senses.

2. I can suppose a Being of a Disposition good or bad, *i. e.* either to communicate Happiness or Misery to others, without either *Intelligence* or Knowledge how, or *Power* to do it, though not without Will, which is immediately consequent upon the Desire, and connected with it. And this Disposition is the *Motive* to, or Cause of, a Being's willing and *exercising* his Intelligence or Knowledge and Power to bring about his Designs. This is common Experience, That People *first* intend to do a Thing, *then* set their Wits a-work to contrive Means how to do it; and *lastly*, apply their Power to execute them. I wonder that you should think my Reasoning on this Head absurd: Goodness does *not flow from* Intelligence; for we often see *little* Goodness with *much* Intelligence, and much Goodness with little either of Intelligence or Power.

3. I

22 *The Eleventh Letter.*

3. I consider the rest of your Letter altogether, which turns intirely upon the Supposition of the *Abuse of Liberty*, and by this introducing moral Evil, which you call *real Evil*, in Opposition to what I advance, That all Things are *necessarily* for the *best* in the present Time and Circumstances, though I allow they will improve or advance for ever towards Perfection. This is a large Field for deep Discussions ; but as I have said much already upon it, I shall endeavour to be as short and distinct as possible with what I am farther to add, and shall treat this important Subject with Decency and the utmost Freedom, *Sine metu Judæorum*.

I have shewn above, That the Disposition is the *Spring* of all Action in every Being. If a Being is of a *benevolent* Disposition, he will be *determined* or prompted by it to make Use of all those Means that are *fit* to promote his *benevolent Designs* ; and a Being of a *selfish* Disposition would be *excited* by it to use those Means that are *fit* to advance his *selfish Ends*. So that I do not understand what some mean by talking about the *abstract Reason* and *absolute Fitness* of Things or *Means* ; for these *vary* according to the Designs or Ends intended to be brought about by Beings of *different Dispositions*. And therefore we must know God's *Disposition* before we can judge of his *Designs*, and what are the *fit Means* to bring them to pass. God, I think, is generally own'd to be a perfectly *benevolent* Being, and not a *selfish* one : He therefore, as a *benevolent* and *self-sufficient*

The Eleventh Letter. 23

sufficient Being, created all Beings to make them *happy*, and not to supply any *Defects* of his own; and I think that none directly deny his infinite Wisdom and Power to accomplish his good Designs. So that according to this Theory there can be no *real Evil, Sin, Wrong* and *Misery*, with respect to the *whole* System of Beings. Although there is *more or less* Degrees of Virtue, Perfection and Happiness among Creatures, in Proportion to their *various* Capacities, Dispositions and Circumstances, which Variety and Subordination of Beings I take to be necessary to the Beauty and *Perfection* of the whole; or else this *perfect* Creator would have made them *otherwise*. And while you are shewing how Men of *equal* Knowledge might entertain one another, you are forced to suppose this Equality *broke*, either by their Application to the Study of different Truths, or a Revelation to some of them.

But after all I must own, that however agreeable and true this may seem in *Theory*, yet if this System or Hypothesis does not also account for the *Facts*, or for what *Experience* teacheth us, it is not *complete* and *conclusive*. And I am sincerely sorry to see some who have given us fine Arguments for the Existence of God, *i. e.* a perfect Being who made and guides the Universe, join in mustering up *Facts*, which *overturn* all their *Theories*. They would indeed account for these Facts, “ by
“ Creatures abusing their natural Power of
“ Acting, and so introducing Sin and real
“ Evil,

24 *The Eleventh Letter.*

“ Evil, which God could have no otherwise
 “ prevented (*you say*) but by not creating ra-
 “ tional Creatures at all, or by taking away
 “ the Possibility of Virtue and Vice, moral
 “ Good and Evil, and making us necessary
 “ Beings ; but such a Scheme of Providence
 “ is neither *wise* nor *fit*.” Where is the Rea-
 son of this Consequence ? It seems to be much
 the *wiser* and *fitter* (I would rather say *better*,
 for the other might be *fitter* to make many
miserable) Scheme of Providence, that Crea-
 tures should be *necessarily determined to Good*,
 than left at *Liberty to do Ill*. But supposing
 they were only *binder’d* to do *Ill*, yet this
 might be done without *destroying* their natural
 Power or Liberty to do Good. If a *good* and
wise Parent was *always present* with his Chil-
 dren, would he not *always prevent* their doing
 any *real Evils* to themselves and Fellows, and
 yet leave them at *Liberty* to do all the Good
 they *would* ? Where then is the Absurdity of
 supposing the same of the *common Parent* of
Mankind ? Nay farther, if an earthly Parent
 had the *framing* of his Children’s Dispositions,
 would he not *always incline* them to *Good* ?
 Would he not give them *sufficient Capacities* to
 discover the best Means *to it*, and never *place*
them in *tempting* Circumstances ? But perhaps
 it may be answer’d, That they would not be
 Subjects capable of Rewards and Punishments.
 What then ? If People were always *necessarily*
inclin’d or determin’d to *Virtue*, and all the
 Avenues to *Evil* closed up, they would be
necessarily happy, and in Hazard of no *Punish-*
ment.

