

DEISM REVEALED.

O R, T H E

Attack on CHRISTIANITY

CANDIDLY REVIEWED

In its real MERITS, as they stand in the
celebrated Writings of

LORD HERBERT,
LORD SHAFTESBURY,
HOBBS,
TOLAND,
TINDAL,
COLLINS,

MANDEVILLE,
DODWELL,
WOOLSTON,
MORGAN,
CHUBB,
And others.

THE SECOND EDITION. With Amendments.

Ἀρχαῖος μὲν ἔν τις λόγος καὶ πατρίος ἐστὶ πάντων ἀν-
θρώποις, ὥς ἐκ Θεῶ τὰ πάντα καὶ διὰ Θεῶ ἡμῖν συνέστηκεν·
ἐδημία δὲ φύσις αὐτὴ καθ' ἑαυτὴν αὐτάρκης ἐρημωθεῖσα
τῆς ἐκ τέττε σωτηρίας. Aristot. de Mundo.

Ἀλλ' ἐδ' ἂν διδάξειεν, εἰ μὴ Θεὸς ὑφηγοῖτο.
Plato in Epinom.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

L O N D O N:

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PREFACE.

READER,

ALTHO', generally speaking, a Preface is deservedly considered as no more than a buttress to the front of a tottering building, which, if skilfully managed, may assume, in some measure, the air of a portico; yet as, on this occasion, there are a few preliminary notices which you ought to be apprised of, give me leave to lay them before you here, at the entrance. If you begin with these, and do not, according to the preposterous custom of some readers, who always make a book the introduction to its preface, defer it till you have read the performance it is prefixed to; it may happen to save you the trouble of perusing the book itself: for, to be plain with you, the following Dialogues are neither as to the matter, nor manner, planned on the taste of the present times.

If you read merely for amusement, this work being, only in some places, and chiefly towards the latter end, calculated for that purpose; you must be, in part, disappointed. If you are one of those grave and solid readers, whom nothing can please but a close and well-connected chain of cool reasoning; it will be but an act of justice to let you know, in time, that the characters introduced by the present work, are supported, as is usual in conversation and debate, with some strokes of a lower faculty than that of reason. If your end, in reading, is only to confirm you in your own opinions, be advised not to meddle with these Dialogues; in which the disputants, on both sides, do their utmost to overturn the principles of their adversaries. If you do not care to be roused from a pleasing slumber over long-indulged opinions, or a yet more favourite course of life accommodated to those opinions, stop here; for the very foundations of your sentiments about religion, be they what they will, are, in the following performance, examined with a severity and impartiality not very usual in writings of this kind. For instance; in case you are inolably pre-engaged to
the

the religion of your country, the arguments, here urged home in their utmost force by its opposers, will shock you not a little: or, in case you are settled in Libertine and Deistical principles; the person, who here assaults those principles with the weapons of Revelation, may happen to give you some disturbance.

Was there ever so odd a Prefacer! you will say, who labours to dissuade his reader from the perusal of a Book, written, or at least published, by himself? Be patient, and hear me out. I do not mean to bar up your way to the Book by this Preface, unless you are reducible to some one or other of the foregoing classes: if you are, I, who am at present better acquainted with these Dialogues than you, know full well, they will neither be pleasing nor profitable to you. But, provided you are one who honestly prefers the truth to all things; and if, in order to get a thorough view of it, you are willing to submit your opinions, pre-conceptions, or principles, to a re-examination; or, in case you are as yet under no engagement to any set of sentiments about religious matters; you, and the Book I introduce to you, are well enough qualified

fied to pass a few hours together ; so well, indeed, that, I promise you, such a conversation will not be altogether disagreeable or unprofitable to you.

Altho' no one hath a worse talent at compliments than your humble servant, yet I will take it for granted, you have sat down to read this book, in quest of truth, and in order to a little information. If I do you justice in this, do not wrong yourself by turning critic ; examine closely into the reasonings, that you may judge of their strength ; and weigh the reflections, in order to find out whether they are just and useful : but as to censures on the mere conduct of the work, and its stile, consider them as impertinent, and beside your purpose. If a Physician should visit you in your sickness, you would not, I suppose, instead of listening attentively to his directions, fall to making remarks on the impropriety or rusticity of his expressions. This is not said because the Author is in any pain to prevent your criticizing his Book, in case you read only to refute. That liberty he hath taken with others, you, and all the world, are most heartily welcome to use, in its utmost extent, with him. Neither do I
hereby

hereby intimate the least apprehension in him at the effects of that ruffle he may possibly excite in your temper: your passion will not at all discompose him, if, upon looking into his performance, you should think fit to shew some resentment at seeing your principles baffled, or your practices exposed. He writes for truth with a freedom becoming so noble a cause, and he lashes the low dissembler, who, pretending to do the same, hath recourse to double-dealing, to imposture, and hypocrisy, with an indignation, felt by every honest man at the sight of a detected thief or sharper. In case, therefore, you should be piqued, keep your chagrin to yourself, and be revenged as secretly as you can; for, by discovering your uneasiness, you will but class yourself with a set of men, who make as despicable a figure in the eyes of all honest and discerning persons, as they do in the censures of this writer. He sees farther into the defects of his own performance than you can do, unless you will give as much attention to it as he hath done, which is neither to be supposed, nor expected. He foresees you will, on some occasions, be dissatisfied

with his reasonings, cloyed with his repetitions, tired with the length of his harangues, disgusted at the bluntness of his stile, and perhaps offended at his putting so many arguments into the mouth of him who opposes your own opinions. As to his reasoning weakly on some occasions, you ought not to be displeased with him for it, because he did his best. Neither will you, it is hoped, be severe on his repetitions, when you find that the defence of Deism in one part of his work, and that of Christianity in the other, forced him sometimes to handle the same topic in both; and that he was often obliged to give the same answer to several objections, either because they did not admit of any so good, or because none so good occurred to him. Besides, you are sensible, that, in Dialogue, the speakers cannot so properly refer, as in a regular treatise, to what was formerly urged, but not granted; and are therefore frequently obliged to recal the same arguments, as it always happens, in every extemporary debate. He hath on set purpose made the speeches sometimes run out into a greater length than those of *Plato* and *Lucian*: had he done otherwise, the
fre-

frequent interruptions and rejoinders must, in the midst of so much matter, and so many topics, have spun out the work to such a prolixity, as seemed too great a trespass on your time and patience. You will ask, Why, then, did he write in Dialogue? He will answer, That he chose that manner of performance for your entertainment; and will thank you, if you do not ask, Why he wrote at all? As to his giving him, who holds the contrary side of the question to yours, leave to say so much; he hath no other apology to make, but his having taken it for granted, that whoever writes for truth, writes for you; and you know, Sir, truth is not likely to be fairly weighed, when all the arguments are thrown into one scale. . . Thus much I thought proper to say to you, in case you should look into this book with a design to snarl.

But as I rather hope you intend to read with a disposition more conformable to that which gave birth to the following Dialogues, I shall consider you only in that view, and speak to you as a sincere lover of truth; than which, there is nothing you or I have ever heard of, better worth inquiring after, especially in rela-

tion to religion. Nothing, therefore, can be more unpardonable than a neglect, and nothing more absurd than a wrong management, of this inquiry : yet the bulk of mankind give themselves little or no trouble about the matter. The fashion of a man's cloaths, the menage of his horse, or the making his dog, often cost him as much money, and more care and pains, than the choice of his principles : yet there are some who look for truth with a sincere and hearty affection, but do it under a byass, unperceived and unfelt by themselves ; and therefore, notwithstanding the goodness of their intentions, like persons whose eyes are muffled, go wide of what they search for. Some are afraid their own opinions should, upon a close and candid scrutiny, appear to be ill-grounded ; and so, in consequence of this unmanly apprehension, pass their days in a secret scepticism, covered with the mask of bigotry, thro' which they now-and-then warily peep askew at the opposite opinions and arguments, as children do at fruit they are forbidden to touch ; their curiosity being checked by their fears, and their love of truth repressed by a greater

greater fondness for prejudices, long ago espoused, of which, however, they are a little jealous. Some, on the contrary, do indeed dispute and read with a shew of much freedom, but, withal, under the influence of a strong desire or wish to find their own opinions true; which adds as much weight to weak arguments on their own side of the question, as it takes off from strong ones on the other. Lastly, There are many able controvertists, and men of renown in disputation, who pursue, not truth, but interested views; such as the profits arising from a very vendible book, or from lucrative principles, which they wed, more for the dowry entailed on them, than for their beauty and merit; or the glory of well-managed debates, of peculiar systems, and of new and surprising discoveries, calculated for no other purpose than to set the inventors at the head of new sects and parties.

From men, thus influenced, nothing is to be hoped for but nibbling, or chicaning. If you, my dear Reader, are of a more ingenuous turn of mind, you will be well pleased to look into a performance, wherein if more, on some occasions,

is said on one side, than the other, yet justice is done to both; inasmuch as fair and open dealing runs thro' the whole, and little or nothing is omitted, that can be justly brought in defence of either.

As for the Deists, I must observe to you, that they do not, by any means, do justice to their own cause; they do but in part support it with its own genuine arguments. They stand miserably in awe of fines; they are afraid to speak out their principles, lest they should shock or alarm. It is for these reasons, that they are forced to borrow the name and cloak of Christianity, in order to attack it; and dare seldom or never rejoin to their answerers, lest they should lose the benefit of their present concealment, from which the greater part of their success is hoped for.

On the other hand, our modern Apologists for Christianity often defend it on Deistical principles; and, besides, are too apt to give a new model to their own *credenda*; hoping, thereby, to gain some advantage to their cause; or, at least, to acquire the reputation of having contrived a better sort of Christianity. Among those of them who stick the closest to the old Christianity,

Christianity, and argue best for it, there are some, who, knowing the Libertine turn of the times, are a little afraid, on their side, to deal roundly with their adversaries; and therefore assume an affected gentleness; softening the sanctions, lowering the mysteries, and relaxing the ordinances of their religion.

By these means, the controversy is forever shifting, so that nothing is brought to an end, or conclusion; and, what is still worse, the real merits on both sides are kept out of sight, being covered under a world of artifice and confusion, or whistled away into needless debates about matters of little consequence.

To keep clear of these inconveniences, and do justice to the controversy, the writer now before you brings real Deism, and real Christianity, into the field, to confront each other: if you are a Deist, you will be well pleased to see your adversaries held to that religion which Christ and his Apostles left the world: and if, from what is said in this work, reason, without higher assistance, should appear an insufficient guide; if men may be not trusted altogether with themselves; if they cannot be their own instructors, their own legislators,

lators, their own judges ; or if present considerations only are not of sufficient weight to render them virtuous ; then be just to your own reason, and bid Deism a final farewell. If you are a Christian, you cannot take it amiss, to see the principles of Deism truly represented, and defended with their own proper arguments ; and if mysteries, and positive institutions, and the traditionary nature of the vouchers for Christianity, shall, on a fair inquiry, appear to refute the supposition of its Divinity, let it fall to the ground.

Time was, when the inhabitants of these countries were forced to be of whatsoever religion other people pleased ; but it is the peculiar happiness of the times we live in, that every man may be of what religion he himself pleases, or of none, in case none shall please him. Let not, therefore, this Author, or any other, write with greater freedom, or boldness, or regard to truth, than you dare read with. If you suspect your own opinions, this alone is a sufficient reason for your attending closely to all that can be said either for or against them : if you are fully convinced of their soundness, you have nothing to fear from the most impartial examination

mination of them : if you have been hitherto amused with an artful management of this important debate, and confounded with the fight of combatants, stealing weapons from each other, to annoy each other, so as that you could not distinguish to whom those weapons did of right belong ; it will be some satisfaction to you to see, in these Dialogues, each opponent standing on his own ground, fairly covering himself with his own shield, or striking with his own proper sword. You know, Sir, that, altho' this controversy may, for a time, be managed, it can never be finally decided, by policy and stratagem, but by the strength of fair and open reasoning.

After all, Sir, I am very far from conceitedly insinuating, that this Dialogist is the only person who hath managed the dispute, I speak of, with candour ; or that you may from the performance now in your hands, derive more satisfaction than from several others : for I am as sensible, as any man can be, that many, who have handled the same topic with the present writer, have done it, so far as they went, with equal honesty, and superior ability : but I do insist, that, in general, the chief articles

in debate, between Deists and Christians, are not handled in so open, or so ingenuous a manner, as here ; nor kept so unembarrassed with the discussion of points not necessarily connected with the decisive merits of this important question. Give me leave therefore to advertise you, that the present performance is intended, by its Author, rather as an introduction to a further, and more perfect course of reading, on the reigning controversy, than as a complete system of all that can, or ought to be said thereon.



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End of the Contents to V O L. II.

OPHIOMACHES:

O R,

DEISM Revealed.

DIALOGUE I.

DECHAINED,
TEMPLETON,

CUNNINGHAM,
SHEPHERD.

Dechaine. **P**ARSON, a good-morning to you.
Does your pretty little garden always
raise you so early?

Shep. During the spring and summer it does; and at
other seasons I have other things to call me up, for the
most part, before five in the morning.

Dech. Mr. Templeton, be acquainted with Mr. Shep-
herd.—Mr. Cunningham, let me present the Parson of our
Parish to you.

Shep. Gentlemen, I am much obliged to you for this
favour. Pray will you walk into that turret, and be
seated?

Dech. Here I suppose you study.

Shep. I read and sleep in the room above; and, when
any body comes to see me, here we sit.

Dech. Who lives in the little house, thro' which we
entered the garden?

Shep. It affords shelter to a poor relation, and his
wife, with two servants.

Decb. I am told, you are still a single man yourself. How comes it to pass that, in so long a time, you have doubled neither your person nor your chin? You don't fast and mortify surely?

Shep. It is no fault in me, that I am not married; for my circumstances are but narrow: nor is it a merit, that I am not fat; for my state of health is but indifferent.

