

# JOSEPH BUTLER

THE ANALOGY OF  
RELIGION TO THE  
CONSTITUTION AND  
COURSE OF NATURE

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Constitution and Course of Nature**

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**Butler J.**

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# Joseph Butler

## The Analogy of Religion to the Constitution and Course of Nature / To which are added two brief dissertations: I. On personal / identity. II. On the nature of virtue

### Editor's Introduction

Joseph Butler was born at Wantage, England, May 18th, 1692, the youngest of eight children. The biographies of that day were few and meagre; and in few cases is this so much to be regretted as in Butler's. It would have been both interesting and profitable to trace the development and occupations of one of the mightiest of human minds. But no cotemporary gathered up the incidents of his life, and now all efforts to elicit them have been without success.

His father was a prosperous dry-goods merchant, who, at the time of his son's birth, had retired from business with a competency, and resided in a suburban mansion called "The Priory," still in existence.

Being a non-conformist, he educated Joseph at a "dissenting" academy at Gloucester, under Samuel Jones, a gentleman of great ability, and a skilful instructor, who raised up some of the greatest men of their day.<sup>1</sup>

It was while a member of this academy, and about the age of twenty-one, that Butler disclosed to the world his wonderful power of abstract reasoning, in his famous correspondence with Samuel Clarke, in relation to that eminent author's "*Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God.*" This correspondence is now generally inserted at the end of that work.

Mr. Butler having deliberately adopted Episcopal views, and resolved to unite himself with the Established Church, his father, with praiseworthy liberality, sent him to Oxford, where he entered Oriel College, March, 1714. Of his college life there is no account; nor of the time and place of his ordination. He removed to London in 1718, on receiving the appointment of "Preacher at the Rolls." His famous Fifteen Sermons were preached in that chapel, and published before resigning the place, with a dedication to Sir Joseph Jekyl, "as a parting mark of gratitude for the favors received during his connection with that learned society."

One of Butler's warmest college friends was Edward Talbot second son of a clergyman who afterwards became Bishop of Durham. This admirable young man died of smallpox; in his last hours recommending Butler to his father's patronage; and scarcely had that gentleman attained the see of Durham, before he gave Mr. B. the living of Haughton, from whence he transferred him, in 1725, to the richer benefice of Stanhope.

On receiving this honorable and lucrative appointment, he resigned the Lectureship at the Rolls, and in the autumn of 1726 retired to his beautiful residence at Stanhope. Here, without a family to occupy his time, he devoted himself to his great work, the Analogy: using horseback exercise, seeing little company, living abstemiously and caring for his flock.

Seven years thus rolled away; when to draw him from what seemed to his friends too great retirement and application, Lord-Chancellor Talbot made him his chaplain, and afterwards, in 1736,

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<sup>1</sup> Among these were *Jones*, author of the admirable Treatise on the Canon of the New Testament: *Lardner*, *Maddox*, *Chandler*, *Archbishop Secker*, &c.

gave him a prebend's stall in Rochester. In 1736, Butler being now forty-four, Caroline, consort of George II., appointed him "Clerk of the Closet," an office which merely required his attendance at the Queen's apartments every evening, from seven to nine.

Being now in London, convenient to the press, and enjoying both leisure and competency, he published his immortal Analogy – the cherished work of his life. The Queen was delighted with the book, and made herself master of its glorious array of reasoning. But she died the same year, and he lost not only a patroness, but a friend. He returned to his benefice at Stanhope, the income of which had been held during his residence in London.

On her death-bed, the Queen had urged her husband to promote her honored chaplain to a bishopric; and next year, the see of Norwich becoming vacant, the Bishop of Bristol was translated to it, and the see of Bristol given to Butler. Bristol was the poorest bishopric in England, its emoluments being but \$2,000 per annum; less than those of the rectorship of Stanhope. Butler distinctly disclosed his disappointment in his letter to the minister Walpole, accepting the position; and declared that he did not think it "very suitable to the condition of his fortune, nor answerable to the recommendation with which he was honored." The king was not displeased at this candor, and in 1740 improved his income by giving him, in addition to his bishopric, the profitable and influential office of Dean of St. Paul's. Butler, who had retained the living of Stanhope along with his bishopric, now resigned that rectorship. "The rich revenues," says Professor Fitzgerald, "of the Deanery of St. Paul, enabled him to gratify his taste at Bristol." He expended about \$25,000 in improving and beautifying the episcopal residence and gardens. He fostered useful charities, and employed his wealth for others rather than for himself.

In 1750, upon the death of Dr. Edward Chandler, Bishop of Durham, Butler was promoted to that see, the most honorable and lucrative in England. He had before been offered the Primacy, on the death of Archbishop Potter, but declined it, with the remark that "it was too late for him to try to support a falling church." On assuming his diocese at Durham, Butler delivered and published his famous Charge to the Clergy, upon "The Use and Importance of External Religion." He was at once assailed vigorously, in pamphlets and papers, by Archdeacon Blackburn, the Rev. T. Lindsay, and others, on the charge of Popery; an imputation which is still sometimes cast upon him, and which finds some slender support in his setting up a marble cross over the communion-table at Bristol. That he never was a Papist, is now so evident, that we can account for the imputation only by the strong jealousy of the Romish Church then prevalent.

Butler now became still more munificent. His private charities were exceedingly generous, and his public ones seemed sometimes to border on extravagance. He gave \$2,000 a year to the county hospital, and often gave away thousands of dollars at a time. But though quite lavish in buildings and ornaments, as well as in benevolence, he was remarkably frugal in his personal expenses. It is said of him, by Rev. John Newton, that on one occasion, when a distinguished visitor dined with him by appointment, the provision consisted of a single joint of meat, and a pudding. The bishop remarked to his guest on that occasion, that he "had long been disgusted with the fashionable expense of time and money in entertainments, and was determined that it should receive no countenance from his example."

Of his amusements we know little except that he took much horseback exercise, and often employed his secretary, Mr. Emms, to play for him on the organ.

Butler held the see of Durham less than two years. Symptoms of general physical decay betrayed themselves about the time of his promotion, and in spite of all that skill and affection could prompt, he sunk to rest June 16th, 1752, aged sixty. He was never married.

A considerable number of his sermons and charges have been printed, but are too philosophical to be generally read. His great work is the Analogy, published in 1736, and from that day read and admired by every highly-cultivated mind. He was induced to write by a state of things very remarkable in the history of religion. Debauchery and infidelity were almost universal, not in any one

class of society but in all. England had reached the culminating point of irreligion, and the firm re-establishment of Episcopacy had as yet done nothing to mend the nation's morals. Piety was deemed a mark of ignorance and vulgarity, and multitudes of those who professed it were persecuted to dungeons and death.

Infidel writers, warmed into life by court corruption, became more numerous and audacious than ever before. Their methods of attacking Christianity were various; but the most successful then, as always, was to impugn certain doctrines and declarations of the Sacred Scriptures, as irrational, and hence reject the whole. They generally admitted the Being and perfection of God, and extolled the sufficiency of natural religion; but denied any revelation, or any necessity for one. The verdict of the world was that the Bible is not authentic, that man is not accountable, nor even probably immortal, that God neither rewards nor punishes, and that present indulgence, as far as our nature admits, is both wise and safe.

Bishop Downam,<sup>2</sup> one of the most learned of the clergy, in the early part of the seventeenth century writes thus: "In these times, if a man do but labor to keep a good conscience, though he meddle not with matters of state, if he make conscience of swearing, sanctify the Sabbath, frequent sermons, or abstain from the common corruptions of the times, he shall straightway be condemned for a puritan, and be less favored than either a carnal gospeller, or a close Papist."

It was considered settled, especially in polite circles, that Christianity, after so long a prevalence, had been found out to be an imposture. The clergy, as a body, did nothing to dispel this moral gloom, but rather increased it by their violent and scandalous conduct. In the sad language of Bishop Warburton, "Religion had lost its hold on the minds of the people." He adds with great point, "Though a *rule of right* may direct the philosopher to a principle of action; and the *point of honor* may keep up the thing called manners, among gentlemen: yet nothing but *religion* can ever fix a sober standard of behavior among the common people." Even the universities were on the side of irreligion; for professorships, as well as pulpits, were given to men, not for positive worth and fitness, but for possessing qualities then most in vogue with those who held the appointing power. Such were the trying times which had driven our pilgrim fathers to seek a home amid the wilds of an unexplored continent, and to face the dangers of sea and savage.

It must ever be regarded as among the highest instances of God's bringing good out of evil, that this outrageous rampancy of infidelity brought out a host of champions for the truth of His word; who boldly met the odium of discipleship, and waged battle in such style that the Deistical controversy was settled forever. Never was a dispute more determined on both sides, and never was victory more complete. Literary infidelity not only recoiled, but was routed; and can never again prevail. Henceforth, no *scholar* will ever treat the evidences of Christianity as a subject of ridicule or contempt.

When we contrast the stupendous learning, and powerful logic, of the Christian writers of that century, with the superficial and almost contemptible productions of the writers against whom they contended, we are tempted to wonder why such power should be requisite to overthrow such weakness. But we must remember, that frail logic and shallow considerations, will persuade men to indulge their vices; while the soundest reasonings and the most impressive inducements, with difficulty lead them to self-restraint and true holiness.

The infidel writers of that day have sunk into such oblivion that their works are now seldom found but in great libraries; and even well-educated persons scarcely know more of them than their names. Yet so perfectly did their principles accord with the temper of the times and the universal depravity of the carnal heart, that they enjoyed the highest popularity with all classes. Forever honored be the names of that noble band, who, in face of such odds, established the authority of the Bible,

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<sup>2</sup> Sermon at Spittle, on Abraham's trial.

and left the advocates of atheism and immorality without a lurking-place.<sup>3</sup> In this noble cohort Butler stands conspicuous: and to him, I think, more than to all the others, is to be attributed the sudden and total overthrow of infidelity, when it was in its glory.

As a metaphysician, few have equalled him. What he added to the science, has ever since remained a part of it, which can be said of scarcely another. He advanced more that was new, fortified old positions more ably, and applied speculation to religion more usefully than any before him. Our language furnishes no profounder thinking. Merely to understand him is an honorable distinction, and requires no small previous training of the power of attention. As a polemic, he is keen, sagacious, candid, patient, persevering, calm, inventive, and profound: every page indicates that repose of mind, which belongs only to true greatness, combined with a full knowledge of the subject. So far as I am able to judge, he never presses a consideration beyond its just limits, and seldom introduces an illustration which has not the force of an argument. Fallacies he seems to abolish at a touch.

The Analogy employed much of his life. It was begun in his twentieth year, but was not published till he was forty-five. Such a mode of writing never makes large books, for the matter, constantly revised, becomes constantly condensed. The Analogy is so condensed, as that to make a satisfactory synopsis is scarcely practicable. Hence, though my Conspectus and notes have aided my pupils to understand and remember the argument, they do not in any measure obviate the necessity of studying the book itself. If they do not increase the number of those who shall studiously peruse the book itself, my aim and expectations will be disappointed.

To this work no reply has ever been attempted! Extensive as is its diffusion, and great as is its acknowledged influence, infidelity has had the highest inducements to attempt to set it aside. Written for a present purpose, and most signally accomplishing it, it is yet so written as to endure, in full value, through all coming time. It is undoubtedly “the most original and the most profound work extant, in any language, on the philosophy of religion,”<sup>4</sup> “the most argumentative and philosophical defence of Christianity ever submitted to the world.”<sup>5</sup>

Writers in defence of Christianity had, before Butler, amply discussed the several departments of evidences; but still there remained objections. The structure of the globe, the course of nature, the organization of animals, &c. were affirmed to contradict revelation. Its doctrines and duties, moreover, were pronounced inconsistent with sound reason. Butler repeats none of the old arguments, but confines himself to the showing that the declarations of revelation are in perfect harmony with facts seen daily in the world, and which all admit. That the world might not have been ordered and governed otherwise, he does not choose to dispute. Taking things as they are, and closely studying the connection between one thing and another, we ought to inquire what course of action on our part, will conform to the needs of such a nature and such circumstances. Our bodies are constructed of parts, all adapted to each other, and also to one general end. So too, our souls. And the two together have relations and adaptations, which may, to some extent at least, indicate what is designed to be the *general* end of our existence. If Christianity befits these several parts of our mixed nature and their obvious uses, then there is nothing incongruous between the two; and no objections against Christianity can be drawn from the course of nature. On the contrary, all seems to be governed as the gospel declares it is, and shows that the Author of man and the Author of the Bible is the same. This is still more impressive when we consider that we have a *moral faculty*; for it is the very object

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<sup>3</sup> Among them were Cudworth, born 1617; “Intel. Syst. of the Universe:” Boyle, 1626; “Things above Reason:” Stillingfleet, 1635; “Letters to a Deist:” Sir I. Newton, 1642; “Observations on Prophecy:” Leslie, 1650; “Short Method with Deists:” Lowth, 1661, Vindic. of the Divine Author of the Bible: King, 1669; “Origin of Evil:” Sam. Clark, 1675; “Evidences of Nat. and Rev. Religion:” Waterland, 1683; “Scripture Vindicated:” Lardner, 1684; “Credibility of Gospel History:” Leland, 1691; “View of Deistical Writers,” and “Advantage and Necessity of Rev.:” Chandler, 1693; “Definition of Christianity,” on “Prophecy,” &c.: Warburton, 1698; “Divine Leg. of Moses:” Bishop Newton, 1704; “On the Prophecies:” Watson, 1737; “Apology for Christianity,” (against Gibbon,) and also “Apology for the Bible,” (against Paine.)

<sup>4</sup> McIntosh: “Progress of Ethical Philosophy.”

<sup>5</sup> Brougham: “Disc. on Nat. Theology.”



and business of this faculty to deal with right and wrong, good and evil; the facts and magnitudes of which are obvious in the course of nature. If Christianity does, in an especial manner, *befit* this faculty, if it is adapted to promote our general rectitude and happiness, and if it contains no principle which is not discernible in the government of the visible world, then there is no discrepancy between Christianity and Providence.

This is Butler's position. He confines himself to proving such an analogy between revelation and the daily course of things, as that nothing known in the universe can be offered in disproof of Christianity. The mode of warfare was new. Without professing to prove Christianity to be true, he demonstrates that it cannot be proved to be false; and that if it be even probable, the rejection of it is a gross folly and a tremendous hazard. Every objection against it he proves to be equally forcible against facts which constantly occur, and which all admit, though none profess to understand. Thus leaving the ramparts of the church to be guarded by the mighty men who had valiantly maintained its defence, he quietly walked out into the camp of the enemy, and spiked every gun!

It has been said that the whole argument of the "Analogy" seems to be built on Ecclesiasticus xlii. 24: "All things are double, one against the other, and God hath made nothing imperfect." If it be so, it involves no disparagement to have received thus the seminal idea of this immortal work. Who else has so gloriously discerned and expanded the profound philosophy of the son of Sirac? Others have uttered sentiments which seem to involve the whole exposition of Butler. Origen affirms 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 nature." Shall we assign to Origen the whole credit of the "Analogy"? As well might we bestow all our admiration for the delightful papers of Addison, in the *Spectator*, to the classical authors from whom he selected appropriate mottoes! By such a rule, the entire merit of this most Christian work of Butler should be attributed to the pagan Quintilian, from whom he derives the motto which so appropriately graces his title-page.

A rapid sketch of the outline of the argument will aid the student at his outset. He begins by taking for granted the existence of an intelligent Author and Governor of the universe. Then, from the conditions and changes observed in the visible world, he argues the folly of objecting to revelation on account of doctrines which do but declare the same general laws and the same principles of government. That there is this harmony, he proves; and hence the probability that the same sort of government will prevail hereafter, which prevails now. He demonstrates that man is under exactly such a probation in this world, and as to this world, as revelation affirms him to be under, as to the next; and that embarrassments produced by the doctrine of necessity, involve nature no less than religion. He then evinces the need that man should be placed in a state of training and trial, if he is ever to be qualified for better conditions; and that this world, as now governed, is exactly adapted to give that training, and to produce such a character as will insure happiness under any possible contingencies. This is the argument of Part I.

Proceeding to examine Christianity, he discusses its importance, its proofs, the unavoidableness of its containing strange things, the absurdity of expecting fully to comprehend its statements, and the abundance of its evidence for candid minds, though they are not, and ought not to be, irresistible. He answers not only the objections to Christianity, but the objections against its proofs; which he shows are very different things. Though he keeps rigidly to the refutation of objections, and nowhere meddles with the direct evidence of Christianity, yet, by removing every objection, he does in fact confirm its claims. This clearing away of objections, *after* the usual proofs are presented, crowns and completes the evidence. Thus the ultimate result of a study of his book is not only negative but positive; and such has been its effect on every candid and competent student.

We should remember that we have no right to require the removal of objections, and that therefore the whole of Butler's work is in fact supererogatory; a concession and kindness to such as have doubts, either honest or captious. Our only rightful demand of Christianity is for *credentials*. It presents these in its nature, its miracles, its prophecies, its propagation, its influence, and its success.

If these are competent, we should bow to its teachings. To suppose that we are capable of judging of the *propriety* of all God's law, or even to understand his reasons for it, if they were disclosed, is absurd.

It is true we naturally presume that a revelation in words, and a revelation by natural objects and the visible order of things, would coincide; but to find out the fact or the extent of such coincidence, is not our first business. We are to weigh the *testimony* in favor of religion, embrace it, if sufficient, and attribute the obscurity of any part, to our present want of capacity. The solution of difficulties serves to *confirm* our faith in Christianity, but has no place in our *ground of reception*: and we have no right to wait for such solution, however painful and embarrassing may be the difficulties.

Another, and perhaps even more important, use of the "Analogy," is to dissipate the prejudices and objections to Christianity which prevent a candid study of its evidences. These prepossess and poison the mind, and obstruct or abate the force of the best arguments. Few, if any, after a careful examination of the positive evidences of Christianity, conclude them to be inadequate. But many are they, who having heard objections which their scanty learning does not enable them to answer, and their no less scanty interest in the subject does not induce them to examine, or which their inclinations lead them to cherish, cast it all aside. In this way they relieve themselves from the labor of investigation, as well as their compunctions of conscience; while they indulge both their love of sin and pride of singularity.

An instance of the use of this book to such a mind, we have in the case of Chalmers. He had read, when a young man, several infidel productions. Their semblance of logic and learning, and supercilious confidence of style, disposed him to regard all religion as mere superstition. His mind was poisoned. Accustomed as he had been to the positive and precise reasonings of mathematics, he could not find similar proofs for Christianity. But he was induced, by some friends, to study Butler's Analogy. This, as he expresses it, took Christianity "out of the class of unlikelihoods." It brought him to the investigation, as if the evidence was neither plus nor minus. He examined the evidences as he would have done a declaration that Cicero weighed just one hundred and fifty pounds; open to the smallest proof or presumption on the positive side of the question. Delivered from prejudice, not only against Christianity but against its proofs, he soon saw the madness of deism, and immovably accepted the word of God, though he did not, at that time, feel its transforming power on his own heart. Long afterwards he writes, "I cannot render sufficient homage to the argument, which first, addressing itself to the *subject-matter* of Christianity, relieves it of all disproof, and pronounces it worthy of a trial; and then, addressing itself to the evidence of Christianity, relieves it of all objections, and makes good, to that evidence, all the entireness and efficiency which natively belong to it." Years afterwards he said, "Butler made me a Christian." That it did far more for him than to effect his change of sentiment, that it continued to be a light in his firmament, is touchingly told in the Preface of his Bridgewater Treatise, where he says, "I have derived greater aid from the views and reasonings of Butler, than I have been able to find, besides, in the whole range of our extant authorship."

