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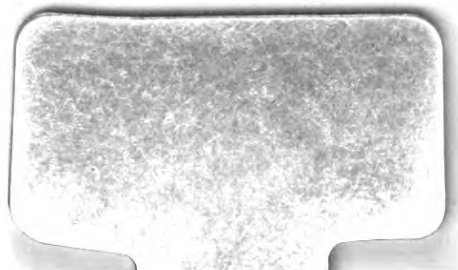
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LECTURES
ON
BUTLER'S ANALOGY OF RELIGION.



LECTURES
ON
BUTLER'S ANALOGY OF RELIGION,
TO THE
CONSTITUTION AND COURSE OF NATURE.

DELIVERED BEFORE THE MEMBERS OF THE
DUBLIN YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION
IN CONNECTION WITH THE
UNITED CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND IRELAND

BY THE
RIGHT HON. JOSEPH NAPIER, LL.D.,

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P R E F A C E .

THE Lectures contained in the following pages, were originally prepared for the use of the members of the Class before whom they were delivered. It was afterwards suggested to me that the publication of them might be attended with advantage to others, and in the hope of helping forward the profitable study of Butler's admirable treatise, they are now offered to the public. They have been printed from the manuscripts which I composed and wrote from week to week, for each successive Lecture. The main object has been to direct attention to the exact import of the text of Butler, and to make the illustrious Author his own principal commentator. The importance of this, was impressed upon me some time ago by Professor Webb, whose masterly knowledge of Butler, enabled him to give me many instructive suggestions for the better understanding of the scope and the text of "The Analogy." I am also greatly indebted to Mr. Mahaffy of Trinity College for the valuable help which he has given me, enhanced much by the spirit in which it was given.

In the notes of the Bishop of Killaloe, the Lectures of Dr.

Chalmers, and the Sermons of the Bishop of Ossory, I found materials of which I have made occasional use, and I may add, that I found the excellent and lucid Analysis of Mr. Wilkinson, published by Parker, to be a very useful auxiliary. There is also a modern work, well deserving the attention of the student of Butler—Gabell on the Accordance of Religion with Nature; it was kindly sent to me by the author during the delivery of the course, and I have made some extracts from it.

Since the last of these Lectures was delivered, I have seen an instructive example of the way in which Butler is occasionally dealt with. In a very recent and ingenious publication of Professor Goldwin Smith, in reply to Mr. Mansel of Oxford, with reference to the Bampton Lectures of 1858—the learned writer refers to a passage in Mr. Mansel's preface in which he assures Oxford "that religious philosophy will flourish or fade within her walls, according as she perseveres or neglects to study the works and cultivate the spirit of her great son and teacher, Bishop Butler." Professor Smith, amongst other comments on this, says—(the italics are mine)—"they counsel her ill, even for her safety, who bid her bind herself to the stake of a philosophy now *half obsolete* in the middle of a rising tide." (pp. 77, 78). Afterwards (pp. 109, 110,) we find this—"But in the case of Religion, *probable evidence* will not suffice. Religion is not a speculation which we may be content to hold, subject to a certain chance of error, nor is it a *practical interest of the kind which Butler has in his mind, when he tells us that we must act on this, as in*

other cases, on probability. It is a *spiritual* affection which nothing less than the assured presence of its object can excite. . . . We may be ready to stake, and do constantly stake, our worldly interests, as Butler truly observes, upon *probabilities*, when *certainty* is beyond our power. But our hearts would refuse their office, if we were to bid them adore and hold communion with a probable God."

If the object had been to shew that Religion, in its plenitude, appeals not only to our moral apprehension, but to our faith, and that the Holy Spirit witnesseth to the spirit in man, the deep things of God, I would unhesitatingly subscribe to the conclusion, though I might not adopt the language of the commentator. But how does he propose to secure to man the *certainty* which he suggests, that Butler has ignored? "The historical evidences," he says, "of religion are necessarily and inherently of less than adamantine strength. The *moral* evidences are adamantine. And, as was before intimated, there seems to be nothing contrary to reason in the supposition that man, as a *moral being*, may have been intended by his Maker to rest upon *moral*, not upon physical grounds." *Moral certainty* is, therefore, his own *ultima ratio*. Now the very first sentence in the introduction of Butler is, that "probable evidence is *essentially* distinguished from the demonstrative by this, that it admits of degrees; and of all variety of them, from the HIGHEST MORAL CERTAINTY, to the very lowest presumption." But in the extract which I have just given from Professor Smith, probability and probable evidence are used as merely expressive of some inferior degree of presump-

tion and are put in contrast with *certainty*, but not the *necessary demonstrative conclusiveness* with which Butler contrasts them; it is with the certainty which *moral* evidences can supply to a *moral* being—that is to say, with “*moral certainty*.” According to Butler, the *highest moral certainty* is expressly included in his description of probability; and in reference to the duties of man as a moral being, Religion requires him to act upon his *moral conviction*.

The degree of certainty required is itself a moral question, and even in its highest attainment it may not, I admit, go so far, as the spiritual affection which seeks the full assurance of faith, may demand and obtain. What I have noticed above, is for the purpose of shewing how very important it is, to attend to Butler’s cautious explanations, and to weigh his words, advisedly. If the definition with which he sets out—the explanation of “*probable evidence*,” had been simply substituted for the words themselves, the learned Professor might probably have reconsidered the epithet of “*half obsolete*,” which he has applied to the noble and standard treatise of the great and good Christian philosopher. How would the sentence have stood? “But in the case of Religion, probable evidence—*i. e.*, FROM THE HIGHEST MORAL CERTAINTY, to the very lowest presumption, will not suffice,” &c. It would have been a strange supplement to this, to have insisted, that the “*certainty required*” is that which *moral* evidences are adapted to bring home to man as a *moral* being!

That there is an intelligent Author of Nature, is assumed by Butler, as his only postulate; that He is the moral and

righteous governor of the world, he has shewn by moral evidence and argument. That the clearness and certainty of our moral convictions may in a great degree depend on moral causes within our own controul, he significantly suggests. That on these convictions we are appointed to act in life—that its discipline is preparatory and moral, and that doubt and difficulty may be a part, and an important part of this discipline; and that all this thoroughly harmonizes with the great central truths of Revelation which are revealed to our faith, the mediation and atonement of our Lord and Saviour, and the sanctifying energy and grace of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter—will, I trust, in some degree at least, be elucidated by these Lectures, in which I make no pretension whatsoever, to learning or philosophy, but have simply and humbly endeavoured, so far as God may have enabled me, to explain, enforce and defend, what I firmly believe to be “words of truth and soberness.”

4, MERRION SQUARE (SOUTH),

17th March, 1862.

LECTURES ON BUTLER'S ANALOGY.

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.

It is usual for those who, for the first time, visit the city of Rome, to ascend some central elevation, and look around on the principal objects of interest to which their attention will be drawn. The far-famed Seven Hills, the crumbling palace of the Cæsars, the majestic Colosseum, and the classic Forum, the triumphal arches of Titus and of Constantine, the graceful Pantheon, the Vatican, and St. Peter's—these will all be noticed—their relative position, and their combined effect. This is the prelude to a careful and repeated visit to each in succession—an inspection of all that can be found therein to delight or instruct, which is studiously examined in detail. From time to time points of view are discovered, from which the outstretched city, surrounded by the solitude of the Campagna, and permeated by the yellow Tiber, may be seen under different aspects, in the glow of the noon-day sun, and again as he sinks in the west, and sheds a softened splendour on monuments of Imperial and Papal magnificence. The varied view of the whole, the separate inspection of the prominent parts, will be followed up by a panoramic survey from the

lofty dome of St. Peter's—when, the mind aroused, the heart enlarged, and the spirit elevated, the expanded scene spreads itself on every side, in all the fulness of its acknowledged grandeur. In offering myself as a guide to such of you as desire to understand, and are resolved to study, the great work of Bishop Butler, “On the Analogy of Religion to the Constitution and Course of Nature,” I have been induced, in accordance with the illustration which I have used, to avail myself of this occasion, in order to lay before you, in the first instance, what I take to be the general plan and outline of the work, before we proceed to examine in detail the several component parts of the whole. We are here on a moral eminence. It is the Saturday evening. The business of the week has closed—the bustle of the world is shut out—the Sabbath draws on. The new year has just opened, hallowed by the remembrance of past mercies, and by the hope of future blessings. May our hearts be lifted up in thankfulness and prayer, humbly seeking that the Holy Spirit may be our guide and teacher, and may give to each of us a wise and understanding heart—the spirit of a sound mind! There is a brief but appropriate sketch of Bishop Butler in the number of your magazine which has just been published. It is desirable that you should read, in addition to this, the excellent memoir which is given in Bishop Fitzgerald's edition of the Analogy. It is well to know the character of the eminent author, and the circumstances under which his great work was prepared for publication. For logical completeness, candour in controversy, cautious moderation, moral thoughtfulness, practical wisdom, and love of truth, Bishop Butler has left in his memorable work ‘*Monumentum aere perennius.*’ The style is not popular, the reasoning is often subtle and profound, and cannot be adequately comprehended without a sustained attention and repeated study. With a view the

more effectually to answer objections, which had been put forward in his day in order to discredit religion, he meets his opponents on their own ground. He tells us that he argues on their own principles—that is to say, notwithstanding their principles; and he declined to avail himself of abstract principles, which he himself thought to be true and of the utmost importance, but which he does not make use of in the argument, because they are by others thought to be unintelligible or not true. He adds, that for the purpose of avoiding the use of language formed upon the principles so disputed, he has been obliged to express himself in a manner which will appear strange to such as do not observe the reason for it. The reason and the result are, therefore, to be carefully noted as we read the book. My desire is, to make the Bishop his own interpreter—to interest you in the diligent study of this volume, and assist you in patiently following the course of the argument until you feel that you have mastered it. You will find the value of this as an exercise of the mind, and the moral effect may, I trust, be found to be an adequate recompense for the labour that will thus be profitably employed. Some preliminary suggestions may here be given to the student of Butler. His words must have their exact and emphatic meaning given to them; and his own explanations, to be found in various parts of the work, are the proper glossary by which the meaning may be decisively fixed. It is, moreover, incumbent on the reader to make himself familiar with the treatise as a whole, before he concludes that there is in any part an error or omission. A word will be discovered which has a saving operation and properly qualifies the argument or the assertion. Sometimes a sentence will be found which supplies in a fit place the explanation or the statement which removes what otherwise might have been considered a difficulty or a defect elsewhere. Bishop Fitzgerald has given

the verbal alterations which the author made in the later editions, and these show with what scrupulous exactness and care the language was revised to the last. Every word seems to have been weighed, and its place cautiously chosen. The right word was put into the right place. The work itself, as has been observed, was carefully and closely worked up out of twenty years' hard thinking. Single words, limiting and saving clauses, studiously moderate statements, must be attended to by those who desire to apprehend and appreciate the exact point of the argument and the real purpose of the author. His great object was to repel and overthrow the current objections made to the credibility of religion. He seeks to lay a solid foundation for his argument, in the acknowledged dispensation and course of Providence in the routine of daily life—in matters of fact which are obvious—matters of common experience, and open to the observation of all. Thus descending to a level with his opponents, and arguing on common data which Atheists only could dispute or deny, he sets up the credibility of religion, and then completes his masterly argument by summing up the proper positive evidence by which religion is proved to be true. Let me call your attention to the title of the volume which you may hear of as "Butler's Analogy,"—sometimes it is given as "Butler's Analogy of Natural and Revealed Religion." This is likely to mislead. It is "The Analogy of Religion (natural and revealed) to the Constitution and Course of Nature." Religion, which is commonly divided into natural and revealed, is compared with that system of Providence which regulates our common daily life. Natural religion is the moral system of the world, discoverable by human reason; revealed religion is the dispensation of God to man, disclosed by Divine Revelation. The truths which religion teaches as to our present duties and our future destiny,—the position which man occu-

pies in the Divine economy as a moral, immortal, and accountable being—his relation to God—the privileges and obligations incident to this relation,—the scheme of religion, its publication, and the proof which God has given of its truth,—these were the materials of a controversy in which speculative difficulties and objections were put forward as sufficient to overthrow the whole system of religion, natural and revealed, as altogether incredible. Many years had elapsed since Lord Bacon had challenged as a folly, the contentious controversies of the schools of philosophy in their rival theories of physical science. He taught mankind a more excellent way, modestly and patiently to observe the operations and course of nature, and note the sequences in their appointed order. This was the province of man, as the minister and interpreter of nature. This was to be carried on with docility and submission, for, as he emphatically observes, “that it is no less true in this human kingdom of knowledge than in God’s kingdom of heaven, that no man shall enter into it except he become first as a little child.”—(3 Vol., 224, Spedd. ed.) “Therefore (as he says), from a closer and a purer league between these two faculties, the experimental and the rational, such as has never yet been made, much may be hoped.”—(95 Aph. 4 vol., 93). Much has since been realized. In this spirit of true philosophy, Bishop Butler has proposed to meet speculative objections by practical answers. He assumes as already established by the consideration of final causes, by the abounding evidence of the power and wisdom of the Creator which creation supplies, he takes it as admitted “that there is an intelligent Author of Nature.” This is all that he postulates. He suggests that, instead of indulging in mere hypothesis and speculation, which, on the subject of religion, must be altogether imperfect, as it is unbecoming for such a creature as man, we should 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. "Let us compare," he says, "the known constitution and course of things with what is 'said to be' the moral system of nature; the acknowledged dispensations of Providence with what religion 'teaches' us to believe and expect." This comparison brings out the analogy—the resemblance of relations. There is a likeness which we recognize; the things compared may be traced up to the same general laws, and resolved into the same principles of the Divine conduct. We find a unity of design, which is the source of analogy—a uniformity of operation, which is the source of experience. This unity of design is perceived in the many relations which the material and the moral worlds bear to each other. There is an analogy in the laws by which their phenomena are regulated and the methods of investigation peculiarly applicable to each. It must, then, be allowed to be just, as Butler observes, "to join abstract reasonings with the observation of facts, and argue from such facts as are known to others that are like them." This is almost the language of Lord Bacon; it is altogether in the spirit of the inductive philosophy. The introduction to the "Analogy" may be properly studied in connexion with the 8th chapter of the second part of the Treatise, in which he explains and defends the use which he has made of the argument from analogy. This mainly consists in refuting objections, in which it is irresistibly convincing. This is the negative use of it, and it makes way for the affirmative proofs and positive arguments by which religion is authoritatively established. When employed as a medium of proof, it may authorize a probable conjecture, inviting further examination, or it may materially confirm and

fortify an independent proof. We must, therefore, not be disappointed if we find in some parts of the Treatise that the argument from analogy, taken by itself, does not seem convincing. This only occurs when it is used as a medium of proof, for it will be found that wherever it is used for its genuine purpose—to repel and refute speculative objections—the masterly hand of Butler has laid prostrate the sophistry and the scepticism—which the enemies of our faith have called to their aid, in support of unbelief.

In matters which involve our relation to God, there is a divine and there is a human aspect in which they may be viewed. The former has reference to the character of God—the reasons and the design of the divine economy; the latter to our own obligations—our proper business in this present life—the connexion of our duties with our destiny. Religion, as Butler reminds us, 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 under His government.” The design of this treatise (he says) is not to vindicate the character of God, but to show the obligations of men; it is not to justify His providence, but to show what belongs to us to do. It is on this eminently practical view of religion,—the doing of God’s Word, the keeping diligently what He has commanded, the obedience of faith, which is the proof of love and the purpose of life,—on this depends the power of the argument from the analogy of religion to the constitution and course of nature. What is the course of nature in this respect? In the concerns of our daily life, to enable us to act with a due regard to our temporal interests, we do not ask for mathematical demonstration. 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, determine that course of action to be that

which we ought to pursue. This is what is called a practical proof; such a proof as will be admitted fully sufficient in reason to influence the actions of men who act upon thought and reflection. It is matter of experience that the evidence on which we are naturally induced to act in common matters throughout a very great part of life is doubtful in a high degree. This is a matter of fact. Whether, and how far, we ourselves contribute to this doubtfulness is a question which deserves our conscientious consideration. Sufficient evidence is afforded to enable us to act our part in life. We cannot have, we do not demand, overbearing evidence nor conclusive demonstration; but we look for that which will satisfy conscience and ought to determine conduct. Should we require another kind of evidence in religion? Is not the evidence on which we are appointed to act in the affairs of life adapted to our moral nature and sufficient for our moral judgment; and will not evidence of the like kind be sufficient to regulate conduct as the discipline of virtue? Without faith it is impossible to please God,—without believing that He is—that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. This is pre-supposed; this is to be tested and exercised. Evidence which may fail to satisfy speculative curiosity is sufficient and quite suitable for the discipline of Christian life. Probability (as Butler remarks) is the very guide of life. But observe what he means by probability, and how it is distinguished from demonstration. Demonstration admits of no degrees; its conclusion is not only certain but necessary. Probability, in the proper—not in the popular—sense, admits of every variety of degrees, from the highest moral certainty to the very lowest presumption. A matter is properly said to be probable when it is like some truth or true event—like it in itself, in its evidence, in some more or fewer of its circumstances; and this, by the constitution of our nature, is adapted to beget that presumption,

opinion, or full conviction, which it does necessarily produce in us. Analogy is thus found to be of weight in various degrees towards determining our judgment and our practice. Origen, the great teacher of Alexandria, whose proper name is said to mean the Son of Light, had 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. Butler quotes this with marked approval; and, in the spirit of it, he adds that he who denies the Scriptures to have been from God upon account of these difficulties may, for the very same reason, deny the world to have been formed by Him; and 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 the system of religion and the course of nature have both the same author and cause, at least so far as to answer objections against the former being from God, drawn from anything which is analogical or similar to what is in the latter, which is acknowledged to be from Him. Identity of authorship, according to Origen, leads us to expect identity of characteristics, and, on the other hand, identity of characteristics according to Butler, leads us to presume or apprehend identity of authorship. If the authorship of one volume be admitted,—of another be disputed or denied, on the ground of opinions or expressions contained in it, which are said to be decisive against the alleged authorship,—and if the like opinions and expressions be found in the volume of which the authorship stands confessed, the objection to the identity is refuted,—nay more, the presumption that they are from the same author is fortified and every proof confirmed. Butler

has taken up the two great volumes of Nature and of Revelation. The authorship of the former is admitted. The style of the Divine authorship is traced throughout both; like principles, like procedure, like anomalies and difficulties to be solved in each, like purposes to be answered by these in the discipline of life. The perplexity of life itself, as disclosed in the book of Nature, disappears when we find in the book of Revelation that it is an institution for eternity, and the speculative objections which tempt men to doubt or deny the truths and facts of revelation also disappear when we turn to our experience of the course of nature, to the facts of common life. These are subject to the same *à priori* difficulties, but we do not allow ourselves to be reasoned out of what we feel, and see, and know. We rely on our consciousness and our common sense; the speculative difficulties, whatever be their abstract or intrinsic value, cannot here prevail. If they be false, we must reject them as unfounded; if they be true, we must equally reject them as inapplicable. Our nature and condition compel us to treat such objections as if they were false, when we have to act in our daily life. This is the groundwork of the argument from analogy.

The treatise is divided into two parts. In the first part, three leading points are dealt with—first, a future life, in which happiness and misery will be apportioned as reward and punishment, and this apportionment will be regulated according to a moral rule of distributive justice. So far man is shown to be an immortal, moral, and accountable being. The first chapter deals with the fact of a future life, and the analogies by which it is rendered probable and credible. The second chapter shows that we are under the natural government of God; that pleasure and pain as reward and punishment follow upon our actions, and that we are enabled to foresee that such will be the consequences of these actions. The third chapter carries forward the argument, and shows

that we are under the moral government of God, as the righteous governor of the world. This naturally leads to the consideration of the second of the three leading points, namely—the present life, as a preparatory stage of existence. It is found to be a state of probation, and therefore attended with difficulties and dangers in the temptations by which we are tried and proved. This is the subject of the fourth chapter. It is a state for moral discipline in virtue and piety, in forming habits of active benevolence and passive resignation, and also for the manifestation of character. This is the subject of the fifth chapter. The third leading point is the consideration of the argument against the moral government of God as a fact, and the proof of this fact,—an argument based on the doctrine of necessity; and also, the objection that this moral government is not reconcilable with wisdom and goodness. In the sixth chapter the argument of necessity is thoroughly exposed and completely answered. In the seventh the second objection is overthrown. There is then a short concluding chapter, summing up the whole argument as it has been applied to natural religion. The leading proposition in the first part, that there is a moral governor of the world, and that virtue is His law, is established in two ways—by external and by internal evidence. The former is found in the profession which has been made in all ages and countries; in the reception of this truth in the first ages; in traditional evidence that it was taught by a revelation. Thus we have general consent, antiquity, and evidence of a revelation to establish the truth of God's righteous government. The internal evidence is found in the reason of the thing; in the principles of moral liberty and moral fitness; in the presages of conscience and the moral faculty, and in the distinct natural intimations which are given to us in the constitution and course of nature, and pointed out and reasoned upon in the

third chapter. In the second part the author deals with revealed religion. He first considers the general objections against it, then the special objections against it, and then considers the positive evidence in support of its truth; these he sums up, and clears from objections. The general objections are two-fold: first, that before any system of Revelation is proposed, it must be superfluous, because unnecessary; and next, that it must be incredible, and could not be proved by miraculous attestation. The first of these objections is fully met in the first chapter, and in the second chapter the other objection is disposed of. There is then the further objection against a proposed system of Revelation, either as a system, or a wise and good scheme. The third chapter disposes of the one; the fourth of the other. The special objections which are made are answered by special analogies. There is first the objection founded on the alleged intricacy of means; next on the idea of mediation; and thirdly, on the want of universality. The appointment of a Mediator and Redeemer is nobly vindicated in the fifth chapter, which cannot fail to edify the faithful student. Objections to this great fundamental truth of Christianity having been scattered and routed, and the other objections to the system of Revelation having been repelled and cleared away, the positive evidence is brought forward with advantage. The direct proofs furnished by miracles and prophecy—the indirect, many and various, by which Revelation and the religion which it teaches have been divinely accredited,—are then presented with cumulative force and effect. Light is thus sown for the righteous—for those who, in an honest and good heart, keep the Divine Word which they have heard, and bring forth fruit with patience. I have thus given you a cursory sketch of this admirable treatise—the general scope and outline of it—the nature of the argument from analogy, and the general

principles on which Butler has brought it to bear upon the great practical subject of religion. We must go through it with patience—may I add, with prayer? We must take it chapter by chapter, dig deep in the mine for the rich ore which diligent search alone can secure. Criticism has censured Butler as having dealt rather with the credentials than with the contents of Christianity, but I cannot think the censure has been deserved. The avowed object of the work is to relieve religion from objections which were levelled at its credibility; and surely this has been accomplished to the full, so as to leave without excuse all who neglect so great salvation as God has offered to man. But, in addition to this, the clear and comprehensive summary of the leading facts and guiding truths of revelation, the uncompromising advocacy of the great doctrine of the Atonement, the solemn earnestness with which we are reminded of the relation in which we stand to God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, as well as to God the Father, and also reminded of the responsible duties which flow out of these relations,—all these satisfy me that he did not shun to declare the whole counsel of God, so far as the plan of his treatise and the course of the argument would fairly admit. He has chosen the method of St. Paul as his model—to begin on common ground, on a level with those whom he sought to convince. The first part, as an argument against objectors, may be taken as complete for the mere purpose of controversial triumph; but when we use it for Christian instruction, we must treat it as an integral part of the whole, receiving and reflecting the light which radiates from the second part. When we hear of a reward for the righteous, sounding from the harp of David—‘the great reward in the keeping of the commandments,’—we interpret the reward as of grace, not of debt; we read the inspired intimation in the light of the glorious Gospel of the Redeemer.

When we turn to the instructive chapter of the Analogy, on the moral discipline of life, the formation of character by habits and conduct, the connexion of our destiny with our duty,—we should place it in connection with the great chapter on the Atonement. May we not then be led to appreciate more fully the force and truthful power of the words of our blessed Lord, that whosoever cometh to Him, and heareth His sayings, and doeth them, he it is who builds upon a rock—his foundation is secure? We thus see how the believer, trusting in Christ, taught by the Holy Spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God, by the discipline of life adapted for its moral purposes, may go on from strength to strength; conduct forming habits, habits fixing character, and character capacitating for the joy of heaven. And thus the analysis of our moral nature and the moral system of God, and the light thrown upon both by Revelation, make clear and consistent what otherwise we could not reconcile—salvation and reward; the one not of works, the other according to works. The righteous judge who freely gives the one, Himself awards the other, in both remembering mercy. Let me then commend this work to your earnest, patient, and prayerful study. It is adapted, under God's blessing, to invigorate your minds and elevate your hearts. Difficulties, whether of belief or of practice, are part of our trials here on earth. We must seek the aid of Him without whom we can do nothing. We must seek for the guidance of the Holy Spirit who can lead us into all the truth. "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief!"

LECTURE II.

A FUTURE LIFE.

BEFORE we enter upon the immediate subject of the first chapter of the Analogy, there are one or two points connected with the general lecture of the last evening to which I would wish to advert. One of the members asked me at the end of it, "What is the meaning of a practical proof?" Now, I have told you I wished, whenever I could, to make Butler his own interpreter. He states in exact terms what he means by a practical proof:—"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 confuted—such a proof as, considering the infinite importance of the thing, I apprehend would be admitted fully sufficient, in reason, to influence the actions of men who act upon thought and reflection."—(Part I., chap. vi., par. 15). A practical proof, then, is that which is sufficient for men to act upon; that is the kind of proof proposed in the introductory chapter, where he starts with the definition of probability. Butler tells you that probability admits of all degrees, from the lowest presumption until we arrive at what we call moral certainty, and he says "probability is the very guide of life." Observe the distinction is between what is strictly

called demonstrative, mathematical certainty'—(such, for instance, as the proposition that two and two make four, which cannot be otherwise, there can be no degree in that—it is conclusive, certain and necessary)—and 'probability.' Now, probability admits of various degrees, until it reaches from the lowest presumption to the highest moral certainty. Then he says, Religion is a practical thing: he speaks of it as 'Natural' and 'Revealed;' as comprehending both branches of it—this is *practical* (as he says) not *speculative*. Man is here in this life to act—certain duties are imposed upon him—he has these duties to perform, and Religion guides him in the discharge of them, the duties flowing indeed from his relation to God—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. As Religion is then a practical thing, you have to discharge the duties incident to this relationship which you occupy. You act upon what? Not upon demonstration, for that you cannot have, and that is the reason he refers to every-day life to show that in all the ordinary affairs of life probability in its various degrees is held sufficient to guide us. When an insurance office insures the life of an individual, they are not certain whether the man may die to-morrow, or at the end, perhaps, of thirty or forty years; they have established probabilities to act upon, which are deemed sufficient to guide them. So if, in a court of law, we sit on a trial in which a man's life is involved, all we can have is that "moral certainty" which will satisfy the consciences of twelve men on their oaths. So that in common life it is not mathematical certainty, but probability in its various degrees, upon which we act. This is the foundation upon which he goes—this is the key to his argument from analogy. He puts his argument in this way. If you raise objections founded upon speculative suggestions—objections to religion—and say, it cannot have come from God because there are these difficulties about it;—

well then, he says the same difficulties equally arise in the constitution and course of nature where you do act—these difficulties there meet you, and you put them aside—you doubt them, or perhaps you think them to be false, or act as if they were so. He inquires what are the principles on which we act, and he applies these principles to religion. Thus he takes the constitution and course of nature as his basis.

We now come to what he says is the foundation of our hopes and fears, a future life, and there can not be, certainly, a subject more interesting and more momentous to beings such as we are, than the consideration that there is to be a future state of existence, with which our present state is mysteriously and irrevocably connected. Therefore, that being implied in all religion—a future state of existence—he begins the first chapter by taking up the subject of the future life. With regard to this chapter, those of you who have read it may have felt—as many persons have felt in reading it—disappointment. This is a very common feeling experienced on reading the first chapter of Butler's work—people feel disappointed at the close of the chapter. But, perhaps, persons who have read the whole of the book, and considered the whole scope of the argument together, and treated this chapter as a part of the whole work, will not feel so strongly (if at all) this disappointment. Butler's object was to carry out the exact, precise view he had of bringing to bear the analogy of the constitution and course of nature upon religion, and in this first chapter, upon that part of religion which concerns the fact of a future life simply, the mere fact of a future life; he goes on afterwards to pursue the argument further, and to show that we are under the moral government of God. In this chapter he proposes to show what analogies there are in the constitution and course of nature that we can bring to bear on the fact of a future life. Now, the great office of analogy is to repel objections—to refute disproofs—to remove

unfavourable presumptions. It is seldom used for the purpose of direct proof; it is not suited for that. It clears the way,—it makes a matter credible,—leaves it open for the application of proper proofs, which it confirms. If you look at the concluding section of this (first) chapter, you find he says:—“This credibility of a future life.” That is all he professes to establish. “This credibility of a future life which has been here insisted upon, how little soever it may satisfy curiosity, seems to answer all the purposes of religion in like manner as a demonstrative proof would.” What he means by that is this:—This doctrine of a future life *may* be true. His argument with the Deists is that they could not be safe unless they were able to disprove religion. “Because,” he says, with regard to a future state of existence, “it *may* be true.” You *may* be here under the moral government of God; you may hereafter be in a state of misery or eternal happiness, and that state may be connected with your faith and conduct in this life. Hence, even supposing it to be a doubtful matter, how should a person act where consequences so momentous are at stake! In the ordinary affairs of life, just in proportion to the importance of consequences you will give these consequences what is called “the benefit of a doubt.” That is what he means by saying that “the credibility of a future life answers all the purposes of religion” and answers the purpose he had in view in the chapter, which was to show that it was probable, in the sense in which he defines probability. In the first section of the chapter he proposes the argument thus:—“Whether it be not from thence (that is, the analogy and course of nature) probable that we may survive this change and exist in a future state of life and perception.” Now, in this chapter the objection which the materialist puts forward, of the destruction of the soul along with the body, is removed by the presumption

which analogy supplies. It is very remarkable, that in the portion of Scripture which has been read this evening, this very argument from analogy is made use of by the Apostle Paul—he there puts the case and says, you remember—“Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die, and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat or of some other grain; but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.” Then, again you remember when he was before Agrippa he said, “why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?”—I may say that it may be applied to all miracles—is a miracle an act of greater power than creation itself? If you admit a Creator, what is there incredible in His exercising His power in any way—what is there incredible in Him who breathed the breath of life into the human body, raising that body from the dead, and putting life into it? He puts the analogy of the seed—you take a seed and put it into the ground—it dies—corrupts—and out of it grows a living stalk. Our Lord himself, in the 12th chap. John, xxiv. verse, employs the same analogy—“Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone: but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit.” All the Lord’s parables are founded upon these illustrations from nature, that is, founded upon the unity of design and uniformity of operation, shewing that all the material and moral word came from the same God; and upon that is based the argument from analogy. Now, with regard to a future life, the foundation for our belief of it is two-fold: there is the argument from what we call ‘the light of nature,’ and the teaching of revelation; but, to show how much Butler felt the weakness of the argument drawn from nature, and how it could only afford that credibility,—that removing of unfavourable presumptions,—

that clearing the way for the positive teachings of Revelation, in the second part of the Treatise, 1st chap. 9th par., you find him thus expressing himself—"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 of light to which that of nature was but darkness." So that he considers the light of nature is but darkness compared with the Gospel, which in terms "brings life and immortality to light." You will find a very able dissertation on the subject, by our most venerable patron, the Archbishop of Dublin, in his "Essays on the Peculiarities of the Christian Religion," where he shows that we are almost exclusively indebted to the Gospel teaching for the light we enjoy with regard to that blessed hope. Now (excluding the Scriptural proofs), the arguments for a future life are threefold. There are the metaphysical, the physical, and the moral arguments. The metaphysical arguments are those subtle scholastic disquisitions in which the schoolmen delighted: the nature of the soul, its essence, whether material or immaterial, divisible or indivisible. All these foolish disquisitions end in nothing, and afford no light with regard to a future state. The physical arguments are different: they give some little light on the question, but subject to this objection—that, dealing with a part of our nature that is common to us with animals, and in some degree with vegetables, the conclusions therefrom, if they can be called conclusions, would apply equally to all: so that the metaphysical arguments are worse than useless, and the physical arguments are of very slight advantage. But what we call the moral arguments are of great value; they are derived from the considera-

tion of man's capacity, his aspirations, his moral and intellectual progress, the course of human enlightenment, his power of grasping eternal truths. The lower creatures seem here fitted for the positions they occupy; to enjoy happiness, and attain to the highest improvement their nature is capable of. The brute attains a certain degree of perfection, and then declines; but man in his course of moral and spiritual improvement goes on, and sometimes, at the very moment when cut off by death, he is in the course of blooming into a higher degree of improvement. The argument from this is very strong, and the human heart accepts it, and it is completely in harmony with those mysteries of our being that are within us, our feelings and emotions; and we accept the conclusion that we are destined for immortality hereafter, and that the gracious and good Being who has given us these capacities and powers, with means to enlarge and purify them so greatly—that He has made this world like a nursery as it were for the next, by a course of moral discipline and spiritual improvement—that He would not stop short and undo at the moment of death what had been going on beneficently up to that moment. These are the moral arguments which of all that are independent of the light of Revelation, are the most to be accepted and depended upon. With regard to the metaphysical argument, the question, let me observe, is not whether the soul is naturally or essentially immortal, but whether we are warranted in concluding it to be the will and design of God, as indicated in our own nature, and in the government of the world—that it—the soul—should continue to exist in a future state, differing from, yet closely connected with the present. Those who discuss this metaphysical argument of the immateriality of the soul and its indivisibility, and such like speculations, assume that there is no alternative between the destruction of the soul and its continued existence as a

living agent : for they argue thus—They say, there is no such thing as the destruction of anything—God who created of course can annihilate, but we are not aware of the destruction of anything that has been created, therefore, they say, as the body is not destroyed by death, but dissolved by death, if the soul be immaterial it is not destroyed. But then again it may be said, “as the body is an organized structure, if that organization is destroyed it cannot exist as a structure—it ceases to be a body, and can be recognized no more as a body, and the soul may be connected with the whole organization—or there may be something analogous to that in the soul,” so that the argument after all goes for nothing. There is a splendid summing up of this argument in Dugald Stewart’s work, where he refers to the discussion upon the nature and essence of the soul, which, he says, “has been in all ages a favourite subject among metaphysicians, from its supposed connexion with the argument in proof of its immortality. In this light it has plainly been considered by both parties in the dispute ; the one conceiving that if mind could be shewn to have no quality in common with the matter, its dissolution was physically impossible ; the other, that if this assumption could be disproved it would necessarily follow that the whole must perish at death.” He states this latter opinion to have been contended for by Dr. Priestley, and many other speculative theologians ; and adds—“Neglecting, accordingly, all the presumptions for a future state afforded by a comparison of the course of human affairs with the moral judgments of the human heart, and overlooking with the same disdain the presumptions arising from the narrow sphere of human knowledge when compared with the indefinite improvement of which our intellectual powers seem to be susceptible, this acute but superficial writer attached himself to the old hackneyed pneumatological argument. In the actual

state of science these speculations might well have been spared. Where is the sober metaphysician to be found who now speaks of the immortality of the soul as a logical consequence of its immateriality, instead of considering it as depending on the will of that Being by whom it was at first called into existence? And on the other hand, is it not universally admitted by the best philosophers, that whatever hopes the light of nature encourages beyond the present scene, rest solely, like all our other anticipations of a future state, on the general tenor and analogy of the laws by which we perceive the universe to be governed? The proper use of the argument concerning the immateriality of mind is not to establish any positive conclusion as to its destiny hereafter, but to repel the reasonings alleged by materialists as proof that its annihilation must be the obvious and necessary effect of the dissolution of the body." (*Coll. Works*, Vol. 1, p. 115).

The changes we have ourselves undergone, and the changes we may yet undergo without being destroyed, the change, for instance, before and after birth, the completely different state whilst in the womb, and afterwards when born into life, the changes we may yet undergo without being destroyed, the changes our bodies undergo gradually by the assimilation of food, and the gradual wasting of particles,—then, again, the way in which limbs may be cut off, or portions of the body pared away, still without affecting the rational being; these changes show the law of change in the different stages of existence both of ourselves and other creatures. There is the common one of the butterfly springing from the grub. Therefore (Butler says), as there have been antecedent stages of existence in which we were acquiring fitness for the present stage, so death may be one of those stages of continuous existence, and we are now undergoing a course of preparation for a future state, and, just as before we come to the present

state, we were undergoing preparation for the present stage, so the law of change warrants the presumption, as far as it goes, in favour of there being a future stage of existence. He goes on to the second law,—the law of continuance,—by which things are presumed to go on unless you see some reason for the contrary. He says;—“That we have those powers and capacities before death, and until death, is a presumption that we shall retain them after death.” It is on the same kind of presumption we expect that the sun will rise tomorrow, uniformity in the operations of nature seems to be quite congenial to our minds, and to adapt itself to our constitution. All experience is founded upon that supposition—that things will continue to go on as they have done. If we find no reason in nature from which to infer death to be the destruction of our rational being, then we have a right to infer that it will not, “because there is in every case a probability that all things will continue as we experience they are, in all respects, except those in which we have some reason to think they will be altered.” But, then, he says there is a kind of confused suspicion naturally arising in our minds, that the effect of death must be, perhaps, to destroy our whole existence as living beings; “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.” And then he combats that suspicion by arguing from a phrase which you will often find in the book—“the reason of the thing.” He argues as to the nature of death, and shows that we cannot thence infer that death is the destruction of living agents, because we know nothing of what death really is. We only know some of the effects of it,—*i. e.*, its power over the body,—and these effects do in no wise appear to imply the destruction of a living agent. He then shows that neither can we find anything in the whole analogy of nature to afford

even the slightest presumption that animals ever lose their living powers. He pursues the argument in the eighth section, which, I think, is open in some degree to the criticism of being that metaphysical kind which reasons on the immateriality and indivisibility of consciousness; but so far as it answers the arguments of the materialist, it is undoubtedly of use.

The argument of the materialist is, that the soul is so combined with the body that the destruction of the body involves that of the soul. It is a very fair argument to put to them, that if the soul be not connected with the body their argument goes for nothing—because their argument goes upon the hypothesis that the soul is vitally connected with the body, and is not immaterial. I don't know from reason how that is one way or the other; but what does the gospel teach us? It says not a word of material or immaterial; the Resurrection of the Body is its great doctrine. In early times this doctrine of a future life was left in obscurity, because the doctrine of a future state is essentially connected with the fact of the death and resurrection of our Lord, on which the world's destiny altogether hangs; therefore, until this was propounded in the fulness of time, all with regard to a future state was left comparatively in darkness. A few men—Plato, Socrates, Cicero, and a few others—seem to have had a glimpse of a future state, reminding us of what you see sometimes in a murky night, a few solitary stars struggling in the gloom. Thus, in the Old Testament dispensation, you find, first, in proportion as the prophets began to throw out predictions with regard to the Messiah, so was the revelation of a doctrine of a future state gradually evolved and brought to light. It was something like the starlight, but more, perhaps, like the pensive light of the moon,—the reflected light of the sun in the absence of the sun itself; and then, when we come to the Gospel, we have it distinctly brought

forth in its fulness; light shines upon the darkness of the future state, and the Gospel brings life and immortality to light, and the doctrine of the future state is fully revealed. And why? Because all had been then prepared for the revealing of it, and man has been taught that the future state with which he is to be everlastingly connected, and his condition therein, are dependent upon his union with the Lord Jesus Christ. In this chapter, the argument of Butler goes into the question of the consciousness being single and indivisible; there is a degree of subtlety in it, and it fully answers materialists so far as it goes; but really I do not think it is of any great importance. He argues that you use a glass for the eye, which assists it; that leads you to suppose that the eye itself is a kind of instrument; and so it is, for the telescope has been constructed and perfected from a regard to the constitution and peculiar form of the eye itself. So with the ear, which can be aided by instruments. And he instances the case when, losing a limb you get its place supplied by a cork or a wooden one, which you can move; and so with other portions of our body. In that way he shews that some parts of the body are a kind of instruments to obey the mind, and, therefore, he infers that so far from the mind being connected with them so as to be destroyed by their destruction, in its entirety and vigour it is complete, though some of these are taken away. So far as there is any presumption to be derived from this, it is in favour of the continued existence of the rational soul, because such, independently of these, controls them, and deals with the material substances which are put in their place when any of them are removed, and has control over these substances, just as it had over the portions of the body. The active power remains, and thus he says, that the dissolution of matter in which living beings were most nearly interested is not their dissolution,

and that the destruction of several of the organs and instruments of perception and of motion belonging to them is not their destruction, showing 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.

He then meets the objections as to the animal creation also, by saying that it may be the intention of God that animals should also exist in a future state. What the fact is with regard to that we cannot tell; we know nothing one way or the other about it. But he says there is another argument founded upon a matter which is more peculiar to mankind, and then he puts the case of our present powers—the power of exercising reason, memory, and perception—and takes the distinction between sensation and these powers, where our mind and moral nature act by themselves. He says that we get ideas that way that we can without the use of our senses reflect upon. When we have got ideas our minds can act, and therefore he argues from this the independence of the mind. Its fate is not, therefore, so intimately connected with the body that you can assume from the dissolution of the body that this involves the dissolution of the mind and rational soul. By these arguments he repels the objections of the materialists. That is what he had in view, because it is quite plain, from the paragraph in the second part, that he looked upon the teaching of revelation upon this subject as the main and important teaching, and that he was sweeping away the objections which unbelieving men made, these objections being founded upon the supposed connexion between the soul and body to such a degree that when death dissolves the body the soul perishes along with it; and these arguments, he urges, shows that they had no right to indulge in such speculations as these.

The consideration of the law of change, of continuance, of adaptation, the manner in which our mind seems to act without the body, the way in which we can lose limbs and portions of the body, or in which we can, by the use of various instruments, assist the operations of our body, showing that they are to a certain degree instrumental,—all these warrant the inference, as far as it goes, that the dissolution of the body does not carry with it the dissolution of the rational and moral nature. That is the whole length to which he goes in this argument. Then he says there are two states of life in man, and these are the sensual state and a state of reflection, and he adds, if ideas are gained, “it is by no means certain that anything which is dissolved by death is any way necessary to the living being after ideas are gained.” If we follow the analogy of the seed, there may be some germ in our body which is indestructible, from which the spiritual body may afterwards arise. He also mentions the case of mortal diseases which do not affect our intellectual character. There are classes of diseases from which men die suddenly, and yet at the very moment of their death, their nature may be in a high state of intellectual and moral culture. There was, for instance, the late Judge Talfourd, who, when he was addressing the grand jury, at Stafford and in the very act of speaking, fell forward on the bench and died. Instances of that kind have sometimes taken place; but upon what ground could we infer or assume that the mind which, up to the last moment, had been kept in a high state of culture, would expire and go out with the body? These mortal diseases may at any moment carry off the body by death; yet, as they do not seem to affect our intellectual powers, this, he says, affords the presumption that such diseases will not destroy these powers.

The whole scope of this analogy is to remove objections.

When he has done this he takes up the positive proofs, in the second part of the analogy. He clears the ground first of all those objections which unbelieving men have brought forward. He adds, also, that "death may immediately, in the natural course of things, put us into a higher and more enlarged state of life, as our birth does,—a state in which our capacities and sphere of perception and of action may be much greater than at present." For we find, with regard to our bodies and senses, we are very often hindered from a more perfect state of reflection and reason by our bodies, since they interfere sometimes with our reflective powers; and these hindrances may be removed by death; and it may be so that just as we find the child in the womb is preparing for the present state of existence, so here we may be preparing for entrance into a state of enlarged powers and capacity of enjoyment. It is sometimes said that Butler is a gloomy writer, but this arises from his moral thoughtfulness and sobriety of mind. He thought of man as a moral and immortal being, here placed under the dispensation of a God of love, the law of holiness, the law of His moral government. He thought of the destiny of every moral and immortal being, and how that destiny was connected with the way in which he might avail himself of the means and privileges that God had placed in his power in this life. One may well apply to him the beautiful lines of our great poet:—

"Walk calmly on the solemn silent shore
Of that vast ocean thou must sail so soon."

He has added an observation, which shows his cautiousness, that he did not intend to carry the argument one whit beyond the exact requirement. "But if 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," he says again, "these observations together may be sufficient to show how little presumption there is that death is the destruction of human creatures." An observation, he says, has been made with regard to the decay of vegetables, but this he answers by saying that "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 that is peculiar to man, and which," he adds, "is the only thing we are inquiring about the continuance of." His object in this, the first part of his work, is to repel the objections urged by the materialist, rather than to bring forward positive proofs for his own side. He relies upon the facts and experiences of ordinary life in nature, and casts aside the cobweb theories of speculative men. It was the glory of Bacon, getting rid of all such theories, to induce men to reason up from the operations and course of nature, and to argue from the book of nature, and not from the speculations of their own metaphysical brains. Thus he cleared away the cobwebs of the schools, and laid the foundation of that inductive method which was afterwards opened out by Newton, and so largely employed by Butler. What is natural as much requires and pre-supposes an intelligent agent to render it so continually, as what is supernatural or miraculous does to effect it for once. Therefore, he says that our notions of what is natural may be enlarged; and he adds, "that there is no absurdity in supposing that there may be beings in the universe whose capacities may be so extensive as that the whole Christian dispensation may to them appear analogous to God's dealings with other parts of His creation." He has

removed and repelled all the objections that the materialist urges with regard to the supposed immortality of the soul, and shows that the various presumptions which grow out of our experience of nature, are rather in favour of that immortality. Butler does not follow out the moral argument to its full extent, but makes use of it to prepare the way so far as is necessary for his purpose at this stage. Bacon has a very beautiful passage, showing that it is to revelation we are to look for this great doctrine. He says—"The doctrine concerning the breath of life, as well as the doctrine concerning the substance of the rational soul, includes those inquiries touching its nature, whether it be native or adventive, separable or inseparable, mortal or immortal, how far it is tied to the laws of matter, how far exempted from them, and the like; which questions, though even in philosophy they admit of an enquiry both more diligent and more profound than they have hitherto received, yet I hold, that in the end all such must be handed over to religion to be determined and defined, otherwise they will be subject to many errors and illusions of the sense. For since the substance of the soul in its creation was not extracted or produced out of the mass of heaven and earth, but was immediately inspired from God, and since the laws of heaven and earth are the proper subject of philosophy, how can we expect to obtain from philosophy the knowledge of the substance of the rational soul? It must be drawn from the same Divine inspiration from which that substance first proceeded." In the third vol., p. 379, the same view is expressed, and more succinctly, and there it is expressly stated "that as to the immortality of the soul and other such points, religion, and not reason, must give the true knowledge." And in another volume he points out that "religion, whether with regard to morals or mysteries, depends upon revelation from God." Philosophers, with all their speculations, admit

that they can know nothing about the beginning of life; but the Word of God teaches us that God Himself breathed into the nostrils of man the breath of life. There is nothing in nature analogous to the human soul, and as that soul came direct from God, its nature and destiny must be taught by God; and therefore it is taught to us in and by revelation. Consequently, analogy does not do more than furnish illustrations, remove objections, and repel disproofs.

It is as Christ is gradually made known in revelation that you find light breaking in upon this doctrine, until at last it is fully revealed to us when life and immortality are brought to light together. I was greatly struck by the doubts and difficulties which seem to have met the old philosophers in their inquiries as to a future state. But in connexion with Christ—it is not a matter of opinion, but a great reality, an historical fact upon which the immortality of the soul depends. What says Dr. Arnold?—"I have been used for many years to study the history of other times, and to examine and weigh the evidence of those who have written about them, and I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort, to the understanding of a fair enquirer, than the great sign that God has given us, that Christ died and rose again from the dead." This he views as a man accustomed to historical research and critical inquiry, and shows that the great fact of the resurrection of Christ was established upon the clearest evidence. We have our hopes of immortality based upon the works and life and death, and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is proved in this clear and conclusive manner; no uncertainty, no obscurity, no speculation, but there it is, clear and distinct, and may I not add, in the words of the apostle—"How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" You have also the statement that the "gift of

God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord," and that "the wages of sin is death;" and, lest any one should think that they shall be destroyed by death, we are told that death itself shall be destroyed. We read sometimes of wretches who fly in a state of unbelief to death, as if there to find a refuge from misery here and hereafter; but the Gospel teaches us that in the resurrection, man, with a body, shall rise again, that the soul shall not die, but that even death itself shall be destroyed, and then shall open out an immortality of endless bliss or endless woe. Is it any wonder, then, that Butler with such solemn truths and thoughts before his mind, should have written every line of this great work in seriousness and solemnity? You may call it gloomy if you like, but it is the writing of a man with his heart set upon a great theme, speaking as it were, in the presence of death itself to those who are the heirs of immortality. Read this chapter, in connexion with the portion of Scripture you have read this evening, and in that way all these presumptions from analogy will blend in harmony with the Word of God; and may He give to each of us, as I said in my former lecture, a wise and understanding heart, and the spirit of a sound mind!

LECTURE III.

NATURAL GOVERNMENT BY REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS.

IN the last lecture our attention was mainly directed to the analogies to be found in the course of nature, which show us that the teaching of religion as to a future life has presumptions in its favour,—that, as a matter of fact, a future life is credible and probable. According to Butler, a thing may be said to be probable when analogy is such as to beget a presumption, opinion, or full conviction of the truth of the matter, according to the effect produced on the mind of the individual by whom it has been considered. This effect, be it remembered, may range between the lowest presumption and the highest moral certainty. The nature and proper use of the argument from analogy was illustrated in the chapter read on the last evening—15th chap. 1 Cor.—in which the objection to the credibility of the resurrection of the body is repelled by the analogy of the grain of corn dying and quickening; and from what we find recorded in John's Gospel, 12th chap. 24th verse, we may conclude that this analogy had been used by our Lord Himself. Analogy having been thus employed to show that it is at least not incredible as a fact, the doctrine of the Resurrection is established by the positive teaching of the Scripture; and it is put beyond doubt by the historical reality of the resurrection of our Lord from the dead. That a future

life is credible has been shown by what has been observed in the order and course of nature and may be there traced to general laws. There is the law of change; this is manifested in the successive stages of existence, from that of the fœtus in the womb, to the maturity and the close of the present life of man; it is seen in the transmutations of other creatures, throughout each of which the living principle continues; also in the changes which our bodies undergo gradually, as well as by the mutilations which frequently take place, without interrupting the progress or impairing the mental or moral energy of the rational being. There is next, the law of continuance, the presumption in favour of the course of things going on as heretofore, unless we can find cause sufficient to believe that there shall be an interruption or alteration. This shifts the burden of proof on those who affirm that the soul expires with the body at the time of its dissolution. Such persons make use of assertions which are not consistent with experience, or assumptions which are merely speculative and inadmissible, and therefore valueless. There is, further, the law of adaptation, which leads us to consider the presumption in favour of a future life that arises on looking at the discrepancy between man's present condition and present capacities, and viewing this in the light of the arrangements in the course of nature by which every being and every part of being seems to have been wisely and beneficently fitted to its place and condition. By these and other analogies in the course of nature, the credibility of a future life has been shown, its probability has been legitimately deduced; but the blessed hope of immortality and the promise of eternal life are certified to us under the seal of the Spirit, and by the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour.