Decb. How modest! with another you would turn all this to Saintship.

Shep. No, Sir, I am as far from that species of dissimulation as yourself.

Decb. It is a long time, *Shepherd*, since you and I were first acquainted.

Shep. Upwards of thirty years, I believe.

Decb. I have been now three months your landlord and neighbour, and you have never been to see me. This, I think, was not kind.

Shep. Indeed, Sir, I went to your house with that design; but your servants said you were not at leisure. Had my visit been a thing of any consequence to you, I suppose they would have told you I was to pay my respects.

Decb. Methinks, however, you might have come a second time.

Shep. It is a common remark, that poor Clergymen are too intruding on their wealthy neighbours. Their conduct, which in this respect is generally thought forward, and troublesome at least, is ascribed to low and unworthy motives. It was for this reason, Sir, that I thought proper to keep my distance, till you should signify a desire to see me. The gentleman from whom you purchased this estate, came every *Sunday* to Church, while he was in the country, and generally asked me to go home with him. This hath been hitherto the custom here; and as it gave me sometimes an opportunity of seeing good company, and at the same time defended the gentleman from my visits, excepting at such seasons as were most convenient to him, I think it was a very good one.

Decb.

Dech. Altho' I do not go so often to Church as my predecessor, yet I hope my way of serving God is not the less acceptable for being less public and showy.

Shep. You mistake me, Sir; I did not intend to put you on the defence of your conduct in respect to religion; I only intended to apologize for my own, in point of civility.

Dech. Ah Parson! I believe I can guess what you intended well enough; but I must tell you, the great stress, laid by your order on the mere externals of religion, is of ill consequence to the thing itself, and leads your hearers to believe, that running to the Church and the Sacrament may atone for great defects in matters of more real importance. Besides, your particular forwardness in reproving, or say it were only in throwing out hints like this, by which the conduct of men in station is arraigned, as it proceeds from a mistaken zeal, if not from pride, answers no other end, but to disoblige, and to render your person, and of consequence your advice and function, disagreeable. Your brethren, who know the world better, have, generally speaking, found this method so disobliging and unsuccessful, that they have been forced to lay it aside, and betake themselves to a conduct more conformable to the times. Since the ceasing of miracles, and other divine interpositions, the Church, I think, can scarcely be supported by any other, than human means. You must therefore ply to the world, you must keep in with the great ones, you must cultivate their good graces, and engage their countenance and interest, or I must tell you, in a little time you will have no Church at all. And take my word for it, Sir, this is not to be done by reproofs and such-like freedoms, but by an insinuating and soothing behaviour, by making the duties of religion easy and agreeable, by shaping those and your own carriage to the politeness and freedom of the times you live in.

Shep. As to the duties of religion, it is not in my power to change the shape of them, and I think them agreeable enough to well-disposed persons, as our Saviour and his Apostles left them. As to my own carriage, I do not pretend to justify it. All I can say is, that I must

Speak the truth on pain of my own eternal ruin; and I do not take myself to be any further answerable for the effect, than as I may happen to hinder it by an improper manner of addressing myself to those with whom I have to do. Now, in that respect, I endeavour to discharge my duty with all the little prudence and conduct I am master of. When I have not the success I could wish, altho' I am very apt to blame my own weakness for it; yet I cannot help thinking it in some measure owing to the disinclination of those whom I speak to. You, Sir, I believe, will own I have not yet attacked you in a very rude or shocking style.

Cunn. The style indeed was not uncivil; but your hint was, I think, a little early in a conversation but just commenced.

Dech. It was not altogether on account of Mr. *Shepherd's* insinuation about my not going to Church, that I took the liberty of offering my mite of advice, but because I find he is censured by many people, and even by some of the Clergy, for too much boldness and freedom with men of power, in what he takes to be his duty of reproof; and the idea of his temper, which remains upon my memory since our acquaintance in the College, made me think a little advice, tending to soften his conduct in this article, not altogether unnecessary.

Cunn. So far from it, that, if I mistake not, he who knows the temper of the age we live in, must be sensible the Church, and the interests of the Clergy, are not to be supported, as you just now hinted, but by being well with the great.

Shep. That may be; and yet, if I be not guilty of the imprudence charged on me, the advice that hath been given me is better intended, than applied. But I hope, Sir, I need not prove to you, who are a Clergyman, that the Church of Christ hath promises from Scripture of more than human assistance; nor need I remind you, that it gained ground and prevailed in opposition to all the policy and power of greater persons, than the minister of this parish hath occasion to disoblige.

Dech.

Dech. It prevailed indeed, as you say; but, upon recollection, you will find it did not gain *ground*, no not a foot of *ground*, until it had gained the great ones to its party.

Shep. The Church-lands then; and the wealth of the Clergy, are what you mean by the Church; and in that sense of the word perhaps you may reason justly: but I mean by it, the whole body of Christians, united in one Society, for the preservation of Christian principles, and the practice of Christian duties. Now the Church, taken in this sense, is never more in danger of ruin, than when its Clergy sacrifice the interests and great ends of their function to worldly views; when they mince and qualify their doctrines to the palate or pride of their hearers; and when people, impatient of all restraints, and averse to plain and salutary truths, do all they can to keep them at a distance from their consciences. If the Clergy are to consider themselves as God's Ambassadors, they will speak freely; and, if the people look upon them as such, they will receive their messages with some degree of respect, or decency at least.

Temp. God's Ambassadors! I thought my Lord *Shaftesbury* had so fully exposed their Spiritual Excellencies on this claim of honour, that none of them would ever have talked in that strain any more.

Dech. They do still assume that style in country congregations; but I believe Mr. *Shepherd* is singular in using it to such people as us. Ah *Shepherd!* *Shepherd!* I remember, when we were in the College together, I prophesied concerning your future fortunes. Did I not tell you then, boy as I was, and little acquainted with the world, that your warm temper, and high notions, bordering on enthusiasm, would never do, when reduced to practice; that you would make enemies to yourself, instead of friends to the Church; that you would be always poor and despised, and live, if not die, a martyr to your airy notions? And was I not too true a prophet? Could *Isaiah* himself have predicted a chain of future events more exactly? Your liberty of speech hath offended those among the Laity, who could have served you, and even given umbrage to the Bishops.

Shep. And did I not prophesy too ? Did I not tell you, I should be very indifferent about those events, and postpone all such considerations to the discharge of my duty, if God should ever think fit to admit me into the sacred office, which I have now the honour to fill ?

Dech. And so you would not accept of a fat Deanry or Bishoprick ? A likely thing indeed !

Shep. You never heard me say so. I would be glad to take a better benefice than the one I am now possessed of, if it were offered me ; but this does not hinder me from living contented on my present income of four-and-thirty pounds a year, and my little farm, from which I draw near as much more.

Dech. The same turn of mind runs through all the Clergy. They are a mighty spiritual sort of men ; yet they grasp at all the temporalities they can lay their hands on. Why, *Shepherd*, you are a mere Pope, or *German Bishop*, in miniature ! While one part of you is soaring in sermons, psalms, and prayers ; the other, and that the larger, is groveling in the earth, and growing to this naughty world, which you would persuade us to be so much out of humour with. The farmer shews the parson is not altogether satisfied with his condition. You are just as discontented as any other man in the like circumstances ; but the pride of your heart, which will not let you stoop, will never suffer you to climb. You aim at wealth and greatness, like the rest of your tribe ; but be assured on't, digging and grumbling never made a great man yet.

Shep. And I know they never will. In the mean time I do neither ; nor have I any talent at those more successful arts of rising you recommend to me, than which nothing can be more foreign to my purpose ; for, I thank God, my desires are as low as my circumstances. Pray, Mr. *Dechaine*, are you ever uneasy because you are not a King ?

Dech. No indeed ; I never was once disturbed by so wild a thought.

Shep. Nor I, by any expectation so chimerical, as that of better provision in the Church, after having behaved myself in such a manner, that, unless mankind were
made

made over again, I could have no reason to entertain such hopes. However, supposing there were nothing, either in my past conduct, or in the times, to discountenance hopes of this kind, to what end should I encourage them in myself? I eat, drink, sleep, and dress, to all reasonable intents and purposes, as well as you do; and what more should one desire? I have no family to provide for. I have none of those anxieties, not to say remorse, that attend the making, managing, or spending a great fortune. In a word, I have found by sweet experience, that there is no difference between a great and a moderate income, but what is either in favour of the latter, or else arises wholly from a perverted imagination.

Dech. The old man still! I tell thee, *Shepherd*, I am far from believing there is any thing more than grimace and hypocrisy, in all you have been saying on this subject these thirty years past. It is true I heard a very great Clergyman, since I came into the country, do you the honour to compare you to Cardinal *Spada*, who, while the Reformation was going on briskly in *Switzerland*, went thither, and engaged in warm disputes with Protestants, in hopes they would put him to death for his religion; but, to his great disappointment, found them a very peaceable and well-conditioned people. This reflection sprung from some instances that had been given in company of your flaming zeal against the prevailing opinions of the times. However, I no more believed you was seeking for the crown of martyrdom, than I did, that his Reverence, who entertained us with this sneer at your expence, would snatch it from you, and put it on his own bacon-head. I believe I understand you better. As you have no friends, you scheme upon the idle reputation of great zeal, disinterestedness, and merit, in hopes by those means to force some Bishop to provide for you. But the Bishops know too well how to unriddle such a conduct, and form very different notions of your merit, from those erected in that proud breast of yours. Nothing on earth can be more airy and whimsical, than hopes founded on a scheme like this, which I think the woful experience of twenty years

might by this time have put you out of humour with. Be advised by a friend to enter even yet, for perhaps it may not be too late, upon a more prudent course. Give a more genteel cut to your principles, at least to your professions. Be more obsequious to men in power. Endeavour to wriggle yourself in with their favourites, and do not neglect to cultivate even their servants. Let the Bishops have your attendance. Pay them the court they expect. Be always a conformist to the company you are in. Let the principles or practices of your acquaintances, especially your great acquaintances, point which way they will, before you go along; for no good, no reformation of them, nor promotion of yourself, is to be expected from contradiction and opposition.

Shep. I hope promotion in the Church is not to be obtained by such arts as these; and as to the Bishops, I have no reason to think so meanly of them, as to hope, that any court I could pay them, would induce them to prefer me to more deserving objects of their favour. Altho' the times are such, that it is not to be supposed, report is kinder to them than they deserve, yet I question, whether at any time since the establishment of our Church, that order stood higher in the just esteem of all who are competent judges of either their abilities or behaviour. This alone is sufficient to prevent in me the least hope of their regard, at least of obtaining it by such means as you recommend, which they have too much sense not to see thro', and I too little address and obsequiousness to employ.

Dech. Be always poor and despicable then. There are some men of so unhappy a make, and cast in a mould so uncouth, and cross to all the courses of the world, that unless the world will bend to them, their advancement in it is impossible. A person of this stamp is always in the wrong, and therefore always unsuccessful in every thing he undertakes.

Shep. How much more happy is he, who is so framed by nature, and prepared by art, as to be always in the right, who never errs in his reasonings, nor fails in his schemes! Nothing about such a person as this can go wrong.

wrong. His very watch partakes of the infallibility of its owner, and is always in the right.

Dech. If your hint is intended for me, give me leave to say, I think the reputation and fortune, to which I have raised myself by acting on maxims quite opposite to yours, shew in good earnest, I have been much oftener in the right than your Reverence, and that to much better purpose.

Shep. Not unless you have also raised yourself to higher contentment than mine.

Dech. Contentment! Do you think an estate of four thousand a year, great reputation and business at the bar, and an honourable place at court, can afford a man nothing above contentment? I have laboured for the wind indeed, if that only felicity of beggars is all I can extract from such ample means. Take my word for it, Parson, my fortune affords me pleasures, to which a fat capon at a Christening, the highest delight you know, is not to be compared.

Shep. My ignorance of them makes me satisfied without them, and I shall take your own word for it, that you are happy enough, provided you have preserved the conscience and character of an honest man, which is not always the case with those who have amassed vast fortunes in the space of a few years.

Dech. As to my reputation, I can appeal to my business for the most solid kind of voucher in its favour. People of high rank, and good understanding, do not usually trust their fortunes to Lawyers of small reputation. As to my conscience, the late Mr. *Templeton*, father to this young Gentleman here, left him at the age of fifteen, with an estate of five thousand a year, and upwards of fifty thousand pounds in money, to my care; and no one can say, I have not discharged this important trust like a man of honour. I have improved his fortune; I have given him a polite education; and I have bred him a defensive Lawyer, insomuch that it will hereafter be in his power, at least to preserve what he has.

Shep. You forget to tell us with what principles you formed his mind, that being, in my opinion, a matter of

far greater consequence to him, than all his wealth, law, and politeness.

Dech. What if I instilled no principles into him at all; but only endeavoured to root out those he had before?

Shep. Provided they were bad ones, you did one half of what a good friend should do.

Dech. They were such as a sorry Parson, and two or three nursery-maids, thought fit to obtrude upon an ingenuous nature, that needed no instruction.

Shep. It may be, the principles were good for all that. You say you gave him a polite education; did you not, among other things, take care to have him well instructed in music, dancing, and riding the great horse?

Dech. I did.

Shep. His mind must be of a very different make from the minds of other men, if it did not require to be taught certain internal sciences, analogous to those, and infinitely more ornamental, as well as useful. Pray Mr. Templeton, have you read my Lord Shaftesbury's characteristics?

Temp. Yes, Sir; and think them very fine performances.

Shep. I guessed as much by your quoting him a little while ago. You do not forget, I suppose, what he says concerning *the internal music and harmony of affections*.

Temp. He speaks incomparably on that, as well as all other topics.

Shep. Does he not take the gross of mankind to be void of that harmony, and the grace of moral action, resulting from it?