To the sincere believer in the word of God the study of Butler is of great use. Doubts are among Satan's tried weapons, and often haunt the holiest, especially if of a contemplative turn. They see goodness oppressed, and vice rampant; the world ruled by wicked men, and truth making its way with difficulty. Their hearts are traitorous, their surroundings full of temptation, and the direct evidence of Christianity they may never have studied. To such the analogical argument comes with full power, meets a candid examination, and prevails.

To no Christian is this book so useful as the minister. He is constantly confronted by the difficulties which Butler so triumphantly handles. Here he is furnished, not only with a shield to protect his own mind from subtle darts, but a sword to demolish the cavil, and defend the system of which he is a public teacher.

To *all* persons this book is of great value. We arrive at certainty in but few of our decisions, and are often obliged, even in matters of great moment, to act on probability. Thus we employ precautions when an evil is not certain to occur. If the evil would be very serious, we adopt the precaution, when

there is but little probability, or perhaps a bare possibility, of its occurrence. Now, Butler has shown that if the proofs of revelation were weak, nay, if it had absolutely no proof, nay further, if on fair examination there appeared not even a probability of its truth, still there would remain a *possibility*, and this alone, considering the tremendous issues at stake, should make every man a Christian. This argument cannot be applied to Mahometanism or any other religion, because against those much may be advanced as *disproof*. Our author, having shown the utter absence of disproof, shuts us up to the reception of Christianity, were its truth barely possible.

There have not been wanting persons to disparage the “Analogy,” because it affords, as they say, no *direct* proof of revelation. As well might we demand a discussion of chemistry in a work on astronomy. Scores of writers *prove* Christianity, and here we have one to relieve us from the difficulties which beset it, and objections which still remain. There is an aspect in which the Analogy may be said to contribute the best of proof. What can go further towards establishing a point, than to demonstrate that there is no proof of the contrary? What can show the fallacy of a set of objections, more than to prove that they might be urged with no less force against the obvious course of nature? This use of analogy is conformable to the severest logic, and though offering no pretence of positive argument, goes far towards establishing full conviction. “The probabilities,” says Stewart, “resulting from a concurrence of different analogies, may rise so high as to produce an effect on the belief scarcely distinguishable from moral certainty.”

When it is considered that Butler’s argument is wholly in addition to the cumulative mass of direct and almost irresistible evidence, and removes even the objections which attend the subject, we see the rejection of Christianity to be inexpressibly rash and absurd. We see the skeptic condemned at his own bar, for acting in the most momentous of all possible concerns, in a manner the very opposite of that which he calls sensible and prudent in his ordinary affairs. The “Analogy” establishes, beyond cavil, strong *presumptions* that Christianity is true, aside from all inspection of its proofs. The man, therefore, who really understands this book, and refuses to be a Christian, is led by his lusts and not his reason.

Some admirers of this book have lamented as a defect, its want of evangelical tincture, and its exclusive reference to natural things. To me, this is a prime recommendation. Were it otherwise, the reasoning would be in a circle. The very structure of the argument demands that it should avoid quotations from the Bible.

It must be admitted, however, that some expressions, taken just as they stand, without qualification by the current of the argument, tend to lead astray. For instance, “There is nothing in the human mind contrary to virtue.” “Men’s happiness and virtue are left to themselves.” “Religion requires nothing which we are not well able to perform.” “Our repentance is accepted, to eternal life.” “Our relations to God are made known by reason.” Such expressions are not to be taken alone, but as explained by the general drift of sentiment and doctrine. No one can be familiar with his works, without finding the fullest evidence that Christianity was to Butler infinitely more than a creed or a ritual. Nor should we forget that such expressions are not to be interpreted by the tenor of the “Analogy” only, but by that of his whole ‘Works.’

Even if it be judged that he everywhere fails to express himself in such phrase as we usually call evangelical, it should be remembered that he was a Church-of-England man, at a time when there was a powerful reaction against the evangelism of the Puritans, and when a real lack of emotional piety was general in his church.

That he did not enjoy in his last illness, which extended over a long period, that sustaining sense of the love of Christ which hearty Christians generally feel, is certain. A friend, trying to relieve his depression, reminded him of his excellent life, and especially his wide liberalities. He immediately replied, “I am but a steward! All is His, intrusted to me, to promote his glory and the good of mankind; how can I know that I have not abused the trust? I reflect on all these things, and they fill my soul with terror by the feeling of responsibility they awaken.”

On another occasion, his chaplain sought to soothe his troubled spirit by referring to the extensive influence of his *Analogy* in reclaiming skeptics. His reply was, “I *began* the Analogy with a view to the glory of God; but as I proceeded, visions of the fame it might bring me mingled themselves with my motives, and all was polluted and made sinful! The book may be a blessing to others, but it weighs like lead on my soul.” “Admit all this,” tenderly replied the chaplain; “yet has not Jesus said, ‘Whosoever cometh unto me shall in no wise be cast out’?” Instantly the Bishop raised himself in the bed, exclaiming, “How wonderful that the force of this passage never struck me before! ‘Whosoever,’ —*all*, ALL! ‘In no wise,’ – no amount of sin can prevent acceptance! Christ’s righteousness will hide the iniquities of *all* who accept his offer of mercy!”

From that time, for weeks, Butler spoke to all who approached him, of a *full* and *free* salvation. He died triumphantly repeating this passage.

If all that is said of the lack of evangelical sentiment in Butler or his book be conceded, it certainly cannot impair either the value of the analogical argument, or the force of our author’s use of it.

Various circumstances conspire to make the study of “The Analogy” difficult. The nature of the reasoning – the conciseness, and often obscurity of the style – the dislocation of parts by frequent digressions – the arrest of a close course of reasoning to answer objections – and the abstruseness of the subject itself – combine to make the full comprehension of its import difficult. Mackintosh says, “No thinker so great, was ever so bad a writer.” But this, like some other objections of Sir James, is stated too strongly. The language is good, sinewy Saxon, and will endure when much that is now called fine writing, will seem grotesque. Still it is possible to write philosophy in better phrase, as has been shown by at least two great men, Berkeley and Stewart. Had Butler but possessed the glowing style of Berkeley, or the smooth, graceful, and transparent diction of Dugald Stewart, his work, instead of serving only for close thinkers, or a college text-book, would have been read by all classes, and banished that vulgar infidelity which flippant writers still disseminate. That it is thus restricted in its influence is a misfortune to the world. But he wrote for a class, and did his work completely. Literary infidelity was conquered. Vulgar, ignorant, licentious infidelity, will always exist, and is even now deplorably prevalent. Both Europe and America contain conceited and malignant ignoramuses, who by their sneers, their cavils, and their audacity, make havoc of souls. Of these, Tom Paine is a type, whose book, the contempt of cultivated minds, continues to be sold and read. For this class of persons, “Baxter’s Call,” or “Alleine’s Alarm,” are far more suitable than treatises on the evidences of Christianity, or even Butler’s Analogy.

## Editor's Preface

The text is the result of a careful collation of the various principal editions. Occasionally solecisms are corrected, and a word transposed or put in italics, when a sentence could thus be made perspicuous. The author had a fashion of beginning a large proportion of his sentences with "and," "but," "now," "indeed," "however," &c., which often served to perplex, and in such cases they have been omitted. Long paragraphs, comprehending different topics, have been so divided as to correspond with the true analysis; which will greatly assist the student in detecting the successive stages of the argument. Special pains have been taken to correct and improve the punctuation. Hundreds of sentences have thus been rendered more perspicuous, and many which were obscure, have been made lucid. In no respect was Butler's style, as printed, so defective.

The Conspectus is made much ampler than any other, for this reason: that students are apt to content themselves with such help instead of mastering the full discussion by the author. In the present case they cannot so do, for such is the fulness of the Conspectus, that if they master this, they have mastered the subject itself in full.

Notes by the present editor are distinguished from those of the author by being enclosed in brackets. They are designed to open out further views, to elucidate the text, to facilitate extended researches, and to suggest topics for conversation in the class-room.

The Index has cost far more labor than would be supposed, and may not be of much benefit to the undergraduate. Its advantages will not be small to him in after life when he desires to recur to particular topics. The general scholar will find it enables him to make use of the book for occasional reference. Without it the work is not complete for the class-room, still less for the library.

That students of the Analogy need help, is confessed; and all attempts to furnish it have been kindly received. As is remarked by Bishop Wilson, "His argument, clear and convincing as it is to a prepared mind, is not obvious to the young reader, whose experience of life being small, and his habits of reflection feeble, has not the furniture necessary for comprehending, at first, the thoughts and conclusions of such a mind. The style is too close, too negligent, too obscure, to be suitable for the young."

If it be asked why, with several existing helps to the study of the Analogy, I offer another, I frankly reply, because I have found none of them satisfactory, either to the public or to myself.

Some teachers prefer their text-books to be accompanied by a set of questions. Such will find in this edition all they desire. They have only to enunciate each sentence of the Conspectus in the interrogative form, and they will have every possible question prepared to their hand.

## Conspectus of the Author's Introduction

### I. *What is probable evidence?*

1. It differs from demonstration in that it admits of degrees; of *all* degrees.

1.) One probability does not beget assurance.

2.) But the slightest presumption makes a probability.

3.) The repetition of it may make certainty.

2. What constitutes probability is *likeness*; in regard to the event itself, or its kind of evidences, or its circumstances.

1.) This daily affords presumptions, evidence, or conviction: according as it is occasional, common, or constant.

2.) Measures our hopes and fears.

3.) Regulates our expectations as to men's conduct.

4.) Enables us to judge of character from conduct.

3. It is an imperfect mode of judging, and adapted to beings of limited capacities.

4. Where better evidence cannot be had, it constitutes moral obligation, even though great doubts remain.

1.) We are as much bound to do what, on the whole, *appears* to be best, as if we *knew* it to be so.

2.) In questions of great moment, it is reasonable to act when the favorable chances are no greater than the unfavorable.

3.) There are numberless cases in which a man would be thought distracted if he did not act, and that earnestly, where the chances of success were *greatly against* him.

### II. *The use and application of probabilities.*

Shall not go further into the *nature* of probable evidence, nor inquire *why* likeness begets presumption and conviction; nor how far analogical reasoning can be reduced to a *system*; but shall only show how just and conclusive this mode of reasoning is.

1. In determining our judgments and practice.

1.) There may be cases in which its value is doubtful.

2.) There may be seeming analogies, which are not really such.

3.) But as a mode of argument, it is perfectly just and conclusive.

2. In noting correspondencies between the different parts of God's government.

1.) We may expect to find the same sort of difficulties in the Bible, as we do in Nature.

2.) To deny the Bible to be of God, because of these difficulties, requires us to deny that the world was made by him.

3.) If there be a likeness between revelation and the system of nature, it affords a presumption that both have the same author.

4.) To reason on the construction and government of the world, without settling foundation-principles, is mere hypothesis.

5.) To apply principles which are certain, to cases which are not applicable, is no better.

6.) But to join abstract reasonings to the observation of facts, and argue, from known present things, to what is likely or credible, must be right.

7.) We cannot avoid acting thus, if we act at all.

3. In its application to religion, revealed, as well as natural. This is the use which will be made of analogy in the following work. In so using it,

1.) It will be taken for proved that there is an intelligent Creator and Ruler.

– There are no presumptions *against* this, prior to proof.

– There are proofs: – from analogy, reason, tradition, &c.

– The fact is not denied by the generality of skeptics.

2.) No regard will be paid to those who idly speculate as to how the world *might* have been made and governed.

– Such prating would amount to this:

· All creatures should have been made at first as happy as they could be.

· Nothing of hazard should be put upon them.

· Should have been *secured* in their happiness.

· All punishments avoided.

– It is a sufficient reply to such talk that mankind have not faculties for such speculations.

3.) We are, to some extent, judges as to *ends*; and may conclude that Nature and Providence are designed to produce virtue and happiness; but of the *means* of producing these in the highest degree, we are not competent judges.

– We know not the extent of the universe;

– Nor even how one person can best be brought to perfection.

– We are not often competent to judge of the conduct of each other.

– As to God, we may presume that order will prevail in his universe; but are no judges of his modes for accomplishing this end.

4.) Instead of vainly, and perhaps sinfully, imagining schemes for God's conduct, we must *study what is*.

– Discovering general laws.

– Comparing the known course of things with what revelation teaches us to expect.

### III. *The force of this use of Analogy.*

1. Sometimes is practically equivalent to proof.

2. Confirms what is otherwise proved.

3. Shows that the system of revelation is no more open to ridicule, than the system of nature.

4. Answers almost all objections against religion.

5. To a great extent answers objections against the *proofs* of religion.

### IV. *General scope of the book.*

1. The divine government is considered, as containing in it,  
Chap. 1. Man's future existence.

" 2. In a state of reward or punishment.

" 3. This according to our behavior.

" 4. Our present life probationary.

" 5. And also disciplinary.

" 6. Notwithstanding the doctrine of necessity.

" 7. Or any apparent want of wisdom or goodness.

2. Revealed religion is considered,

Chap. 1. As important.

" 2. As proved by miracles.

- ” 3. As containing strange things.
- ” 4. As a scheme imperfectly comprehended.
- ” 5. As carried on by a mediator.
- ” 6. As having such an amount of evidence as God saw fit to give.
- ” 7. As having sufficient and full evidence.



# Conspectus of the Analogy

## PART I

### CHAPTER I

#### A FUTURE LIFE

Will not discuss the subject of identity; but will consider what analogy suggests from changes which do not destroy; and thus see whether it is not *probable* that we shall live hereafter.

I. *The probabilities that we shall survive death.*

1. It is a law of nature that creatures should exist in different stages, and in various degrees of perfection.

– Worms turn into flies.

– Eggs are hatched into birds.

– Our own present state is as different from our state in the womb, as two states of the same being can be.

– That we shall hereafter exist in a state as different from the present as the present is from our state in the womb, is according to analogy.

2. We now have capacities for happiness, action, misery, &c., and there is always a probability that things will continue as they are, except when experience gives us reason to think they will be altered. This is a general law; and is our *only* natural reason for expecting the continuance of any thing.

3. There is no reason to apprehend that death will destroy us.

If there was, it would arise from the nature of death; or from the analogy of nature.

1.) Not from the nature of death.

– We know not what death is.

– But only *some* of its *effects*.

– These effects do not imply the destruction of the living agent.

– We know little of what the *exercise* of our powers depends upon; and nothing of what *the powers* themselves depend on.

– We may be unable to *exercise* our powers, and yet not lose them —*e. g.* sleep, swoon.

2.) Not from analogy.

– Reason shows no connection between death and our destruction.

– We have no faculties by which to trace any being beyond it.

– The possession of living powers, up to the very moment when our faculties cease to be able to trace them, is a probability of their continuing.

– We have already survived wonderful changes.

– To live after death is analogous to the course of nature.

II. *Presumptions against a future life.*

1. That death *destroys* us.

*Ans.* 1. This is an assumption that we are compound and material beings, and hence discernible; which is not true.

1.) Consciousness is a single, indivisible power, and of course the subject of it must be.

2.) The material body is not ourself.

3.) We can easily conceive of our having more limbs, or of a different kind, or of having more or fewer senses, or of having no bodies at all, or of hereafter animating these same bodies, remodelled.

4.) The dissolution of a succession of new and strange bodies, would have no tendency to destroy *us*.

*Ans.* 2. Though the absolute simplicity of the living being cannot be proved by *experiment*, yet facts lead us so to conclude. We lose limbs, &c. Our bodies were once *very* small, but we might, then, have lost part of them. There is a constant destruction and renewal going on.

1.) Thus we see that no certain *bulk* is necessary to our existence, and unless it were proved that there is, and that it is larger than an indissoluble atom, there is no reason to presume that death destroys us, even if we are discernible.

2.) The living agent is not an *internal material organism*, which dies with the body. Because

– Our only ground for this presumption is our relation to other systems of matter. But we see these are not necessary to us.

– It will not do to say that lost portions of the body were not *essential*— who is to determine?

– The relation between the living agent, and the most essential parts of the body, is only one by which they mutually affect each other.

3.) If we regard our body as made up of organs of sense, we come to the same result.

– We see with the eyes, just as we do with glasses. The eye is not a *recipient*, any more than a telescope.

– It is not pretended that vision, hearing, &c. can be traced clear up to the percipient; but so far as we can trace perceptions, the *organ* does not perceive.

– In dreams we perceive without organs.

– When we lose a limb we do not lose the *directing power*; we could move a new one, if it could be made, or a wooden one. But the limb cut off has no power of moving.

– Thus, our loss of the *organs* of perception and motion, not being the destruction of the power, there is no ground to think that the destruction of other organs or instruments would destroy *us*.

*Objection.* These observations apply equally to brutes.

*Ans.* 1. Be it so. Perhaps they are immortal: – may hereafter improve: we know not what latent powers they may have.

1.) The human being at one period looks as little likely to make great intellectual attainments; for a long time he has capacities for virtue and religion, but cannot use them.

2.) Many persons go out of the world who never became able to exercise these capacities; *e. g.* infants.

*Ans.* 2. If brutes were immortal, it does not prove them to be *moral agents*.

1.) It may be necessary, for aught we know, that there should be living creatures not moral agents, nor rational.

2.) All difficulties as to what would become of them, are founded in our ignorance.

2. That our souls, though not material, so depend upon the bodily structure, that we cannot survive its destruction.

*Ans.* 1. Reason, memory, &c. *do not* depend on the body, as perceptions by the senses do. Death may destroy those *instruments*, and yet not destroy the *powers* of reflection.

*Ans.* 2. Human beings exist, here, in two very different states, each having its own laws: sensation and reflection. By the first we feel; by the second we reason and will.

1.) Nothing which we know to be destroyed at death, is necessary to reflecting on ideas formerly received.

2.) Though the senses act like scaffolds, or levers, to *bring in* ideas, yet when once in, we can reflect, &c. without their aid.

*Ans.* 3. There are diseases which prove fatal, &c., yet do not, in any part of their course, *impair* the intellect; and this indicates that they do not *destroy* it.

1.) In the diseases alluded to, persons have their reflective power, in full, the very moment before death.

2.) Now, why should a disease, at a certain degree, utterly destroy powers which were not even affected by it, up to that point?

3. That death at least *suspends* our reflective powers, or interrupts our continuing to exist in the like state of reflection which we do now.

*Ans.* There appears so little connection between our powers of sensation and our powers of reflection that we cannot presume that what might *destroy the former*, could even *suspend the latter*.

1.) We daily see reason, memory, &c. exercised without any assistance, that we know of, from our bodies.

2.) Seeing them in lively exercise to the last, we must infer that death is not a discontinuance of their exercise, nor of the enjoyments and sufferings of such exercise.

3.) Our posthumous life may be but a going on, with additions. Like the change at our birth – which produced not a suspension of the faculties we had before, nor a *total* change in our state of life; but a continuance of both, with great alterations.

4.) Death may but at once put us into a *higher* state of life, as our birth did; our relation to bodily organs may be the only hinderance to our entering a higher condition of the reflective powers.

5.) Were we even sure that death would suspend our intellectual powers, it would not furnish even the lowest probability that it would destroy them.

*Objec.* From the analogy of plants.

*Ans.* This furnishes poets with apt illustrations of our frailty, but affords no proper analogy. Plants are destitute of perception and action, and this is the very matter in question.

## REMARKS

1. It has been shown, that confining ourselves to what we know, we see no probability of ever ceasing to be: – it cannot be concluded from the reason of the thing: – nor from the analogy of nature.