The Eleventh Letter. 25

ment. A most *desirable State*, sure, all to be *necessarily happy!* and so be the *liker* God himself.

I can see no Answer can be made to these and the like Arguments which might be farther urged, but these two. 1st, That all Creatures are necessarily as *happy* at all Times as their *various* Tempers, Capacities, Circumstances, &c. can allow, and that the Pain or Misery which some feel *greater* than others, do arise from their *less perfect* Frame or Constitution of Body or Mind, or *less* advantageous Circumstances: which *Variety* and Subordination of Beings, is absolutely necessary both to the *Beauty* and Perfection of the *whole System* of Beings; no Individual of which can be absolutely free from some *Imperfection* or Misery, as they are dependent Creatures. This Opinion I contend for, as I believe there is a Being of infinite Goodness, Wisdom and Power, who *made* and *takes Care* of the *whole*. 2d Answer, That God perhaps hath *other Views* in his Actions than the *Good* of the *Whole*, and may (as some affirm) be as much *glorified* in the *Damnation* and Misery of *some* of his Creatures, as he is in the *Salvation* and Happiness of *others*. Cruel Gratification! and yet this *shocking* Opinion, which is no less absurd in it self, I doubt not we may find some People who will say, that lawful Authority requires us to *believe* it. But to deal plainly, it would seem more eligible, to have *undesigning Nature alone* to *trust* to, than to have such a Governor to her.

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Lastly,

26 *The Eleventh Letter.*

Lastly, When once you *overturn* my Notion of *Necessity*, or that every Thing is *necessarily for the best*, which I infer from the *necessary Goodness* and *absolute Perfection* of God, I shall give it up. But you press me only with what you think to be its Consequences without confuting it. And to bid me prove from the *Facts*, That nothing is *evil* or *wrong* with respect to the *Whole*, is to bid me be *Omniscient*. But on the other hand, I defy any Man to prove, That though this may *seem Evil* with respect to this *Individual*, and that Evil with respect to that *Society*, yet any of these Evils are *really* so with respect to the *Whole*. Ideas of Perfection, when applied to *Particulars*, are visionary Things. Take away all *Uneasiness* or Pain, and you take away the *Salt* of Human Life and the *Spur* to Happiness. Hence the *Necessity* of the Pains attending Vice or Imperfection, which we are necessarily subject to. If there is but *One* Author of *all Things*, He is the *Author* both of *natural* and *moral Evil*, none of which are *real Evils*, but produce Good upon the Whole. It is strange to see the various Ways of accounting for the *Origine of Evil*. Some will have it, That God hath given Men a Power to *abuse* their Liberty : and so to introduce Evil, *contrary* to, or at least besides his Intentions, which are thereby *defeated*. And to make this go down the better, others deny his *Fore-knowledge* ; so that the Creator is not to *blame* though his Works *turn'd out so ill*, that he had Reason to *repent* his making them. Do not these No-
tions

The Eleventh Letter. 27

tions end in *Atheism*? And what is yet as strange, some, because they cannot *comprehend* the *infinite incomprehensible* Nature and Perfections of God, endeavour to *limit* or *circumscribe* him; and so would bring him down to the *Size* of their own *finite* foolish Fancies. But would it not be more *becoming* in us to retain the absolute *infinite Perfections* of the Deity, and the consequent *Goodness* of his Works, though we cannot conceive how the *seeming Discords* contribute to the perfect *Harmony* and *Happiness* of the *Whole*.

I am, Reverend Sir,

Your Friend and humble Servant.

July 20. 1737.

28 Answer to the Eleventh Letter.

ANSWER to LETTER XI.

SIR,

August 6. 1737.

I Received the Favour of Your's of *July* the 20th, in Answer to mine of *July* the 5th ; and amongst a Multiplicity of Business had no Time to write an Answer to it till now : and indeed I had no Thoughts of giving You or the World any more Trouble on the Subjects debated between us : but because you expect I should say something to your last Letter, I shall do it in as brief a Manner as I can.

In hope of removing the erroneous Consequence which I charg'd your Notion of Religion with, *as supposing every one to be as pious and virtuous as he ought to be or can be* ; you have added in the latter end of your Tenth, and in the beginning of your Eleventh Letter, these Words : *All Irreligion arises from our not having a good Character of God, which we necessarily love.* This Addition will not shew my Consequence to be wrong drawn : for, on the direct contrary to what you say, all *Irreligion* is most properly such, and the Guilt of it aggravated, when Men who *knew God* by the Works of his Creation and Providence, or by the Revelation of his Will, yet *honour him not as God*, but act irreligiously in Opposition to their Knowledge of God and Virtue, and to the Light of Reason and Scripture : and tho' she cannot but approve of a *good Character*,
yet

Answer to the *Eleventh* Letter. 29

yet this does not make us *necessarily* imitate it : and our willful Defect here is the Source of *Irreligion* and *Vice*.