I may here observe that in the concluding chapter of the first part of the treatise there is a good summary of the gene-

ral argument which has been expanded in the first chapter. This is followed up by moral considerations, by which the argument is made the more complete. [You will find this summary running from page 137 to 140, of the Oxford Edition.] The probability of the antecedent supposition that there is a future life having been thus shown, he proceeds in the second chapter to consider the question as to the future life, as a state of happiness or misery, and the happiness or misery as by God's appointment connected with and dependent on our actions in this present life. We are to live hereafter. We are so constituted as to be capable of happiness or of misery. What can we collect from the course of Providence, from the facts and realities of the system under which we now find ourselves? What can we make out as to the general laws by which our happiness and our misery are, by God's appointment, connected with our voluntary actions and our course of conduct? This is a question of solemn interest. This inquiry, be it observed, is simply and plainly one of fact, of matters open to common observation, and to be tested by daily experience. We find ourselves capable of happiness and of misery, of pleasure and of pain; that happiness or misery, pleasure or pain, are connected with certain actions, with certain courses of conduct, and that we are conscious that we have capacities of foreseeing the happiness or the misery, the pleasure or the pain, as the natural—that is to say, the settled or appointed—consequences of such actions or conduct. You will bear in mind the important definition of that word "natural," which is given in the twenty-third paragraph of the first chapter, where Butler says, "the only distinct meaning of that word (natural) is *stated, fixed, or settled;*" and why? he goes on to say, "since what is natural as much requires and pre-supposes 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”—therefore the pleasure or the pain we are capable of foreseeing is the natural, that is, the settled or appointed consequence of our actions or conduct.

The preservation of our lives is made to depend on the use of the appointed means, which we must, therefore, provide; the enjoyment of external things which are the objects of our passions, depends more or less upon our own exertions; our pleasures depend altogether, our miseries, in a great part, upon ourselves; for, generally speaking, a tolerable ease and quiet result from prudence and care, whilst, on the other hand, we may do what we must know will sooner or later make us unhappy, bring poverty, sickness, disgrace, and even untimely death. This we find to be generally true, and enough appears to warrant the conclusion that the general method of the Divine administration in this present life is by forewarning us, giving us 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 these enjoyments and making us feel these sufferings as the natural (*i. e.*, the appointed) consequences of our actions. This is the reality of our present condition as a matter of fact, attested by our observation and experience. Why it should be so, is a speculative question, and in the third paragraph of this chapter Butler suggests, in the modest spirit of a true Christian philosopher, more than enough to show why this question ought not to be further pressed. “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.” He shews from the matters, which I have already alluded to, that generally speaking, our happiness or our pain

is connected with our conduct, and not only that, but that we can see beforehand what the consequences of that conduct may be; that is, by a course of prudence and care we may avoid evil consequences and enjoy tolerable ease and quiet, or we may do those things which we know will bring down upon us many injurious results. But it is then asked "why has God made us so?" Saint Paul, you may remember, gives a summary answer to such a question when he asks—"Hath not the potter power over the vessel?" and in the same spirit Butler suggests, "perhaps there may be some impossibilities in the nature of things which we are unacquainted with. 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 may not be a bare single disposition to produce happiness, but a disposition to make the good, the faithful, the honest man happy"—he is cautious, you observe, and goes no farther than suggesting that "perhaps"—"Perhaps an infinitely perfect Mind may be pleased, with seeing his creatures behave suitably to the nature which he has given them; perhaps 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." It is then true that the general method of the Divine administration is as he has stated it; he deals with the matter of fact—this is so, he says, and we cannot get rid of it—we have nothing to do with why the fact is so but to act upon it as undeniably true.

It may be said (as he observes) that all these results are to be ascribed "to the general course of nature." This he admits—indeed insists upon, as the strength of his own argument from analogy. For, what is properly meant by the course

of nature? It is a course of operation which the Author of Nature has appointed and settled, which, from its uniformity or constancy, is called natural. It necessarily implies an operating agent, whether He acts constantly or has endued His acts with permanent effects. It is not allowable, after having admitted an intelligent Author of Nature or natural Governor of the world, then to deny all this, because His government is found to be uniform, carried on by stated and settled laws of His appointment. If, then, the general course of nature is of God's appointment, and if our natural faculties of knowledge and experience are His gifts, these consequences of our actions are His appointment, and our foresight of them His gift—and this foresight is a warning from Him as to how we ought to act.

It is not that we are to do everything to which we may be induced by the foresight of pleasant consequences, for (as Butler observes) our eyes were intended for sight, but not to look at everything without discrimination. We may look at the sun, for instance, until we injure our sight; in the use we must exercise discrimination. Besides (as he afterwards shows) there may be sometimes present pleasure and immediate advantage, consequent upon actions which may be afterwards attended with disgrace and misery. In this chapter he goes on then slowly and gradually in building up his argument—at present he is simply dealing with the fact of that he calls our being under God's natural government. He is, at it were, making the whole building secure in every part of it; and hence, as we proceed we will find his work the more interesting as it becomes the more complete. In the study of such a subject you find your mind gradually trained and enlarged: as you proceed you see the light breaking in more and more upon you—you get more into the spirit of the writer, and you find each succeeding chapter throwing light upon the others.

Thus, then, we find ourselves at present actually under God's natural government, in the strict and proper sense of the word. For the appointment of happiness and misery, of pleasure and of pain, as the settled and declared consequences of voluntary conduct, and warning us of this, and enabling us to foresee it, is the proper formal notion of government. And it is the most perfect form of law, to make it self-executing, carrying its own sanction with it.

The final causes of this appointment of pleasure and pain are obvious, and show that in all their degrees these pleasures and pains are instances of Divine government by rewards and punishments. We are under this government "in as strict and proper sense of these words, and even in the same sense, as children, servants, and subjects are rewarded and punished by those who govern them." This analogy shows that there is nothing incredible arising out of the nature of rewarding and punishing,—that God will reward and punish hereafter. The whole course of nature is a present instance of His exercising that government over us which implies in it rewarding and punishing. It is a matter of fact, a present reality, which cannot be denied. Butler here calls attention to this, that the side of the argument which specially relates to Divine punishment has been chiefly objected to, and this he proceeds to deal with specially and separately—leaving out of view for the present the question of *rewards* altogether. In addition to what has been observed as to the miseries which follow actions of imprudence and wilfulness, as well as actions more distinctly considered as vicious, which consequences, when they may be foreseen, are natural punishments annexed to such actions, there are circumstances connected with these punishments, which are particularly deserving our attention, and which furnish analogies by which the credibility of Divine punishments hereafter is well estab-

lished. These are not occasional, but of daily occurrence, proceeding from the general laws of God's natural government, and they are so analogous to what religion teaches us concerning future punishment, that both would naturally be expressed in the very same words and manner of description. He then gives a summary of them, which is a most valuable one indeed; they amount to eight in all, and they are detailed in the tenth paragraph of this chapter. He observes, that we find these to be matter of experience, and he has premised in the preface to his first edition, that many of the things he would bring forward were very obvious; it is in the application of these obvious things that his argument consists. They are obvious to us when our attention is drawn to them; but it is the application to the subject, of these obvious things, which makes his argument throughout so forcible and conclusive. Look now for a moment at this summary in the tenth paragraph. We have first—"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 is the penalty of the law. God has annexed to certain actions certain penalties—we are under this government. The second point he makes, is—"That these punishments are often much greater, than the advantages or pleasures obtained by the actions of which they are the punishments or consequences." Then he proceeds to shew that these punishments or penalties flowing from certain actions, may be delayed in their infliction:—"They are often delayed a great while, sometimes till long after the actions occasioning them are forgot, so that, the constitution of nature is such, that delay of punishment is no sort nor degree of presumption of final impunity." This shews that we do not

know definitively how far the infliction of punishment may be postponed or delayed, it may await the future life. Then he says, "That after such delay, these natural punishments or miseries often come, not by degrees but suddenly, with violence and at once; the chief misery often does. That as certainty of such distant misery following such actions, is never afforded to persons, so perhaps during the actions they have seldom a distinct, full expectation of its following, and many times the case is only thus that they see in general or may see the credibility, that intemperance, suppose, will bring after it diseases; 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 inevitably follows at its appointed time, in very many of these cases." Then he goes on still further and urges—"Thus also, although youth may be alleged as an excuse for rashness and folly, as being naturally thoughtless, and not clearly foreseeing all the consequences of being intractable and profligate, this does not hinder, but that these consequences follow, and are grievously felt, throughout the whole course of mature life." How well does the Scripture precept of "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth," accord with the spirit of the paragraph? He then adds, that "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." He says of this misery and pain that they are consequences which many for the most part neglect to consider, and perhaps seldom can properly be said to believe beforehand." In the period of youth, which is so often made the subject of excuse, the germs of ruin are as often engendered in the heart. He says—"It requires also to be

mentioned, that in numberless cases, the natural course of things affords us opportunities for procuring advantages to ourselves at certain times, which we cannot procure when we will." Those opportunities may never be ours again; they may never return. The most momentous consequences to us depend upon the use we make of these opportunities—when they have once passed away, they can never be recalled. Butler says truly—

"If the husbandman lets his seed time pass without sowing, the whole year is lost to him beyond recovery." Then he says there are certain stages in which there may be no place of repentance:—"There is a certain bound to imprudence and misbehaviour, which being transgressed there remains no place for repentance in the natural course of things." And then he puts the case of civil government as a part of God's government of the world:—"So that many natural punishments are final to him who incurs 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." In the Book of Proverbs, he tells us, Wisdom is introduced, offering herself as the appointed guide of human life:—"How long, speaking to those who are passing through life, how long ye simple ones will ye love folly, and the scorers 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, she says—'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 poetic, 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 choose 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.' ” “ The whole passage,” he says, “ is so equally applicable to what we experience in the present world and to what religion teaches us is to be expected in another, that it may be questioned which of the two was intended.”

When the future state of rewards and punishment has been accredited by its own proper proofs nothing can so sensibly realize it as the consideration of these natural punishments. He says—“ 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 serve only to aggravate distress.” So that these characteristics of natural punishment which we see around us in life, may also constitute the characteristics which are referred to in the Book of Proverbs, which are equally applicable to the present as to the future life. Though men are not uniformly punished in this life according to their mis-behaviour, there is enough 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 imagination 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." Then he applies this, and says, to the unbeliever you cannot be safe in going on as you are. "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 universal 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." You will begin to feel the peculiar force of the observation of Butler, that religion is a practical thing, and what is our proper business in this our present life, is a question of momentous importance. The chapter of the analogy which we have before us to-night brings religion into the realities of the present, into the common concerns of our daily life. In God we live and move and have our being, and by an unalterable appointment of His sovereign wisdom and almighty power we are placed here under His natural government, carried on by a method of rewards and punishments. The following chapters of Butler will open out to us in a striking view the moral government of God, our state of probation, trial, and discipline, as moral and immortal beings,—the opening of a vista in the future, which we can see but in part, as through a glass darkly, but of which we have an earnest in the present.

There is a profound harmony between the lessons of the

book of nature and the gracious truths which are taught in the Book of Revelation. It is God's appointment that pleasure attends on certain actions, happiness on a certain course of conduct. This we have found to be a part of the course of nature. We open the Book of Revelation, we find that the same God has there declared His will to be that in keeping His commandments there is great reward. In neither case is there any ground for man to claim as a right what in both has been graciously ordained as a fixed element of the Divine government of the world. Disobedience of God's commandments, disregard of His laws, as well in the course of nature as in the volume of Revelation, is followed by consequences which conscience recognises as the righteous judgment of the moral Governor of the world. You will have observed that Butler specially directs his argument in the conclusion of the chapter to the question of Divine punishment hereafter, as that which was mainly objected to as inconsistent with the speculative opinions of those whom he encountered in this treatise. Men would yield a ready assent to the doctrine of reward, who would refuse to receive the doctrine of punishment. The cases, I admit, are not parallel, but the contrast seems to me to place the credibility of punishment in a much stronger light than that of reward. Reward supposes that something has been done beyond the bounden duty of the doer; punishment, that a known obligation has been consciously violated. It has been well observed by the Archbishop of Dublin, in his lucid and instructive essay, to which I referred in the last lecture, that "In no case does justice dictate reward to be placed on the one side of an alternative, and punishment on the other." The Royal Psalmist says, "To thee, O Lord belongeth mercy for Thou rewardest every man according to his work." Whatever, then, may be the claim or expectation of reward as between man and man, for services rendered over and above

the strict right of the party benefited, and for the withholding or refusal of which no human punishment could be lawfully inflicted—as between man and God, the creature and the Creator, under the moral law of His righteous government, reward must be a gracious provision of His mercy and His love : it cannot be a claim of right. Thus it is, that whilst unaided reason could only look on a future with shadows, clouds, and darkness resting upon it, with an occasional vague expectation—not a reasonable assurance—of a happy immortality, the light of the glorious Gospel scatters the clouds and dispels the darkness. The lessons of the order of nature, written in a Divine cipher, are now made plain to man, not by putting God's righteous punishment of vice and His gracious reward of virtue upon the same footing of natural equity, but by showing that the same God who has settled the course and order of nature under a government of rewards and punishments has made provision, in the higher economy of redeeming love, for magnifying and making honourable and establishing the moral law,—for giving eternal life and endless happiness to all who are reconciled in Christ and sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

I adverted to the moral argument for a future life growing out of the consciousness of moral and intellectual progress, the grasping of eternal truths, and the aspirations of the soul of man. In these there is an approximation, though at an immeasurable distance, towards the image of God, in whom all perfection dwells. “Is it not reasonable to suppose (says Dr. Whewell) that man needs a Divine influence to enable him to reach this kind of moral completeness? And is it not also reasonable to suppose that as he needs such aid in order that the idea of his moral progress may be realized, so he will receive such aid from the Divine power which realizes the idea of Divine love in the world, and to do

so must realize it in those human souls which are most fitted for such a purpose?" The moral difficulty—that under the moral law we cannot sustain a claim to eternal happiness as a reward for occasional and temporary obedience—is solved by the revelation of the Son, the giver of eternal life; the spiritual difficulty, that we cannot of ourselves make good our progress towards the perfection of the Divine nature, is solved by the revelation of the Spirit our sanctifier. What a beautiful and pregnant confirmation of the truth of the revelation which is treasured in the Holy Scriptures! Its exquisite adaptation to the wants of man—the removal of the perplexing difficulties which have made human destiny so dark an enigma—the deep and hidden harmonies of nature and of grace which are made manifest—the unity of design—the symmetry and order of the whole,—can we doubt the identity of the authorship or the character of the Author? The history of God's dealings with man shows that knowledge abused is followed by ignorance and unbelief—tending to gross corruption, and ending in judicial hardness. By the operation of a law of man's nature, he that will not turn, at last cannot: the rebellious sinner at last is obdurate. He is, nevertheless, an immortal being; the awful consequences cannot be overlooked. It is right, as Butler observes, that things should be stated as they really are—as we find them in our experience of life, and in the lessons of Revelation. In what we have been considering, and in what we have yet to consider in the succeeding chapters, bear in mind that the doctrine of reward as discoverable in nature and as disclosed in Revelation, emanates, like faith itself, from the sovereign bounty of God. He has placed us under a system in which He has connected the character with the conduct of man—his moral progress with his moral obedience, his future happiness with his present holiness. He has provided agencies sufficient for all the purposes of His

mercy and His love, so wonderfully arranged, that none who refuse the offers of His mercy, can gainsay His justice. Throughout the whole of this economy, the indispensable need of morality and the invalidity of the claim of human merit are written as with a sunbeam. They are fully and completely reconciled in the Gospel of Christ. I will have occasion to consider this, especially in connexion with the fifth chapter of this first part of the Analogy, which, in my humble judgment, when read in the light of the Gospel, discloses a harmony of the highest and holiest origin, and is of the most momentous interest to us all. Thus, as we go forward we will go upward, the clouds will clear away, and truth in its Divine oneness be unfolded to our view. I remember, many years ago, ascending Snowdon in the twilight and amongst the clouds of the early dawn. It was toilsome and discouraging until the morning advanced and the sun put forth his strength; the breeze freshened, the clouds rolled off, the vapours vanished, the veil which covered the loveliness of nature was lifted off, the mountain towered in its grandeur, and the valleys shone with light and beauty. Be patient, be persevering. Difficulty is the genuine discipline of life, mentally and morally. As you advance you will ascend; the opening horizon will gradually expand, as it melts on every side into the calm quiet of the heavens.

LECTURE IV.

MORAL GOVERNMENT OF GOD.

WHEN we reason on God's dealings with man, we may properly call in aid those analogies and presumptions which may be gathered by observing the outward government of the world. What we experience to be the course of nature with respect to intelligent creatures, we can (as Butler has told us) resolve into general laws or rules of administration, in the same way as many of the laws of matter may be collected from experiments. These general laws, the knowledge of which is of great consequence to man, are often left unexpressed, though discoverable, so far as they are discernible, by observation and comparison of phenomena which common life supplies. These are laws of God's natural government of the world. It is our wisdom to search for these laws, and it is our interest, as it is our duty, to conform to their requirements, as generally tending to promote our present happiness. They are in effect promulgated by the Author of Nature, who is also the Supreme Governor of the world; and we find by experience, what we are also taught in His Word, that in keeping His commandments there is great reward—in the consequences which have been graciously appointed to follow; and we further find that, if we disregard these laws, there is a natural punishment generally imposed as a settled consequence of

their neglect or violation. Thus, what are called sanitary laws indicate how health and life may be preserved or sacrificed, by the observance or neglect of plain and simple rules ; and the laws of economic science point out how social and industrial prosperity may be advanced or retarded by the influence of circumstances or conduct which we have power to control and regulate. This course of nature declares that we are under the natural government of God, who proceeds by a method of rewards and punishments in His dealing with us in this present life. From this it follows that no valid objection can be made to the principle of this method of government with reference to a future life, as we find it to be a plain present reality—a matter of actual experience in the life that now is. The final causes, the obvious purpose and design of the pleasure and the pain, the happiness and the misery which are the generally appointed consequences of our actions, as clearly prove that there is an intelligent Governor of the world, as other final causes show that there is an intelligent Author of Nature. In the second chapter, which we considered in the last lecture, the fact of this natural government under which we are placed, and to the laws of which we are subject, has been conclusively established. In the third chapter, upon which we are now about to enter, the fact of this government being moral, is shown with equal clearness. It is a stage in the general argument, of great interest and of unspeakable importance. The fact of God being the natural Governor of the world does not appear at first sight to determine anything certainly concerning the moral character of God—that He is the righteous Governor of the world and that virtue is His law. Moral government does not consist in the mere rewarding or punishing as a consequence of conduct, but in rewarding the righteous and punishing the wicked ; in rendering to men according to their

actions, considered as good or evil. This is the moral distinction. The perfection of moral government consists in adjusting the recompense—the reward or the punishment—in an exact proportion to personal merit or demerit, “every man according to his works.” It is not contended that in this present life such a proportion is maintained; but it is shown by a careful analysis of the course and order of nature, that the principles and beginnings of a moral government over the world may be discerned, notwithstanding and amidst all the confusion and disorder of it. The completion of this hereafter, in a final and perfect adjustment, may thus be reasonably expected, and especially from a consideration of the essential tendencies of virtue and of vice, and the accidental hindrances which now counteract these tendencies. The tendencies must remain—the hindrances may be removed; and if God be thus shown to have commenced a moral government in this life, we may properly count upon its continuance hereafter,—that He will not renounce the character of a moral and righteous governor in a future state. The speculative view of some is (as Butler suggests) that the only character of God is that of simple absolute benevolence. In the preceding chapter (paragraph 3) he refers to views of this kind with reference to the purposes and character of God, and says that men make very free in their speculations, with Divine goodness, which may not be a bare single disposition to produce happiness, but to make the good, the faithful, the honest man happy. He then turns away from all such speculation to the facts of experience, and so, in the chapter now before us, he turns aside from mere supposition and suggestion of what God may be in Himself, or under what aspect He may have manifested Himself to other beings in the universe, and he directs our attention to this, that God manifests Himself to us under the character of a righteous governor.

At the outset he premises, as a matter particularly to be observed, that the Divine government, which we find ourselves under in the present state, taken alone, is allowed not to be the perfection of moral government. But there is a moral government in a measure and to such a degree as to give us the apprehension and warrant the expectation that it shall be completed or carried on to that degree of perfection which religion teaches us it shall. The proofs of this are collected from clear and distinct intimations given to us in the constitution of nature and the conduct of life. This is altogether exclusive of the presumptions afforded by the reason of the thing and the natural presages of conscience.

These intimations that God is a righteous Governor are (as he says) clear to such as give to the matter a thoughtful attention, though they may not be clear to every careless person who just glances at the subject. I may here observe what a fruitful source of error it is, how much of the dreamy sentimentality, the meagre theology which sometimes wears the mask of Christianity, may be traced to the neglect of these real and decisive intimations which teach us that the government of God is moral. Such speculative heresies lead to the disregard, if not the denial, of the righteousness and the justice of God, and go on to make of none effect the Cross of Christ. The realities of experience, which disclose God's righteousness, His character as the moral governor of the world, harmonize with the greater realities revealed to faith,—mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other. It is a significant fact that they who will not learn the lessons in the Book of Nature are often found to depreciate or deny the very essence of the Gospel of Christ. In this weighty chapter we find two classes of proofs derived from fact and observation,—first, in the instances which we have of present moral government; and next, in the tenden-

cies which we may discern towards a yet more perfect moral government. He does not insist on the greater comparative happiness of virtue over vice in this life, although he does not allow it to be doubtful that, on the whole, this is generally true, that the balance of happiness in the life that now is will be found on the side of virtue. But, as it may be difficult to estimate this with such exactness, as to make it the basis of a practical argument,—it is not here used for this purpose, though it is not discredited as an opinion. It is certain matter of experience that God does manifest Himself to us under the character of a governor, who governs by a method of rewards and punishments. What then, is the presumption as to the rule by which this will finally be completed? Is it not that the rewards and punishments hereafter will be consequent upon virtuous and vicious conduct respectively—a moral adjustment according to the rule of distributive justice? Our moral nature intimates to us that any other rule which we could suppose, would be more difficult to account for—that this rule is adapted to our moral constitution, and thus we find an expectation that, a method of government already begun, 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. This is a natural and distinct intimation of a moral government. Certain advantages and disadvantages follow upon prudence and imprudence in the management of our affairs, and so far as prudence and imprudence are of the nature of virtue and vice, these consequences are instances of a right constitution of nature, a moral government, which is further shown in the correction of a child by way of discipline. So far we find that some sort of moral government is implied in the natural government of God. The punishments inflicted by society are a part of the natural course of things, for civil society is

an appointment of God, and the punishment of whatever is destructive of society is necessary and therefore natural, as a part of the Divine government, though carried on by the instrumentality of men. The vices of falsehood, injustice, and cruelty are punished as mischievous to society. The guilty are often punished by the penalties inflicted, and always by the fear of detection which haunts the guilty offender, and the natural fear and apprehension of exposure and punishment is a declaration of nature against vicious actions. This is an instance of a kind of moral government naturally established and actually taking place. Men find themselves placed in such circumstances that they are unavoidably accountable for their behaviour, and are often punished, and sometimes rewarded, in the view of being mischievous, or eminently beneficial to society. It is objected, and, as a matter of fact not denied, that good actions are sometimes followed by punishment, and evil actions by reward; and reference is made to the punishment of persecution, by which men of whom the world was not worthy, have been subjected to ignominy, imprisonment, and cruel deaths. But, as he observes this was not natural, in the sense which he has explained. Good actions are never punished, considered as beneficial to society, nor ill actions rewarded, under the view of being hurtful.

Thus an inversion of the rule is not necessary to the existence of society, and therefore is not natural. The moral government which is manifested in civil society is both natural and divine, for the Author of nature has made it necessary for civil society to preserve itself by punishing these vices when they take the form of crimes, just as human life must be preserved by taking food. So far as civil society punishes vice, as being mischievous to society, it proceeds naturally—that is to say, according to the appointment of God; so far

it is part of a Divine moral government, carried on by the agency of man. This is natural and distinct. We find in the natural course of things virtue as such is rewarded, and vice as such punished. This is so far an instance of moral government, perfect in kind, though not in degree. To understand this clearly, it is proper to call attention to an important distinction between actions themselves and the quality ascribed to them, which we call virtuous or vicious. Some effects are produced by the action itself, abstracted from its quality; other effects are produced by the quality, abstracted from the action. When, therefore, it is said that virtue as such is rewarded and vice as such punished, it is meant that it is by reason of the quality of virtuousness or of viciousness that the effects produced are followed by reward or punishment. Thus, the immediate effects of virtue and vice upon the mind and temper are instances. In lesser matters, vice is attended with what is familiarly spoken of as 'being vexed with oneself,'—in greater matters with remorse; virtue is attended by inward peace and a disposition for happiness; there is also the complacency, satisfaction, and joy of heart which accompany the real exercise of gratitude, friendship, and benevolence. That these result from the quality of the actions in each case, as distinguished from the actions themselves, will appear by observing first, in the case of vice, from the common language in which a person laments some event which has inflicted an injury, and either speaks of the satisfaction that he feels in not having to blame himself for it, or of the uneasiness and self-reproach which he feels because he is sensible it was his own doing—that he had brought it all upon himself. So in cases where there is no reason to apprehend either resentment or exposure, there is the disturbance and fear which often follow upon a man's having done an injury. This can only in such a case arise from a sense of his being

blameworthy. We have also the hopes and fears which are felt more or less at present, with respect to a better life or future of punishment. The instances so far are internal, but all them are natural and distinct intimations. Then there is another class which must be next noticed. In private life all good men are disposed to befriend good men; and even those who have little regard to the morality of their own actions, and might be supposed to have less to that of others when they themselves are not concerned, are yet disposed in some degree to favour and do good offices to a virtuous man, from regard to his character.

In public life, honours and advantages are the natural and sometimes the actual consequences of eminent justice, fidelity, patriotism, considered in the view of being virtuous. On the other hand, death, infamy, and external inconvenience are the public consequences of vice as vice. Take one or two recent examples to illustrate this. We are engaged at present in getting up a national memorial to the memory of the late Earl of Eglinton. On the first interview which I had with him, just after his appointment to the Vice-regal office, I anticipated the success of his career, from a simple but significant observation which he made:—"I have no experience," said he, "in official life, and I have heard much of the difficulty of governing Ireland, yet I cannot but believe that the same principles of truth and honour which regulate well ordered private life, ought to be sufficient to keep a public man safe and straight." And so I ever found him,—whether in private intimacy or in official intercourse,—frank, generous, truthful and resolute. Well do I remember the impression made upon me at an interview which I had with him in reference to the exercise of the prerogative of mercy, when the lives of two convicts depended on the result of our conference: the anxious search for any fact or inference which might

reduce the moral guilt of the homicide; the tear of compassion when the search proved fruitless; the desire for mercy, if it could be reconciled with the demands of public justice; the womanly tenderness and the manly firmness of his good and gentle nature. And now the recognition of his moral worth by a warm-hearted, generous, and grateful people,—is not this a fresh and pregnant proof of what Butler states as to public honours being the natural rewards of public virtue? There is another instance still more recent, and not less significant,—I allude to the illustrious Prince whose death has so touched the hearts of a great and loyal people, of millions who deeply sympathize with their sorrowing widowed Queen, and bear her up with many a prayer ascending to God, in His holy habitation, the Father of the fatherless and the Judge of the widow. What but the genuine goodness of the late Prince Consort, his cultivated and enlightened mind, the discipline of his heart, the thoughtful training of his higher nature in all its departments, the moderation, the gentle wisdom, the domestic virtue, and the public spirit which gave to his whole character a harmony and a grace that all have recognised, admired, and approved,—what but these could have so endeared him to a wise and understanding people? Is there not here an instance, and a notable one, that He who made man upright, has not left himself without a witness in the conscience of civil society that He is the righteous Governor of the world, and that virtue is his law? But men are not only found to honour public virtue, but to resent oppression—public wrong done to others as well as when it is inflicted on themselves. Not the fear or the feeling of mere misery, but the natural sense which mankind have of tyranny, injustice, and oppression, has brought about revolutions which form a part of the moral history of the world. The squalid mendicancy, the moral prostration of thousands in the king-

dom of Naples might have long remained without disturbance in the stagnation of ignorance and langour, but the dungeons of St. Elmo spake with the sound of a trumpet, of unrighteous and cruel oppression—"man's inhumanity to man." This stirred to resistance and helped forward revolution. This sense of wrong and injustice, this moral resentment against the oppressor, consecrates the struggle for deliverance, and gives to the oppressed a moral support from the free and the good of every generous nation. Nor is this without its efficacy. It is the voice of the righteous Governor of the world—it is His royal proclamation from heaven against unrighteousness, injustice, and oppression upon earth. I felt a conscious pride as I looked upon our noble ships of war floating in the Bay of Naples, and adding a moral grandeur to the graceful beauty of surrounding nature:—

"The flag that braved a thousand years
The battle and the breeze"—

was significant of the moral supremacy of the British nation. It seemed to place Naples in the very presence of freedom, and tell her, in the language of our great poet—

"Who would be free must first be wise and good."

A moral government of the world! Aye truly; the stones of Italy have cried out, the plains of India have published it, the woods of America ring with the message to man—there is a righteous Governor of the world, and virtue is His law. It has been written in the best blood of man—in the life-blood of the Son of God.

It is to be observed that in civil government, though the actions which are punished are mainly dealt with on account of the consequences of the actions themselves to society, yet the natural sense of their immorality helps in many ways to bring offenders to justice, and the moral element enters more

or less into the adjustment of the punishment, and sometimes procures a remission of the sentence. On this depends the exercise of the prerogative of mercy. Indeed, Burke has observed that "mercy is not a thing opposed to justice. It is an essential part of it, as necessary in criminal cases as in civil affairs equity is to law." It is the effort of man to regulate public justice by a moral rule, and, therefore, account is made of all the circumstances which reduce the moral guilt of the act by which, irrespective of this, society has suffered. This is a natural and distinct intimation of a moral government in the present order of nature. Thus, whilst the moral nature which God has given us is a proper proof of our being under a moral government, these instances which show that He has placed us in a condition which gives this nature scope to operate, in private, family, and public life, and that in these it does unavoidably operate in rewarding virtue and punishing vice, are a distinct additional proof. The first shows that God will finally favour and support virtue effectually, for He inclines us to support it now; the tendency of virtue, as it were, acts by a law of moral gravitation; and the second is an example of His favouring and supporting virtue at present, for He not only inclines us generally by our moral nature, but enables us specially by our social condition to favour and support it in some degree. The first is a proof of a future and perfect—the second, of a present and modified moral government.

The reason why virtue is often rewarded as such, and vice often punished as such—and this rule is never inverted—arises partly from our moral nature, and partly from our having so great a power over the happiness and misery of each other. The effect of this nature upon our internal condition is such as to connect peace and delight with virtuous practice, and lead to the moral results by which vice is to such a degree accounted infamous, and men are disposed to

punish it as detestable, and to regard the punishment as deserved. The intimation is here natural, and there is nothing on the side of vice to answer this. For (as Butler says) "vice in human creatures consists chiefly in the absence or want of the virtuous principle," and "there is nothing in the human mind (as the logicians speak) contradictory to virtue." There is, therefore, no like regard to falsehood, injustice, and cruelty as such, as to veracity, justice, and charity as such. If any instance be pointed out, it is plainly exceptional—a monstrous perversion, which proves the rule. If not imaginary, it is unnatural. Thus, from the frame of our nature, which inclines us, and our condition which enables us to favour virtue and punish vice, it would follow 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. The degree is not insisted on, but the thing itself—that virtue and vice are thus distinguished. It is in a manner necessary; it is a matter of fact, of common experience even in the greatest confusion of human affairs. Thus, then, we have the following practical proofs of a moral government commenced in this life: Our natural preference for the moral rule of distributive justice, the undoubted consequences of prudence and imprudence, the punishments of vice as mischievous to society, the discipline of household life, the natural pleasures of virtue and the painful stings of vice, apart from the consequences of good or injury to others; the regard shown to good men, both in private and public life, and the detestation of bad men: the one class esteemed and honoured, the other despised and denounced. The pleasure of a vicious action, which is the result of the indulgence of a passion, is owing to the passion, not to what is vicious in it; for whilst the passion by its gratification must so far yield pleasure, the vice may, notwithstanding, merely as vice, be followed by the pain of

self-condemnation within—detection, exposure, or punishment from without. Virtuous actions may be punished though they are virtuous, but never because they are virtuous; and so in like manner vicious actions may be rewarded, though, not because, they are vicious. The distribution of happiness and misery seems to be governed here by other rules than only the personal merit or demerit of characters. This may be by way of mere discipline; and, indeed, the general laws of the world may render this promiscuous distribution not only proper, but unavoidable. Virtue however is naturally favoured, vice naturally discountenanced; and thus the intent of nature, that is to say, the end and design of the Author of nature, is manifested in a way which our moral constitution compels us to acknowledge. If we find virtuous actions sometimes punished, and vicious actions rewarded, it cannot be said that such was the design of nature; irregularity and disorder may be introduced, but cannot have been designed. In the classic ruins of past ages we recognize the skill and the genius of some great architect, and we linger over the pensive and decaying beauty of the mouldering column, the symmetry of the shaft, and the graceful sculpture: but we readily separate the work of the designer from the ravages of ruthless time. These may have been anticipated but never were designed.

Thus we can read in the facts of experience, in the order of nature, that a virtuous man is on God's side—a fellow worker with Him. So far, therefore, as a man is true to virtue, to veracity and justice, to equity and charity, and to the right of the case in whatever he is concerned, be it great or small, he works with God; he has a secret satisfaction, a sense of security, and an implicit hope of somewhat further. But in all this it is not to be forgotten that man is a fallen being—his moral nature a mournful, though majestic, ruin. The

law is weak through the flesh; but God has sent His own Son to do what the law could not accomplish by the mere agency of man. He has sent the Holy Spirit the Comforter to help our infirmities. He thus justifies the ungodly, and rewards the righteous—a seeming contradiction, but a revealed reality. In the portion of Scripture for this evening, you have heard of “the righteous government of God, who will reward every man according to his works,” and in the same epistle the inspired Apostle has spoken of God justifying the ungodly, and this “not of works lest any man should boast.” Thus is our moral discipline intended to lead us to walk in the Spirit and live in the Spirit, so that our works may be the measure of our recompense, but are not the title to a free salvation. This distinction will come out in bold relief when we enter upon the fifth chapter. Meanwhile, I trust the clouds are clearing away.

LECTURE V.

MORAL GOVERNMENT OF GOD—CONTINUED.

THE constitution and course of nature has taught us that there may be a future life; that in the present life we are under the government of God; that this government is carried on, under a system of general laws, from which we find, as a matter of experience, that He is our natural Governor, and that He governs us by a method of rewards and punishments. That this government is moral, and recognizes the distinction between virtue and vice; that happiness is connected with virtue and misery with vice; that this is the general though not the invariable course of things, but is so, in such a degree and to such an extent as to shew that there are the principles and beginnings of a moral government already established, and discoverable by observation and reflection. This, combined with the consciousness of our moral nature, and the conviction that the character of God is righteous, leads us onward to the conclusion that the moral government which has thus been commenced in the life that now is, may be continued and completed in the life that is to come. What the realities of experience thus teach us as a '*may be*' hereafter, revelation tells us, '*must and shall be.*' Thus is there a harmony disclosed; the analogy of nature is found to confirm the proper proofs of religion. Butler

frequently notices the sufficiency of the inferences from analogy, to influence conduct; they shew those things to be probable which Revelation declares to be certain—and “probability is the very guide of life.” Therefore if we are consistent as moral and intelligent beings, we will not reject the guidance of probability in the weightier matters of eternal moment, whilst we unhesitatingly follow it in the ordinary concerns of our daily life.

In the last lecture we were mainly occupied with the consideration of the proofs which shew that a modified moral government is to be found in the appointed order of the present life. In addition to the realities in the course of nature, which directly establish this, there are tendencies at present, discernable necessary tendencies, which are instances of somewhat moral in the essential constitution of nature. There is a tendency in virtue and vice, to produce good and bad effects in a far greater degree than they do in fact produce them. Causes, not inherent in the nature of virtue and vice, prevent and hinder much that would follow, in the way of reward and punishment; justice is often artificially evaded and eluded; characters are not made manifest so as to be known; accidental causes hinder many from favouring virtue and discouraging vice. This is clear in the case of individuals. In the case of society, it is not less certain, though it is not so obvious. 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 order to illustrate and confirm this position, Butler takes the case of reason and its acknowledged tendency to prevail over brute force. This prevalence is the natural but not always the necessary consequence; in order to secure the victory of reason there must be at least some proportion between the power which is under its direction, and that

which is opposed to it. A few men in a desolate plain might not successfully resist the attack of a number of wild beasts ; so if the rational beings could not distinguish one another, or were otherwise hindered from uniting together, they might readily be overpowered. Other instances are mentioned to shew that length of time, proper scope and opportunities for reason to exert itself, may be absolutely necessary to give it its natural superiority over brute force, and without union and direction, it would not be unlikely that the order of things as to the prevalence of reason, might in some instances be inverted altogether. That reason has the tendency to prevail over brute force and this in its very nature, no one will deny ; and it is evident that circumstances should concur to enable it so to prevail. What has been said of reason, may be applied to the case of virtue. It unites a society, by means of the true and proper bonds, veracity and justice ; it makes the public good an object and end to every member of the society, and awakens a moral thoughtfulness as to what is most needed for the common weal, and how this may be most effectually secured. That virtue should thus in fact prevail, there must be a concurrence of favourable circumstances as we find it necessary in the case of reason. Here on earth, there are hindrances, which may not exist in other parts of the universe and may not continue hereafter. Good men cannot unite over the face of the earth, as, for other reasons, so because they cannot be sufficiently acquainted with each others characters. I may here notice that the argument of Butler is supported by what we may observe as to the increase of power, the cumulative influence of men who associate together for the accomplishment of good and virtuous ends ; and the combined effect of a common sympathy of nations interested if not united in the cause of liberty. Who has read history, who has observed the course and order

of things around him, that must not admit the inherent and necessary tendency of virtue to give increased and abiding strength to united action, so as to make it to prevail over power, whether merely physical or under the direction of vice? On the other hand it is found by experience that it is the nature of associations formed for bad purposes, to inflame the passions of one member by those of another, to demoralize and thus rapidly to hasten the decay which ends in the dissolution of the society. In the eloquent and impressive language of the late Chief Justice Bushe—“Every moral principle is rapidly extinguished—every sense of obligation is lost; that consummation of vice to which an individual slowly habituates himself, a conspirator arrives at speedily, and sometimes in a single day, and it has often happened that an unfortunate and deluded wretch has in the morning joined one of these confederacies as the champion of rights and redresser of wrongs, and the evening sun has set upon him covered with crimes and stained with blood.” Such is the description given from the seat of justice, by this great and accomplished magistrate—a description of an association established for criminal purposes and united in the bond of iniquity. He significantly adds that “those who have had the experience of official and judicial life can assure you that it has never been able to stand against the venerable authority of the laws, vigorously and calmly brought to bear upon it.”

Civil society is necessary to man; mutual confidence is necessary to civil society, and virtue is necessary to secure and preserve that confidence which is displaced by suspicion; by the fear which conscious guilt never can shake off, by the malice which is nurtured in the heart of the guilty. I can myself say that whilst in office as the public prosecutor, I was regularly informed of the movements and meetings of criminal

associations, their proposals and even their pass-words were periodically made known by confederates, ready to betray their partners in crime. They cannot trust each other; and thus though they may conspire, they cannot effectually combine. But what shall we say of an association, in which men unite for good and virtuous purposes; especially when they endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace? Take for example our own Association. Union, we find to be strength—moral strength—calculated to encourage an increased confidence in each other. By every contribution to the common stock, all are benefited; the giver receives the greater blessing graciously appointed for him; there is in each a happy consciousness of being in the right path, of moving in the right direction, and though there be hindrances to be removed and difficulties to be overcome, is not the very fact of our union and the just and reasonable expectation which we have of increasing success, an unanswerable argument, (at least to us) that there is a necessary tendency in virtue to go onward, and should we not conclude that it will progress and the whole scheme of the moral government of God be completed in a brighter and a better world? As we remove hindrances, we necessarily make way for tendencies. These hindrances are the difficulties which we have to fight against—so that virtue is said to be militant here—sometimes at great disadvantage. “But it may combat with greater advantage hereafter and prevail completely and enjoy its consequent rewards in a future state.” So Butler suggests. In words of chaste and simple eloquence, he says, “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. If the soul be naturally immortal and this state be a progress to 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.”

This suggestive view of what may be our state and condition hereafter, is presented with his characteristic modesty and caution. It is not (as he says) intended to be a delineation of what is *in fact* the particular scheme of the universe, which cannot be known otherwise than by Revelation; *suppositions* (as he wisely reminds us) *are not to be looked on as true because not incredible*. He puts the suggestion forward to show this—that so far from the hindrances to the present superiority of virtue, being necessary—we can conceive easily how they may be hereafter removed, and full scope be granted to virtue.

The law of change which has been already noticed, shews us that when we go out of this world we may pass into new scenes, and a new state of life and action, and this may be just as natural as that we came into the present; and this new state may be a social one. He evidently considered that it will be an active and social state, where virtue may still have to combat; and where good men may be made the instruments of God's government as ministering spirits; as messengers of the mercy of God, or as ministers of His justice. This may be our state hereafter; a state of security though not necessarily one of perfection, nor naturally one of probation. Further we need not speculate, nor ought we too curiously to pry into “the secret things which belong unto the Lord our God.” The sublime discoveries of astronomy to which Butler alludes, as leading us to consider how vast and boundless must be the scheme of Providence, in proportion to the extent of the material creation, the crowded canopy of heaven with all its countless stars, ‘a mystery and a beauty;’ the myriads of insects, which the microscope reveals to us, as

they revel in the luxury of existence in the drop of water or on the downy leaf—these may suggest comparisons as to the destiny of man, the crowning work of Creation; his history and his hopes raise our thoughts heavenward, and we soar into realms of light and glory and immortality—we contemplate visions of moral loveliness, and ministrations of Divine mercy; the heart swells and the spirit rejoices; and the deep and divine emotions which are the very mysteries of our being, thrill with an ecstasy which language is powerless to express. “It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” Blessed hope—and glorious appearing!

Thus far, we can naturally and without difficulty conceive the removal of the hindrances and the free scope given to the tendencies of virtue, in the case supposed with reference to the great scheme of the universe, which may consist of the visible and the invisible dispensations. Another case is suggested of a kingdom on earth, a society perfectly virtuous for a succession of ages and with a situation advantageous for universal monarchy, and he describes with graphic power the nature and influence of its domestic and foreign policy. The absence of faction, the concentration of authority in the hands of the most capable in the several departments, to wield it, the united wisdom of the community in framing the public decrees, and their united strength in executing them; the complete security of personal liberty and of private right; the contribution of all to the common weal, and the contentment of all under the protection which they would enjoy—the influence such a kingdom would necessarily acquire, and the extension of its empire, partly by what would be considered just conquest, and partly by the voluntary submission of other kingdoms—and “the head of it would be a universal

monarch, in another sense than any mortal has yet been." It would be a righteous and acknowledged supremacy, acquired by the natural and necessary tendency of virtue freed from hindrances, to exert its legitimate influence upon and over all.

This would fulfil the prediction of the prophet that the people should be all righteous and inherit the land for ever; it would realize the cheering promise of the Psalmist in the 72nd Psalm, as to the sovereignty of the blessed King, and the reign of righteousness on earth.

Religion reveals to us plainly that the government of the world is uniform and one and moral; that virtue and right shall finally prevail over fraud and lawless force, over the deceits and the violence of wickedness, under the righteous rule of the Almighty—and then we find that God has so constituted us that we can naturally see a peculiar connection in the several parts of this revealed scheme, and a necessary tendency towards the completion of it, in the very nature of virtue. It is thus admitted to be reasonable, and we find that it has been revealed. What would be our feeling, what our condition (Butler significantly asks) if vice had essentially and in its nature these advantageous tendencies, or virtue the direct contrary ones? If it be said—notwithstanding all this—things may go on in other parts of the universe, and hereafter, as we find them now and here on earth, he answers—that in this treatise he does not propose to prove God's perfect moral government of the world or the truth of religion, but to confirm the proper proof of it supposed to be known.

Analogy has its appropriate office and is sufficient for its purpose—it can remove objections which would otherwise obstruct or obscure the proper positive proofs of religion—and it can confirm these proofs by shewing to be probably true, what religion declares to be actually true. Analogy shews

that the probability is in favour of the triumph of virtue in a future life, and therefore furnishes a distinct proof—a proof sufficient to determine conduct—a real practical proof of the obligations of religion.

Religion teaches us that under the rule of distributive justice hereafter, that will be completed in effect, towards which we now see a necessary tendency. That which we here experience and acknowledge as a present reality will be carried forward—and though not different in kind will be greater in degree; the good and bad tendencies of virtue and vice sufficiently shew that this actually will be the case hereafter. “It is manifest absurdity,” (as he says in one of his sermons on human nature) “to suppose evil prevailing finally over good under the conduct and administration of a perfect mind.” The tendencies which are essential to and inherent in virtue and vice, and the rewards and punishments which arise directly out of the settled order, the nature of things, may be expected to remain—and the hindrances (which are but accidental) to be removed. If these be removed—then must all that remains move onward towards moral completeness, the tendencies become effect, and carry with them all the essential accompaniments. Beyond this we must submissively suffer Revelation to lead us by the hand. All we can add is—that it seems essential to our happiness, as our nature is constructed, that we should be social and moral; it is a matter of circumstance, and not essential that we should be ignorant (to a great degree) of character, and subject to death.

Thus Butler’s sober spirit always kept aloof from what was merely speculative, and fastened on what was moral and practical. By what is obvious to common observation, he makes clear to calm reflection, that there is a righteous governor of the world, that virtue is His law, that His moral government has been commenced, in this present life; and that it is pro-

bable that this moral government will be completed hereafter, and rewards and punishments adjusted according to the perfect rule of distributive justice. To this we add the consideration of the moral nature which God has given us—of which he says “as 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.” All this, taken together, amounts to what he calls “a practical proof, a proof from fact,” that the moral government commenced will be completed; and this is distinct from the proof derived from the abstract principles of what is called moral fitness—the eternal and unalterable relations of actions. It is well that you should clearly understand his view of what a *practical proof* is—it is a proof derived from fact, and it is a proof sufficient for moral guidance; such in its nature that the faculty within us which is the guide and judge of conduct may properly *act upon it*—it is therefore *practical*. As probability is the guide of life—its degree and its influence, having in them a moral element, and an adaptation to our moral nature, it may not satisfy the cravings of speculative curiosity, though quite sufficient for the purpose of placing us under a strict moral obligation as to our duty. It has this practical purpose; keep this in view and you will the better appreciate the force of his observations in more places than one, as to the practical effect which ought to be produced upon man as a moral being, by the establishment of the presumptions in favour of religion.

Thus then what we find to be imperfect and preparatory we can complete by faith and reason; difficulties there are and perhaps must be, which are consequent upon our limited observation and experience or necessary for our probation and discipline. There is a law of progress which meets us everywhere; even necessary truths require for their appre-

hension, a growth and development, a gradual culture of the human mind. Its march is slow. But it has been beautifully said—that the faith in the progression of human nature towards perfection will—in some shape always be the creed of virtue. The wise and gentle Wordsworth, has worthily replied—“Let us allow and believe that there is a progress in the species towards unattainable perfection, or whether this be so or not, that it is a necessity of a good and greatly gifted nature to believe it.” But he has also reminded us that “it is not necessary, in order to satisfy the desires of our nature or to reconcile us to the economy of Providence that there should at all times be a continuous advance in what is of highest worth.” The hindrances may delay but do not defeat the onward movement. A river (as Wordsworth observes) both in its smaller reaches and in its larger turnings is frequently forced back towards its fountains by objects which cannot otherwise be eluded or overcome, yet with an accompanying impulse that will insure its advancement hereafter, it is either gaining strength every hour or conquering in secret some difficulty, by a labour that contributes as effectually to further it on its course, as when it moves uninterrupted in a line direct as that of the Roman road.” It is this faith in progress—this necessary belief in the completion of what has been commenced, that enables the poet to transcend the historian, and in the beautiful language of Lord Bacon, “to satisfy the mind with the shadows of things when the substance cannot be obtained. For (says he) if the matter be attentively considered, a sound argument may be drawn from Poesy, to show that there is agreeable to the spirit of man, a more ample greatness, a more perfect order, and a more beautiful variety, than it can anywhere (since the fall) find in nature.” He has elsewhere added—“a more exact goodness.” ‘Therefore (saith he) because the acts or events

of true history, have not that magnitude, which satisfieth the mind of man, poesy feigneth acts and events, greater and more heroical; because true history propoundeth the successes and issues of actions, not so agreeable to the merits of virtue and vice, therefore poesy feigns them more just in retribution and more according to revealed Providence." What feeds the imagination of the poet, nourishes the faith of the Christian. We find in the present, the earnest of the future; we are under a law of progress moving onward towards final completion. I have seen the glacier which in the lapse of centuries had glided from the lofty region of perpetual snow, into the bosom of the sunny valley; it had been carried forward by an irresistible law of God's appointment. Many a rocky hindrance interposed, but overcome in the movement, the seeming obstruction has but formed a convenient centre to collect and radiate the solar heat, which by another law of heaven liberates the ice-bound captive, and sends the melting drops in free and flowing streams downward to the abounding river, and onward to the swelling ocean.

" The great eternal scheme
Involving all, and in a perfect whole
Uniting, as the prospect wider spreads
To reason's eye refined clears up apace."

You may have observed that in the first chapter, Butler has not enlarged on the moral argument in support of the probability of a future life. But at this stage we are enabled to call it in aid, with greatly increased effect. The argument derived from the tendencies of virtue and vice, leads us to presume, that there will be a future life, and a perfect moral government—both the fact, and the general character of that future life, are confirmed by the consideration of these tendencies. It would falsify our moral nature, and be at variance with

the law of progress, which regulates the course and order of things around us, if the expectation cherished in the heart, and founded in the common experience of our daily life—if the continuance of the moral government already commenced, should be abruptly and prematurely interrupted; or if the triumph of virtue should not be carried forward to its final and complete fulfilment.

Thus then the present life is found to be the stepping-stone to the future; and this earth is for us, but the outer court of the great temple of eternity. It is good for us to be here—we feel the presence, we acknowledge the power and we experience the protection of God—our heavenly Father, as He leads us onward to the promised land, and points to the inheritance purchased for His people, by our gracious Redeemer.

The earnest of the Spirit is given that we may have a foretaste of the joy and the peace of Heaven. It tells the loving heart—

‘There is a happy land, far far away.’