2. We are therefore to go upon the belief of a future existence.
3. Our going into *new scenes* and conditions, is just as natural as our coming into the world.
4. Our condition may naturally be a social one.
5. The advantages of it may naturally be bestowed, according to some fixed law, in proportion to one's degrees in virtue.
  - 1.) Perhaps not so much as now *by society*; but by God's more immediate action.
  - 2.) Yet this will be no less *natural*, *i. e.* stated, fixed, or settled.
  - 3.) Our notions of what is natural, are enlarged by greater knowledge of God and his works.
  - 4.) There may be some beings in the world, to whom the whole of Christianity is as natural as the visible course of nature seems to us.
6. These probabilities of a future life, though they do not satisfy curiosity, answer all the purposes of religion, as well as demonstration.
  - 1.) Even a demonstration of a future state, would not demonstrate religion, but would be reconcilable with atheism.
  - 2.) But as religion implies a future state, any presumption against such a state, would be a presumption against religion.
  - 3.) The foregoing observations remove all presumptions of that sort, and prove to a great probability, a fundamental doctrine of religion.

## CHAPTER II

### THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD BY REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS

The question of a future life is rendered momentous by our capacity for happiness and misery. Especially if that happiness or misery depends on our present conduct.

We should feel the deepest solicitude on this subject.

And that if there were no proof of a future life and interest, other than the probabilities just discussed.

#### ***I. In the present world our pleasures and pains are, to a great extent, in our own power***

1. We see them to be consequences of our actions.
  2. And we can *foresee* these consequences.
  3. Our desires are not gratified, without the right kind of exertion.
  4. By prudence we may enjoy life; rashness, or even neglect may make us miserable.
  5. Why this is so is another matter.
    - 1.) It may be impossible to be otherwise.
    - 2.) Or it may be best on the whole.
    - 3.) Or God's plan may be to make only the good happy.
    - 4.) Or the whole plan may be incomprehensible to us.
- Objec.* It may be said "this is only the course of nature."

**Ans. It is granted: but**

1. The course of nature is but the will of God. We admit that God is the natural governor of the world: and must not turn round and deny it because his government is *uniform*.

2. Our natural foresight of the consequences of actions, is his appointment.

3. The consequences themselves, are his appointment.

4. Our ability to foresee these consequences, is God's *instruction* how we are to act.

*Objec.* By this reasoning we are instructed to gratify our appetites, and such gratification is our reward for so doing.

*Ans.* Certainly not. Foreseen pleasures and pains are proper motives to action *in general*; but we may, in particular cases, damage ourselves by indulgence. Our eyes are made to see with, but not to look at every thing: – for instance the sun.

It follows, from what has been said, that

**II. *We are, now, actually under God's government, in the strictest sense***

1. Admitting that there is a God, it is not so much a matter of speculation, as of experience, that he governs us.

2. The annexing of pleasures and pains to certain actions, and giving notice them, is the very essence of government.

3. Whether by direct acts upon us, or by contriving a general plan, does not affect the argument.

1.) If magistrates could make laws which should *execute themselves*, their government would be far more perfect than it is.

2.) God's making fire burn us, is as much an instance of government, as if he *directly inflicted* the burn, whenever we touched fire.

4. Hence the analogy of nature shows nothing to render incredible the Bible doctrine of God's rewarding or punishing according to our actions.

**Additional remarks on Punishment**

As men object chiefly to future punishment, it is proper to show further that the course of administration, as to *present* punishment, is analogous to what religion teaches as to *the future*.

Indeed they add credibility to it.

And ought to raise the most serious apprehension.

**I. *Circumstances to be observed touching present punishments***

1. They often follow acts which produce present pleasure or advantage.

2. The sufferings often far exceed the pleasure or advantage.

3. They often follow remotely.

4. After long delay they often come suddenly.

5. As those remote effects are not certainly foreseen, they may not be thought of at the time; or if so, there is a hope of escaping.

6. There are opportunities of advantage, which if neglected do not recur.

7. Though, in some cases, men who have sinned up to a certain point, may retrieve their affairs, yet in many cases, reformation is of no avail.

8. Inconsiderateness is often as disastrous as wilful wrong-doing.

9. As some punishments by civil government, are capital, so are some natural punishments.

1.) Seem intended to remove the offender out of the way.

2.) Or as an example to others.

## **II. *These things are not accidental, but proceed from fixed laws***

1. They are matters of daily experience.

2. Proceed from the general laws, by which the world is governed.

## **III. *They so closely resemble what religion teaches, as to future punishment, that both might be expressed in the same words***

*e. g.* Proverbs, ch. i.

The analogy sufficiently answers all objections against the Scripture doctrine of future punishment, such as

1.) That our frailty or temptations annihilate the guilt of vice.

2.) Or the objection from necessity.

3.) Or that the Almighty cannot be contradicted.

4.) Or that he cannot be offended.

## **REMARKS**

1. Such reflections are terrific, but ought to be stated and considered.

2. Disregard of a hereafter cannot be justified by any thing short of a *demonstration* of atheism. Even skeptical doctrines afford no justification.

3. There is no pretence of reason for presuming that the licentious will not find it better for them that they had never been born.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **MORAL GOVERNMENT OF GOD**

As the structure of the world shows *intelligence*, so the mode of distributing pleasure and pain, shows government. That is, God's *natural* government, such as a king exercises over his subjects.

But this does not, at first sight, determine what is the *moral character* of such government.

### ***I. What is a moral or righteous government?***

1. Not mere rewarding and punishing.
2. But doing this according to character.
3. The perfection of moral government is doing this *exactly*.

*Objec.* God is simply and absolutely benevolent.

*Ans.* Benevolence, infinite in degree, would dispose him to produce the greatest possible happiness, regardless of behaviour. This would rob God of other attributes; and should not be asserted unless it can be proved. And whether it can be proved is not the point now in hand.

The question is not whether there may not be, in the universe, beings to whom he manifests absolute benevolence, which might not be incompatible with justice; but whether he treats *us* so.

4. It must be owned to be vastly difficult, in such a disordered world, to estimate with exactness the overplus of happiness on the side of virtue: and there may be exceptions to the rule. But it is far from being doubtful that *on the whole*, virtue is happier than vice, in this world.

### ***II. The beginnings of a righteous administration, are seen in nature***

1. It has been proved (ch. ii.) that God *governs*: and it is reasonable to suppose that he would govern *righteously*.

1.) Any other rule of government would be harder to account for.

2.) The Bible doctrine that hereafter the good shall be happy, and the wicked miserable, is no more than an expectation that a method of government, now begun, shall be carried on.

2. The opposite consequences of prudence and rashness, show a right constitution of nature; and our ability to foresee and control these consequences, shows that we are under moral law.

3. God has so constructed society that vice, to a great degree, is actually punished by it.

1.) Without this, society could not exist.

2.) This is God's government, through society; and is as *natural*, as society.

3.) Since the course of things is God's appointment, men are unavoidably accountable for their behaviour.

*Objec.* Society often punishes good actions, and rewards wickedness.

*Ans.* 1. This is not *necessary*, and consequently not natural.

2. Good actions are never punished by society as *good*, but because considered bad.

4. By the course of nature, virtue is rewarded, and vice punished, *as such*, which proves a moral government; as will be seen if we rightly distinguish between actions and their qualities.

1.) An action may produce present gratification though it be wrong: in which case the gratification is in the act, not the morality of it: in other cases the enjoyment consists wholly in the quality of virtuousness.

2.) Vice is naturally attended with uneasiness, apprehension, vexation, remorse, &c.

– This is a very different feeling from that produced by mere misfortune.

– Men comfort themselves under misfortune, that it was not their own fault.

3.) Honest and good men are befriended *as such*.

4.) Injuries are resented as implying fault; and good offices are regarded with gratitude on account of the *intention*, even when they fail to benefit us.

– This is seen in family government, where children are punished for falsehood, fretfulness, &c., though no one is hurt.

– And also in civil government, where the absence or presence of ill intention goes far in determining the penalty of wrong-doing.

5.) The whole course of the world, in all ages and relations, turns much upon approbation and disapprobation.

6.) The very fact of our having a moral nature, is a proof of our being under God's moral government.

– We are placed in a condition which unavoidably operates on our moral nature.

– Hence it arises that reward to virtue and reprobation of vice, as such, is a *rule*, never inverted. If it be thought that there are instances to the contrary, (which is not so,) they are evidently monstrous.

– The *degree* in which virtue and vice receive proper returns, is not the question now, but only the thing itself, in some degree.

7.) It is admitted that virtue sometimes suffers, and vice prospers; but this is *disorder*, and not the order of nature.

8.) It follows, that we have in the government of the world, a declaration from God, for virtue and against vice. So far as a man is true to virtue, is he on the side of the divine administration. Such a man must have a *sense of security*, and a hope of *something better*.

5. This hope is confirmed by observing that virtue has necessary tendencies beyond their present effects.

1.) These are very obvious with regard to individuals.

2.) Are as real, though not so patent, in regard to society.

– The power of a society under the direction of virtue, tends to prevail over power not so directed, just as power under direction of reason, tends to prevail over brute force.

– As this may not be conceded, we will notice how the case stands, as to reason:

· Length of time, and proper opportunity, are necessary for reason to triumph over brutes.

· Rational beings, disunited, envious, unjust, and treacherous, may be overcome by brutes, uniting themselves by instinct: but this would be an inverted order of things.

– A like tendency has virtue to produce superiority.

· By making the good of society, the object of every member of it.

· By making every one industrious in his own sphere.

· By uniting all in one bond of veracity and justice.

3.) If the part of God's government which we see, and the part we do not see, make up one scheme, then we see a *tendency* in virtue to superiority.

4.) But to *produce* that superiority there must be

– A force proportioned to the obstacles.

– Sufficient lapse of time.



– A fair field of trial; such as extent of time, adequate occasions, and opportunities for the virtuous to unite.

5.) These things are denied to virtue in this life, so that its tendencies, though real, are *hindered*.

6.) But it may have all requisite advantages hereafter.

– Eternity will be lasting enough.

– Good men will unite; as they cannot do now, scattered over the earth, and ignorant of one another.

– Other orders of virtuous beings will join; for the very nature of virtue is a bond of union.

7.) The tendency of such an order of things, so far as seen by vicious beings in any part of the universe, would be to the amendment of all who were capable of it, and their recovery to virtue.

8.) All this goes to show that the hinderances to virtue are contingent, and that its beneficial tendencies are God's declarations in its favor.

9.) If the preceding considerations are thought to be too speculative, we may easily come to the same result by reflecting on the supremacy which any earthly nation would attain, by entire virtue for many ages.

## REMARKS

Consider now the general system of religion. The government of the world is one; it is moral; virtue shall in the end prevail over wickedness; and to see the importance and fitness of such an arrangement we have only to consider what would be the state of things, if vice had these advantages, or virtue the contrary.

*Objec.* Why may not things be now going on in other worlds, and continue always to go on in this world, in the same mixed and disordered state as at present?

*Ans.* We are not proving that God's moral government is *perfect*, or the truth of religion, but only seeing what there is in the course of nature, to confirm it, supposing it to be known. Were there nothing to judge by, but the present distribution of pleasure and pain, we should have no ground to conclude that hereafter we should be rewarded or punished exactly according to our deserts. But even then there would be no indication that vice is better than virtue. Still the preceding observations *confirm* the doctrine of future retribution; for,

1.) They show that the Author of nature is not indifferent to virtue and vice.

2.) That future distributive justice would differ not in *kind*, but in degree only, from God's present government. It would be the *effect*, towards which we see the *tendency*.

3.) That higher rewards and punishments *may be* hereafter.

4.) That we should *expect* it to be so; because the tendencies of vice and virtue are immutable, while the hinderances are only artificial.

## SUMMARY

[This enumerates the steps of the argument, in the foregoing chapter, in as condensed a form as possible.]

## CHAPTER IV

### OF A STATE OF PROBATION

The doctrine of probation comprehends several particulars. But the most common notion is that our future interests are *depending*; and depending on *ourselves*. And that we have *opportunities* for both good and bad conduct, and *temptations* to each.

This is not exactly the same as our being under moral government; for it implies allurements to evil, and difficulties in being good.

Hence needs to be considered by itself.

*Doctrine.* The natural government of God, in this world, puts us on trial as to the things of this world; and so implies, what religion teaches, that his moral government puts us on trial as to a future world.

#### ***I. So far as we are tempted to do what will damage our future temporal interests, so far we are under probation as to those interests***

1. The annexing of pleasures and pains to actions, as good or bad, and enabling us to foresee their effect, implies that our interests, in part at least, depend on ourselves.

2. We often *blame* ourselves and others for evils, as resulting from misconduct.

3. It is very certain that we often miss possible good, and incur evils, not for want of knowing better, but through our *fault*.

4. Every one speaks of the hazards of young persons, from other causes than ignorance.

#### ***II. These natural or temporal trials are analogous to our moral and religious trial***

1. In both cases, what constitutes the trial, is either in our circumstances or in our nature.

1.) Some would do right but for violent or extraordinary temptations.

2.) Others will *seek* evil, and go out of their way after wicked indulgence, when there are no external temptations.

3.) But even those who err through temptation, must have that within which makes them *susceptible* of temptation.

4.) So that we are in a like state of probation with respect to both present and future interests.

2. If we proceed to observe how mankind behave in both capacities, we see the same analogy.

1.) Some scarcely look beyond the present gratification.

2.) Some are driven by their passions against their better judgment and feeble resolutions.

3.) Some shamelessly go on in open vice.

4.) Some persist in wrong-doing, even under strong apprehensions of future misery.

3. The analogy is no less plain in regard to the influence of others upon us.
  - 1.) Bad example.
  - 2.) Wrong education.
  - 3.) Corruptions of religion.
  - 4.) General prevalence of mistakes as to true happiness.
4. In both cases negligence and folly bring difficulty as well as vice.

### ***III. The disadvantages we labor under from our fallen and disordered state, are the same, in relation to both earthly and future interests***

This disadvantage affords no ground of complaint; for,

1. We *may* manage to pass our days in comfort and peace.
2. And so may we obtain the security and comfort of religion.
3. We might as well complain that we are not a higher order of beings.

### **REMARKS**

1. It is thus proved that the state of trial, which religion says we are in, is credible; for it exactly corresponds to what we see.

1.) If from birth till death we were in a constant security of enjoyment, without care or correctness, it would be a presumption against religion.

2.) It might, if we had no experience, be urged that an infinitely good Being would not expose us to the hazard of misery. This is indeed a difficulty, and must remain so; but still the course of nature is as it is.

3.) The miseries which we bring on ourselves are no more unavoidable than our deportment.

2. It has been proved that we are in danger of miscarrying as to our interests, both present and future.

3. The sum of the whole is, that as we do not have present enjoyments and honors forced upon us, in spite of misconduct, so this *may* be the case, as to that chief and final good which religion proposes.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **PROBATION INTENDED FOR MORAL DISCIPLINE AND IMPROVEMENT**

Why we should be placed in the condition spoken of in the last chapter, is a question which cannot be answered. It may be that we could not understand, if told. And if we could, it might injure us to know, just now. It certainly is consistent with God's righteous government.

Religion tells us that we are so placed in order to become qualified for a better state.

This, though a very partial answer to the inquiry *why* we are so placed, answers an infinitely more important question, – viz.: *What is our business here?*

**I. *We are placed in this state of trial, for our improvement in virtue, as the requisite qualification for future security and happiness***

1. Every creature is designed for a particular way of life.

1.) Happiness depends on the congruity between a creature's nature and its circumstances.

2.) Man's character might be so changed as to make him *incapable* of happiness on earth.

3.) Or he might be placed, without changing his nature, in a world where he must be wretched, for want of the proper objects to answer to his desires.

4.) So that without determining what is the future condition of good men, we know there must be necessary *qualifications* to make us capable of enjoying it.

2. Human beings are so constituted as to become fit for new and different conditions.

1.) We not only acquire ideas, but store them up.

2.) We can become more expert in any kind of action.

3.) And can make settled alterations in our tempers.

4.) We can form *habits*— both bodily and mental.

As these operate in producing radical changes in human character, we will look for a moment at the process.

– Neither perceptions, nor knowledge, are habits; though necessary to *forming* them.

– There are habits of perception, however, and habits of action: the former are passive, the latter active.

– Habits of body are produced by external acts, and habits of mind by the exertion of principles; *i. e.* carrying them out.

– Resolutions to do well are acts, and may *help* towards forming good habits. But *mere* theorizing, and forming pictures in the mind, not only do not help, but may harden the mind to a contrary course.

– Passive impressions, by repetition grow weaker. Thus familiarity with danger lessens fear.

– Hence active habits may be formed and strengthened, by acting according to certain motives or excitements, which grow less sensibly felt and less and less felt, as the habit strengthens.

· Thus the sight of distress excites the passive emotion of pity, and the active principle of benevolence. But inquiring out cases of distress in order to relieve them, causes diminished sensitiveness at the sight of misery, and stronger benevolence and aptitude in relieving it.

· So admonition, experience, and example, if acted upon, produce good; if not, harden.

5.) The formation of a habit may be imperceptible and even inexplicable, but the thing itself is matter of certain experience.

6.) A habit once formed, the action becomes easy and often pleasurable: opposite inclinations grow weaker: difficulties less: and occasions more frequent.

7.) Thus, a new character, in several respects, is formed.

3. We should not have these capacities for improvement and for the reconstruction of character, if it were not necessary.

1.) They are necessary, even as to this life.

– We are not qualified, at first, for mature life: understanding and strength come gradually.

– If we had them in full, at birth, we should at first be distracted and bewildered, and our faculties would be of no use previous to experience. Ignorant of any employment, we could not provide for ourselves.

– So that man is an unformed, unfinished creature, even as to this world, till he *acquire* knowledge, experience, and habits.

2.) Provision is made for our acquiring, in youth, the requisite qualities for manhood.

– Children *learn*, from their very birth,

· The nature and use of objects.

· The subordinations of domestic life.

· The rules of life.

– Some of this learning is acquired so insensibly, as to seem like instinct, but some requires great care and labor, and the doing of things we are averse to.

– According as we act during this formative period, is our character formed; and our capacity for various stations in society determined.

– Early opportunities lost, cannot be recovered.

3.) Our state of discipline throughout this life, for another, is exactly of the same kind: and comprehended under one general law.

– If we could not see how the present discipline fitted us for a higher life, it would be no objection.

· We do not know how food, sleep, &c. enlarges the child's body; nor would we expect such a result, prior to experience.

· Nor do children understand the need of exercise, temperance, restraint, &c.

– We thus see a general analogy of Providence indicating that the present life is preparatory.

4. If virtue is a necessary qualification for future happiness, then we see our need of the moral culture of our present state.

1.) Analogy indicates that our future state will be social.

– Nature furnishes no shadow of unreasonableness in the Scripture doctrine that this future community will be under the more immediate government of God.

– Nor the least proof that its members will not require the exercise of veracity, justice, &c. towards each other; and that character which *results* from the practice of such virtues.

– Certainly the universe is under moral government; and a virtuous character must, in some way, be a condition of happiness in that state.

2.) We are deficient, and in danger of deviating from what is right.

– We have desires for outward objects.

– The times, degrees, &c. of gratifying these desires, are, of right, subject to the control of the moral principle.

– But that principle neither excites them, nor prevents their being excited.

– They may exist, when they cannot be lawfully gratified, or gratified at all.

– When the desire exists, and the gratification is unlawful, we are tempted.

3.) The only security is the principle within.

– The strengthening of this lessens the danger.

– It may be strengthened, by discipline and exercise.

· Noting examples.