2. I endeavour'd to shew you the Absurdity of supposing moral Properties and Dispositions in rational Beings, particularly the Goodness and Agency of God, (in which the Point of Argument subsisted) precedent in Conception to Intelligence. You still continue in your Notion, and wonder I should think it absurd. I cannot but say I wonder that one of your Sense and Understanding does not perceive the evident Absurdity of it. It is evident that in rational Beings, no moral Property, Disposition, or Intention to act can be conceiv'd or be possible without the Pre-supposition of Intelligence: if it could, then unintelligent Beings might have these Dispositions and Intentions, than which nothing is more plainly absurd. For if Intelligence was posterior to these Properties and Dispositions, and particularly to the Properties of Goodness and Agency, then they may as well be conceiv'd to exist without it, as Intelligence may be conceiv'd to exist without the Property of Goodness or Agency. And this, I think, might let you see, that in the Constitution of intellectual or rational Beings Intelligence must at least in Conception precede every other moral Property, Benevolence, Agency, &c. We form in our selves general habitual Dispositions and particular Intentions of Agency from that Perception of Things and Consideration of them which is precedently inherent
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30 Answer to the *Eleventh* Letter.

in the Mind ; and our having Dispositions and Intentions in particular Cases without Knowledge or Means of effecting what we are disposed or intend to do, is no Argument at all that our Dispositions are not at first form'd in us from our precedent Intelligence and Perception of the Reason, Truth and Consequences of Things, whatever it is, more or less perfect. And though we may talk of our selves as having Dispositions which are the Spring of Action, nay, and that oft-times we act from the Motive of Benevolence or a good Disposition, without Reason, or duly understanding or considering what we are about to do or would do ; yet it is very wrong to talk or conceive thus of the All-perfect Being, who has not, nor can have, any Disposition at all like human Benevolence ; but is determin'd in all his Agency by a perfect Intelligence of the Right and Reason of every Case. This Perception is that alone which excites in God [if I may so say] every Disposition to act and determine the Manner of his Agency ; therefore must be conceiv'd as precedent. God, as being omniscient or intelligent in the most perfect Manner, cannot but in all actual and possible Existences and Relations of Things and Persons to one another, perceive by a true and infallible Connection of Ideas, the Reason and Fitness of every actual or possible Case and Relation with its contrary. This is the abstract Reason and absolute Fitness of Things which you say, you do not understand the Meaning of, and which in Reality are
those

Answer to the Eleventh Letter. 31

those eternal Truths which are the Objects of the Divine Mind, and in the Perception of which the Perfection of God's Knowledge properly consists, and which are the Ground and Rule of God's Agency : and his invariably acting agreeably to them, is acting according to the absolute Reason and Fitness of Things, *i. e.* indeed the Reason or Knowledge of the Divine Mind it self. This I thought had been well understood, and is, I presume, indisputable. The Connection of the Happiness of rational Beings with voluntary Virtue, of which it is the natural Consequenc, is one of those Connections of Ideas in the Divine Mind which constitutes the Fitness of it. Therefore God created rational Beings that they might be happy by Acts of Virtue, which he gave them Power to do or not ; and so acting contrary to Virtue is acting contrary to the real and natural Foundation of Happiness ; and is therefore, instead of Happiness, bringing Pain and Misery upon our selves, which is real Evil, not caus'd by God, but by our selves : And as every Degree of Virtue and Happiness consequent to it, is properly our own, as being the Effect of our own Agency, [though God gave us the Power of Agency which produced it] so every Degree of Vice and doing Wrong, and the Misery attending it, is also properly our own, as not being the Result of our natural Constitution, but of voluntary Motion or Agency, by which we produc'd that likewise. And if God has by his Allwise Providence so constituted the System
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32 Answer to the *Eleventh* Letter.

of rational Beings that Happiness shall have its natural Course and follow, and in the End be certainly and immutably connected with Virtue ; and Misery in like manner with Vice ; it is impossible to conceive a more wise, fit, and good System ; and surely it is better that Virtue, and the Happiness consequent to it, which is of the purest and noblest Kind, should finally prevail and subsist together in the whole rational Creation, than that we should not have the Power of Agency, and so not be capable of the Happiness of virtuous Actions ; or be capable only of an animal and sensitive Happiness, or at most a meerly speculative one, or the Happiness of Speculation, arising from the Perception of Truth infus'd into us ; or forc'd upon us ; but be incapable of that moral and truly Divine Happiness which is the Effect and Consequence of making a free and good Use of intellectual and moral Faculties.