It connects by a Divine link, the life that now is with that which is to come—and man must not sever what God has joined together. The wind blowing from the west is said to have suggested to Columbus, the idea of a distant continent. Prompted by the heroism of his genius, by intuitions higher than reason and deeper than reflection; guided by intimations that pointed towards the land which he felt to be divinely promised to his faith and patience; his watchword was—Persevere—

‘Nor bate a jot
Of heart or hope, but only steer
Right onward;,
“Steer on, brave sailor! steer right on!
Though scoffers may deride,

And the tir'd pilot at the helm
 His rudder lay aside,
Yet ever, westward ho! the
 Coast must there appear ;
Already to thy mental sight
 It glimmers bright and clear.
Trust to the God who guides—
 Pursue the silent ocean flood—
Ev'n were it not, still there would
 Rise to make thy surety good.
With genius nature joins, in ever
 Lasting covenant still:
The promises of one, the other
 Fails not to fulfil."

Go and do likewise.

LECTURE VI.

PROBATION.

THE teaching of Revelation as to a future life having been confirmed by analogy—the reality of a moral government of the world being matter of present experience, and the continuance and completion of this moral government hereafter, a reasonable inference and a revealed doctrine, the consideration of the present life as preparatory to the future, as a state of probation and of moral discipline, naturally demands our thoughtful attention. An immortal and moral being, placed in such a state by Him who is the righteous governor of the world, accountable to Him who will judge the world in righteousness and reward every man according to his works—such a being has an unspeakable interest in the solemn practical question—what is our proper business, in this preparatory stage of our earthly existence? But it may here be asked what is meant by a state of probation? It may be supposed that in effect it amounts to the same thing as to say (what has been said and shewn already) that we are under the moral government of God; but it brings out more distinctly the state of trial in which we are placed, with allurements to wrong, difficulties in adhering uniformly to what is right, and the danger of miscarrying by such temptations.

The pleasures and the pains already shewn to be the gene-

rally appointed and foreseen consequences of our actions under God's natural government, imply this—that He has made our happiness and misery, or our interest to depend *in part* upon ourselves. So far as we have temptations to any course of action which will *probably* occasion us greater temporal inconvenience and uneasiness than satisfaction—so far our temporal interest is in danger and we are in a state of trial with respect to it. There is a practical proof in the probability which is sufficient to influence conduct—there is a temptation to gratify a passion sufficient to try and to prove us. We blame others and blame ourselves for misconduct in temporal matters. We miss happiness sometimes that we feel conscious we might have attained, and we incur misery which we acknowledge that we might have avoided. All these shew that we encounter temptation and incur the peril and often the penalty of miscarrying.

In the peculiar circumstances of youth, and from the temptations to certain courses of vice, both our present and our future interests may suffer severely. Thus are we in a state of difficulty and danger, analogous to what we are taught to believe is our present state of trial or probation with reference to a future life.

There are external temptations from objects without and internal from passions within; these temptations coincide and mutually imply one another. There are objects which being present to the senses or offering themselves to the mind, excite emotions suitable to their nature, not only in cases where they might be gratified innocently, but where the gratification must be imprudent and sinful. The object being present, the affection is excited which, though it cannot be lawfully gratified, remains a propension, constitutes temptation, and necessitates the duty of self-denial; the moral difficulty of this, is the element of danger. This self-denial is as

really necessary to secure the present interest which imprudence endangers, as the future interest which sin puts in peril. We are thus in a like state of trial with respect to both, by the very same passions excited by the very same means. We may be tempted by present gratification of our passions to forego what is upon the whole our temporal interest, and our state of trial in regard to it, is so analogous to that in which we are taught to believe we are placed with reference to our future interest, that we have but to substitute future for temporal, and virtue for prudence, in order to make the description of the former applicable to the latter.

We may make like observations with regard to the behaviour of those who seem to be blinded and deceived by inordinate passions in their worldly concerns, as much as in religion. Some are forcibly carried away by their passions against their better judgment and feeble resolutions of amendment; others are utterly reckless of all consequences in time or eternity. Thus temporal interests are often consciously disregarded as well as the higher interests of eternity. Our trial as to both, our difficulties and our dangers proceed from the same causes, have the same effect upon conduct, and are evidently analogous.

In both cases our difficulties and dangers are increased, and would seem to be in a manner made by means of others. Wrong education, bad example, the dishonest artifices which are got into business of all kinds, and the corruption of religion into superstitions which indulge men in their sins, may fearfully increase the peril of miscarrying as to our higher interests. So the difficulty of acting prudently, in matters relating to our present interest, and the danger of being misled in regard to it, may be increased by an imperfect or foolish education; by the extravagance or carelessness of those with whom we have intercourse in maturer life, by mistaken

notions about happiness—popular fallacies and current prejudices, which are taken up for common opinion. Negligence and folly in temporal matters, sinful practices and habits of indulgence may accumulate difficulties, and undermine the authority of conscience; wrong behaviour in youth, when the feelings are fresh and impressible, the memory tenacious and the passions strong, may fatally increase the power of temptation in maturer life; and at least give to many a subsequent trial, the sharp severity of remedial chastisement, in mercy inflicted before ‘the door is shut.’

No account can be given in the way of reason for the wilful sacrifice of man’s acknowledged interest to the temporary gratification of passion. Butler dwells upon this impressively in the celebrated Sermon on the Character of Balaam. Man is a fallen creature; there are natural appearances (he says) of our being in a state of degradation. “Reason alone, whatever any one may wish, is not in reality a sufficient motive of virtue in such a creature as man”—(Serm. on Compassion, 2 Vol. 56.) But notwithstanding our actual condition, and the circumstances in which we are placed, he says in the chapter now before us—that there is no more required than what we are well able to do; no more than we naturally consider to be equitable, supposing it required by proper authority.

It has been suggested by some whose opinions deserve our respect, that Butler seems to have here overlooked the great revealed truths of the Atonement of Christ, and the operation of the Holy Spirit; but I think this objection has been unadvisedly made. His professed design in this part of the treatise is to shew 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.

In shewing this, he directs our attention to the facts of our experience, the course of our daily lives, the order of nature in respect of our present and temporal interest. Whatever speculative difficulty may be suggested as to the future, there can be no dispute about present matters of fact which are obvious; and these are equally open to the same speculative abstract objections, though not in the same degree, yet to such a degree as to render the facts a practical answer to the speculative objections. He does not at this stage introduce those weighty truths, which are afterwards stated in the second part of the treatise where he deals with Revealed Religion. He is in this first part engaged in clearing the ground of objections to what religion teaches as to man's state of probation in this life, and the conditions of trial, difficulty and danger, to which he is subjected. We have no more right to isolate this and then to condemn it, as partial and incomplete, than we would have to separate a verse of Scripture from its context, or a text of the Old Testament from the truths revealed in the New. Take the 2nd chapter of the Epistle to the Romans—read it by itself alone; then follow the course of the argument to its completion until you have mastered the sublime logic of the 8th chapter and then turn back and you will find that this 2nd chapter and every verse from the first has been made significant and consistent—as integral parts of a complete whole. The analogy to which he refers is peculiarly clear and convincing, to shew that there is nothing incredible in the doctrine that the way to our security and happiness hereafter, is one which requires self-denial, and is beset with many difficulties and many dangers; as a matter of fact we find the way to our temporal happiness, and the security of our present interest is beset with like difficulties and dangers, like in kind—though not in degree. The miseries of life although certain to the fore-know-

ledge of God, are yet *contingent to us*, as contingent and undetermined as the conduct of which they are the appointed consequences, and left to be determined by it. Our present interest is not forced upon us, nor offered to our acceptance simply, but *to our acquisition by the means which God has appointed for the purpose*. This may also be the case—(at least *it is perfectly credible that it may be so*) as to the chief and final good which Religion proposes to us. The analogy throughout is striking and suggestive; you will see in all this, there is nothing stated which may not be made completely consistent with the lessons of the Gospel economy. Indeed, the acknowledged fact of our moral degradation—the avowed insufficiency of reason alone to guide us in the path of duty, these confessions of human nature, these cries of helplessness, invite at least the offices of mercy—and welcome the glad tidings of the Gospel, which came not to make void but to establish the law. The objections which Butler encounters, if sufficient to displace the teaching of religion as to our state of trial as a preparation for and precursor of our future state beyond the grave—must also displace the facts of our experience, and the natural course of life in reference to our temporal interests. The God of nature must be given up, if we give up the God of Revelation.

But it may be said that although the analogy may be complete in kind, it fails because of the difference in degree between the interests at stake, and the relative hardship of the trial in respect of these unequal interests. The argument involved in this objection ignores the true character of God. His righteousness or His justice cannot be vindicated by any process of graduation. It is not here a matter of degree as to His justice, but of the *principles* of His government. One solitary point of the law broken, establishes guilt before God; one jot or tittle cannot therefore be compromised, without

breaking in upon Divine perfection. They who reason on degrees, who would acquiesce in a smaller degree of injustice, however reduced, but denounce and repudiate a greater, would be compelled to admit the possible sacrifice of the highest interests and most blessed hopes of man to the demands of other portions of the universe, as compared with which, ours might be found to be relatively unimportant. To reason on degrees, when surrounded by a universe so boundless, is alike derogatory to God and destructive of our dearest hopes.

The semblance of injustice there may be to a shallow observer, in finding such a creature as man, in such a state of trial, whether in relation to his temporal or eternal interests, but in neither have we a right to say that any real injustice exists. Mere difficulty is not nor is extreme danger allowed by ourselves to be a valid excuse for the wilful disregard of an acknowledged and imperative duty. The analogy should teach us that God may be as essentially just in the least as in the greatest. His own word declares that He is just, and "the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus."

In the passage which I quoted from the Sermon on Compassion, in which Butler speaks of the insufficiency of Reason to secure virtuous conduct in such a creature as man—he adds—"but this reason joined with those affections which God has impressed upon his heart, when these are allowed scope to exercise themselves, but under strict government and direction of reason; then it is we act suitably to our nature, and to the circumstances God has placed us in." Our nature, be it remembered, is confessedly in a state of degradation; and Butler observes that if upright creatures may want to be improved, depraved creatures want to be renewed. Education and discipline in all degrees and sorts of gentleness and severity are absolutely necessary for such a creature as man. This leads him in the 5th chapter to consider this life as a

school of discipline for eternity; to shew that we are so constituted, and such is our condition that we may here by the use of the means which God has appointed and provided, qualify ourselves for the state which is to follow the present. You will see how at the beginning of this important chapter he puts aside certain speculative questions as not only irrelevant but as altogether beyond the legitimate province of human enquiry. He confines himself to the practical question, what belongs to man, what is his business here on earth, what duties has he to fulfil in this school of discipline? He does not introduce into the argument at this stage, the vital truth of the gracious work of the Holy Spirit; but it is not just to say, that he has overlooked it—and we cannot say that he has ignored what he afterwards sets forth in the second part of the treatise. It is doubtless most needful for us in the study of this chapter, not to forget the necessity of the aid of Him from whom all holy desires, all good counsels and all just works do proceed. The future state to which we are taught to look forward as a blessed hope, is one of “*security and happiness*,” and therefore we may reasonably infer that this present life was intended to be a school of discipline and suitable preparation for such a state.

Such is the teaching of Religion. We find that under the Christian economy, none of the laws of our mental and moral nature have been repealed; the Holy Spirit sanctifies but does not supersede the process under which man’s moral culture, is to be advanced, in accordance with these laws. By reason of use, (says the inspired Apostle) the senses are exercised to discern both good and evil. Our passive impressions are weakened, our active principles strengthened by exercise; these are laws of our nature on which is founded our capacity of moral improvement. Happiness results from our nature and our condition jointly; and therefore there

must be some character and qualifications, some determinate capacities to render us capable of future happiness in heaven, just as there must be some without which men could not enjoy life or happiness on earth.

The constitution of man, and the course of nature in the successive stages of life shew that we are capable of becoming qualified for states of life for which we were previously wholly unqualified. We find it to be a general law, that all our faculties are made for enlargement, for acquirement of experience and habits. We can perceive and know; we can store up ideas and knowledge by 'memory.' We can not only act as voluntary agents, but we are susceptible of impressions which for the moment may be made upon us, and *we are capable of getting a new facility in any kind of action and of settled alterations in our temper and character.*

This new facility—these settled alterations, depend on what is called *the law of habits*. Under this law, vivified by the power of Him, who is the Divine helper of our infirmities, we may have a transformation wrought in us by which our hearts will be fixed, our imaginations controuled and regulated, our wills no longer wilful but submissive to the Sovereign will of God our Father. "The process (says Archdeacon Hare) by which this transformation is to be brought about, is set forth by Butler in his excellent chapter, the most valuable perhaps in the whole Analogy, on a state of moral discipline; where he shews that while passive impressions grow weaker by repetition, practical habits are formed and strengthened by repeated acts. So that the true preparation for heaven is a life of godliness on earth."

The word habit—implies a thing possessed—somewhat gained or acquired and made our own; gained or acquired in accordance with certain laws of association already explained in the valuable lecture of Dr. M'Cosh, and by means of cer-

tain movements within us, to which it is proper more precisely to refer. It is familiarly described as a second nature. We acquire the habit of speaking or writing with facility; of understanding what we hear or what we read. There are habits of bodily activity, and motions graceful or unbecoming which are owing to use; there are also habits of life and conduct, of submission to constituted authority, of veracity, justice, charity; attention, self-government, envy, hatred, malice and uncharitableness; these are formed by repeated acts, as well as those of the body. For habits of the mind—of the moral nature, are produced by the exertion of inward practical principles, by carrying them into act, or acting upon them; the principles of obedience, of veracity, justice and charity. It is not the act in itself which forms the active habit of virtue but the exertion of the inward principle. The resolution to do well, and the endeavour to enforce upon our own consciences a practical sense of virtue or beget it in others, are acts, in a limited sense, and will contribute to some extent towards forming good habits. But here you must remember there is a habit of insensibility, which above all others requires to be noticed, and against which Butler gives us a solemn and significant caution. By a law of our nature, impressions which are often repeated are felt less sensibly; whilst we are passive they are transient—they flit away as the clouds of the morning—chased by the passing breeze. He warns us therefore against going over theories of virtue, making it a matter of mere sentiment—a kind of passive enjoyment and nothing more by which the mind may be hardened in a contrary course, because it may be rendered the more insensible to good impressions, intended to supply active principles to influence conduct. But if we act upon our good impressions, then active habits may be gradually forming and strengthening, by a course of acting upon the motives and excitements which

are continually less and less sensibly felt as impressions, even as the active habits gain strength and vigour. And thus it is, by a wise and beautiful provision, which manifests its gracious purpose to the thoughtful observer, that active principles at the very times that they are less lively in perception than they were, are found to be the more thoroughly wrought into the temper and character and more powerful in determining conduct. Maturer years may have not the fresh feelings or the impressible affections of youth, but they ought to have the acquired habits and the fixed character, for the formation of which, the season of youth and its susceptibility have been graciously provided by the wisdom and goodness of God. "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth." Thus then our sympathy may be merely sentimental, or it may stimulate us to acts of benevolence; the frequent sight of distress may simply render us the more insensible to human misery, or it may lead to the formation of a habit of active benevolence. The moral efficacy therefore of such impressions depends on this, whether we act upon them according to conscience. "If ye know these things," said He who spake as never man spake, "happy are ye if ye *do* them." Remember how He has pointed out the difference between him who built on the solid rock and him who chose for his foundation the shifting sand—both heard the same Divine lessons under the same circumstances; one was a doer of the word which both had heard; he acted on the impressions made upon his heart—by the words of our gracious Redeemer; he built an enduring edifice, on a sure and tried foundation. The other was a hearer only; the passive impression passed away—like the baseless fabric of a vision—the foundation failed, the superstructure fell to the ground.

Thus then we have in this testimony of our blessed Lord, this law of our nature, the law of habit, manifestly recog-

nized; to know or to hear the highest truths, is not, of itself, a blessing to us; but to be made happy and secure, we must *do* them, that is to say, we must act upon them, according to opportunity and as God may enable us. To him that hath, that maketh a profitable use of—shall be given. You cannot fail to remember the many instances in which this practical lesson is enforced in the New Testament, never indeed in the way of leading man to prefer a claim founded on any supposed merit of his own, in any form or under any pretence, but as the willing obedience of a true faith, a faith which works by love—a love which is the fulfilling of the law. This obedience of faith, this work of love, this diligence in duty, forms the habits which fix the character; and the character as finally fashioned, measures the capacity for enjoyment of the reward which is given, according to the works which thus (as it were) have been incorporated into the character, and so follow into heaven the blessed dead who die in the Lord in whom they have lived. The reward is not the less a gift, it is not the less of grace, because it has been so adjusted as to have not merely provided for endless happiness freely bestowed, but also for the security of the believer, by the discipline of his life on earth. To make this discipline effectual for its high and holy purposes, the laws of our moral nature are quickened (not repealed) by the Spirit which helps our infirmities; every element of our being which can be made available to the gracious purpose, is called in aid to take part in the conflict, in which conscience and passion are more or less engaged, in the temptations which constitute our trial and our discipline. In what way, or by what higher agencies, the Holy Spirit helps the believer in this conflict we cannot tell—we have not the means of knowing, perhaps not the faculties for apprehending. But so far as it is fit for us to know, that we may see what our proper part is, in a conflict so vital, we

can find in this law of habits in our nature and constitution, what must be to us deeply interesting and important.

In active habits, there is first a movement of the will—a *volition*; then a mechanical effort—then an act done; by the repeated acts, and the law of association, the effort at last disappears, and the act follows on the volition.

In the passive habit—there is first an impression made; next an effort of attention; then an idea—here again the second term is made to disappear by repetition, and the idea follows at once on the impression. This is a habit because formed by exercise, and passive because exercised involuntarily or in obedience to the essential laws of association. A readiness acquired in speaking or writing is an instance of active habits; our readiness in understanding languages upon sight or hearing of words, an instance of passive habits. There is further the habit of insensibility, which may be acquired by receiving impressions and remaining passive when it is our duty to act on the impressions made upon us, which are intended to influence us and not to be exhausted in mere sentimentality, or buried in the language of exaggeration.

There is a very striking testimony to the Divine origin of the Gospel, in its avoidance of all abstraction or mere philosophic system; in its way of fixing our hearts on Him who is the great Exemplar for man; its historical reality as a religion of facts, the actual dealings of God, personally and practically communing with us as a Father in heaven with His children on earth. “There was another particular,” says David Hume, “which contributed more than any thing to waste my spirits and bring on me this distemper, which was, that having read many books of morality, such as Cicero, Seneca and Plutarch, and being smit with their beautiful representations of virtue and philosophy, I undertook the improvement of my temper and will, along with my reason and understanding. I

was continually fortifying myself with reflections against death and poverty and shame and pain, and all the other calamities of life. These, no doubt, are exceedingly useful when joined with an active life, because the occasion being presented along with the reflection, works it into the soul and makes it take a deep impression; but in solitude they serve to little other purpose than to waste the spirits, the force of the mind meeting with no resistance, but wasting itself in the air, like our arm when it misses its aim. This however I did not learn but by experience, and till I had already ruined my health, though I was not sensible of it."

In the interesting volumes which contain the letters and conversations of M. de Tocqueville, there are extracts from the journal of Mr. Senior, which gives the conversations as they occurred. The last bears date the 26th April, 1858. "We talked of novels. I read none," he said, "that end ill. Why should one voluntarily subject one's self to painful emotions? to emotions created by an imaginary cause, and therefore impelling you to no actions? I like vivid emotions, but I seek them in real life, in society, in travelling, in business, but above all, in political business."

Now is it not exquisitely and Divinely arranged by a wisdom and a goodness which characterize the God of Revelation, that the present life with all its activities, its daily duties, in the home, in the town, in the kingdom, in the wide world—the family relations, the claims of vicinity, of country, of humanity—should be consecrated to the purpose of our discipline in duty—provision so bountifully made for the constant exercise of those principles of our moral nature, by which, under the influence of the Holy Spirit we are trained for heaven; and without which, by the ascertained law of that unaided nature, we must sink into deeper degradation? How can we escape if we neglect so great salvation? If we are immortal as

well as moral beings, is there not in the indelibility of the character which may be fashioned in this our state of discipline, an element of endless happiness or of endless misery? We thus see how and why it is, that duty is so vital to man, and how gracious is the Gospel which presses it on him at every stage of his progress. We see that it is truly a reasonable service which is required of us—not only no more required on our part than we are well able to do—(to use Butler's words in the 4th chapter) but I would add—no less than is needful to complete our happiness and perfect our security hereafter in a heavenly home.

God does not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it. So says the Apostle in the Scripture portion of this evening. The temptation is in the excitement of the passion, which the object presented to it, is fitted to awaken and stimulate. The habit of resistance, of controlling the passion, of placing it under the authority and restraint of conscience, must be acquired. How is this to be accomplished? "It were," says Lord Bacon, "a strange speech which spoken, or spoken oft, should reclaim a man from a vice to which he were by nature subject. It is order, pursuit, sequence, and interchange of application, which is mighty in nature, which although it require more exact knowledge in prescribing and more precise obedience in observing, yet is recompensed with the magnitude of effects." In the seventh Book of the *De Augmentis*, he refers to the influence of custom and habit, and after some wise and instructive remarks observes—"That the most noble and effectual of the means to the redeeming of the mind unto virtue, and placing it in the state nearest to perfection, is the electing and propounding unto a man's self, good and virtuous ends of his life and actions; such as may be in a reasonable sort within

his compass to attain. For if these two things be supposed that a man set before him honest and good ends: and again, that his mind be resolute and constant to pursue and obtain them, it will follow that his mind shall address and mould itself to all virtues at once. And this indeed is like the work of nature, whereas the other courses I have mentioned are like the work of the hand. For as when a carver makes an image, he shapes only that part wherein he works, and not the rest—as if he be upon the face, that part which shall be the body is but a rude and unshapen stone still, till such time as he comes to it; but contrariwise, when nature makes a flower or a living creature, she forms and produces rudiments of all the parts at one time. So in obtaining virtue by habit, while we practice temperance we do not advance much in fortitude nor the like; but when we dedicate and apply our lives entirely to good and honest ends, what virtue soever the pursuit and passage towards those ends suggests and enjoins, we shall find ourselves invested with a precedent disposition, and propensity to conform thereto.”

The end of the commandment is charity, the love of God and love of man. And, indeed, in the very page of Lord Bacon from which I have read, he adds—“the true religion and holy Christian faith lays hold of the reality itself by imprinting upon men’s souls charity, which is excellently called the bond of perfection, because it comprehends and fastens all virtues together.”

Under the Gospel economy, temptations are not withdrawn, but still constitute our trial and our discipline. A virtuous habit helps us to resist temptation—to controul the passion excited. It is an auxiliary to the reason—to the moral faculty. After it has once resolved, the facility and the strength which the habit has already increased, are at the service of the faculty—the propension excited by the object soliciting its

attention. But then it may be said that to act from a virtuous habit is not necessarily an act of virtue, and that is true; an act of virtue must be approved by the moral faculty—by reason—as right—the virtue in a habit is exerted in its formation.

But when it is formed, we have pleasure in the exercise, which had been at first a work of difficulty, and so the propension on the side of virtue is strengthened, and the power of resisting the solicitations in the other direction are increased in proportion. This is the appointed law of our moral nature; its discipline or its degradation are essentially connected with the action of this law, under the circumstances in which we may be placed. Now it is said to indicate bodily health, when the functions of the various parts are carried on below consciousness of the particular action of each separate part—but whilst we are conscious of the general good condition of the whole. If we are disposed to be on the watch to note the effect of every mouthful of food which we take, or to feel the beat of our pulse, or such like matters, we shew rather the symptoms of disordered nerves than a proper regard for bodily health. It is at the same time very right that we should provide ourselves with wholesome food, and take suitable exercise—and the neglect of such matters brings its own penalties.

So with our higher nature, it must be kept in a healthy state by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God and by the discharge of the duties which He has appointed for our daily discipline. It is under the law of love that the highest fulfilment of duty is most effectually secured; and therefore has this discipline of duty been placed under the sanction of this highest law of the universe. He who loved us and gave Himself for us—who spake as never man spake—went about doing good—living the Gospel which He preached—leaving us an example that we should follow His steps.

His Gospel is a system of love and of saving grace—with few doctrines to be believed, and many duties to be performed—performed as proofs of our love, as free-will offerings of thanksgiving, but also as auxiliary to our happiness, and subservient to our security. You will find in some parts of the Gospel, works are spoken of as relatively worthless—in other parts, as absolutely essential. And so we can now well understand the truth and consistency of both. As a ground of claim, or a title to salvation, they are valueless; as an element of moral discipline, an appointed instrumentality under the influence of the Holy Spirit, to prepare the believer for a better and a happier world, they have the value which God has put upon them, of His own free and sovereign grace. It is more blessed to give than to receive. The cup of cold water given for Christ's sake, has its appointed blessing for the giver—and they who for the love of Christ, and without the possibility of recompense upon earth, have performed works of active benevolence, of faith and charity, they shall be recompensed in the resurrection of the just.

These acts—done in faith—prompted by love, will have moulded the character of the servant of Christ on earth—before he enters into the joy of his Lord in heaven. I have lingered over this part of our subject with a heart-felt desire that you should be impressed with the exquisite adaptation of the Gospel of the grace of God, to the requirements and the laws of our moral nature, and the fulfilment of our holiest aspirations—the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

The good ends which Bacon so beautifully suggests—are scattered profusely around the paths of Christian life. In the family, affection and obedience; in the outer world, sympathy and benevolence; in business, fidelity integrity and diligence; in the church, devotion and thanksgiving. As the Spirit con-

vinces us of sin, of the perfection of that law which is holy, just, and good, He will lead us the more to look to Him who has washed us from our sins in His own blood, and taketh away the sin of the world. He will quicken us with the love of Him who hath so loved us ; as we feel that much has been forgiven, we will be led to love much—and if we love much we will do much—nor be weary in well-doing.

Whatsoever things are true,
Whatsoever things are honest,
Whatsoever things are just,
Whatsoever things are pure,
Whatsoever things are lovely,
Whatsoever things are of good report—

If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things, *and do them.*

LECTURE VII.

MORAL DISCIPLINE.—CONTINUED.

THE consideration of the present life, as vitally connected with the future, for which we find it to be a state of preparation, where our characters are to be formed by a course of moral discipline, with the Divine help which God has provided—this has been the subject of the last lecture, and I propose to follow it up in the present, so as to conclude the examination of the impressive and important chapter which is now before us. Butler tells us that in our natural state we find ourselves at the first, “unformed, unfinished creatures, utterly deficient and unqualified (before the acquirement of knowledge, experience, and habits), for that mature state of life, which was the end of man’s creation, considering him as related only to this world.” But these deficiencies may be supplied by acquired knowledge, experience, and habits; and the condition of infancy, childhood, and youth is fitted for the acquiring of the qualifications which are needed in mature age. In the arrangements of family life, authority softened and commended by natural affection, trains the young to subordination, and habituates them to a willing obedience. They are thus gently and gradually qualified for submission to civil authority and the restraint of self-government in society. They learn insensibly and perfectly rules of action and conduct, which

may be mistaken for instinct, though they have been really acquired by exercise and experience. Processes are silently active long before their effect is manifested. The fresh feelings have received impressions and impulses which go forward into manhood, upon which is visibly impressed the character of the training of the child. Thus at the start, in the domestic constitution, provision is made for giving the key-note to life's duties; it inculcates order, cherishes kindness, commends unity, and hallows peace. At this stage, instruction, example, and the care of others are requisite, but moreover there is much left to ourselves to do; part is easily done, part demands diligence, thoughtfulness, self-denial, and a sustained sense of duty. According to the use made of this early period of life, the character of the man is formed or made appear; it is an opportunity put into our hands, which, when lost, is not to be recovered. All this will be at once admitted as what may be said to be commonplace, because it is what we all find to be true in the routine of life. Butler has observed, in the preface to the first edition of this treatise, "If the reader should meet here with anything 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.*" If then we find ourselves placed in a state of discipline during childhood, for mature age, and our character and qualification for our position in life are moulded by this discipline, and dependent on the success with which it has been conducted, is it not credible and probable that this life may be a like state of discipline for the future; and our finding ourselves placed in it under such discipline, a providential disposition of things, making our condition in both respects uniform and of a-piece, and comprehended under one general law?

That we are capable of moral improvement by discipline,

is undeniable ; that we require it, is obvious. From the very constitution of a finite creature, habits of virtue may be necessary for a security against the danger of deviating from what is right. The great wickedness of many, the imperfections of which the best are conscious, shew how greatly we want moral culture. Our nature is made up of various affections towards particular external objects, and 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—the times, degrees, and manner in which the objects of them may be pursued. But (as he truly adds) “the principle of virtue can neither excite them *nor prevent their being excited.*” The presence of the object naturally excites the affection towards it—what we call “*the propension ;*” and if it cannot be gratified lawfully, but may be gratified by unlawful means, then, so long as in such circumstances the affection continues to be excited, it has a tendency to incline us to venture upon such unlawful means, and so far to put us in danger. The excitement of the affection and its continuing in the mind for a time may be natural, necessary, and innocent ; but the danger we are placed in by this, is greater or less according to the strength of the power of resistance within us, and this may depend to an extent, we may not be able to define, on the improvement of the practical principle of virtue, the moral principle invigorated by discipline and exercise—by our attending to the equity and right of the case in whatever we are engaged, whether it be in greater or less matters, and accustoming ourselves always to act upon it. If we do not steer we must drift. The habit of resistance as it is acquired, strengthens the practical principle and weakens the power of the opposite propension, which will be excited in like forbidden circumstances. In a future state (he says) it is scarce possible to avoid supposing that particular affections, as a

part of our nature, will remain. If so, the regulation of them by acquired habits of restraint may be necessary. Indeed, in any event, habits of virtue acquired by a moral discipline are improvement in virtue, and under the moral government already established, and which we have found to be moving forward towards completion hereafter, and which we expect will be perfected in righteousness, improvement in virtue must be advancement in happiness; and the strength of the principle as improved, will be at least an element of security against the danger to which finite creatures are, from their very constitution, more or less exposed. We can see how such creatures though made upright may fall, but if enabled to preserve their uprightness, by so doing might raise themselves to a more secure state of virtue.

Particular propensions must be felt by creatures having particular affections, and placed in circumstances in which there are objects which must, in their very nature, excite these affections. All this may so far be innocent and lawful, natural and necessary. The inward constitution of such creatures may be such, that the several principles natural and moral are in the most exact proportions, that is to say, in a proportion the most exactly adapted to their intended state of life. Such would be at the first upright or finitely perfect; but the presence of the object which naturally excites a particular propension may be accompanied with circumstances in which the propension cannot be gratified with, but may be gratified without, the allowance of the moral principle or by contradicting it. The excitement of this propension may be repeated by a greater frequency of occasions naturally exciting it, than of occasions of exciting others. The least voluntary indulgence IN FORBIDDEN CIRCUMSTANCES (these words are emphatic) though but in thought, will increase the tendency to induce the creature to the forbidden gratification

—peculiar conjunctures, perhaps, conspiring, the tendency becomes effect—the danger of deviating from right ends in actual deviation. The danger, you may observe, arises from the very nature of the propension, and therefore could not be prevented though it might have been escaped, that is to say, got through innocently. Is not this an exact analysis of the temptation and fall of our first parents, which is recorded for our instruction in the Word of God ?

“ It is impossible (Butler adds) to say how much even the first full overt act might disorder the inward constitution, unsettle the adjustments, and alter the proportions which formed it, and in which the uprightness of its make consisted.” Then the repetition of similar acts would produce habits. Thus the constitution would be spoiled, and creatures made upright become corrupt and depraved in their settled character, whereas if they had preserved their integrity by steadily following the moral principle, and notwithstanding the unavoidable danger of defection, which necessarily arose from the natural propension, the danger would have lessened and the security against it have increased. Vicious indulgence is not merely in itself sinful, but it depraves and deteriorates the inward constitution and character. On the other hand, the exercise of the virtuous principle may be such as to lessen the danger of defection and fortify against what remains of it ; and the higher perfection of our nature may consist in habits of virtue formed in a state of discipline, and a more complete security remain to proceed from these habits. But here let me say though (as it is admitted by Butler) we cannot adequately estimate the moral consequences of the fall—the derangement and degradation—the debasing fear—the sense of alienation from God—yet, as the mysterious shock thus given to our moral nature is to some extent at least a matter of which we are conscious, and in all its solemn reality a fact

revealed, it cannot consist with reason, and it is contrary to revelation, to set up any system of human effort, or any method of discipline, however refined, as sufficient of itself to re-adjust the framework of this our fallen nature, to repair the ruin, to restore the lost image of Him, who made man upright. “*Depraved* creatures (says Butler) want (not merely to be improved) but to be *renewed*.” When, therefore, revelation teaches us that this is the special and sacred office of the Holy Spirit, that He is the helper of our infirmities; that the processes of moral discipline, which are on our part to be carried on, according to the laws of our moral being, the analogy of our common life and in the course of our daily duties, that these are quickened by Him—in all who are children of God by faith in Christ—so as to make them meet to be partakers of the joys of heaven; let us accept the gracious announcement with thankful and confiding hearts—let us not presume to limit the influence nor define the operation of the Blessed Spirit. We may not be able to analyze what we may feel in the very depths of our being—a witness within us; but we can at least see on the human side, the moral obligations imposed, the reasonable service required, the discipline of duty in order to a growth in grace; we may observe the care and the diligence, so becoming our position under the Gospel dispensation, the jealous vigilance ever to be exercised that we may not grieve Him by whom the believer is sealed unto the day of redemption.

It is our part to “fill the waterpots to the brim”—the converting process is the work of God alone. So far as practically concern us, our duties, our moral preparation for that future state which we have had under consideration, the present world is peculiarly fit to be a state of discipline for this purpose to such as will use it, according to the appointment and will of God. The experience of life, the facts which it presents

to our observation, the evidence of our frailty, of our capacity of misery, 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 sinful and wretched; this has a tendency (Butler tells us) 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. The security of creatures in the highest and most settled state of perfection may in part, perhaps, arise from having had such a sense of things as this, habitually fixed within them in some state of probation. The impressions fixed here may remain for ever. Our temptations, difficulties, need of thought and care,—all the trials of our daily life render the present world peculiarly fit to be a state of discipline, because from the very make of our nature, the continued exercise of the virtuous principle carried into act, has a peculiar tendency to form habits of virtue, and so to fix the character. The continuance of temptations calls for the continued exertion of the virtuous principle, which grows and is strengthened as the exercise of it is more continued, oftener repeated and more intense, as it must be in circumstances of danger, temptation and difficulty of any kind and in any degree; and in such case the tendency to form and fix the habit of virtue is increased proportionably, and a more confirmed habit is the consequence. The labour is not in vain, in the Lord. In the work which He has allotted to us in our position and circumstances, whatsoever they be, we are encouraged to be always abounding, and the effect of this, on our habits, holds (as Butler says) to a certain length—but he adds—“how far it may hold, I know not.” Indeed he suggests that there is a degree beyond which neither our intellectual powers nor our bodily strength can be improved and both may be over wrought. And probably (he suggests) there may be something analogous

to this with respect to the moral character, which he only mentions, lest it should be considered as a confutation of, rather than an exception to, what he had observed as to the law of moral habits.

To this suggestion of Butler as to the limit in our moral discipline, I would add a suggestion from myself. The law of growth is one of silent progress—which is manifested at intervals in the results which we find in the several stages—such as the blade, the ear—the full corn in the ear. Character in like manner grows insensibly and continuously—influences from above co-operate with energies below, at the proper season, and if either be wanting in their season, the appointed consequence follows in the settled course of nature. God of His Sovereign wisdom may have fixed a limit beyond which the highest effort of any cannot go—but He has encouraged all of us to a patient continuance in well doing, and enjoined us not to be weary. He has invited us to press onward—not by impulsive and intermittent efforts—but by stedfast and sustained diligence *always* and *abounding*. Each hour of our lives has its own limit and we cannot go beyond it; but it is not so much to increase our sensitiveness—as to stir our energy—to make us “fervent in spirit serving the Lord,” that these limitations and their obvious consequences are noticed. We need to be admonished as well as encouraged. The world is made by many a discipline of vice rather than of virtue. Whether the analogy which he suggests as to the seeds of vegetables and the bodies of animals which are suffered to be wasted and lost without coming to perfection,—whether this can be at all compared with the ruin of moral and immortal beings, I do not here offer an opinion. Butler suggests that the appearance of such a waste in one case may be as difficult for us to account for as the ruin in the other. Be this as it may, it is but speculative; what we are concerned

to know is practical, that this world is adapted to be a state of moral discipline for those who feel that it is their wisdom and their safety, to obey a merciful and righteous God rather than to follow fallen man. Nor is this a mere appeal to the selfish part of our nature. Veracity, justice and charity, regard to God's authority and to our own chief interest are all coincident. It is not only that we have in this present life the means of cultivating the active principle of virtue and the obedience of faith, but we may also cultivate the habit of passive submission or pious resignation to the will of God. This is an essential part of a right character, and is not less needed in the hour of our wealth, in the sunshine of prosperity—than in the darker day of adversity. In the 2nd Sermon upon Compassion he observes “mitigation and reliefs are provided by the merciful Author of nature, for most of the afflictions in human life. There is kind provision made even against our frailties, as we are so constituted that time abundantly abates our sorrows, and begets in us that resignation of temper, which ought to have been produced by a better cause, a due sense of the authority of God and our state of dependence.” This is very beautifully expanded in the 2nd Sermon on the Love of God, (see page 179.) Habits of resignation—of submission to God's will, contentment with our appointed position, our lot in life as God has arranged it—habits formed by use may be necessary for our happiness and security hereafter—and the proper discipline for this is affliction. A right behaviour under it, receiving it as from the hand of God, as His appointment, His chastening for our profit, this will habituate the mind to a *dutiful* submission. “Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him”—was the sublime and pious assurance of His afflicted servant. “Prosperity” (says Lord Bacon) “is the blessing of the Old Testament, adversity is the blessing of the New, which carrieth the greater

benediction and the clearer revelation of God's favour. Yet even in the Old Testament, if you listen to David's harp you shall hear as many hearse-like airs as carols; and the pencil of the Holy Ghost hath laboured more in describing the afflictions of Job than the felicities of Solomon. Prosperity is not without many fears and distastes, and adversity is not without comforts and hopes. We see in needleworks and embroideries it is more pleasing to have a lively work upon a sad and solemn ground than to have a dark and melancholy work upon a lightsome ground: judge therefore of the pleasure of the heart by the pleasure of the eye. Certainly virtue is like precious odours, most fragrant when they are incensed or crushed."

It is (as Butler observes) the habit of dutiful submission, together with the active principle of obedience, which make up the temper and character in man which answers to the sovereignty of God. It is a necessity of human nature. The inspired Apostle has taught this in weighty and solemn words — "*Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered, and being made perfect, he became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.*" "The conclusion is" (to use the words of Butler in his sermon on the Ignorance of Man) "that in all lowliness of mind we set lightly by ourselves; that we form our temper to an implicit submission to the Divine Majesty; beget within ourselves an absolute resignation to all the methods of His providence, in His dealings with the children of men; that in the deepest humility of our souls we prostrate ourselves before Him and join in that celestial song,—"*Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty! just and true are thy ways thou King of saints! who shall not fear thee, O! Lord, and glorify thy name?*" It is not submission to mere power, but to the rightful authority of the righteous Governor of the world.

Thus then we experience in the stages of our present life that what we were to be, was to be the effect of what we would previously do, and that the method of God in 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. It is 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, exercise and discipline—chiefly in the beginning of life, but also throughout the whole course of it. Our condition is made a matter of choice, so far as our conduct is voluntary, with which our condition is naturally connected. The case with regard to a future state, and the declared consequence of neglecting or fulfilling the present duties appointed to be the discipline for that future state, the final judgment and reward according to works—the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or whether they be evil, is at least rendered credible, perfectly credible, from the analogy of nature, which has been so fully considered in this chapter.

The objections then to the statement of this life being intended to be a state of probation and of moral discipline, are met by the facts and realities which we experience; by the analogies in the course of things which we may readily observe. It is not a mere discipline of self love, for this it naturally moderates; and it cannot proceed exclusively from hope and fear. This state of probation may further imply the manifestation of character, not to Him who knoweth all things, but to His creation or some part of it. And all this is implied in moral government, since by the behaviour of persons under it, their characters cannot but be manifested, and if they behave well, improved.

The subject is of such solemn interest that it may at least excuse a more protracted review of it, than might be neces-

sary to make it simply intelligible. As we leave this life, we enter into the next stage of existence, morally advanced or morally degraded. And all we have been considering leads irresistibly to the conclusion, that the degree of this advancement or degradation, is fitted to be the measure of our capacity for happiness or misery hereafter.

The highest capacity for happiness must be the highest enjoyment of it for those who depart to be with Him, in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore. And although there is a manifest reserve in Revelation, as to the scenes and circumstances of our actual condition hereafter, there is a plain intimation that there will be degrees of happiness and misery, permanent personal differences, founded on the moral and individual results of the appointed discipline of the present life. How does this dignify the details of common daily life and all its daily duties? They are sacred as well as social, they are Divine as well as human—they are prospective as well as present—they are eternal as well as temporal. Do we shrink from the consequences of a conflict between conscience without sovereignty, and passions without subjection; from the encounter of our frail and fallen nature with the temptations which meet us at every turning of our course, at every step of our progress? We are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses—we are cheered by the grace and truth of that blessed Gospel, which tells of one who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin; who is afflicted in all our afflictions; who is able as He is willing to succour them that are tempted. “Count it all joy,” says St. James, “when ye fall into divers temptations—knowing this that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” We are not left to the deadly struggle of a shattered conscience with disordered passions.

“He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him, also freely give us all things?” How otherwise could we struggle, if we were left to ourselves, estranged and alienated from God, without loyalty or love in our hearts; without the hatred and abhorrence of evil, how could we cleave to that which is good? I have said before that the moral difficulty of our probation is solved by the Revelation of the Son—the Spiritual difficulty by the Revelation of the Spirit. “Let us reason together,” is the gracious invitation of God Himself, as by the hallowed lips of the holy and inspired Prophet, He opens out the gracious plan of salvation—pardon, purity and peace. And shall not reason bow with meek reverence and accept with thanksgiving such a proclamation of mercy, which clears up the perplexities of human life—the mystery of man—and makes the events and changeful experiences of life—its daily duties—its joys and its sorrows, the agencies of moral discipline, improvement in virtue, advancement in happiness, increase of moral security—a reasonable service, and a measure of Divine reward.

The analysis given of the process of temptation, by which our human nature in its original uprightness was liable to be and was in fact tempted and fell—this shews how this same nature taken by Him who was perfect Man as well as perfect God, did necessarily subject Him to the assaults of the Tempter. In the masterly sermons of the Bishop of Ossory on our Lord’s human Nature, in which he exposes the fallacy of that strange doctrine which the late Mr. Irving propounded on this question, he makes use of the principles which Butler has briefly but lucidly stated in this chapter—as to the excitement of propensions in human nature, which the moral principle cannot extinguish but may controul—and he applies them to the case of our blessed Lord, when the Tempter was

permitted to exhaust the resources and power of his mysterious dynasty—and subject the Redeemer to the highest pressure of severity, of which His human nature was capable, under temptation. It is not then merely that in our conflict, we are upheld by the love of Christ and the comfort of the Spirit—but we have the sympathy of Him who is touched with a feeling of our infirmities—who has triumphed over the Tempter—triumphed in His human nature—and thus “conquering and to conquer” stands revealed to us—“the Captain of our salvation.”

He leads us onward through this stage of our probation—not to take us out of the world into unnatural seclusion—but to keep us from the evil; to fix our hearts on Him—looking unto Him, as we run with patience the race that is set before us. “I am of opinion,” says Bacon, “that the duties of life are preferable to life itself. Wherefore if there be anything which may exactly answer our intentions, yet interferes at all with the offices and duties of life, I reject it.” It is not by isolation from the bustle of life—it is not by fitful or impulsive efforts that the great purpose of life’s discipline is to be successfully accomplished. The character of the immortal being is to be fashioned; a work intended to endure throughout eternity.

Mr. John Stuart Mill, an accomplished and able master of economic science, of what may be relatively described as a cold philosophy, dealing with things temporal, has said—“The character itself should be to the individual a paramount end, simply because the existence of this ideal nobleness of character, or of a near approach to it in any abundance, would go further than all things else towards making human life happy; both in the comparatively humble sense of pleasure and freedom from pain, and in the higher meaning of rendering life, not what it now is almost universally, puerile

and insignificant, but such as human beings with highly developed faculties can care to have.”

If then the end be so important, even in regard to the social progress of man, and the perishable concerns of this passing scene—this present life—how elevating, how ennobling is the greater and the higher end of augmenting the moral and spiritual weal of a better and a happier community, the spirits of the just made perfect.

In spotless garments, washed in blood
To wield the victor's palm,
Join in the song of—Praise to God
And glory to the Lamb.

The nobler and higher ends of Christian life—the love of God and love of man,—these are the good ends which come within the wise and beautiful suggestions of Lord Bacon which I noticed in the last lecture—in which he says—“ what virtue soever the pursuit and passage towards those ends suggests and enjoins, we should find ourselves invested with a precedent disposition and propensity to conform thereto.”—“ All other things are added.” It is our wisdom therefore, whether with regard to the life that now is or that which is to come, to set our affections on things above—to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; to live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world. It is here, now, within us, that religion in its reality presents itself—not as a matter of sentiment, not as a theme for speculation, not as a prospective possibility—but as present, practical and vital.

The genius of Scott has pictured Old Mortality with his mallet and his chisel striving to repair the ruins of time, the wasting influence of the elements which effaced the imagery and the sculpture of the mouldering tombs—but the winds and the rains of heaven, as they sweep over the decaying monuments of the dead—demonstrate that all human effort is

but in vain, to reverse the sentence that "the glory of man is as the flower of grass—the wind passeth over it and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more."

There is a labour that shall not be in vain, nor its achievements perishable; there is a sculpture which cannot be effaced—there are works which follow us beyond the grave, when we rest from our labours on earth—the trials, difficulties and dangers of this our state of probation and of discipline. May the great theme of this weighty chapter be a source of instruction to us all; reminding us not merely of gracious privileges, but of solemn responsibilities—the work which in our appointed sphere of duty on earth, our lot and position in life, God has given each of us to do.

Help with thy grace, through life's short day
Our upward and our downward way
And glorify for us the West
When we shall sink to final rest.

LECTURE VIII.

OPINION OF NECESSITY—AS INFLUENCING PRACTICE.

WE have been engaged in the consideration of the present life as adapted to the purposes of moral discipline and a preparation for a future state beyond the grave. This discipline has been shewn to be governed by that important law of our nature, which we call the law of habit. Dr. Carpenter in his profound and instructive work on human physiology has said, "The conscience of the religious man, indeed, may be said to be the resultant of the combination of his moral sense with the idea of duty which arises out of his sense of relation to the Deity. With the former are closely associated all those emotions and propensities which render him considerate of the welfare of his fellow men, as of his own; and with the notion of duty to God are closely united the desire of His favour, the fear of His displeasure, the aspiration after His perfection, all which act, like other motives in deciding the will. Their relative force on any occasion, as compared with that of the lower propensities and sensual desires, greatly depends on the degree in which they are *habitually* brought to influence the mind; and it is in its power of fixing its contemplation on those higher considerations which ought to be paramount to all others, and of withdrawing it from the lower, that the will has the chief influence in the direction of the conduct

according to the dictates of virtue. (5th Edition, page 581.) When he treats on the motive powers which are the sources of human action, under the permission or intentional direction of the will—he classifies them under three heads; previously acquired habits, emotional states, and notions of right and duty, which may act simply according to the intensity with which they are brought before the mind, but obtain a much stronger influence when they acquire an emotional character from the association of the feelings of desire with the idea of obligation; that is, when we feel a wish to do that which we are conscious we ought to do. This association (he adds) is one which it is peculiarly within the capability of the will to cherish and strengthen. And still more powerful is the operation of these combined motives when *a constant habit* of acting upon them has been formed; for the strongest desires are then immediately repressed, the strongest aversions cease to exert an influence, when once the question is looked at in its moral aspect, and a clear perception has been obtained of its right and its wrong side.” 629—631.)

All this—indeed all that we have been considering from the first—assumes that man has a free will—that is to say, a power of determining and acting within certain limits, according to his own choice, as a responsible agent, and without this, he must cease to be considered as an intelligent or moral being, or accountable to God as the righteous governor of the world. Butler has at first assumed, that there is an intelligent Author of nature. This is what I called his postulate. But as the objection may be made against the proof of the assumption, as it may be supposed that what is called necessity will itself account for the origin and preservation of all things, he thinks it proper at this stage to meet this, by showing as he does in the sixth chapter, that this necessity (which must at

least be consistent with what we certainly experience) does not destroy the proof of an intelligent Author or Governor of nature, nor of a moral governor of the world—nor of our being in a state of religion. You will observe that the title of this chapter is “of the opinion of necessity *considered as influencing practice.*” In its speculative aspect, this question has been from an early date, a fruitful source of strife and contention; of worse than unprofitable controversy. Philosophers and theologians, setting aside the fundamental intuitions of man, the consciousness of his moral nature and his moral responsibility—unwilling to accept in humility, what God has disclosed in the constitution and course of nature or in the Book of Revelation for the guidance of man—to be received in the docile and submissive spirit of childhood, they have entangled the question in such perplexity, as requires both faith and patience to restore it to its true simplicity. Their doubtful disputations may at least teach us how great is the folly, if not the sin, of all pretentious speculation, which overleaps the proper boundaries of human knowledge or overlooks the limitations of the human faculties.

They “found no end, in wandering mazes lost.”

In Coleridge’s notes on Baxter’s life of himself, he quotes the following sentence from the pen of that eminent and godly man.

“And when I have studied hard to understand some obtruse admired book, as de Scientiâ Dei, de Providentiâ circa malum, de Decretis, de Prædeterminatione, de libertate Creaturæ, &c. I have but attained the knowledge of human imperfection, and to see that the author is but a man as well as I.”

Coleridge adds by way of comment, “On these points I have come to a resting place. Let such articles as are either to be recognized as facts, for example, sin or evil having its origination in a will, and the reality of a responsible and (in

whatever sense freedom is presupposed in responsibility) of a free will in man; or acknowledged as laws, &c., &c.—let these be vindicated from absurdity, from self contradiction, and contradiction to the pure reason, and restored to simple incomprehensibility. He who seeks for more, knows not what he is talking of.” “The truths in question (he says in his Comment on Leighton) are transcendent and have their evidence (if any) in the ideas themselves, . . . and as they do not originate in the intellective faculty of man, so neither are they addressed primarily to our intellect.”