Temp. I think he does.

Shep. And does he not endeavour to remedy this great defect in his readers?

Temp. He does.

Dech. Ay, and it was in order to give the young mind of my ward an happy and graceful turn, that I put my Lord Shaftesbury's works into his hands, as soon as ever he came under my care; and directed Mr. Cunningham, who was his tutor, to impress the notions of that incomparable writer as strongly on his mind as possible.

Shep.

Shep. If they were better fitted to answer that end than the principles he had imbibed in the nursery, you did very well : but, it seems, I misunderstood you ; for I thought your whole endeavour, on the article of his education, had been to root out the principles of the nursery from a nature so ingenuous as to need no instruction.

Dech. My Lord *Shaftesbury* hath an admirable hand at rooting out the exotic weeds of a wrong education, which is in my opinion the only work of education worth labouring in ; for, as soon as they are removed, the beautiful and wholesome plant of virtue, which is natural to the soil, shoots up without any further culture, and quickly comes to maturity.

Shep. It is very well. Every thing, I find, may be taught, but Christianity ; and all that is said against instruction in general, is levelled only against Christian instruction. And pray, Mr. *Cunningham*, did you not sometimes think it an odd employment in a Parson to eradicate from the mind of your pupil the principles of God's word, and to implant, in the place of them, a System of Deism ?

Cunn. What if I did not look on the principles I found in him, as derived from the word of God, but rather from the superstition of an ignorant Clergyman, and two or three silly women ? And what if I think my Lord *Shaftesbury*, who was a man of candour and honour, sincere in his frequent professions of Christianity ?

Shep. Be so good, Mr. *Templeton*, as to let us know whether the substance of what you was taught in the nursery, is not contained in the Catechism of the Church of *England* ; and whether you was not made to get the Catechism itself by rote.

Dech. There is no need of catechising at present either Mr. *Templeton* or his tutor. As to the latter, at whom I perceive you are striking in this sly inquiry of yours, I take him to be full as sound a Christian as yourself, without any of that stiffness, or sourness, or formality, that render your sort of Christianity so troublesome to yourself and others. You don't care for him, perhaps, because you may have heard he was educated at *Glasgow*, where, if we may judge by those, who come from thence, the

minds of young persons are formed to a much more open and liberal turn, than in the Universities of *England*. The good effects of his education appear in his behaviour, which is humane and prudent. I do believe he hath not a single enemy upon the face of the earth. He hath many and powerful friends, and hath already tasted the fruits of his own merit, and their attachment to him, in two rich benefices, which he is now in the enjoyment of. Nay, I think I may assure him, his rise in the world is not yet at its meridian.

Cunn. You are always very good, Sir; and I shall have more merit a great deal, than I dare think myself possessed of, if I can deserve the smallest part of your favours. While I am so happy as to be well with such persons as you, I have enough to comfort and defend me against the envy of lower people.

Dech. I HAVE been, I know not how, diverted from mentioning to Mr. *Shepherd* the occasion of our visit. Pray, Parson, do you often hold forth to your plain congregation on such topics as employed you last Sunday?

Shep. Very seldom, Sir.

Dech. Why, so I thought. It was then, I suppose, to honour us on our first appearance in your Church, that you chose to be so refined.

Shep. It was not with a view to do you any honour, that I preached as I did, but to lay before you some reasonings which I judged proper for your consideration.

Dech. And why proper for our consideration, I pray you? Had any-body told you we were Libertines or Deists?

Shep. I have indeed heard it said, that you are but too inclinable to Deism, and that you have brought Mr. *Templeton* partly into your own sentiments about religion. I was the more confirmed in my fears, that it might be so, by your not coming to Church, and by what hath been lately whispered about the neighbourhood concerning an odd sort of industry, said to be used by you, in propagating loose principles among our country Gentlemen over a bottle, both at your own, and some of your neighbours

bours houses. These things laid together, gave me occasion to recollect, that, when we studied at *Oxford*, you even then began to discover the seeds of libertinism, particularly by speaking slightly of several matters in the scriptural history; and I remember, one day, more especially, you undertook to prove, that the *Theatre* was by far a more magnificent and sumptuous building, than the *Temple of Solomon*.

Dech. I am not much surpris'd, that your country-people, who are but an ignorant and clumsy sort of folks, can't tell how to distinguish between one's talking freely on certain points of religion, purely for the sake of speculation and exercise, and making a solemn confession of one's faith by a creed; but the ingenious Mr. *Shepherd*, who had his education in a place where every thing is disputed, amazes me, when I hear him recollecting the remarks of a boy, to confirm those of his ignorant neighbours, upon a liberty, which we cannot be deprived of, without sinking immediately into Barbarism.

Shep. There is the more occasion, you see, for those who desire to be thought Christians, to take care how they speak in the hearing of such people as us.

Dech. It is of no consequence what opinion Squire this one, and Parson t'other one, entertains of one's principles, unless principles are assumed for shew and parade. But, supposing I was really a Deist, could you have the vanity to hope, that, by slipping your fierce triple-headed *Cerberus* of a sermon at me, you might bark or worry me out of my way of thinking? Indeed, Doctor, the sermons of you Clergy have but little weight with people of any tolerable taste or understanding. The brute thunders of the Pulpit can neither hurt nor frighten any, but the Vulgar.

Shep. I never intended to frighten, much less to hurt any body, by my sermons; and in that particularly, which, it seems, you have taken offence at, I am sure there was nothing, that could either hurt or terrify those for whose use it was designed.

Dech. That is very true; and I am sure there was as little that could convince. It could have no effect any way, but to satisfy the understanding part of your audience, that the Parson was a weak man; and had you

been modest enough to think so before you preached it, you might have saved yourself the trouble of an impertinent harangue, that kept you about forty minutes longer from your beef and pudding, than there was any sort of occasion for.

Shep. Yet, as long as I am convinced I was doing my duty, nothing you can say, even though it were, if possible, more genteel and witty, than your jest about *beef* and *pudding*, shall make me wish it undone.

Dech. Bless us! how polite we shall grow under the corrections of a country Parson! But enough of this. Do you really think you could support the positions you undertook to prove in that sermon, now that you are out of the pulpit, and one may have word about with you?

Shep. I think I can, and will very readily undertake it, provided you will promise to moderate the keenness of your wit a little, and enter on the point with somewhat less contempt for the reasonings of a man so far below you in circumstances. If we do not contend for a mere triumph, but seriously set ourselves to search for truth, reason, even from me, will have its full weight with you; and I shall readily submit on my side, as soon as ever reason shews itself on yours.

Dech. Agreed, agreed; do you however take your own way of arguing, and don't pretend to tie me to it, because I am as free to use mine.

Shep. With all my heart.

Dech. If I forget not, the chief positions, on which the rest of your discourse depended, were these: 1st, *That the evidence of possible facts, said to be done in ages long since past, is matter of faith.* 2dly, *That he who denies such facts to have been done, can found his dissent on nothing else but faith.* And, 3dly, *That, of consequence, he who denies the historical part of the Christian religion, the facts of which are all possible, cannot be sure it is false, can only believe it to be so.* Do I rightly represent the points you endeavoured to prove, and afterwards to draw conclusions from, in your Sermon?

Shep. You do, Sir, in the fairest manner.

Dech.

Dech. These doctrines were new and surprizing to me. But before I enter upon the discussion of points, that may possibly carry us out into some length of debate, give me leave to premise, that altho' I frequently may have occasion to serve myself with the arguments and expressions of a Deist, you are only to consider me as personating a man of Deistical principles, merely for argumentation's sake; and let me at the same time assure you, Sir, that I am sincerely a Christian.

Shep. May I then speak to you, without offence, as if it were to a professed Deist, provided I understand you to be no more than arguing, merely for speculation, in the character and mask of a Deist?

Dech. You may; and I in return will consider you as arguing, merely for your bread, in the character and mask of a Christian.

Shep. Well, that will shew a kind of benevolence in you as humane and tender, as if it had sprung from the heart and pen of a *Shaftesbury* himself. Be pleased to proceed.

Dech. **A**S to your first proposition, namely, *that the evidence of possible facts, said to be done in ages long since past, is matter of faith*, I readily grant it. We can only believe such facts, they being in themselves neither self-evident nor demonstrable. But, before we go any farther, it will be proper to observe to you, that as faith is the lowest and weakest among the three degrees of assent, so it is that only, and no more, that can be afforded to Christianity.

Shep. It is very true. But as a demonstration, which, in the order and progress of knowledge, follows from, and depends on self-evidence, if it is once fully and fairly made out, justly claims as intire an assent, as self-evidence itself, so there are, in some cases, certain degrees of report and credibility, to which an assent, as full and intire, is given by all men, as to the most self-evident or demonstrable propositions.

Dech. Pray, Sir, will you favour me with an instance or two?

Shep. Were you ever at *Constantinople*, Sir?

Dech.

Dech. Never.

Shep. Yet I believe you have no more doubt there is such a city, than that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right ones.

Temp. I am sure I have not.

Dech. Nor I; but what then?

Shep. Pray, Mr. *Dechaine*, did you see *Julius Cæsar* assassinated in the capitol?

Dech. A pretty question! No, indeed, Sir.

Shep. Have you any doubts about the truth of what is told us by historians concerning that memorable transaction?

Dech. Not the least.

Shep. Pray, is it either self-evident or demonstrable to you, at this time and place, that there is any such city as *Constantinople*, or that there ever was such a man as *Cæsar*?

Dech. By no means.

Shep. And you have all you know, concerning the being of either the city, or the man, merely from the report of others, who had it from others, and so on, thro' many links of tradition?

Dech. I have.

Shep. You see then, that there are certain cases, in which *the evidence of things not seen*, nor either sensibly or demonstrably perceived, can justly challenge so intire an assent, that he who should pretend to refuse it in the fullest measure of acquiescence, would be deservedly esteemed the most stupid or perverse of mankind.

Dech. Suppose I should, to shorten our work, grant you all this; are you so weak as to imagine you can put the facts related in the four gospels, or any of them, for instance the resurrection of *Jesus*, on the same footing of authority and evidence, with the assassination of *Cæsar*?

Shep. If I cannot put it on an higher and firmer foundation, I ill deserve the pay and livery of my Master. Let us, however, for the present, keep close to the method prescribed to us by the three propositions, cited from my discourse. And, as to the first, with the observation you just now introduced under it; tending to shew,

shew, that the evidence of the Christian religion is of the weakest kind, altho' I think I have said enough to prove that kind of evidence capable of certainty, yet I am far from being satisfied with your granting it merely to shorten our work; and shall therefore beg leave to observe to you, that the most important affairs of life are founded and transacted upon this sort of evidence. A merchant trusts all his fortune to advices from foreign countries, such as that there are cities, commodities, traders, in *Turky* or *China*, none of which he ever saw; and often relies on factors, with whom he is not in the least acquainted. On this bottom is built all foreign commerce, and even the greater part of our domestic trade. The civil and military lists are paid by it, and every thing you, or his Lordship, or his Majesty, enjoys, that is better than acorns and water, is derived from it. The Judge determines property, and liberty, and life, by oaths, which are only the *evidence of things not seen* by him; and neither he nor all the Lawyers upon earth can find out any other evidence, more to be depended on, for the execution of law and justice; nay, the nature of those important matters mentioned doth not, in one case among ten thousand, admit of any other evidence. The King is represented, and his power exercised, by Sheriffs, Justices, Constables, &c. whom he never saw, and in places vastly remote; and subjects obey them so far as to surrender their goods, liberties, lives, without ever having seen either his Majesty, or his commission; nay, his Majesty himself never saw one among a thousand of the commissions, by which his authority is delegated. From hence it may appear, that wealth, liberty, property, life, peace, and society, depend almost wholly on faith; and that Kings, Judges, Merchants, the wisest of men, as well as the weakest, are obliged to see with other peoples eyes, to hear with other peoples ears, to judge by other peoples reason, and to act by other peoples hands, over the face of the whole earth, and in matters of the last consequence.

Dech. And are they not often deceived by trusting to imperfect lights, by confiding in other peoples eyes and judgments?

Shep.

Shep. They are indeed ; but I think not oftener than by trusting too confidently to their own. The purblind man must see for himself ; the half-witted wretch must judge for himself ; those who can see very well, must take upon them to distinguish objects that lie beyond the verge of sight ; and those who have good judgments, must canvass and decide such points, as are above human comprehension and reason. This proceeds from pride ; and what is the consequence ? Why, an infinity of errors in matters of sense, and of strict and undeniable demonstrations, that are really false.

Temp. The Doctor hath struck out a beautiful field for thought, that is intirely new to me.

Shep. And yet, Sir, one would think there is scarcely a day in which the common affairs of life might not suggest it to one.

Temp. It is very true ; and I now wonder how it could escape me. So it fares with the proofs for the being of a God. The world is full of them ; every atom of matter carries an evidence for that great truth ; and yet I know not but an ordinary eye might gaze for a long time on the sun, an animal, or a tree, without tracing the connexion between those works of wisdom and their Author, if nobody hinted it to him.

Shep. Your observation is good, and those who had the care of your education, ought, I should think, to have taught you the strength of moral evidence long ago. They might have led you thro' great part of this field, as you call it, the hither side of it being open time out of mind.

Cunn. Reflections thrown upon his education, now that he is full five-and-twenty, and can think for himself, turn to flouts upon him, rather than his tutor.

Temp. If there was a flout intended, I believe it was not for me ; however, I wish the appearance of it had been avoided.

Shep. All I intended, Sir, was to shew you by that instance, that, notwithstanding all the boasts I have heard of the open and candid education you have got, certain notices of the greatest consequence may have been indoltriously kept out of your sight, and, with the same intention,

intention, others, as prejudicial, thrown in your way. This hint, which, for aught I can see to the contrary, may be very necessary to you, neither Mr. *Dechaine's* two great estates, nor Mr. *Cunningham's* two fat parishes, high as they set them above me, can hinder me from repeating to you, because I have some reason to think it concerns your happiness in this world and the next.