3. To your saying *there can be no real Evil, Sin, Wrong or Misery with respect to the whole System of [rational] Beings*, I ask ; Whether there is or can be any real Evil, Sin, &c. in any Part of the System ? If there is, [as surely there is] and it be necessary and not the Effect of Agency, then one Instance of it in any Part of the Creation is as inconsistent with the Perfections and good Providence of God, as if it existed in every Part of the whole rational System, and all was Evil, Wrong, Sin, and Misery. For (be pleased to observe) if Sin, &c. could be necessary, and yet be consistent

Answer to the Eleventh Letter. 33

sistent with the Divine Perfections in any one Instance or Part of the System, it might and would be so in any others, and consequently in all Instances and every Part of the Creation ; and the Distinction of Good and Evil would entirely cease : this I take to be clear and undeniable. But if on the contrary in no Instance real Evil or Sin be *necessary*, but always the Effect of *voluntary* Agency, then the Evil and Misery introduc'd into the System by it, is not God's acting, but our own ; and it is consistent with his Perfections, as the Governor of the Universe, to suffer this Evil more or less in more or less perfect Systems of intelligent Beings, because it may be destroy'd, *i. e.* reform'd by the Agents themselves ; and the Misery attending it is only the natural and fit Consequence of it ; which if it was necessary, would be neither fit or natural. And if Happiness [let them who can, receive what I say] will in the End be by God's Providence universally the Consequence of Virtue and free Goodness, as Misery ought and certainly will be the Consequence of Vice and Evil-doing, till it is reform'd by the Agent ; This takes off all Imputations which can be cast on the Justice and Goodness of the Providence of God, who fully and most equitably considers the various Circumstances and Capacities of his Creatures of the same kind ; and also the various and different Degrees of Perfection and Imperfection of different kinds of Beings through the whole Creation, and does and will take care for and provide the Means of their

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34 Answer to the *Eleventh* Letter.

final Happiness accordingly. As you see the Beauty and Fitness of a Subordination of Creatures endued with various and different Degrees of Perfections ; so I wonder you do not see that all the Facts or visible Effects of their Behaviour as Good and Evil, Happiness and Misery, are more agreeable to a good and wise Providence on the Supposition of voluntary Agency than of a necessary Constitution ; which latter destroys the very Nature of Virtue and Vice, Good and Evil, and (as you seem sensible) takes away the Foundation of Rewards and Punishments.

Lastly, If I have shewn your Notion of Necessity to be inconsistent with the Goodness and other Perfections of God, from which yet you infer it ; as also to be attended with insuperable Difficulties and many absurd Consequences, you must own that it is sufficiently confuted. You own you cannot prove from Facts that there is no real Evil with respect to the whole System, though you constantly suppose and maintain it : and I think I have proved that Vice or Sin is in it self real Evil naturally attended with Misery, and therefore must be so with respect to the Whole, as much as to any Part, and as much as Virtue is good in it self and with respect to the Whole, as being naturally attended with Happiness ; and in the same Manner as every Truth and Falsehood which is so in it self is such with respect to the whole intellectual System. The Reason is plain ; because Vice and Sin are always equally evil, and naturally attended with
Misery

Answer to the Eleventh Letter. 35

Misery in one individual Agent as in another, and so must be Evil, and naturally attended with and producing Misery in respect to all. So that your defying any Man to prove this seems to me a very weak Defiance, which no one that is capable of considering the Matter need be afraid of.

However after all; as I am satisfied you have no other View in what you have written, but to assert and vindicate the Goodness and other Perfections of God in his moral Government of the World according to your own Conceptions of them, so I am far from thinking the worse of you for any Difference of Opinion there is between us. If the Arguments for my Opinion which I have freely proposed to you, are (as I think they are) good and conclusive, I doubt not but whenever you are satisfied that they are so, you will ingenuously, and as a Lover of Truth, acquiesce in them, as I always think my self obliged to do with respect to any Reasonings brought against any Opinions of mine. As Submission to Truth, perceiv'd by the Acknowledgment of it is in all Cases the Duty of every rational Being, so an habitual Uniformity of Action agreeable to the Rule of it, whether natural or revealed, is the Perfection and greatest Happiness which we or any rational Beings are capable of.

I am,

Your sincere affectionate Friend

and Servant.

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LET-

L E T T E R XII.

Reverend S I R,

I Am favour'd with Your's of *August* the 6th, and am glad to find us perfectly agreed in drawing the most important and desirable Conclusion, that can possibly be infer'd from any Principles of Reasoning, from our seemingly opposite ones, *viz. The final Happiness of the whole Creation.* This is what I have always contended for, to be the *End* of all God's Actions. But I am surprized that you say this most benevolent Design, of final universal Happiness is brought about by God without any *Desire* or Disposition to do it. Your Words are, *The All-perfect Being has not or can have any Disposition at all like Human Benevolence.* You may go on as you will, and say that He hath not or can have any Reason, Intelligence, &c. like human Reason and Intelligence, &c. and thus make Him *we know not what.* But you add that the *Perception of the Right and Reason of every Case, excites in God every Disposition to act.* Can any Thing, pray Sir, (whatever you mean by the *Right* and *Reason* of the Case) excite in God any Disposition which He never had before the Perception of the Right and Reason of this or that Case? and how does it effect this strange and mighty Work on the *All-perfect Being*? You will not, sure, defend such evidently great
 I Absur-

Absurdities. But to bring this Matter to a point, I presume again to ask you, Hath the Deity a natural Desire of and Pleasure in our Happiness or not? If He hath not, what is the Cause of his communicating Happiness to us? And if He hath no Disposition to communicate Happiness to us, and a Pleasure in so doing, how can He be called *Good*? and how could we *love* a Being that hath *no Love* for us? or where is the *Foundation* for *Religion* upon your Supposition? But if the Deity hath a Desire of and a Pleasure in our Happiness, this is what we call *Divine Benevolence* or Goodness; and ours is *like unto His* perfect Benevolence, though it bears no Proportion to it. This, I think, all plain Men of common Sense agree in; but some Philosophers have *abstracted* their Reasoning about God, and Goodness or Virtue, beyond all *Conception*.