In the recent edition of Butler's Sermons—published by Bell and Daldy, (page 374 *et seq.*) you will find the correspondence of Butler with Dr. Clarke on this subject of the free agency of man. “The chief glory of Clarke,” says Dugald Stewart (Coll. Works 1, 295)—“as a metaphysical author is due to the boldness and ability with which he placed himself in the breach against the Necessitarians and Fatalists of his times.” It is interesting to find Butler, more than 20 years before the publication of the Analogy, in correspondence with Clarke, with the object in view, which is given in his own simple but memorable words, in a letter dated in 1713. “As I design the search after truth as the business of my life, I shall not be ashamed to learn from any person.” In the year 1717, he discusses this question of necessity, and whilst he states the difficulties which he felt in handling the abstract question, and which he subsequently admits to have been in a great degree, if not altogether removed by the replies of Clarke—he says in his letter of 30th Sep. 1717—“Though all that I have here said should be true, I don't think the foundation of Religion would be at all removed, for there would certainly notwithstanding, remain reasons of infinite weight to confirm the truth and enforce the practice of it; but upon another account, I have cause to think that I am guilty of

some mistake in this matter, viz—that *I am conscious of some what in myself and discern the same in others, which seems directly to contradict the foregoing objections.*” He could not but suspect the reasoning which conflicted with intuition and falsified his moral nature. Locke seems to have felt like difficulty and to have reposed at last on the moral certainty of his inward conviction. “I own freely to you,” (says this candid and enlightened philosopher) “the weakness of my understanding, that though it be unquestionable that there is Omnipotence and Omniscience in God our Maker, and though *I cannot have a clearer perception of any thing than that I am free, yet I cannot make freedom in man consistent with Omnipotence and Omniscience in God, though I am as fully persuaded of both, as of any truth I most firmly assent to, and therefore I have long since given off the consideration of that question; resolving all into this short conclusion, that if it be possible for God to make a free agent, then man is free though I see not the way of it.*” Dr. Johnson seems also to have encountered this difficulty and to have also retreated upon the consciousness of freedom which overruled his abstract reasoning on the subject.

In some of the attempts which have been made to reconcile a rigid system of necessity with moral freedom, theology has been entangled in what properly appertains to the philosophy of human nature, and abstract speculation has been unduly mixed up with biblical teaching. The inherent difficulties of the question have not been removed. It has been well observed, that the general answer to all such difficulties is to be found in the confession of our ignorance as regards the mystery from which they spring, and on which the solution depends; and the advance to be made is in the clearer apprehension of the reasons why they are insoluble by creatures with limited faculties—the finite is unable to grasp the

infinite. "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not."

The difficulty is essentially involved in the idea of "*the Eternal*," which the human understanding struggles to express by two seemingly contradictory positions—"foreknowledge and free will." Whatever objection can be raised from the former, as to the free agency of man, must also apply to the freedom of the Omnipotent. Indeed, what we call contingency, has reference only to the limited and imperfect knowledge of man; there can be no contingency with God; and the sovereignty of His will cannot be gainsaid. As to the will of man, it is the ultimate fact in human nature which we cannot analyze. In its very nature it is inscrutable; as a fact, its existence is admitted, and this is enough for every practical purpose. According to this practical view, Butler has proceeded hitherto—and now he goes on to show that whatever be the merits of the speculative treatment of the dogma of necessity—as we find it to be indifferent or inapplicable to the conduct of common life, we may consider it as equally indifferent or inapplicable to Religion—to the living faith of a practical Christian.

The necessity which a Fatalist propounds, cannot exclude deliberation, choice, preference, and acting from certain principles, and to certain ends—because this is matter of fact and of daily experience. All that necessity can urge is this—that things could not have been otherwise than they are and have been. As then, necessity (supposing it to be true) does not exclude intelligence and design in us, but only says, that we act necessarily, though designedly and intelligently—neither does it exclude intelligence and design from the Author of Nature in the creation and preservation of the world—but at most it can only affirm that He was and is an agent acting necessarily.

When it is said that Necessity is itself the proper account of the existence of God—this is a new sense of the word which arises from the scantiness and imperfection of language, when we ascribe to God a necessary existence uncaused by any agent. We cannot avoid the conclusion of an infinite Being existing, prior to all design contributing to His existence and exclusive of it. But it is not alleged that everything exists, as it does, by this kind of Necessity, which is antecedent in nature to design; indeed, it is admitted, that design, in the actions of men, contributes to many alterations in Nature.

When it is said, therefore, that every thing is by Necessity—it can only be meant—*by an Agent acting necessarily*, and it must be admitted, that the necessity under which he is supposed to act, does not exclude intelligence and design, and, therefore, does not prejudice the conclusion drawn from the appearances of design and of final causes, that the Author of Nature is an intelligent Designer, and that He is the natural governor of the world. What Butler had assumed, therefore, stands undisturbed. If necessity be consistent with possibility, with the constitution of the world, and the natural government of it which we experience, is it irreconcilable with the belief that we are in a state of religion—with the system of religion, and the proof of it? He puts the case of a child educated from his youth up in the principles of fatalism—and then left to apply them to practice. He would either be the plague of himself, and all who came in contact with him, or he must be subjected to such corrective discipline as would convince him that if the scheme he were instructed in were not false, yet that he reasoned inconclusively upon it, and somehow or other misapplied it to practice and common life. The experience, then, of the conduct of Providence at present ought in all reason to convince

the Fatalist that his scheme of Necessity is misapplied, when applied to the subject of Religion. Every practical application of it ends in absurdity ; it cannot be acted upon in the course and conduct of life. But experience justifies us in reasoning on the supposition that we are free, and the constitution and course of Nature is adapted to this supposition. So that prior to the consideration of the abstract question, we find as a matter of fact that we are treated and dealt with as if we were free. If, then, the opinion of Necessity be in any sense true, still we cannot apply it in any way which would contradict the freedom of which we are conscious, and what we find as a matter of experience in the natural course of daily life.

Religion is a practical subject, and life has its many duties ; and as confessedly we have not faculties which would enable us to apply the opinion of Necessity (if true) to practical subjects, it is manifest that if we apply it to Religion, and thence conclude that we are freed from the sacred obligations which Religion imposes, we cannot depend on this conclusion. Whatever be the speculative value of Necessity, for all practical purposes it is as if it were false. Man must deal with himself at all times, and on all occasions, on one and the same principle of Necessity or of Freedom. We have already seen that in the course of daily duty and the sphere of religious feeling we are governed by principles, which, if not identical, are not contradictory ; morality and piety are not intended to be divorced from the motives and the conduct of common life. If, then, there be any practical inference from this doctrine of necessity, it must bear equally upon all motives of conduct, upon all calculations of consequences ; but as we find in the course of Nature, that it is not applicable to practice, we must consistently conclude that with respect to all practical subjects (and, therefore, with regard to Religion)

it is as if it were not true. If it be false, we have nothing to do with it; if it be true, we cannot apply it. It is irrelevant or unfounded.

To pretend to act upon reason, in opposition to practical principles, to our experience of life—our consciousness—our common sense—our moral convictions; to principles that the Author of Nature has given us to act upon; and to pretend to apply our reason to subjects with regard to which we find it cannot be trusted—this, Butler says, is vanity, conceit, and unreasonableness.

But this is not all. If Necessity be reconcileable with anything, it is reconcileable with that character in the Author of Nature, which is the foundation of Religion. Happiness and misery, we find as a matter of fact, are appointed to be the consequences of our actions; and the government of God as actually exercised over us, and which we actually experience, shows that veracity and justice must be the natural rule and measure of exercising this authority or government. The character of this government is carried on by a method of rewards and punishments; this is certain as our experience; and so is the possession of a moral faculty which implies a rule of action, and this involves a command from God, with all the consequences which are necessarily to follow. Necessity cannot get rid of the fact, nor displace the direct consequence which is itself necessary. If it can justify a sin or a crime, it can equally justify the appointed punishment which is annexed to the action as its necessary consequence. The general proof of Religion which we have been heretofore considering, is left in all its reality, even supposing this dogma of necessity, to be in any sense true. Nor could it affect the external evidence of Religion derived from the consent of all ages; from the antiquity of it, and the historical and traditional evidence of its having been taught by Revelation.

He wisely observes that both our speculative and our moral faculties are liable to be prejudiced and deceived, and, therefore, we should be very cautious as to the manner in which and the sources from which, we may derive our opinions on such vital subjects as virtue and religion. It is not, indeed, suggested that we are not to use these faculties, and the means that God has given us for such inquiries, and for the use of which we are to Him accountable—but that we are to use them conscientiously, with candour and circumspection. Indeed, I would say that it is well worthy of more consideration than it has sometimes received, that in forming and correcting all our opinions, we are not less responsible for the use we make of our faculties and opportunities, than we are for our conduct and the amendment of our lives. There is but one unerring standard of conduct and of consistency, and that is the will of God, discoverable in the constitution and course of nature, or revealed in His Holy Word.

To the objection of the Fatalist, that it is incredible that God should govern us upon a supposition as true, which (as the Fatalist says) He knows to be false, and that *therefore* it is absurd to think that He will reward or punish us for our actions hereafter, especially under the notion of good or ill desert—Butler answers, that the whole analogy of Providence shews beyond possibility of doubt, that the conclusion from this reasoning is false, wherever the fallacy lies. For the rewards and punishments which we now experience in the course of nature, and which are appointed under the natural government of God, are as much a contradiction to this conclusion and shew its falsehood, as a more exact and complete rewarding and punishing of good and ill desert as such. It is a question of principle—not of degree. If then it is incredible that necessary agents should be rewarded and punished—men are not necessary but free, for they are in fact

rewarded and punished in this present life. But if it be insisted that men are necessary agents, then the supposition of the reward and punishment of necessary agents, must also be allowed, for men are thus dealt with under God's natural government of the world. Thus then, whatever may be urged as to the abstract question of Necessity, it cannot set aside the obligations of religion, as it cannot be allowed to contradict the constitution and course of nature. The analogy therefore is undisturbed and the argument from it, unprejudiced. We should not perhaps overlook the fact that there are those who hold what is strictly and properly the doctrine of Necessity, both in philosophy and religion, and accept it rather as a help than a hindrance to their moral life. Mr. Mill says "The Fatalist believes or half believes (*for nobody is a consistent Fatalist*) not only that whatever is about to happen will be the infallible result of the causes which produce it (which is the true necessarian doctrine) *but moreover that there is no use in struggling against it* ; that it will happen, however we may strive to prevent it." Thus it is said, the character of a man is formed *for* him by circumstances—and therefore, it is argued, it is not formed *by* him nor can he form it of his own free will, as a voluntary and responsible agent. But says, Mr. Mill, in answer to this—he has to a certain extent a power to alter his character, and its being in the ultimate result formed for him is not inconsistent with its being, in part, formed *by* him as one of the intermediate agents. His character is formed by his circumstances, including among those his own particular organization, but *his own desire to mould it in a particular way is one of those circumstances, and by no means one of the least influential.*

Indeed (he adds) if we examine closely we shall find that this feeling of our *being able* to modify our own character, *if we wish*, is itself the feeling of moral freedom which we are

conscious of. This very power within us, to co-operate in the formation of character, is a fact as discernible and therefore as real as any other fact which we call a circumstance; it is equally a link in the chain of sequences; it is ignored by the Fatalist, but too much kept out of sight, though not avowedly denied by those advocates of necessity who do not question the responsibility of man. What we call the free will doctrine, puts prominently forward, what the doctrine of Necessity rather puts out of sight. Indeed the term Necessity—which is generally associated with what is more aptly called Fatalism—tends to perpetuate the confusion and contradiction in which the whole subject has been involved. We find certain consequences to follow from certain antecedents according to an ascertained law—and we say the consequences result necessarily from these antecedents. But in the case of the will of man, how it acts—whether in any degree it can take the initiative by a self-determining power—this is a matter of fact—which can only be known to us from consciousness or by revelation. The act of the will is one of the antecedents from which a consequence follows which may be said to be necessary in the sense explained; whether this act of the will was that of a free and responsible agent, or of a being subject to a controul which he had not power in himself to resist—is (as I have said) a matter which we must solve (if at all) by an appeal to our consciousness—the faculty of internal observation, or—by the light of revelation. We are conscious that we are so far free as to be accountable beings. If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things—if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.”

The sovereignty—the free grace of God—are set forth in the Bible with a fulness and in a way which a cursory reader cannot avoid noticing, and which a candid student will unre-

servedly allow. But, the responsibility of man is not less explicitly declared. To reconcile and adjust these, is left to the conscience, or rather to the faith which is the evidence of things not seen. According to one series of texts, all that works for good in man is God's work; according to another, all seems to depend on man as responsible for his actions, and (as it were) the master of his destiny. The working of God, then, does not take away the responsibility, but rather perfects the freedom of man. God is not said to *form* for destruction the vessels of wrath. He endures them with much long-suffering. His sovereignty is here shown not in causing, but in punishing evil, and even more, in deferring the punishment.

On this great subject how needful is it to accept, with all humility, the teaching of the Holy Scriptures, and to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit. God is omniscient—known unto Him are all *His works* from the foundation of the world. Christ is the Lamb slain before all worlds, and yet crucified with the wicked hands of sinful men. God heareth prayer, and “the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous availeth much;” it moves the hand which moves the universe in its inmost framework. There is a liberty wherewith Christ has made the believer free, whilst he brings him under the moral necessity (as it were) of obeying the law of holiness and love, —to be bound by this necessity, is the true liberty. At every step of our moral advancement, liberty and necessity seem to merge and become identical. The Son makes us free indeed, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. What says the Royal Psalmist? “I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.” As our will is assimilated to the will of God, our moral freedom is advanced: so that he is the most free whose reason and whose volition are brought the most into

harmony with the will of Him who is our Father in Heaven; and the earliest prayer that we have learned to lisp at a mother's knee, has thus the watchword of eternal freedom, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." Thus, then, whether we look to the constitution and course of nature, or to the teaching of Religion, we find that no violence is offered in either, to the moral convictions of which we are conscious. We feel that we are free, in all the sense of responsibility, we are dealt with accordingly; we feel that we are frail, fallible, fallen creatures, and we find that God has, of His own free and sovereign bounty, provided for our redemption from the bondage of sin and our restoration to the genuine and glorious liberty of the children of God.

The sequences in nature which are so far necessary as God has appointed them, are adapted for our moral training, for the guidance of the freedom which God has given to man. Thus, the very language of philosophy, with regard to what is called the law of probabilities, is, "it is sufficient for guidance, though not for prediction." This is, because the moral freedom of the moral agent reserves or keeps back (as it were) an element of calculation, known indeed to Him who is omniscient, but contingent to man. It has been noticed by Mr. Mansel, in his very able essay on miracles, that the uniformity represented by statistical averages, is one which offers no bar to the existence of individual freedom, exercised, as all human power must be exercised, within certain limits. Indeed, it is sometimes objected, that statistics are useless because they cannot be relied on for the determination of any given cause, and only establish probabilities where man requires and asks for certainty. On the last occasion on which I heard the late Prince Consort deliver a public address, in London, he gave to this objection

an answer full of truth and wisdom, and eminently characteristic of his sound and cultivated mind.

The objection, he said, is well founded, but it does not affect the science itself, but solely the use which man has in vain tried to make of it, and for which it is not intended. "It is the essence of statistical science that it only makes apparent general laws, but that these laws are inapplicable to any special case; that, therefore, what is proved to be law in general, is uncertain in the particular. . . . Thus are the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Creator manifested: showing how the Almighty has established the physical and the moral world on unchangeable laws, conformable to His eternal nature; while he has allowed to the individual, the freest use of his faculties; vindicating, at the same time, the majesty of His laws, by their remaining unaffected by individual self-determination."

Thus God worketh in us—"in Him we live, and move, and have our Being,"—and He works without us, in the course and order of Nature, according to the counsel of His own will.

The contrast of the general result is reconciled in nature and reconcilable in religion with personal responsibility and individual freedom. Nor is it one of the least striking results of modern science that this great truth should be so significantly confirmed by statistics.

It is not competent for us to sit in judgment on the ways of God, which are unsearchable; but it is obligatory upon us to conform to His will, which is discoverable in nature and in Revelation. Our faculties are limited—our sphere of observation is confined within very narrow bounds. So far as we are enabled to see what God has actually done, we can meet the objection which insists that He would not do the

like hereafter. What is exemplified here in the constitution and course of nature in the works of God, cannot be consistently excepted to because it is set forth in His Word. But there is a further office of analogy, in addition to that of establishing the credibility of the facts of religion; it can show that we are not in a condition to object 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. We see but in part, and we know but in part. This partial ignorance, or rather this limited knowledge, from its very nature disqualifies us from pronouncing on what is not now before us, namely, the other parts of the great system of the universe, and the relations in which these may stand to what we see and know. There is enough here to suggest that we are but a part of a great whole—a very small part of a stupendous system. So far as we see, we find a connection of events, the smallest with the largest, and there is no bound to the possibility of relation or connection of any or all of these with what is far beyond the range of our narrow sphere and limited faculties. The natural and the moral government of the world in which we live, are obviously so connected as to make up one scheme. The former (as Butler observes) may have been formed, and is, probably, carried on merely in subserviency to the latter, and a higher authority tells us (in speaking of our Lord and Saviour) that all things were created not only by Him but *for* Him. It is enough for Butler's purpose in the 7th chap., that the subserviency of the physical to the moral should be *credible*, so that every act of Divine justice and goodness may be supposed to look much beyond itself, and every circumstance of the moral government adjusted beforehand with a view to the whole of it.

Unless, then, we knew the whole of this system, we are

plainly not in a condition to object to the wisdom and goodness of it, and our faculties, moreover, may be quite unequal at present to deal with such a comprehensive and complicated equity, as the adjustment of the moral relations of the universe. When it is objected that God might have ordered things otherwise than He has done—the utmost length we can go is to suggest that things might be better than they are. But all this is merely arbitrary and inconclusive. The parts objected against, may be relative to other parts unknown to us, and as we are not acquainted with what is, in the nature of the thing, practicable in the case before us, such our ignorance is, according to all analogy, a satisfactory answer, because some unknown relation, some unknown impossibility may render the very thing objected to, in the highest practicable degree, just and good. In the natural government of God, we find desirable ends accomplished by undesirable means, which experience shews us to have been conducive to such ends. Experience also shews that ends are brought about by means which we would have supposed to have had quite an opposite tendency. The more we know of the system of the world and of God's dealings therein, the more do we recognize the wisdom and goodness of God and our own incompetence to find Him out.

I saw all seeming eccentricities
Were but the playing of the wider laws,
While law itself was systematic love.

The proof of the will of God, and the objections to His ways are not open to the same kind of answer from our partial ignorance. We can trace design—discover purpose in a part; this is positive so far as it goes. The appearance of design may be enhanced, it cannot be destroyed; but the appearances of disorder cannot have been designed at all. Thus the answer to the objections against the system of religion, which is founded on our partial ignorance, does

not invalidate the proofs of religion which are positive and which are confirmed by analogy. We see through a glass darkly—but we shall yet know even as we are known.

Ye vainly wise—ye blind presumptuous ! now
Confounded in the dust, adore that Power
And wisdom oft arraigned—see now the cause
Why unassuming worth in secret lived
And died neglected ; why the good man's share
In life was gall and bitterness of soul—

Ye good distress'd ;

Ye noble few, who here unbending stand
Beneath life's pressure ! yet bear up awhile,
And what your bounded view which only saw
A little part deem'd evil is no more :
The storms of wintry time will quickly pass
And one unbounded spring encircle all.

S U M M A R Y .

WE have been engaged, since the opening of the new year, in examining the several successive chapters of the first part of this able treatise. In this part Butler deals with the Analogy of Natural Religion to the Constitution and Course of Nature. I have been anxious to interest you in the earnest study of the text, to encourage you in a patient effort to comprehend clearly the argument, convinced as I am, that in the end, you will find sufficient recompense for the labour that it exacts in order to be understood. The discipline of difficulty meets us in all the great departments of mental and moral culture—in every direct path which leads to excellence ; it is adapted to our nature ; to nurture, to invigorate, to mature the faculties which God has given us as a trust ; the talents which are to be turned to a profitable account.

In the celebrated preface to his sermons, Butler adverts to the manner in which many persons lounge away their time, and dissipate their thoughts in reading, merely for present amusement or some passing purpose, without a sincere desire to search for what is true ; and without any of that religious and sacred attention which is due to truth and to the important question—What is the rule of life ?

He observes that the great number of books and papers of amusement, which, of one kind or another, daily come in one's

way, have in part occasioned and most perfectly fall in with and humour this idle way of reading and considering things. "By this means" (he says) "time, even in solitude, is happily got rid of, without the pain of attention; neither is any part of it, more put to the account of idleness, one can scarce forbear saying, is spent with less thought, than great part of that which is spent in reading." If we indulge such a passive habit, we may gradually impair our active faculties and acquire a settled distaste for thoughtful reading, which demands the sober and sustained exercise of our reason and our reflection, and thus we may incapacitate ourselves for the profitable study and the deliberate attention, which our discipline requires, and without which we cannot reasonably expect to realize the moral purposes of this our present life.

The student of Butler can scarcely fail to notice how thoroughly practical he is—how repeatedly he reminds the reader, of the duties of life, the proper business of man placed in this stage of an endless existence, in this part of a great and boundless scheme of the universe, in which he finds himself. In the eighth chapter of the second part, which I have already suggested may be advantageously read in immediate connection with the first part of the treatise, he says—"The design of this treatise is not to vindicate the character of God, but to show the obligations of men; it is not to justify His providence, but to shew what belongs to us to do." Again, he says, as to his purpose in the treatise, that "it is not to enquire what sort of creatures mankind are, but *what the light and knowledge, which is afforded them, requires they should be*; to shew how in reason they ought to behave, not how in fact they will behave." He opens the Introduction with a discussion on probability—and you must not forget that he includes therein its several degrees, from the lowest presumption to the highest moral certainty—and he contrasts

it with that demonstrative certainty which admits of no degrees, but is in its nature conclusive. This is appropriate to the analogy which he proceeds to discuss, because the course of life, as we find it in our daily experience, does not supply us with conclusive certainty on which we are to act; "*probability, in its various degrees, is the guide of life.*"

Man is a moral being, and as such, he should naturally act on moral convictions. Under the natural or settled constitution and course of things, in our common daily life, in our temporal concerns, almost continually, and in matters of great consequence, we act upon what is more or less probable, not upon what is *demonstrative*. It is enough if the evidence be such as (taking in all circumstances) makes the faculty within us, which is the guide and judge of conduct, determine our course of action to be prudent or obligatory. And this brings out the force of the Analogy of Religion to the constitution and course of nature. For as he says in the eighth chapter of the second part, "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 under His government." Social duties are found to be sacred and religious obligations; our common life, a reasonable and religious service. Thus the sceptic—(or at least the objector who professes sceptical principles) is met at the outset by this—that if his objections prevail—they must overrule our undoubted experience—falsify the undeniable facts which we observe—and displace the realities of which we cannot but be conscious.

These words 'probable' and 'practical,' as well as the word 'natural,' require to be clearly understood in the sense in which Butler explains and uses them, and should be considered in connection with the scope of the treatise; with the argument from the facts with which we are conversant in our

present life, with the way in which we are actually dealt with, under God's government of the world. We find that sceptical speculative objections are not sufficient to lead a reasonable being to disbelieve what he cannot deny without distrusting his very consciousness, and falsifying his moral nature. Such objections are thus found to be inadmissible to shew that facts of a like kind, which Religion teaches us will take place hereafter, are not credible; or that the way in which Religion also teaches us that the righteous government of God will hereafter be continued and completed, is not to be believed by him who finds himself now placed under this government already here commenced, with its present sanctions and its prospective tendencies, and who observes the natural intimations which in the course of things around him are distinctly given, of such a government—confirmed as these are by the presages of conscience, as the voice of God, speaking within.

What then is the *probability*, the presumption in any degree, as to the facts which Religion teaches? If Religion is *practical*, and *probability* is *the guide of life*, on which we are required to act, and which is adapted to the moral nature which God has given us, and for the purposes of our discipline and our progress—then it is of undoubted importance to ascertain in the first instance whether there is *any presumption* in favour of what Religion teaches. If there is any—the sceptical objector whom Butler encounters, is thereby answered, if not silenced. With reference to the great fact of a future life, many things—particular analogies shew that so far from our having reason to conclude that we shall cease to be, when the phenomenal change of death takes place, by the dissolution of the body, there is nothing strange, nothing incredible, in our existing in another and subsequent state of life; that it is reasonable to suppose that our living

nature will continue after death. That at least this is so far *probable*—that we ought not to act upon the contrary supposition. That our present experience, our moral intuitions, our capacity of happiness and misery, the character of God as the righteous governor of the world—the constitution and course of nature, its system of progress, preparation and continuity—all lead us to accept the conclusion, that this life is an institution for eternity,—a probationary stage for man as a moral and immortal being; a truth which harmonizes with all we can observe and experience in the order of Providence, and with those moral judgments of the heart and conscience, which sustain the reason itself, if they be not (in part at least) the highest efforts of its own inherent energy. The anticipation which we experience, of a righteous judgment hereafter, is given in solemn words by Butler in his second sermon on Human Nature.

“But there is a superior principle of reflection or conscience in every man, which distinguishes between the internal principles of his heart as well as external actions; which passes judgment upon himself and them; pronounces determinately some actions to be in themselves just, right, good; others to be in themselves evil, wrong, unjust; which without being consulted, without being advised with, magisterially exerts itself and approves or condemns him the doer of them, accordingly; *and which, if not forcibly stopped, naturally and always of course goes on to anticipate a higher and more effectual sentence, which shall hereafter second and affirm its own.*” I would here again remind you that in the first chapter, which deals with the subject of a future life, you are not to look for an argument so satisfactory as to be complete in itself, to establish, what Butler afterwards says, has been left in darkness by nature, as compared with the light which is thrown upon it by the Gospel. His exact purpose in this chapter was to

shew that there is nothing in reason to warrant us in concluding that death must be our destruction, and that there is enough in what comes under our observation and within our experience, in the constitution and course of nature, to lead us to conclude, that our existence hereafter is at the least, not incredible; that our moral convictions suggest that it is probable, and that we are morally bound to act upon the supposition that it is true. The arguments which are founded on animal life and its analogies are admittedly feeble—but so far as they go, it is in the direction to which religion points; the metaphysical arguments on both sides, involve assumptions, which are inadmissible, and therefore may be set off against each other. They are now disregarded by the soundest thinkers. But as the treatise proceeds, we find the moral arguments gathering strength and consistence, until at last the day dawns—and we stand in the presence of the Gospel which brings life and immortality to light—we are prepared to welcome its glad tidings of great joy, whilst it publishes peace in Him, who is Himself, “the resurrection and the life.” If then there may be a life beyond the grave—if analogy which shews that this is credible and probable, points to the present life as a preliminary and preparatory stage of existence—what would seem to be our condition here—what is our proper business—how do we find ourselves in fact and experience to stand here in relation to God?

This he has proceeded to discuss in the second and subsequent chapters. We find ourselves subject to God’s authority—we are under what Butler calls the natural government of God. There is a settled and appointed order of things—regulated according to laws which are the expression of the Divine will. We are enabled to discover many of these laws, and are encouraged to conform to them, by anticipation of the consequences which are likely to promote our happiness, and we are

warned by the apprehension of pain or misery, against neglect or disobedience. The uniformity of operation in nature, which is fixed and settled, is arranged with wisdom and goodness, so that we profit by observation and gain experience; and this, coupled with the facility of fore-seeing consequences, and our capacity of enjoyment and suffering, shews decisively that we are subjects of God's natural government and bound by its laws. This leads him next to the consideration, of the moral element in this natural government; to observe the beginnings of a modified moral government, and also the essential tendencies of virtue and vice, struggling against hindrances, which are occasional and accidental; and further, to notice the inherent power, and intrinsic superiority of goodness and virtue—the law of progress by which, and according to which, God's moral government, modified and impeded though it is in a world which manifests so many traces of ruin and degradation, yet moves onward irresistibly towards an expected completion. This law of progress is everywhere around us—and especially in ourselves we find that we are (as Butler observes) “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.” This life is thus presented to us as a stage of probation and preparation—and the difficulties and the dangers we have here to encounter, as obviously designed to be the proper discipline which He who best knows the training that is suitable to us and necessary for us, a Heavenly Father who deals with us as His children, and has provided whatever is required to make the discipline effectual for its Divine purpose, He has appointed and adapted for our use. And above all, He has provided the agencies of Redeeming love and sanctifying grace, by which our holiness and our

happiness are indissolubly united. Thus on looking back on the chapter on a future life, we find it has assumed a new aspect. The present emerges into a state of moral discipline for a future life, "a discipline by which we are exercised into the possession of those loftier qualities which by exercise become habit, by habit become nature, and without which, man may, even by physical laws, be incapable of the happiness of heaven."

In the part of the treatise which relates to this discipline, we have seen how this law of habit is designed to operate; how vital it is to man to avail himself of the discipline of the present life—afforded by the duties which arise out of the relation in which he stands to God, and his appointed position amongst his fellow men; duties, which carry with them a recompense of blessing, a reward of grace, when they are fulfilled as a labour of love and as the obedience of faith. Duties so appointed that they are subservient to the formation of virtuous habits; to the fixing of the enduring character, the moral elevation and security of him, who will look to Christ as his Saviour, and to the Holy Spirit as his sanctifier. The law of our nature—the law of habit—the degradation towards which we gravitate, the elevation to which we may be raised by the means which Religion instructs us to be proper and essential—this is a part of the treatise which deserves to be read and digested with earnest attention, with heartfelt prayer, that it may be as profitable as it is powerful and convincing.

So far we have the credibility of religion shewn by experience and facts, which cannot be got rid of by speculative objections, however specious. The argument is practical in a two-fold sense; it is a proof from facts, and it is a proof to be acted upon, for it shews beyond doubt or question that the lessons of Religion have in them at least that probability

which is the acknowledged guide of life. Instead of placing Religion in dim and distant perspective—as something visionary and speculative, it brings it home to the heart, to the conscience, to the habits of our daily life; it reminds the man of prayer that he must also be the man of performance, and it invests the humblest duties here below, with a dignity derived from heaven above. It withdraws Religion from the assaults of scepticism, which is not allowed to cheat men out of their consciousness or their common sense in temporal matters, and ought not in reason, nor according to the teaching of analogy, to have a different influence in displacing or discrediting the facts of Religion. It cannot show these facts to be incredible, by mere speculative boldness which is powerless against the facts and realities of common life; but these facts and realities are themselves but an enigma unexplained, if not unintelligible, until they are placed in the light of Religion—and then the duties to which we are here called for the promotion and security of our temporal interests are found to be a part, a vital part of what God has graciously arranged as His discipline to prepare us for another and a better world.

It deals with Religion as a present reality—plain and practical in its requirements, so far as man is concerned. It deals with man as a moral being—placed in circumstances which are suitable to give effect to the discipline which Religion declares to be a necessity of his moral nature. But here the objection is started which was much considered in the last lecture—the objection of the Fatalist—that everything is the inevitable result of a law of necessity against which it is in vain to struggle. By this, man would be lowered from his moral status to the level of mere mechanism. In Mr. Westcott's admirable work on the Miracles, he observes, "The proud advances of physical science which place in a clearer light the symmetry and order of external nature,

invest the idea of law with an absolute majesty, inconceivable at an earlier time." This idea, if not duly limited, leads to atheism; but if duly limited, leaves man, so far free at least, as to be responsible morally to God, to the extent of which he is himself irresistibly conscious, and which Revelation obviously assumes. The origin of evil, the perversion and corruption of the will, and the necessary consequences, are matters which baffle human research, and humble the pride of philosophy; we cannot go further than is disclosed to our consciousness or revealed to our faith. Butler has dealt with the question of necessity, as a practical question, and according to the spirit of the analogy on which he proceeds throughout the entire treatise.

I have more than once adverted to his explanation of the word 'natural' "stated—fixed, or settled;" the sequences in nature are the settled result of Divine arrangement. But in the sphere of morals, the mystery of the human will, its action and the influences to which it is subject, present difficulties which are different from the appointed sequences in nature. Whatever be the complete solution of the question of necessity, we find in common life, in our temporal concerns, that we are dealt with and that we act, as if we were free—so far free as to be consciously and actually responsible for our actions—so far free that we may and should exercise discretion, deliberation, choice, forethought—in a word, that we are moral and accountable beings, and not passive instruments of a system of mere mechanism, bound by an irresistible law of uncontrollable necessity. He treats the question as collateral to Religion, to the same extent and for the same reasons as we find it to be collateral to conduct in the affairs of the present life. It belongs to the region of speculation—but he deals with Religion as a "*practical thing*"—and so far as practice is concerned, we must do violence to our nature and falsify our

experience, if we conclude that there is a law of necessity which reduces or removes our obligations as moral and accountable beings, and makes us the passive victims of an inexorable fate. Note then, the distinction between the *natural* and the *moral* system. Remember Butler's definition of the one—and reflect on his analysis and exposition of the other. Man is a moral organism—not a natural mechanism; the sequences in nature, which follow the law which God has appointed, cannot reasonably be compared with the felt action of the conscience, or the consciousness of the moral being. The uniformity of nature, which is the basis of our experience, and is thus made subservient to our moral discipline, leaves the question of moral freedom open to whatever solution we find in our own consciousness, or in the sober study of the Word of God. It was enough for Butler to shew, that necessity however understood, could not displace his practical argument from analogy—could not vary our obligations to make use of the means afforded by the temptations, the trials, the difficulties and the dangers of life—as the discipline adapted to our moral nature and required for our happiness and security hereafter. And when I say, adapted and required, I repeat what I would desire you to keep in memory at all times,—that all this is subject to the agencies and influences from above—the love of Christ, the comfort and guidance of the Holy Spirit. The husbandman is enjoined to till the ground—to prepare it carefully for the seed which must be sown—to do all on his part in due season—but the agriculturist who instructs him how and when to do all that skill and labour can accomplish, and to do it, to the best advantage, does not thereby ignore and exclude the higher and the heavenly agencies—the sunshine and the shower, the silent dew and the fresh invigorating breeze—the breathings of God's blessing by which “the earth yieldeth her increase.”

The last objection to which Butler refers in this first part, is that which is levelled against the scheme or system of the Divine government, as wanting in wisdom and goodness—and as not being such as the objector would suggest it might have been. You will remember that he answers this by pointing out how limited are our faculties, how narrow our sphere of observation, and that we are taught by analogy, that we are incompetent to judge the wisdom and the goodness of a scheme so extensive and boundless, of which we see and can see but so very small a part. This is enlarged upon with great effect, in his Sermon on the Ignorance of Man. Our partial ignorance—ignorance which is so obviously great in proportion to our limited knowledge—ignorance of the relation which may subsist between the visible and the invisible dispensations—our incompetence to judge of the ways of God, which are mysteriously connected with a stupendous system, a boundless universe—all this, must or it ought to satisfy a reasonable being, circumstanced as man finds himself here on this little speck of earth, in his transient existence, that the greatness of God is unsearchable and His ways past finding out. Submission and docility—humbly to learn what God has permitted and provided in the interpretation of nature and the study of revealed truth,—thankfully to accept this, as sufficient for the purposes of his present existence, and appointed under an economy of grace and truth as suitable at present for the heirs of immortality—faithfully to use this knowledge as the preparation for a higher life, and as now enabling him to promote the glory of God and the welfare of his fellow man,—this is the proper business of man—this his responsible duty. We are enabled to discover purpose and design in the constitution and course of nature, and the will revealed in the Word; the knowledge of His ways, in the scheme of the universe, we cannot attain unto.

It has been urged that if our partial ignorance disables us from judging the ways of God—it must also raise an objection to the proof of His will. But as Butler observes, it is what analogy teaches us with reference to our partial ignorance, that we use in answering the objection which has been made against the wisdom and goodness of God's government—and this analogy shews us that the answer to this objection, does not in any degree invalidate the proof of the design, the purposes, and the will of God. In the note to the Sermon on the Ignorance of Man, in p. 198, this is well illustrated. "If the general design or end for which the complicated frame of nature was brought into being, is happiness, whatever affords present satisfaction, and likewise tends to carry on the course of things, hath this double respect to the general design. Now suppose a spectator of that work or constitution was in a great measure ignorant of such various reference to the general end, whatever that end be; and that upon a very slight and partial view which he had of the work, several things appeared to his eye disproportionate and wrong, others just and beautiful; what would he gather from these appearances? He would immediately conclude there was a probability, if he could see the whole reference of the parts appearing wrong, to the general design, that this would destroy the appearances of wrongness and disproportion: but there is no probability, that the reference would destroy the particular right appearances, though that reference might shew the things already appearing just, to be so likewise, in a higher degree or in another manner. There is a probability that the right appearances were intended; there is no probability that the wrong appearances were. We cannot suspect irregularity and disorder to be designed." Thus then we find that analogy leads us the conclusion, that what seems to be open to objection in the system of God's government of the world, will be cleared

up hereafter—but what is disclosed to us already, as to His design in the constitution and course of nature,—and His good will to man, may be perfected, but will not be displaced, when we know as we are known. In the nature of things, we must expect to be, and we find that we are surrounded with speculative difficulties, to us, at present, altogether incomprehensible; and as to other matters of objection, we find that the things objected against, 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. For practical religion, this is decisive. Thus, when it is said that if religion were true, it would not be left doubtful and open to objections to the degree in which it is—the answer is simple and conclusive. It is not the method of Providence, in our daily life, which is undoubtedly true and real, to afford us overbearing evidence; on the contrary, the evidence on which we are naturally appointed to act in common matters throughout a very great part of life, is (as Butler says) doubtful in a high degree. It may be a part of the discipline of difficulty, and it may be more or less the consequence of our moral obedience, whether and to what extent we may be left in doubt as to the truths of religion. “If any man will do His will,” he has the Divine assurance that his doubts will disappear. It is not intended by Butler to present what would be acknowledged to be a *satisfactory* account of the matters which he has discussed, for this reason amongst others, that satisfaction, in the sense in which it is required by objectors, does not belong to such a creature as man. And with reference to religion—it is not a matter of speculative curiosity, and the question is not whether the evidence be satisfactory in the sense of objectors, but *whether it be sufficient for the purpose for which God has intended it*. It may not satisfy curiosity, but it can, under God’s

blessing, make wise unto salvation. It places man under the most solemn responsibility—to refuse not Him that speaketh from heaven, and if the evidence be such as ought to convince his conscience and influence his heart, it proves him and tries him, as one who must give account to Him who will judge the world in righteousness. Religion, then, so far as it is probationary, has had its end upon all to whom it has been proposed with evidence suitable and sufficient to induce their submission to God's will, and their unconditional acceptance of His free gift of salvation. Butler glances at other considerations, besides these practical views, considerations derived from the abstract truths of moral fitness and moral freedom. But with a view to meet objectors on their own level, and notwithstanding their avowed principles, Butler has not availed himself of these higher truths. The actual government of the world is a matter of fact—and so is its moral character—without reference to the disputed questions of liberty and moral fitness. The moral faculty which God has given to man, as well as the moral rule of distributive justice, is a matter of fact, a fact which we ascertain by a present experience; and that this rule will be hereafter acted on has been established by a practical proof, confirmed by the general analogy of nature—not offered as “demonstrative” but as a practical proof, a proof suitable and sufficient for the guidance of man as a moral being—impossible to be evaded or answered. Religion implies in it numerous facts, and analogy confirms all facts to which it can be applied—and thus, so far as Natural Religion is concerned, so far as the moral system which is implied in it, and the facts of that system are involved, these have been shewn to be credible and reasonable, neither crushed by fatalism nor disparaged by premature and partial judgment.

If reason could be trusted, if man, who was made upright,

but has fallen from his high estate, could now be left to his unaided conscience to guide him with safety, the reasoning of Butler in this first part of the treatise might be fairly expected to be as generally influential as it is in its argument conclusive.

In one of the fragments of Butler's writings which have been recently published, he says—"As all my passions and affections to my reason, such as it is, so in consideration of the fallibility and infinite deficiencies of this my reason, I would subject it to God that He may guide and succour it." But even this clings too much to what is, after all, peculiarly to be called "*reasonable*."

In his first sermon on the Love of God, he speaks of the danger of that extreme which we may fall into, under the notion of a *reasonable religion*—"so very reasonable as to have nothing to do with the heart and the affections."

This first part of the treatise, therefore, so convincing to reason, clear and conclusive as it is, as an argument against sceptical objectors—valuable as it is for its moral instruction—yet if it stood alone, it would be but as the pool of Bethesda to the impotent man, waiting for the moving of the waters. The presence and the power of Christ was what he really needed. The law is said to be a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, and the argument of Butler as to Natural Religion, has appropriately brought us to the great theme of Revealed Religion.

We will be the better prepared to enter upon this second part of the treatise, after we have thoroughly mastered the argument in the first part; and after we have accomplished this, we will be but the more convinced how much yet is needed to act upon our affections and win our hearts to God.

The evidences of Christianity, which are furnished by miracle and prophecy—the moral accompaniments of the one,

and the comprehensive, germinant and providential fulfilment of the other, cannot but be of the deepest interest and importance to the Christian student. But there is also the testimony within, the felt adaptation to our moral wants—to our spiritual necessities—the convictions which are brought home to the heart, as well as the conclusions of the understanding—the appeal which is made to the whole man, as an intelligent and a moral being—a being with sympathies and affections—an imagination designed for heaven; it is the combined effect of the whole—the historical proof—the inward response—the moral adaptation—the influence which is felt within, when the spirit shakes from its emancipated wings the dust and the dews of a fallen humanity: an earnest of the liberty of the the glory of the children of God.

Poor wanderers of a stormy day
 From wave to wave we're driven,
 And fancy's flash and reason's ray,
 Serve but to light the troubled way;
 There's nothing calm but Heaven.

I purpose, should God graciously permit me, to take up the second part of the Analogy for the course of the next session. For the present, I will give whatever further aid I can, by familiar conference and conversation to make more clear the path, which we have so far gone over happily together. When I began the course, I did not underrate the difficulties which I had to encounter; but whilst I was not wanting in diligence myself—whilst I spared no labour to make these lectures as perspicuous, as persuasive, and as attractive as the subject would admit in my humble hands—a subject unavoidably at times, dry, didactic, and difficult—I felt the growing conviction, which your patient and indulgent attention could not fail to inspire, that the labour was well bestowed in such a cause, and on such a class.

The hours of thoughtful preparation, and the hours of our meeting together have been to myself pleasant and profitable. If the leisure which God has given me, and the sympathies with young men, which I feel as warm and as fresh as in the earnestness of College competition—if these have in any degree enabled me to encourage, to elevate, to help forward, any one of those, whom I am here privileged to address—the leisure has not been unprofitably squandered, the sympathies have not been lavished away.

The success of this and the other kindred associations of our young men, is to me a subject of the deepest thankfulness to the great Head of the Church. My connection with you, as one of your fellow labourers, I regard as one of the happiest privileges of my public life. Here we have seriousness without gloom, earnestness without fanaticism, reason without rationalism. We honour Church and State, the truth and the freedom which belong to the charter of both; loyalty to our Sovereign and love to our God, are offered here as the genuine homage of true Irish hearts. Go on, in this spirit, with that wise moderation which is the privilege of conscious strength; like the gentle messenger of Noah—with a mouth for the olive branch—a heart for the ark—a wing for heaven. And finally, remember that the reformed faith which we profess—is the restored Christianity—the pure and primitive religion of the one and only gospel of our Lord and Saviour—

“Him first—Him last—Him midst and without end.”

LECTURES ON BUTLER'S ANALOGY.

PART II.

LECTURE I.

IMPORTANCE OF REVELATION.

IN the good Providence of God, we have been permitted to meet together, at the beginning of another year, to resume our study of the instructive treatise of Butler, on the Analogy of Religion (natural and revealed) to the Constitution and Course of Nature. In the first part which relates to what he calls natural religion, the moral system which is natural to man, as that in which man takes his appointed place under the government of Him who is the intelligent Author of nature and moral governor of the world, we have traced the outlines of his destiny, in which the present life is shewn to be a scene of discipline and preparation for a life beyond the grave, at least supposable and credible. The light of nature, however, could not altogether dissipate the shadows, clouds, and darkness which have hung over this the deepest problem connected with human existence;—it was reserved for revealed religion, to bring life and immortality to light by the Gospel of Christ. As to the question whether the soul is mortal or immortal, Cicero has said—“which of these two opinions be true, God only knows; which of them is most probable, is a very great

question. I know not how, (he says) when I read the arguments in proof of the soul's immortality, methinks I am fully convinced; and yet, after I have laid aside the book and come to think and consider the matter alone by myself, presently I find myself fallen again insensibly into my old doubts." What reason could not certify, has been fully revealed to faith.

There are, however, as Butler observes, men who have insisted that the light of nature is sufficient for man, so as to render revelation in its very notion incredible and fictitious. But human history and human consciousness, the state of religion in places where there has been no light from revelation, the doubtfulness of the wisest philosophers on things of the utmost importance, and the inattention, ignorance, and debasement of the mass of mankind, all indicate the importance of a Divine interposition. The light of nature, darkened as it has been, has ushered in the dawn and the day-spring of revelation. "We must observe" (says Lord Bacon) "that the light of nature is used in two several senses; the one as far as it springs from sense, induction, reason, argument, according to the laws of heaven and earth, the other as far as it flashes upon the spirit of man by an inward instinct, according to the law of conscience, which is a spark and relic of his primitive and original purity. And in this latter sense chiefly does the soul partake of some light to behold and discern the perfection of the moral law; a light, however, not altogether clear, but such as suffices rather to reprove the vice in some measure, than to give full information of the duty. So then religion, whether considered with regard to morals or mysteries, depends on revelation from God." (9th Book, De Augm. Scient. 5th vol. 113.) As the principal object which I have in view is to assist you in your efforts clearly to apprehend and thoroughly to appreciate the cautious and

sober instruction contained in this admirable treatise, I must entreat of you, to endeavour to place yourselves as nearly as you can in the position of the writer, so as to view the subject from his chosen stand-point, and to observe the way in which he dealt with the assailants of religion. We are not here to expect an exposition of controversial theology, nor to have any craving satisfied for the discussion of speculative opinions, about which polemical disputants may consistently contend. In going through the first part of the *Analogy*, I am well assured that the spirit of this suggestion was not neglected by you, for I had most encouraging and satisfactory proof, that by a goodly number of those who heard my former lectures, this first part of the treatise of Butler was carefully read and inwardly digested; the scope and course of the argument, profitably and accurately understood. Although in the way of illustration, or for the purpose of making the lectures attractive to some and instructive to others in the class, who could not have been expected to fall in with the strict and guarded reasoning of Butler, without some preparatory training, I occasionally introduced topics which belonged rather to positive religious teaching than to the argument from *Analogy*, designed to remove objections against and establish the credibility of religion,—I am confident that you were not thereby in any degree misled into that common mistake of some of Butler's commentators, who have more or less complained (and surely without sufficient reason) of his having dealt with the credentials rather than the contents of Christianity. Is not this to say, that he has composed this masterly treatise, in a form appropriate to the defence of religion when it had been assailed by unbelieving men,—instead of making it an exposition of the favourite doctrines which earnest and zealous men have regarded and taught as constituting in their opinion the sum and substance of the Gospel?

Having assumed that there is an intelligent Author of Nature—that innumerable instances of design and system cannot but prove a designer—that in the material and the moral world there is at least enough to leave man without excuse if he fails to conclude that there is an intelligent Author and moral Governor of the world; assuming further, that the objectors go upon what they think principles of reason, for otherwise they are not to be argued with, he first obviates all the general objections against the moral system of nature—that is to say, against natural religion.

He proceeds in this second part to consider the case of revealed religion, and begins by shewing its intrinsic importance to man. This is the subject of the chapter on which we are now about to enter. The importance of it is regarded under two aspects—first, as a republication of natural religion, and secondly, as the promulgation of a dispensation distinct from natural religion, additional to it, and not discoverable by human reason unaided and alone.

The consideration of the importance is a fit introduction to a discussion of its credibility, and the more so, as there are those who require to have it proved that it is important to man to have this revelation from God.

There are those who *reject* it at the outset as wholly unnecessary, and therefore incredible; and others who *neglect* and (as it were) overlook it as of small importance provided natural religion be kept to. This neglect, though it does not treat revelation in the same way exactly as the rejection of it as incredible, yet, practically, it comes in the end very much to the same thing.

In a general way it may be premised that if God has given a revelation to man, it cannot be a matter of indifference whether it is accepted and acted on by those to whom, and for whose benefit, it has been given. Whatever command-

ments God has published, ought to be regarded by us, who are under His moral government, and we are bound to obey them unless we are certainly assured that all the reasons for the commands so given are known to us, and that these reasons have ceased with regard to mankind in general, or to ourselves in particular. We must bear in mind that our ignorance cannot give this assurance, for the whole analogy of nature shows that there may be infinite reasons for things with which we are not acquainted. But the importance of revelation will more distinctly appear by a particular consideration of it—first, as a republication and external institution of natural religion, adapted to the exigencies of mankind and intended to promote natural piety and virtue; and next, as a special dispensation of Divine mercy not discoverable by reason, in consequence of which several distinct precepts are enjoined us. Thus the moral law is authoritatively declared and established, and a redemptive and restorative economy of grace and truth is plainly revealed.

It instructs mankind in the moral system of the world. It teaches this system in the genuine simplicity of its leading doctrines—an author of nature, a ruler infinitely perfect, whose government is moral, and whose law is virtue; a righteous judgment hereafter by Him who will render to all according to their works, in a future state. Thus has natural religion been freed from the corruptions and cleared of the doubts and obscurities under which it had been totally corrupted and in a manner lost; the darkness of night has been dispelled; the day-spring from on high has poured its genial sunshine on the gloom of a dark and lowering day. But, again, this republication is authoritative, for it is attested by the miracles and prophecies which furnish credentials to revelation, designed to prove the revealed dispensation which reason could not discover, and these are also adequate to

prove God's general providence over the world as our moral governor and judge. Those who wrought the miracles and delivered the prophecies have taught and insisted on this character of God, and from the connexion between natural and revealed religion, the former is as much proved by the Scripture revelation as if it had no other design than to prove it.

As to the proof from miracles, Butler observes, that all the objections against it are merely speculative, for, considered as a practical thing, there can be none. A person professing to have a commission from God, to teach natural religion to those who had lived in total ignorance or forgetfulness of it, and in proof of his commission foretelling things future which human foresight could not have foreseen; dividing the sea with a word; feeding multitudes with bread from heaven; curing all manner of diseases; raising the dead, even himself, to life—would not this (he asks) give additional credibility to his teaching beyond that which would accompany a common teacher, and be an authoritative publication of the law of nature, and so a new proof of it? Such a proof is given by the law of Moses, and the Gospel of Christ, in addition to the particular dispensation towards sinful creatures revealed in this law and Gospel. It is truly a practical proof, a proof from testimony, and a proof upon which, as rational and moral beings, we may and ought to act—a practical proof, of the strongest kind, perhaps, which human creatures are capable of having given them.

But, again, suppose a man of the greatest and most improved capacity who had not heard of revelation, but having reasoned himself into a belief that notwithstanding the disorders of the world, it was under the direction and government of an infinitely perfect being, was ready to question whether he were not got beyond the reach of his faculties,

and thus was in danger of being carried away by the prevalent bad example of all around him who had no practical sense of their relation or their responsibility to God. This is as favourable a position with regard to religion, perhaps, as could be expected from nature alone. Would it not be a great confirmation to such a man, so placed, to find that the moral system which his conscience had approved, was revealed in the name of that infinite Being in whom he had been led by the light of reason to believe, and that they who published this revelation proved their Divine commission by exercising a power of interference with the observed laws of nature, on special and suitable occasions, in a way and under circumstances sufficient to prove that this was above the power of man alone to do, as well as beyond the action of those laws which are God's constant and uniform actings upon matter and which constitute what is called the course of nature.