Dech. We are obliged to believe your duty forces you to be rude, and so must bear with you the best we can. But let us return to your second proposition; which was this, *that he who denies such possible facts as are said to have been done in ages long since past, can found his dissent on nothing else, but faith.*

Shep. I Hope that point will not detain us long, because I think it seems to be almost evident in itself.

Dech. To me I am sure it appears exceedingly strange: I thought faith had been the very reverse of disbelieving; that it had consisted in actually and positively believing; and that he who hath not faith, is called in Scripture, and by all the world, an unbeliever.

Shep. That is but playing with words. Are there not four kinds of evidence; and, corresponding with them, four kinds or degrees of assent?

Dech. There are; namely, *Self-evidence*, *Demonstration*, *Probability*, and *Credibility*: And the assent given to the first, is *Intuition*; to the second, *Knowledge*; to the third, *Opinion*; and to the fourth, *Belief*.

Shep. Do you intuitively perceive, that possible facts, said to have been done in former ages, were not done?

Dech. No.

Shep. Can you demonstrate, that such facts were not done?

Dech. Not, unless there were other facts to render those impracticable and impossible.

Shep. But you cannot demonstrate, that there ever were such other facts.

Dech. It is very true: in some cases I cannot.

Shep. It follows then, that, in such cases, you can only believe, such facts were never done; for as you cannot demonstrate,

monstrate, so neither can you render it probable, that such facts never happened.

Dech. Not so fast, Sir. The third head of your discourse was to this effect; *In consequence of what hath been laid down in the two former propositions, he who denies the historical part of the Christian Religion, the facts of which are all possible, cannot be sure it is false, can only believe it so to be.* Let me observe to you, Sir, that no degree of testimony can ever prove an impossible fact to have been done; and that if the highest degree of testimony is opposed by as high a degree of improbability, the opinion founded on the one will destroy, or at least suspend, the belief that may be claimed by the other.

Shep. This I readily acknowledge.

Dech. In consequence of this, I must insist, that if some of the facts, delivered in the Gospel-history, be impossible, or extremely improbable, this will demonstrate that history to be false, or at least put the negative faith of a Deist, if faith you will call it, on a very firm foundation.

Shep. I own it will.

Dech. To avoid prolixity then, let us fix on a single fact, among several of the same kind, and consider a little, whether it be not impossible; or extremely unfeasible. If I mistake not, *Jesus* himself put the truth and reality of his Messiahship on his rising again from the dead; so that, if he did not actually die, and rise again, he could not have been that Son and Messenger of God, he gave himself out for.

Shep. He did.

Dech. Pray now, in sober and good earnest, was that a very possible fact?

Shep. I think it was. If our Saviour had not thought so, and been sure he could perform it, he had sense enough to have put the truth of his mission on somewhat more within his power, or to avoid the leaving it to any further trials.

Dech. For my part, that which is against nature, I shall always think impossible. The laws of the creation are stated and invariable things, and, as long as the world lasts,

lasts, make such a reunion of soul and body, such a reviviscence of a dead carcase, as impossible, as it is for water to burn, or fire to wet us.

Shep. They certainly do, unless the power of God, who made all things, and can alter them as he pleases, should suspend those laws, and, by a force superior to them, should compel matter to produce effects contrary to theirs. To restore a dead body to life, is at least as easy, as it was to give it life at first.

Dech. But before you fly to the power of God, in order to account for such an amazing fact, you would do well to consider, whether it is consistent with the Majesty of an Almighty Being, who can bring about all his purposes in a natural way, whose works do not, like those of men, need to be taken in pieces, in order to be mended, to break in upon his own scheme of creation by an act of violence, that must plainly shew him sensible of a defect in what he had made. His works are all perfect, and the moral part, which is the most excellent of his works, being the most perfect of all, cannot be supposed to want assistance from any suspension or reversal of the natural.

Shep. Does not morality consist in the goodness or badness of actions?

Dech. It does.

Shep. And can any action be either morally good or evil, if the agent hath it not in his power to do it, or let it alone?

Dech. It cannot.

Shep. All moral actions therefore, as such, depend upon the freedom of the agent, to do that which is good or evil.

Dech. No doubt on't they do.

Shep. Now man, who is a free and moral agent, may do that which is evil.

Dech. He may.

Shep. As this is the privilege of men in general, so men in general may do evil, and be wicked.

Dech. This I grant.

Shep. It follows therefore, that irregularities and defects may arise in the moral world, thro' an abuse of the
afore-

afore-mentioned privilege, notwithstanding the perfection, in which this part of the creation may have been sent into being. Now to remedy these defects, if they should at any time happen, and become general, bring the means from whence you will, can be no unreasonable object of God's goodness; and we cannot, I think, without great presumption, say, either that God would not, or could not, for a time at least, suspend or reverse the laws of the material world, provided such his suspension might be made subservient to so excellent a purpose. Now this suspension, or reversal, is as natural, as the course of nature itself; for what is nature, but the free-will of God exerted in the works of creation? The supreme will, Sir, may act as naturally, and as wisely, when at any time it inverts the common course of things, as you do, when you turn back the hand of your watch, in order to bring it nearer to the time of day. Thus I hope it appears, that both in respect to the fact itself of the resurrection, and to God the Agent, it may have been possible enough, unless it be said, that there were no defects nor corruptions in the moral world, that required a reformation; or that the miracle of our Saviour's resurrection, no more than the rest of his miracles, could be judged by God to be a proper proof of the Reformer's mission.

Dech. And may not this be said?

Shep. It may; but not, I think, with any shew of reason. There was wickedness enough in the world, at our Saviour's coming, to make a reformation necessary. The wisest of the *Gentiles*, as well as the *Jews*, thought so; and that the miracles, particularly the resurrection, wrought in proof of our Saviour's mission, were very strong and effectual arguments in favour of it, and therefore worthy to be employed by the Divine wisdom for that purpose, may appear evident to any one, who considers, not only the nature of the case, which to human apprehension seems incapable of any other satisfactory proofs, but also the conviction actually wrought by their means in prodigious numbers of people, who, had they not been eye-witnesses of demonstrations so irresistible, could never, by any other means, have been induced to

suffer

suffer and die, as they did, for facts so hard to be believed, and for principles so irreconcilable to the corruptions of human nature.

Dech. As to the difficulty of believing such facts, you will not surely insist on that as an argument for your faith, since, in the apprehension of every sober person, it must appear an insuperable obstacle thereunto.

Shep. Ordinary facts are believed upon common report, or even slight appearances; and therefore, in respect to such, mistakes are easy and usual; but no one will become evidence for a miracle at the expence, or even risque, of his life, without the highest and strongest conviction the nature of the thing will bear.

Temp. Surely the resurrection of Christ, or any other man, cannot be a thing impossible with God. It is neither above his power, nor, when employed for a sufficient purpose, inconsistent with his majesty, wisdom, and goodness.

Dech. Well, *Templcton*, the Parson is likely to make a very strong believer of you. He could not reasonably hope for a more forward disciple.

Temp. It is not just now that I began to think the resurrection possible.

Dech. No, I believe not. You probably thought it so, ever since you was fed with that, and other the like food for babes, in the nursery. Children suck in marvellous tales at a strange rate, and find it difficult to clear their heads of them at a riper age.

Temp. That is not my case, if I know any thing of my own mind. I think it, in itself, a very amazing fact; and, were it not well attested, should never believe it; but I must be excused, if I can see no impossibility in it, nor in any of the miracles said to have been wrought by Christ, or his Apostles. What do you think, *Mr. Cunningham*?

Cunn. I do not think it impossible.

Shep. So much, at least, I expected from you. But what if it should, all things considered, appear highly probable?

Dech. That, I believe, you will find it hard to prove, take what you will into consideration.

Shep.

Shep. If sin, universally spread, brought universal death into the world ; if it was worthy of a compassionate God to send some one into the world to take away sin ; if miracles were the best proof of his mission ; if his own resurrection was the most convincing miracle that could be wrought, and at the same time carried with it the most experimental assurance of an happy victory over all the effects of sin, and a comfortable renovation of the moral world ; and if it was as easy for God to raise up his Son from death, as it is for one man to awake another out of sleep ; I think the resurrection of Christ very far removed from improbability.

Dech. Ay, very far, no doubt on't ; but methinks you took a great many *ifs* to eke out that argument.

Shep. I intended it rather as matter for you to form arguments out of, and as an appeal to common sense, than as a regular syllogism, raised by mood and figure.

Dech. Oh ! Sir, you may spare yourself the trouble of furnishing me with matter.

Shep. But, Sir, while you throw into one scale the improbability of certain facts related in the Gospel-history and aggravate it as much as you can, give me leave to put into the other that authority, and those vouchers, on which the credibility of the facts objected to is founded, and hint a little the weak authorities the Deists are forced to support their opposite faith with, in relation to those facts. We are all, both Christians and Libertines, believers ; but which side believes aright, is the point to be considered.

Dech. If it is, proceed to it.

Shep. Those believers, whose faith it is to rely on the truth of the Christian-history, rest their assent on a written report, made by eye-witnesses ; which report the various Churches and Sects, jealous of one another, took care to preserve genuine and uncorrupted, at least in all material points, and all the religious writers in every age since have amply attested. That the first spreaders of this report were competent witnesses, can hardly be questioned, when it is considered, that, in respect to facts, they only reported what they saw ; in doing which they were so far from having any interest, that they forfeited every

every comfort and pleasure of life, and life itself, for the sake of gaining followers to a better. In the case of ordinary facts, indifferent witnesses may suffice ; but, when miracles were to be recorded, Providence, for the satisfaction of distant places and ages, gave witnesses, who embraced the terrors of death to confirm their testimony. who, if I may be allowed the expression, were sworn on their own blood to the truth of their evidence. The Libertine believers, on the other hand, whose faith consists in a persuasion, that the Christian religion is an imposture, found their opinion on that of the *Jews*, who persecuted and crucified Christ, and on that of the *Romans*, who put his followers to death, by way of answer to the doctrines they taught, and to the evidence of the facts they reported. From them only can any testimony against Christ, or his followers, be derived. Now, as it is plain, from a favourite principle in Libertinism, that they were prejudiced against Christianity by their persecuting it, their testimony is not to be relied on. The *Jews* caused our Saviour to be put to death, lest the *Romans* should come, and take away their place and nation. And the *Romans*, if they had suffered the Christian religion to spread itself without opposition, saw they must have given up their gods, to whom they were blindly bigotted, and their vices, to which they were still more strongly attached. They therefore set themselves to refute it with fire and fagot, and thought to subdue it, as they had done every thing else, by force. To believe in vouchers like these, against the testimony given in favour of Christianity, is to have a strange redundancy of faith. Yet no one contemporary *Jew* or *Roman* hath left any thing on record, to invalidate the truth of our Saviour's resurrection, or the reality of any one miracle, in the Gospel-history ; so that the Libertine is destitute of any testimony to found his faith on, and is forced to build on the mere cruelty of tyrants and persecutors.

Dech. The Christians had the world long enough to themselves to destroy all records and memorials, that made against them.

Shep. And so the faith of a Deist rests upon this, that there might have been such records, and that those records

might have been sufficient to expose the falsity of the Christian history. Prodigious faith! not resembling a grain of mustard-seed, but like a mountain! Indeed I have not seen such, no not among Papists. But, Sir, had there been such testimony as you speak of, against the resurrection, and other miracles of our Saviour, his religion did not then want enemies as bitter, and as watchful to destroy it, as the modern Deists, who certainly had not failed to stifle it in its very birth, could they have brought so good evidence against it.

Dech. The Christian religion, for many years, ran so low among the people, was confined to so obscure a corner of the world, and made, in every respect, so inconsiderable a figure, as not to come even into the notice of persons sufficiently awake to an inquiry about the proofs either for or against it. All this time its own ignorant preachers were heaping up vouchers to support it; and those who might have produced a better set to refute it, having either never so much as heard of it, or thought it not worth their while to trouble themselves about it, took no care to record the marks of imposture, which, considering the extravagance of its pretensions, could hardly escape the notice of sensible observers, had there been such, who thought it worth their attending to. It grew, like a weed in some neglected ground, to a large size, before it was seen by any, who had eyes to see in things of such a nature.

Shep. Surely you must be mistaken. At the time when Christianity was introduced into the world, the *Jews* were a very sensible and knowing people, and lived intermixed with *Greeks* and *Romans*, whose understandings had all the opportunities of being well cultivated, and enlightened, that could be expected in the most intelligent age of the world. The *Jews* were then in great expectation of a Messiah, and the *Romans* were alarmed at certain prophecies, importing, that the East was about to give a King to the whole world. When Christ appeared, his miracles made too great a noise, not to draw the attention of mankind; and the religion he preached with all imaginable boldness and freedom, so directly opposed the notions, so severely reprov'd the vices, both of *Jews* and *Gentiles*,

Gentiles, and drew after it so many followers, as could not fail to excite, not only the curiosity, but the resentment of the world. Although the first preachers of Christianity were men of mean condition, yet so great was their success in making converts, some of whom were by no means in the lower class of mankind, that it was impossible for their adversaries, the *Roman* and *Jewish* rulers, to be indifferent to the progress they were making. Our Saviour, and his Apostles, were arraigned, crucified, stoned, &c. insomuch that the cause of Christianity was pleaded before high-priests, governors, and kings. Nothing in the world was farther from being done in a corner. It was openly preached to the great cities in the world, and even in *Rome* itself as early as the reign of *Claudius*; and that the greatest men in the world did not look upon it as an obscure or inconsiderable business in that of *Nero*, is but too plain from the inhuman persecution it underwent at that time. Now, Sir, had our religion betrayed itself by any primitive signs of imposture, it is plain they could not have passed unnoticed, nor unrecorded, considering the adversaries it had to deal with, whose power, policy, and malice, had they been helped out by the detection of only a few impostures, must infallibly have suppressed it in its very infancy. I hope, Sir, it will seem unnecessary to vindicate the Deists from the charge of infidelity by any further arguments, since it hath already been sufficiently proved, that they are believers of a very high class.