The Exercise of Benevolence, Kindness or Goodness, is the *Happiness* both of God and his Creatures. God is perfectly, naturally and necessarily good: this is the *Cause* of his willing or chusing the fittest Means which his perfect Reason points out to make his Creatures *happy*, and his infinite Power executes them; and this *End*, I have argued again and again it was, is, and will be *impossible* for any of his Creatures to *frustrate*, and this you do not dispute. And I have as often shew'd, that as God's naturally good Disposition *necessarily determines* Him to will or chuse the *fittest* means to accomplish his Designs, so our natural Desire of Good or Happiness *necessarily determines*

mines us to will or chuse the *apparently fit* Means to attain our Ends ; and farther, that all which are call'd our *Vices*, which are always in exact Proportion to our *Degrees* of natural *Imperfection*, whereof God made us, are but *unavoidable Mistakes* or Short-comings of our *greatest Happiness* that we are ever advancing towards ; And that the *Pains* of Self-Condernation, Remorse, Shame, &c. naturally attending such Short-comings, are *necessary Impulses* to determine our Wills to the Pursuit of greater and greater *Happiness*, in the true Road to it, *Virtue*, or the Exercise of kind Affections, which carries its own *Reward* with it. Why then, I pray Sir, do you argue as if I maintain'd *Virtue* not to be *voluntary*, though I say that our natural Disposition *determines* us to *will* or *chuse* it ? And where is the need for asking me, *Whether there is or can be any real Evil or Sin in any Part of the System* ; when I have all along argued that there is or can be *none* ? All Vices, [which you call *real Evils*] being only *Degrees* of *Imperfection inseparable* from Creatures by God himself ; for a perfect Creature is an *Impossibility* and a *Contradiction*. Men ought to be *pitied*, not *punish'd* for their Vices or Imperfections ; but should be punished to determine or *incline* their *Wills* to *Virtue*, which would be a *Kindness* done them. Thus God deals with his Creatures, and makes the Punishments of Society too, which are founded on Self-defence, answer the same *good End* ; which is contrary to the Notion of *positive* Punishments ; and thus

Vice

The Twelfth Letter. 39

Vice and its consequent Pains produces *Good* in the vicious Being *it self*, and furnisheth Occasions for the Exercise of the Virtues of *others*, as far as we *can see* ; and must of Necessity do so *through the whole* System, if God's Government *extends through all*, as you will not dispute it doth. But on the other side, how can any Man prove that any the least Thing is *Evil* with respect to the *Whole*, when we are extreamly far from seeing *all the Relations* of the *minute* Part to the *Whole* ?

For a general Conclusion to my Part of our Correspondence [which I think will be no less agreeable to the Readers of what is, or may be, publish'd of it, as there is no Mixture of Passion, low Wit and Raillery in it on either Side] if any Person shall yet dispute that the Deity hath not a *natural benevolent* or good Disposition, of which ours is the imperfect *Likeness*, that necessarily determines Him to will and act as he doth, I will not dispute it farther with him, no more than I would contend with one who should affirm that *Nothing*, is a *possible Idea*, or that there is not a *necessarily existent*, all-perfect Being, whose Works *are*, and *ever* will be *advancing* towards infinite Perfection and Happiness. And I doubt not that every Man, who *perceives* that the *Natural Constitution* of Things is such, that he must necessarily suffer *Pain* in consequence of his Vices or Imperfections, not as a *Punishment*, but as a Spur, or *necessary Impulse* to determine or *incline* him to work out *his own* Happiness, which is necessarily connected
with

40 *The Twelfth Letter.*

with the Good of *others*, will heartily *rejoice* in such a *necessarily perfect Constitution of Things*, which never was or possibly can be *altered* for the *worse*, as a self-existent, necessarily perfect Being *made* and *directs* the Whole.

I am, Reverend Sir,

Your truly affectionate Friend

and humble Servant.

August 18. 1737.

ANSWER

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ANSWER to LETTER XII.

SIR,

Sept. 3, 1737.