The credibility of miracles, and the important position which they occupy in the dispensation of revealed religion will be fully considered hereafter, and especially when we come to the second chapter. At present the question is whether on the supposition of the truth of revelation, its importance can be shown. In confirmation of what has been affirmed on this head, it may be added that the great doctrines of a future state, the perils of a course of wickedness, and the efficacy of repentance, the exact place it occupies in the Divine economy, these are taught with a degree of light in the Gospel to which that of nature is but darkness.

Thus, then, we have the doubts, obscurities, and corruptions of natural religion cleared away by a declaratory exposition of the Law-giver in the book of Revelation. Just as in our own jurisprudence, when our common law has become doubtful in consequence of conflicting interpretations, or has been otherwise obscured so as to make it difficult to adopt a

construction which can be acted on with safety, it is the proper province of the legislature to interpose—to clear up the doubts—to remove the obscurities, and in the authoritative form of what is called a declaratory law, to publish the approved exposition. Thus, when it announces what ought to have been and is thereafter to be considered as the law which has been previously denied or doubted, the legislature passes what is called a declaratory law—where it originates a new positive law, it simply enacts.

We have in revelation not only a republication of natural religion in its genuine simplicity, and authoritative because accredited by a Divine testimony ; it shines, moreover with a heavenly light which has dissipated the doubts and the fears that disquieted human hearts ; the Sun of Righteousness has arisen with healing in his wings.

When Christianity was first published, these purposes were effected *by the miraculous publication itself*, and provision was made for it to serve the same purposes in future ages, by *the settlement of a visible church*, a society distinguished by peculiar religious institutions, by an instituted method of instruction and an instituted form of external religion, fitted for all men, consisting in a common form of Christian worship, together with a standing ministry of instruction and discipline. You will do well to refer to the sermon of Butler, preached on behalf of the venerable society for the Propagation of the Gospel in foreign parts, for some further observations of Butler as to the origin and purpose of the Christian Church. “It is,” he says, “like a city that is set on a hill which cannot be hid, inviting all who pass by to enter into it. They are reminded of that religion which natural conscience attests the truth of, and they may (if they will) be instructed in it more distinctly, and likewise in the gracious means whereby sinful creatures may obtain eternal life ; that

chief and final good which all men in proportion to their understanding and integrity, even in all ages and countries of the heathen world, were ever in pursuit of."

The religion of nature had been left originally to be transmitted from age to age pure and unclouded, or to be darkened and corrupted by mankind; but Christianity graciously provided the Divine institution of the Christian Church in order to perpetuate the priceless blessing of pure revealed religion. The Church was therefore appointed to be not only the witness but the keeper of holy writ—the repository of the oracles of God. "Hence," says Butler, in the sermon to which I have referred, "*it has come to pass, and it is a thing very much to be observed in the appointment of Providence, that even such of these communities as in a long succession of years have corrupted Christianity the most, have yet continually carried together with their corruptions the confutation of them; for they have everywhere preserved the pure original standard of it, the Scripture, to which recourse might have been had both by the deceivers and the deceived in every successive age.*" So far, therefore, as the Church has holden up the light of revelation to the world, natural religion has been advantageously laid before mankind, and brought repeatedly to their thoughts as of infinite importance. This was a part of the office, the appointed office of the Christian Church. How wise and how generous was the provision made by the establishment of this divine institution! The spiritual and moral instruction, which it was privileged to provide, has a distinctive character. The cultivation of the intellect ministers to the pride and the pleasures of man, and often to his worldly advancement. It will, therefore, be sought as a temporal good, as auxiliary to the acquisition of wealth or influence. It has an inherent energy or expansive force which tends to its dissemination. But spiritual and moral wants are frequently not felt where the need of instruc-

tion is in truth most urgent. And this instruction is not designed to pamper pride or minister to selfish gratification, but to humble the intellect and arouse the conscience—to enjoin the sacrifice of self—the seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

It is to this department that the law of demand and supply is not applicable; but God of his infinite mercy has supplied what man requires, but which he could not have provided or obtained for himself. At sundry times and in divers manners, He spake to the fathers by the prophets, who were the great moral instructors under the old dispensation. In these last days He hath spoken unto us by His Son, who is the head of the Church Catholic, and the founder of the Church Apostolic, and His Church is the commissioned instructor of all who are willing to be taught the Gospel of His salvation.

In the first part of the chapter, Butler explains the nature and the value of the action of the Church in promoting the knowledge of natural religion as republished by revelation.

It is right that you should be reminded that in thus dealing with the subject of natural religion, it is not to be supposed that it should be separated from revealed, as if it was a thing in itself isolated or independent. It is an integral part of a comprehensive whole. Just as the present life belongs to the life eternal—as a part and a vital part; the period in which character is fixed and the heart prepared for heaven; they are connected as the porch with the altar—as the dawn of the morning with the clear noon-day. We see, however, how specially the Church has been appointed to the office of moral instruction, as a vital part of its authorized ministrations. It is, as Butler observes, an instituted method of education, instituted for this purpose amongst others, that its members should be '*trained up*' in piety and virtue. Thus is it one of the notes of a true church, that it provides and

offers freely such moral training; that it teaches the moral duties of man, as they are Divinely declared in their revealed purity—and that it enjoins them under the sanctions of the Gospel of Christ. But this is not all. The very notion of a visible church implies positive institutions, for if you take these away, you lose the very notion itself. And thus, from observing the obvious uses of a visible church perpetuated in and by these institutions, we can see the importance of them, since, without such, we could not have the advantages which the Christian Church has been fitted to supply. Why such particular ones were fixed upon, rather than others, is a matter with which we have nothing to do.

You will observe, that all that Butler contends for in this part of the chapter is, that by means of the offices of the church and its teaching of revealed religion, moral duties are far better taught and enjoined than under the light of nature. It is not to be overlooked, that the more clearly the moral law is taught in its purity, the more needful is it to teach the great truths of redemption through Christ, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit—the law is the schoolmaster to bring men to Christ. Both Law and Gospel, in all their fulness, belong to the teaching of the Church of Christ. There may, however, be a kind of secondary morality which has its social uses, and even in this lower sense, the importance of Christianity may be considerable in securing the order and promoting the prosperity of a community—and the church may be a great temporal benefit to many who do not partake of its spiritual blessings. These indirect and secondary influences of the Christian Church may not be so fully appreciated as they deserve, and it may be difficult to estimate their intrinsic value, but it cannot be doubted that they are real and are not to be overlooked in the consideration of the importance of revelation.

The objection which is founded on results which belong to the perversion of Christianity, and the allegation that it has had but little good influence, cannot be insisted on upon any principles but such as lead to downright atheism. It proves too much, and would overturn natural as well as revealed religion. The genuine good effects have been often underrated or overlooked—the supposed ill effects have been as often exaggerated, and even when undeniable they are properly ascribable to the false pretence of Christianity, which is itself in no degree chargeable with them.

There is a weighty principle, which he states here as fundamental in all reasoning upon natural as well as upon revealed religion, that the dispensations of Providence are *not to be judged of by their perversions, but by their genuine tendencies*; not by what they actually seem to effect, but what they would effect, if mankind did their part; that part which is justly put and left upon them. He applies to both cases the solemn and monitory words of inspiration—“He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still.”

The moral evil which abounds, the occasional prosperity of the wicked, and the various moral disproportions which this life does not rectify, could not supply valid arguments against natural religion. The corruptions, perversions, idolatries, and ungodliness of man, prove unmistakeably his moral debasement—his need of God’s salvation,—but they cannot be used as reasonable proof that God’s government of the world is not moral, and that man is not subject to this government.

God’s method has been to give light sufficient for such as desire to see, and obscurity for all who love darkness better than light. The general rule of His government is to forewarn and to admonish—there is no compulsion to enforce obedience. We act on our moral responsibility, and as accountable to the righteous judge of all the earth.

The importance of Christianity having been shewn even to this limited extent as an authoritative publication of the law of nature, with new light and other circumstances of peculiar advantage adapted to the wants of mankind, he suggests that the nature of the case requires, and all Christians are commanded to contribute by their profession of Christianity, to preserve, extend, and perpetuate it, for the good of mankind. Each is called on to unite in the public profession and external practice of it; some by instructing—by having the oversight, and taking care of this religious community—the Church of God. And the danger which must attend our neglect of it—where in its very nature it requires each to help according as he may be enabled, in the support and extension of its system of gracious instruction and Divine ministration,—this shews its importance in a practical sense. It appeals to the conscience, and bears on the conduct of every professing Christian. Disregard or neglect is the sinful omission of what is expressly enjoined us for continuing those benefits to the world, which this Divine system was intended to confer.

With what a dignity does he thus invest the Christian Church; what privileges and responsibility devolve upon its members?

In our Association here, I am very thankful to find that we are promoting the gracious purposes to which Butler has so solemnly called our attention—by moral instruction, by spiritual and intellectual improvement. And all this is carried on decently and in order, with the active assistance of respected ministers of our Church, and the support and sanction of the venerable and esteemed metropolitan, our worthy Archbishop. Here you have precious opportunities—may they be used for your own advancement, the benefit of our country, the good of the Church, and the glory of God!

In the part, which it is my privilege here to take, I humbly desire to give you what aid I can, in this goodly work of Christian cultivation. We have been dealing with the mystery of man and of nature, and we have now entered on the subject of revelation. We find man (to use the words of Pascal) "the glory and opprobrium of the universe."

"How is this entanglement to be unravelled? Nature confounds the sceptic and reason the dogmatist. Where, oh! man, shall end all your vain researches into your real condition by the force of natural reason only? You cannot but fall into one or other of these sects; you cannot remain permanently in either. Learn, then, O! proud being, the paradox which you constitute. Humble yourself, vain reason. Be silent, weak nature; know how man infinitely surpasses man; receive from your great Master the secret of your true condition, of which you are so ignorant. Listen to the words of God."

LECTURE II.

IMPORTANCE OF REVELATION—CONTINUED.

IN the part of this chapter which has been under our consideration, Butler has discussed the question of the importance of Revelation, with reference to Natural Religion. He has shewn that the service which has thus been rendered is such as to make it unreasonable in those who profess to believe in the moral system of the world, to call in question the importance of a dispensation, by means of which that moral system has been so cleared, and reformed, and placed on such a sure foundation. What is it which these objectors allege? "They say" (as De Quincey so happily remarks) "that they want no revelation, because the light of nature is sufficient to guide us to all that is necessary to be known respecting what we are to believe concerning God, and the duty which God requires of us; either not knowing or wilfully concealing that the light of which they speak is not the light of nature at all, but a light emanating from the very revelation which they undervalue. We want no sun, they say, in substance; the ordinary daylight is quite sufficient for all our

purposes. But whence comes that daylight but from the sun? Diffused through the atmosphere, refracted and reflected in countless ways, its origin is forgotten, but that origin is the very same with that of the direct beams which we can trace back to their source."

God makes His sun to shine on the evil and the good—on the just and the unjust: the light of the glorious Gospel pours forth its effulgence over a ruined world, although the blinded mind and the clouded heart of unbelief may not perceive its presence nor feel its power. We come next to consider Revelation as it discloses to us the dispensation of grace and mercy which God is carrying on by his Son and Spirit, for the redemption and restoration of man; for his salvation out of that state of moral ruin and spiritual darkness, in which Scripture represents him—the existence of which, if not actually provable by reason, yet is in no wise contrary to it. In consequence of this revelation which unfolds the relations in which we stand to the Son and the Holy Spirit, distinct duties, which were previously unknown, are enjoined, and we are placed under new obligations. Thus (as he says) we have it made known to us by reason, that God is the governor of the world; by Revelation, that Christ is the mediator between God and man, and the Holy Spirit our Guide and Sanctifier. These relations being thus shewn to be true and real, the duties which are connected with them are equally binding on us. The duties flow out of the relations; and our religious regards to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, are in truth a reasonable service; for the duty of these regards arises to the view of reason, out of the very nature of these offices and relations. Religion is to be considered under two aspects—internal and external. Under the first, the essence of natural religion consists in religious regard to God, the Father—and the

essence of revealed religion as distinguished from natural, in religious regards to the Son and the Holy Spirit. The obligation of these regards to each arises, before external command, out of the very nature of their offices, when these have been made known to us; just as the obligation of kind feelings and intentions towards our fellow-creatures arises out of the known and common relations between us and them. It matters not how the relation is made known; the duty flows out of the relation itself, when it is known. These regards thus obviously due, as arising at once out of the disclosed relations, are reverence, honour, love, trust, gratitude, fear, hope.

External religion consists in the expression of these religious regards according to revealed command—purely so in respect to the Son and the Holy Spirit, and more so (he adds) than perhaps we are ready to think, in respect to the Father. Thus it appears that Christianity has a peculiar moral importance, as distinguished from Natural Religion. The obligation of religious regards to our Lord and Saviour, when his office is made known, is as plainly moral as charity to mankind is—for this intelligible reason, that the obligation arises before external command, out of that office and relation. So also we may conclude as to the Holy Spirit. Revelation discloses to us real relations in which we stand, in the system of God's government of the world, and which we could not have otherwise known. The neglect of behaving suitably to them (in other words the *practical* neglect of them) we must reasonably suppose will be attended with the same kind of consequences, as the like neglect of other relations made known to us by reason. Ignorance, if unavoidable will as much, and if voluntary, as little excuse in the case of revelation as of reason; it being supposed to be equally unavoidable or equally voluntary in both cases. With respect

to the Son, judicial punishment may be expected to be the natural consequence in a future life, not only of the obstinate but of the careless disregard of Him, in the high revealed relation of our Redeemer. This may as naturally follow as those natural consequences of vice in this present life, which are obviously judicial punishments of God's appointment. They are naturally consequent on the neglect of God, in relations discoverable by reason.

And so with respect to the Holy Spirit. If man is in a state of moral ruin, and the aid of the Spirit be needed to renew man's nature, so as to make him meet for the kingdom of heaven, qualified to partake of that pure and holy state which Christ is gone to prepare for his disciples—is it possible that any serious person can think it a slight matter whether or not he makes use of the means expressly commanded by God, for obtaining this Divine assistance? The whole analogy of nature shews that we are not to expect any benefits without making use of the appointed means for obtaining or enjoying them. It is from revelation only we can learn the means by which our nature may be renewed and sanctified; reason does not shew us the particular immediate means of obtaining any benefit, temporal or spiritual; we must have recourse to experience or revelation—in this matter experience cannot avail at all.

Taking Christianity then to be true or credible, it cannot be treated as a light thing without profaneness and presumption. It must be taken to be positively false, before it can justly be esteemed as of little consequence. Therefore, if it be credible, it is a matter of the highest obligation, that we should examine the evidences to see if it is true; and supposing it to be true, to embrace it as worthy of all acceptance.

You may then observe that this preliminary discussion of the importance of Christianity prepares the way very profita-

bly for the discussion of its credibility. For if it is vital to man as a moral and immortal being (supposing it to be true) its credibility is sufficient in reason, to make the question of its truth, the most important that man could investigate. If he cannot positively take it to be false, he can have no resting place until he finds it to be true. This it is, that gives such a practical value to the unanswerable argument of Butler, by which he sets aside the deistical objections, and makes plain to reason and common sense, the unspeakable importance and undeniable credibility of revealed religion. Here at least he opens to view some of the most precious contents of Christianity, which are made available in some degree at least as credentials also.

By way of illustration, and for the sake of clearness he adds two deductions. First, he shews the distinction between what is *positive* and what is *moral* in religion; Secondly, that this distinction is the ground of that peculiar preference which Scripture teaches us to be due to what is moral.

We see the reasons of *moral* precepts; but we do not see the reasons of *positive* precepts. A moral duty arises out of the nature of the case itself, prior to external command; positive duties, from the external command. The manner of our knowing the nature of the case, or the fact of the relation, does not bring a duty under the head of moral or positive. Thus, baptism in the name of the Father is as much a *positive* duty as baptism in the name of the Son, because both arise equally from revealed command, though the nature of the case (the relations of the Father and the Son towards us) is made known by reason, in respect to the Father, and in respect to the Son by revelation only.

On the other hand, religious regards to the Son, are (supposing the Gospel to be true) as much *moral* duties as religious regards to the Father, though the nature of the case is

made known to us by revelation in respect to the former, and by reason in respect to the latter.

It is plain that positive institutions are twofold—being founded either upon natural or on revealed religion.

The reason of positive institutions *in general*, (though not of this or that particular one as appointed rather than another) is very obvious. Therefore it is that these institutions *in general*, as distinguished from this or that *particular* one, have the nature of moral commands, since the reasons of them appear.

Thus we have seen that the external worship of God is a moral duty, though no particular mode of it be so. This shews us that in any comparison made between positive and moral duties, we are not to compare them farther than as they are different; as they arise respectively out of the apparent reason of the case without external command, or from external command, the reasons of which we are not acquainted with.

If then they are found to interfere with each other in any case, and we cannot obey both, the moral should have the preference, because there is an apparent reason for this, and none against it. We see the reasons of the moral, but not of the positive, considered respectively *as such*. Moreover, the positive institutions of Christianity are means to a moral end, and the end must be acknowledged more excellent than the means. Indeed, the observance of positive institutions is of no value otherwise than it proceeds from a moral principle. He has already told us in chap. v. part 1, that “doing what God commands, *because He commands it*, is obedience, though it proceeds from hope or fear. And a course of such obedience will form habits of it.” (Oxf Ed. p. 102.)

Putting the matter in a more practical, though not in so logical, a shape, it may be said that the moral law is as much matter of revealed command as positive institutions are. But

the moral law is also written upon our hearts, which is a plain intimation from God of the preference due to what is moral. But we are not left to reason out this distinction, or the duty of preferring the moral to the positive, when they come into conflict and cannot both be obeyed. The very nature of the case shews, that placing religion in peculiar positive rites and observances, by way of an equivalent for obedience to moral precepts, is utterly subversive of all true religion. Mankind in all ages have been greatly prone to this, though it is contrary to the whole general tenor of Scripture, as well as to its most express declarations as to the paramount importance of moral virtue. There must be a righteousness exceeding that of "Scribes and Pharisees."

Whenever the Scripture refers to both classes of duties, it puts the stress of religion on the moral and never upon the positive; not indeed as intimating that the latter are to be neglected when they do not interfere with the former, but that when they do, the former are to be preferred. And this is not all. Our Lord himself, from whose command the obligation of positive institutions arises, has taken occasion to make the comparison between them and moral precepts on two distinct occasions.—(Matt. ix. 13, and xii. 7.) Not only has he expressly and in form determined this question of preference, but by his *proverbial* manner of expression he has made this determination *general*, so as to express the preference that should *always* be given to the moral, without leaving it to be merely inferred by parity of reasoning from his determination in a particular case. The inference, however, would be quite legitimate. Nor is it merely because the manner is proverbial that His determination has a general applicability; but from the reproof which he gives to the Pharisees for not understanding the general sense and spirit of the quotation from Hosea, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice," as teaching

moral obedience in contrast with formal observances. On both occasions our Lord introduces the quotation with a declaration that the Pharisees did not understand the meaning of the words. The *literal* sense is obvious; and this, doubtless, they all understood; but this would not have prevented their condemning the guiltless. The genuine spirit and real import of the prophet's words, which they did not understand, indicate wherein the *general* spirit of religion consists—in piety, in kindness, in humility, in patience, and in moral obedience, as distinguished from formal positive ritual observances. “To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit.” “Sacrifice and burnt offering, Thou didst not desire. Then, said I, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.” Each of these (and there are many of this class) is both a sacred text and a comment.

We find on several occasions our blessed Lord emphatically rebuking the ceremonial, self-righteous, narrow and Pharisaical religionists of that age for the unscriptural preference of the positive above the moral and spiritual. The holy sabbath had been based upon a foundation broad as creation itself, and it was designed for the whole human family. Made as it was for *man*, and adapted to his nature, it was a seventh day sanctified on which man was to be set free from the law of labour, that was imposed by his Creator; and this periodical exemption was previously provided in order that man might enjoy a recurring day of rest, as the privilege of an immortal being originally created in the Divine image. Under the symbolical economy of Judaism, the tendency of man in his fallen nature to settle down in mere external observances, and to substitute the positive for the moral, overlaid and obscured the great primary purpose for which the sabbath was made. Cessation from the routine of daily life is essential, but it is not the proper privilege of the sabbath—this is but

a means to a higher end. The teaching of our blessed Lord, on one of the occasions to which Butler refers and on which he comments with so much characteristic wisdom, is an exposition not more emphatic in the gracious words than from the Divine example of our Lord, by which He condemned the Pharisaism of those who, in ignorance or disregard of the benign purpose of the sabbath and of the genuine spirit of the Holy Scriptures (the oracles of God, which it was their peculiar privilege to have committed to their charge) ignored the design of the one, and the instruction of the other, by elevating the ceremonial and the positive into the place of the spiritual and moral—the letter that killeth, instead of the spirit that giveth life. The commandment had enjoined the duty of keeping holy the sabbath day as appointed for the good of man ; that he should be free from the toils and labours that would obviously interfere with the realization of the blessing which God had provided in setting apart a seventh day as a day of sacred rest. But the same God had again and again declared in the Holy Scriptures, and by the mouth of His holy prophets, the preference of mercy to sacrifice on all occasions and on every day.

The service of God is a reasonable service, designed for His own glory, but for the good of man. The duties and the actions, which the circumstances wherein man may be placed, may reasonably require, that do not necessarily frustrate the primary purpose of the day, are not within the scope and spirit of the prohibition. Acts of goodness, of justice, charity and mercy, may rather tend to effectuate than defeat the object of the Divine appointment. This exposition of the commandment thus graciously given by Him, who is the Lord of the sabbath, has been handed down to us as his own direction in the keeping of the Christian sabbath, and also as instructing us in the way in which we should compare Scrip-

ture with Scripture, searching therein for the genuine spirit and meaning—the mind and the will of God. If in the way thus authoritatively pointed out we search the Scriptures, we shall find (to use the words of Bacon) “how vast a difference there is between the idols of the human mind and the ideas of the Divine.” The former are fashioned in the head and heart of man; the latter, when given by inspiration of God, are spiritually discerned. Yes, they are so discerned by the humble and the patient student, who with prayer and in faith asks for and accepts the guidance of Him, who is emphatically called the Spirit of Truth—

“ Whose love, whose counsel, whose commands have made
Your very poorest rich in peace of thought
And in good works; and him, who is endowed
With scantiest knowledge, master of all truth
Which the salvation of his soul requires.”

It is evident from the way in which Butler dwells on the memorable comment of our Lord on the words quoted from Hosea, that he regarded the Divine exposition as a most remarkable instance of magnifying and making honourable ‘the moral law.’ In every false religion morality is put (more or less) out of its proper place. Whether it be put above the grace of God, in the form of human merit, or below positive observances or the commandments of men which are taught as doctrines, it is misplaced; God is dishonoured and man is injuriously affected in his moral nature. The tendency is so great in human nature to gravitate into a positive system, and thus to separate religion from morality, that we find it to be the great corruption to which religion has, at all times, been exposed. The importance then of revelation in this matter cannot be too highly appreciated; the impressive and instructive comment of Butler well deserves a patient and

repeated consideration. The great Pascal, pious and philosophic as he was, beyond all question, a man of faith and prayer, when he suggested a remedy for unbelief, took it from the breviary instead of the Bible, and so has given an instructive example of the passion of human nature (if I may so say) to invert the Scriptural order of the moral and the positive. He advises those who are afflicted with unbelief to act as if they believed, "taking holy water, causing masses to be said, and so on." His general view was right; namely, that a willing obedience to Christianity, as the revealed will of God, was the path to the attainment of a higher knowledge of it. Be willing to be a Christian in action, and you shall become at last a Christian in conviction. "If any man *be willing* to do His will, He shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." But what is a Christian in action—what is the will of God as to the Christian life? Here Pascal is at fault; he places rite and ceremony, and the traditions and commandments of men, above (thus practically instead of) the weightier commands of the law of love and mercy—the subjection and the sacrifice of self; the daily and the hourly duties of our respective stations, arising out of the common relations in which we find ourselves placed, and in which diligence, deference, kindness, and sympathy are reasonably required from us. "Go and do likewise," stands in striking contrast with the ritual prescription of Pascal. How excellent is the great Physician! God is wiser than man. He gives nothing as a remedy or as a test, but what is in itself good; nor enjoins anything as obligatory which is not in itself reasonable. It has been wisely observed by South, in his celebrated sermon on the unbelief of Thomas, that "Christ never rewards anything with a blessing but so far as it is a duty, nor makes anything a duty but what is highly rational."

There is a very suggestive comment of Lord Bacon in his

Meditationes Sacræ, on the words of Hosea, to which our attention has been directed. It is in the 7th vol. p. 249. "The ostentation of hypocrites" (he says) "is ever confined to the works of the first table of the law, which prescribes our duties to God. The reason is two-fold, both because works of this class have a greater pomp of sanctity and because they interfere less with their desires. The way to convict a hypocrite therefore is, to send him from the works of sacrifice to the works of mercy." He goes away sorrowing. "The works of mercy therefore are the works whereby to distinguish hypocrites. With heretics, on the contrary, it is otherwise; for as hypocrites seek by a pretended holiness towards God to cover their injuries towards men; so heretics seek by a certain moral carriage towards men to make a passage for their blasphemies against God."

This acknowledged tendency in human nature to put moral duty out of its proper place, a tendency which history has certified and Revelation condemned, is, in itself, a pregnant proof of the moral disorder of man's nature and the need of that interposition of God by which man may be created anew in the Divine image; the one is as undeniable as the other is important. Thanks then be unto God for His unspeakable gift!

But whilst we have thus been so solemnly reminded of the preference that ought to be given to the moral above the positive, when they come into conflict and both cannot be obeyed, we are cautioned by the sagacious Butler, against a peculiar weakness of human nature, that when on a comparison of two things, one is found to be of greater importance than the other, we are prone to consider this other of scarce any importance at all. In his first sermon on the love of God, he thus adverts to this weakness—"There is such a thing as having so great horror of one extreme as to run

insensibly and of course into the contrary ; and that a doctrine's having been made the shelter for enthusiasm or made to serve the purpose of superstition, is no proof of the falsity of it : truth or right being somewhat real in itself, and so not to be judged of by its liableness to abuse or by its supposed distance from or nearness to error." Thus St. Paul never meant to depreciate the intrinsic value of those works which are the evidence of a Christian life, and the proper fruit of a true and lively faith. There is a law of faith, and a law of works ; a proper place for both, but in their relative Scriptural order. St. James intended not to disparage the faith without which it is impossible to please God, nor to disturb the precedence which Paul had settled. A careful and candid collation of the words of the two inspired Apostles, construed in the spirit of which our Lord has given us an example—enables us to see at once the indissoluble connection and appointed relation of faith and works. And so it is with reference to institutions or observances appointed by competent authority. It would be presumptuous if not perilous in us to make light of any institutions of Divine appointment because we may suppose them to be of comparatively little importance. The preference that ought to be given to the greater does not imply that we ought to neglect the less. These are not to be always left undone, because the former are always to be done. Positive commands from God, lay us under a moral obligation to obey them ; moral, in the strictest and most proper sense, because they are the commands of our moral governor.

This account of Christianity as a dispensation of mercy beyond the ordinary course of nature, a dispensation not discoverable by reason, and distinct from natural religion, shews most strongly the obligations of seeking inductively for the scheme of revelation in the Sacred Record which contains it (the Holy Scriptures) instead of determining speculatively

beforehand from reason, what the scheme of it ought to be. The province of reason in judging of the internal and external evidences of revelation is quite another matter, and will be considered hereafter, especially when we come to the third chapter. What Butler here suggests is, that revelation must be left to speak for itself, and man is bound to hear and learn its sacred lessons, in order to know what the scheme of Christianity is; this he cannot discover, and he ought not to attempt to determine beforehand, from reason. But revelation must be received and interpreted, and (we may admit) reasonably interpreted. But here great caution is needed, that we may not indirectly do what we must not do directly. We have to interpret revelation, and in doing so we use our reason. "If," (says Butler) "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. There may be, however, a doctrine which the light of nature cannot discover, or a precept which the law of nature does not oblige to." There may (in effect) be matters beyond and above the reach of unaided reason, and altogether out of the pale of natural religion—but not any thing which can truly be said to be unreasonable or at variance with natural religion, as contrary to it. This I take to be quite true as Butler exactly understood it; but it is a truth which requires to be guarded with the most jealous and conscientious caution.

Reason and revelation are gifts from God: natural religion is a religion of truth—though designedly imperfect in its disclosures; what God has revealed comes in aid and completion of that which He has enabled man by reason to discover. Truth is one, and in all its departments it will be found consistent and harmonious.

If, indeed, man had accomplished the true interpretation of nature and that of revelation also, I cannot doubt that all

would have been found to harmonize in Divine order and unity. We are only in a state of infancy as to both. And what says the great inductive Philosopher? "The entrance into the kingdom of man founded on the sciences, being not much other than the entrance into the kingdom of heaven, whereunto none may enter except as a little child." Let us cultivate, in the docile temper of childhood, the unsuspecting confidence, the trust of a loving heart, in the truth and wisdom of a Father's teaching, not the pride and arrogance of speculative opinion presuming to dictate the lesson to our Teacher, but glad to learn His lesson from the books of nature and revelation by which our minds will be enlightened, our hearts enlarged, and our affections purified.

We may expect that as we cultivate our reason, we shall be the more enabled to appreciate what is truly reasonable; that as we act on the Divine lessons which are written for our learning, we may the better apprehend their gracious purpose and their comprehensive wisdom. The very chapter which we have been discussing, explains forcibly how revelation has helped to purify natural religion, which had been grievously obscured and corrupted. Therefore we must be cautious, that we may not set up a condemned standard of judging a Divine communication, of which an important use has been to relieve natural religion of the obscurity and corruption by which it had been confessedly overlaid.

Again, remember Lord Bacon. "The idols of the human mind are not the ideas of the Divine." Natural religion and revelation, as God has given them, may be said to be concurrent, *but not coextensive* in their disclosures—and although we may most reasonably expect ultimately to find them in complete harmony, we must be very careful not to precipitate a contradiction by some rash or crude interpretation of

either, which further and more careful study may induce us to modify or reject.

Thus then, although we may be assured that no contradiction will in the end be found, we must expect, whilst the leaven of Divine truth is working in the entire mass of human knowledge, to meet with much to try and prove us, to exercise our reason and our faith as fellow-workers with God; to require our patient waiting upon Him in all humility of mind, but in the full assurance that in His works and in His word He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

The subject will recur when we come to the third chapter; and therefore, I need not longer dwell on it at present. In concluding the consideration of a chapter, which impresses so forcibly the importance of revelation, as a preliminary to the discussion of its credibility, I may appropriately extract an eloquent passage from Pascal. After discussing the perplexities of philosophic systems, he says:—

“The Christian religion alone discovered the remedy for these evils; not in setting the one against the other by the wisdom of this world, but in overthrowing them all by the simplicity of the Gospel. It is this, which while elevating the just to a participation of the Divine nature itself, reveals to them that in this exalted state they bear yet within them the seeds of that corruption, which throughout the whole of their earthly existence renders them the subjects of error, misery, sin, and death; and this also proclaims to the most debased of the whole human race, that it is yet in their power to become partakers of their Redeemer’s grace. Inspiring the holy with salutary fears and extending its hopes to the most sinful, the Gospel so mildly tempers fears with encouragement, and holds the scales so evenly between grace and sin, that the soul is far more effectually abased, yet without abandoning itself to despair, than she could have been by any efforts of

mere human reason ; while she is infinitely more elevated, although without unwholesome inflation, than she could have been by the pride of nature ; plainly showing, that unalloyed by error and corruption, these sacred principles alone can correct and purify the evils of the fallen nature of man.

“ Who then can withhold his belief in this celestial revelation ? Can we not perceive in ourselves, as traced by the bright beams of the noon-day sun, the ineffaceable characters of our pristine existence ? And do we not equally feel with bitter force the effects of our fall and ruin ? What is it then that from amidst this fearful confusion and chaos, we hear proclaimed to us with a voice of irresistible conviction, but the irrefragable truth of these two co-existent states of humanity ? ”

LECTURE III.

OBJECTIONS AGAINST REVELATION AS MIRACULOUS.

HAVING shewn that the Christian Revelation is of vital importance to man; and, if credible, the obligation of examining its evidence is paramount, Butler next considers the supposed presumptions against revelation in general. This is a part of the preliminary objections or prejudices which he thinks it is proper to clear away before he deals with the positive evidence in favour of Christianity; thus he makes the argument complete, which is otherwise conclusive.

It has been observed by Dr. Hampden (now Bishop of Hereford) in his excellent and instructive treatise on the philosophical evidences of Christianity, that revelation “presumes to disturb nothing, either in the mind of man or in the world, which is of natural appointment. It assumes all things to be good, so far as they proceed from the same Divine Author, whom it claims as the inditer of its holy truths, and it therefore affects not to undo or dispense with any thing which bears the real impress of His workmanship. It aspires only to be the universal rule—to moderate and conduct towards its due perfection, that constitution of things which we find existing in nature.” We have seen in the preceding chapter how emphatically revelation has republished and

enforced the moral law, giving its commandments a significant precedence over positive precepts; not with a view of superseding the latter, but of subordinating them to the higher demands of eternal and immutable morality. We were wisely cautioned by Butler against a peculiar weakness of human nature, which inclines to ignore altogether what seems to be the less important of two things when they are compared, the one with the other. Thus it is, that positive commands are sometimes altogether neglected as undeserving of attention, when they ought to be attended to in their proper place; and, on the other hand, it often happens that the ritual and ceremonial observances, which fall in with the tendencies of our nature and please its propensities, not only displace but make void the commandments that are weightier by reason of their moral obligation. The preservation of both moral and positive in their real yet relative importance, was the great aim of the Christian Church, as well in its primitive as in its restored purity. This is provided for, in her Scriptural formularies and settled order of worship;

“And by the care prospective of our wise
Forefathers, who, to guard against the shocks,
The fluctuation, and decay of things,
Embodied and established sacred truths
In solemn institutions: men convinced
That life is love and immortality—
The being one and one the element.”

It is instructive to observe how the elevation of the ritual code of the Church to the rank of doctrine, led to the corruption of religious worship and to the gradual and general disregard of the moral law. Training the members of the Church in piety and virtue was superseded by a routine of rites and ceremonies, which mainly required from the wor-

shippers a blind credulity, and an unreasoning submission. On the other hand when the positive institutions, which gave visibility to the Church, and embodied the great central truths of atonement and regeneration, were treated as empty forms having no spiritual significance, a system of frigid rationalism grew up, professing indeed to honour the moral law, but stripping it of its essential holiness, and reducing it to a sentimental system of indulgent benevolence, to be dealt with on easy terms of mere human dictation. In some cases, indeed, reason itself was dethroned, and fanaticism, without decency, order, or moral obedience, took possession of the house thus swept and garnished. The Christian Church, divinely appointed, gives to morality a natural and scriptural precedence, without unduly depreciating the positive institutions which constitute the Church's visibility.

In proceeding to deal with the supposed peculiar presumptions from the analogy of nature against a revelation considered as miraculous, Butler first disposes of the objection against the general scheme—that God created and invisibly governs the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom He will judge it in righteousness, *i. e.*, render to every one according to his works, and that good men are under the influence of the Holy Spirit. It is not important whether this scheme be called miraculous or not, for if the analogy of nature raises any presumption against it, this must be, either because it is not discoverable by reason or experience, or because it is unlike that course of nature which is. As to the first, there is a general answer—we see but in part, we know but in part. He puts the case of a man of the most improved understanding, fully acquainted with the whole of natural philosophy and natural religion, but who had not heard of revelation; such a man could not but feel that in the past, present, and future of God's general government, there was very much

hidden from him that he could not discover and of which he must be ignorant without revelation. What is open to us is but a point in the vast and boundless system of the universe; it is but a very small part of the whole scheme of this world. And as there must be innumerable things in the constitution and government of the universe which are thus *beyond the natural reach of our faculties*, there is no sort of presumption against the truth and reality of any of the things which we *cannot* ourselves discover. As to the second, there is no presumption against any of the things contained in the general scheme as described, upon account of their being *unlike the known course* of nature. For analogy does not warrant us in presuming that the *whole* course of things *naturally unknown*, and *every* thing in it, is like to *any* thing in that which is known. In the natural and the moral government of the world we see things in a great degree unlike each other, so that we may not be surprised at such unlikenesses between things visible and invisible.

The inductive system repudiated the speculative presumption of man, as the great hindrance to knowledge and progress; man was required to come and learn the lessons recorded in the volume of nature as God had therein written them, and the analogy which is thus afforded is not without instruction. Lord Bacon, in the *Novum Organum*, (Aph. cix.) says,—“Some of the inventions that are already known are such, as before they were discovered it could hardly have entered into any man’s head to think of; *they would have been simply set aside as impossible.*” After alluding to several of these in detail, he says—“yet these things and others like them lay for so many ages of the world concealed from men; nor was it by philosophy or the rational arts that they were found at last, but by accident and occasion; being indeed, as I said, *altogether different in kind, and as remote as possible from any-*

thing that was known before ; so that no pre-conceived notion could have led to the discovery of them. There is, therefore, much ground for hoping that there are still laid up in the womb of nature many secrets of excellent use, having no affinity or parallelism with any thing that is now known."

The scheme of Christianity, indeed, is by no means entirely unlike the course of nature, as will hereafter be shewn. In truth there will be found throughout both, such an identity of principle as shews that the Author of Nature is the God of Revelation. There are profound harmonies in nature, man, and heaven. There is no presumption from analogy against a revelation *as miraculous*, at the beginning of the world. *A miracle, in its very notion, is relative to a course of nature, and implies somewhat different from it, considered as being so.* What the course of nature was, if any, upon the first peopling of the worlds, we know not—so that the question of whether a revelation was then given, is a common question of fact, and may be established by the like evidence as convinces us of other matters of fact of the same antiquity. The power then exerted was different from the present course of nature, but we cannot therefore properly call it miraculous: and whether it is so called or considered, does not alter the argument, for it cannot but be admitted that such a power was actually exerted. The question then is—in what manner and degree did this power exert itself; whether it stopped after the creation of man, or exerted itself further in giving him a revelation? So far as history and tradition testify as to this matter, they rather indicate that religion was not reasoned out at the first, but came into the world by revelation. This has already been noticed in the 13th paragraph of the 6th chap. of Part I.

A further objection is supposed—That there may be some peculiar presumption from analogy against miracles, particu-

larly against revelation, *after the settlement and during the continuance of a course of Nature*. To this objection he gives a two-fold answer. There is no part of Butler's writings, which has been so adversely criticised, as the portion of the chapter in which this answer is set forth; and to this I would now direct your particular attention.

We have in print the objections which have been taken by Bishop Fitzgerald, and also what occurred to Dr. Chalmers; they have been followed by others, who have yielded to the great authority of these eminent commentators. There are several friends for whose learning and candour I entertain a very sincere respect, who have frankly communicated to me the difficulty they have found in following Butler in this place, and they have their misgivings with reference to a part of his argument which appears to them to be fallacious. The weight of authority against Butler in this matter is certainly considerable; but after careful deliberation, I have come to the conclusion that his argument (if I understand it correctly), is not open to the objections which have been made. The solution of this question more or less depends on the ascertainment of the exact meaning of the text.

I have corresponded with my friend Mr. Mansel, of Oxford, an authority inferior to none on this subject; he has explained his views in a clear and masterly paper, which, with his kind permission, I am at liberty to use, as I think fit. Dr. Lee, of Trinity College, is the author of a valuable Essay on Miracles, in which he upholds Butler with characteristic learning and ability; and Professor Webb, who is eminently conversant with the writings of Butler, is to be found also on the side of his supporters in this controversy. The argument, in its nature, calls for a thoughtful attention; it seems at first subtle if not obscure. Objectors differ in their exceptions, and they are not exactly of one mind as to

the meaning of the text on which they comment. On the other hand, those who take the side of Butler also differ to some extent, rather on the exact interpretation of his words than on the substance of his argument. None of these differences touch any thing vital in the great question of the credibility of revealed religion.

I propose to offer you the explanation of Butler's argument which I am satisfied to adopt. The objection arises out of this—that there is a supposed *peculiar* presumption from analogy against miracles (particularly against revelation), *after the settlement and during the continuance of a course of nature*. Revelation, as a direct message from God to man, has in its very nature a miraculous character, for it supposes God to interfere in human affairs in a way that is designedly different from, though relative to the settled course of nature to which our experience bears witness. Therefore, any peculiar presumption against it arises from what is exceptional in its character, as an interference with what we experience to be the settled course of nature, and it is the same that might be suggested against miracles *in general, i. e.*, against *any miraculous interposition*. It is founded on this, that God will continue to govern the world by *general* laws only, inasmuch as all things may be presumed to continue as we experience they are, in all respects except those in which we may have reason to think they will be altered. Now keep steadily in your minds that this supposed antecedent presumption against miraculous interposition, is the peculiar presumption which Butler here proceeds to deal with. His first observation on it is, that as we have no parallel case of the history of some other world seemingly in like circumstances with our own, we have no ground for raising what can with propriety be called an argument from analogy, for or against revelation considered as miraculous—that is to say,

for or against such a Divine interference with a settled course of nature as would amount to a miraculous interposition. So far there is no difficulty—the argument is plain and intelligible. But he proceeds to a more detailed argument with reference to the supposed peculiar presumption. He makes *four particular observations*. The first and second of these are treated as the premises to a conclusion which is drawn from both when taken together, and it is material to attend to the very words in which Butler has expressed this inference. At the end of the second particular observation he says, “And from this” (*i. e.* the second of the four) “joined with the foregoing observation” (*i. e.* the first of the four), “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.”

Observe, then, that what he expressly professes to have dealt with in the first and second of the four *particular* observations (as he calls them) is the presumption against *particular* common facts of a specified class—and the presumption against miracles *in general* (*i. e.* against miraculous interposition); and the presumptions which he compares one with the other, are such only as can arise *before any evidence in either case*. Keep this steadily in your minds. In fact he is discussing a supposed presumption that is of the nature of a preliminary objection. This presumption in every case of alleged miraculous interposition is supposed by the objector to shut out evidence as inadmissible, because (he says) it is insufficient to prove that, against which, from its very nature, there is a *peculiar* presumption arising *prior to any evidence*: and, thus, (as is supposed by the objector) the case of revelation is put out of court in the first instance, without allowing its evidence to be brought forward at all.

The analogy to which Butler first directs attention is that

of the presumption which arises against common speculative truths and against ordinary facts, before the proof of them, and which may be overcome by almost any proof. He adds—"there is a presumption of millions to one against the story of Cæsar or of any other man. *For*, suppose a number of 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." He deals here with those contingencies in the course of common life, which cannot be reduced or referred to laws or rules, and are therefore called *accidental*: all these are dependent on countless combinations which we cannot control, and on influences of which we are ignorant. The truth and reality of all such matters are therefore certified by some kind of proof. In chap. iv. par. 4, he observes, "The laws by which persons born into the world at such a time and place, are of such capacities, geniuses, and tempers;" (ex. gr. the case of Cæsar or any other man) "the laws by which thoughts come into our minds in a multitude of cases; and by which innumerable things happen of the greatest influence upon the affairs and state of the world; *these laws are so wholly unknown to us that we call the events which come to pass by them as accidental*: though all reasonable men know certainly that there cannot in reality be any such thing as chance; and conclude that the things which have this appearance are the result of general laws and may be reduced into them." (Oxf. Ed. 190).

There are countless incidents in common life to which he further refers in the next page (191), which we cannot bring under general laws, and which by reason of our limited knowledge and capacity, are relatively to us contingent; so that before they are certified by proof of some kind, the antecedent presumption against any particular accidental fact

or connected set of facts of this class, is at least 'millions to one:'—and our mental constitution is so framed that if any one *such* fact, or a connected set of such facts, should happen to come into our minds, *of which we had no kind of proof*, we must conclude it or them to be false; and therefore, without evidence, we cannot admit their truth and reality. The supposition of a fact or set of facts happening to come into one's head, is merely put by Butler to illustrate the mental law; and to shew that to certify any of this class of accidental facts, as he has himself explained their nature, proof is to us a matter of necessity, for without some degree of evidence we could not believe in the truth of any such facts.

In chap. vi. par. 10 he says, "The ground of these observations, and that which renders them just and true is, that doubting necessarily implies some degree 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 accidentally come into his thoughts and of which he had no evidence at all.*" That is to say—that in such a case, there would be no doubt of the facts so coming into the mind, being unreal and false; if there was any doubt, there must be some degree of evidence, but if there is no evidence at all—no kind of proof—then the falsehood of the matter is certain. He seems here to have repeated the very same illustration, simply to shew what the mental law is, and the effect of the absence of any kind of proof. This shews how untenable is the objection which supposes him to have suggested that the story of Cæsar or the like might come into a man's head by accident, or that a set of facts might first come into the head, and that these might be afterwards deposed to as true and real, by some credible witness. It appears to me an entire misconception of the meaning of his words and the scope of his argument which implies the very contrary of this—for he does

not propose to shew that any man might, by second sight or clairvoyance or otherwise without evidence get what was true and real into his head, but on the contrary says, that if any facts of the class described, of *which one had no kind of proof*, should happen to come into one's head, he ought to conclude that they were false and unreal. Just as in dreaming, facts come into the head which are found to be unreal when we are conscious that we had no kind of evidence of them. So in cases of insanity, generally known as 'notional,' a matter is taken to be true and is treated as real, being in fact but a delusion which has happened to come into the head, not as a designed fiction, or a conscious invention, but what a sane person takes to be false, *because it is without any kind of proof*. The very essence of the delusion consists in the insane person accrediting that as true and real of which there is no kind of evidence.

The common phrase that we use at times—"he has taken into his head so and so," supposes the existence of the mental law which is observed in accidental circumstances, and has been appropriately illustrated by the supposition which Butler has made, in order to shew the materiality of proof in all cases of such contingent common facts. So much then for the presumption against a particular accidental fact before evidence. Next comes the presumption which is peculiar to miracles *in general*, that is to say, to miraculous interposition. This presumption is additional to that which has been already explained as arising out of contingency, and it is *peculiar*, because it arises out of the exceptional character of the alleged interference with the settled course of Nature. Butler describes it as a small presumption, which, though additional and peculiar, yet cannot be estimated, and is relatively as nothing. It is the supposed peculiar presumption against miracles *in general*, which he thus characterizes. It may be weak or strong, small

or great, in proportion as we can say whether there may or may not have been a reasonable ground for any interference with the settled course of nature. We may be so conscious of our ignorance as to be unable to arrive at any definite conclusion, or to estimate the peculiar presumption that has been supposed. And therefore it is that in his second particular observation he takes the case on the lowest ground, so as to meet the unbelieving objector on his own level. Arguing the question without reference to the moral facts and religious reasons which justify the expectation (as they shew the importance) of a Divine revelation to man, how does the case stand? If we leave out the consideration of Religion, we are then in such total darkness as to the causes, occasions, reasons and circumstances on which the present course of Nature depends, that we could not say whether there may or may not have been reasons for miraculous interposition. That is to say—in the very circumstances favourable to the objection, viz., those in which the peculiar antecedent presumption is supposed to arise—it is found that such a presumption cannot be estimated; therefore, Butler concludes from the two observations together, the presumption against a particular *contingency* as described, is incomparably greater than the supposed peculiar presumption against miracles *in general*, before any evidence of either.

I have adverted to the misconception of the way in which Butler illustrates the law, by which proof of some kind is made essential to certify the truth of a particular contingency; and having pointed out the misconception, I need not criticise the comments which are not applicable to what I take to be his true meaning. It is not in this part of his argument that he is so generally supposed to have lapsed into fallacy, as in that where he speaks of the additional peculiar presumption

as small and also as incapable of estimation, as virtually or relatively amounting to nothing. He is said not to have distinguished between "improbability before the fact, and improbability after the fact," where he deals with the presumption against miracles:—and he is also said to have confounded improbabilities antecedent to proof, with "improbabilities against proof," when he deals with the presumption against particular common facts. I do not stop to criticise these expressions, though they have not the philosophical precision that is desirable in any adverse criticism on so cautious and accurate a writer as Butler. If it is intended to affirm that he overlooked or underrated the contrast between a marvellous or a miraculous fact, and one which is common or usual; that he did so with reference to internal improbabilities which might leave the mind without the aid of experience or analogy in considering the evidence in the case, and thus raise impediments to belief more or less difficult to be overcome by that evidence—with the most sincere deference I would say, that to the immediate argument of Butler, the discussion of this would not have been relevant. He had to follow an objector in order to shew that the precise objection which had been made in order to shut out altogether the evidence in favour of revelation, was not valid. The presumption supposed is prior to any evidence, and it was to this presumption that Butler's argument is appropriately confined.

He does not compare nor profess to compare, the narrative of any common fact with the report of some alleged miracle. On the contrary, in his fourth "particular observation" he emphatically excludes the comparison of miracles to facts which are ordinary: these are the subject of contrast, not of comparison, with miraculous facts; for "a miracle in its very notion is relative to a course of nature, and

implies somewhat different from it, considered as being so." What he has here compared is—the presumption before evidence against the *actual happening of a particular accidental fact* or set of facts *which cannot be reduced or referred to any general law or rule*, and the presumption before evidence against any miraculous interposition *on any occasion whatsoever*. It is very material to observe this, and not to introduce a subject of comparison in any respect different from that which is to be found in the very words of the text.

Having shewn the relative strength of the two presumptions which he has expressly considered, he derives an argument from analogy, which warrants him in concluding that there is not any presumption worth mentioning against Christianity as miraculous (if any at all); none certainly which can render it in the least *incredible*. These are the words in which, in his concluding chapter, he sums up the substance of the argument in this, to which I have just directed your attention.

"The *only material question*" at this preliminary stage "is, whether there be any such presumption against miracles as to render them in any sort *incredible*." Why then should it be thought necessary to complicate the discussion with another question, that is not relevant to the exact argument specially directed against the preliminary objection which was supposed to arise, *not out of, but prior to evidence?*

The relative effect of internal improbabilities in any of the cases to which he refers, he does not (so far at least as I can discover) profess to discuss. His argument is directed to shew this, that if miraculous interposition is not in its nature incredible, the preliminary bar is removed, and then we are free to examine the evidence that may be offered in any case of an alleged miracle, the truth of which we are required to believe.

He refers to the story of Cæsar, *or of any other man*. It

would seem from this, that the presumption which he had in his mind, was not dependent on the peculiar conjuncture of circumstances, or the internal improbability of any part of the narrative in the case of Cæsar. It was that which arises in the case of *any* story, from our ignorance of the combinations and the influences, the reciprocal connection and dependence of events, whether great or small. In a word, he deals with that which makes all such matters, relatively to us, *accidental*, because we know not the laws by which they are brought to pass. However various may be the colours, shapes and sizes, they are all alike in the dark; we must wait for the light of evidence to enable us to distinguish. The presumption is *prior to any kind of proof*.