Dech. You will find it an hard matter, I believe, to draw any advantage to Christianity from so singular a position, were it never so fully proved on the one side, and granted on the other; for if faith is so very firm a foundation to build on, in matters of this nature, as you represent it, we Deistical believers may, after all, perhaps with more safety trust our cause to it, than you can do.

Shep. It was not in order to bring any argument from thence in favour of Revelation, that I endeavoured to prove the Deists to be believers; but that, after all their dealing in demonstrations, and pretending to certainties, they might have the mortification to see themselves stand-

ing at least on no higher nor firmer ground, than their adversaries, that is, on faith, a principle so long despised, and so severely ridiculed by them all.

Dech. Oh! but since you have so cleverly raised this ground under us, as well as yourselves, to a level with demonstration, we shall not for the future have so much reason to be ashamed of it.

Shep. I have not raised it all so high. There is a part of it left for you to stand on, that is low and slippery enough. Your faith, when closely examined, will be found to have all the properties of a weak credulity, which you so contemptuously, and so unjustly, ascribe to ours. You build it either on the supposed impossibility of facts, as easy to be performed, as it is for you to walk and speak; or else on the opposition given to our religion by the most partial adversaries, by the very worst and cruellest of mankind, who have left you no testimony against its miracles, but their inhuman persecutions, nor the least argument against the purity of its doctrines, but such as arose from the stupid absurdity of their own principles, and the wild licentiousness of their own vices. The opposition of such men is so far from giving you any foundation to build on, that no one thing in the world can speak so strongly in behalf of Christianity; for so great is the tenderness of human nature in the worst of men, that they never choose to refute by the sword, when they can do it by argument; and, besides, this demonstrates, that while the grounds of your faith were maintained by human power, those of ours were supported by the Divine.

Dech. And so yours is a Divine faith?

Shep. Yes, Sir, this alone is sufficient to intitle it to that epithet; for nothing but the power of God could have upheld a religion against the association of all the policy, and power, and corruptions, of the world.

Dech. But for all this opposition, given to your religion by the *Jews* and *Romans*, you have no other evidence, but the testimony of men; and therefore your faith is purely human.

Shep. Our faith is the same with that of the first Christians, and therefore originally Divine. Altho', however,

ever, it should be allowed, that we in these remoter ages have nothing else to found our faith on, but the testimony of men ; yet this is rendered so full and clear, in respect to the prodigious progress of Christianity in spite of persecution, by what is left on record in the writings of enemies, as well as friends, that nothing of this nature can be more firm and certain, than the grounds of our faith. But once we are persuaded, be it by what argument it will, that the New Testament is the word of God, our belief that God will make good to us the promises contained therein, is an act of trust in, and dependence on God ; and therefore merits the appellation of Divine faith. However, Sir, I am very far from granting you, that our faith concerning the truth of the Scriptures rests intirely on the testimony of men. Those writings are, on all hands, allowed, and known to be very antient, more antient by far, than many events foretold in them. Now the completion of such prophecies, as relate to these events, is a late, a present attestation, given by Providence, to the truth and genuineness of those writings ; and therefore, on this score, our faith, relying on the testimony of God, is a Divine faith.

Dech. But you Christians, before the publication of a late treatise (*a*), had a surer way of proving your faith to be Divine, namely, from the attestation given to it by the inward workings of the Holy Ghost upon your own minds. This, however, you do not insist on now, not only because that treatise hath bantered you out of a pretence so bold and groundless, but because such continual inspirations, being known only to yourselves, cannot be urged as proofs to us.

Shep. You wholly mistake the matter. We to this day actually insist on the reality of the thing.

Cann. Enthusiasts do ; but men of sense have long since disclaimed these extraordinary convictions and experiences.

Shep. Men of sense then have disclaimed the Scriptures ; for in them we are told, *that by grace we are saved thro' faith ; and that not of ourselves ; it is the gift of God.* The external testimony given to our religion, is sufficient

to excite an historical faith in the worst of men, and even in devils; but this faith is only a foundation for fears, not for a new life and conversation, nor for the comfortable hope of an happy immortality. A lively, operative, and effectual faith, is never found, but where the Spirit of God hath raised it by his immediate grace and assistance. After faith hath taken possession of the understanding, something further is necessary to urge it home upon the heart, in order to give it a sufficient ascendancy over the will and affections. Now this is the work of God only, *without whom we can do nothing*.

Dech. Do you not look upon the effectual faith you speak of, as the only spring of a good life, and the only instrument of your salvation?

Shep. I do.

Dech. How then can your good actions be deemed virtuous, or held rewardable, since, in respect to the faith that produces them, you are but mere machines, moved and acted on by the Divine power?

Shep. We lay no stress on the merit of our good actions, nor are we so presumptuous as to claim a reward from God; we only hope for his mercy. However, as we do not hold the grace of God to be irresistible, if we have any thing to recommend us in his sight, it is our yielding up the reluctant motions of a corrupt and degenerate heart to the dictates of his Holy Spirit. As often as we do this, and, in consequence of it, betake ourselves to a life of piety and virtue, we demonstrate to all, who know us, the presence and power of God within us; for a good life is a miracle, exceeding the strength of man, and to be hoped for only from the hand of God. Thus, Sir, every good Christian can as fully prove to others, as satisfy himself, that the Divine Being is both *the author and finisher of his faith*.

Dech. After all, he is a strange sort of a good man, whose goodness is not his own.

Shep. He is a much better man, who will suffer himself to be made good by another, than he, who, having no goodness of his own growth, will suffer none to be grafted or planted in him.

Dech.

Dech. Whether we suppose the happiness of another life to be the mere effect of faith, or to follow the good actions produced by faith, the supposition will be equally absurd. All actions are to be estimated by the principles and motives, from whence they proceed. The good actions of a Christian proceeding from his faith only, and his faith neither proceeding from his choice, nor depending on his power, I cannot see how either the cause or effect can recommend him to God, who approves only of those who are good by choice, and, we may presume, will never condemn those who are wicked only thro' a want of that faith, which he hath not given them.

Shep. He will never condemn any man for a want of that goodness which he hath not afforded him the means of. But when the evidence of an historical faith in Christianity is bestowed on any man, if he resists that evidence, it is not to be expected, that God should inspire him with the more practical kind of faith, which can never be found, where the historical hath not first taken place.

Dech. If the historical evidence is sufficient, it cannot be resisted; if it is not, we are in the right to reject it.

Shep. But whether it is or not, can never be known to any man, till he hath fairly and fully weighed that evidence. Most men have their faith in their own power, and find a way to believe as they please, because they can turn away their minds from the evidence on the one side, and attend to that on the other; they can read such books, and converse with such persons, as lean the same way with themselves; and, if they should at any time do otherwise, the evidence for a disagreeable persuasion, being received with some aversion, hath little or no effect. There is nothing more common than to find men deaf to all arguments that thwart their interests or pleasures, and yielding an easy assent to such as fall in with either. Now, as thinking under such a bias is certainly vicious, so thinking with an honest regard to truth only is as undoubtedly virtuous. But if an article of faith is proposed, the nature and tendency of which are calculated to promote virtue, to allow the evidence of that article of faith its full weight, is virtuous in an higher sense; and to refuse a due attention to it, or to

resist it, in case it is sufficient, is, we must own, criminal in a very high degree. If the faith of a real Christian leads him to virtue, and if that faith is in some measure the effect of his own choice, his faith is itself a virtue. If, on the other hand, the faith of a Libertine is at all chosen by himself, and tends in the least to make him wicked, then his faith is not only or simply an error of his judgment, but also the reigning vice of his heart. Considered as an error, it is so gross, so superstitious an excess of faith, that I cannot help advising those who are addicted to it, as the best means to preserve the reputation of good sense, which they claim, to a little more incredulity. Nothing lays a man so open to all manner of imposition, as a strong faith erected on a weak foundation. Considered as a vice, I forbear to expatiate on it, being unwilling to give offence, and not knowing how far what I should say might concern the persons, who have done me the honour of this visit.

Dech. Do you really imagine we Deists have no principles to make us virtuous, because we reject the fictitious or compulsory principles of revelation?

Shep. Your creed may contain other articles of faith, better founded than this we have been considering. As, no doubt on't, you think it does, will you be so good, Sir, as to give us it at large? This act of condescension might afford us an occasion to enter more fully into the points already considered, and also to handle some others of no less importance. The Deists, and indeed the Libertines of all degrees and denominations, are accused as men of dark and deep designs, who artfully attack the principles of other men, and still more artfully conceal their own, seldom declaring themselves by their writings in favour of any particular system of opinions, and, when they do, seeming frequently to contradict one another. I have read over, with all the attention I was master of, the celebrated performances of my Lord *Shaftesbury*, Mr. *Collins*, Mr. *Toland*, Dr. *Tindal*, and some others of less note; and, to my great concern, altho' I can perceive what it is they would overturn, yet I cannot so easily and clearly discern what they intend to establish, any further, than that they labour

to

to recommend the religion and law of nature, instead of Revelation; and that their readers may gather, in some few instances, what they maintain by what they deny. This obscurity, proceed it from whence it will, is turned against them by their adversaries, and ascribed by some to the crudity or evil tendency of their tenets, by others, to artifice and chicane. Now I think it concerns them much to remove this unhandsome reflection by an open declaration of their opinions, both for truth's sake, and their own. You will please to pardon me, Sir, if I be too presuming in this request.

Dech. As the Deists are far from being dogmatists, so no one of them attempts to impose his own notions on the rest, or thinks himself obliged to follow those of the greatest man among them. They leave to others to think together in Churches and nations, and take the liberty each man to think freely for himself. Yet this doth not hinder them from harmonizing in main matters; and those I will sum up to you in a few words, their tenets being few and plain. And as to the artifice, with which they have been maliciously charged by their adversaries, you will see sufficient reasons assigned for it in several passages of the *Characteristics*, and in *Christianity as old as the creation*. Riveted prejudices cannot be beaten down by regular attacks; nor can the opposite opinions be introduced, without some disguise. Besides, nobody, you know, would care to risque his own safety with a set of persecuting antagonists, who are ready, on all occasions, to argue with us from acts of parliament, and to call us to an uncouth sort of disputations before courts of judicature, where bigotry often presides on the bench, and always reigns in both the boxes.

Shep. You are very obliging, Sir; and in my opinion do more honour to Deism, by frankly telling us what it is, than he who thinks it wants art, either to conceal or insinuate it.

Dech. Sir, it was not because the Deists were ashamed of their principles, that they chose to introduce them with so much address, and under the colour of more received notions. A little art was necessary to render old prejudices disagreeable, and take away the strange-

ness of new truths. But now that people do, generally speaking, lean rather to our side, we make less scruple of declaring what we hold, and begin to open our system by degrees.

The Deistical Creed.

1. **T**HE Deists maintain, that the light of nature is sufficient to discover to every man, without instruction, all that is necessary or expedient for him, as a moral agent, to know (*a*).

2. By this light every man perceives there is a God (*b*), that is, a being of infinite goodness, wisdom, justice, mercy, power, who is eternal, immutable, and perfect; who, being infinitely happy in himself, made nothing for his own sake, and consequently seeks no honour nor service from his creatures, it being impossible for their actions, be they good or bad, to affect him in any sense (*c*); and who, as Governor of the world, takes care to make his will sufficiently known to all his subjects (*d*).

3. It appears by the light of nature, that the law, or the religion, by which God governs the world, and which is written in the heart of every man, is enforced, not by future and uncertain sanctions, but by the present pleasure ever attending on a good action, and the present remorse inseparably annexed to an evil one (*e*); that to do good merely thro' hope of reward, and to abstain from evil, merely through dread of punishment, hath neither virtue nor goodness in it (*f*); that to act up to the dictates of that nature, which God hath given us, is the way to please God; and to do otherwise, is to affront, dishonour, and displease him (*g*); that the natural light, which shines in the breasts of all men, and enables them to discover the fitness of things, in which consists the law of nature, is divine; and that this law

(*a*) Christianity as old as the creation, chap. 1. 3. Shaftes. Inquiry concerning virtue.

chap. 1, 2.

(*c*) Chap. 4, & 5.

(*d*) Chap. 1, & 2.

(*e*) Chap. 3.

(*f*) Chap. 14.

(*g*) Chap. 3. 13, 14.

is eternal, and indispensable, and binds the actions of God himself (*b*).

4. The Deists maintain, that altho' the dictates of natural religion are universal, and plain to all men, yet, since men have been led away from them by craft and superstition, it is necessary to reduce them to the light of nature again by discourses oral and written (*i*). But, however,

5. As the more knowing kind of men may do this for the more ignorant, there is no necessity, nor even the least occasion, for calling in miracles and divine revelations for this purpose; and therefore they deny the reality of any revelation (*k*).