IN your Letter dated the 18th of *August*, you charge me with saying in my last Letter, *That the most benevolent Design of final universal Happiness is brought about by God without any Desire or Disposition to do it.* This, Sir, is a very wrong Charge, and which you cannot, with any Reason, infer from my Words, viz. *The all-perfect Being has not nor can have any Disposition at all like human Benevolence.* What Sort of Logic is it by which you infer from these Words my saying, that God has *no Disposition* to bring about the final universal Happiness of his rational Creatures? all you could rightly infer was, That God did not promote this Happiness by a *Disposition like to human Benevolence*; from which, I observ'd to you, our Actions oftentimes proceeded *without Reason, or duly considering what we are about to do or would do*: and from which evident Imperfection of humane Benevolence [which is but a general Disposition and Motive of Action and doing Good, sometimes with Reason, and sometimes without Reason, and sometimes against Reason] I argued, that *it was very wrong to talk or to conceive thus of the all-perfect Being, who has not nor can have any Disposition like human Benevolence; but is determin'd in all his Agency by a perfect Intelligence*

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42 Answer to the Twelfth Letter.

gence of the Right and Reason of every Case. This Perception (I added) is that alone which excites in God (if I may so say) every Disposition to act, and determines the Manner of his Agency. This shews the Difference betwixt God's Disposition to do that which is right and good, and Men's acting for that End from the Principle of Benevolence.

God's benevolent Disposition is founded in and excited (if I may so say) by his precedent perfect Intelligence and Perception of what is *right, fit and good* in every Case : but human Benevolence is a mere natural Instinct and Motive of Action in order to promote the Happiness and Good of others, plac'd in us as a Check and Counter-balance to our selfish Interests and Passions, and is so far good. But in it self it is not Virtue, and is of an indifferent Nature, and frequently demonstrates its own Imperfection, by exciting us to act from partial Affection, without Reason, or duly understanding and considering the Case, and not seldom against Reason ; and thereby doing more Harm than Good in many Cases. This Benevolence also where Reason is not duly join'd with it, often raises in us *vain and weak* Desires to do we know not what or how to do, or even what we ought not to do ; and has much Uneasiness on these Accounts attending it : but God can properly have no *Desire*, having always Power to effect and produce whatever in his all-perfect Knowledge he sees to be good or right or fit to be done. Hence it appears that your Charge is ungrounded and

Answer to the *Twelfth* Letter. 43

unreasonable, and owing to your not attending to the full and large Reasoning which I offer'd to convince you of the great Absurdity of your supposing *Dispositions*, &c. in God *precedent* in Conception to the Divine *Intelligence* ; which I shew'd you was making them a blind and irrational Principle : and to which large Reasoning you think fit to say nothing, whence I conclude that it is not to be confuted. In short, that Benevolence which is truly commendable in us, and in its Effects like to the Divine Benevolence, is that alone which excites us to Action with the Perception and Consideration of the *Reason* of every Case, or which is consequent to that Perception, &c. but what is frequently so call'd is but a partial and weak Affection which may and often does misguide our Actions, and, instead of Happiness, causeth Pain and Misery to us. Do not think that I hereby depreciate human Benevolence ; it is what it is, an imperfect but an amiable Disposition exciting us to deny ourselves, and the Gratification of selfish Passions and Interests, out of Regard to the Good or Happiness of others, oftimes even almost without thinking what we do. But the Divine Benevolence is of another kind, and is an absolute Perfection founded in, and flowing from the perfect Intelligence or Reason of the Divine Mind, without any partial Affection mix'd with it, and without a Possibility of Disposition to act without the Perception of the Right and Reason of every Case, or of

G 2 acting

44 Answer to the Twelfth Letter.

acting otherwise than in a Manner agreeable to it.

All that follows in your Letter on this Head of Argument might have been spar'd had you attended to my saying; *The Connection of Happiness of rational Beings with voluntary Virtue, of which it is the natural Consequence, is one of those Connections of Ideas in the Divine Mind which constitutes the Fitness of it: and therefore (N. B.) God created rational Beings that they might be happy by Acts of Virtue, which he gave them Power to perform.* Thus you see (what you ask me about) *the Cause or Reason of God's Benevolence, and his communicating Happiness to us.*

To talk of *Virtue* being *voluntary*, and yet the natural Effect of *necessary Impulses*, is talking contrary to the plain Sense of Words and Reason of Things; and you may as well say that *Virtue* is *necessary*, and yet affirm that it is *voluntary*; or that we *will* and *act* (as you say God does, in the latter Part of your tenth Letter) *necessarily* and *voluntarily*, i. e. that we *will* and *act*, and yet neither *will* or *act* at the same time: and also to say, that all our *Vices* are but *unavoidable Mistakes*, and *Virtue* the contrary, or *unavoidably* doing right, is making both equally indifferent in themselves, neither the one or the other really good or evil; and is also making the Consequences of *Self-condemnation*, *Remorse* and *Shame*, naturally attending the one, and the Happiness of *Self-approbation* and *Complacency* naturally attending the other to be absurd, and no more reason-

Answer to the Twelfth Letter. 45

reasonable than to suppose *Self-Condernnation*, &c. naturally to attend an ill-proportion'd or a weak and diseas'd Constitution of Body, which we brought with us into the World ; and *Self-approbation* naturally to attend an healthful Constitution or well-proportion'd Body ; and is withal confounding the Distinction between *natural* and *moral* Good and Evil, and making it merely *nominal*.