Where, then, do we find in this, that he has confounded improbabilities antecedent to proof with "improbabilities against proof?" His own accurate phrase is "presumption prior to proof." This is the presumption, and the only presumption which here he professes to discuss. If by "improbabilities against proof," is meant internal improbabilities,—these, if not so great as to render in any sort incredible the matter alleged, can be overcome by sufficient testimony; and therefore, in discussing the validity of the preliminary bar to hearing evidence at all, it was not material to notice these improbabilities that might be disposed of by the evidence when examined.

Mr. Mill's criticism on the answers given to Hume by Campbell and others, is quoted by Bishop Fitzgerald as an authority, to shew that, with reference to his description of the alleged weakness of the peculiar presumption against miracles in general, Butler had made the mistake of not distinguishing between "improbability before and after the fact." In the extract from this learned writer, which is given in the Bishop's note, Mr. Mill has explained what he means

by "improbability after the fact"—for, he says at the close, "this alone it is which is improbable in the sense of *incredibility*, or, as we have called it, improbability after the fact." In another part of the same work (vol. ii. p. 59) he says: "The probability of an event is not a quality of the event itself, but a mere name for the degree of ground which we or some one else have for expecting it." Thus, Butler's language—"presumption prior to the proof," or "before the evidence," is strictly accurate; and then if the presumption be not "*such as to render miracles in any sort incredible*," it is not material to consider in this part of his argument, what in fact is a part of the evidence. Therefore, Butler seems to draw a line exactly where it ought to be drawn, when he states what he considers to be "*the only material question*" at this stage of his argument. In the sentence which immediately follows that to which the objection of Bishop Fitzgerald is directed, Butler says:—"the only material question is, whether there be *any such* presumption" (presumptions in first edition) "*against miracles as to render them in any sort incredible*." This, in its nature, must apply to miracles *as a class*—it must be a presumption which does not arise out of the peculiarities of any individual case, but out of something common to all. It must belong to miracles in general, *i. e.*, to any miraculous interposition whatsoever. Mr. Mill's criticism on the answers which had been given to Hume may be sound; but whether it is applicable to Butler is a different question.

Having drawn the line of distinction, which excludes any such presumption as would render miracles in any sort incredible (*i. e.* 'improbable after the fact,' in Mr. Mill's language), Butler does not at this stage proceed to analyse or weigh the internal improbability of this or that being true or objectively real; this must vary with the circumstances in

each individual case. There may be enough to excite suspicion in some, distrust in others, and to cause the evidence to be more or less carefully sifted, this his argument has nothing to do with these considerations.

Now if you examine the comments in which it is stated that Butler has made a mistake, either by confounding or not distinguishing or the like, you will find that they are mainly dependent on illustrations which are so framed by the commentator, that for a *particular* contingency against which the presumption prior to evidence would be *millions to one*, there is substituted some event against which there would be a very limited presumption, lower sometimes than ten to one. And instead of a representative of "miracles *in general*," you will find some strange and surprising incident, obviously discredited by an antecedent improbability arising from the absence of an intelligible occasion for an interference with any of the known laws of nature. Or a comparison is made between some ordinary and some miraculous *narrative*, supported by some kind or amount of evidence—and a balance is struck, by which it is supposed that Butler's guarded comparison in his two specified cases, under exact conditions, is shewn to be fallacious or untenable. I cannot but think that these illustrations are calculated to mislead. *They compare what Butler does not profess to compare*; and they withdraw attention from the author's text, his precise argument and the subject matter of the comparison to which he has expressly confined his observations. Whatever, then, may be the value of the comments when applied to the comparisons that have been made by the commentators, I cannot find in any one of them an argument or a criticism that I could feel justified in applying to the text of Butler, which is conversant with the presumption, prior to evidence, against a *particular* contingency, and with the like presumption against miracles in *general*.

That Butler was not required to do more in the first and second observation than to remove the supposed objection *as a preliminary bar* to going into evidence at all, is confirmed by this, that in the third "particular observation" he proceeds to shew that when we consider the moral system of the world, we find reasons that give a positive credibility to the history of miracles in cases where these reasons hold. The preliminary objection he had argued and removed on the facts and principles which the objector himself could not but acknowledge. Having in this way shewn that the objector could not reasonably deny that miraculous interposition is not incredible, he goes on to prove that as we find in natural religion, reasons sufficient to render the history of miracles credible in cases where these reasons hold, we are thus enabled to bring miracles, in such cases, within the moral system to which he has before suggested that the order of nature is subservient. In such cases the antecedent presumption which had been supposed by the objector, would altogether disappear. A new element is introduced by which miracles are in certain cases shewn to be not mere exceptions to physical order, but as having a moral end; and whilst they interfere with the laws of a system that is subordinate, they may coincide with those of another that is superior. But the effect of this is excluded if the evidence cannot be examined; and therefore it was material to remove the preliminary bar, in order that the circumstances under which the miracle is alleged to have been performed should all be considered.

"There is one case," says Locke, "wherein the strangeness of the fact lessens not the assent to a *fair testimony given of it*. For where such supernatural events are *suitable to ends aimed at by Him who has the power to change the course of nature*, there, under such circumstances, they may be the fitter to procure belief by how much the more they are beyond or

contrary to ordinary observation. This is the proper case of miracles, which, well attested, do not only find credit themselves, but give it also to other truths which need such confirmation." (Bk. iv. c. 16, s. 13). In s. 8, Locke refers to our belief in the story of Cæsar, because it is "related by historians of credit and contradicted by no one writer." The heading of this section is—"fair testimony, and the nature of the thing indifferent produces confident belief." Locke does not go into the question of presumption before proof in any case; this case he describes as indifferent in its nature. There is in this no difference of opinion between him and Butler, but the latter has gone into the question of presumption before proof; as to the effect of proof they seem substantially to agree.

"Fair testimony," whether in the case of the miracle with its moral interest and its congruous accompaniments, or in the case of the history indifferent in its nature but without any moral impediment to our belief in its truth, these eminent men take to be sufficient to produce the conviction on which we may safely rely. Indeed I cannot but here observe that whilst the story of Cæsar may be to us indifferent in its nature, the history of our blessed Saviour is all important; and the Christian miracles have that moral fitness which arises from their consistency with the character of God, in which are combined His goodness and His wisdom, His omnipotence and His mercy to man.

Thus we see how premature it would have been in Butler to have gone into the question of internal improbability before he could also take into account the moral accompaniments of the miracles of revelation. These forming a part of the circumstances of each case, could not be set off against an antecedent adverse presumption, otherwise than by going into the evidence; but when this presumption was shewn to be

insufficient to stop the inquiry, Butler then took up that which forms so important a part of the matter to be considered. "There is" (says Mr. Mill in the same chapter from which Bishop Fitzgerald has made the extract to which I have already referred) "a general presumption against any supposition of Divine agency not operating through general laws, or, in other words, there is an antecedent improbability in every miracle which, in order to outweigh it, requires an extraordinary strength of antecedent probability *derived from the special circumstances of the case.*" (Vol. ii. p. 160).

Then how are you to get at the special circumstances? You must not shut out, in the first instance, the consideration of the evidence, for it may remove the objection altogether; and if you find that the probability which the special circumstances supply, is such as to outweigh the antecedent presumption against *any* miraculous interposition, then, whether the strength of this probability be extraordinary or not, the case of the miracle is established. Nor is it necessary that it should be extraordinary. For if you eliminate (as Butler has done) this presumption as it stands prior to any evidence, you have only to find in the circumstances a suitable occasion for the Divine interposition, and thus you remove the presumption. Mr. Mill admits "that a miracle considered merely as an extraordinary fact, may be satisfactorily certified by our senses or by testimony;" in this he exactly follows in the wake of Butler. But he suggests that it cannot, in the strict sense, be proved that it is a miracle, because it may possibly be the result of some unknown natural cause.

This supposition, however, only shews that the evidence is not demonstrative, and it leaves the moral inference as clear and certain as before. For "proved" the word "demonstrated" should be substituted, and then how does the matter stand? There are extra-ordinary facts established by fair testimony,

and the proper inference is to be drawn by a moral and intelligent being from all the circumstances submitted to him. Assuming that there is an intelligent Author of Nature and Ruler of the universe (which is Butler's postulate), there is an adequate cause for whatever is not in itself impossible as a contradiction. What remains? Is the special interposition consistent with His character, and is the occasion proper for His interference? Has the transaction those congruous moral accompaniments which are reasonably to be expected? This is not a matter for "strict demonstration," but for the *proof* which leaves no doubt in the conscience; and it satisfies the heart, just as the inference we derive from the world without and the voice within, that there is an intelligent Author of Nature—a Moral Governor of the world. This too may not be capable of "strict demonstration," but it is capable of *proof* sufficient to leave him without excuse who is not convinced. If he has already drawn this conclusion, he has but to go through a like process, in considering the facts and circumstances of an alleged miracle; if he has not, and so does not believe in the existence of a God, he cannot be expected to admit the possibility or the proof of a miraculous interference of an Almighty Creator with the course and order of the world.

We cannot "*demonstrate*" the motive with which man sometimes acts—and yet it is a material element in the consideration of the most important questions of public justice. On the right determination of it, human life and liberty are forfeited according to law. And how is it determined? Not by any *demonstration*. In the correspondence with Dr. Clarke (see Serm. Bell and Daldy's Edition, p. 356) Butler says, "My using the word demonstration instead of proof which leaves no room for doubt, was through negligence, for I never heard of strict demonstration of matter of fact." It is an inference

from the facts—a reasonable inference and a moral probability, such as we act on in the most important concerns of life. You cannot demonstrate all that you may prove, but this may be as certain to the moral conviction as demonstration to the reason, or as evidence to the senses.

Mr. Mill admits that the miracle, as an extraordinary fact, may be certified “by our senses or by testimony.” So far as Butler deals with miracles as exceptions to physical order, he has anticipated this admission of Mr. Mill; for, in his fourth “particular observation” Butler says that “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.*” This shews that he had not overlooked the points of contrast, which made the comparison with ordinary events inadmissible. He excludes such a comparison. The very nature of a miracle is exceptional. The presumption against it, in the first instance, is fitly compared to that which would present itself to the mind of a person acquainted only with the daily, monthly, and annual course of nature respecting the earth and the common powers of matter, *upon first hearing* of comets and other such extraordinary phenomena, or of such powers as magnetism, electricity, &c. So that it is by no means certain that there is *any* peculiar presumption at all from analogy, even in the lowest degree, against miracles. Whether there is or not, he says is not important, inasmuch as he has already shewn that, even assuming that the presumption is peculiar, *it is not such in its degree as to render miracles incredible.* He gives a reason for avoiding the very discussion required by some of the comments which impute mistake and fallacy to his reasoning. He shews plainly that he did not consider it to be relevant to the only question which he took to be material at this stage of the argument.

Thus you find that the presumption against miracles, of which he speaks throughout, is that which belongs to them as a class—that antecedent improbability of which Mr. Mill speaks as being in *every* miracle; *but this may be overcome by a greater probability, that may be derived from the special circumstances of the case.* This improbability is not (properly speaking) in the miracle at all, but arises from the presumption that is drawn by our limited knowledge, and, therefore, is capable of being removed by the proof which enlarges our knowledge, and so takes away the ground of the presumption.

PRESUMPTION AGAINST MIRACLES.

CONTINUED.

THE consideration of the preliminary objections which have been made to the credibility of Revelation as miraculous, included that of the supposed peculiar presumption against any Divine interference with the course of Nature after it has been settled and during its continuance; or, in other words, the supposed peculiar presumption against miracles in general. Butler proceeds to establish, first, that if there is a peculiar presumption against miracles *in general, i. e.*, against any miraculous interposition, it appears to be relatively unimportant; and there is certainly no such presumption as to render miracles in any sort *incredible*; and, next, that as the moral system of the world enables us to see reasons for such interposition, this gives a positive credibility to the history of miracles, in cases where these reasons hold. Thirdly, that if we compare miracles as a class, not to the ordinary but to the *extra-ordinary* phenomena of nature, then 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; but that this is of no importance to determine, as the only material question is, whether there is any such presumption as to render miracles *in any sort incredible*. It is the degree, not

the fact of the presumption, that is important. Remember that the presumption supposed by the objector, is put forward as a bar to an examination of the evidence, in *any* case of an alleged miracle. But the objector is met on his own ground, and before he leaves this position, Butler examines the only argument which can be drawn from analogy (and to analogy the objector himself appeals), and he shows that a presumption beyond comparison greater than that which the objector has supposed, may be removed by evidence, and therefore that there is no preliminary bar to the examination of the evidence in a case of alleged miraculous interposition. It is here that the difficulty is generally felt in following Butler; and to avoid, or, at least, to remove this difficulty, a sustained attention is required. The supposed peculiar presumption which he treats as small and as not to be estimated, is (as I conceive), *simply and merely the naked presumption (prior to any evidence), against the interference of God in any respect or on any occasion, with the settled course of nature.* It is assumed for the sake of argument and under certain limited conditions; for, so soon as we look to the moral system of nature, this presumption disappears.

Miracles are left at last in all their distinctiveness as significant of a divine interposition for a religious purpose; and in no respect is the contrast weakened between the settled course of nature and the miraculous interference of God. I believe that it is by mixing up the consideration of this contrast with the previous question as to the supposed peculiar presumption against any interference at all; by thus complicating, however unconsciously, what Butler had designedly disentangled, that much of the difficulty has arisen in following or adopting his argument at this stage. His caution and exactness are the more apparent, as he expressly forbids the comparison of miracles as a class, to ordinary facts as a class: he had

described what in its very notion a miracle is, and so as to show this comparison to be inadmissible. But the happening of *particular* events of a known class is referred to—not the uniform physical sequences of nature, but matters which we *cannot* reduce to general laws, and which are, therefore, called *accidental*. We have to wait on testimony to certify their happening; and before any evidence, the presumption against the *actual* happening of a *particular* accidental event is such, that it is often beyond the limits of definite calculation; and this may be expressed by saying, that there are millions to one against its happening at all.

It is (as I have observed), the objector who has appealed to analogy in support of his objection; and, therefore, Butler had only to show that there was no valid argument from analogy in favour of the objection. First, he says, we have no parallel case; but if we look to the whole course of nature, to the facts which are within our ken, what is the utmost that we are warranted to presume from analogy against miraculous interposition? The course of nature (as he explains in chap. 4), consists not only of uniform and occasional phenomena which by experience and analogy we *can* bring under general laws, but also of a class of events which *cannot* be referred to such laws, *and are, therefore, called accidental*; and of phenomena which are called *extraordinary*. To compare miracles to matters which are reducible to general laws, is inadmissible in the very nature and reason of the thing; but we may look to the other matters, and see if there is any analogy that can be derived. Now, what do we find in respect of many matters in the course of common life which is a part of the course and order of nature? “The *most seemingly improbable* events in human history may be perfectly credible on sufficient testimony, *however contradicting ordinary experience* of human motives and conduct, simply because we

cannot assign any limit to the variety of human dispositions, passions, or tendencies, or the extent to which they may be influenced by circumstances of which, perhaps, we may have little or no knowledge to guide us." These are the words of Mr. Baden Powell in his essay against miracles in the "Essays and Reviews." Where experience cannot lead, nor analogy guide us, we are altogether dependent on testimony, for in the class of events which we cannot bring under general laws, the unknown reciprocal connection and mutual influence of countless circumstances, the action of causes that we cannot estimate or controul, leave us without the means of getting at the truth of events which have been brought to pass, unless we have recourse to testimony. Before any evidence, the presumption may be as great as we can well express; indeed, so great, that if any of such events should happen to come into one's head, *without any kind of proof*, every one would conclude that they were false. Why so? Simply because there is no evidence of the facts. Where these avenues of knowledge, viz., experience, analogy and testimony have been closed, it is a law of our nature that we cannot believe events to be true and real which happen to come into our head from another approach. The presumption before evidence against such events is great, simply because our ignorance with regard to them is great. We are in a dim twilight in which we are unable to see all that is around us; dark and distant objects are concealed from observation. When we come to consider miraculous interposition, we have no case that is strictly parallel; and then, leaving religion out of consideration, we get into total darkness with reference to the probability of any interruption of the course of nature. We are unable to say how the matter stands as to the happening of an occasion for God's interference; and the presumption against it is, certainly, not such as to render miracles in any sort *incredible*. Now,

with reference to the difficulty in comparing the two presumptions,—perhaps it mainly arises from the circumstance, that *the question is one of degree*. When we are left without the light of experience and of analogy and find ourselves in a twilight, we must make use of the lamp of testimony; when we pass into total darkness, this lamp is not the less available nor less required. It is very easy to distinguish between the light of day and the darkness of night, but most difficult to say at what precise moment twilight ends and darkness begins. There may be just at that critical period, a small additional hindrance to our vision, beyond that which had previously hidden from our eyes

obscure or remote objects, yet its relative importance, though it be peculiar, may be as nothing, and it is in itself incapable of estimation. The transition from facts that are usual to those that are often stranger and more improbable than fiction, and from these to the extraordinary and exceptional phenomena of nature; the place also, which testimony admittedly holds in making known what experience and analogy could not teach us—thus instructing the ignorance by reason of which a presumption arises before evidence and by evidence is removed; all this may assure us that miraculous interposition (if not in its nature incredible), may be established also by testimony, in which, by a law of our nature, we instinctively confide.

This has been extremely well put by Professor Jellett, in a very instructive sermon preached in Trinity College Chapel, which I have had the advantage of reading, and to which I am permitted, by his kindness, to refer. “As we know but imperfectly the laws of human thought, and the circumstances under which that thought is developed, *we are obliged to have our information from testimony, and are willing to accept its evidence, though it may contradict the positive anticipations we*

had formed. And shall we say that we know so perfectly the laws of the Divine mind, and the circumstances under which He forms his decision, that we can always afford to reject the evidence of testimony and treat the matter as one of positive science?"

The argument, then, from particular contingencies, so far as it can be applied, is against the objector, and so is that which is derived from the extraordinary phenomena of nature. Our first information as to these may depend altogether on testimony unaided by experience or analogy. If here we shut out evidence, because of a supposed presumption against such seeming excrescences on a system assumed to be settled and complete, how could we arrive at any knowledge of those wonders of the universe of which some are at once "a mystery and a beauty?" But as testimony is here admitted, and thus we are at last enabled to bring within the cosmical system of nature, marvels of creative skill and power disclosed to the inductive spirit that waits patiently upon God, as He reveals Himself in His works to those ministers and interpreters of nature who diligently seek Him—where is the analogy to justify us in shutting out testimony as to other marvels which may be found to be lights of a higher system of morality and mercy? Have we not then found that particular events, extraordinary phenomena, and the moral system, bear witness respectively against the objector, so as to discredit his supposed presumption against the credibility of revelation as miraculous?

I am enabled through the kindness of Dr. Salmon to give you what he has said, in one of his divinity lectures, when speaking on the subject of Natural Religion, as preparing the way for revelation; he says—"When she has ascribed to God those attributes which she has discovered from the study of our own nature, will, goodness, and wisdom, she sees nothing

incredible in the statement, that God may interfere in a manner different from that of His every-day working, in order to point man to a worship which may be accepted as authoritative, to give a weighty support to true ethical doctrine (such support, I mean, as shall induce men to practise it), and which shall reveal to them a future life. *Nay, it needs not this; once admit the existence of a personal God, and his interference with the ordinary course of nature is not incredible, even if we could tell no reason why such an interference might be expected.* For any one who considers the narrowness of human experience, must make allowance for the possible existence of causes of which we have no knowledge."

Again—"I have shown that there are many points in which we can feel that natural religion is painfully defective, and on which we can readily believe that God might be pleased to grant us greater certainty and fuller information. And I have said that besides these reasons which we can see, *no one can venture to say that there may not be reasons unknown to us making it necessary that God should communicate with men.*"

This is, in fact, the substance of that part of Butler's argument which is contained in his second and third "particular observations." To view the matter as Butler did, we must not forget his habitual acknowledgment of the *unlimited* power of God, and the *limited* knowledge of man. The course of nature he has described as that "course of operation, from its uniformity or constancy, called natural, and which necessarily implies an operating agent," (p. 36). He assumes, from the first, the existence of an intelligent Author of nature, and asserts, that, "the very notion implies a will and a character which we are led to consider to be moral, just, and good, and in consequence of this his will and character he formed the universe as it is, and carries on the course of it as he does rather than in any other manner," (p. 136-7).

And in another part he says:—“*What is natural as much requires and pre-supposes 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.” (p. 31-2).

In reference to the limited capacity and *narrow* experience of man; the connection of actions and natural events with one another, and *their possible natural relation to other actions and events, much beyond the compass of this present world*, he observes: “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 correspondences 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 things of the greatest importance; *so that any one thing 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 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.” He further suggests that

“the natural and the moral make up together but one scheme, and it is highly probable the first is carried on merely in subserviency to the latter.” (p. 126.) By way of illustration I may refer to the treatise of Dr. S. Clarke on the Evidences of Religion, 219—224. His views are clearly stated, and may help you in understanding the text of Butler.

In dealing with the antecedent presumptions which he has compared, Butler takes them as they stand prior to evidence and as relative to the ignorance of man. It is the comparison—not of degrees of *credibility after proof*, but of *presumptions before proof*, in cases in which, from the very nature and reason of the thing, we are altogether dependent on testimony. A case has been put in which a definite number of contingencies are placed in the same circumstances, so that some one must turn up; and as each has the same definite number of chances to one against it, and it is certain that some one of this class must turn up, it is said that here the antecedent presumption does not in the least render incredible the particular event which is alleged to have actually taken place. The presumption before proof is (as Butler himself has observed) altogether removed by almost any proof. But an event, or set of events, which may result from countless circumstances and may be such as to defy expectation, and to be incapable of being estimated in a definite form by any calculation of chances beforehand, is not exactly parallel with the limited contingency and its alternatives. Butler does not say that of the events against which the presumption may be millions to one *before proof*, there may not be differences and degrees of *credibility after proof*, *i. e.*, that some may not be more, some less readily believed; nor does he say that there may not be a like difference between an *ordinary* and a *miraculous* narrative. This raises an entirely different question from that which he discusses. It is very easy to construct a comparison

of an ordinary and a miraculous narrative, and to present a very striking contrast of credibility in these extreme cases. But a contrast almost, if not altogether, as striking might be made out between two cases selected for the purpose, one from the ordinary and the other from the extraordinary departments of nature. We do not ignore the difference of day and night when we compare twilight with darkness, where the question is properly one of degree throughout, and not merely the contrast of extremes. When it is urged, that in the case of a miracle there remains what is described as an "improbability after the fact," which Butler is said to have overlooked; I answer that he has disposed of the presumption prior to evidence, and excluded any such presumption as would render miracles in any sort incredible; and I then ask, what is there left to give to the objection any meaning other than this—*that a miracle remains a miracle?*

The account of the contingency, in the illustration to which I have referred, may be supposed to be more credible (*i. e.*, more readily believed) than the narrative of a miracle which cannot cease to be a miracle; but, so far from overlooking this, it seems to me to be the very ground on which Butler insists that miracles must be compared not to the ordinary but to the extra-ordinary phenomena of nature in the way he has clearly explained.

The natural and the miraculous (according to Butler and Clarke) may be more or less in contrast when viewed in their relation to the knowledge and belief of man; but, with reference to the power of God, all are alike. To a mind so profound—solemnized by his deep consciousness of the moral relation of man to God—a mind at once elevated and humbled—how illusory must the supposed presumption have appeared? It was, after all, like "the baseless fabric of a vision." It could only be supposed to exist by keeping the moral system

out of view and regarding miracles merely as exceptions to the physical order of nature.

In meeting the unbelieving objector on his own ground, the miracle is, in the first instance, regarded in its physical aspect; but, when the preliminary objection has been removed, the moral element is brought forward and the whole question is viewed from an altered stand-point. Before coming to this, it is the cautious definition of Butler which has justified him in the language which he has used in speaking of a miracle at all; and this reminds me that I should call your attention pointedly to a two-fold view of miracles. There is in every visible miracle, what I may call the overt act—the objective reality or effect produced, and this is the proper subject of direct testimony; the moral inference that this has been miraculously brought to pass, is to be drawn from the facts in connexion with all the attendant circumstances. *Thus there is a physical and there is a moral question.*

Hume published his Essay on Miracles some years after the publication of the first edition of the Analogy of Butler, and he has contended that the report of a miracle could not be believed, as testimony was incompetent to prove it. He did not say that miracles were impossible, but it came very much to the same thing, if they could not be proved by testimony. It is not now denied that testimony may prove all the facts of a miracle and the accompanying circumstances, but it is insisted that it is not competent to prove that the effect has been caused by the special interference of divine power. “What is alleged” (says Mr. Baden Powell in his essay recently published in “Essays and Reviews,” p. 107), “is a case of the supernatural, but no testimony can reach to the supernatural—testimony can apply only to apparent sensible facts; *testimony can only prove an extraordinary, and, perhaps, inexplicable occurrence or phenomenon*; that it is due to super-

natural causes is entirely dependent on the previous belief and assumptions of the parties." I think it is instructive and important to trace the changes which have taken place in the assault on miracles, and this will enable us to see how completely Butler has dealt with the question in his compendious but suggestive argument. I take Hume's theory; not indeed as Mr. Mill represents it, as if, in effect, it amounted to a kind of harmless truism of no practical value; but, as I find it to be—a mischievous compound of an arbitrary and erroneous definition of the word miracle, and an unwarrantable abuse of the word experience. "A miracle," he says, "is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle from the nature of the fact is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined." But in the same essay (vol. ii. 136, Dub. 1779), he makes this confession. "I beg the limitations here made may be remarked when I say, that *a miracle can never be proved so as to be the foundation of a system of religion. For, I own that otherwise there may possibly be miracles, or violations of the usual course of nature, of such a kind as to admit of proof from human testimony, though, perhaps, it will be impossible to find any such in all the records of history. Thus, suppose all authors in all languages agree, that from the first of January, 1600, there was a total darkness over the whole earth for eight days, suppose that the tradition of this extraordinary event is still strong and lively among the people; that all travellers who return from foreign countries bring us accounts of the same tradition without the least variation or contradiction; it is evident, that our present philosophers, instead of doubting the fact, ought to receive it as certain, and ought to search for the causes whence it might be derived.*" According to this statement it follows, that experience is not "unalterable," and testimony is competent to

prove that the settled uniformity of nature has been interrupted, and "the proof against a miracle from the nature of the fact" is not "as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined."

The real difficulty with Hume, seems to have been connected with the use to be made of miracles as "the foundation of a system of religion." It was a difficulty indigenous to the "heart of unbelief." But, I must say, that he has both asserted and conceded more than I am prepared to admit, for I cannot admit that a law of nature could be violated at all. "The laws of nature;" (says Dr. Salmon in his sound and admirable lecture) "are nothing more or less than the most general statements of the results of our observation of the processes and facts of nature. If a new fact comes under our notice, inconsistent with the laws of nature, *such as we have laid them down*, we are not to say that a law of nature has been transgressed, but merely that we have interpreted the laws wrongly, or that our statement of them has been defective. . . . For no fact that possibly can take place can be a violation of the laws of nature. . . . And the progress of modern science is nothing else than the patient observation of such new facts, and the consequent correction and widening of our statement of nature's laws." In truth, the inductive philosophy requires us to enlarge our experience by observation and by testimony, and forbids us to measure creation by our uninstructed capacity, or to stereotype our ignorance by the efforts of *a priori* speculation. The 109th aphorism in the *Novum Organum* of Bacon, (vol. iv., p. 99), is here very suggestive. How could we know the universal experience of which Hume speaks, except by testimony and communication; and how could individual ignorance be removed, error corrected, or experience enlarged, unless we receive from testimony what by a law of our nature it can give, and we

should take. Individual experience, after all, is merely fractional ; and, therefore, our first lesson, and every subsequent increase which our experience receives, must have, each in itself, some positive value. If Hume's main position were sound, it would seem as difficult to enlarge our experience beyond our individual observation, as to make a unit by the addition of cyphers.

The Archbishop of Dublin, in his well-known Treatise on Logic, has thoroughly exposed the inexcusable liberty which Hume has taken with the word experience ; and, in the celebrated "Historic Doubts," his Grace has most happily shown the absurdities to which Hume's sophistry necessarily leads. Hume must have felt the difficulty of his position, for he suggests a distinction between what is contrary and what is not conformable to experience. (p. 122.) But this does not relieve him. The Indian prince who refused to believe the first relations concerning frost reasoned justly (he says). But he is afterwards compelled to admit that testimony was competent to enlarge the experience, which in this very case it seemed to contradict. And, indeed, this example shows the inherent fallacy of Hume's position. In the note that may be found (p. 479), he proceeds to modify what he had put forward in the text (p. 122). "No Indian it is evident," (he says in the note, "could have experience that water did not freeze in cold climates. This is placing nature in a situation quite unknown to him ; and *it is impossible for him to tell a priori what will result from it.* It is making a new experiment, the consequence of which is always uncertain." That is to say, *the a priori speculative objection was erroneous ; it was founded on mere ignorance, which, under the circumstances, could only be removed by testimony.* Here then the sceptic contradicts and confutes himself. There are facts, which although seemingly against experience and analogy, are, *for this very*

reason, the proper subject of testimony that instructs those who could not otherwise have their ignorance removed, or their experience enlarged. "Such an event," continues Hume, "may be denominated *extra-ordinary*, and requires a pretty strong testimony to render it credible to people in a warm climate: but still it is not miraculous, nor *contrary to uniform experience of the course of nature in cases where all the circumstances are the same*. The inhabitants of Sumatra have always seen water fluid in their own climate, and the freezing of the rivers *ought to be deemed a prodigy*; but they never saw water in Muscovy during the winter, and, *therefore, they cannot reasonably be positive what would there be the consequence*." They would not reason soundly then if they would refuse to hear testimony to prove the prodigy; and, if so, you may naturally ask, how could the Indian prince be said to have "reasoned justly?" And if neither ought to have relied on mere ignorance as a bar to the reception of testimony, has Mr. Hume reasoned justly when he lands himself in such palpable contradictions? It is contrary to experience, he says, that a miracle should be true. To whose experience? If he means that it is contrary to all human experience, then I say, this is begging the whole question, for he assumes that this experience is known to all, and that testimony to establish the fact alleged must *necessarily* be false. If he means that it is contrary to the experience of those who have not been eyewitnesses of it, then I say, this is the very case in which, according to all analogy, we should receive testimony for the purpose of enlarging this experience. This is the very basis of all inductive science. The consciousness of our ignorance suggests that we should be slow to reject a narrative as incredible, merely because it is beyond or even contrary to our very limited experience; the ignorant and uninstructed, the pretentious and speculative, may reject as incredible and

absurd what the patient follower of Bacon would receive as the wise words of "truth and soberness."

Hume's theory, then, breaks down altogether when it is applied to common life, or to the extraordinary phenomena of nature. It ought (says Mr. Starkie in his excellent work on the Law of Evidence, 4th. ed. p. 833, n.) to be stated thus: "Human testimony is founded on experience, and is, therefore, inadequate to prove that of which there has been no previous experience." But, as Mr. Starkie well observes, "the negation of experience is perfectly consistent with the just operation of the principle of belief or faith in testimony, *which is a law of our nature*; and this negation cannot reasonably be supposed to destroy this principle. Negative evidence is, in the abstract, inferior to positive, because the negative is not directly opposed to the positive testimony—*both may be true.*" Again—"That there may be and are general and ever unalterable laws of nature may be admitted; but that human knowledge and experience of these laws is unalterable (which alone can be the test of exclusion), is untrue, except in a very limited sense; that is, it may be fairly assumed that a law of nature once known to operate will always operate in a similar manner *unless its operation be impeded or counteracted by a new and contrary cause.*"

Butler has shown, by his appeal to analogy, that testimony is competent to establish facts, notwithstanding a very strong presumption against them, provided this is not such as to render the facts alleged in any sort incredible. Hume might have said, in these cases, that it is more probable that testimony should be false than that facts, which neither experience nor analogy could certify without testimony, should be true; but here the experience of human life and events (some of which are commonly said to be more strange than fiction) would have repelled if not refuted this fallacy. It does not

follow, that because *some* testimony may be false, *all* testimony should be discredited at the outset; and I may add, that nothing is more contrary to experience than that the testimony of *such witnesses* as have accredited the miracles of revelation, should be false. The case of extra-ordinary phenomena, even of a prodigy, Hume admits to be proveable by testimony; and that *a priori* objections, founded on our previous ignorance, could not be relied on in such cases. Butler most appropriately refers to this very analogy, and to the presumption which naturally arises in the minds of those, who have but a limited knowledge of such matters, when they hear of such phenomena for the first time. The absence of previous experience may properly and naturally induce caution, if not hesitation, in the reception of evidence, which may, therefore, be the more carefully sifted. But such inexperience, however constant, is not sufficient to raise a preliminary bar to the reception or examination of the evidence that must be considered in connection with the probabilities in favour of testimony, and the moral suggestions which the special circumstances supply. If we but look to the lessons of experience in the advancement of knowledge since the inductive method has been adopted, we may see that new facts or phenomena, which had not been observed or known before, *and could not be accounted for by the laws already observed*, have been the means by which more general, and, therefore, more perfect, laws have been ascertained.

The definition of a miracle as a violation of the laws of nature is founded on an assumption and a fallacy, for it assumes all the circumstances to be the same where the effect is natural and where it is miraculous. The action of the frost, as related to the Indian prince, was the influence of a new, and to him, unknown cause, that made all the difference in the result. So long as, in deference to his own ignorance, he

took for granted that there could be no other causes in operation but those of which he had experience, he could not believe the testimony as to the effect. But the testimony was sufficient to establish the truth of the effect, produced by the action of the unknown cause. And so in the case of a miracle, there is the direct interposition of an act of the will of the Intelligent Author of nature and moral Governor of the world, "whose will," as Mr. Mill has said, "being assumed to have endowed all the causes with the powers by which they produce their effects, may well be supposed able to counteract them." What are called the laws of nature, are but some of the expressions of His will with which we become gradually acquainted in the discoveries of science and the disclosures of revelation. His interposition, then, is not a violation of these laws. It is but the subordination of the lower to a higher rule of the one comprehensive system.

Just as in our jurisprudence, equity interferes with common law, and mercy with criminal justice ; but equity does not violate law, nor is mercy opposed to justice. We have it confessed by Hume and admitted by Baden Powell, that testimony is sufficient to establish facts though they are extraordinary or even inexplicable—matters beyond the range of experience and the reach of analogy. There is no possible matter, however strange it may seem, how unlike the ordinary tenor of our experience, which yet we may not be justified in believing to have actually occurred, provided that we have competent testimony to the fact. Mr. Mill, therefore, plainly and properly states that miracles, as extra-ordinary facts, are as susceptible of proof as any other extraordinary facts. In all cases in which information is communicated, if it is found to be either unusual or improbable, and, therefore, unexpected—we naturally sift the evidence and scrutinize all the circumstances, and especially consider the credit due to the

witnesses. Much may depend on the circumstances in the case of an alleged miracle—the occasion, the manner, and the agent employed. But no peculiar species of testimony is required different from that offered to prove other events, and especially such as are unusual or improbable. The amount that may be required in any of these cases is not a general question, but depends not merely on special circumstances but on the personal condition of the individual to be convinced—his moral antecedents, his intellectual attainments, his emotional temperament. But this is not peculiar to the credibility or the proof of miracles. The testimony of competent and credible witnesses is all that can be required; and as miracles are relative to the course of nature, the same persons can attest miraculous facts who are suitable witnesses of the corresponding facts that are natural. This is very ably discussed in Mr. Newman's Essay on the Miracles, in the fifth volume of the "Encyclopedia Metropolitana." I may here also refer you to a masterly discussion of the causes of doubt and disbelief and the proper force of testimony, in the celebrated sermon of South on the unbelief of Thomas. When I read it, I could not but remember with satisfaction the happy expression of Hannah More, as to the old divines—"I like the lean of their fat." Well, then, our case is so far made good, that the facts of a miracle can be established by testimony, and by the same kind of testimony as that by which facts not miraculous may be proved. The amount of testimony is an individual, not a general, question; and it is a question not peculiar to the case of miracles. Then wherein is the difficulty now said to exist? It arises *not before the evidence, but after the proof of the facts*. What has Hume said was proper to be done in the case where he admitted that testimony might prove what he assumed to be a violation of a law of nature?—"Our present philosophers, instead of doubting the fact ought to receive it as certain,

and ought to search for the causes whence it might be derived." Agreed. What then? If we find in such a case that there is no natural solution; if it cannot be proved to be a pretence like that of the alleged melting of the blood of St. Januarius at Naples, before we can say that it is altogether inexplicable, we are bound, according to the soundest philosophy, to consider whether it may not be a sign from God. Now, in connection with the facts, there may be such attendant circumstances incontrovertibly established by the evidence, such declarations accompanying the acts done, such an appeal to the moral and religious elements of our nature, as ought to bring clear conviction home to us that it is a miracle—that here is the finger of God. It is a moral inference, for the miracle has a moral element and a moral end. The question is, whether in the whole matter as it is presented and testified, there is enough to leave us without excuse if we refuse to hear the voice from heaven. Our moral nature is as real as the material world around us. It is not because we are enabled to trace in the latter, some of the laws by which physical order is regulated, the uniformity of which consists with that watchful Providence without whom a sparrow falls not to the ground; a uniformity, moreover, without which we could not have a miracle at all—it is not because of this order in the material world, that we are to ignore other facts as real; the freedom and responsibility, the weakness and dependence, the religious instincts, and the moral suggestions that are the mysteries of our being. There is a spiritual and a moral system as well as a cosmical order in the universe. The spiritual and the moral transcend the material. "The case of the miracle," says Professor Jellett, "is no question of the universality of the law of causation which the Christian theory obeys as perfectly as its opponents. The question is, whether, in addition to the causes which we see in operation

every day, another cause, the direct interference of God, has acted at certain rare intervals; and whether this be true must be decided by considerations of the general probability of such unusual interference, the most important of these being the plausibility of the special case which can be made out for such special interference; and, secondly, direct testimony that the alleged effect has been produced. General physical reasonings do not really affect the question. All that such reasonings can establish is, that if no other cause act but those which we see usually operating, and the laws of whose operation we know, a certain effect will invariably follow. But they do not and cannot tell us what effect will be produced under the influence of a new cause, the laws of whose action we know imperfectly or not at all. Information in such cases can only be given to us by testimony. In fact, where the new cause is human interference, this is quite conceded." The provision made for this new cause, in the exercise of our responsible freedom, may well teach us that He who could so establish the moral and the material world on unchangeable laws conformable to His eternal nature, that they should be unaffected by human interference, is able also to provide for His own gracious interference with the material world, in order to restore the moral harmony that man had interrupted. The creature has interfered with the higher system and caused disorder; the Creator with the lower, to restore the moral order of His own creation.

There is a tribute, though unconsciously paid, to Butler, in what we find in the concession of Hume and of Baden Powell, and still more in the exposition of Mr. Mill. It is instructive to compare the summing up of his views at the close of this chapter, with a summary which Mr. Mill has furnished and to which he has kindly allowed me to refer. Butler says: — "Upon all this I conclude that there certainly

is no such presumption against miracles as to render them in any wise incredible; but, 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." The summary of Mr. Mill, to which I have referred, is in these words:—

"My view of the general question is briefly this: that a miracle, considered merely as an extraordinary fact, is as susceptible of proof as other extraordinary facts. That as a miracle it cannot, in the strict sense, be proved, because there never can be conclusive proof of its miraculous nature; but that to any one who already believes in an intelligent Creator and Ruler of the universe, the moral probability that a given extraordinary event (supposed to be fully proved), is a miracle, may greatly outweigh the probability of its being the result of some unknown natural cause." I have already observed* that for "proved" and "proof," the words "demonstrated" and "demonstration" should be substituted. Butler has assumed throughout, the existence of an intelligent Author of nature, and has shown that He is the Moral Governor of the world; that, although there cannot be a strict demonstration of a fact, there may be a convincing proof; that, from the facts which testimony can establish, with all the attendant circumstances, the moral inference proper to be drawn may be clear and certain; that there is no antecedent presumption to make the miracle incredible, and there may be moral reasons to give a positive credibility to the narrative. Is not this sustained by the summary of

* Ante 199.

Mr. Mill, and is it not in all that is material, logically accurate and morally sufficient?*

Where is now the supposed peculiar presumption against miracles in general? In Mr. Mill's clear and compendious summary it has vanished before the belief in an intelligent Creator and Ruler of the universe. This is the only "previous belief and assumption of the parties" (to use the words of Mr. Baden Powell), that Mr. Mill requires, to make that a miracle properly so called, which he who believes not in a personal God (the atheist and the pantheist), will consistently regard as the result of some unknown natural law of the material world. Can this presumption, then, be other than as Butler has described it? Can this be too strong for testimony to overcome if it is found to pass away with the unbelief that has given it birth? Can it be estimated by those who believe in a God?

"Once admit the existence of a personal God, and His interference with the ordinary course of nature is not incredible, even if we could tell no reason why such an interference might be expected." Thus the question of miracles resolves itself, at last, into that of atheism. There seems to be no consistent position between the disbelief in a personal God and the acknowledgment of "the pure word by miracle revealed."

"I had rather," (says Bacon), "believe all the fables in the Legend, and the Talmud, and the Alcoran, than that this universal frame is without a mind; and, therefore, God never wrought miracle to convince atheism, because His ordinary works convince it." His eternal power and Godhead, "the invisible things" of the Creator, from the time of the creation are therein manifested, because God has so created the world as to leave impressed on it this testimony as to Himself. Hence it is that Bacon speaks of miracles as "new creations,"

* See Aids to Faith, p. 29. Hampd. Phil. Ev., p. 236.

which are connected with the work of redemption, "whereto all God's signs and miracles do refer," (vol. vii., p. 221, and see 243).

The discoveries of modern science bring out more palpably the special character of the miracles of revelation. These gather around the great central fact which stands unique in its sublime and solemn majesty—the finished work of man's redemption. Science, as she progresses, shuts us up the more to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God manifest in the flesh—for the miracles by which this has been attested are found incapable of other solution than this—they are signs from God. How consistent, then, that these should stand out in such striking contrast with the course and order of nature, as God's witnesses to His gracious interference with the course of justice! The great poet speaks from the heart to the heart in that noble passage—

" Therefore, Jew,
Though justice be thy plea, consider this—
That in the course of justice, none of us
Should see salvation ; we do pray for mercy.

Here we expect—we implore the Divine interposition, the mercy that is itself a miracle. The religious affections, the instincts of our nature, speak in the voice of prayer, by which we acknowledge that He who has so settled the order of the world as to leave nothing to chance, nothing that is not *provided*, is the

" Divinity that shapes our ends,
Roughhew them how we will."

Events which sensibly affect our destiny, we instinctively call providential, when some special occasion reminds us of the watchful providence of God. We should remember that the hairs of our heads are numbered—that in Him we live and move and have our being. In the significant words of

Butler, "What is natural as much requires and pre-supposes 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."

In considering the question of the miracles, we are not asked to investigate some isolated wonder occurring suddenly by surprise, without warning and without connection. Mr. Smith, the respected minister of St. Stephen's church, has in his valuable treatise on the Christian Miracles, admirably expounded their connection with the moral system and the work of redemption. This is all important. For, as Dr. Johnson has wisely observed, "Although God has made nature to operate by certain fixed laws, yet it is not unreasonable to think that He may suspend those laws in order to establish a system highly advantageous to mankind." . . .

"Here then we rest, not fearing for our creed
The worst that human reasoning can achieve
To unsettle or perplex it."

It is now conceded that the facts set forth in the narrative of our historical religion are the proper subject of testimony, and that by testimony they may be accredited. This is indeed the great concession. The power of God had been at first denied, then, the sufficiency of testimony; but the assailant at last retreats to his native home in the "heart of unbelief." The special difficulty is acknowledged to be, exclusively, the moral difficulty of him who does not believe in a personal God; we need not pursue it further.

I feel that I have drifted into a digression, for which I ask your indulgent consideration, as the subject is one of great interest and importance in its general aspect. Nor is it in other respects merely an academic question. For if I have been enabled in any way to vindicate the accuracy

of the illustrious Butler, to expand his argument, and place it in a light that may enable some of you to apprehend it with exactness and satisfaction, I have so far done a service to his honoured memory, and to the cause of religion which was dear to his heart. I feel indebted, more than I can express, to those esteemed friends with whom I have communicated on this somewhat difficult chapter ; they are of “the excellent of the earth,”—men of learning, candour, and piety. Nor can I conclude this lecture without acknowledging a deep sense of gratitude to God, that He has led me here to examine these evidences of His power and His goodness. The miracles were works of mercy ; the doctrines were words of truth—“Mercy and truth are met together.” They point to the moral order yet to be completed in “the restitution of all things,” in “the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness,”—when each

“Inspired

“By choice, and conscious that the will is free,

“Shall move unswerving, even as if impelled

“By strict necessity, along the path

“Of order and of good.”

APPENDIX TO LECTURE IV.

CRITICAL EXPLANATION OF THE ARGUMENT OF BUTLER,
BY THE REV. H. L. MANSEL, B. D.

MY DEAR MR. NAPIER,

I do not think that the objection founded on Mr. Mill's distinction between "improbability before the fact and improbability after it" is properly applicable to Butler's argument concerning miracles. Indeed, Mr. Mill himself does not state it as against Butler, but as against Campbell and some other opponents of Hume. Something may perhaps be said in defence of these writers, if we consider them merely as using an *argumentum ad hominem*, arguing against Hume on Hume's own principles; but at present we have only to consider the force of the objection as against Butler, to whose argument it seems inapplicable for the following reasons:—

1. No distinction can be drawn between the improbability that a supposed event *will occur*, and the improbability that it *has occurred*, except in relation to *particular events*, and to the circumstances which distinguish one particular event from another. In relation to *general classes* of events, such as "common events in general," "uncommon events in general," "miracles in general," the two probabilities or improbabilities present no data from which any distinction can be drawn between them. I have no grounds for saying that it is more

or less probable that *some common event*, or *some uncommon event*, or even *some miracle*, took place yesterday, than that it will take place to-morrow. The difference, if there is any, must arise from the *particular character* of the event narrated, or the *particular grounds* of belief or disbelief, not merely from the *general conception* of the event, as common, uncommon, or miraculous. The distinction, therefore, cannot affect an argument which treats only of the presumption against miracles *in general* taking place *at all*, not of the presumption against *this particular* miracle having taken place *as narrated*.

2. The probability that any particular event has taken place as narrated, cannot be measured by any general rule, but may vary with each individual case. Two events belonging to the same class, and, as such, having no difference as regards general probability, may have any degree of special credibility or incredibility, according to circumstances. I may read, for instance, in the same newspaper, the advertisements of two marriages. Considered merely as events of a certain class, there is no difference between them; but I may know something of the persons mentioned, which may lead me to regard the one event as very probable, and the other as so improbable that I rather believe that the advertisement is a hoax. Or some very extraordinary conduct on the part of an individual may be mentioned, which to a stranger seems hardly credible, while, from those who know the person, it elicits only the remark—"just like him." Such cases can only be adequately estimated on *individual grounds*, and not by *general rules*; and, therefore, they do not come under general considerations, such as those of Butler.

3. The examination of Butler's argument, as a whole, naturally suggests a different interpretation of the passage to which the above objection has been thought applicable. The word *presumption* seems to point naturally to objections which may

be urged *before* evidence of the fact, and to indicate that it is with these objections alone that Butler is dealing, both as regards common events and as regards miracles. But Butler further says, that he is comparing the presumption "against *particular* common facts" with that "against miracles *in general*." Let us endeavour to analyse his argument on this supposition.

There are *general* considerations of probability applicable to the examination (1). Of *any* particular ordinary event, considered merely as one possible event out of many, [not of this particular ordinary event as compared with that ordinary or extraordinary; for here probabilities will vary in each case according to circumstances] (2). Of *any* miracle, considered merely *as a miracle*, [not of this miracle as compared with that miracle or that ordinary event; for here again probabilities will vary in each separate case] (3). Of *any* extraordinary natural phenomenon, considered merely *as an extraordinary phenomenon*, [not of this extraordinary phenomenon as compared with that ordinary or extraordinary; for here again probabilities will vary in each separate case].

These are the cases which we might naturally expect to find discussed in a chapter on general grounds of belief, such as Butler's. Let us examine the two latter cases more closely.

(a.) What is meant by "a presumption against miracles *in general*?" This must be something common to the whole class of miracles; and which, if convincing, would require us to say, generally, that *all* miracles are incredible, not merely that *this or that* miracle is incredible. I can imagine only two grounds for such a presumption: (1) the belief that there is no power in existence *capable* of working miracles. (2). the belief that there is no power *likely* to work them. The first declares miracles to be *impossible*; the second declares them to be *improbable*, perhaps so much so as to be *incredible*.

With the first of these grounds we are not concerned. Butler is not arguing against atheists: his argument all along supposes a God, who created the present course of things, and who is, therefore, capable of interfering with it. We may, therefore, proceed to the second ground.

Supposing that there is an intelligent Author of the present course of nature, what grounds have we for believing that He will never introduce any deviation from that course? We have *some presumption* of the kind from past experience. God has hitherto governed the world in a certain way; therefore we may believe that He will continue to govern it in the same way, *unless there is some reason for his acting otherwise*. This is the *peculiar* presumption against miracles *in general*, as distinguished from natural events *in general*. It is more likely *a priori* that God will act as He has hitherto acted than otherwise.

This presumption may be strong or weak, according as we know much or little of the scheme of God's government *as a whole*. If what we do know is more than what we do not know, then the presumption is strong; if the contrary, it is weak.

(b). There is a similar presumption against extraordinary phenomena of nature *in general*, as compared with ordinary ones. It is, in fact, this presumption which is expressed in the popular use of the word *extraordinary*. "To a person acquainted" (to use Butler's words) "only with the daily, monthly, and annual course of nature," there is a probability that the phenomena of next year will resemble those of previous years; and this is so far a *general* presumption against such phenomena as comets. This presumption, again, may be strong or weak, according as a knowledge of the daily, monthly, and annual phenomena of the heavens constitutes a large or a small portion of a perfect knowledge of all possible astronomy.

This is the sense in which I understand the presumptions mentioned by Butler. First, there is a *general* presumption against any particular ordinary fact, simply as being one possibility out of many. Secondly, there is, over and above this, a *peculiar* presumption against miracles *as a class*; and, thirdly, there is also a *peculiar* presumption against extraordinary natural phenomena *as a class*. Let us see how Butler compares these three together.

First of all, he says, there is a presumption, *before proof*, against any particular event, simply because, without evidence of its having actually occurred, we can only regard it as one out of many possibilities. This presumption may even be as great as "millions to one," where there are millions of possible alternatives; and it may be beyond any calculation, as in the case of the story of Cæsar's life, or of that of any other man. But this presumption is no bar to belief, for it may be overcome by "almost any proof." A miracle, like any other particular fact, has this presumption against it; and *if* it has no more than this, or only a "small presumption" more, it may be believed, like any other event, upon sufficient evidence.