Here is an amiable and glorious system of principles. In this all superstition, and priestcraft, and tyranny over the minds and opinions of mankind, are laid aside. In this the Deity is truly represented, not as in your scheme of religion, full of wrath, indignation, jealousy, imposing arbitrary and useless commands on free and rational beings, and placing his honour and glory in severely exacting obedience to such impositions; but full of lenity and indulgence to the infirmities of his creatures. In the next place, here is a law, not depending upon authority and traditions, not darkened by hyperbolical and figurative expressions, not mutilated by interpolations, corruptions, and imperfect or wrong translations, not capable of being explained away by arbitrary, or split into opposite and contradictory doctrines by various and fanciful interpretations, but written on the heart of every man in capital letters. Place a man in what circumstances you please, and those circumstances shall suggest his duty to him. The whole creation is his teacher, and the relations and fitnesses of things are his standing monitors. He thinks for himself, and becomes his own casuist, divine, and priest, without either expence or trouble. The virtue of individuals, and the peace and happiness of societies, are not built by this system on a mere belief of future rewards and punishments, but on

(*b*) Chap. 13. (*i*) Chap. 8. (*k*) Chap. 7. For this see the whole book, and all other Deistical writings.

rewards enjoyed, and punishments inflicted, by the conscience of every man, immediately upon his doing a good or evil action. This dispensation, far from being partial, like some other pretended ones, is communicated universally to all ages and nations; *its sound is gone out into all lands, and its words unto the ends of the world.* It is to reduce mankind to this universal and natural law, it is to turn away their eyes from false and foreign lights, and fix them on this internal illumination, that the great philosophers of this age do labour in their writings and conversations with a force of reason, and a sublimity of soul, which the whole *Helvetic* body of those who militate in the cause of revelations are strangers to.

Shep. You have almost persuaded me to be in love with Deism.

Dech. Almost! Why, *Shepherd*, I know you are a man of sense, and therefore can hardly take you for any other than a real Deist in your heart, altho' your craft, and the subsistence you earn by it, compel you to profess the contrary.

Shep. Your compliment to my understanding, Sir, costs me too much, in point of sincerity, to be received. I am not yet a Deist, nor can the most rapid torrent of eloquence or wit carry me down with it to Deism, unless its principles are supported by close and convincing arguments. If you can bring such in its favour, you will then have the honour of converting to it an honest and candid inquirer after truth.

Dech. Would you really profess yourself a Deist, if you were thoroughly convinced of the truth and solidity of our principles?

Shep. You know, Sir, as well as any-body, how little I have to hinder me from making such a profession, did it appear to go against my conscience no more than it does against my worldly interest. You yourself would take care your convert should not die a martyr to your principles, merely for want of necessaries.

Dech. Your present income of thirty-four pounds a year, as you intimate, ought not to tie you to disingenuous professions; and it would be very hard, if I could not provide for an honest fellow of my own making, at a
better

better rate than that. If all other expedients failed, I could procure or purchase you a much better living than this, surely, which you might leave to the care of some sorry curate; and spend the remainder of your days in the enjoyment of the town, and my table, and in writing, as some very ingenious Divines, whom I could name, have done, in defence of such doctrines as seem to put Christianity on a new and clearer footing; but tend, in the conclusion, intirely to overturn it.

Shep. Whether you are in jest or earnest, this, I am afraid, would seem somewhat base and disingenuous; though, now I think on't, if I could once heartily close with the principles you recommend, I should probably make but little scruple or difficulty of using some art in the support of opinions so soothing and beneficial to me.

Dech. Ah Parson! you are very sly. However, I am ready to defend the Deistical Creed against all your objections, and shall leave your future conduct to your own discretion. But as this defence will take up a good deal of time, are you willing we should pass a few mornings together for so good a purpose?

Temp. O, by all means. Mr. *Shepherd* does not seem to be so diffident of his cause as to decline it. If I was well enough acquainted with the gentleman to ask a favour, I would beg his compliance with this overture, as a singular kindness to me.

Shep. Sir, I do most readily agree to it, both for your satisfaction, and own information.

The End of the First DIALOGUE.

DIALOGUE

D I A L O G U E II.

DECH AINE,
TEMPLETON,

CUNNINGHAM,
SHEPHERD.

Shep. **G**entlemen, I am very glad to see you here so early. It is, however, matter of surprize to me, that you should be abroad at this hour, when some others of your rank are but going to bed.

Dech. I have been always an early riser in the country : in town I am a conformist.

Temp. For my part, I am never so chearful as the day I rise betimes. Lying long in bed relaxes the spring both of body and mind. As early hours in the morning are impossible without early hours over-night, and as most of our excesses are committed by candle-light, I do not know any thing that would contribute more to virtue, than a rule, or some call of business, that could rouse one every day at five or six in the morning. I had formerly a settled prejudice against positive duties ; but the great service, that might be drawn from such a duty for this purpose, reconciles me a little to institutions of that nature ; so that I begin to doubt whether we do not really stand in need of them, and, in particular, to wish we were obliged by sufficient authority to rise always at five in the morning. It would deliver us from a custom infinitely prejudicial to health and virtue, and give us a longer and an happier life. I honour him much who said, *He that lengthens his nights shortens his days.*

Dech. When you make a revelation, *Templeton*, you may take care to put in this new positive institution ; and that you will not in time become a prophet, or a revealer, I am by no means certain. You was seized with some flight symptoms of enthusiasm in this very place on *Tuesday* last ; and they seem to grow upon you so fast, that

that I am really not altogether free from apprehensions of a new *Templetonian Testament* or *Dispensation*. Virtue consists not in rising either late or early, nor in any artificial methods of managing ourselves, but in following nature, whose light is sufficient, according to the first article of our creed, to discover to every man, without instruction or institution, all that is necessary for him, as a moral agent, either to know or practise.

Shep. Will you be so good, Sir, as to tell me in what the light of nature consists?

Dech. It consists in two things, *sentiment* and *reason*. By sentiment I mean, first, that impression made on the heart of every man, by which he is naturally led to seek his own good, and to preserve himself; secondly, that love of the sexes, by which they are prompted to propagate and preserve the species; thirdly, that *storge* by which the parents are moved to cherish and preserve their offspring; fourthly, that benevolence, by which one human creature is inclined to benefit and preserve another; and lastly, that perception of beauty in a good, and of deformity in a bad, action, which every man feels in himself. By reason I mean that divine faculty of the mind, by which all men are enabled to judge and direct themselves in the choice of such means, as are necessary to bring about the ends suggested to them by their natural sentiments, to decide between them according to the fitnesses of things, when they interfere, and to restrain them within due bounds, when at any time they tend to excess or irregularity. This, Sir, is what I mean by the light or law of nature, implanted in the breasts of all men, and adequate to all their moral purposes. As every one must acknowledge there is such a law within him, independent of all instruction, there can be no need of a revelation. It was in full confidence of forcing you to own this, that I suffered you to carry your arguments, relating to the history of miracles and resurrections, to their full length, knowing well, that as soon as the natural and universal revelation came to be considered and demonstrated, all your talk about the proofs of a particular dispensation, and the necessity of it, would come to the ground. Pray, Sir, do you own
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the clearness of this law, as I have described it, within yourself?

Shep. I do not.

Dech. You do not! Then you deny, I suppose, you have any desire to preserve yourself, to propagate your species, to cherish your offspring, to do good to mankind, to cultivate virtue, and extirpate vice from your mind; you deny the existence of a rational faculty within you; you deny, in a word, that you are a man.

Shep. I deny none of these things; but I doubt indeed whether any, or all of these, can be properly called a law.

Dech. Do they not oblige and bind the actions of men? And is not that which binds the actions of moral agents, a law?

Shep. Does the law of nature consist in sentiment, or in reason?

Dech. In both.

Shep. So far as it consists in sentiment, the brutes, having those instincts, which you call sentiments, are moral agents, as well as men.

Dech. By no means. Brutes are not struck with a moral sense of good and evil, as men are. Brutes are destitute of reason and choice, and therefore their instincts are not laws; but man being directed by his reason to act in conformity to his sentiments, and being free to obey or disobey its dictates, those sentiments become a law to him.

Shep. No sense, perception, or instinct, can be called moral, till some higher faculty enjoins obedience to it as a duty. It is reason therefore in which the law of nature consists; for men are only accountable for their actions, so far as they are rational creatures; and that man, who is wholly deprived of reason, is, for the time, neither a moral, nor an accountable agent. But pray, Sir, have all men one and the same law of nature? Or hath every man a distinct natural law of his own?

Dech. All men have the same natural law. The sentiments I mentioned, and the faculty of reason, are the same in every man.

Shep.

Shep. As men are to deal with one another, and live in community, they ought certainly to have but one universal law; for if this man were to act by one law, and that by another, it is easy to see, that great mischiefs and clashings would arise from thence. You know better than I do, that no trial can be had, nor a judge determine in any cause, but upon a common law, which parties on both sides must submit to. If men had different laws, that which is right by one man's law, might be wrong by another's, and consequently right or wrong could never be distinguished. Now, Sir, it is a common observation, that the sentiments and reasonings of mankind are very different. Altho' all men have those sentiments you speak of, and reason too, yet this sentiment is stronger in one man, and that in another; and reason, which is clear and strong in some men, is weak and ill-informed in others. Hence it comes to pass, that *Mr. Templeton* may do a thing, which you think right, and I wrong, tho' both you and I are perfectly unprejudiced in the matter. In this respect, therefore, the mere sentiments and reasons of men cannot be a perfect law. Were it not for this great diversity, the breast of every man might be appealed to, as containing the common law, and no judge could ever mistake in his decrees. But as the contrary is evident to experience, mankind are forced to form themselves into societies, and determine what shall be the common law of all the members.

Dech. Yet if reason were not able to direct, the society could frame no common law, capable of answering the end.

Shep. Altho' it should mix unjust with equitable laws, which all societies have done, partly by mistake, and partly with design; yet those who are to be judged by those laws, are in a better condition, than if every man were left to be his own lawgiver.

Dech. When you say, this or that law of society is unjust, is it not reason that tells you so?

Shep. I cannot tell whether it be or not. My reason says one thing, that of the society says another; and two societies are as apt to differ, as two men. But if reason
were

were never so uniform in all men, yet I cannot see what authority it hath to set up for a legislator. If any man should deny its authority, and act against reason; and, as it often happens, be powerful enough to defend himself against all the consequences of such a procedure; what could reason do to enforce or vindicate its laws? A law is a rule of action imposed on a free and moral agent, by a known superior, whose authority cannot be questioned, with a reward or penalty, or both, annexed; and if the law is perfect, it must be just, and its sanctions must be adequate to the just and good end proposed by it. Be pleased to shew, Sir, that the dictates of mere reason are supported by such authority, and by rewards and punishments of weight and cogency equal to the security and happiness of all mankind.

Dech. To act against nature is shocking to a rational being, and therefore the authority of nature is sufficient. As to the rewards and punishments annexed to the law of nature, they too seem to be sufficient. No man can be more surely rewarded for a good action, than he who hath his reward in his own hand, and can bestow it as plentifully on himself as he pleases, in that greatest of all pleasures, the pleasure of doing good. Nor can any man be more terribly punished, than by being left, after doing an evil action, to the severe stings of his own guilty conscience.

Shep. Every man therefore is subject to the law of his own heart, and that law is founded on the mere authority of his own nature. He is likewise his own judge, rewarder, and punisher. By this, which we may call the self-sufficient scheme, a man must either be subject to no law of nature; that is, in any proper sense of the word law; or else he must be superior to himself; for every law is the will of some superior imposed upon one, who is inferior and subject.

Dech. Are not the nature and reason of a man superior to his will and passions, and every thing else about him, that can be said to act? There is certainly in every man a superior part that imposes, and an inferior that obeys, the law.

Shep.

Shep. I find the self-sufficient scheme is more perfect than I imagined. Every man, it seems, hath a legislator, and subjects, with a court of justice, and executioners, in his own breast.

Dech. Yes ; every one of us is a moral, as well as a physical, microcosm. Did you never hear of the *forum conscientiae* ?

Shep. I have ; but I imagined, till now, it had only been a metaphorical forum, or court of justice. It hath been received as a maxim by some, that the will obeys and executes the last result of the understanding or reason. Whenever therefore a man does wrong, the legislator hath been deficient, and the law unjust ; whereas you and *Tindal* maintain, that the law of nature is perfect, and universally right and clear.

Dech. But, good Sir, that maxim is no maxim with me. I say, a man may act against nature and reason. If he might not, he could never be guilty of a culpable action ; for all that is required of any man is, to act up to the dictates of his reason, and that nature which God hath given him.

Shep. When the reward annexed to the natural law is conferred on any man for doing well, or the punishment inflicted on him for doing ill, is the man, properly speaking, said to be rewarded or punished ?

Dech. No doubt on't he is.

Shep. It is not then his will or passions, or the active part of him alone, that is said to be rewarded or punished, but the whole man ; and when he acts against the laws of nature, poor nature herself, who hath rightly dictated the law to him, is punished together with the more peccant part. I really pity that unhappy legislatrix, who, without any fault of hers, must, as often as her subjects disobey her, come down from her tribunal, and suffer with them under the hand of her own executioner. The constitution of this internal court of conscience is ill regulated, in my opinion. I find there are great disorders in the moral microcosm, as well as in the natural, and, what is worse, great injustice. However, I must own, it is a great alleviation of this grievance, that the punishments which nature undergoes on
such

such occasions, being inflicted only by her own directions, are very gentle. Besides, if she be so corrupt and ill-disposed, as some say she is, it is little matter what she suffers. It seems very strange, Mr. *Dechaine*, that you, who I suppose cannot conceive the possibility of a personal distinction in the Divine Nature, should nevertheless have found out a sufficient number of personalities in one individual man, to furnish a court of conscience. If the mind of a man is so populous, the poorest beggar may say *We*, as well as the King.

Dech. You have a strange knack at allegory.

Shep. Nay, it was of your own starting; and, besides, you did not make an allegory of it altogether, but somewhat worse. In order to give authority to your law of nature, you found out a ruler and subjects in the same man. But one faculty in a man can never be lawgiver to another; nor can the duty and obligation, lying upon any man, arise out of, and terminate in, himself. He must be subject to some higher power, if he is to be governed at all.

Dech. If there is any defect in the authority of the natural law, it is abundantly supplied by the authority of society. If each man contains not a perfect moral world within himself, society, into which he is by natural inclination, and I had almost said by necessity, obliged to enter, is a perfect body, and sufficiently authorizes the laws of nature and reason.