I have before treated so largely on these Heads in Hope of convincing you of the evident Absurdity (as it appears to me) of your Notion of *Morality* both human and divine, and of God's moral Government of the World, that it were needless to add any more to what hath been already said : and as I can see no Reason in your Assertions advanc'd contrary to what I have argued again and again in support of my own Notions, and which you repeat over and over without replying to, or seeming to attend to my Arguments ; so it were to lose both our own and the Reader's Time to debate Matters any longer, in which we are not likely to come to an Agreement : though yet I cannot but be well pleas'd that we agree in any important Conclusion, howsoever we disagree in the Methods of coming at it.

I am

Your sincere affectionate Friend

and Servant.

Post-

Postscript (to the Twelfth Letter.)

The ending of your last Letter puts me in mind of Mr. Woolaston's Explication of Virtue by *Significancy of Truth in Actions*, or *in acting according to Truth*: which, in my humble Opinion, is the sandiest Foundation that ever Virtue was built upon. For there are as many *Truths* concerning *Vice* as *Virtue*; which would make the Obligation to pursue the one as great as the Obligation to pursue the other, if the Obligation lay there. For example, *Robbery disturbs Society, discourages Industry*. These are *Truths* concerning *Vice*; ought we to act according to them? But this Observation I make by the Bye. It is an Honour to yield to the Force of a good Argument, when it is perceiv'd; and we cannot avoid doing so in our own Minds; it would be Disingenuity then not to own it. And if I was one of those who are ashamed to own Conviction from any Hand else, I would not be ashamed to own it from so great a Master of Reason as Mr. Jackson.

I am Your's most kindly.

LET-

L E T T E R XIII.

Reverend S I R,

I AM favour'd with Your's of the 5th of *September*, in Answer to mine of *August* the 18th, which, if it hath in the least displeas'd you, I am sorry for; and therefore beg Pardon for trespassing once more on your Time, to shew you, that if I have mistaken you in any Thing, or charg'd you wrong, it was undesignedly: or rather what you call a *wrongful Charge*, and your Reasoning thereupon are founded on our different Notions of *Benevolence*. You find Fault with my Inference from your saying that *the all-perfect Being has not nor can have any Disposition at all like human Benevolence*, viz. *that God hath no Disposition to bring about the final universal Happiness of his Creatures*; and you say, *the right Inference should be, that God did not promote this Happiness by a Disposition like to human Benevolence*. This to me appears to be the same with mine, which I think you will own, when you consider that I have always in these Papers taken a Disposition to *communicate Happiness* to others, and a *benevolent Disposition*, to be one and the same Thing, whether in God or in Man: so that a Being who hath no Benevolence, I must say, hath no Disposition to communicate Happiness; and I think that
the

48. *The Thirteenth Letter.*

the common use of these Terms, as equivalent ones, justifies me in so doing.

Though I have argued that our Benevolence and our Reason are like to God's Benevolence and God's Reason, yet you need not debate with me that our Benevolence and our Reason are infinitely short in point of Perfection to God's Benevolence and Reason: for I believe and have given my Reasons for it, that God is naturally, necessarily or essentially *benevolent* and *good*, *wise* and *powerful*, i. e. absolutely perfect; and that we on the other part are naturally, necessarily or essentially imperfect, though we are always advancing towards Perfection, the least Degree of which is *Good*, not *real Evil*. And I see no Absurdity in saying, That Benevolence, Kindness, Virtue or Goodness, (by which I mean the same Thing) is *necessary*, and at the same time *voluntary* both in God and Man; or that the natural Dispositions of all rational Beings, supreme as well as subordinate, *necessarily* determine them to *will* or *choose* Virtue and Happiness: for *Will* is not oppos'd to *Necessity*, but to *Coaction* or *Force*, which cannot operate upon the Will. And farther, if God hath no natural benevolent or good Disposition, or a Disposition to communicate Happiness to other Beings, I do not at all see that his Perception of the Means of communicating Happiness to them could excite such a Disposition in him more than his Perception of the Means of making them miserable (which no doubt God knows also) could

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could excite a malevolent Disposition in him : so that *final* Misery or *final* Happiness may equally be infer'd from such Principles. Here lies the Stress of the Debate, and the main Difference between us ; but I shall trouble you no farther, after assuring you that I am with the sincerest Gratitude and Affection to you for bearing with my Weakness and Incapacity of Conviction so long,

Reverend Sir,

Your most obedient humble Servant.

H

ANSWER

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ANSWER to LETTER XIII.

SIR,

O^r. 3. 1737.

I Receiv'd the Favour of Your's of the 16th of *September*. You need not be apprehensive of my being displeas'd with your drawing an Inference (which I thought wrong) from what I had said concerning the Divine Benevolence. I am not apt to be out of humour in Controversy, because I am sensible that the most honest and judicious Men cannot but differ one from another more or less, by apprehending Things differently : and therefore nothing makes me angry but an unreasonable, uncharitable and dishonest Writer, who by false and unfair Reasoning aims at supporting irreligious Bigotry more than promoting Truth.