- Attending to the right, and not to preference.
- Considering our true interests.
  - When improved, it becomes, in proportion to its strength, our security from the dangers of natural propensions.
  - Virtue, become habitual by discipline, is improved virtue; and improved virtue must produce increased happiness, if the government of the world is moral.
- 4.) Even creatures made upright may fall.
  - The fall of an upright being, is not accounted for by the nature of liberty; for that would only be saying that an event happened because it might happen.
  - But from the very nature of propensions.
  - A finitely perfect being would have propensions corresponding to its surroundings; its understanding; and its moral sense; and all these in due proportions.
  - Such a being would have propensions, though the object might not be present, or the indulgence might be contrary to its moral sense; and this would have some tendency, however small, to induce gratification.
  - The tendency would be increased by the frequency of occasions; and yet more by the least indulgence, even in thought; till, under peculiar conjunctures, it would become effect.
  - The first transgression might so utterly disorder the constitution, and change the proportions of forces, as to lead to a repetition of irregularities; and hence to the construction of bad habits, and a depraved character.
- 5.) On the contrary, a finitely perfect being may attain higher virtue, and more security, by obeying the moral principle.
  - For the danger would lessen, by the increased submissiveness of propensions.
  - The moral principle would gain force by exercise.
- 6.) Thus vice is not only criminal, but degrading; and virtue is not only right, but improving.
  - The degree of improvement may be such that the danger of sinning may be almost infinitely lessened.
  - Yet the security may always be the habits formed in a state of discipline; making such a state altogether fit and necessary.
- 7.) This course of reasoning is vastly stronger when applied to fallen and corrupt creatures.
  - The upright need improvement; the fallen must be renewed.
  - Discipline is expedient for the one; necessary for the other; and of a severer sort.

## ***II. The present world is peculiarly fit for such discipline as we need***

1. Surrounding evils tend to produce moderation, practical knowledge, &c. very different from a mere speculative knowledge of our liability to vice and misery.
2. Our experience in this world, with right views and practice, may leave eternal impressions for good.
3. Every act of self-government in the exercise of virtue, must, from the very make of our nature, form habits of virtue, and a more intense virtuous principle.

4. Resolute and persevering resistance to particular and violent temptations, is a *continued* act of virtue, and that in a *higher degree* than if the seduction were transient and weak.

5. Self-denial is not essential to virtue, but is almost essential to discipline and improvement.

1.) Because actions materially virtuous, which have no difficulty, but agree with our inclinations, may be done merely from inclination, and so not be *really* virtuous.

2.) But when they are done in face of danger and difficulty, virtuousness is increased, and confirmed into a habit.

*Objec.* 1. As our intellectual or physical powers may be overtasked, so may our moral.

*Ans.* This may be so in exceptional cases, but it does not confute the argument. In general, it holds good. All that is intended to be proved is, that this world is *intended* to be a state of improvement, and is *fitted* for it.

1.) Some sciences which of themselves are highly improving, require a trying measure of attention, which some will not submit to.

2.) It is admitted that this world disciplines many to vice: but this viciousness of many is the very thing which makes the world a virtuous discipline to good men. The *whole end* in placing mankind as they are we know not; but these things are evident – the virtues of some are exercised: – and so exercised as to be improved: and improved beyond what they would be in a perfectly virtuous community.

3.) That all, or even the generality, do not improve, is no proof that their improvement was not *intended*. Of seeds and animals not one in a million comes to perfection; yet such as do, evidently answer an end for which they were designed. The *appearance of waste* in regard to seeds, &c. is just as unaccountable, as the ruin of moral agents.

*Objec.* 2. Rectitude arising from hope and fear, is only the discipline of self-love.

*Ans.* Obedience *is* obedience, though prompted by hope or fear: and a *course* of such obedience, forms a habit of it: and distinct habits of various virtues, by repressing inclination whenever justice, veracity, &c. require.

Beside, veracity, justice, regard to God's authority, and self-interest, are coincident; and each, separately, a just principle. To begin a good life from either of them, and persist, produces that very character which corresponds to our relations to God, and secures happiness.

*Objec.* 3. The virtues requisite for a state of afflictions, and produced by it, are not wanted to qualify us for a state of happiness.

*Ans.* Such is not the verdict of experience. Passive submission is essential to right character. Prosperity itself begets extravagant desires; and imagination may produce as much discontent as actual condition. Hence, though we may not need *patience* in heaven, we shall need that *temper* which is formed by patience.

Self-love would always coincide with God's commands, when our interest was rightly understood; but it is liable to error. Therefore, HABITS of resignation are necessary, for *all* creatures; and the proper discipline for resignation is affliction.

*Objec.* 4. The trouble and danger of such discipline, might have been avoided by making us at once, what we are intended to become.

*Ans.* What we are to be, is the effect of what we are to do. God's natural government is arranged not to save us from trouble or danger, but to enable and

incline us to go through them. It is as natural for us to seek means to obtain things, as it is to seek the things; and in worldly things we are left to our choice, whether to improve our powers and so better our condition, or to neglect improvement and so go without the advantage.

Analogy, therefore, makes the same arrangement credible, as to a future state.

### ***III. This state of discipline may be necessary for the display of character***

1. Not to the all-knowing Being, but to his creation, or part of it, and in many ways which we know not.

2. It may be a *means* in disposing of men according to character.

3. And of showing creation that they are so disposed of.

4. Such display of character certainly contributes, largely, to the general course of things considered in this chapter.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **OF NECESSITY AS INFLUENCING CONDUCT**

Fatalists have no right to object to Christianity, for they of course hold the doctrine to be compatible with what they see in nature.

The question is, whether it be not equally compatible with what Christianity teaches.

To argue on the supposition of so great an absurdity as necessity, is puzzling; and the obscurity and puzzle of the argument must therefore be excused.

#### ***I. Necessity does not destroy the proof of an intelligent Author and Governor of the world***

1. It does not exclude design and deliberation.

1.) This is matter of actual experience and consciousness.

– Necessity does not account for the *existence* of any thing, but is only a *circumstance* relating to its origin. Instance the case of a house: the fatalist admits that it had a builder, and the only question would be, was he obliged to build it as he did?

2.) It is the same as to the construction of the world. To say it exists by necessity must mean it had a maker, who *acted* by necessity: for necessity is only an abstract notion, and can *do* nothing.

3.) We say God exists by necessity, because we intuitively discern that there must be an infinite Being, prior to all causes; but we cannot say that *every thing* so exists. The fact that many changes in nature are produced by man's contrivance is a proof of this.

4.) Thus though the fatalist does not choose to mean by necessity *an agent acting necessarily*, he is obliged to mean this.

5.) And it also follows that a thing's being done by necessity does not exclude *design*.



**2.** It does not exclude a belief that we are in a state of religion.

1.) Suppose a fatalist to educate a child on his own principles, – viz.: that he cannot do otherwise than he does; and is not subject to praise or blame. (It might be asked, *would* he, if possessed of common sense, so educate his child?)

– The child would be delighted with his freedom; but would soon prove a pest, and go to destruction.

– He would meet with checks and rebuffs, which would teach him that he *was* accountable.

– He would, in the end, be convinced either that his doctrine was wrong, or that he had reasoned inconclusively upon it, and misapplied it.

2.) To apply fatalism to practice, in any other way, would be found equally fallacious: *e. g.* that he need not take care of his life.

3.) No such absurdity follows the doctrine of freedom.

– Reasoning on this ground is justified by all experience.

– The constitution of things is *as if* we were free.

4.) If the doctrine of necessity be true, and yet, when we *apply it* to life, always misleads us; how, then, can we be sure it would not mislead us with respect to future interests?

5.) It follows that if there are proofs of religion on the supposition of freedom, they are just as conclusive on the supposition of necessity.

**3.** It does not refute the notion that God has a will and a character.

1.) It does not hinder *us* from having a will and a character; from being cruel, or benevolent, or just, &c.

2.) If necessity be plead as the excuse for crime, it equally excuses the *punishment* of crime; for if it destroys the sin of the one, it destroys the sin of the other.

3.) The very assumption of injustice in punishing crime, shows that we cannot rid ourselves of the notion of justice and injustice.

*Objec.* If necessity be *reconcilable* with the character of God, as portrayed in Christianity, does it not destroy *the proof* that he has that character; and so destroy the proofs of religion?

*Ans.* No. Happiness and misery are not our fate, but the results of our conduct. God's government is that of a father and a magistrate; and his natural rule of government must be veracity and justice. We shall proceed to show that,

## **II. Necessity does not destroy the proofs of religion**

**1.** It is a plain fact that God rewards and punishes.

1.) He has given us a moral faculty, by which we discern between actions, and approve or disapprove, &c.

2.) This implies a *rule*, a peculiar *kind* of rule; *i. e.* one from which we cannot depart without being self-condemned.

3.) The dictates of our moral faculty are God's laws, with sanctions. It not only raises a sense of *duty*, but a sense of *security* in obeying, and danger in disobeying; and this is an explicit sanction.

4.) God's government must conform to the nature he has given us; and we must infer that in the upshot happiness will follow virtue, and misery vice.

5.) Hence religious worship is a duty, if only as a means of keeping up the sense of this government.

6.) No objection from necessity can lie against this course of proof.

– The conclusion is wholly and directly from facts; not from what might appear to us to be *fit*, but from what his actions tell us *he wills*.

2. Natural religion has external evidence which necessity, if true, does not affect.

1.) Suppose a person convinced of the truths of natural religion, but ignorant of history, and of the present state of mankind, he would inquire:

– How this religion came?

– How far the belief of it extended?

– If he found that some one had totally propounded it, as a deduction of reason, then, though its evidences from reason would not be impaired, its history would furnish no further proof.

2.) But such an one would find, on the contrary,

– That essentially it had been professed in all countries.

– And can be traced up through all ages.

– And was not *reasoned out*, but revealed.

3.) These things are of great weight.

– Showing natural religion to be conformed to the common sense of mankind.

– And either that it was revealed, or forces itself upon the mind.

– The rude state of the early ages leads to the belief of its being revealed, and such is the opinion of the learned.

3. Early pretences to revelation indicate some original real one from which they were copied.

– The history of revelation is as old as history itself.

– Such a fact is a proof of religion, against which there is no presumption.

– And indicates a revelation prior to the examination of the book said to contain it; and independent of all considerations of its being corrupted, or darkened by fables.

4. It is thus apparent that the *external* evidence of religion is considerable; and is not affected by the doctrine of necessity.

## REMARKS

1. The danger of taking custom, &c. for our moral rule.

1.) We are all liable to prejudice.

2.) Reason may be impaired, perverted, or disregarded.

3.) The matter in hand is of infinite moment.

2. The foregoing observations amount to practical proof.

*Objec.* Probabilities which cannot be confuted, may be overbalanced by greater probabilities: much more by demonstration. Now, as the doctrine of necessity must be true, it cannot be that God governs us as if we were free when he knows we are not.

*Ans.* This brings the matter to a point, and the answer is not to be evaded, – viz.: that the whole constitution and course of things shows this reasoning to be false, be the fallacy where it may.

The doctrine of freedom shows where, – viz.: in supposing ourselves necessary agents when in fact we are free.

Admitting the doctrine of necessity, the fallacy evidently lies in denying that necessary agents are accountable; for that they *are* rewarded and punished is undeniable.

Conclusion. – It follows that necessity, if true, neither proves that God will not make his creatures happy or miserable according to their conduct, nor destroys the proofs that he will do so. That is, necessity, practically, is false.

## CHAPTER VII

### DIVINE GOVERNMENT A SCHEME IMPERFECTLY COMPREHENDED

Moral government, *as a fact*, has now been considered; it remains for us to remove objections against its *wisdom and goodness*. A thing being true does not prove it to be good.

In arguing as to its truth, analogy could only show it to be credible. But, if a moral government be admitted as a fact, analogy makes it credible that it is a scheme or system, and that man's comprehension of it is necessarily so limited, as to be inadequate to determine its injustice.

This we shall find to be the case.

*Doctrine.* On the supposition that God exercises moral government, the analogy of nature teaches that it must be a scheme, and one quite beyond our comprehension.

#### ***1. The ordering of nature is a scheme; and makes it credible by analogy, that moral government is a scheme***

1. The parts curiously correspond to each other; individuals to individuals, species to species, events to events; and all these both immediate and remote.

2. This correspondence embraces all the past, and all the future; including all creatures, actions, and events.

1.) There is no event, which does not depend for its occurrence on some further thing, unknown to us; we cannot give the whole account of any one thing.

2.) Things apparently the most insignificant, seem to be necessary to others, of the greatest importance.

3. If such is God's natural government, it is credible that such is his moral government.

1.) In fact they are so blended as to make one scheme.

– One is subservient to the other, just as the vegetable kingdom subserves the animal, and our animal organization subserves our mental.

– Every act of God seems to look beyond the occasion, and to have reference to a general plan.

– There is evidently a previous adjustment.

· The periods, &c. for trying men.

· The instruments of justice.

· The kinds of retribution.

2.) The whole comprises a system, a very small part of which is known to us: therefore no objections against any part can be insisted on.

3.) This ignorance is universally acknowledged, except in arguing against religion. That it ought to be a valid answer to objections against religion, we proceed to show.

– Suppose it to be asserted that all evils might have been prevented by repeated interpositions; or that more good might have been so produced; which would be the utmost that could be said: still,

– Our ignorance would vindicate religion from any objections arising from apparent disorders in the world.

– The government of the world might be *good*, even on those suppositions; for at most they could but suggest that it might be *better*.

– At any rate, they are mere assertions.

– Instances may be alleged, in things much less out of reach, of suppositions palpably impossible, which *all* do not see to be so: nor *any*, *at first sight*.

4.) It follows that our ignorance is a satisfactory answer to all objections against the divine government.

– An objection against an act of Providence, no way connected with any other thing, as being unjust, could not be answered by our ignorance.

– But when the objection is made against an act related to other and unknown acts, then our ignorance is a full answer.

– Some unknown relation, or unknown impossibility, may render the act not only good, but good in the highest degree.

## ***II. Consider some particular things, in the natural government of God, the like of which we may infer, by analogy, to be contained in his moral government***

1. No ends are accomplished without means.

1.) Often, means very disagreeable bring the most desirable results.

2.) How means produce ends, is not learned by reason, but experience.

3.) In many cases, before experience, we should have expected contrary results.

4.) Hence we may infer that those things which are objected against God's moral government, produce good.

5.) It is evident that our not seeing *how* the means work good, or their seeming to have an opposite effect, offers no presumption against their fitness to work good.

6.) They may not only be fit, but the *only* means of ultimate good.

*Objec.* Though our capacity of vice and misery may promote virtue, and *our* suffering for sin be better than if we were restrained by force, yet it would have been better if evil had not entered the world.

*Ans.* It is granted that though sinful acts may produce benefits, to refrain from them would produce more. We have curative pains, yet pain is not better than health.

2. Natural government is carried on by general laws.

1.) Nature shows that this is best: all the good we enjoy is because there are general laws. They enable us to *forecast* for the procurement of good.

2.) It may not be possible, by general laws, to prevent all irregularities, or remedy them.

3.) Direct interpositions might perhaps remedy many disorders arising under them, but this would have bad effects.

– Encouraging improvidence.

– Leaving us no rule of life.  
– Every interposition would have *distant* effects: so that we could not guess what would be the *whole* result.

· If it be replied that those distant effects might also be corrected by direct interpositions – this is only talking at random.

*Objec.* If we are so ignorant as this whole argument supposes, we are too ignorant to understand the proofs of religion.

*Ans.* 1. Total ignorance of a subject precludes argument, but partial ignorance does not. We may, in various degrees, know a man's character, and the way he is *likely* to pursue certain ends; and yet not know how he *ought* to act to gain those ends. In this case objections to his mode of pursuing ends may be answered by our ignorance, though that he *does* act in a certain manner is capable of proof. So we may have evidence of God's character and aims, and yet not be competent judges as to his measures. Our ignorance is a good answer to the difficulties of religion, but no objection to religion itself.

*Ans.* 2. If our ignorance did invalidate the proofs of religion, as well as the objections, yet is it undeniable that moral obligations remain unaffected by our ignorance of the consequences of obedience or violation. The consequences of vice and virtue may not be fully known, yet it is credible that they may be such as religion declares: and this credibility is an obligation, in point of prudence, to abstain from sin.

*Ans.* 3. Our answers to the objections against religion, are *not* equally valid against the proofs of it.

[Answers rehearsed.]

*Ans.* 4. Our answers, though they may be said to be based on our ignorance, are really not so, but on what analogy teaches *concerning* our ignorance, – viz.: that it renders us incompetent judges. They are based on experience, and what we *do know*; so that to credit religion is to trust to experience, and to disregard it is the contrary.

## CONCLUSION

1. The reasoning of the last chapter leads us to regard this life as part of a larger plan of things.

1.) Whether we are connected with the distant *parts* of the universe, is uncertain; but it is very clear we are connected, more or less, with present, past, and future.

2.) We are evidently in the midst of a scheme, not fixed but progressive; and one equally incomprehensible, whether we regard the present, past, or future.

2. This scheme contains as much that is wonderful as religion does: for it certainly would be as wonderful that all nature came into existence without a Creator, as that there should be a Creator: and as wonderful that the Creator should act without any rule or scheme, as that he should act with one; or that he should act by a bad rule, rather than a righteous one.

3. Our very nature compels us to believe that the will and character of the Author of nature, is just and good.

4. Whatever be his character, he formed the world as it is, and controls it as he does, and has assigned us our part and lot.

**5.** Irrational creatures act their part, and receive their lot, without reflection, but creatures endued with reason, can hardly avoid reflecting whither we go, and what is the scheme, in the midst of which we find ourselves.

[Here follows a recapitulation of the book.]

## PART II

### CHAPTER I

#### IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIANITY

Every one must admit that we *need* a revelation. Few, if any, could reason out a system, even of natural religion. If they could, there is no probability that they would. Such as might, would still feel the want of revelation. To say that Christianity is superfluous, is as wild as to say all are happy.

No exactness in attending to natural religion can make Christianity of small importance.

If Christianity be from God, we must obey, unless we know all his reasons for giving it: and also that those reasons no longer exist; at least in our case. This we cannot know.

The importance of Christianity appears if we regard it

#### ***I. As a republication of natural religion***

1. It gives the moral system of the universe.

1.) Free from corruptions; teaching that

– Jehovah created all things.

– ” governs all things.

– Virtue is his law.

– Mankind will be judged according to character.

2.) It publishes its facts authoritatively.

3.) With vastly more clearness; e.g. the doctrines of a future state: danger of sin: efficacy of repentance.

4.) With the advantage of a visible church, distinguished from the world by peculiar institutions.

*Objec.* The perversions of Christianity, and the little good it has done.

*Ans.* 1. Natural religion is no less perverted, and has done less good.

2. The benefits of Christianity are *not* small.

3. The evils ascribed to it, are not *its* effects. Things are to be judged by their genuine tendencies.

4. The light of reason, no more than revelation forces acquiescence.

5.) With the additional advantage that every Christian, is bound to instruct and persuade others.

#### ***II. As containing truths not discoverable by natural reason***

1. A mode of salvation for the ruined.

2. Duties unknown before.

3. Our relations to the Son and Holy Ghost.

1.) Hence the form of baptism.

2.) Pious regards to Christ, and the Holy Ghost, based on our relations to them.

4. The manner of external worship.

**III. *The fearful hazard of neglecting Christianity***

1. Those who think natural religion *sufficient*, must admit that Christianity is highly *important*.

2. Our relations to Christ being made known, our religious regard to him is an evident obligation.

3. These relations being real, there is no reason to think that our neglect of behaving suitably to them, will not be attended with the same kind of consequences as follow the neglect of duties made known by reason.