Shep. This is giving up the whole matter in question, and flying from a natural to an artificial and factitious authority. If the law of nature is a perfect law, it must have a natural authority, and not a borrowed one.

Dech. Society is necessary and natural, and therefore the authority it derives on the law of nature is purely natural.

Shep. I thought *Tindal*, and the rest of you, had maintained, that every man hath a perfect law of nature in his own breast, whether in society, or out of it, go whither he will. I have also hitherto imagined, that all the abettors of the self-sufficient scheme had founded society on the law of nature, instead of sending the law of nature to borrow its basis from civil society. For my
part,

part, I think it evident to demonstration, that society cannot at all subsist, if its several members be not subject to some authority and law, previous to those of society. And as to the inward uprightness and virtue of individuals, society, which hath to do with nothing more than our outward actions, can never provide for them. The magistrate bears no rule over the consciences of men, into which he cannot dive; and therefore, unless virtue, contrary to all your maxims, consists in mere exterior conduct, allured or forced by civil rewards and punishments, the political Leviathan can afford no assistance towards the sincere and real goodness of his members, and is of consequence but an huge body, without soul or strength. You say, I think, mankind cannot subsist out of society.

Dech. If we comprehend families in the number of societies, I believe they cannot.

Shep. Nay, for that matter, families cannot subsist without the protection of greater societies; for as children depend absolutely on families for subsistence, so do families on kingdoms and commonwealths for peace, security, property, life, and every thing. Pray, can society subsist without laws?

Dech. No, its members must know by what constitutions or customs they are to regulate their actions, and what is lawful or penal; or they can never answer either the public ends of society, or their own private purposes of entering into it.

Shep. Magistrates too seem to be as necessary as laws; for altho' the laws were never so good and just, they could not execute themselves.

Dech. I grant it.

Shep. As to the lower magistrates, we need not inquire about their qualifications, because we may presume they will take care to accommodate their dispositions and conduct to the mind of the Supreme. But how, think you, ought he to be qualified, who is to be set at the head of society?

Dech. The better to answer the ends of society, he ought to be wise and just.

Shep.

Shep. So I think ; because the ill effects of folly or partiality in him will be severely and extensively felt among his subjects. If the inferior magistrates find him to be weak or foolish, they will impose on his blindness ; and if they think him unjust, they will take the liberty to be so too, and hope for his connivance ; and on both accounts will be apt to abuse such portions of his power, as may happen to be lodged in their hands. The people too will always either despise such a magistracy, and run into rebellions and insurrections, or they will by interest made with the magistrates, by bribes, and evasions of the laws, by parties and factions, endeavour to restrain the common advantages of the society, each man, or party of men, to themselves. By these means good men will be oppressed, and bad men advanced and enriched, contrary to the well-being and ends of society.

Dech. This is all very true ; but I think it is little to our present purpose.

Shep. You will be of another opinion very soon. The better intelligence the supreme magistrate hath of what is doing among his subjects, and the more perfectly he understands the rules of government, you will grant, I believe, that he will be the better qualified to superintend the public affairs.

Dech. I will.

Shep. For my part, I think it evidently necessary, he should be perfectly well acquainted with the principles and conduct of all his under-officers, and of his subjects ; for if he is not, he can never, in any sort, keep either the one or the other in their duty. The greatest irregularities and enormities may be committed by both, without being either animadverted upon, or brought within a possibility of being punished. Crimes not cognizable are not punishable. Again, if he be not most strictly and steadily just, it will be little matter how knowing or wise you suppose him to be, because he may oppress the innocent, and promote the wicked, or suffer others to do it, notwithstanding the highest and most perfect knowlege you can imagine him vested with. As to his power, it must be proportionable to his wisdom
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and justice, or those qualifications will be useless. He must be able sufficiently to reward every good action, and punish every ill one, or he will never be fit to fill the place of a supreme magistrate; because otherwise virtue might go unrewarded, and vice unpunished, tho' he were never so well apprised of both, and never so desirous of chastising the one, and encouraging the other. Now it is not only necessary to the very being and possibility of society, that he should be wise, just, and powerful, in this high degree; but it is also necessary, that his under-officers and subjects should firmly believe him to be so, because their behaviour will not be regulated by his unknown qualifications, but by their opinion or knowledge of them. A bad man in power, who thinks he may escape unpunished for his male-administration, thro' the ignorance, injustice, or weakness of his supreme, will turn that portion of power he is possessed of, directly against the good of society; nay, he will become, in his own opinion, effectually supreme, inasmuch as he will not expect to be called to account for his conduct. That man, who does not believe he is to account in the severest manner for the use and application of his power, ought never to be trusted with any power, because he will endeavour to draw all the advantages of the society to himself, and his instruments, and turn all its weight and strength against those who thwart his usurpations. How can mankind be more unhappy, than under a fallible, or I should rather say, a corrupt and wicked administration, that stands in awe of no superior, that is under a lawless power? As to the subjects, if they do not look upon themselves as accountable to such wisdom as there is no hiding from, such justice as there is no byassing, and such power as there is no resisting or escaping, they will never pay any more than an outward respect to the civil power, and that only when it is too strong for them. Whenever the magistracy can be resisted, or the truth, on which right and justice depend, concealed, or the laws evaded, which you know may be done in most cases, they will follow their own private ends, without any regard to those of the public. There is, in short, no enormity,
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which under the influence of a persuasion, that the administration is at all defective in wisdom, justice, or power, they will not be ready to commit. Thus, Sir, I think it appears, that a community consisting of magistrates and subjects, who do not think their supreme governor qualified as aforesaid, is but a rope of sand, and, instead of meriting the name of society, should rather be called a confederacy against all the rights of men, all the comforts of life, and all the ends of civil government. Pray, Mr. *Dechaine*, is there any justice, peace, or safety to be expected in civil society, without such tryals in capital and other cases, as are brought on in our courts of law and justice?

Dech. No.

Shep. Is it not by those tryals, that the benefits and punishments of society are applied?

Dech. It is.

Shep. Can there be any such thing as a tryal without evidence?

Dech. It is impossible.

Shep. Can those, who on tryals are to bring verdicts, or pronounce decrees, have personal knowlege of the merits in every point disputed before them?

Dech. They can have it in few or none.

Shep. How then are they to come at information?

Dech. By the testimony of indifferent persons, who know the case inquired into.

Shep. Can the judge or jury see into the hearts of witnesses, and satisfy themselves whether they are deposing the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

Dech. No indeed.

Shep. If the witnesses then are not firmly persuaded, that he who holds the supreme power over them, can see into their hearts, is perfectly acquainted with the case they swear to, and is both just, and able to punish them in the most terrible manner for prevarication, they may depose a falshood, and thereby frustrate the whole intention of the tryal.

Dech. God, I find, is your Supreme Magistrate.

Shep. Yes, it is God alone who can be supreme in a civil, as well as a physical sense. No mortal, no Angel,

is able to fill that high station. None but he, who is present at all transactions, to whom all hearts, tho' never so dark and manifold, are transparent, whose justice there is no byassing, and from whose power there is no escaping, against whom the grave itself is no defence; none but he can be an infallible and universal witness, a competent judge in all cases, and a supreme governor. Society depends absolutely on him, and all kingdoms and communities are but provinces of his universal kingdom. He is the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, and the Judge of Judges. You sought in vain for a law within yourself; and when you could not find an authority there, you had recourse to society for it; but society could furnish you with no other, than what it borrows from the author of its being, and the source of all power, *whose kingdom ruleth over all*. Now, Sir, I have three things to observe to you concerning what hath been said. In the first place, if God were rightly and firmly believed in, by the under-magistrates and subjects of any community, the wisdom, justice, and power of the Divine Head would derive themselves in the chanel of that faith upon all the members of the public body, and make the whole extremely happy; and I may safely venture to say, that all the defects of civil society, all the injustice, oppression, rapine, rebellion, faction, all intestine struggles for power, and all the civil wars, that shake or tear society to pieces, spring only from a want of faith in God, and inattention to his superintendence. Secondly, as God's kingdom reaches to all places, and comprehends all things, so it extends likewise to all times; and as he neither manifests what he knows of the secret virtues or vices of mankind, as he neither inflicts an adequate punishment on the latter, nor confers a full reward on the former, in this life, so there must be a time hereafter, when he will assemble all the members of his wide-extended dominion to judgment, and do ample justice on them all. Thirdly, as mankind cannot subsist out of society, nor society itself subsist without religion, I mean without faith in the infinite wisdom, justice, and power of God, and a judgment to come, religion cannot be a falshood. Is it possible, that all the
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happiness of mankind, that the whole civil world, that peace, safety, justice, and truth itself, should have nothing to stand on, but a lye? Is it to be supposed, that a God of infinite power could give the world no other foundation; or that a God of infinite truth and goodness could be obliged to help out his creation with deceit and fraud, and was able no otherwise to provide for the happiness of all his rational creatures, but by a gross and universal imposture? These things cannot be supposed, and therefore religion is, and must be, true.

Temp. I really think it a clear and irresistible demonstration; and as it is intirely new to me, I cannot withhold the pleasure I know it will afford Mr. *Shepherd*, to hear me say, I think myself happy in the acquaintance of a man, who hath given me intire satisfaction on a point of the last importance to me.

Dech. Well; but as it is what I should in a great measure have granted, without any difficulty, the Doctor needed not to have taken so great a compass in the proof of it. We Deists are far from denying religion, as you may see by our creed.

Shep. But you seem, Sir, to forget that you were for terminating your natural law in yourself, and carrying its authority no higher, than nature or society. This made it necessary to shew the true source of all law, authority, and obligation.

Dech. The real matter in debate wants yet to be inquired into, namely, whether nature or reason cannot give us a right idea of God, and our dependence on him; for all you have said, Mr. *Shepherd*, is only a proof of religion in general, whereas we are not at all disputing, whether there is any true religion, or not, but whether there is any occasion for revelation. Religion, on which so much depends, ought to be universal and clear; whereas no revelation can have either of those properties. It may be materially altered or corrupted by the inventions, and interested views, it may be variously interpreted by the prejudices, and false reasonings, and it may be wholly lost by the negligence, of those, through whose hands it ought to pass to the rest of the world. In matters of far less consequence God hath afforded as means of knowlege, which are in no dan-

ger of being ill interpreted, or imperfectly transmitted, because they speak in a plain and intelligible language to every body. Is it to be supposed, that an infinitely wise God, who knows so well how to adapt the means to the end in all cases, should have given senses to all men, by which they can easily distinguish objects, not only those which are of some importance to them, but even such as they are little, or not at all, concerned in, and reason to judge even in matters of curiosity; is it, I say, to be supposed, that he should have left us to uncertain or defective means of knowing himself, since the happiness of every individual, and consequently of all communities, depends absolutely on that knowledge? No man needs to be taught there is a God, who governs the world he hath made, with infinite goodness and power. He finds the idea of this great Being impressed by nature on his mind, and suggested to him by all her works. No deduction of reason, no idea of sense, can be more clearly formed, or strongly apprehended, by the soul of man, than the being of God, independent of all revelation and instruction. Accordingly we find, that all men in all nations believe in God; which had never been the case, if the idea of that Divine Being were not universally natural. Thus, Sir, it appears, that the religion or law of nature hath its authority from the light of nature, and is perfect, without the aid of revelation.

Shep. If it should happen to be proved, that nature alone does not clearly suggest a right idea of God to us, it will follow, that revelation must do it, or we be destitute of it. And howsoever defective the methods of propagating this revelation may be, we are not now inquiring about them, but only whether, from the mere light of nature, every man hath a right idea of God; for my Lord *Shaftesbury* and you will own, that wrong ideas of God will hurt society as much, if not more, than ignorance of him could do. Yet before we go any further, I must observe to you, that altho' the idea of God were derived from a revelation only vouchsafed to our common parents, that idea could never be wholly lost or wanting to any of their posterity. The idea of an infinitely great and glorious Creator and Governor,

once revealed, will strike deep into the mind, and cannot be forgotten. The parent, who hath himself received this idea from revelation, cannot conceal it from his children, without a direct rebellion against his Maker, and the most senseless sort of cruelty to them. Upon the increase of mankind, if any parent should neglect to tell his son there is a God, which however cannot be supposed, that son could not possibly fail of hearing it from others. An article of knowledge, on which all duty, all obligation, all law and justice, so necessarily depends, could not be a secret to him. All mankind, and the whole course of his dealings in the world, would be his instructors in this; and therefore, altho' we were to depend on revelation alone for our idea of God, yet no rational man, unless he were to grow up from his infancy, like a tree, on some mountain remote from his parents and all mankind, could possibly fail to have some idea or other of God. It is true, indeed, there is this objection to the supposition of our having the idea of God from revelation only, that some men may easily, and all men possibly, depart from the right idea, and, in process of time, entertain a wrong notion of the Deity; but this, of which there but too many actual proofs, evidently demonstrates to us, that we have no natural innate idea of God; for if we had, and that idea were as plain and strong, as any idea of sense, in all men, no mortal could ever entertain an absurd or unworthy notion of him. All the false or absurd theology in the world, proves incontestably to us, that every man hath not a right idea of the Divine nature from within himself; nay, I believe I may safely question, whether any man hath it from the mere light of nature. Nothing can seem more strange, than that the wisest and most sagacious of all men, I mean the philosophers, should have searched with all imaginable candour and anxiety for this idea, and searched in vain, if it had been impressed as clearly and strongly on their own minds, as the idea of a tree, or any other common object of sense. Do you really believe, Mr. *Dechaine*, that all knowledge, absolutely necessary to the subsistence of man, must spring from the light of nature?

Dech. Most undoubtedly.

Shep. If a man and woman were created in full maturity of mind and body, with all their faculties and senses in the highest natural perfection, would they be able to distinguish poisonous from nutritious fruits?

Dech. I believe scarcely.

Shep. Would they be able to distinguish between the effects of walking over a plain and a precipice, till they had made a trial?