Secondly, we must examine the preceding *if*. There is, besides the above general presumption, also a peculiar presumption against any miracle, *simply because it is a miracle, i. e.*, from the presumption, as explained above, against miraculous events *as a class*. Is this presumption a small or a great addition to the "millions to one" which are against the same event, simply as being one possibility out of many? To this question Butler replies, that, even "if we leave out the consideration of religion," and look merely at our general ignorance of God's government as a whole and of the reasons why He maintains the present course of nature as the ordinary one, we cannot regard this presumption as other than a weak one; for there *may be* thousands of reasons, of which

we know nothing, why God may occasionally depart from His ordinary course of government: and that further [here comes Butler's *thirdly*] if we "take in the consideration of religion," we see, not merely that there *may be some possible* reason, but that there *is an actual* reason for such a departure; and thus, when the miracle is part of a religious revelation, the weak presumption against it, *merely as a miracle*, is destroyed, and gives place to a positive presumption in its favour.

Thirdly [this is Butler's *lastly*] "miracles must not be compared to common natural events, but to the extraordinary phenomena of nature." This I understand as relating to the general presumption against *the class* of miracles, as compared with that against *the class* of extraordinary natural phenomena. "To a person acquainted only with the daily, monthly, and annual course of nature," as regards the celestial phenomena, there is a general presumption against the probability of extraordinary phenomena occurring at rare intervals, such as comets. And so, to a person acquainted only with that portion of God's government which is manifested in the natural phenomena of the world, there is a presumption against supernatural phenomena, such as miracles. Both of these are *peculiar* presumptions against events belonging to the respective classes of phenomena, as distinguished from the *universal* presumption against *any* event merely as one out of many possible. Of these two peculiar presumptions, which is the greater? This depends on another question. Is our ignorance, as regards God's government as a whole, greater than that of a man acquainted only with the ordinary celestial phenomena, as regards astronomy as a whole? This question is one which probably we shall never be able to answer; but, till we can answer it, we have no right to say that we know more of God's government than such a

person knows of astronomy ; and, consequently, we cannot be sure that there is any greater presumption against miracles than against extraordinary natural phenomena, *before proof of either.*

I think Butler's divisions of *secondly, thirdly, lastly*, in the above argument, a little awkward ; and the reasoning would be clearer if divided into three heads instead of four, as I have divided above. But I have no doubt that his meaning is as I have here given it ; and that he is speaking of the presumption against miracles in general being parts of God's scheme of government ; not of the probability for or against a single supposed miracle, reported as an isolated fact. *Some* alleged miracles may be highly improbable or incredible on their own special grounds ; and some narratives of common events may also be highly improbable or incredible on their own special grounds ; but the peculiar presumption against there being such things as *miracles at all*, is one easily overcome by evidence.

Believe me,

Yours very truly,

H. L. MANSEL.

LECTURE V.

I. INCAPACITY OF JUDGING OF REVELATION BEFOREHAND.

II. CREDIBILITY OF ITS CONTAINING THINGS LIABLE TO OBJECTION.

HAVING shown the importance of Chistianity, and having removed the *a priori* objection against revelation as miraculous, Butler next proceeds to consider the objections which have been made against the scheme of Chistianity, as distinguished from those against the evidence by which the scheme is established as a matter of fact. The former have been suggested against the whole manner in which revelation has been put and left with the world, as well as against particular relations in Scripture; against its alleged deficiencies; against things in it appearing to men, foolishness; against matters of offence; against its not being universal; against the supposed deficiency in its proof, and even against the style in which it has been written.

There is a general answer to this whole way of arguing from such supposed objections, that on the 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. Therefore, objections against the scheme itself, are

to be kept distinct from those against the evidence of the scheme. The former objections *as distinguished from the latter* are frivolous; and to make out this, is the general design of the chapter on which we have now entered.

The course of nature is discoverable by reason and experience; the additional dispensation has been disclosed to us by revelation. These two constitute one united scheme of Providence, and if we find that we are incompetent judges of the one, it is highly credible that we are also incompetent judges of the other. In the natural dispensation, what we learn from experience often turns out to be very different from what we had previously expected, and seems liable in many instances to great objections. This renders it credible that the revealed dispensation also may contain much that we might not have expected, and much to which we might raise objections beforehand. The man who is not competent to judge of the wisdom of the *ordinary* administration of a prince or ruler is not competent to pronounce on the wisdom of the *extraordinary*—on the exigencies in which, or the degree to which, the laws commonly observed might be suspended or deviated from. If he thought he had objections against the former, it is highly supposable he might think that he had objections also against the latter. Both the natural and the revealed dispensations are found to contain many things different from what might have been expected, and things that are liable to great apparent objections; and as we are incompetent judges before experience of the natural, so are we incompetent judges beforehand of the revealed.

This analogy is applicable to “inspiration” in particular. Before experience we are incompetent judges, 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 are we incompetent to judge how he would *supernaturally* instruct us.

The kind or the degree of natural information; the means of communicating it; whether the evidence of it would be certain, highly probable or doubtful; whether it would be equally clear to all; whether it would be acquired gradually or at once—these and the like questions, we could not determine beforehand. Therefore in the matter of revelation, we must wait on God and accept thankfully what He has been pleased to make known, and in the way in which He has thought fit to communicate with us.

The degree of new information to be given; the amount or manner of miraculous interposition in order to qualify those to whom God should make known the revelation, that they might communicate the knowledge given by it and transmit it to posterity; the nature of the evidence of Revelation; whether it would be revealed at once or gradually—these are matters on which we are not competent to pronounce *beforehand*. Nay more—"we are not" (Butler further adds) "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." You will observe that what he here urges is, that we have no principles of reason upon which we can judge *beforehand*, on this or any of the preceding matters. His purpose is to shew that objections, such as have been supposed, are altogether inadmissible *a priori*, and are in truth unreasonable.

But, it may be said, that on some of the matters above stated, we are competent judges beforehand; for instance, that if revelation had not been committed to writing and thus secured against the danger of corruption, it would not have answered *its purpose*. The way in which Butler replies to

this, deserves your special attention. He asks—“*what purpose*”? We are not to assume that we are competent to judge beforehand of the purpose of God in giving a revelation at all; and the most therefore that we can here say is, that verbal tradition would not have answered *the purpose which has been effected by a written revelation*. It is the fact of the revelation having been committed to writing, that in a great degree enables us to collect the purpose of God in giving us the holy Scriptures in the form in which they have been preserved by the Church as their witness and keeper. The purpose is manifested by the means employed; before we know the means, we are incompetent to determine what purpose would best fall in with the general government of God, of which we can know nothing beyond what he has enabled us to discover in nature, and what He has disclosed in Revelation.

It is then quite frivolous to object *afterwards* as to any of the matters upon which we are confessedly incompetent to judge *beforehand*; it would be folly to reject experience because it turned out to be different from expectation. “The only question *therefore* concerning the truth of Christianity is, *whether it be a real revelation*, not whether it be attended with every circumstance which we should have looked for. And the only question concerning the authority of Scripture is 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.” These two are important to be remembered. As to the first—the only objections that could overthrow Christianity, must be such as can shew that there is no evidence whatsoever of its reality—that there is no proof of miracles wrought in attestation of it—no appearance of anything miraculous in its obtaining in the world, nor any of prophecy; that the proof alleged for

all these is unappreciable. So long as any amount of proof remains, the practical authority of revelation remains also. We cannot safely disregard it, unless we can set it aside altogether as certainly unfounded and untrue. A doubt may be the germ of faith.

As to the second—neither obscurity nor seeming inaccuracy of style, nor various readings, nor disputes about authorship, nor any other such matters could overthrow the authority of Scripture, *unless* the prophets, apostles, or our Lord had promised that the Divine record should be secure from those things.

It is moreover to be observed that there are ways of arguing, which, though just with regard to other writings are not applicable to Scripture, at least not to the prophetic parts of it. 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 expressed. We are bound to accept the meaning as it appears, without questioning how much more determinately or accurately it might have been expressed or figured. We are not competent to determine the manner in which God would reveal His will.*

It may be said, however, that internal improbabilities of all kinds weaken external probable proof. Butler at once admits this. But he observes that the most ordinary testimony may overcome improbabilities, which rise even to moral certainty. These are taken into consideration, in weighing the evidence, and (as it were) as part of the evidence, out of which they arise. Thus in criminal trials there may be a very strong presumption of guilt raised by circumstantial evidence, that will be at once and completely removed by the positive testimony of a single credible witness. Besides we know that there are historical narratives, the truth and reality of which are commonly admitted without any manner

* See O'Brien on Justification, 428-9. (2nd Edit.)

of doubt, but which may be shewn to be in many places highly improbable and such as never could have been expected. "Arguments," says Bacon, "when opposed to testimony may make a fact seem strange, but cannot make it seem not a fact." This has been most happily illustrated by the Archbishop of Dublin, in the little treatise entitled "Historic Doubts," with which I presume some of you are familiar. It shews very clearly, how fallacious and absurd may be the arguments from speculative objections against the truth of things of which we are assured by various kinds of evidence in the common course of life. The Archbishop in a postscript written in 1860, to the 13th edition of the work to which I have referred—says "It is indeed shown that there are at least as many and as great *improbabilities* in the history of Buonaparte as in many of the Scripture narratives; and that as plausible objections—if not more so—may be brought against the one history as the other." It had been long ago observed by Origen, that objections against a history itself, which are drawn from particular things contained in it, are of no avail to destroy the truth of that history; for that in such matters, a discriminating judgment will examine into the particulars themselves and ascertain their import as belonging to the history and their bearing on it. The summing up of a judge may sometimes afford a suitable illustration.

So far, Butler has shewn from Analogy that we have not capacity to determine what should be expected in a revelation; that objections founded on our preconceived expectations are inadmissible; that we are not in any sort competent judges what supernatural instruction were to have been expected, and that the objections of an incompetent judgment must be frivolous; and besides all this, that we scarce know what are improbabilities, when we deal with the matter of divine revelation.

He proceeds to the next head of the argument in this chapter—that if in despite of all that has been urged, men will pretend to judge of Scripture by preconceived expectations, the analogy of nature shews beforehand, not only that it is highly credible they may, but it is also probable they will, imagine they have strong objections against it, however really unexceptionable. The circumstances, degrees, and whole manner of natural instruction; the means by which it is given; the seeming disproportions, the limitations and necessary conditions of it, which are all matter of actual experience and therefore undeniable, would be rejected as incredible in many instances if considered merely as matter of probable proof, before certain observation and actual experience.

That we should be instructed in the general laws of matter and of the heavenly bodies, and left so much in ignorance of the cure of diseases affecting human life, in which we are so much more interested; that we should be dependent on the capricious and irregular results of invention; exposed to the deficiencies and abuses of language; and that the instinctive foresight of brutes should be in many respects superior to man in these respects—all these and the like matters make it highly credible, that upon supposition God would afford men some additional instruction by revelation, it would be with circumstances, in manners, degrees and respects, which we should be apt to fancy we had great objections against the credibility of.

Thus it appears that the objections against the Scripture, or against Christianity in general, are not greater or more than the analogy of nature shews to be at least supposable and credible, if not to be expected.

He takes a particular objection, to illustrate the applicability of the general observation to others of the like kind—that is to say, to almost all objections against Christianity

as distinguished from objections against its evidence. It is said that the gifts to certain persons in the Apostolic age, upon their conversion to Christianity, were not really miraculous because they were used in an irregular and disorderly manner. Take the instance—of tongues. Now we would suppose from analogy that the person endued with this miraculous gift would have the same power over it as if it had been acquired by habit, study, and use, in the ordinary way—or the same power as he had over any other natural endowment, and therefore he would use it in the same way, either regularly or not, according to his discretion and prudence. Then it is said that either it should only have been given to the discreet and prudent, or that discretion and prudence should also have been miraculously conferred, or the irregularities miraculously restrained. But this is met at once by what has already been shewn, that we are not competent to judge of the manner and degree of miraculous interposition. We see moreover, that natural gifts are not conferred only on persons of prudence and discretion, or such as are disposed to make the properest use of them; and natural instruction is often given in a manner and accompanied with circumstances which are apt to prejudice us against it.

This analogy between the light of nature and of revelation may be shewn in many points of resemblance. The common rules of conduct in our temporal affairs are plain and obvious. So are the faith and behaviour of a humble practical Christian.

“The primal duties shine aloft—like stars;
The charities that soothe, and heal, and bless,
Are scatter'd at the feet of Man—like flowers.
The generous inclination, the just rule,
Kind wishes, and good actions, and pure thoughts—
No mystery is here”!

But as in natural and civil knowledge progress may be made by study and diligence, in various forms—so is there a ‘going on unto perfection’ in religious attainments. There may thus be a corresponding progress in the knowledge of revelation. He instructively compares the Word of God, to the world as His work; the one is open to the researches of the Christian student, the other to the natural philosopher. Neither has yet been fully explored—the hindrances and the helps to further progress are in many respects alike, so far as human effort is concerned. Lord Bacon had already observed, in the 68th Aphorism of the *Novum Organum*, that “the several classes of idols and their equipage” (the nature and causes of which he has previously explained), “must be renounced and put away with a fixed and solemn determination, and the understanding thoroughly freed and cleansed; *the entrance into the kingdom of man, founded on the sciences, being not much other than the entrance into the kingdom of heaven, whereunto none may enter except as a little child.*”

The mind freed from prejudice, disposed to receive the lesson of instruction as it is written in the volume of nature or of revelation; the continuance and progress of learning and liberty, the patient research of the diligent, and the study and reflection of the thoughtful, comparing and pursuing what the many overlook and neglect—these and the like ‘ways and means’ advance the knowledge of nature and the fuller and better understanding of the scheme of Scripture. And as in natural science we find that the same phenomena and the same faculties of investigation, from which such wonderful discoveries have been made since the days of Bacon and of Newton, were in the possession of mankind for some thousands of years before, it is not incredible that the Bible, though so long also in man’s possession, should contain many profound truths as yet undiscovered. It may have been designed that the

meaning should be opened and gradually ascertained, as events come to pass in the course and order of Providence. I cannot but think that we have yet much to learn as to the profitable study of the Holy Scriptures; as much, perhaps, as the students of nature had to learn from Bacon and Newton, of the true method of pursuing physical enquiries by the inductive method of patient interpretation.

The whole spirit of this chapter of Butler is thoroughly Baconian. Speculative objections, preconceived expectations, cobweb theories, and the like idols of the human mind are shewn to be fallacious and delusive; and we are brought to look to the realities of things as we find them in nature—to the record of truths as we read them in revelation. It may be objected however, that natural knowledge is of little or no consequence, and therefore the analogy between the natural and the revealed fails. But the importance of the knowledge is not material to the argument, which refers to the general instruction which nature does or does not afford us. And moreover there are parts of natural knowledge of the greatest consequence to the ease and convenience of life. Moreover, it appears from the whole constitution and course of nature, that God does not dispense His gifts according to our notions of their importance to us. This *general* result, considered in connection with His method of dispensing knowledge in *particular*, makes out a full and distinct analogy.

Another objection may be urged, that 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 then credible (it is asked) that it should have been so long kept back, so partially made known, so deficient in supply, and open to the like objections of obscurity, doubtfulness, and so forth, as the light of nature itself? To this

he replies—that this is by no means incredible, if the light of nature and of revelation be from the same hand. God has provided natural remedies for diseases, to which men are naturally liable, but these have not been discovered for many ages, and they are known but to few men, and probably many valuable and effective remedies are yet to be discovered. Of those that are known, some are obscure in their nature and difficult in their application; where they are absolutely necessary, they may seem to be improper; and it is only after labour and study, unsuccessful experiments, contemptuous rejection, and endless disputes, that some have been proved to be useful.

Again, the best remedies may be so unskilfully or so dishonestly applied as to aggravate what they might have cured or to produce new diseases; they may fail altogether or succeed by slow degrees, and the application of them and the accompanying regimen may be so disagreeable, that some will not suffer them to be tried or patiently submit to them throughout a period and process of cure, but satisfy themselves with the excuse, that the remedy proposed is experimental and the cure doubtful. There are others who are not in the way of the remedies which might relieve them; so that we find on the whole as matter of experience, that *the remedies provided in nature for natural diseases, are neither certain, perfect, or universal.*

The principle on which it is contended 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. But our experience that there are diseases, shews that it is credible beforehand, upon supposition that there are remedies in nature, these may be (as we find they are), not certain, perfect, or universal. Thus it appears that if we argue from expectation and *a priori* objection, we are landed in a conclu-

sion that is falsified by experience; so that this mode of arguing is proved to be fallacious. We cannot then argue that Christianity is not a Divine expedient to recover man from ruin and supply the deficiencies of natural knowledge, because this is against expectation and liable to objection—for this would lead us to conclude, that there is no ruin in the world and no deficiency in natural knowledge, as also against expectation.

If then we are not to pronounce on such matters beforehand, is it to be said, that reason is no judge of what is offered to us as being of Divine revelation? By no means. Reason has its proper province, and it is of the greatest consequence that we should observe the limits as Butler has laid them down. Reason can and ought to judge not only of the meaning, but of the morality and of the evidence of revelation. As to "the meaning"—he had already referred to this at the close of the first chapter. I would further say, that all interpretation of language should be reasonable, but this is more easy to state than clearly to explain or safely to apply with proper limitations.

The student will do well to read diligently the remarks of Bacon on the use of Reason in Religion, in the ninth book of the *De Augmentis*, Vol. v. pp. 113-5. The reason of any individual (be it remembered) is not reason in its general and absolute sense. We may put our prejudices in the place of reason; our acquired notions in the place of genuine truth. When it is said that the reason may sit in judgment on the meaning or morality of Scripture, we must go back to reason at its source, as the gift of God, by virtue of which man is consistently required to offer to God a reasonable service. It is, however, very difficult to apply in practice what is incontrovertible in theory, and it will require a cautious consideration at your hands.

In judging of the morality of Scripture, it is not within the province of reason to test it, by what we should have expected from a wise, just, and good being. It has been shewn that we are not competent to decide on this beforehand, and therefore it is not reasonable that we should take upon ourselves to do so. But it is within the province of reason to enquire and consider whether the Scripture contains things *plainly contradictory* to wisdom, justice, or goodness; irreconcilable with what the light of nature teaches us of God. The judgment which we form of actions as being right or wrong, is the voice of conscience. It has a regulative, but a relative authority, for it is not supreme, inasmuch as that is not absolutely or necessarily right or wrong, which in the judgment of our conscience we may pronounce to be right or wrong. Dr. Whewell has well observed this. He says, "Our judgment on these points may be erroneous, we may have wrongly conceived or wrongly applied the supreme rule of human action, and thus our erroneous conscience may require to be enlightened and instructed by a better use of our rational faculty." Let me add, that it may still more require to be enlightened by Divine grace and instructed by the Holy Spirit. "In whatever degree any man does not possess a perfect natural religion, in the same degree he is liable to error in judging of the truth of a revelation solely from internal evidence." These are the weighty words of Mr. Mansel in his admirable Essay on Miracles in *The Aids to Faith*. Whether then it is reason or conscience; whatever part of our nature we use in this process of judgment, let us remember its imperfection, when exercised otherwise than in faithful dependence on God as the giver of every good and every perfect gift. Let us use it with humility and with pious caution; with earnest prayer for higher and holier guidance; seeking that

we may find, knocking that the door may be opened to us. Above all, remember the Divine promise that never yet has been shewn to have failed—"If any man *be willing to do his will*, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God."

As regards the morality of Scripture, Butler observes that the only objections urged, have reference to certain commands given to certain persons to do acts, which would be wrong, were it not for such commands. But none of these commands are contrary to immutable morality. Property or life may be taken away as God may determine. Men have no right to either, except what arises solely from the grant of God. He may think fit to revoke the grant, and He may appoint whom he pleases to be His ministers in executing His declared purpose. A course of external acts, which without authoritative command would be immoral, must make an immoral habit; yet a few commands detached from the general body of other commands, have no such tendency. Executive acts, in which they who take an authorised part are but the functionaries of the law which all are bound to obey, are not immoral. They are the acts of the law for which the agent is not responsible. These exceptional commands in Scripture, create no real difficulty, unless that which arises from their liability to perversion by wicked, designing, or fanatical men. The objection from them is not against revelation, but against the whole notion of religion as a trial and against the general constitution of nature.

As to the evidence of revelation, reason is competent to judge, and of the objections against that evidence. This is the subject of the 7th chapter, in which the evidence is summed up.

As in natural philosophy, the experimental and the rational faculties co-operate, each acting within their proper limits; so in the profitable study of the word of God, our intellectual,

moral, and spiritual faculties should harmoniously combine. "The men of experiment (says Lord Bacon), are like the ant, they only collect and use; the reasoners resemble spiders, who make cobwebs out of their own substance. But the bee takes a middle course; it gathers its material from the flowers of the garden and the field, but transforms and digests by a power of its own." Herein is wisdom. And in the application of it to the profitable study of the Holy Scriptures, let us bear in mind that as they are given by Inspiration of God, the truths therein revealed are spiritually discerned; and he who would know the mind of the Spirit, must seek so as to obtain His aid and guidance.

The general conclusion that Butler here draws is this—that the truth of Christianity is not affected by the objections alleged against its scheme (since there are none against the morality of it); and these objections as distinguished from those against its evidence are frivolous. The real question is, what proof of it remains after due allowance for objections against that proof? It has been shewn that no weight can be attached to a way of arguing and objecting from preconceived expectations, that is resolvable into principles and goes upon suppositions which mislead us in judging of the natural dispensations of Providence. Its unreasonableness will be the more apparent when it is shewn hereafter that the chief things objected to in revelation, are justified by distinct and full analogies in the constitution and course of nature. Its findings are against experience and analogy.

In conclusion, he observes as a distinct reflection, that Holy Scripture is more consistent with itself and has a more general and uniform tendency to promote virtue, than could have been expected from enthusiasm and political views. Now we are competent to judge of what might have been expected from these; and, therefore, we are furnished with a

strong though a negative argument in support of the divine origin of the Scriptures.

You cannot fail to have been struck with the sober wisdom, the true spirit of philosophy in which Butler has dealt with the important subject which he discusses in this instructive chapter. He propounds no rigid preconceived theory as to what should be the precise form in which God would reveal His will. He leaves this altogether in the hands of an All-wise God, and he neither limits the influence nor defines the operation of the Holy Spirit in Revelation.

He takes the Scripture as God in His infinite wisdom has thought fit to give the divine record. Our own Edmund Burke has said of it—"Scripture is no one summary of doctrines regularly digested, in which a man could not mistake his way; it is a most venerable but most multifarious collection of the records of the divine economy; a collection of an infinite variety of cosmogony, theology, history, prophecy, psalmody, morality, apologue, legislation, ethics, carried through different books, by different authors, at different ages, for different ends and purposes. It is necessary to sort out what is intended for example, what only as narrative, what to be understood literally, what figuratively; where one precept is to be controlled and modified by another—what used directly, and what only as an *argumentum ad hominem*—what is temporary and what of perpetual obligation,—what appropriated to one state, and to one set of men, and what the general duty of all Christians." All this wonderful variety is treasured in the record that is emphatically "the Book," with a divine unity throughout. The objector may suggest his difficulties—the sceptic his doubts—those are shewn to be inadmissible, these are proved to be unfounded. Stand on the solid ground on which Butler has fixed his position throughout this chapter, and then you will

see how unreasonable are the speculative arguments and objections—"the idols and their equipage" which make up much of the stock of modern scepticism. The absurd interpretation, the shallow suggestion, the limiting of God's power, the pre-judging of God's wisdom, "the must be's" and "the could not be's" of human dictation—against all this we can appeal to reason and to evidence—"to the law and to the testimony," by which alone we can be made wise unto salvation.

"Oh! let thy Word prevail, to take away
The sting of human nature. Spread the law
As it is written in the holy Book,
Throughout all lands; let every nation hear
The high behest, and every heart obey."

LECTURE VI.

OBJECTIONS TO THE SCHEME OF CHRISTIANITY.

THE analogies which were brought under our notice in the last lecture were sufficient to shew that supposing a revelation to be made, it is highly credible that it must contain many things very different from what we should have expected beforehand and such as would seem to be open to great objections. This in a great degree obviates such objections when they are put forward against the Christian scheme *as a fact*; but it does not exclude the consideration of internal difficulties *altogether*. These may have to be taken more or less into account and duly weighed—when the meaning, the morality or the evidence of revelation is investigated. The circumspect caution with which this should be done, and the limitations which are reasonably required for our security I have already suggested. Butler has well remarked at the close of the first chapter of this second part, that the account given of Christianity “most strongly 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 reason, what the scheme of it must be.” At

the very outset, we are authoritatively required to become as little children, that we may be taught the lessons of our Heavenly Father. We are told to look for a higher wisdom than the wisdom of this world, "to become fools" that we may be "made wise unto salvation." Reason must humble itself before the deep things of God, revealed by the Spirit.

It is not a little remarkable that the words of our blessed Lord, in which He propounds the qualification for entering into His kingdom, are used by Lord Bacon, as applicable also to the kingdom of science, and furnish the true key to the inductive philosophy. I gave you Bacon's words in the preceding lecture.* Does not this shew you that it is very reasonable that our reason should be submissive, in order that it may afterwards be instructed and enlightened according to God's appointed method? When Bacon speaks of his hope of providing a better guidance in the investigation of truth, he says, "Wherein, if I have made any progress, the way has been opened to me by no other means than *the true and legitimate humiliation of the human spirit.*" In another place we find him suggesting that "as God uses the help of our reason to illuminate us, so should we likewise turn it every way, that we may be more capable of receiving and understanding His mysteries; provided only that the mind be enlarged according to its capacity to the grandeur of the mysteries, and not the mysteries contracted to the narrowness of the mind." We have to interpret Nature and Revelation. "Interpretation is the true and natural work of the mind *when freed from impediments;*"—and such are arbitrary abstractions. "The ideas of the Divine mind are the Creator's own stamp upon creation, impressed and defined in matter by true and exquisite lines;" or they are expressed and recorded in Scripture by those inspired penmen who were moved and taught by the Holy

* Ante, 244.

Spirit. Obedience to nature, therefore, is not more necessary than submission to revelation. Analogy shews that it is not reasonable to rely on reason that is prejudiced, or to trust the clouded mind: it is as we are freed from '*impediments*,' properly so called, when we seek and search for truth in the way of God's appointment, that we may reasonably expect to find it either in Nature or Revelation.

We have then to consider the scheme of Christianity as God has actually revealed it in Scripture; and although what has been said in the preceding chapter may shew that the objections which have been there suggested, are not of any avail against the scheme *as a fact*; yet it may be said "that this does not shew at all that the things objected against can be wise, just, and good; much less that it is credible they are so." An objection of the same kind has been made against the natural government of God, and has been dealt with in the 7th chapter of the first part, and there satisfactorily answered. A like answer may be given to this objection to the scheme of Christianity. First, it is a scheme imperfectly comprehended; secondly, it is a scheme in which means are used to accomplish ends; and, thirdly, it is carried on by general laws.

The natural government is a scheme incomprehensible—so is Christianity. This is a particular scheme under the general plan of God's moral government, conducive to its completion with regard to mankind. It consists of several parts and a mysterious economy; it has been carrying on from the fall of man, and is still carrying on for his recovery, by the Messiah, who is the founder of an everlasting kingdom, wherein dwelleth righteousness—to whom prophecy has given witness. After the various preparatory dispensations, in the fulness of time, as appointed by infinite wisdom, He took our nature upon Him and endured the death of the cross; and God highly

exalted him, and gave Him a name, which is above every name—the name of Jesus, *in* which every knee should bend, of those in heaven, and those on earth, and those under the earth; and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. There is, moreover, the miraculous mission and the peculiar office of the Holy Spirit, the Divine Sanctifier, without whom nothing is strong, nothing holy: the invisible government of Christ as the head of and ruler over His church; His preparation of a place in heaven for His followers—His return to judge the world in righteousness, and completely re-establish the kingdom of God. This is but an abstract of Butler's epitome—his outline of that wonderful scheme of free and full salvation, revealed in the Holy Scriptures. It is described as 'the mystery of godliness;' every passage which we read relating to it, runs up into something of which we are confessedly ignorant; and we see that a great part of the scheme is manifestly not revealed. For all the purposes of judging or objecting, we know as little of it as of the constitution of nature, and our ignorance, therefore, is as much an answer to our objections against the perfection of one as against the perfection of the other. But, secondly, as in God's natural government, means which may seem to us undesirable, are used to accomplish desirable ends; so in the Christian scheme, the things which are objected against as seeming to be foolish, may be the best means under the circumstances, of accomplishing the best ends. As the scheme is confessedly so much beyond our comprehension, the apparent foolishness of the things objected to, cannot warrant any presumption against this result.

And, thirdly, as the natural government of God is carried on by general laws, it is credible that the Christian dispensation may have been all along carried on, in like manner. There are, in what we call the course of nature, many things

which we have been enabled to reduce to general laws; but there are also matters and events which we are not able to reduce to any laws or rules at all. From what we have observed in nature, from the discoveries that have been made from time to time under the inductive method, by patient observation, the diligent collecting and comparing of phenomena, and the researches of learned men, "the closer and purer league between the experimental and the rational faculties," we are led to conclude that the course of nature is *altogether* governed by general laws.

What we have been enabled to discover furnishes an analogy that becomes the more striking as we make progress in knowledge. It is a just ground (if not to conclude) at least to apprehend, that it is *supposable and credible* that God's miraculous interpositions may have been all along in like manner, by *general* laws of wisdom. Our ignorance of the general laws under which the natural government of the world is carried on, does not prevent our concluding that events which are exceptional, unexpected or accidental, such as we are not able to bring under rules or laws at all, are, nevertheless, reducible to general laws. Neither is our ignorance of the general laws of the Christian scheme, or our inability to bring miraculous interposition under such laws, a bar to the conclusion, that such interposition at stated times and in certain degrees and respects, has resulted from general laws of wisdom. These may constitute a settled part of the scheme of man's redemption, and of the moral government of the world. Nor is it more to be expected that every exigence (as it arises) in the Christian scheme, should be provided for by general laws of miraculous interposition, than that every exigence in nature should be provided for, by the general laws of nature. There might be wise and good reasons in the hidden counsels of the Almighty, that miraculous interposition

should be by general laws of infinite wisdom, and that these laws should not be interfered with by other miracles. Butler has, with singular caution, defined a miracle as relative to a course of nature; and the general laws of which he speaks, are not mechanical or material contrivances, but general laws of *wisdom*. They are connected with the moral government to which the material creation is subservient. The interposition that is miraculous, is the interference of the *personal* God —“by whom and for whom all things were created.”

Christianity, then, like natural government, is a scheme imperfectly comprehended, because partially made known, and of a certain kind in other respects; a scheme in which means are used to accomplish ends, and is carried on by general laws. So that it is not only credible there might, but probably there would be, the like appearance of deficiencies and irregularities in the Christian scheme as in Nature, and that both would be liable to like objections. The answers to the objections are therefore alike. The objections against the Christian scheme as a fact, having been obviated in the 3rd chapter, and the objection against its perfection having been disposed of in the first part of the 4th chapter,* it remains to show that the *particular* objections alleged against the Christian scheme may be answered by particular and full analogies in nature. One of these is made against the *whole* scheme, as described in the summary already given; this objection, therefore, may be appropriately considered in this chapter. It is this — that the Christian scheme seems to suppose that 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; and that, in this respect, there seems to be a want of understanding or power. The folly of this may be made manifest, considered as an

* See ante, pp. 127 and 143.

objection against the truth of Christianity. For, throughout the natural government of God, which is undeniably true and real, He makes use of a variety of means, to us apparently intricate and tedious, for the accomplishment of His ends. This, however, is relative to our conception of what we consider to be means, and what to be ends. For (as Butler observes) we are quite ignorant how far things are considered by the Almighty under the single notion of means and ends. They are all links of the chain of eternal Providence. We cannot say whether, in our very manner of conception of means and ends, there may not be somewhat so relative and imperfect as to be in reality absurd.

The natural world and the government of it is a progressive scheme, slow and gradual in its development. The changes of the seasons, the ripening of the fruits of the earth, the history of a flower, the course of human life, exemplify the operation of processes slowly but surely working out the results to which they ultimately tend. The growth of our bodies is gradual, and the formation of our characters is the effect of a long course of training, through stages successive and subservient; so that the mystery is as great in nature as it is in the scheme of salvation. The difficulty which it presents, arises from our limited capacity and our imperfect knowledge; it cannot be solved until we know as we are known. It is enough for the present to say, that it is not peculiar to the scheme of Christianity; we find it around us and within us—in what we see, and feel, and know already. In the daily course of His providence, God operates in the same progressive manner as He does in the dispensation of Christianity. There is a series of means, extending backward and forward beyond our utmost view, subservient one to another, and all belong to the Divine plan, which in its very nature is so arranged and administered as

to require various systems of means, as well as length of time, to carry it out to its designed completion. This is God's appointment, and we are altogether incompetent to sit in judgment upon it. It extends alike to the Natural and the Revealed Dispensation. It is not open to the objector on this account to discredit the truth of the Christian scheme, whilst he cannot deny the fact and the reality of the system of Nature. The similarity of the objection in the two cases converts what is supposed to be an argument against Christianity into a striking confirmation of its Divine origin, and therefore of its essential truth. The Author of Nature is also the God of Revelation.

His ways are not as our ways. The various forms of speculative objection to the Christian scheme are, in truth, but the modes in which the presumption of human ignorance or the pride of human knowledge seeks to limit the wisdom or the power of God. That frail, fallible, fallen creatures, objects of the sovereign mercy and goodness of Him who is mighty to save—a just, a righteous, and a holy God, but the justifier of him who, with a thankful heart, accepts the gift of eternal life—that these should turn from the message of mercy, accredited as it has been by a voice from Heaven,—by words and works on earth—by prophecy fulfilled and miracles performed—by historic testimony and moral adaptation—that they should question its wisdom, deny its truth, and reject its offer, is but the crucial test of the ruin of their moral nature.

It is important that you should deliberately follow the illustrious Bishop in the course of his clear and unanswerable argument; you will find the benefit of exact attention, not only as an exercise of the mind, but also as a moral discipline. It is temperate and truthful; cautious and reasonable. It exaggerates nothing; it is not abstract, specu-

lative, or dogmatic; it proceeds on solid fact and undoubted analogy. At this crisis of free thought, I cannot but believe that his method of dealing with such questions well deserves your sober attention. It may help you much in acting on the suggestive precept of the inspired Apostle—"Prove all things—hold fast that which is good."

You will be impressed with the wisdom of Butler in excluding the same kind of speculative abstractions as those which Bacon exorcised out of philosophy, and Burke out of politics. The reason of man has its proper place and office in philosophy, politics, and religion; but the realities of life, the facts of nature and the truths of revelation are not to be set aside in order that our reason may be exalted above measure. On the other hand, looking to the position which, in God's appointment, reason occupies, and the influence it exercises in human affairs, and considering its acknowledged though limited province in judging of revelation, it is of the highest consequence that it should be so guided and enlightened that it should more and more conform to the will of God, which alone can be the supreme standard for man. He who is conscious of human frailty and fallibility and thankfully accepts the Scripture as a revelation from God, an infallible and accredited depository of religious truth, will in humility, seek the aid and guidance of God in the way that He has revealed, and think it more reasonable to regulate and rectify his reason by the standard of the Scripture, than to make that which is human, the rule or measure of that which is Divine. As it is through the reason and the conscience that much of the instruction comes, by which life and conduct are regulated, he will recognize the duty and responsibility of diligently using the aids which God has provided for the enlightenment of both. Therefore it is, that we have an unspeakable interest in whatever relates to the Holy

Scriptures; in upholding the authority of that pure Word, to which our Church refers her children, as their Divine and infallible standard of faith and practice. Doubts and difficulties have arisen out of the exaggeration of some who have a zeal for God but not according to knowledge, as well as from the heartless scepticism of those who "mind earthly things." There is a tendency, (if not a temptation) to a recoil and reaction equally erroneous, when any extreme view has been discovered to be indefensible in its excess. Now observe how Butler has, by his practical wisdom, avoided errors of this perilous kind. He waits upon God. He is not a dictator but a humble disciple. He accepts what is sufficiently accredited as historically true, and he excludes objections which originate in mere abstract speculation. He uses his reason in such a way as is most likely to lead to reasonable conclusions. Facts in nature, analogies of nature; facts of revelation historically accredited, truths in revelation Divinely revealed; the continuous attestation of the Church; the cumulative evidence of Christianity which God has furnished in profusion—these are the solid materials with which Butler has built up the enduring edifice, that has successfully withstood the assaults of the boldest and the subtlest of the enemies of our Christian faith.

I am persuaded that if we were to classify the various objections to the Scriptures, which have been put forward not only before but since the publication of the Analogy, there may be found in the principles laid down, or in the suggestions made by Butler, sufficient to lead to the conclusion that these objections are either unfounded or unreasonable; that they are insufficient to discredit the genuineness or weaken the authority of the Scripture as given by inspiration of God. Unique in its oneness, as it is marvellous in its variety; subjected to all the tests which the skill and the

subtlety of scepticism could supply; assailed in every form that unbelief could suggest; confronted as it has been with nature and with man from age to age—those who have most thoroughly explored nature, and those who have most profoundly studied man (the most competent and the most credible witnesses) have borne the fullest testimony to the truth of that Word which has been “a light unto the feet and a lamp unto the path” of the wisest and best of mankind.

Butler does not indulge in negative positions, nor raise any issue founded on mere private interpretation, as the test by which the truth of Christianity is to be tried. He appeals to and abides by the external and internal evidence, reasonably dealt with and responsibly considered. He does not propound any sharply-defined theory of inspiration. When he asserts that we are not competent to judge beforehand how the meaning ought to have been expressed in Scripture, he shews plainly that he felt the meaning was given to us “not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.” When he says that we have not the means of judging *beforehand*, whether revelation should have been committed to writing, he further shews plainly that in his judgment we ought to accept thankfully what God has given, in the form in which it has been in fact given. However piously intended theories may be, which have sprung from a zeal for God and reverence for His Holy Word, yet, if they are speculative merely, if preconceived according to man’s wisdom, they are but human in their origin and cannot be accepted as the measure of the Divine. God must be worshipped *in spirit and in truth*. But whilst Butler neither propounds a theory nor admits an arbitrary limitation of any kind derived from preconceived expectation, he gives no countenance whatsoever to any loose or shifting apprehension of the inspiration of the sacred writers or the Divine authority

of the Scriptures. We are to judge them by the analogy of nature; and, interpret them according to their own requirement. (*Shore v. Wilson*, 9th Clark & Fin., 515).

It is not to be lightly passed over, that a man of known moderation and learning—the Norrisian professor of divinity at Cambridge, has recently given the result of his investigation in the following words:—“With all the pains and ingenuity which have been bestowed upon the subject, no charge of error, even in matters of human knowledge, has ever yet been substantiated against any of the writers of Scripture.”* This is the conclusion at which he has arrived as a matter of fact; an important testimony from a highly competent authority. It is not brought forward in support of any preconceived theory. On the contrary, he intimates, as at least possible, that there might have been infallible Divine teaching in all things spiritual and heavenly, whilst on mere matters of history or of daily life, prophets and evangelists might have been suffered to write as men. “Even if this were true,” he says, “we need not be perplexed or disquieted, so we can be agreed that the Divine element was ever such as to secure the infallible truth of Scripture in all things Divine.” Butler does not suggest any other view than what may be discovered in the facts of the case; he is satisfied simply to take what God has actually given and as He has thought fit to give; and he uses the analogies of nature so far as they may assist in judging of the revelation so given.

Lord Bacon in the “*Advancement of Learning*” has noticed the effect of using the Scriptures in another manner than that in which we may reasonably conclude that God had designed. “The school of Paracelsus and some others had pretended to find the truth of all natural philosophy in the Scriptures, scandalizing and traducing all other philosophy as heathenish

* “*Aids to Faith*,” 318.—See also 417.

and profane." "But," saith he, "there is no such enmity between God's Word and His works. Neither do they give honour to the Scriptures, as they suppose, but much embase them. For to seek heaven and earth in the Word of God whereof it is said, 'Heaven and earth shall pass, but my word shall not pass,' is to seek temporary things amongst eternal. And as to seek divinity amongst philosophy is to seek the living amongst the dead, so to seek philosophy in divinity is to seek the dead amongst the living. The scope or purpose of the Spirit of God is not to express matters of nature in the Scriptures *otherwise than in passage, and for application to man's capacity and to matters moral or divine.* And it is a true rule, *auctoris aliud agentis, parva auctoritas*—what a man says incidentally about matters which are not in question has little authority."—Vol. III. p. 486; and see Vol. IV. pp. 66 and 89). It will be found, I think, that the primary purpose of the Scripture sufficiently justifies the occasional adoption of so much of the popular belief then current, as serves to illustrate or explain parts of the Divine message. Expressions there may be, which are obviously used in condescension to human infirmity, so as to be intelligible to the simple and humble; and yet these may also be pregnant with meaning that the highest culture may fail to discover. The language of the sacred writers never *offends* the most profound philosophic truth, while it sometimes shews what now appears to have been then an insight into secrets of nature. Where the language is relative in its structure and seemingly imperfect, it is an accommodation adapted to the occasion, and subservient to the main purpose of the Divine message, that might have been obstructed, if not defeated, by the use of words which would have been unintelligible, or if intelligible would have seemed to be palpably untrue. There are other answers to seeming imper-

fection and real obscurity, to which I need not further refer. But as I have touched on this subject, let me direct your attention to an important distinction drawn by Dr. Lee of Trinity College, in his valuable work on the Scriptures. "By revelation," he says, "I understand a distinct communication from God to man, either of such knowledge as man could not of himself attain to, because its subject matter transcends human sagacity or human reason; (such, for example, were the prophetic announcements of the future, and the peculiar doctrines of Christianity;) or of information which, although it might have been attained in the ordinary way, was not, in point of fact, for whatever cause, known to the person who received the revelation. By inspiration, on the other hand, I understand that actuating energy of the Holy Spirit, in whatever degree or manner it may have been exercised, guided by which, the human agents chosen by God have officially proclaimed His will by word of mouth, or have committed to writing the several portions of the Bible." Now, what we have to deal with, in Butler's view of the question, is *the actual result* of all this Divine interposition. We have to use our best endeavours to secure a correct text and a faithful translation. The errors which have originated in human interference may be at last renewed by human industry and research. Be it remembered that objections and difficulties which have been left for a time without an answer, and some of which have seemed almost (if not altogether,) incapable of solution, have by the progress of knowledge and in the course of Providence been quite unexpectedly but fully cleared up. The essential character of the Scriptures suggests that we should at all times wait patiently on God; and the instances to which I have alluded may well encourage us to believe that in His own good time "the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain." Let me add this—that

I do not myself remember to have met with any objection to the genuineness, the truthfulness, or the Inspired authority of the Bible, which has not already received or may not hereafter receive a sufficient solution.

It is in the habitual study of "the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus," that you will find the best antidote against the poison of scepticism. "In thy light shall we see light." May God who has caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience, and comfort of His Holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which He has given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

LECTURE VII.

THE MEDIATION OF CHRIST.

So far as we have gone, we find that the argument from analogy has been used by Butler in removing or obviating general objections suggested against the scheme of Christianity. There are also particular objections which are deserving of notice. One of these having been made against the whole Christian scheme, he deals with in the latter part of the fourth chapter, which was the subject of the last lecture. We come next to consider another of these particular objections, which though not made against the whole scheme professedly, yet would, if sustainable, undermine its very foundation, by removing the chief corner-stone—that act of Redemption, “whereby *alone* we obtain remission of our sins and are made partakers of the kingdom of Heaven.” The purpose of Butler in the impressive and all-important chapter on which we are about to enter, is to shew that there are analogies of nature sufficient to remove objections which have been made against the Mediation of Christ. The proof of this great doctrine comes from Revelation; analogy does not pretend to offer proof, but proceeds to set aside preliminary difficulties which are suggested by the way

of disproof. It is well observed by Dr. Chalmers, that "the preparation for the testimony of Scripture regarding any doctrine is not that we know reasons why that doctrine is likely or probable or true, but for aught we know, there *may be* such reasons."

The general notion of a Mediator between God and Man has no presumption against it, for the birth of all living creatures and the preservation of their life in infancy and every satisfaction of it—in a word, the *visible* government which God exercises over the world is by the instrumentality and mediation of others. And as we thus find by experience that God does appoint mediators to be the instruments of good and evil to us, instruments of His justice and His mercy, there is no sort of objection against the general notion of a mediator in carrying on a part of His *invisible* government, considered as a doctrine of Christianity, or as an appointment in His Revealed Dispensation. The objection here met is urged against the whole notion of a mediator, not against the high eminent and peculiar sense in which Christ is our Mediator—our Prophet, Priest, and King.

The doctrine of Redemption presupposes that the world is under the moral government of God. This Divine government implies that misery is the penal consequence of sin; that punishment shall take effect hereafter by God's appointment: that it may follow wickedness, in the way of natural consequence, from God's original constitution of the world, although we are not acquainted with the reasons for which it is fit that future punishment should be inflicted, or how or in what manner it shall follow.

Present punishment (such as poverty, sickness, infamy, death by disease or the hands of civil justice) is the natural consequence of vice. The natural consequence of folly or carelessness may be of this penal character—as where one

rashly ventures on a precipice, and in the way of natural consequence falls down, and without help perishes. It is not taken out of God's hands, because we call it natural. 'The course of Nature' is not a set of words merely, but (as he has well observed in Part I. chap. ii. par. 4) must refer "to Him who appointed it, and put things into it." Whatever is of God's appointment is *natural*, in the sense in which Butler defines the word, as meaning 'stated, fixed or settled.' (Part I. chap. i. par. 23.) The course of nature cannot be separated from the moral government of God. It is not to be regarded as if it were an independent mechanism, regulated by some physical energy of its own, whether inherent or acquired, without reference to the higher system to which it is plainly subservient. When things occur according to the course of nature, they are not the less His doing, who is the God of Nature, and the Scripture ascribes to Divine justice punishments, which are known to be natural—which must be called so, when distinguished from such as are miraculous. It matters not indeed whether future punishment follow in the way of what we may call natural consequence, or according to some general laws of government already established in the universe, for it must be admitted that it is not a matter of arbitrary appointment, but of reason equity and justice.

In this state of things provision has been made, that *all* the bad natural consequences of men's actions should not actually follow. The permission of evil is a mystery, but it is a fact. We can find in many cases remedies for it, after some pains and difficulties; reliefs and remedies even for that evil which is the fruit of our own misconduct—remedies for evil that is the penal consequence of vice. Thus we trace in the constitution of nature, both severity and indulgence. The absence of any provision for human power or interference to prevent

the foreseen natural consequences of vice might have been really good, though rigidly severe, and the fact of this provision may be called mercy or compassion in the original constitution of the world ; compassion as distinguished from goodness in general.

Here then we have an analogy to lead us to hope that however ruinous the natural consequences of sin might be from the general laws of God's government over the universe, yet provision might be made, possibly might have been originally made, by some general law for preventing those ruinous consequences from inevitably following—at least from following universally and in all cases. This shews the doctrine of Redemption to be, at all events, supposable ; and viewing the question in the solemn aspect in which it presented itself to his sober spirit, with that awful reverence and godly fear which was with him habitual, Butler suggests that those who wonder why this should be made a question, have not reflected on the present fallen condition of man as it deserves, and some serious persons have spoken on the matter unadvisedly. But when we look to what experience shews us to be, and what from the very constitution of nature cannot but be the consequences of behaviour even such as we scarce call vicious, and consider what it is for moral creatures presumptuously to introduce that confusion and misery into the kingdom of God, which mankind have in fact introduced ; to blaspheme the sovereign Lord of all, to contemn his authority, and to injure their fellow-creatures, the creatures of God—looking at this and the effects of sin in the extreme misery, irretrievable ruin and even death of sufferers, no one can say in what degree fatal might be the unprevented consequences according to the general rule of God's government. It is by no means intuitively certain how far these conse-

quences 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.

We are not informed of all the reasons that render it *fit* that future punishments should be *inflicted*, 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 appointed consequences of sin are, nor in what way they would follow, if not prevented. In this state of things we may refer to analogy, not as sufficient to raise a positive opinion upon, but as sufficient to answer a mere arbitrary assertion, urged by way of objection (but without any kind of evidence) against a doctrine, *the proof of which is not reason but Revelation*. The analogy is this. Extravagance, excess, criminal misconduct bring distress, disease and civil penalties; but sorrow for the past and behaving well for the future, would not alone and of itself prevent these natural consequences. Our ability of helping ourselves in such circumstances is often impaired, or the assistance of others is made necessary to our recovery. So that looking to our condition here, we may see what may be the case hereafter in our more important capacity under a moral government more perfectly carried out. If in this higher capacity we have misbehaved, that behaving well for the future may be wholly insufficient alone of itself to prevent the punishment annexed to our transgression, according to God's appointment, or to put us in the condition in which we should have been, had we never transgressed. Indeed it is contrary to all our notions of government as well as against the constitution of nature, to suppose that doing well for the future should in all cases prevent the judicial penal consequences of having done evil. And even if in some cases it would prevent the punishment annexed to disobedience, we have no means of

determining in what degree or in what cases this would take place. The general prevalence of propitiatory sacrifices, from the earliest times, shews that the notion of expiating guilt by repentance alone, is not conformable to the general sense of mankind. Therefore we conclude, that if the laws of God's moral government had been permitted to take their course without any interposition in our behalf, the future punishment of sin, for ought we know to the contrary, or have any reason to think, must inevitably have followed, notwithstanding any thing that we could have done with a view to prevent it.

So far Butler has fairly collected the inferences supplied by the constitution and course of nature. From these it appears that God uses the instrumentality of others in His providential dealing with each of us; that there is in His government a principle of mediation by which we are often mercifully saved from natural consequences of our sins and negligences, which otherwise must in the course of things have oppressed us or brought us to ruin; and there is in addition a principle of propitiatory expiation acknowledged more or less in all ages and countries of the world.

Mercy in a *general* way does not satisfy the yearnings of the human heart. The aspirations of man are chilled and clouded by doubts and fears—there are solemn misgivings and trembling apprehensions of a judgment to come.

“In this darkness or this light of Nature” (says Butler) “call it which you please, Revelation comes in; confirms every doubting fear which could enter into the heart of man 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.) It teaches us that the Divine government does not admit of pardon immediately and directly upon repentance or by the

sole efficacy of it, but that the unknown laws of God's more general government, no less than the particular laws of His providential government which we experience, are compassionate as well as good in the more general notion of goodness: that He has mercifully provided that there should be an interposition to prevent the destruction of human kind, whatever that destruction would have been. The provision is this—

“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish.” And the Son of God “loved us, and gave Himself for us.” “He interposed” (says Butler) “*in such a manner* as was necessary and effectual to prevent that execution of justice upon sinners which God had appointed otherwise to follow: or in *such a manner* as to prevent that punishment from actually following, which, according to the general laws of Divine government, must have followed the sins of the world, had it not been for such interposition.”

In the note that is appended to this part of the chapter there are suggestions made, which seem to me to be very instructive to the Christian student. Keep them in memory.