4. If we are corrupt and depraved, and so unfit for heaven, and if we need God's Holy Spirit to renew our nature, how can it be a slight thing whether we make use of the means for obtaining such assistance?

5. Thus, if Christianity be either true, or merely credible, it is most rash and presumptuous to treat it lightly.

**REMARKS**

1. The distinction between positive and moral obligations.

1.) For moral precepts we can see *the reason*: for positive we cannot.

2.) Moral duties are such *prior* to command; positive duties are such *because* commanded.

3.) The manner in which a duty is made known, does not make it moral or positive.

2. The ground of regarding moral duties as superior to positive.

1.) Both have the nature of moral commands.

2.) If the two conflict, we must obey the moral.

– Positive institutions are *means* to moral ends.

– Ends are more excellent than means.

– Obedience to positive institutions, has no value but as proceeding from moral principle.

3.) Both moral and positive duties are *revealed*, and so are on a level; but the moral law is *also* interwoven with our very nature, and so its precepts must prevail when the two interfere.

3. There is less necessity for determining their relative authority, than some suppose.

1.) Though man is disposed to outward and ritual religion, nothing can give us acceptance with God, without moral virtue.

2.) Scripture always lays stress on moral duties.

3.) It is a great weakness, though very common, to make light of positive institutions, because less important than moral.

– We are bound to obey *all* God's commands.

– A precept, merely positive, admitted to be from God, creates moral obligation, in the strictest sense.



## CONCLUSION

This account of Christianity shows our great obligation to study the Scriptures.

## CHAPTER II

### PRESUMPTIONS AGAINST A REVELATION, CONSIDERED AS MIRACULOUS

Having shown the need of revelation, we now examine the presumptions against it. The analogy of nature is generally supposed to afford presumptions against miracles. They are deemed to require stronger evidence than other events.

#### ***I. Analogy furnishes no presumptions against the general scheme of Christianity***

1. It is no presumption against Christianity, that it is not the discovery of reason, or of experience.

2. Nor is it a presumption against Christianity, that it contains things *unlike* the apparent course of nature.

1.) We cannot suppose every thing, in the vast universe, to be just like what is the course of nature in this little world.

2.) Even within the present compass of our knowledge, we see many things greatly unlike.

3. If we choose to call what is unlike our known course of things, *miraculous*, still that does not make it *improbable*.

#### ***II. There is no presumption against such a revelation, as we should now call miraculous, being made, at the beginning of the world***

1. There was then *no* course of nature, as to this world.

2. Whether man *then* received a revelation involves a question not of miracles, but of *fact*.

3. Creation was a very different exertion of power from that which *rules* the world, now it *is* made.

4. Whether the power of forming *stopped* when man was made; or went on, and formed a religion for him, is merely a question as to the *degree* or *extent*, to which a power was exerted.

5. There is then no presumption from analogy against supposing man had a revelation when created.

6. All tradition and history teaches that he had, which amounts to a real and material proof.

### **III. *There is no presumption against miracles, or a miraculous revelation, after the course of nature was settled***

1. Such a presumption, requires the adduction of some *parallel* case.
2. This would require us to know the history of some other world.
3. Even then, if drawn from only one other world, the presumption would be very precarious.

*To be more particular,*

1. There is a strong presumption against any truth till it is proved – which yet is overcome by almost any proof.

– Hence the question of a presumption against miracles, involves only the *degree* of presumption, (not whether the presumption is *peculiar* to miracles,) and whether that degree is such as to render them incredible.

2. If we *leave out religion*, we are in total darkness as to the cause or circumstances on which the course of nature depends.

– Five or six thousand years may have given occasion and reasons for miraculous interpositions of Providence.

3. *Taking in religion*, there are distinct reasons for miracles; to afford additional instruction; to attest the truth of instruction.

4. Miracles must not be compared with common events, but with uncommon; earthquakes, pestilence, &c.

### **CONCLUSION**

1. There are no analogies to render miracles incredible.
2. On the contrary, we see good reasons for them.
3. There are no presumptions against them, *peculiar* to them, as distinguished from other unusual phenomena.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **OUR INCAPACITY OF JUDGING WHAT SHOULD BE EXPECTED IN A REVELATION FROM GOD**

Beside the objectors to the *evidences* of Christianity, there are many who object to its *nature*. They say it is not full enough: has in it foolish things: gives rise to superstition: subserves tyranny: is not universally known: not well arranged: figurative language, &c.

It is granted that if it contained *immoralities* or *contradictions* they would show it to be false. But other objections against religion, aside from objections against its evidences, are frivolous: as will now be shown.

Let the student look to the *force* of the proofs, rather than any *consequences* which may be drawn from them.

***I. The Scripture informs us of a scheme of government, in addition to the material laws of the world***

1. If both these schemes, the physical and the moral, coincide and form one whole, then our inability to criticise the system of nature, renders it credible that we are incompetent to criticise the system of grace.

2. Nature shows many things we should not have expected, prior to experience.

3. Hence it is altogether likely it would be so in religion.

4. If a citizen is incompetent to judge of the propriety of the *general* laws of his government, he is equally incompetent to judge when and how far those laws should be suspended, or deviated from.

***II. We are no better judges of how revelation should be imparted***

Whether to every man, or to some for others; or what mode or degree of proof should be given; or whether the knowledge should be given gradually or suddenly.

1. We are not able to judge how much new knowledge ought to be given by revelation.

2. Nor how far, nor in what way, God should qualify men to transmit any revelation he might make.

3. Nor whether the evidence should be certain, probable, or doubtful.

4. Nor whether all should have the same benefit from it.

5. Nor whether it should be in writing, or verbal. If it be said that if not in writing it would not have answered its purpose: I ask, what purpose? Who knows what purposes would best suit God's *general* government?

6. All which shows it to be absurd to object to particular things in revelation as unsuitable.

***III. Hence the only question, concerning the truth of revelation is, whether it is a revelation***

1. No obscurities, &c. could overthrow the authority of a revelation.

2. It can only be overthrown by nullifying the proofs.

3. Though the proofs could be shown to be less strong than is affirmed, it still should control our conduct.

***IV. Modes of arguing, which are perfectly just, in relation to other books, are not so as to the Bible***

1. We are competent judges of common books, but not of Scripture.

2. Our only inquiry should be to find out the sense.

3. In other books, internal improbabilities weaken external proof; but in regard to revelation, we scarcely know what are improbabilities.

1.) Those who judge the Scripture by preconceived expectations, will imagine they find improbabilities.

2.) And so they would by thus judging in natural things.

– It would seem very improbable, prior to experience, that man should be better able to determine the magnitudes and motions of heavenly bodies, than he is to determine the causes and cures of disease, which much more nearly concerns him.

– Or that we should sometimes hit upon a thing in an instant, even when thinking of something else, which we had been vainly trying to discover for years.

– Or that language should be so liable to abuse, that every man may be a deceiver.

– Or that brute instinct should ever be superior to reason.

### ***V. Such observations apply to almost all objections to Christianity, as distinguished from objections against its evidence***

For instance, the disorderly manner in which some, in the apostolic age used their miraculous gifts.

1. This does not prove the acts *not* miraculous.

2. The person having any such gift, would have the same power over it which he would have over any other ability, and might pervert it.

3. To say why was he not also endued with prudence, to restrain its use, is but saying why did not God give a *higher degree* of miraculous endowment? As to which we are not competent judges.

4. God does not confer his *natural* gifts, (memory, eloquence, knowledge, &c.) only on those who are prudent and make the best use of them.

5. Nor is worldly instruction, by educators, commonly given in the happiest manner.

### ***VI. There is a resemblance between religion and nature in several other respects***

1. In both, common and necessary things, are plain; but to “go on to perfection” in either, requires exact and laborious study.

2. The hinderances to both religious and physical knowledge, are the same in kind. A more perfect knowledge may be brought about,

1.) By the progress of learning and liberty.

2.) By students attending to intimations overlooked by the generality.

3. It is not wonderful that our knowledge of Bible truth should be small; for the natural world has laid open to inspection, for thousands of years, and yet only lately are any great discoveries made.

4. Perhaps these scientific discoveries, are to be the means of opening and ascertaining Bible truth.

*Objec.* The cases are not parallel; for natural knowledge is of no consequence, compared to spiritual.

*Ans.* 1. The cases *are* parallel; for natural knowledge is as important to our natural well-being, as spiritual knowledge is to our spiritual well-being.

*Ans.* 2. If the cases were not parallel, there are plenty of other analogies, which show that God does not dispense his gifts according to *our* notions of their value.

*Objec.* 2. If Christianity be intended for the recovery of men, why not sooner introduced, and more widely diffused?

*Ans.* The objection is just as strong against the natural sciences. Nay, if the light of nature and of revelation are both from the same source, we might *expect* that revelation would have been introduced and diffused just as it is.

1.) Remedies for disease are known but to a few, or not known at all, nor to any without care and study.

2.) When proposed by discoverers, they have been treated with derision, and the use rejected by thousands whom they might have cured.

3.) The best remedies have been used unskilfully, and so made to produce more disease.

4.) Their benefit may come very slowly.

5.) In some cases they may be wholly ineffectual.

6.) They maybe so disagreeable that many will not submit to use them, even with the prospect of a cure.

7.) Sometimes the remedy may be entirely out of reach if we were ready to take it.

All this reasoning may be applied to Christianity.

**VII. Having obviated all objections to Christianity, from its containing things we should not have expected, we will now consider the objections against its morality**

1. Reason may judge, as to whether revelation contains things contrary to justice, and wisdom, &c. as those attributes are taught by natural religion. But no such objections are advanced, except such as would equally condemn the constitution of nature.

2. There are indeed particular precepts, to particular persons, which *would* be immoral, but for the precept. The precept changes the nature of the action.

3. None are contrary to immutable morality. We are never commanded to cultivate the principles of ingratitude, treachery, &c.

4. God may command the taking of life or property because these are *his*.

5. The only real difficulty is, that such commands are liable to be perverted by the wicked to their own horrid purposes; and to mislead the weak. But such objections do not lie against revelation, as such, but against the very notion of *religion as a trial*.

6. The sum of the whole is, objections against the *scheme* of Christianity do not affect its truth; since there are no objections against its morality. Hence objections against it, aside from its evidences, are frivolous. Objections against the *evidence*, will be considered in a subsequent chapter, [*i. e.* ch. vii.]

## CHAPTER IV

### CHRISTIANITY A SCHEME IMPERFECTLY UNDERSTOOD

In the last chapter it was shown that we might expect, beforehand, that a revelation would contain strange things, and things liable to great objections.

This abates the force of such objections, or rather precludes them.

But it may be said this does not show such objectionable things to be good, or credible.

It was a sufficient answer [ch. vii. part i.] to objections against the course of nature, that it was a *scheme*, imperfectly comprehended.

If Christianity be a scheme, the like objections admit of a like answer.

[In studying this chapter, let [chap. vii. part i.](#) be kept in view.]

### ***I. Christianity is a scheme, beyond our comprehension***

1. God's *general* plan is to conduct things *gradually*, so that, finally, every one shall receive what he deserves.

2. Christianity is a *particular* arrangement, under this general plan: is a part of it, and conduces to its completion.

3. It is itself a complicated and mysterious economy.

1.) Its arrangements began from the fall of man.

2.) Various dispensations, patriarchal, prophetic, &c. were preparatory to it.

3.) At a certain juncture in the condition of the world Jesus Christ came.

4.) The mission of the Holy Ghost was part of this economy.

5.) Christ now presides over it, and will establish the church, judge the world, give up the kingdom, &c. &c.

4. Of course, we can comprehend but little of such a scheme.

5. We plainly see, from what is revealed, that there is very much unrevealed.

6. Thus it is evident that we are as little capable of judging as to the whole system of religion, as we are as to the whole system of nature.

### ***II. In both material and spiritual things, means are used to accomplish ends***

1. Hence a thing may seem foolish to us, because we do not know its object and end.

2. Its seeming foolish to us, is no proof that it is so.

### ***III. Christianity is carried on by general laws, no less than nature***

1. Why do we say there are *laws of nature*?

1.) We indeed know some such. But nothing of the laws of many things, *e. g.*

· Pestilence.

· Storms.

· Earthquakes.

· Diversities of human powers.

· Association of ideas.

2.) Hence we call many things *accidental*, which we know are not matters of chance, but are subject to general laws.

3.) It is a very little way that we can trace things to their general laws.

4.) We attribute many things to such laws, only by analogy.

2. Just for the same reasons, we say that miracles comport with God's *general laws of wisdom*. These laws may be unknown to us; but no more so than those by

which some die as soon as born, or live to old age, or have superior understandings, &c.

3. We see no more reason to regard the frame and course of nature as a scheme, than we have to regard Christianity as such.

1.) If the first is a scheme, then Christianity, if true, would be *likely* to be a scheme.

2.) As Christianity is revealed but in part, and is an arrangement to accomplish ends, there would of course seem to us, in it, irregularities; just as we see in nature.

3.) Therefore objections against the one, are answered in the same manner as objections against the other.

Having, in a previous chapter, [ch. iii.,] answered objections to Christianity *as a matter of fact*, and in this, as a general question of *wisdom and goodness*, the next thing is to discuss *objections in particular*.

As one of these is directed against *the scheme*, as just now described, it will be considered here.

*Objec.* Christianity is a roundabout, and perplexed contrivance; just such as men, for want of understanding or power, are obliged to adopt, in their designs.

*Ans.* 1.) God uses just such complex arrangements in the natural world. The mystery is quite as great in nature as in grace.

2.) We do not know what are means, and what are ends.

3.) The natural world, and its government, are not fixed, but progressive.

4.) Great length of time is required in some changes; *e. g.* animals, vegetables, geological periods, &c.

5.) One state of life is a preparation and means for attaining another.

6.) Man is impatient, but Jehovah deliberate.

## CHAPTER V

### OF A MEDIATOR, AND REDEMPTION BY HIM

Nothing in Christianity is so much objected to as the position assigned to Christ; yet nothing is more unjust. The whole world exhibits mediation.

#### ***I. Our existence, and all its satisfactions, are by the medium of others***

1. If so in the natural world, why not in the spiritual?

2. The objection therefore is not only against *Christ's* mediation, but *all* mediation.

#### ***II. We cannot know all the ends for which God punishes, nor by whom he should punish***

1. Future punishment may be as natural a sequence of sin, as a broken limb is of falling from a precipice.

2. This is not taking punishment out of the hands of God, and giving it to nature; it is only distinguishing ordinary events from miraculous.

### ***III. In natural providence, God has made provision that the bad consequences of actions do not always follow***

1. We may say God could have prevented all evil. But we see he permits it, and has provided relief, and even sometimes perfect remedies for it.

1.) Thus the bad consequences of trifling on a precipice may be prevented by a friend, if we do not reject his assistance.

2.) We may ourselves do much towards preventing the bad consequences of our misdeeds.

3.) Still more if assisted.

2. It might have been perfectly just if it were not so; but that it is so, shows compassion, as distinguished from goodness.

3. The course of nature affords many instances of such compassion.

4. Thus analogy sanctions an arrangement, by which the ruinous consequences of vice or folly may be averted, at least in some cases.

5. If the consequences of rash and inconsiderate acts, which we scarcely call vicious, are often so serious, we may apprehend that the bad consequences will be greater, in proportion as the irregularity is greater.

6. A dissolute disregard to all religion, if there be a religion, is incomparably more reprehensible than the mere neglects, imprudencies, &c. of this life.

7. As the effects of worldly imprudence and vice are often misery, ruin, and even death, no one can say what may be the consequences of blasphemy, contempt of God, and final impenitence.

8. Nor can any one tell, how far the consequences of such great wickedness can possibly be prevented, consistently with the eternal rule of right.

9. Still there would, from analogy, be some hope of room for pardon.

### ***IV. There is no probability that any thing we could do alone, would entirely prevent the effects of our irregularities***

1. We do not know all the reasons for punishment, nor why it should be fit to remit punishment.

2. Nor do we know all the consequences of vice, and so should not know how to prevent them.

3. Vice impairs men's abilities for helping themselves.

4. Misconduct makes assistance necessary, which otherwise would not have been. Why should not the same things be so, as to our future interests?

5. In temporal things, behaving well in time to come, does not repair old errors, why should it as to future things?

6. Were it so in *all cases* it would be contrary to all our notions of government.

7. It could not be determined in what degree, or in what cases, it would be so, even if we knew it might in *some cases*.



8. The efficacy of repentance, as urged in opposition to atonement, is contrary to the general sense of mankind; as shown by the prevalence of propitiatory sacrifices.

***V. In this state of apprehension, awakened by the light of nature, revelation comes in, and teaches positively, the possibility of pardon and safety***

1. Confirms our fears as to the unprevented consequences of sin.
2. Declares the world to be in a state of ruin.
3. That repentance alone will not secure pardon.
4. That there is a mode of pardon, by interposition.
5. That God's moral government is compassionate, as well as his natural government.
6. That he has provided, by the interposition of a mediator, to save men.
7. All this seems to put man in a strange state of helpless degradation. But it is not Christianity which puts him so. All philosophy and history show man to be degraded and corrupt.

***VI. Scripture, in addition to confirming the dim testimony of the light of nature, reveals a Christ, as mediator and propitiatory sacrifice***

1. He is "*that prophet*."
  - 1.) Declared the will of God.
  - 2.) Published anew the law of nature.
  - 3.) Taught with authority.
  - 4.) Revealed the right manner of worship.
  - 5.) Revealed the exact use of repentance.
  - 6.) Revealed future rewards and punishments.
  - 7.) Set us a perfect example.
2. He has a *kingdom* which is not of this world.
  - 1.) Founded a church.
  - 2.) Governs it.
  - 3.) Of it, all who obey him are members.
  - 4.) Each of these shall live and reign with him forever.
3. He is a propitiatory *sacrifice*.
  - 1.) How his sacrifice becomes efficacious, we are not exactly told.
  - 2.) Conjectures may be absurd; at least cannot be certain.
  - 3.) If any complain for want of further instruction, let him produce his claim to it.
  - 4.) Some, because they cannot explain, leave it out of their creed; and regard Christ only as a teacher.
  - 5.) We had better accept the benefit, without disputing about how it was procured.

**VII. *We are not judges, antecedent to revelation, whether a mediator was necessary, nor what should be the whole nature of his office***

1. We know not how future punishment would have been inflicted.
2. Nor all the reasons why it would be necessary.
3. The satisfaction by Christ, does not represent God as indifferent whether he punishes the innocent or guilty.
  - 1.) We see, in this world, the innocent *forced* to suffer for the faults of the guilty.
  - 2.) But Christ suffered *voluntarily*.
4. Though, finally, every one shall receive according to his own deserts; yet, during the progress of God's scheme, *vicarious* sufferings may be necessary.
  - 1.) God commands us to assist others, though in many cases it costs us suffering and toil.
  - 2.) One person's sufferings often tend to relieve another.
5. Vicarious atonement for sinners, serves to vindicate the authority of God's laws, and to deter men from sin.
6. Objections to vicarious suffering are obviously not objections to Christianity, but to the whole course of nature.
7. The objection, therefore, amounts to nothing more than saying that a divine arrangement is not necessary, or fit, because the objector does not see it to be so; though he must own he is no judge, and *could* not understand why it should be necessary, if it were so!

**VIII. *We have no reason to expect the same information touching God's conduct, as we have in relation to our own duty***

1. God instructs us by experience.
2. This experience, though sufficient for our purposes, is an infinitely small part of his providence.
3. The things not understood involve God's appointment, and Christ's execution; but what *is required of us*, we are clearly informed.
4. Even the reasons for Christian precepts are made obvious.