You endeavour to maintain your Inference by telling me, *You have always taken a Disposition to communicate Happiness to others, and a benevolent Disposition, to be one and the same Thing, whether in God or in Man : So that a Being who hath no Benevolence, you must say, hath no Disposition to communicate Happiness.* This will not in the least justify your Inference, because we have no Dispute whether God is *benevolent* or not. You know I allow the most perfectly benevolent Disposition to be in God, founded in his most perfect Reason ;
and

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and so, that his Disposition to communicate Happiness to all his intelligent and rational Creatures is certain and immutable, as being founded in the eternal unalterable *Reason* of his omniscient Mind : and a Benevolence which is not founded in Reason, or attended with it, is mere Instinct and Imperfection. Therefore, if you would still maintain your Inference from your own Principles, you must maintain that there cannot be in God any Benevolence or Disposition to communicate Happiness unto his Creatures, unless it be a Benevolence or Disposition like to *human* Benevolence, which is the Benevolence which I said ought not to be ascrib'd to God, because it is an imperfect tho' kind Instinct and Motive of doing Good, oftentimes without *Reason*, and sometimes *against Reason* ; which shews the Difference between *human* and *Divine* Benevolence. But this is not the Case with human *Reason* ; that indeed is *like* to the *Reason* of the Divine Mind, both consisting in the Perception of true or real Connections of Ideas.

But in Reply to my Notion of the Divine Benevolence you say ; *If God hath no natural benevolent or good Disposition, or a Disposition to communicate Happiness to other Beings, I do not at all see that his Perception of the Means of communicating Happiness to them could excite such a Disposition in him, more than his Perception of the Means of making others miserable (which no doubt God knows also) could excite a malevolent Disposition in him : so that final Misery or final Happiness may equally be infer'd from*

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such Principles. Here lies the Stress of the Debate, and the main Difference between us.

To this I answer ; I must insist upon it as being demonstratively evident, that a benevolent Disposition, precedent in Conception to *Intelligence*, is an impossible *Fiction* ; and if not suppos'd to be always uniformly concomitant with Reason, is a *Weakness* and *Imperfection*. Therefore God's Benevolence or Disposition to communicate Happiness is and cannot but be founded in, and flow from the eternal perfect Intelligence or Reason of the Divine Mind necessarily perceiving what is *right*, and *fit* and *good*, and also what is *wrong*, *unfit* and *evil*, in every possible or actual Existence. This natural and necessary Perception of God makes his Benevolence or Disposition to communicate Happiness natural and immutable ; and it would be unnatural and absurd [because the Connection of Ideas is unnatural and self-destructive] to suppose an independent Being endued with perfect Reason to have a malevolent Disposition, or a Disposition to make his own Creatures miserable without any Fault or Demerit of theirs. Try to connect the Ideas of *Innocence* or *Virtue* and *final Misery*, and you will see the Absurdity of the Connection, and of the Supposition of a perfect Agent's connecting them in Fact. Therefore the Perception of the Means with the Power of communicating final Happiness to *capable*, that is, to *innocent* or *virtuous* Objects, must, from the Nature of the Things, excite in an independent perfect Being Benevolence,
or

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or a Disposition to communicate it : but Perception also of the Means with the Power of making the same Objects finally miserable, cannot possibly dispose such a Being to make them miserable, any more than it can dispose him to act unreasonably. So that final Happiness and final Misery cannot be infer'd from the same Principles ; they cannot be infer'd without a plain Contradiction or Absurdity. And therefore if the *Stress of the Debate, and the main Difference between us lies here*, I shall hope it cannot long continue.

In Answer to the Postscript of your twelfth Letter, you quite mistake Mr. Woolaston's Notion of *Virtue*, as founded in acting agreeably to *Truth*, when you say, *There are as many Truths concerning Vice as Virtue, which would make the Obligation to pursue the one as great as the Obligation to pursue the other, if the Obligation lay there* : and you instance, *that Robbery disturbs Society, and discourages Industry, are Truths concerning Vice ; ought we* (you add) *to act according to them* ? Your Error lies in making no Distinction between forming a true *Proposition* concerning Vice, (which no doubt may be done) and shewing that Vice is *acting* as agreeably to Truth as Virtue is. Take your own Instance then ; it is a *Truth* that *Society ought not to be disturb'd, nor Industry discourag'd* : Is *Robbery* now, or is living *honestly* and doing *justly*, an acting most agreeably to these Truths ? or is not Robbery acting according to these *Falsehoods*, viz. *that Society ought to be disturb'd, and Industry discourag'd* ?

But

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But you say, *Robbery disturbs Society, this is a Truth concerning Vice*; and you ask, *Ought we to act according to it?* I answer, Yes certainly: not indeed commit *Robbery*, but act as if it was a *Truth*, or as knowing it to be a *Truth*, that *Robbery disturbs Society*; and therefore not to rob, but to live honestly and do Justice. Such acting only is acting agreeably to the Supposition of its being a *Truth*, that *Robbery disturbs Society*; but Robbery is acting, as supposing it a *Truth*, that Robbery does not disturb Society, or that Society ought to be disturb'd, and so is *acting a Falsehood*, or agreeably to *Falsehood*. This is what Mr. *Woolaston* means, and is the Ground of his excellent Book.

I am, Sir, with sincere Affection,

Your Friend and humble Servant.

F I N I S.

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