He first intimates that he cannot suppose that any thing he has said could be taken to imply “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.” I may observe, that in an extract from his fourth Charge at Bristol (1749) which has been published in Bell and Daldy's Edition of the Sermons, he thus speaks as to the fulness of Redemption in its own nature. “The sins and imperfections of the best as viewed by them then, require to have His mercies, who is able to save to the uttermost all that come to the Father by Him, set before them We know not how far ignorance, temptation, want of admonition, may alleviate; *nor can we set bounds to the mercy of*

the Gospel, which is a dispensation of mercy beyond the ordinary course of nature. . . . The efficacy of Christ's atonement is infinite." "The efficacy of the Lord's work," (says Bishop O'Brien) "does not depend in any degree upon the time at which it was wrought. *It is plainly in its own nature as applicable to sinners who lived before, as to those who lived after it was accomplished.* And when it was determined in the Divine Councils, it might be regarded as already wrought; so that all its benefits might be bestowed upon all whom God connected with it, even though they lived before it was actually wrought."—O'Brien on Justif. 440 2nd Edit.*

The whole provison in all its parts comes from the sovereign bounty and grace of God; and it is not for man (the object of God's mercy) to place it under any limitation that God has not expressly revealed. In the note to which I have directed your special attention, Butler deprecates the discussion of certain questions, on which conflicting opinions have been pronounced (as he says) "*perhaps with equal rashness on both sides.*" Whether God could have saved the world by any other means than the death of Christ, consistently with the general laws of His government? Again—if Christ had not come into the world as a Saviour, what would have been the future condition of the class of men, who seem to be naturally just and upright? He observes that neither question can properly be answered without going upon that infinitely absurd supposition, that we know the whole of the case. What would have followed if God had not done as He has, we may not consider further than is necessary to help our partial and inadequate conception of things. We may collect enough as to what might have followed, to shew us how merciful is

* See also Gwynne on the Epistle to the Galatians, 329, note. This will be found to be a most valuable Commentary, by an excellent scholar and a truly pious minister of our Church.

that interposition which God has revealed and Christ has carried out in the great scheme of Redemption. If the constitution of things had been such that the whole creation must have perished, had it not been for somewhat which God had appointed in order to prevent that ruin, we could not say that this moral severity would have been inconsistent with the most absolutely perfect goodness.

This (it may be said) supposes mankind to be naturally in a very strange state. Doubtless, this is so. But Christianity did not put us into this state. The wickedness and misery in the world as we ourselves find it; the view of heathen moralists that the present state was a place of punishment; and the appearances of ruin which the earth exhibits—these and the like considerations may satisfy us that the Scriptural account that mankind is in a state of degradation, is not open to reasonable objection, however difficult it may seem to explain or apprehend the occasions and circumstances of it. That the disobedience and sin of our first parents caused this state of degradation, is particularly analogous to what we see in the course of natural providence; and the interposition of Christ has been shewn to be so in general.

Thus then we have got the way cleared for the testimony of Scripture on the Mediation of Christ in the largest sense between God and man. His providential dealings and the course of ordinary life have supplied analogies, by which we are enabled to put aside some hindrances which might keep us back from attending to Revelation. This we must receive in all humility of mind. It has been well observed by Wordsworth that “when Christianity, the religion of humility, is founded upon the proudest faculty of our nature, what can be expected but contradictions?” And if there is any part

of the Christian Revelation to which this *emphatically* applies, surely it is that which is its very essence—the Mediation of Christ as our Prophet, Priest, and King. We can know nothing of this—we must not seek for any thing, but what God of His infinite mercy has thought fit to reveal; and all human questionings, all that go beyond what is Divinely written for our learning, are to be set aside. I doubt not that much prejudice has been wrought against the explicit testimony of the Gospel on this great theme, by overlaying its statement with the speculations and reasonings of men who take upon themselves to pronounce on what God has not thought fit to disclose. Thus the sublime doctrine of the Atonement has sometimes been deprived of that majestic simplicity in which God the Holy Ghost has revealed it, which no comparisons of man's device can adequately illustrate—no effort of man can sufficiently express. In our present condition, where we see but in part and know but in part—so small a part of that infinite system of which our earth is but as a speck, it is but reasonable that we should thankfully and humbly receive with meekness the gracious message as God has given it, in its own Divine plenitude.

This is the course which Butler here adopts. He uses analogy merely to clear away preliminary objections and impediments, and then goes direct to the Scripture itself for the authoritative account of the particular manner in which Christ interposed. I give it in his own words.

“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 of the world*,” John i. and viii. 12; the revealer of the will of God in the most eminent sense. He is a propitiatory sacrifice, Rom. iii. 25, v. 11;

1 Cor. v. 7; Eph. v. 2; 1 John ii. 2; Matt. xxvi. 28; *the "Lamb of God,"* John i. 29, 36;* and, as he voluntarily offered himself up, he is styled our High-priest.† 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, Isaiah liii.; Dan. ix. 24; Psalm cx. 4. And whereas it is objected, that all this is merely by way of allusion to the sacrifices of the Mosaic 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,* Heb. x. 1; 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 showed to thee in the Mount,*" Heb. viii. 4, 5: *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 shown him in the Mount. The priesthood of Christ, and the tabernacle in the Mount, were the originals: of the former of which, the Levitical priesthood was a type; and of the latter, the tabernacle made by Moses was a copy. The doctrine of the 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 anything be more express or 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*

* And throughout the Book of Revelation.

† Throughout the Epistle to the Hebrews.

‡ This requires correction. See Bishop Fitzgerald's Note, (o), and Alford's G. T., 4th Vol., 149.

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 offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all,” Heb. x. 4, 5, 7, 9, 10. And to add one passage more of the like kind: “*Christ mas 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,*” Heb. ix. 28. Nor do the inspired writers at all confine themselves to this manner of speaking concerning the satisfaction of Christ, but declare an efficacy in what he did and suffered for us, additional to, and beyond mere instruction, example, 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,*” John xi. 51, 52: that “*he suffered for sins, the just for the unjust,*” 1 Pet. iii. 18: that “*he gave his life, himself, a ransom,*” Matt. xx. 28; Mark x. 45; 1 Tim. ii. 6: that “*we are bought, bought with a price,*” 2 Pet. ii. 1; Rev. xiv. 4; 1 Cor. vi. 20: that *he redeemed us with his blood, redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us,*” 1 Pet. i. 19; Rev. v. 9; Gal. iii. 13: that “*he is our advocate, intercessor, and propitiation,*” Heb. vii. 25; 1 John ii. 1, 2: that “*he was made perfect (or consummate) through sufferings; and being thus made perfect, he became the author of salvation,*” Heb. ii. 10, v. 9: 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,*” 2 Cor. v. 19; Rom. v. 10; Eph. ii. 16; and, lastly, that *through death he destroyed him that had*

the power of death," Heb. ii. 14.* Christ, then, having thus "*humbled himself, and become obedient to death, even the death of the cross, God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name 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,"* Phil. ii. 8, 9; John iii. 35, v. 22, 23. 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."* Rev. v. 12, 13.

"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,"* John vi. 14, 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, 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.† 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

* See also a remarkable passage in the Book of Job, xxxiii. 24.

† Part 2, Chap. 1.

he was a prophet in a sense which no other ever was. To which is to be added, that he set us a perfect "*example that we should follow his steps.*"

"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,*" Eph. iv. 12, 13. 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 to receive them unto himself, that where he is, there they may be also; and reign with him for ever and ever,*" John xiv. 2, 3; Rev. iii. 21, xi. 15; and likewise "*to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not his gospel,*" 2 Thess. i. 8.

"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,*" Heb. ix. 26. 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 really were in some degree, and with regard to some persons."

With regard to the particular way in which the sacrifice of Christ had the efficacy ascribed to it by Scripture, although some have endeavoured to explain this—yet Butler says he does *not find that the Scripture has explained it*. And as it is left a mystery, somewhat in it unrevealed, all conjectures about it must be altogether uncertain. In his summary in the concluding chapter of the *Analogy* he says—"Neither reason nor analogy would lead us to think in particular that the interposition of Christ, in the manner in which he did interpose, would be of that efficacy for the recovery of the world which the Scripture teaches us it was: but neither would reason nor analogy lead us to think that other particular means would be of the efficacy which experience shews they are in numberless instances. And therefore as the case before us does not admit of experience; so, that neither 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." The whole matter then rests in revelation; and it is not lawful to add to nor take from what is there taught, nor can we establish any claim to further information than God has there given. Some have however gone beyond Scripture, in the attempt to explain the efficacy of what Christ has done and suffered. Others, because they could not explain it, have been for taking it away and confining His office as Redeemer to His instruction, example, and government of the Church. These both dishonour the pure Word of God.

I have already observed as to the former class, that they

have often prejudiced the teaching of the Scriptures. The other set aside God's word by an unreasonable abuse of reason, in rejecting what God has expressly revealed. They sit in judgment not on the meaning, the morality, or the evidence of Revelation, but to limit its Divine authority. The expiation of Christ—the work of Redemption, is frittered away, until it becomes subjective and spectral. It is left with a moral aspect, but without a sacrifice for sin. "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him." If they may reject the lessons of the Holy Ghost, in "the shadow of good things to come," in type, in ceremony and in sacrament; in prophetic announcement; in the agony and bloody sweat of Gethsemane; in the cross and passion of Calvary; in the teaching of inspired apostles, divinely commissioned to preach Christ's Gospel to the world—then but not till then, may they deal with the stupendous mystery of Christ crucified, as amenable to human reason, and make the finite mind of man the measure of the boundless mercy and the unsearchable judgments of God.

As Redemption is altogether a provision of mercy, it is not for us to question or dispute how it was procured on God's part. As we are ignorant of the way in which future punishment would have followed wickedness; how it would have been inflicted, and all the reasons why it would have been needful—of the nature of future happiness, and the efficacy of our own efforts to prevent punishment or recover happiness—it is most evident that we are not judges *antecedently to revelation*, whether a mediator was or was not necessary for these purposes. And supposing a mediator to be necessary, we are not judges (antecedently to Revelation) of the whole nature of His office—its nature, parts and duties, in order to accomplish the end of God in His appointment. 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, though it is very common. Unless we were in a condition to shew *positively* that it could not be requisite or conducive to the end proposed, or that it was *in itself unreasonable*, we ought not to object to any particular part of Christ's mediatorial office revealed in Scripture.

One objection is made, which is supposed to be of this positive kind—namely, that the doctrine of the atonement represents God as being indifferent whether He punished the innocent or the guilty. This, like some other objections against Christianity, applies equally to the constitution and course of nature, under the natural appointments of which, innocent people frequently suffer for the faults of the guilty. These sufferings are often involuntary, but Christ's sufferings were altogether *voluntary*.

In completing the great scheme of God's moral government, vicarious suffering may be not only fit but absolutely necessary. In the course of daily life we see the benefit of our interposition and assistance, in relieving the distress of others and saving them from ruin, and this sometimes cannot be done without great pains and labour and suffering to ourselves. In various ways the sufferings of one contribute to the relief of another, and this we see in the common course of things; so that either these matters are not regarded as of God's appointment, or else it is forgotten that vicarious punishment is a providential appointment of daily experience.

In ignorance of the more general laws of the Divine government of the world, and not seeing how the sufferings of Christ could contribute to the redemption of it, unless by arbitrary and tyrannical will, men conclude that His sufferings could not contribute to it in any other way. Such objections are founded either on ignorance or presumption, and are

plainly altogether unreasonable. The natural tendency of this method of our Redemption to vindicate the authority of God's laws, and deter His creatures from sin, is a sufficient justification of the doctrine, which (Butler says) has never been answered, and is, in his opinion, plainly unanswerable, though (as he adds) 'far from being an account of the whole of the case.' In the note X. which Bishop O'Brien has appended to the second Edition of his Sermons on Justification, he combats with remarkable ability and (as it seems to me) with most complete success, the views of the late Mr. Knox and others of his school, with reference to the doctrine of the Atonement. "It must be known to every one," (says the Bishop) "that when we direct the thoughts and hearts of sinners to the cross of Christ, as to the true ground of *Faith*—of confidence in God as a reconciled Father,—the true foundation of trust for pardon and acceptance with Him, we do not speak merely of what was *procured* there, but of what was *done and suffered and exhibited* there. In every exposition of such views, this is distinctly explained and dwelt on. And in every statement of their nature and effects, it is supposed that we know who it was that bore the pain and shame of the cross, and why and for whom He bore it. And when we know this, do we not find in this sacrifice for sin a manifestation at once of God's hatred of sin and His love for sinners, to which no other exhibition of Himself makes any approach?" (p. 536.) Enough has been suggested by Butler to shew the reasonableness of vicarious punishment, in vindicating the authority of God's laws, and deterring His creatures from sin. But (as he says) this falls short of being an account of the whole of the case.

In the great salvation which God has revealed, we have a security that whatever could be required, whatever would be efficacious, has been in fact provided in the perfect

Redemption accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom. viii. 32.) Though we may not have any knowledge how it could be operative with God, no objection could be raised from this our ignorance, in a case in which we are incapable of judging whether such a Divine appointment was necessary or expedient, or of seeing it to be necessary, though it were so.

To enquire with due reverence into the ends and reasons of God's dispensations, is a pious exercise of the understanding, but 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 (says Butler) seems almost lost in the folly of them. And the folly is yet greater, when they are urged against things in Christianity analogous or like to those natural dispensations of Providence, which are matter of experience.

The suggestion given in the concluding section of this instructive chapter is eminently practical. Both reason and analogy teach us not to expect to have the like information concerning the Divine conduct as concerning our own duty. We are taught by experience the consequence of our conduct in common life, sufficiently for all practical purposes of our behaviour, but it is an infinitely small part of God's natural Providence that we are made acquainted with. So in Revelation. In the doctrine of a Mediator, whatever may be the difficulty or obscurity as to what was done on God's part in the appointment or on Christ's part in the execution of it—as to what is required from us in consequence of this gracious dispensation, none can say that we are not fully and sufficiently informed. There is mystery in the whole constitution of Nature and Providence, as well as in the Christian scheme—yet under the first God has given men all things pertaining to life, and under the other, all things pertaining unto godliness.

The mediation of Christ was designed to be restorative; it has a moral purpose in the recovery of fallen man. But the same Holy Scripture that reveals this purpose, tells us of "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." The observances of Judaism—the services of the tabernacle, its very form and fabrication were after the pattern that God showed to Moses in the Mount. These had a *celestial* origin, and point unmistakeably to the "blood of the New Testament shed for the remission of sins." The Gospel sacrifice is *the only real*; the others were but figures of the true. Observe then the two-fold aspect of this great doctrine of Christ's mediation; first, as it relates to God, and next, as it relates to ourselves. It has a Divine and also a human aspect.

Some, who would not in terms deny this, yet fall into a grave error in so concentrating their attention on the moral purpose, as to ignore the sacrificial element, or blend it with the moral, as if it were altogether subjective and secondary. To others, absorbed in the mystery of the cross, its purpose in the moral deliverance of man from the bondage and dominion of sin, appears to have no relative importance. The objective dogma of the one is often arrayed against the subjective doctrine of the other. Each view is but one-sided; both are defective.

In the language of our impressive Collect, the Son of God has been given "*to be unto us both a sacrifice for sin, and also an ensample of godly life.*" It is through faith—faith in His blood—that the law of God is established. He who is most deeply conscious of the free forgiveness of sin, most convinced of his need of an all-sufficient Saviour—he will love the most (Luke, vii. 47), and love is the fulfilling of the law. In the Epistle to the Hebrews we find written, as with a sunbeam, the vital import of that vicarious and expiatory sacrifice of Himself, which Christ has offered once and for ever, for

the putting away of sin; and in the Epistle to the Romans, we find the reality of that restorative process of the Holy Spirit in the heart of every believer, by which he is recovered from the power of sin, delivered from its bondage, into the glorious liberty of a child of God. There is both redemption and restoration; deliverance from the guilt of sin as well as from its power. These are not only not incompatible, but are especially and vitally united together; nor is either to be ignored, or its order to be inverted. Each is settled in the Divine economy as God has revealed it. Seeing then that we have a great High-Priest, Jesus the Son of God, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and tempted like as we are, yet without sin—we can “come with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in time of need.” It is “in and by the blood of Jesus, that we have boldness to enter into the holiest”—“by a new and living way”—“in full assurance of faith.” It is through Christ as our one and only Mediator we draw nigh unto God, as our reconciled Father, and ask in prayer what we receive by faith. The moral benefits result from the mysterious efficacy of that finished sacrifice, with which, in the unsearchable counsels of God, they are inseparably connected. Let no attempt be made to go beyond what is written in the Divine Record, or to reduce it to any system or theory however specious or plausible, in which either the sacrificial or the moral element is denied or displaced. Half truths are often the worst kind of whole errors. Here the error may be of the very gravest consequence.

In a modern work of Canon Stanley, possessing great merit, as well from the richness of illustration, as from the lucid treatment and the attractive eloquence by means of which the accomplished author has imparted a living interest to the history of the Jewish Church, there is the following

passage, in p. 499 :—“In His deeds, I need only refer to His death—proclaiming as the very central fact and doctrine of the New Religion, that sacrifice henceforth and for ever, consists not in the blood of bulls and goats, but in the perfect surrender of a perfect will and life, to the perfect will of an All-just and All-merciful God.” Canon Stanley has in the same volume given a view of the origin of sacrifice, in the following words :—“There have been in almost all ancient forms of Religion, in most modern forms also, strong tendencies, each in itself springing from the best and purest feelings of humanity, yet each, if carried into the extremes suggested by passion or by logic, incompatible with the other, and with its own highest purpose. One is the craving to please, or to propitiate, or to communicate with the powers above us, by surrendering some object near and dear to ourselves. *This is the source of all sacrifice.* The other is the profound moral instinct, that the Creator of the world cannot be pleased, or propitiated, or approached, by any other means than a pure life and good deeds. On the exaggeration, on the contact, on the collision of these two tendencies, have turned some of the chief corruptions, and some of the chief difficulties of Ecclesiastical History,” p. 47.

Is this the *Scriptural* account of the source of those sacrifices, which were figures of the true and only real sacrifice—the sacrifice of Him who is described as “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world?” And again—“*Once, in the end of the world* hath He appeared to put away sin by the *sacrifice of Himself.*” Whatever may have been the difficulties of Ecclesiastical History, arising out of those human corruptions, to which Canon Stanley has adverted, the Scriptural statement of the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ is not shaken. He “was *once* offered to bear the sins of many.” This must not be deprived of its objective

reality, its expiatory and reconciling efficacy. It is not enough that it should be arrayed in a moral loveliness, and expressed in human eloquence. This cannot be a substitute for that sublime mystery, which sets forth Christ as "the very Paschal Lamb, which was offered for us, and hath taken away the sin of the world." That is not to be made the figure, which is itself the true and real; that must not be reduced to the shadow, which is itself the living substance. "The peculiar doctrine of Christianity," (said Johnson) "is that of an *universal sacrifice and perpetual propitiation*. Other prophets only proclaimed the will and the threatenings of God. *Christ satisfied His justice.*" On another occasion the great moralist discussed the question of death, on the Lord's day, when in a boat upon the sea. "There is no rational principle," (said he) "by which a man can die contented, but a trust in the mercy of God, through the merits of Jesus Christ." The subject had often engrossed his attention, and drew from him weighty comments, deserving of our sober regard. "With respect to original sin," (said he) "the enquiry is not necessary, for whatever is the cause of human corruption, men are evidently and confessedly so corrupt, that all the laws of heaven and earth are insufficient to restrain them from crimes. Whatever difficulty there may be in the conception of vicarious punishments, it is an opinion, which has had possession of mankind in all ages. There is no nation that has not used the practice of sacrifices. Whoever therefore denies the propriety of vicarious punishments, holds an opinion, which the sentiments and practice of mankind have contradicted from the beginning of the world. The great sacrifice for the sins of mankind was offered at the death of the Messiah, who is called in Scripture 'the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.'"

* See Bosw. Johns., ed. 1800—especially 694-5.

Such was the view of this singularly gifted man, especially conversant with the moral resources of humanity, with history and philosophy, with secular and sacred literature. He has discussed the reasonableness of the scheme of Redemption, but here we need not follow him. Enough to know, that in the constitution and course of Nature, we are taught by daily experience, the value of mediation, and in the the history of mankind, the general use of propitiatory sacrifice. Revelation then instructs us in the Mediation of Christ, that there is but the one and only sacrifice, for the taking away of sin. There remaineth no more—there is no other sacrifice for a sin-offering.

“The article of Redemption,” (says Coleridge) “may be considered in a two-fold relation—in relation to the antecedent, that is, the Redeemer’s act, as the efficient cause and condition of Redemption; and in relation to the consequent, that is, the effects in and for the Redeemed. The mysterious act, the operative cause is transcendant. Factum est: and beyond the information contained in the enumeration of the fact, it can be characterized only by the consequences.” These consequences are illustrated in various ways in Scripture; by sacrificial expiation of sin-offerings: by reconciliation: by ransom: by payment of a creditor’s demand. Indeed Coleridge wisely observes, “the very number and variety of the words or periphrases used by St. Paul, to express one and the same thing, furnishes the strongest presumptive proof, that all alike were used by him metaphorically.” The consequents of the mediation of Christ, in Coleridge’s exposition of the Apostolic writings, are for the sinner relatively to God and his own soul, analogous to the sacrificial atonement made by the Priest for the transgressor of the Mosaic Law: to the reconciliation of an alienated parent to a son who had estranged himself from his father’s house and presence: to a

redemptive ransom for a slave or captive: to the satisfaction of a debt for a debtor, relatively to his creditor. (See Aids to Reflection, 151 and 263, &c.) Thus are we assisted by analogy and illustration, in apprehending the nature of the benefits conferred—whilst we are not instructed in another part of the mystery, beyond what God has thought fit to reveal. But when we find that He spared not His own son; that the Son of God loved us and gave Himself for us; that with Him, God will freely give us all things needful for our deliverance and restoration—what remains for us but with humble, thankful and loving hearts, to accept this great salvation, assured that nothing can be added to the finished sacrifice, which God has declared to be the one all-sufficient offering for sin?

In the moral purpose of our Redemption we are invited to be fellow-workers with God; to ask for the Divine guidance and the aid of the Holy Spirit; we are called on to obey and to believe the Gospel. Its precepts are our rule of life, whether they refer to positive institutions by which Christianity was to be propagated and handed down from age to age, or to our duty to Christ as it arises out of what He has done and suffered, His authority and dominion and the relation which He is revealed to stand in to us.

How much contentious controversy might have been avoided—how much perversion of that, which in its sublime simplicity is the most comfortable doctrine of the Gospel, might have been prevented by an honest compliance with the lesson here inculcated—a thoughtful attention to the temperate wisdom and Scriptural simplicity of this weighty chapter of Butler! “The Lamb is the light thereof.”

LECTURE VIII.

I. WANT OF UNIVERSALITY IN REVELATION.

II. SUPPOSED DEFICIENCY IN THE PROOF.

HAVING disposed of objections against the credibility of the Christian scheme as a fact; and objections against the wisdom justice and goodness of it; having answered particular objections arising out of the alleged intricacy of means; and having removed objections against the mediation of Christ and the great mystery of the atonement, Butler proceeds to deal with the argument against Christianity—that the revelation of it has not been universal, and that the evidence of it appears to be in some degree doubtful. He shews that these two objections rest upon unwarrantable assumptions which are altogether displaced by the analogy of nature. It is assumed that God would not bestow any favour upon us, unless *in the degree* which we think He might, and we imagine would be most to our advantage; and further, that He would not bestow a favour upon *any*, unless He bestowed the same favor upon *all*. Now the general analogy of nature, as well as particular analogies in the natural government of the

world, shew that neither of these assumptions can be admitted ! The evidence on which we act in our daily life with regard to our temporal interests, is often doubtful in a high degree ; there is in many cases great uncertainty as to these interests in themselves, and also as to the most probable means of attaining them, as well as whether these means will eventually be successful. The course of common life thus furnishes a full answer from analogy to this objection to the truth of Revelation. To the next objection, he says that the Author of Nature dispenses the gifts of His Providence to some and withholds them from others who seem to stand as much in need of them. If this unequal distribution of natural gifts is not to be allowed as an argument against the natural government under which we live, neither should the want of universality in the light of Revelation be made a valid objection to its truth. Let us place the facts in the most favourable light for the objector, and look at the fragmentary and progressive manifestation of God's will from the beginning ; " the sundry times and various manners " of the Old dispensation melting into and culminating in the New ; and both revealed from time to time with degrees of evidence varying in character and strength. Some persons may have been led no further than to suppose that this Revelation might be true ; others have been brought to a full conviction of its truth, with a distinct knowledge of their duty ; and others have had intermediate degrees of religious light and evidence. If we put the case that Revelation was intended to be no more than a small light in the midst of ignorance and darkness—and that glimmerings of this light should be seen by some at a distance, and under circumstances that they should not discern from whence it originally came ; some nearer to it should have its light obscured or intercepted, and others with its clearer influence, cheered and directed by it, whilst even to these it should be

no more than “*a light shining in a dark place,*” yet all this would be *perfectly uniform and of a piece with the conduct of Providence in the distribution of His other gifts* in the course of His natural government. In a word the degrees of moral and religious light and evidence afforded to mankind, in all their varieties, and relative advantages and disadvantages, may be paralleled by manifest analogies in the natural dispensations of Providence at present, and considering ourselves merely in our temporal capacity.

The equity of this Divine arrangement is clearly implied in the declaration of Scripture that every man shall be accepted according to what he has had, not according to what he had not. Although this by no means implies that the condition of all is equally advantageous with regard to futurity, it plainly dispels all shadow of injustice and all harsh appearances in the various economy of Providence and grace—in the dispensations of Him to whom belongeth mercy, for He “renders to every man according to his works.” (Psalm lxii. 12.)

The same wise and good principle which led to the formation of different kinds and orders of creatures, may have also led to the placing of creatures of a like kind in different situations. Differences of moral capacity and difference of religious situation for those of like moral capacity—and differences of the same creatures in the several periods of their being; these and such like matters are all to be referred to the sovereign will of an All-wise God. We who know so little of our own case, cannot but be greatly in the dark as to the particular reason of this sovereign disposition of Almighty wisdom and goodness.

Butler intimates that our present state may *possibly* be the consequence of somewhat past *which we are wholly ignorant of*. The idea of a *pre-existent* state is suggested by Wordsworth

in his sublime and immortal ode on "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood." In the prefatory observations (vol. v. p. 103), he says: "To that dream-like vividness and splendour which invest objects of sight in childhood, every one, I believe, if he would look back would bear testimony, and I need not dwell on it here; but having in the poem regarded it as presumptive evidence of a prior state of existence, I think it right to protest against a conclusion which has given pain to some good and pious persons that I meant to inculcate such a belief. It is far too shadowy a notion to be recommended to faith as more than *an element in our instincts of immortality*. But let us bear in mind that though the idea is not advanced in Revelation, there is nothing there to contradict it, and the fall of Man presents an analogy in its favour."*

It is to shew the extent of our ignorance and how unreasonable it is for us to prejudge the exercise of God's sovereignty, that Butler intimates the possibility of our present state being the consequence of somewhat past, which we are wholly ignorant of, as it has a reference to a future of which we know scarce any more than is necessary for practice.

As a system in its nature implies variety, and our system exhibits very great variety, it follows that even if Revelation were universal, the different capacities, opportunities, and other varying circumstances of mankind would render their religious situations, perhaps, as widely different as they are at present. The reason of our condition of inequality may also be the reason of our ignorance why we have been placed in this condition.

It is a matter of fact that Revelation is not universal, and that the external evidence of its truth is like that on which

* See the observations of Coleridge on this Ode.—Friend, vol. iii. p. 193.

we are compelled to act in the course of our daily life, Butler proceeds to discuss the probable purposes of God, derived from a consideration of these matters of fact. You will observe the philosophic yet practical wisdom of this inductive method. Objectors form their preconceptions as to what they say, God might and ought to have done, from the ends which they suppose Him to have had in view. Butler shows that our limited capacities, the acknowledged ignorance of our own case, our actual condition and circumstances, render us altogether incompetent to form any reasonable conjecture beforehand as to the end that God has had in view, of which we cannot judge *otherwise than by reasoning from what we find He has actually done*. I cannot but here observe how many and how important are the errors which have originated in the substitution of the preconceptions and speculations of man, for the teaching of Nature and of Revelation. Thus has it been assumed, a priori, that the end which God must have had in view in giving a Revelation, could be *neither more nor less* than that those to whom it has been given should possess revealed truth, *simply and absolutely*. On this is founded the argument for an infallible guide on earth, so that people might be kept from going wrong, and this infallible guide is sought after in several forms, but without any countenance from the Revelation which God has in fact given, and contrary to the analogy of God's natural government. Here we find that the supply of our wants is not an end but becomes the means of exercising the energies which God has given us, developing the faculties of our nature and thereby advancing human progress. From our very constitution we find that the purpose of God is not simply to provide us with knowledge, but it is to quicken and cultivate the faculties which are engaged in the search for truth. When by reasoning from what God has done, we find that there are other ends designed in the

giving of the truths of Revelation, beside that of procuring our belief of them, (as Bishop O'Brien justly observes)—“ we must feel that these other ends must have some share in determining the manner in which such truths are to be stated and the extent to which they are to be explained, sustained and enforced.” “ Therefore,” (as he says) “ we cannot, without great rashness, venture to graduate the evidence which we have to look for in each case.” The objections to the truth of Revelation, derived from the alleged doubtfulness of its evidence, are swept away at once by the impressive consideration which Butler brings under our notice, that this very doubtfulness may be a part of our probation and discipline, in testing and exercising our moral and intellectual faculties, in the search for truth. I may here appropriately quote the suggestive comment of Dr. Salmon, in a sermon preached in 1852, at an ordination in Dublin : “ God has made the very importance of religious truth a reason, not for releasing us from all pains of investigation, but a motive to stimulate us more intensely to discipline ourselves in that frame of mind whose search after truth is alone likely to be effectual.” Thus it seems that the actual purpose of God ascertained in the only way that is open to us to judge of it, would not be effectuated by having the proof of Revelation so arranged that no difficulties should be felt—no objections should remain unanswered, or that at every point it should be complete and conclusive. We will find, indeed, in the case of other controverted questions, the same lurking fallacy of arguing from a *preconception* that is merely *speculative*, instead of reasoning from *the true facts* as they are spread out before us, either in Nature or Revelation. The exercise of our intellectual faculties in this search for religious truth, may be as much a part of our *moral* probation, as our behaviour in daily life. Inattention, negligence, want of all serious

concern about a matter of such a nature and such importance, when offered to our consideration, is (before a distinct conviction of its truth) as really immoral as neglect of religious practice after such conviction.

Much has been said of *heresy* in matters of opinion, without any suggestion of *heresy* in duty and conduct; and this, without any consideration of the part in our moral probation, that consists in the forming and rectifying opinion by the responsible exercise of our faculties, and the use of accredited helps which God has placed within our reach. A conviction of the truth of religion is not forced upon any one; it is left to be gained in such a way as constitutes religious probation, by affording scope for the exercise of our faculties, the use of talents committed to our charge, under a responsibility from which there is no escape.

Indeed, as Butler observes, however doubtful the evidence may be, it is sufficient to place those to whom it may appear doubtful in the highest supposable degree, in a general state of probation in the moral and religious sense. For even in this case there is enough to beget a serious practical apprehension that *it may be true*. This gives occasion and motives to consider farther the important subject, to refrain from immoralities and profaneness, and to attend conscientiously to the moral requirements of Religion. If thus any are led to a humble submission to God's will, to seek in prayer for His help and guidance, there may be in all this a moral discipline and a religious progress. The promise of our blessed Lord is ever to be remembered,—“If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.” Thus has He bound up moral obedience with spiritual conviction.

Butler points out the various degrees of evidence, some of which, he says, we have not faculties to distinguish with any sort of exactness, yet in proportion as they are discerned, they

ought to influence our practice. It is a defect in the understanding not to discern a lower degree of evidence, and it is a like defect in the moral character not to act on the lower degree of evidence, after it is discerned. And as the tendency of a defective understanding is to overlook evidence which is not glaring, so it is of the moral character, in proportion to the corruption of the heart, to disregard in practice, evidence that is not overbearing. We find then that the difficulties in the evidence of Religion are no more to be complained of, than the external circumstances of temptation or difficulties in practice. These are adapted to a state of discipline, to improve and invigorate the virtuous principle, and strengthen it for another sphere of action hereafter. To some it may be the *principal* part of their trial and discipline to have these speculative difficulties to encounter. There are persons who have a deeper sense of what is invisible and future, and from their natural constitution of body and of temper, may have small temptations to behave ill, small difficulty in behaving well in the common course of life. These may require a moral discipline in a higher degree than their practice might afford them, or it may be requisite for reasons unknown to us, that they should give some further manifestation of character to the creation of God, than such easy practice would supply. From the very difference of their religious situations, difficulties of the evidence of religion may be as much the probation of some, as difficulties arising out of external temptations may be the probation of others. Some men are so placed in their temporal capacity, that their chief difficulty is not the doing of what is prudent when known, but moral attention, being on their guard against deceits, against false appearances of reason and prudence. This is analogous to what we find as to their religious situations.

It is the privilege of some to have clear and unclouded convictions of Divine truth, whilst in the course of daily life, they have to contend with a sluggish spirit, an irritable temper, a severity of judgment, or a want of sympathy. Yet such may be tempted to assume the office of censor and judge others uncharitably, from whom God in His Almighty wisdom may, for His own wise purposes, have withheld for the present a clearer insight into His revealed truth, whilst they may be enabled to walk worthily in the intercourse of life, in the discharge of its daily duties and its kindly offices. May we not say with the great Apostle, "O! the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!"

Although all this may take place in the way of discipline and trial, irrespective of the neglects or prejudices of men, yet (as Butler adds) the truth of the case requires him to state that dissatisfaction with the evidences of religion may arise from our own fault. We may never set ourselves to examine and consider; we may secretly wish it may not prove true; we may attend to difficulties and objections more than to evidence and explanations; we may treat the subject with levity; we may attend to imperfect signs rather than to the realities signified; we may substitute human errors for Divine truth. Causes which hinder us from being rightly informed as to common things may in like manner, and perhaps in some farther providential manner with respect to moral and religious subjects, hinder evidence from being laid before us and from being seen when it is. It seemed to be so in the course of our Lord's teaching. Some who at first refused to receive his plainer lessons were not afterwards permitted to understand his teaching in parables.

Butler well observes that the general proof of Religion, natural and revealed, is level to common men. Doubtless

this proof is liable to objections, and may be run up into difficulties, which persons who are capable, not only of talking of, but of really seeing, are capable also of seeing through. Not (as he wisely adds) 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 difficulties or destroyed by these objections.* A significant warning is given to those who think fit to pick up such objections from others, and accustom themselves to treat them as if they were of weight, without having the ability or the disposition to examine them so as really to test their validity. They must therefore pay the penalty of doubtfulness, ignorance or error, just as under like circumstances in matters of common science or of common life, when the necessary means of being informed on them are neglected.

It is said by way of argument that if a prince or common master were to send directions to a servant, he would take care to provide that they should always bear the marks of having come from him, and their sense should be plain. Now, first in arguing thus as to God's communications to man, there is a fallacy somewhere, for in our temporal affairs and interests, we know from experience that such information is not given to us, in the way suggested. But there is a complete answer, from the very nature of Religion. The prince or common master absolutely desires the external action to be done ; he only regards *the external event*, and not the doing of it as a moral action. His command relates to *things*, but God's commands relate to *persons* ; to motives ; to principles of moral obedience and moral discipline, by which His accountable creatures ought to be influenced. Ignorance and doubt afford scope for probation, in dealing with the message sent from God, and are to be put to the same account as difficulties in practice—the

one part of the probation being, whether we will take due care to inform ourselves by impartial and diligent consideration, and the other whether we will act as the case requires, upon the evidence which they have. This we find by experience is frequently our probation in our temporal capacity, and we may well suppose it to be the parallel of our religious probation. We are so constituted that we must in the daily course of life, act upon evidence sometimes lower than is commonly called probable—on presumptions, on expectations, on hopes, on possibilities; on a general confidence in the wisdom and goodness of the Almighty.

LECTURE IX.

SUMMARY OF THE EVIDENCES.

THE sovereignty of God in the bestowing of all his gifts, and the Divine purpose manifested in the gift of Revelation, furnish a decisive answer to the objections against Revelation, from its not being universal, and from the alleged defectiveness of its proof. We have found that the character of the evidences is well adapted for a purpose of moral discipline and probation, and that a blind or unreasoning submission to human authority or the mere profession of opinion however orthodox, can give us no security against error nor advance us in our journey to a home in Heaven. To talk about the peculiar doctrines of religion, to dispute about the way to Heaven—so far from making us religious, or sending us forward, or imparting to us the Spirit of Christ and conforming us to His image—may be indulged in, so as to form a habit of insensibility, and (to use the impressive language of Mr. Edward Dowden of Trinity College) “without the awakening of those emotions and sentiments, which the truths of religion are naturally fitted to produce.” They are naturally fitted and naturally designed to influence our affections and our conscience and to regulate our lives, and therefore they cannot without peril be regarded in a sentimental or a rational

aspect merely, nor be allowed without like peril to pass through our minds, or rather flit across them, in a cursory manner, to which we become so familiarised as to hinder the weight of them from being seen, and from having its due influence upon practice for our moral discipline. This reflection is founded upon the laws of our moral nature and the revealed will of God, in which we are taught the unspeakable importance of *doing* as well as *hearing*. We are warned to take heed *how* we hear, and against being *hearers only, deceiving our own selves*.

The difference of our religious situations has suggested another important reflection, that God has been pleased to prove some by the difficulties of evidence in relation to religious truth, and He has seen fit to try others by difficulties of practice arising out of various temptations. Both are dependent on His sovereign mercy for a free salvation, and neither may judge the other without self-condemnation. Looking at the whole system of religion (natural and revealed) as it is actually spread out before us, cleared of the objections which have been removed by the aid of analogy and the exercise of sound common sense, candidly brought to bear upon the several heads of objection, it is proper to consider the positive evidence which we have for the truth of Revelation, what the analogy of nature suggests with regard to that evidence and the objections against it.

The direct and fundamental proofs are miracles and prophecy. But these are to be taken in connection with other evidences which make up one combined argument. I may observe that Butler only discusses the external evidences. The moral harmony, the exquisite adaptation of Christianity to the wants of man; the solution it affords to the perplexing enigma of human life, the light it pours over all that is above us, around us, beyond us and within us—these are the internal

evidences which must be felt to be appreciated. Under the guidance and help of the Holy Spirit they impart a conviction which can neither be obtained nor communicated by reasoning, but it penetrates the heart and the spirit of man.

With reference to miraculous facts, the Scripture relates them in plain unadorned narratives, and they are certified by the same kind of historical evidence as the natural facts. Although it is not what is properly called *demonstrative*, yet it is quite sufficient to prove matters of fact in such a way as to make it unreasonable to refuse our assent. It has been already shewn that miracles, as extraordinary facts, may as other facts be proved by testimony, and the testimony as to the miracles by which the Jewish and Christian religions were respectively established, is confirmed by the contemporary establishment of each Religion with the miracles wrought in attestation of it; for this cannot be satisfactorily explained in any other way than by the fact of the miraculous attestation. Whatever may be put forward by way of supposition, guess and possibility, it must be admitted that these (however multiplied) cannot amount to proof. They merely shew that a proof which is sufficient for moral conviction does not rise to the necessary conclusiveness of strict demonstration. It may reach however to moral certainty. Butler refers to the remarkable confirmatory evidence of the truth of Christianity, which is furnished by the Epistles of St. Paul. The genuineness of these has now been established beyond doubt or question. We have here the testimony of one of the most successful of the first teachers of the Gospel, one who had been converted from being an enemy and a persecutor, and was so thoroughly convinced of the truth of Christianity, that he was ready to encounter every form of difficulty and danger, in publishing it to others. He had ample opportunity of intercourse with Peter, James and John, and with others also

who had seen and known our Lord before His death and after His resurrection, an event on which Paul confidently staked all his hope for time and eternity ; an event which could not have been proclaimed and believed as it was by those with whom Paul associated, if it had not been certified " by many infallible proofs." In like manner we have in Luke another witness of the highest character for intelligence and veracity, who had intercourse with those " who from the beginning of our Lord's ministry were eye-witnesses or ministers of the word." It has been well observed by Dean Alford, " the ' accurate tracing down' of Luke forbids us to imagine that he would have inserted any narrative in his Gospel which he had not ascertained to rest upon trustworthy testimony as far as it was in his power to ensure it, and the means of ensuring it must have been at that time so ample and satisfactory that I cannot imagine for a moment any other origin for the account than such testimony." He observes that the account given of the Nativity could only have been had from the Mother of Christ, who was living in the Christian society after the Ascension, and His brethren were certainly living when Luke published his Gospel.

Thus we have two writers of unimpeachable integrity and acknowledged intelligence, with the fullest opportunity of investigation, and without any interest to deceive or liability to be deceived, and from these we have a testimony at once corroborative and convincing. And their testimony necessarily involves the recognition of the Divine authority and the Christian interpretation of the Old Testament Scriptures ; it binds up these with the New as a living whole, so that they stand or fall together.

I do not propose to go through the summing up of Butler, which cannot be usefully abridged, and ought to be studied *as a compact and collective whole*, in the well-considered

language in which he has brought together into one view, the external evidences, direct and collateral. It is quite judicial in its spirit; candid, impartial, exact and comprehensive. There is another excellent summing up of the late Chief Justice Bushe, a judge of large experience, who had profoundly studied man, in nature as well as in books, and was eminently conversant with the laws of testimony. It was published after his death by the Rev. J. Wills, in 1845 (Messrs. Curry & Co.). Nor can I omit to notice an admirable summary given in Vinet's *Studies on Pascal*, 33-41.

The nature of this evidence thus combined together into one entire and collective whole, gives a facility to objectors, which Butler properly notices. Just as in dealing with circumstantial evidence in a court of justice, the advocate will comment on detached items, taking them separately and dwelling upon their intrinsic weakness; one may be of little weight in itself, another open to some specious objection: and notwithstanding when all are properly combined, the conclusion is clear to the rational understanding and convincing to the honest heart. But to present the united force of the whole, may not be done without calm consideration on the part of the judge, nor can it be appreciated without moral attention on the part of the jury. It is the office of the judge to recal the attention of the jury to the effect of the evidence, taken as a whole; according to that evidence thus weighed and considered, the verdict is to be given. It may be that the weight of detached portions separately considered, is of small account in detail, and yet in their just combination duly estimated, may be found the preponderance that claims the assent of the conscience and the heart. Doubts must be 'honestly come by,' as C. J. Bushe happily observes; and where there is a genuine doubt, consequences are to be considered. What is the safe course? The benefit of the

doubt is given—wisely and mercifully given—in favour of the life that now is. Butler again and again suggests that there is a like claim to the benefit of a doubt in favour of the life that is to come. (I may here refer to Vinet's *Studies on Pascal*, 195–6; 276–7.)

I have adverted to evidences other than these which are external or historical, to evidences which appeal directly to the heart and the spirit of man, and produce that full assurance that is “the gift of God.” God in His sovereign wisdom provides the degrees and the kinds of evidence, according to His gracious purposes and the exigencies of our respective religious situations. We are not at liberty to exaggerate the importance of one kind of evidence, nor to depreciate that of another. Whatever tends to uphold the truth of Revelation, has an intrinsic value as a portion of the moral wealth of man. But that truth may be seriously obstructed by extravagance of argument; by theories untrue to nature or irreconcilable with Revelation, *as God has in fact given it to us*; by non-natural interpretation; by putting the letter in place of the spirit; by striving to be wise above and beyond what is written; by narrow and partial views of God's dispensations; by the lack of that Divine charity that thinketh no evil, and endureth all things. The illustrious Butler in this invaluable treatise which has so long (but not unprofitably I hope) engaged our attention, has taught us to remember our responsibility to God for the opinions which we form as well as for the actions which we do,—and he has left an enduring monument of the wisdom of moderation and the force of truth.

EXAMINATIONS IN BUTLER'S ANALOGY.

Young Men's Christian Association

IN CONNEXION WITH

THE UNITED CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND IRELAND.

1862.

PRINTED QUESTIONS—J. P. MAHAFFY, ESQ., M. A., T. C. D.

PART I.

1. Write out accurately, and explain fully, the title of Butler's Work.
3. What remark does Bishop Butler quote from Origen, and what use does he make of it?
3. Why does Bishop Butler not argue against Atheists?
4. There appear to be two meanings of the words "practical proof" in the Analogy—state these two.
5. Why does Bishop Butler think a *probable* proof of Christianity should have the same effect as a demonstrative one?
6. Explain the difference between a *Natural* and a *Moral* government of the world. What evidence have we that God is our Governor in both senses?
7. Mr. Napier states and compares three sorts of arguments for a future life?

8. Why are virtue and vice rewarded and punished in this world *as such*, and this rule never inverted ?
9. What argument does Lord Bacon draw from the nature of Poetry ? How does Mr. Napier apply this argument ?
10. State, as fully as you can, Bishop Butler's Theory of Habits.
11. Explain how creatures made upright may fail, according to Butler.
12. Some ignorant persons have objected that Bishop Butler does not write sufficiently on Gospel principles. Refute this—(α) by general arguments; (β) by quoting such passages from his Work as imply or state Gospel Truth.

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1863.

WRITTEN QUESTIONS—REV. W. H. FERRAR, F. T. C. D.

PART II.

1. What is the difference between moral and positive precepts. Give examples.
2. Show that positive precepts in general, are of the nature of moral commands.
3. How does Butler estimate the practical presumption against a miracle ?
4. Enumerate the objections noticed by Butler to the Mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and give his answers to these objections.
5. What do the Miracles and Prophecies recorded in Scripture prove ?
6. Moral duties are superior to positive duties; why ?
7. Butler notices three special objections to Revelation ?
8. Discuss Hume's objections to Miracles.
9. To what other question is that of the occurrence of a miracle at any time ultimately reduced ?

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## ERRATA, &c.

- Page 14, line 14, read "for" instead of "or."  
,, 19, line 8 from the bottom, dele "all."  
,, " " " " " " for "word," read "world."  
,, 32, line 4, for "annalogous," read "analogous."  
,, 76, line 4, from bottom, dele "only," and insert, "still bear up and".  
,, 87, line 8, from bottom, after virtue, insert, "in our thoughts".  
,, " " 7, " " after sentiment, insert, "or of speculative reasoning only."  
,, 90, line 14, from bottom, after sentimentality, insert, "or speculative reasoning".  
,, 102, line 5, from bottom, for "concern" read "concerns", and instead of "our duties", insert, "as to our duties".  
,, 104, As to the Analogy referred to, near the close of this page, Dr. Lee has observed that it rests on the principle that every seed, every body of an animal is designed to attain the perfection of its nature. So that the failure in these cases is strictly analogous to the fact, that the world becomes to some a discipline of vice. He also refers to Tennyson's In Memoriam, No. 53, p. 76.  
,, 117, line 13, for "omnipotence" read "omniscience".  
,, 125, see Wordsworth's Poems, vol. vi. 151.  
,, 235, the reader may refer to Boswell's Johnson, p. 315 (edition 1860) and to the articles on Miracles in Smith's Dictionary of the Bible.

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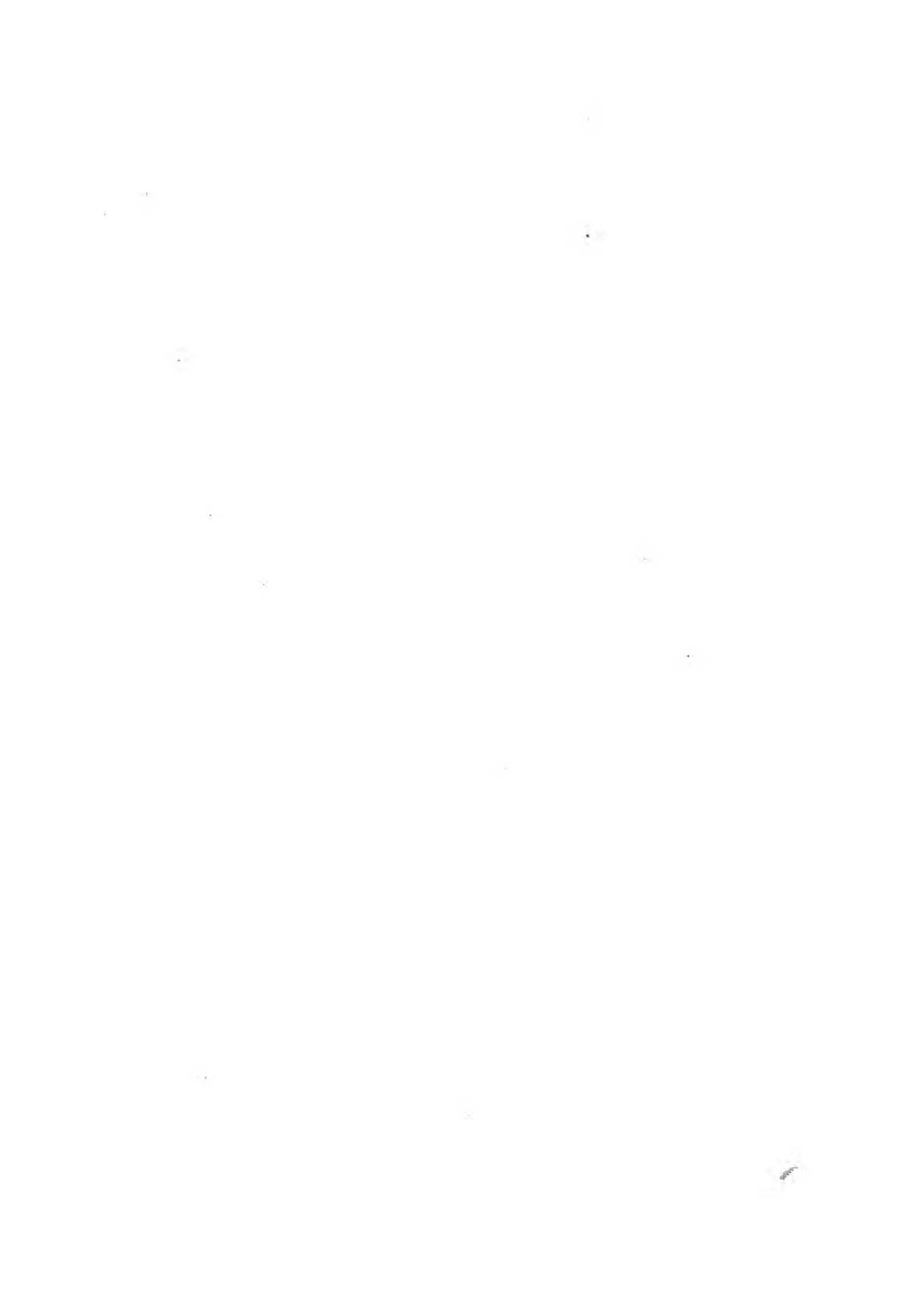
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