**CHAPTER VI**

**SUPPOSED LACK OF PROOF OF REVELATION,  
AND ITS WANT OF UNIVERSALITY**

It has been thought to be a positive argument against revelation, that its evidences are not adequate, and that it is not universally known and believed.

But the argument amounts to just this, that God would not bestow on us any favor, except in such a mode and degree as we thought best, and did exactly the same for everybody else.

Such a notion, all analogy contradicts.

### ***I. Men act in their most important concerns on doubtful evidence***

1. It is often absolutely *impossible* to say which of two modes of acting will give most pleasure or profit.
2. If it were possible, we cannot know what changes temper, satiety, ill health, &c. might produce, so as to destroy our pleasure.
3. We cannot foresee what accidents may cut it all off.
4. Strong objections and difficulties may attach to the course of action we adopt, which yet all would admit ought not to deter us.
5. We may, after all, be deceived by appearances, or by our passions, &c.
6. Men think it reasonable to engage in pursuit of advantage, even when the probabilities of success are against them.

### ***II. As to the light of Christianity not being universal***

1. Temporal good is enjoyed in very different degrees even among creatures of the same species.
2. Yet it is certain that God governs.
3. We may prudently or imprudently use our good things.
4. The Jewish religion was not universal.
5. If it be *intended* that Christianity should be a small light, shining in a great and wide-spread darkness, it would be perfectly uniform with other parts of God's providence.
6. If some have Christianity so corrupted, and interpolated, as to cause thoughtful persons to doubt it, as is the case in some countries; and if, where it is the purest, some learn much less from it than they might, there are manifest parallels in God's natural dispensations.
7. No more is expected of any one, than is equitable under his circumstances.
8. Every one is bound to get rid of his ignorance, as far as he can, and to instruct his neighbor.
9. If revelation *were* universal, in extent and degree, different understandings, educations, tempers, length of lives, and outward advantages, would soon make the knowledge of it as different as it is at present.

### ***III. Practical reflections***

*First.* That the evidence of religion is not such as unavoidably to convince all, may be part of our probation.

1. It gives scope for a wise or vicious use of our understanding. Just as is the case in common affairs.

2. Intellectual inattention to so serious a matter, is as immoral, as disobedience after conviction of the truth.

*Secondly.* If the evidence is really doubtful, it puts us on probation.

1. If a man were in doubt whether a certain person had done him the greatest favor, or whether his whole temporal interest depended on him, he ought not to regard that person as he would if there were *no* reason to think so.

2. So if there is only reason to apprehend that Christianity *may* be true, we are as much bound to *examine*, &c. as we would be bound to *obey*, if we *knew* it was true.

3. Considering the infinite importance of religion, there is not much difference as to what ought to be the mode of life of those who are convinced and those who doubt its truth. Their hopes and fears are the same in kind, though not in degree; and so their obligations are much the same.

4. Doubts presuppose *some* evidence, belief *more*, and certainty *more still*. Each state should influence our conduct, and does so, in common things.

5. It shows a mental defect not to see evidence unless it is glaring; and a corrupt heart not to be influenced by it unless overpowering.

*Thirdly*. Difficulties as to believing religion, are no more a ground of complaint, than difficulties in practising it.

1. They constitute a wholesome discipline.

1.) In allowing an unfair mind to deceive itself.

2.) In requiring belief and the practice of virtue under some uncertainties.

2. In the case of some minds, speculative difficulties as to the evidence of religion is the *principal* trial. A full conviction of its truth would *constrain* some to obedience.

*Fourthly*. The difficulties may be *in the objector* rather than in the religion.

1. Not sufficiently in earnest to be informed.

2. Secretly *wishes* religion not to be true.

3. Looks at objections rather than replies.

4. Treats the subject ludicrously.

*Fifthly*. The proof of Christianity is level to common men.

1. They are capable of being convinced of the existence of God, and of their moral accountability.

2. And they can understand the evidence of miracles, and the fulfilment of prophecy.

3. If they are capable of seeing the difficulty, they are capable of understanding the proof.

4. If they pick up objections from hearsay, and will not or cannot examine them thoroughly, they must remain ignorant, just as they do as to the sciences.

*Objec*. Our directions should be too plain to *admit* of doubt; like those of an earthly master.

*Ans*. The earthly master only wants his work done, and is careless as to the state of the heart; but as the whole of morality consists in the state of the heart, the cases are not parallel.

*Finally*. The credibility of our being in a state of probation is just as great as the credibility of there being any religion. Our probation may be whether we choose to inform ourselves as to our duty, and then whether we choose to do it.

Such is exactly the case as to temporal matters. To discern what is best often requires difficult consideration, and yet leaves doubts: and not reflecting carefully, or not acting even when there may be doubt, is often fatal.

## CHAPTER VII

### POSITIVE EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY

Having considered the objections both to the general scheme of Christianity, and to particular doctrines in it, it only remains to consider the positive evidence of its truth; *i. e.* what analogy teaches with regard to that evidence.

There are many evidences of Christianity, beside those from miracles or prophecy, which are the principal; embracing a great variety of proofs, direct and collateral, and reaching through all past time. We shall now consider the proofs from MIRACLES and PROPHECY.

#### I. *Miracles*

1. Bible history gives the same evidence for the miracles described, as for common events.

1.) The miracles are evidently not put in for ornament, as speeches are by historians and poets put into the mouths of heroes.

2.) The accounts of them have been quoted as genuine, by various writers, from that day to this.

3.) These accounts are confirmed by subsequent events; and the miracles alone, can account for those events.

4.) The only fair way of accounting for these statements, and their reception in the world, is that the things really happened.

5.) The statements should be admitted till disproved, even if doubtful.

2. Paul's Epistles have evidences of genuineness, beyond what can attach to mere history.

1.) *Additional.* His evidence is quite detached. He received the gospel not in common with the other apostles, but separately, and direct from Christ, *after* his ascension.

2.) *Peculiar.* He speaks of Christ's miracles and those of others *incidentally*, as familiar facts, fully believed by those to whom he wrote.

3. Christianity demands credence on the ground of its miracles, and was so received by great numbers, at the time and on the spot; which is the case with no other religion.

1.) Its first converts embraced it on this ground.

2.) It is not conceivable that they would have done so, at such fearful sacrifice, unless fully satisfied of the truth of these miracles.

3.) Such a profession and sacrifices furnish the same kind of evidence as if they had testified to the truth of the miracles in writing.

4.) It is real evidence, for they had full opportunity to inform themselves.

5.) It is a sort of evidence *distinct* from direct history, though of the same nature.

6.) Men are suspicious as well as credulous, and slow to believe *against their interests*, as these did.

4. It lies upon unbelievers to show why all this array of proof is to be rejected; but in such an important concern we shall proceed to notice some possible objections.

*Objec.* 1. Enthusiasts make similar sacrifices for idle follies.

*Ans.* 1. This objection ignores the distinction between opinions and facts. Suffering for an opinion is no proof of its truth; but in attestation of observed facts, it is proof.

2. Enthusiasm *weakens* testimony, it is true, even as to facts; and so does disease, *in particular instances*. But when great numbers, not weak, nor negligent, affirm that *they* saw and heard certain things, it is the fullest evidence.

3. To reject testimony on the ground of enthusiasm, requires that the things testified be *incredible*; which has not been shown, as to religion, but the contrary.

4. Religion is not the only thing in regard to which witnesses are liable to enthusiasm. In common matters, we *get at the truth* through witnesses, though influenced by party spirit, custom, humor, romance, &c. &c.

*Objec.* 2. Enthusiasm and knavery may have been combined in the apostles and first Christians.

*Ans.* Such a mixture is often seen, and is often reprov'd in Scripture; but not more in religious than in common affairs. Men in all matters deceive themselves and others, in every degree, yet human testimony is good ground of belief.

*Objec.* 3. Men have been deluded by false miracles.

*Ans.* Not oftener than by other pretences.

*Objec.* 4. Fabulous miracles have historical evidence.

*Ans.* 1. If this were equal to that for Scripture miracles, the evidence for the latter would not be *impaired*. The objection really amounts to this, that evidence proved not to be good, destroys evidence which is good and unconfuted! Or to this, that if two men, of equal reputation, testify, in *cases not related* to each other, and one is proved false, the other must not be believed!

2. Nothing can rebut testimony, but proof that the witness is incompetent, or misled.

3. Against all such objections must be set the fact that Christianity was too serious a matter to allow the first converts to be careless as to its evidence; and also that their religion forbid them to deceive others.

## II. As to the evidence from prophecy

1. Obscurity as to *part* of a prophecy does not invalidate it, but is, as to us, as if that part were not written, or were lost. We may not see the whole prophecy fulfilled, and yet see enough fulfilled to perceive in it more than human foresight.

2. A *long series* of prophecies, all applicable to certain events, is proof that such events were intended. This answers the objection that *particular* prophecies were not intended to be applied as Christians apply them.

Mythological and satirical writings greatly resemble prophecy. Now we apply a parable, or fable, or satire, merely from seeing it *capable* of such application.

So if a long series of prophecies be *applicable* to the present state of the world, or to the coming of Christ, it is proof that they were so *intended*.

Besides, the ancient Jews, *before* Christ, applied the prophecies to him, just as Christians do now.

3. If it could be shown that the prophets did not understand their own predictions, or that their prophecies are capable of being applied to other events than those to which Christians apply them, it would not abate the force of the argument from prophecy, even with regard to those instances. For,

1.) To know the whole meaning of an author we must know the whole meaning of his book, but knowing the meaning of a book is not knowing the whole mind of the author.

2.) If the book is a *compilation*, the authors may have meanings deeper than the compiler saw. If the prophets spoke by inspiration, they are not the authors, but the writers of prophecy, and may not have known all that the Divine Spirit intended. But the fulfilment of the prophecy shows a foresight more than human.

### REMARK

This whole argument is just and real; but it is not expected that those will be satisfied who will not submit to the perplexity and labor of understanding it; or who have not modesty and fairness enough to allow an argument its due weight; or who wilfully discard the whole investigation.

### THE GENERAL ARGUMENT

We *now* proceed to THE GENERAL ARGUMENT embracing both direct and circumstantial evidence. A full discussion would require a volume, and cannot be expected here; but *something* should be said, especially as most questions of difficulty, in practical affairs, are settled by evidence arising from circumstances which confirm each other.

The thing asserted is that God has given us a revelation declaring himself to be a moral governor; stating his system of government; and disclosing a plan for the recovery of mankind out of sin, and raising them to perfect and final happiness.

#### I. *Consider this revelation as a history*

1. It furnishes an account of the world, as God's world.

1.) God's providence, commands, promises, and threatenings.

2.) Distinguishes God from idols.

3.) Describes the condition of religion and of its professors, in a world considered as apostate and wicked.

4.) Political events are related as affecting religion, and not for their importance as mere political events.

5.) The history is continued by prophecy, to the end of the world.

2. It embraces a vast variety of other topics; natural and moral.

1.) Thus furnishing the largest scope for criticism.

2.) So that *doubts* of its truth confirm that truth, for in this enlightened age the claims of a book of such a nature could be easily and finally shown to be false, if they were so.

3.) None who believe in natural religion, hold that Christianity has been thus confuted.

3. It contains a minute account of God's selecting one nation for his peculiar people, and of his dealings with them.

1.) Interpositions in their behalf.

- 2.) Threats of dispersion, &c. if they rebelled.
- 3.) Promises of a Messiah as their prince; so clearly as to raise a general expectation, &c.
- 4.) Foretelling his rejection by them, and that he should be the Savior of the Gentiles.
4. Describes minutely the arrival of the Messiah, and his life and labors; and the result, in the establishment of a new religion.

## II. *As to the authenticity of this history*

Suppose a person ignorant of all history but the Bible, and not knowing even that to be true, were to inquire into its evidence of authenticity, he would find,

1. That natural religion owes its establishment to *the truths* contained in this book. This no more *disproves* natural religion, than our learning a proposition from Euclid, shows that the proposition was not true before Euclid.
2. The great antiquity of revelation.
3. That its chronology is not contradicted but confirmed by known facts.
4. That there is nothing in the history itself to awaken suspicion of its fidelity.
  - 1.) Every thing said to be done in any age or country, is conformable to the manners of that age and country.
  - 2.) The characters are all perfectly natural.
  - 3.) All the domestic and political incidents are credible. Some of these, taken alone, seem strange to *some*, in *this* day; but not more so than things now occurring.
  - 4.) Transcribers may have made errors, but these are not more numerous than in other ancient books; and none of them impair the narrative.
5. That profane authors confirm Scripture accounts.
6. That the credibility of the *general* history, confirms the accounts of the miracles, for they are all interwoven, and make but one statement.
7. That there certainly was and is such a people as the Jews; whose form of government was founded on these very books of Moses; and whose acknowledgment of the God of the Bible, kept them a distinct race.
8. That one Jesus, of Jewish extraction, arose at the time when the Jews expected a Messiah, was rejected by them, as was prophesied, and was received by the Gentiles, as was prophesied.
9. That the religion of this Jesus spread till it became the religion of the world, notwithstanding every sort of resistance; and has continued till now.
10. That the Jewish government was destroyed, and the people dispersed into all lands; and still for many centuries, continue to be a distinct race, professing the law of Moses. If this separateness be *accounted for*, in any way, it does not destroy the fact that it was *predicted*.

## CONCLUSION

1. Recapitulation of the preceding ten observations.
2. Add the fact that there are obvious appearances in the world, aside from the Jews, which correspond to prophetic history.



3. These appearances, compared with Bible history, and with each other, in *a joint view*, will appear to be of great weight, and would impress one who regarded them for the first time, more than they do us who have been familiar with them.

4. The preceding discussion, though not thorough, amounts to proof of something more than human in this matter.

1.) The sufficiency of these proofs may be denied, but the *existence* of them cannot be.

2.) The conformity of prophecies to events may be said to be accidental, but the *conformity itself* cannot be denied.

3.) These collateral proofs may be pronounced fanciful, but it cannot be said they are *nothing*. Probabilities may not amount to demonstration, but they remain probabilities.

5. Those who will set down all seeming completions of prophecy, and judge of them by the common rules of evidence, will find that *together* they amount to strong proof. Because probable proofs, added together, not only increase evidence, but multiply it.

6. It is very well to observe objections; but it should be remembered that a mistake on one side is far more dangerous than a mistake on the other; and the safest conclusion is the best.

7. Religion, like other things, is to be judged by all the evidence taken together. Unless *all* its proofs be overthrown, it remains proved. If no proof singly were sufficient, the whole taken together might be.

8. It is much easier to start an objection, than to comprehend the united force of a whole argument.

9. Thus it appears that the positive evidence of revelation cannot be destroyed, though it should be lessened.

## CHAPTER VIII

### OBJECTIONS AGAINST THE ANALOGICAL ARGUMENT

If all made up their minds with proper care and candor, there would be no need of this chapter. But some do not try to understand what they condemn; and our mode of argument is open to objections, especially in the minds of those who judge without thinking. The chief objections will therefore be considered. They are these: – it does not solve difficulties in revelation to say that there are as great in natural religion: – it will not make men religious to show them that it is *as* important as worldly prudence, for showing that, does not make them prudent: – the justice of God in the system of religion, is not proved by showing it is as apparent as in his natural providence: – no reasoning from analogy can carry full conviction: – mankind will not renounce present pleasures, for a religion which is not free from doubt. To each of which a reply will now be given.

#### I. *As to requiring a solution of all difficulties*

1. This is but resolving to comprehend the nature of God, and the whole plan of his government throughout eternity.

2. It is always right to argue from what is known, to what is disputed. We are constantly so doing. The most eminent physician does not understand all diseases, yet we do not despise what he does know.

3. It is very important to find that objections against revelation are just as strong, not only against natural religion, but against the course of nature.

## ***II. As to men's having as little reason for worldly pursuits, as they have for being religious***

1. If men can be convinced that they have as much reason to be religious as they have to practise worldly prudence, then *there is* a reason for being religious.

2. If religion proposes greater than worldly interests, and has the same reasons for belief, then it has proportionally a greater claim.

3. If religion being left doubtful, proves it to be false, then doubts as to the success of any worldly pursuit show it to be wrong. Yet we constantly act, even in the most important affairs, without *certainty* of being right.

## ***III. As to the justice and goodness of God in religion***

1. Our business is not to vindicate God, but to learn our duty, governed as we are; which is a very different thing. It has been shown that if we knew all things, present, past, and future, and the relations of each thing to all other things, we might see to be just and good what now do not seem so: and it is probable we should.

2. We do not say that objections against God's justice and goodness are removed by showing the like objections against natural providence, but that they are not *conclusive*, because they apply equally to what we know to be facts.

3. The existence of objections does not destroy the evidence of facts. The fact for instance that God rewards and punishes, though men may think it unjust. Even necessity, plead for human acts, does no more to abolish justice than it does injustice.

4. Though the reasonableness of Christianity cannot be shown from analogy, the truth of it may. The truth of a fact may be proved without regard to its quality. The reasonableness of obeying Christianity is proved, if we barely prove Christianity itself to be possible.

5. Though analogy may not show Christian precepts to be good, it proves them to be credible.

## ***IV. The analogical argument does not remove doubt***

1. What opinion does any man hold, about which there can be no doubt? Even the best way of preserving and enjoying this life, is not agreed upon. Whether our measures will accomplish our objects, is always uncertain; and still more whether the objects, if accomplished, will give us happiness. Yet men do not on this account refuse to make exertion.

2. This objection overlooks the very nature of religion. The embracing of it presupposes a certain degree of candor and integrity, to try which, and exercise,

and improve it, is its intention. Just as warning a man of danger, presupposes a disposition to avoid danger.

3. Religion is a probation, and has evidence enough as such; and would not be such, if it compelled assent.

4. We never mean by sufficient evidence, such an amount as necessarily determines a man to act, but only such as will show an action to be prudent.

### ***V. As to the small influence of the analogical argument***

1. As just observed, religion is a *test*, and an *exercise*, of character; and that some reject it is nothing to our purpose. We are inquiring not what sort of creature man is, but what he should be. This is each man's own concern.

2. Religion, as a probation, accomplishes its end, whether individuals believe or not.

3. Even this objection admits that religion has some weight, and of course it should have some influence; and if so, there is the same reason, though not so strong, for publishing it, that there would be, if it were likely to have greater influence.

Further. It must be considered that the reasoning in this treatise is on the principles of other men, and arguments of the utmost importance are omitted, because not universally admitted. Thus as to Fatalism, and the abstract fitness or unfitness of actions. The general argument is just a question of fact, and is here so treated. Abstract truths are usually advanced as proof; but in this work, only *facts* are adduced. That the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, is an abstract truth: but that they so appear to us, is only a matter of fact. That there is such a thing as abstract right and wrong, which determines the will of God in rewarding and punishing, is an assertion of an abstract truth, as well as a fact. Suppose God in this world rewarded and punished every man exactly as he obeyed or disobeyed his conscience, this would not be an abstract truth, but a fact. And if all acknowledged this as a fact, all would not see it to be right. If, instead of his doing it now, we say he will do it hereafter, this too is not an abstract truth, but a question of fact. This fact could be fully proved on the abstract principles of moral fitness; but without them, there has now been given a *conclusive practical proof*; which though it may be cavilled at, and shown not to amount to demonstration, cannot be answered.

Hence it may be said as to the force of this treatise,

1. To such as are convinced of the truth of revelation, as proved on the principles of liberty and moral fitness, it will furnish a full confirmation. To such as do not admit those principles it is an original proof.

2. Those who believe will find objections removed, and those who disbelieve will find they have no grounds for their scepticism; and a good deal beside.

3. Thus though some may think *too much* is here made of analogy, yet there can be no denying that the argument is *real*. It confirms *all facts* to which it can be applied; and of many is the only proof. It is strong on the side of religion, and ought to be regarded by such as prefer facts to abstract reasonings.

## **CONCLUSION**

Recapitulates the general structure and design of the argument, the classes of persons for whose benefit it is particularly adopted, and declares those who reject Christianity to be wholly without excuse.

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If the reader should here meet with any thing which he had not before attended to, it will not be in the observations upon the constitution and course of nature, these being all obvious, but in the application of them; in which, though there is nothing but what appears to me of some real weight, and therefore of great importance, yet he will observe several things, which will appear to him of very little, if he can think things to be of little importance, which are of any real weight at all, upon such a subject of religion. However, the proper force of the following treatise lies in the whole general analogy considered together.

It is come, I know not how to be taken for granted, by many persons, that Christianity is not so much as a subject of inquiry; but that it is, now at length, discovered to be fictitious. Accordingly they treat it, as if, in the present age, this were an agreed point among all people of discernment; and nothing remained, but to set it up as a principal subject of mirth and ridicule, as it were by way of reprisals, for its having so long interrupted the pleasures of the world. On the contrary, thus much at least, will be here found, not taken for granted but proved, that any reasonable man, who will thoroughly consider the matter, may be as much assured, as he is of his own being, that it is not so clear a case, that there is nothing in it. There is, I think, strong evidence of its truth; but it is certain no one can, upon principles of reason, be satisfied of the contrary. The practical consequence to be drawn from this, is not attended to by every one who is concerned in it.

*May, 1736.*

## INTRODUCTION

Probable evidence is essentially distinguished from demonstrative by this, that it admits of degrees; and of all variety of them, from the highest moral certainty, to the very lowest presumption. We cannot indeed say a thing is probably true upon one very slight presumption for it; because, as there may be probabilities on both sides of a question, there may be some against it; and though there be not, yet a slight presumption does not beget that degree of conviction, which is implied in saying a thing is probably true. But that the slightest possible presumption is of the nature of a probability, appears from hence; that such low presumption, often repeated, will amount even to moral certainty. Thus a man's having observed the ebb and flow of the tide to-day, affords some sort of presumption, though the lowest imaginable, that it may happen again to-morrow: but the observation of this event for so many days, and months, and ages together, as it has been observed by mankind, gives us a full assurance that it will.

That which chiefly constitutes *probability* is expressed in the word *likely*, *i. e.* like some truth,<sup>6</sup> or true event; like it, in itself, in its evidence, in some (more or fewer) of its circumstances.<sup>7</sup> For when we determine a thing to be probably true, suppose that an event has or will come to pass, it is from the mind's remarking in it a likeness to some other event, which we have observed has come to pass. This observation forms, in numberless daily instances, a presumption, opinion, or full conviction, that such event has or will come to pass; according as the observation is, that the like event has sometimes, most commonly, or always, so far as our observation reaches, come to pass at like distances of time, or place, or upon like occasions. Hence arises the belief, that a child, if it lives twenty years, will grow up to the stature and strength of a man; that food will contribute to the preservation of its life, and the want of it for such a number of days, be its certain destruction. So likewise the rule and measure of our hopes and fears concerning the success of our pursuits; our expectations that others will act so and so in such circumstances; and our judgment that such actions proceed from such principles; all these rely upon our having observed the like to what we hope, fear, expect, judge; I say, upon our having observed the like, either with respect to others or ourselves. Thus, the prince<sup>8</sup> who had always lived in a warm climate, naturally concluded in the way of analogy, that there was no such thing as water's becoming hard, because he had always observed it to be fluid and yielding. We, on the contrary, from analogy conclude, that there is no presumption at all against this: that it is supposable there may be frost in England any given day in January next; probable that there will on some day of the month; and that there is a moral certainty, *i. e.* ground for an expectation without any doubt of it, in some part or other of the winter.

Probable evidence, in its very nature, affords but an imperfect kind of information; and is to be considered as relative only to beings of limited capacities. For nothing which is the possible object of knowledge, whether past, present, or future, can be probable to an infinite intelligence; since it cannot but be discerned absolutely as it is in itself, certainly true, or certainly false. But to us, probability is the very guide of life.

From these things it follows, that in questions of difficulty, or such as are thought so, where more satisfactory evidence cannot be had, or is not seen; if the result of examination be, that there appears upon the whole, any even the lowest presumption on one side, and none on the other, or a greater presumption on one side, though in the lowest degree greater; this determines the question,

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<sup>6</sup> Verisimile.

<sup>7</sup> [These three ways of being "like," are very distinct from each other. The first is equivalent to a logical induction. The second produces belief, because the same evidence made us believe in a similar case. The third is just an analogy, in the popular sense of the term.]

<sup>8</sup> The story is told by Mr. Locke in the Chapter of Probability.

even in matters of speculation. In matters of practice, it will lay us under an absolute and formal obligation, in point of prudence and of interest, to act upon that presumption or low probability, though it be so low as to leave the mind in very great doubt which is the truth. For surely a man is as really bound in prudence to do what upon the whole, according to the best of his judgment, appears to be for his happiness,<sup>9</sup> as what he certainly knows to be so.

Further, in questions of great consequence, a reasonable man will think it concerns him to remark lower probabilities and presumptions than these; such as amount to no more than showing one side of a question to be as supposable and credible as the other: nay, such even as but amount to much less than this. For numberless instances might be mentioned respecting the common pursuits of life, where a man would be thought, in a literal sense, distracted, who would not act, and with great application too, not only upon an even chance, but upon much less, and where the probability or chance was greatly against his succeeding.<sup>10</sup>

It is not my design to inquire further into the nature, the foundation, and measure of probability; or whence it proceeds that *likeness* should beget that presumption, opinion, and full conviction, which the human mind is formed to receive from it, and which it does necessarily produce in every one; or to guard against the errors, to which reasoning from analogy is liable. This belongs to the subject of Logic; and is a part of that subject which has not yet been thoroughly considered. Indeed I shall not take upon me to say, how far the extent, compass, and force, of analogical reasoning, can be reduced to general heads and rules; and the whole be formed into a system. But though so little in this way has been attempted by those who have treated of our intellectual powers, and the exercise of them; this does not hinder but that we may be, as we unquestionably are, assured, that analogy is of weight, in various degrees, towards determining our judgment and our practice. Nor does it in any wise cease to be of weight in those cases, because persons, either given to dispute, or who require things to be stated with greater exactness than our faculties appear to admit of in practical matters, may find other cases in which it is not easy to say, whether it be, or be not, of any weight; or instances of seeming analogies, which are really of none. It is enough to the present purpose to observe, that this general way of arguing is evidently natural, just, and conclusive. For there is no man can make a question but that the sun will rise to-morrow, and be seen, where it is seen at all, in the figure of a circle, and not in that of a square.

Hence, namely from analogical reasoning, Origen<sup>11</sup> has with singular sagacity observed, that “*he who believes the Scripture to have proceeded from him who is the Author of nature, may well expect to find the same sort of difficulties in it, as are found in the constitution of nature.*” And in a like way of reflection it may be added, that he who denies the Scripture to have been from God upon account of these difficulties, may, for the very same reason, deny the world to have been formed by him. On the other hand, if there be an analogy or likeness between that system of things and dispensation of Providence, which *revelation* informs us of, and that system of things and dispensation of Providence, which *experience* together with reason informs us of, *i. e.* the known course of nature; this is a presumption, that they have both the same author and cause; at least so far as to answer objections against the former’s being from God, drawn from any thing which is analogical or similar to what is in the latter, which is acknowledged to be from him; for an Author of nature is here supposed.

Forming our notions of the constitution and government of the world upon reasoning, without foundation for the principles which we assume, whether from the attributes of God, or any thing else, is building a world upon hypothesis, like Des Cartes. Forming our notions upon reasoning from principles which are certain, but applied to cases to which we have no ground to apply them, (like

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<sup>9</sup> [This is good common sense, and men always act thus if prudent. But it is not enough thus to act in the matter of salvation. “He that *believeth* not shall be damned:” Mark xvi. 16. “He that *believeth* hath everlasting life:” John iii. 36. “With the heart man *believeth* unto righteousness:” Rom. x. 10. Belief is part of the sinner’s *duty* in submitting himself to God; and not merely a question of prudence.]

<sup>10</sup> See [Part II. chap. vi.](#)

<sup>11</sup> Philocal. p. 23, Ed. Cant.

those who explain the structure of the human body, and the nature of diseases and medicines, from mere mathematics,) is an error much akin to the former: since what is assumed in order to make the reasoning applicable, is Hypothesis. But it must be allowed just, to join abstract reasonings with the observation of facts, and argue from such facts as are known, to others that are like them; from that part of the divine government over intelligent creatures which comes under our view, to that larger and more general government over them which is beyond it; and from what is present, to collect what is likely, credible, or not incredible, will be hereafter.

This method then of concluding and determining being practical, and what, if we will act at all, we cannot but act upon in the common pursuits of life; being evidently conclusive, in various degrees, proportionable to the degree and exactness of the whole analogy or likeness; and having so great authority for its introduction into the subject of religion, even revealed religion; my design is to apply it to that subject in general, both natural and revealed: taking for proved, that there is an intelligent Author of nature, and natural Governor of the world. For as there is no presumption against this prior to the proof of it: so it has been often proved with accumulated evidence; from this argument of analogy and final causes; from abstract reasonings; from the most ancient tradition and testimony; and from the general consent of mankind. Nor does it appear, so far as I can find, to be denied by the generality of those who profess themselves dissatisfied with the evidence of religion.

As there are some, who, instead of thus attending to what is in fact the constitution of nature, form their notions of God's government upon hypothesis: so there are others, who indulge themselves in vain and idle speculations, how the world might possibly have been framed otherwise than it is; and upon supposition that things might, in imagining that they should, have been disposed and carried on after a better model, than what appears in the present disposition and conduct of them.<sup>12</sup> Suppose now a person of such a turn of mind, to go on with his reveries, till he had at length fixed upon some particular plan of nature, as appearing to him the best. – One shall scarce be thought guilty of detraction against human understanding, if one should say, even beforehand, that the plan which this speculative person would fix upon, though he were the wisest of the sons of men, probably would not be the very best, even according to his own notions of *best*; whether he thought that to be so, which afforded occasions and motives for the exercise of the greatest virtue, or which was productive of the greatest happiness, or that these two were necessarily connected, and run up into one and the same plan.

It may not be amiss, once for all, to see what would be the amount of these emendations and imaginary improvements upon the system of nature, or how far they would mislead us. It seems there could be no stopping, till we came to some such conclusions as these: that all creatures should at first be made as perfect and as happy as they were capable of ever being: that nothing, surely, of hazard or danger should be put upon them to do; some indolent persons would perhaps think nothing at all: or certainly, that effectual care should be taken, that they should, whether necessarily or not, yet eventually and in fact, always do what was right and most conducive to happiness; which would be thought easy for infinite power to effect, either by not giving them any principles which would endanger their going wrong, or by laying the right motive of action in every instance before their minds in so strong a manner, as would never fail of inducing them to act conformably to it: and that the whole method of government by punishments should be rejected as absurd; as an awkward roundabout method of carrying things on; nay, as contrary to a principal purpose, for which it would be supposed creatures were made, namely, happiness.

Now, without considering what is to be said in particular to the several parts of this train of folly and extravagance, what has been above intimated, is a full direct general answer to it; namely, that we may see beforehand that we have not faculties for this kind of speculation. For though it be

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<sup>12</sup> [Some of these speculations, carried to the full measure of absurdity and impiety, may be found in Bayle's great "Historical and Critical Dictionary." See as instances, the articles Origen, Manichæus, Paulicians.]

admitted that, from the first principles of our nature, we unavoidably judge or determine some ends to be absolutely in themselves preferable to others, and that the ends now mentioned, or if they run up into one, that this one is absolutely the best; and consequently that we must conclude the ultimate end designed, in the constitution of nature and conduct of Providence, is the most virtue and happiness possible; yet we are far from being able to judge what particular disposition of things would be most friendly and assistant to virtue; or what means might be absolutely necessary to produce the most happiness in a system of such extent as our own world may be, taking in all that is past and to come, though we should suppose it detached from the whole things. Indeed we are so far from being able to judge of this, that we are not judges what may be the necessary means of raising and conducting one person to the highest perfection and happiness of his nature. Nay, even in the little affairs of the present life, we find men of different educations and ranks are not competent judges of the conduct of each other. Our whole nature leads us to ascribe all moral perfection to God, and to deny all imperfection of him. And this will forever be a practical proof of his moral character, to such as will consider what a practical proof is; because it is the voice of God speaking in us. Hence we conclude, that virtue must be the happiness, and vice the misery, of every creature; and that regularity and order and right cannot but prevail finally in a universe under his government. But we are in no sort judges, what are the necessary means of accomplishing this end.

Let us then, instead of that idle and not very innocent employment of forming imaginary models of a world, and schemes of governing it, turn our thoughts to what we experience to be the conduct of nature with respect to intelligent creatures; which may be resolved into general laws or rules of administration, in the same way as many of the laws of nature respecting inanimate matter may be collected from experiments. Let us compare the known constitution and course of things with what is said to be the moral system of nature; the acknowledged dispensations of Providence, or that government which we find ourselves under, with what religion teaches us to believe and expect; and see whether they are not analogous and of a piece. Upon such a comparison it will, I think, be found that they are very much so: that both may be traced up to the same general laws, and resolved into the same principles of divine conduct.

The analogy here proposed to be considered is of pretty large extent, and consists of several parts; in some more, in others less exact. In some few instances perhaps, it may amount to a real practical proof; in others not so. Yet in these it is a confirmation of what is proved otherwise. It will undeniably show, what too many need to have shown them, that the system of religion, both natural and revealed, considered only as a system, and prior to the proof of it, is not a subject of ridicule, unless that of nature be so too. And it will afford an answer to almost all objections against the system both of natural and revealed religion; though not perhaps an answer in so great a degree, yet in a very considerable degree an answer to the objections against the evidence of it: for objections against a proof, and objections against what is said to be proved, the reader will observe are different things.

The divine government of the world, implied in the notion of religion in general and of Christianity, contains in it: that mankind is appointed to live in a future state;<sup>13</sup> that there every one shall be rewarded or punished;<sup>14</sup> rewarded or punished respectively for all that behaviour here, which we comprehend under the words, virtuous or vicious, morally good or evil:<sup>15</sup> that our present life is a probation, a state of trial,<sup>16</sup> and of discipline,<sup>17</sup> for that future one; notwithstanding the objections, which men may fancy they have, from notions of necessity, against there being any such moral plan

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<sup>13</sup> [Ch. i.](#)

<sup>14</sup> [Ch. ii.](#)

<sup>15</sup> [Ch. iii.](#)

<sup>16</sup> [Ch. iv.](#)

<sup>17</sup> [Ch. v.](#)



as this at all;<sup>18</sup> and whatever objections may appear to lie against the wisdom and goodness of it, as it stands so imperfectly made known to us at present:<sup>19</sup> that this world being in a state of apostasy and wickedness, and consequently of ruin, and the sense both of their condition and duty being greatly corrupted amongst men, this gave occasion for an additional dispensation of Providence; of the utmost importance;<sup>20</sup> proved by miracles;<sup>21</sup> but containing in it many things appearing to us strange, and not to have been expected;<sup>22</sup> a dispensation of Providence, which is a scheme or system of things;<sup>23</sup> carried on by the mediation of a divine person, the Messiah, in order to the recovery of the world;<sup>24</sup> yet not revealed to all men, nor proved with the strongest possible evidence to all those to whom it is revealed; but only to such a part of mankind, and with such particular evidence, as the wisdom of God thought fit.<sup>25</sup>

The design then of the following treatise will be to show, that the several parts principally objected against in this moral and Christian dispensation, including its scheme, its publication, and the proof which God has afforded us of its truth; that the particular parts principally objected against in this whole dispensation, are analogous to what is experienced in the constitution and course of nature or Providence; that the chief objections themselves which are alleged against the former, are no other than what may be alleged with like justness against the latter, where they are found in fact to be inconclusive; and that this argument from analogy is in general unanswerable, and undoubtedly of weight on the side of religion,<sup>26</sup> notwithstanding the objections which may seem to lie against it, and the real ground which there may be for difference of opinion, as to the particular degree of weight which is to be laid upon it. This is a general account of what may be looked for in the following treatise. I shall begin it with that which is the foundation of all our hopes and of all our fears; all our hopes and fears, which are of any consideration; I mean a future life.

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<sup>18</sup> [Ch. vi.](#)

<sup>19</sup> [Ch. vii.](#)

<sup>20</sup> [Part II. Ch. i.](#)

<sup>21</sup> [Ch. ii.](#)

<sup>22</sup> [Ch. iii.](#)

<sup>23</sup> [Ch. iv.](#)

<sup>24</sup> [Ch. v.](#)

<sup>25</sup> [Ch. vi. vii.](#)

<sup>26</sup> [Ch. viii.](#)

## PART I. Natural Religion

### CHAPTER I. A FUTURE LIFE. <sup>27</sup>

Strange difficulties have been raised by some concerning personal identity, or the sameness of living agents, implied in the notion of our existing now and hereafter, or in any two successive moments; which, whoever thinks it worth while, may see considered in the first dissertation at the end of this treatise. But without regard to any of them here, let us consider what the analogy of nature, and the several changes which we have undergone, and those which we know we may undergo without being destroyed, suggest, as to the effect which death may, or may not, have upon us; and whether it be not from thence probable, that we may survive this change, and exist in a future state of life and perception.

I. From our being born into the present world in the helpless imperfect state of infancy, and having arrived from thence to mature age, we find it to be a general law of nature in our own species, that the same creatures, the *same individuals*, should exist in degrees of life and perception, with capacities of action, of enjoyment and suffering, in one period of their being, greatly different from those appointed them in another period of it. In other creatures the same law holds. For the difference of their capacities and states of life at their birth (to go no higher) and in maturity; the change of worms into flies, and the vast enlargement of their locomotive powers by such change: and birds and insects bursting the shell of their habitation, and by this means entering into a new world, furnished with new accommodations for them, and finding a new sphere of action assigned them; these are instances of this general law of nature. Thus all the various and wonderful transformations of animals are to be taken into consideration here. The states of life in which we ourselves existed formerly, in the womb and in our infancy, are almost as different from our present in mature age, as it is possible to conceive any two states or degrees of life can be. Therefore that we are to exist hereafter, in a state as different (suppose) from our present, as this is from our former, is but according to the analogy of nature; according to a natural order or appointment of the very same kind, with what we have already experienced.

II. We know we are endued with capacities of action, of happiness and misery: for we are conscious of acting, of enjoying pleasure and suffering pain. Now that we have these powers and capacities before death, is a presumption that we shall retain them through and after death; indeed a probability of it abundantly sufficient to act upon, unless there be some positive reason to think that death is the destruction of those living powers; because there is in every case a 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. This is that *kind*<sup>28</sup> of presumption or probability from analogy, expressed in the very word *continuance*, which seems our only natural reason for believing the course of the world will continue to-morrow, as it has done so far as our experience or knowledge of history can carry us back. Nay, it seems our only reason for believing, that any one substance now existing

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<sup>27</sup> [This chapter Dr. Chalmers regards as the least satisfactory in the book: not because lacking in just analogies, but because infected with the obscure metaphysics of that age. His reasoning, however, only serves to show that B. has perhaps made too much of the argument from the indivisibility of consciousness; and by no means that he does not fairly use it.

<sup>28</sup> I say *kind* of presumption or probability; for I do not mean to affirm that there is the same *degree* of conviction, that our living powers will continue after death, as there is, that our substances will.

will continue to exist a moment longer; the self-existent substance only excepted. Thus if men were assured that the unknown event, death, was not the destruction of our faculties of perception and of action, there would be no apprehension that any other power or event, unconnected with this of death, would destroy these faculties just at the instant of each creature's death; and therefore no doubt but that they would remain after it; which shows the high probability that our living powers will continue after death, unless there be some ground to think that death is their destruction.<sup>29</sup> For, if it would be in a manner certain that we should survive death,<sup>30</sup> provided it were certain that death would not be our destruction, it must be highly probable we shall survive it, if there be no ground to think death will be our destruction.

Though I think it must be acknowledged, that prior to the natural and moral proofs of a future life commonly insisted upon, there would arise a general confused suspicion, that in the great shock and alteration which we shall undergo by death, we, *i. e.* our living powers, might be wholly destroyed; yet even prior to those proofs, there is really no particular distinct ground or reason for this apprehension at all, so far as I can find. If there be, it must arise either from *the reason of the thing*, or from *the analogy of nature*.

But we cannot argue from *the reason of the thing*, that death is the destruction of living agents, because we know not at all what death is in itself; but only some of its effects, such as the dissolution of flesh, skin, and bones. These effects do in no wise appear to imply the destruction of a living agent. Besides, as we are greatly in the dark, upon what the exercise of our living powers depends, so we are wholly ignorant what the powers themselves depend upon; the powers themselves as distinguished, not only from their actual exercise, but also from the present capacity of exercising them; and as opposed to their destruction: for sleep, or certainly a swoon, shows us, not only that these powers exist when they are not exercised, as the passive power of motion does in inanimate matter; but shows also that they exist, when there is no present capacity of exercising them: or that the capacities of exercising them for the present, as well as the actual exercise of them, may be suspended, and yet the powers themselves remain undestroyed. Since then we know not at all upon what the existence of our living powers depends, this shows further, there can no probability be collected from the reason of the thing, that death will be their destruction: because their existence may depend upon somewhat in no degree affected by death; upon somewhat quite out of the reach of this kind of terrors. So that there is nothing more certain, than that *the reason of the thing* shows us no connection between death and the destruction of living agents.

Nor can we find any thing throughout the whole *analogy of nature* to afford us even the slightest presumption, that animals ever lose their living powers; much less if it were possible, that they lose them by death: for we have no faculties wherewith to trace any beyond or through it, so as to see what becomes of them. This event removes them from our view. It destroys the *sensible* proof, which we had before their death, of their being possessed of living powers, but does not appear to afford the least reason to believe that they are, then, or by that event, deprived of them.

Our knowing that they were possessed of these powers, up to the very period to which we have faculties capable of tracing them, is itself a probability of their retaining them beyond it. This is confirmed, and a sensible credibility is given to it, by observing the very great and astonishing

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<sup>29</sup> *Destruction of living powers*, is a manner of expression unavoidably ambiguous; and may signify either *the destruction of a living being, so as that the same living being shall be incapable of ever perceiving or acting again at all*; or *the destruction of those means and instruments by which it is capable of its present life, of its present state of perception and of action*. It is here used in the former sense. When it is used in the latter, the epithet *present* is added. The loss of a man's eye is a destruction of living powers in the latter sense. But we have no reason to think the destruction of living powers, in the former sense, to be possible. We have no more reason to think a being endued with living powers, ever loses them during its whole existence, than to believe that a stone ever acquires them.

<sup>30</sup> [The next paragraph indicates that Butler does not, as Chalmers thinks, consider this argument as "handing us over to an absolute demonstration." It just places all arguments for and against the soul's future life, in that balanced condition, which leaves us to learn the fact from revelation, free from presumptions *against* its truth. This view of the case entirely relieves the objection as to the future life of brutes; and shows how entirely we must rely on revelation, as to the future, both of man and beast.]

changes which we have experienced; so great, that our existence in another state of life, of perception and of action, will be but according to a method of providential conduct, the like to which has been already exercised even with regard to ourselves; according to a course of nature, the like to which we have already gone through.

However, as one cannot but be greatly sensible, how difficult it is to silence imagination enough to make the voice of reason even distinctly heard in this case; as we are accustomed, from our youth up, to indulge that forward, delusive faculty, ever obtruding beyond its sphere; (of some assistance indeed to apprehension, but the author of all error,) as we plainly lose ourselves in gross and crude conceptions of things, taking for granted that we are acquainted with what indeed we are wholly ignorant of: it may be proper to consider the imaginary presumptions, that death will be our destruction, arising from these kinds of early and lasting prejudices; and to show how little they really amount to, even though we cannot wholly divest ourselves of them. And,

I. All presumption of death's being the destruction of living beings, must go upon supposition that they are compounded;<sup>31</sup> and so, discernible. But since consciousness is a single and indivisible power, it should seem that the subject in which it resides must be so too. For were the motion of any particle of matter absolutely one and indivisible, so as that it should imply a contradiction to suppose part of this motion to exist, and part not to exist, *i. e.* part of this matter to move, and part to be at rest, then its power of motion would be indivisible; and so also would the subject in which the power inheres, namely, the particle of matter: for if this could be divided into two, one part might be moved and the other at rest, which is contrary to the supposition.

In like manner it has been argued,<sup>32</sup> and, for any thing appearing to the contrary, justly, that since the perception or consciousness, which we have of our own existence, is indivisible, so as that it is a contradiction to suppose one part of it should be here and the other there; the perceptive power, or the power of consciousness, is indivisible too: and consequently the subject in which it resides, *i. e.* the conscious being. Now, upon supposition that the living agent each man calls himself, is thus a single being, which there is at least no more difficulty in conceiving than in conceiving it to be a compound, and of which there is the proof now mentioned; it follows, that our organized bodies are no more ourselves or part of ourselves, than any other matter around us. And it is as easy to conceive, how matter, which is no part of ourselves, may be appropriated to us in the manner which our present bodies are; as how we can receive impressions from, and have power over, any matter. It is as easy to conceive, that we may exist out of bodies, as in them; and that we might have animated bodies of any other organs and senses wholly different from these now given us; and that we may hereafter animate these same or new bodies, variously modified and organized; as to conceive how we can animate such bodies as our present. And lastly, the dissolution of all these several organized bodies, supposing ourselves to have successively animated them, would have no more conceivable tendency to destroy the living beings ourselves, or deprive us of living faculties, the faculties of perception and of action, than the dissolution of any foreign matter, which we are capable of receiving impressions from, and making use of, for the common occasions of life.

II. The simplicity and absolute oneness of a living agent cannot, from the nature of the thing, be properly proved by experimental observations. But as these *fall in* with the supposition of its

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<sup>31</sup> [Dodwell had published a book, in which he argues that human souls are not *naturally* immortal, but become so, by the power of the Holy Ghost, in regeneration. Dr. Clarke replied. The controversy was continued by Collins. Dr. C. wrote four tracts on the subject. These "presumptions" form the base of materialism, and hence the denial of a future state. Surely, thoughts and feelings, if material, have extension. But can any one conceive of love a foot long, or anger an inch thick? How superior to the gloomy mists of modern infidels have even pagans been! Cicero makes Cato say, "The soul is a simple, uncompounded substance, without parts or mixture: it cannot be divided, and so cannot perish." And in another place, "I never could believe that the soul lost its senses by escaping from senseless matter; or that such a release will not enlarge and improve its powers;" and again, "I am persuaded that I shall only begin truly to live, when I cease to live in this world," Xenophon reports Cyrus as saying, in his last moments, "O my sons! do not imagine that when death has taken me from you, I shall cease to exist."]

<sup>32</sup> See Dr. Clarke's Letter to Mr. Dodwell, and the defences of it.

unity, so they plainly lead us to *conclude* certainly, that our gross organized bodies, with which we perceive objects of sense, and with which we act, are no part of ourselves; and therefore show us, that we have no reason to believe their destruction to be ours: even without determining whether our living substance be material or immaterial. For we see by experience, that men may lose their limbs, their organs of sense, and even the greatest part of these bodies, and yet remain the same living agents. Persons can trace up the existence of themselves to a time, when the bulk of their bodies was extremely small, in comparison of what it is in mature age: and we cannot but think, that they might *then* have lost a considerable part of that small body, and yet have remained the same living agents; as they may now lose great part of their present body, and remain so. And it is certain, that the bodies of all animals are in a constant flux;<sup>33</sup> from that never-ceasing attrition, which there is in every part of them. Now, things of this kind unavoidably teach us to distinguish, between these living agents ourselves, and large quantities of matter, in which we are very nearly interested; since these may be alienated, and actually are in a daily course of succession, and changing their owners; whilst we are assured, that each living agent remains one and the same permanent being.<sup>34</sup> And this general observation leads us on to the following ones.

*First*, That we have no way of determining by experience, what is the certain bulk of the living being each man calls himself: and yet, till it be determined that it is larger in bulk than the solid elementary particles of matter, which there is no ground to think any natural power can dissolve, there is no sort of reason to think death to be the dissolution of it, of the living being, even though it should not be absolutely indiscernible.

*Secondly*, From our being so nearly related to and interested in certain systems of matter, (suppose our flesh and bones,) and afterwards ceasing to be at all related to them, the living agents, ourselves, remaining all this while undestroyed notwithstanding such alienation; and consequently these systems of matter not being ourselves, it follows further that we have no ground to conclude any other (suppose *internal*) systems of matter, to be the living agents ourselves; because we can have no ground to conclude this, but from our relation to and interest in such other systems of matter: and therefore we can have no reason to conclude what befalls those systems of matter at death, to be the destruction of the living agents. We have already several times over, lost a great part or perhaps the whole of our body, according to certain common established laws of nature, yet we remain the same living agents. When we shall lose as great a part, or the whole, by another common established law of nature, death, why may we not also remain the same? That the alienation has been gradual in one case, and in the other will be more at once, does not prove any thing to the contrary. We have passed undestroyed through those many and great revolutions of matter, so peculiarly appropriated to us ourselves; why should we imagine death will be so fatal to us? Nor can it be objected, that what is thus alienated or lost, is no part of our original solid body, but only adventitious matter. Because we may lose entire limbs, which must have contained many solid parts and vessels of the original body; or if this be not admitted, we have no proof, that any of these solid parts are dissolved or alienated by death. Though we are very nearly related to that extraneous or adventitious matter, whilst it continues united to and distending the several parts of our solid body, yet after all, the relation a person bears to those parts of his body, to which he is most nearly related, amounts but to this, that the living agent, and those parts of the body, mutually affect each other.<sup>35</sup> The same thing, the same thing in

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<sup>33</sup> [As every particle of our bodies is changed within seven years, an average life would take us through many such changes. If the mind changes with the body, it would be unjust for an old man to be made to suffer for the sins of his youth. To escape this, the materialist is driven to affirm that *the whole* is not altered, though every particle be changed. This argument from the constant flux is irresistible. It proves our identity, and that matter and mind are not the same. Does it not also destroy all presumption that the Ego cannot exist without this particular body?]

<sup>34</sup> See [Dissertation I.](#)

<sup>35</sup> [The mind affects the body, as much as the body does the mind. Love, anger, &c. quicken the circulation; fear checks it; terror may stop it altogether. Mania is as often produced by moral, as by physical causes, and hence of late moral means are resorted to for cure. The brain of a maniac, seldom shows, on dissection, any derangement. But this does not prove that there was no *functional*

kind though not in degree, may be said of *all foreign* matter, which gives us ideas, and over which we have any power. From these observations the whole ground of the imagination is removed, that the dissolution of any matter, is the destruction of a living agent, from the interest he once had in such matter.

*Thirdly*, If we consider our body somewhat more distinctly, as made up of organs and instruments of perception and of motion, it will bring us to the same conclusion. Thus the common optical experiments show, and even the observation how sight is assisted by glasses shows, that we see with our eyes in the same sense as we see with glasses. Nor is there any reason to believe, that we see with them in any other sense; any other, I mean, which would lead us to think the eye itself a percipient. The like is to be said of hearing; and our feeling distant solid matter by means of something in our hand, seems an instance of the like kind, as to the subject we are considering. All these are instances of foreign matter, or such as is no part of our body, being instrumental in preparing objects for, and conveying them to, the perceiving power, in a manner similar to the manner in which our organs of sense prepare and convey them. Both are in a like way instruments of our receiving such ideas from external objects, as the Author of nature appointed those external objects to be the occasions of exciting in us. Glasses are evident instances of this; namely of matter which is no part of our body, preparing objects for and conveying them towards the perceiving power, in like manner as our bodily organs do. And if we see with our eyes only in the same manner as we do with glasses, the like may justly be concluded, from analogy, of all our other senses. It is not intended, by any thing here said, to affirm, that the whole apparatus of vision, or of perception by any other sense, can be traced through all its steps, quite up to the *living power* of seeing, or perceiving: but that so far as it can be traced by experimental observations, so far it appears, that our organs of sense prepare and convey objects, in order to their being perceived, in like manner as foreign matter does, without affording any shadow of appearance, that they themselves perceive. And that we have no reason to think our organs of sense percipients, is confirmed by instances of persons losing some of them, the living beings themselves, their former occupiers, remaining unimpaired. It is confirmed also by the experience of dreams; by which we find we are at present possessed of a latent, and what would be otherwise an unimagined unknown power of perceiving sensible objects, in as strong and lively a manner without our external organs of sense, as with them.

So also with regard to our power of moving, or directing motion by will and choice; upon the destruction of a limb, this active power evidently remains, unlesened; so that the living being, who has suffered this loss, would be capable of moving as before, if it had another limb to move with. It can walk by the help of an artificial leg. It can make use of a pole or a lever, to reach towards itself and to move things, beyond the length and the power of its arm; and this it does in the same manner as it reaches and moves, with its natural arm, things nearer and of less weight. Nor is there so much as any appearance of our limbs being endued with a power of moving or directing themselves; though they are adapted, like the several parts of a machine, to be the instruments of motion to each other; and some parts of the same limb, to be instruments of motion to the other parts.

Thus a man determines that he will look at an object through a microscope; or being lame, that he will walk to such a place with a staff, a week hence. His eyes and his feet no more determine in these cases, than the microscope and the staff. Nor is there any ground to think they any more put the determination in practice; or that his eyes are the seers, or his feet the movers, in any other sense than as the microscope and the staff are. Upon the whole, then, our organs of sense, and our limbs, are certainly *instruments*,<sup>36</sup> which the living persons ourselves make use of to perceive and

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derangement.]

<sup>36</sup> ["S. What shall we say, then, of the shoemaker? That he cuts with his instrument only, or with his hands also? A. With his hands also. S. Does he use his eyes also, in making shoes? A. Yes. S. But are we agreed that he who uses, and what he uses, are different? A. Yes. S. The shoemaker, then, and harper, are different from the hands and eyes they use? A. It appears so. S. Does a man then *use* his whole body? A. Certainly. S. But he who uses, and that which he uses are different. A. Yes. S. A man then is something different

move with: there is not any probability, that they are any more; nor consequently, that we have any other kind of relation to them, than what we have to any other foreign matter formed into instruments of perception and motion, suppose into a microscope or a staff; (I say any other kind of relation, for I am not speaking of the degree of it) nor consequently is there any probability, that the alienation or dissolution of these instruments, is the destruction of the perceiving and moving agent.

And thus our finding that the dissolution of matter, in which living beings were most nearly interested, is not their dissolution; and that the destruction of several of the organs and instruments of perception and of motion belonging to them, is not their destruction; shows demonstratively, that there is no ground to think that the dissolution of any other matter, or destruction of any other organs and instruments, will be the dissolution or destruction of living agents, from the like kind of relation. And we have no reason to think we stand in any other kind of relation to any thing which we find dissolved by death.

But it is said, these observations are equally applicable to brutes:<sup>37</sup> and it is thought an insuperable difficulty, that they should be immortal, and by consequence capable of everlasting happiness. Now this manner of expression is both invidious and weak: but the thing intended by it, is really no difficulty at all, either in the way of natural or moral consideration. For 1, Suppose the invidious thing, designed in such a manner of expression, were really implied, as it is not in the least, in the natural immortality of brutes, namely, that they must arrive at great attainments, and become rational and moral agents; even this would be no difficulty, since we know not what latent powers and capacities they may be endued with. There was once, prior to experience, as great presumption against human creatures, as there is against the brute creatures, arriving at that degree of understanding, which we have in mature age. For we can trace up our own existence to the same original with theirs. We find it to be a general law of nature, that creatures endued with *capacities* of virtue and religion should be placed in a condition of being, in which they are altogether without *the use* of them, for a considerable length of their duration; as in infancy and childhood. And great part of the human species, go out of the present world, before they come to the exercise of these capacities in *any* degree.

2. The natural immortality of brutes does not in the least imply, that they are endued with any latent capacities of a rational or *moral* nature. The economy of the universe might require, that there should be living creatures without any capacities of this kind. And all difficulties as to the manner how they are to be disposed of, are so apparently and wholly founded in our ignorance, that it is wonderful they should be insisted upon by any, but such as are weak enough to think they are acquainted with the whole system of things. There is then absolutely nothing at all in this objection, which is so rhetorically urged, against the greatest part of the natural proofs or presumptions of the immortality of human minds; I say the greatest part, for it is less applicable to the following observation, which is more peculiar to mankind.

III. As it is evident our *present* powers and capacities of reason, memory, and affection, do not depend upon our gross body in the manner in which perception by our organs of sense does; so they do

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from his own body.” Plat. Alcibi. Prim. p. 129, D. Stallb. Ed. “It may easily be perceived that the *mind* both sees and hears, and not those parts which are, so to speak, windows of the mind.” “Neither are we bodies; nor do I, while speaking this to thee, speak to thy body.” “Whatever is done by thy mind, is done by thee.” Cicero, Tusc. Disput. I. 20, 46 and 22, 52. “The mind of each man is the man; not that figure which may be pointed out with the finger.” Cic., de Rep. b. 6, s. 24.]

<sup>37</sup> [Butler’s argument, if advanced for *proof* would prove too much, not only as to brutes but as to man; for it would prove pre-existence. And this is really the tenet, (*i. e.* transmigration,) of those who arrive at the doctrine of immortality only by philosophy. Philosophy cannot establish the doctrine of a future state, nor can it afford any presumptions *against* either a future or a pre-existent state. Nothing is gained by insisting that reason teaches the true doctrine of the soul; any more than there would be by insisting that by it we learned the doctrine of a trinity, or atonement. Philosophy does teach that He who can *create*, under infinite diversity of forms, can *sustain* existence, in any mode he pleases. The reader who chooses to look further into the discussion as to the immortality of brutes, will find it spread out in Polignac’s Anti-Lucretius, and still more in Bayle’s Dictionary, under the articles Pereira, and Rorarius. The topic is also discussed in Des Cartes on the Passions: Baxter on The Nature of the Soul: Hume’s Essays, Essay 9: Search’s Light of Nature: Cheyne’s Philosophical Principles: Wagstaff on the Immortality of Brutes: Edwards’ Critical and Philosophical Exercitations: Watt’s Essays, Essay 9: Collier’s Enquiry: Locke on the Understanding, b. 2, ch. ix.: Ditton on the Resurrection: Willis De Anima Brutæ.]

not appear to depend upon it at all, in any such manner as to give ground to think, that the dissolution of this body will be the destruction of these our present powers of reflection, as it will of our powers of sensation; or to give ground to conclude, even that it will be so much as a suspension of the former.



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