Dech. Hardly.

Shep. Would they know what pain, sickness, and death are, having not yet seen an instance of the last, or felt the former?

Dech. They would not.

Shep. It seems then, that it is not necessary to our subsistence, to know what will preserve or destroy life; for if it were, nature would teach the aforesaid pair the difference between life and death, and between such things as are fitted to preserve the first, and those that unavoidably bring on the last.

Dech. But nature, Sir, sufficiently instructs us to act according to the natural fitnesses of things, once they are known by experience; to avoid danger, pain, and death, together with their causes; and to desire safety, to pursue pleasure, to preserve life, and to use the necessary means for these purposes, as soon as they are discovered.

Shep. This I grant; and natural reason teaches us to close with the true notions of God and religion, as soon as they are found out. You spoke just now of acting according to the natural fitnesses of things, once they are discovered by experience. Pray is it agreeable to your notions of God's goodness to imagine he would leave our first parents, on whose lives the being of all their posterity depended, to experiments that might prove fatal to them? For my part, I am forced to believe he taught them the difference between life and death, between wholesome and poisonous fruits, between walking over plains and precipices, with all other necessary points of knowledge, their natural senses only supplying them with the mere ideas of things. The office of the senses is to furnish us with ideas; that of reason, to compare those

those ideas, and form judgments out of them ; and that of the instincts, sentiments, passions, appetites, &c. to give us desires towards that which is good, and aversions to that which is hurtful to us. But none of these, nor all of them together, can strike out any useful point of knowlege, till either experience or instruction have shewn us the natures, the fitnesses, and the differences of things. Now experience is too late an instructor in all things immediately and absolutely necessary to be known. We don't leave our children to the hazardous or dreadful tutorage of experience in such matters ; and we may presume God, who is the tenderest of all parents, would not leave his exposed to dangers, I should rather say, to certain ruin, for want of knowlege, which he placed them under the absolute necessity of deriving either from his instructions, or from trials of the most hazardous nature, some one or other of which could hardly fail to destroy them. Actions moral or immoral in the highest degree, to one who knows the tendency of those actions, and the law of God, are perfectly indifferent to a person unacquainted with that law ; and, what is still more, before experience, or some other instructor, hath taught him the tendency of those actions, he knows neither the natural good or evil, fitness or unfitness of them. If the man already described saw the woman a drowning, let him love her never so tenderly, as he could neither be sensible of her danger, nor know how to relieve her, though stretching out his hand to her would be sufficient, it would be neither cruelty nor sin in him to let her sink. He might give her poison, or let a stone drop from a precipice on her head, if he were not told, that such an action would put her to excessive pain, or kill her, and if the evil of pain and death were not previously made known to him.

Dech. But supposing him well apprised, no matter by what means, of the natural evil proceeding from such actions, would he not then abhor them ?

Shep. He would ; yet this abhorrence arising only from instinct, natural affection, or what you call sentiment, as it does in beasts, would be purely animal, and by no means either moral or religious, if he were not first con-

vinced, that he was to regulate his life by the dictates of sentiment and reason, and to look upon those dictates as the laws of God, by which he was to be judged. The propensities and aversions of his own mind could never become laws to him, till he was once apprised, that God made him, was his supreme Governor, had planted those propensities and aversions in him, and would be pleased or displeased with him, according as he acted conformably to, or inconsistently with them. If you should find a printed paper, drawn up in the form of a statute, and pretending to oblige you and all your countrymen to allow your wives a certain proportion of your fortunes yearly, to be disposed of by them as they should think proper; altho' you should, thro' your great regard for your wife, judge the allowance reasonable, yet you would never think yourself legally obliged to pay it to her, till you found the said statute had actually passed both houses of parliament, and gained the royal assent. Besides, if a man should think himself under a moral obligation to obey all the propensities and aversions of his own nature, as many of them are irregular, excessive, or vicious, he would quickly find himself subject to a most iniquitous law; or, if he did not, others, with whom he might happen to have dealings, would feel it to their cost.

Dech. But would not reason, which is the governing principle in man, set the irregularities of the passions strait, and distinguish between such inclinations or aversions as are good, and those that are evil?

Sbep. I am afraid it would not, if every man were to reason and think for himself. All men do not reason alike. Some men reason weakly from right principles; others draw their premises from those very passions that ought to be corrected or suppressed; and, what is as bad, reason doth not dictate with sufficient authority; and consequently cannot enforce obedience. She may judge of the fitness of a law, once it is given, and persuade us to obey it; but she can give no laws herself, as we have already seen. The mind of man is in itself a beautiful and convenient palace, with all the necessary furniture and utensils in their proper places. At first its
doors

doors and windows are shut up, all is dark within, and reason, its owner and inhabitant, lies fast asleep. But as soon as it is thrown open to the outward light, reason begins to rouse by degrees, and look about it; yet knows not the uses of the apartments, or the furniture, till it is taught their convenience and fitness. The architect instructs it in the uses of such as are from the beginning absolutely necessary, and leaves it to exercise its sagacity in finding out the more remote fitnesses by degrees. He leads it to the windows, from whence he shews it the prospect on all sides, and gives it a just notion of its own situation, in respect to its neighbours, and the places from whence it is to bring its necessaries; he carries it up the stairs, and places it on the roof, from whence he shews it the things above, and describes the heavens to it. He demonstrates to it, that all the light it enjoys is derived from the illustrious orb that shines on high, and sheds its beams around, and thro' all the palace.

Dech. If we must talk in allegory, I am of opinion this palace is well enlightened from within, and that its inhabitant hath an excellent lamp, by which he can direct himself thro' all the apartments, and view all the furniture; nor is he so stupid as not easily to discover their uses, without the help of a guide, and an instructor, to explain his own dwelling to him.

Shep. Pray, Sir, whence did you receive the idea you have of God? Was it from the mere light of nature, from the internal lamp, or from instruction?

Dech. It was from instruction; but my teachers might have saved themselves the pains, because I should have had it, without their documents.

Shep. Did you ever know, or even hear of, any person who had an idea of God, without ever having been taught it?

Dech. No; for the good old people, our parents, are so officious in this respect, as to teach us their own notions of God as soon as it is possible for us to apprehend them.

Shep. They teach you then, I suppose, what you knew before; but I should think they would never have given themselves the trouble, had they perceived by your in-

fant acts of devotion, or by your expressions when you came to the use of speech, that you had a right idea of God from the first moment of your appearance in the world.

Dech. I do not say, Sir, that infants perceive in themselves an idea of God. They have no sort of occasion for that idea, till they grow up a little, and begin to be capable of duty and obligation; and then it would shew itself in them, altho' nobody had ever suggested it to them.

Shep. This you are not sure of, because you never knew nor heard an instance of it in your life. And to say it would be so, contrary to the sense of all mankind, who think it necessary to imprint this idea on the minds of children by instruction, without any other grounds for your opinion, but mere conjectures, seems not a little bold and arbitrary. For my part, I think it evident, beyond all contradiction, that we have no innate ideas at all. We need not go to *Locke* to be informed of this, which the observation of every parent and nurse on earth can so fully confirm to us. For nature to give us ideas, which we must and do receive afterwards by the usual inlets of our senses, would be contrary to that frugality of means and causes, which she observes in all things else. But it seems still more absurd to suppose we have ideas, which we are not sensible of till a certain age; that they lie dormant in the mind for a good many years; that when they do make their appearance, it is to no sort of purpose, inasmuch as they do not help in the least to set us right in our notions of their objects, which happened to be amiss before they shewed themselves in the mind; nay, and that we are never sensible of their birth within us, nor even of any struggle between them and our irrational preconceptions.

Dech. This which you make such a wonder of, happens to all men in respect to all or most of their other ideas, which, being stored in the memory, lie there frequently for whole years so dormant, that the mind never recollects them, nor finds itself conscious of their existence, till their own objects, or some other ideas,
with

with which they were assembled, happen to recal them to the mind.

Shep. This is very true, and I own would fully answer my argument against innate ideas, drawn from their not shewing themselves in the mind for some time, were it not that whenever the mind recollects any idea, it is at the same time conscious of having had that idea formerly, whereas when it first perceives in itself the idea of God, impressed by instruction, it is not in the least conscious, that any such idea was ever perceived in it before. But, not to insist on this, I am still surpris'd, that when the time for its appearance is come, and the mind, which before that time hath entertained the most unworthy idea of Divinity, stands in great need of better information, this innate idea never rectifies its notions, nor reduces them to a right way of thinking about God.

Dech. That I think is easily enough accounted for. The mind having been long used to, and prejudiced in favour of, its erroneous conceptions of God, will not resign them for the right impression, when it does appear. You cannot but be sensible how difficult a thing it is to dislodge religious prejudice from the mind, and introduce a truth in the place of it. This you will own is a work too hard for most of your teachers, who, if we may believe yourselves, lend nature and reason all the assistance you can; when gross errors are to be combated, and glaring truths recommended.

Shep. Yes; but then the Pagan, whom I endeavour to reclaim from the worship of the devil, or a plurality of gods, altho' he is not convinced, is sensible of the theology I have been laying before him, and also of the difference between that and his old opinions; whereas he was never conscious in the least of any idea of God arising spontaneously in his own mind, and opposing that which he received from a wrong education. Now an innate idea of God, which neither prevents unworthy notions of him, nor removes them when received, which is neither at all perceived itself, nor to be guessed at in the least by its effects, is a very strange sort of an idea, and of no manner of use, that I can see; tho' by what you said a while ago about the absolute necessity of a natural,

universal, and clear religion and law in the breast of every man, I should think your natural idea of God, on which all natural religion and law must absolutely depend, ought to be strong and evident in the highest degree, in order to answer any of the ends you propose by it. What shall we say to it therefore, when no mortal can perceive the least glimpse of it in himself, nor trace it in his mind by the faintest footsteps or effects? This natural idea of God, were it printed in so deep and strong a character on the mind of every man, would certainly have either prevented all manner of idolatry in the world, or would be able to banish it from thence, should it happen by any strange unnatural means to take place; I am sure at least it must have given some men, especially such as the antient philosophers, an occasion to think a little more sensibly and worthily concerning the divine nature, than it seems they did. Were this idea, as being of more importance to every man in particular, and to society in general, than all our other ideas, more universally clear and evident in all men, than ideas of sense, as for the same reason it ought also to be more unchangeable and indeleble, I cannot conceive how it could have been possible for whole sects of philosophers to deny the very being of a God, and for *Vaninus*, *Jordanus Bruno*, *Casimir Liszinski*, and *Mahomet Effendi*, to die martyrs to Atheism. No man, who can see clearly, denies the existence of an house, or tree, placed directly before him in broad day-light; and if God were as strongly and evidently apprehended by the mind of every man, previous to all information and deduction of reason, as by your hypothesis he ought to be, if not more evidently, how could he possibly disbelieve the being of a God? The certainty we have of sensible objects without us is upon the same footing with axioms and first principles. We can neither bring arguments for them, nor against them, because they convince the mind of their existence by their own light and evidence; whereas the existence of God may be proved by reasons; nay, and opposed by arguments capable of convincing some; which could never happen, were it rendered self-evident by an idea stronger and clearer in the mind of every man than his sensible ideas

ideas of outward objects. A man confined to a dungeon all his days, and deprived of all conversation with mankind, would, I am afraid, be but a sorry sort of a divine. As he could neither receive the idea of God from instruction, nor collect it from his works, I cannot help thinking he could not so much as once consider who made him, or whether ever he was made or not, nor entertain the least notion of God.

Dech. You may be of that opinion; but you can never be sure it would so happen, since you have no experiment of such a fact to argue from.

Shep. But I have many experiments as good, of people born absolutely deaf and blind, who never shewed the least sense of religion, or knowlege of God.

Temp. That is a full proof. Their bodies, destitute of those two senses, were effectual dungeons to their minds. But might not a man, in the full exercise of reason, and enjoyment of all his senses, prove to himself, from the works of creation, the existence of God?

Shep. Do you think it possible by our senses to receive an idea of God, as we do of outward and sensible objects?

Temp. No; a spirit cannot be the object of any sense; but by our senses we can perceive his works, and by our reason trace his being from thence, as we do other causes by their effects.

Dech. There is nothing more certain. Every effect supposes a cause; and when the highest degree of wisdom and goodness discovers itself in the effects, we cannot help believing the cause to be infinitely wise and good. If the effects are such as no finite power could have produced, we must also suppose the cause to be infinitely powerful. There is a strict alliance and conformity between all causes and their effects. Nothing can produce nothing. That which is foolish and weak, betrays its folly and weakness in its works; and that which is wise and powerful in a limited degree, can only demonstrate a limited degree of wisdom and power in its productions or operations. Now the works of creation demonstrate infinite wisdom and power, and therefore their cause must be infinitely wise and powerful. This is an easy demon-

demonstration for the being of a God ; and as it is obvious to every capacity, so it conveys to the meanest understanding a right idea of the divine nature, in respect to such attributes as have any relation to our duty.

Shep. It is one thing to work out the demonstration of a point once it is proposed, and another to strike upon the point itself. I cannot tell whether any man would have considered the works of creation as effects, if he had never been told they have a cause. We know very well, that even after the being of such a cause was much talked of in the world, and believed by the generality of mankind ; yet many, and great philosophers, held the world to be eternal ; and others ascribed what we call the works of creation to an eternal series of causes. If the most sagacious of the philosophers were capable of doing this, after hearing so much of a first cause, and a creation, what would they have done, and what would the gross of mankind, who are inattentive and ignorant, have thought of the matter, if nothing had been taught concerning God, and the origin of things, but every single man left solely to such intimation as his own senses and reason could have given him ? The proofs *a priori* for the reality of a first cause, tho' very convincing, are, however, exceedingly metaphysical and refined, and fitter to come in the rear of a long inquiry about the production of the world, than to lead the way. And, accordingly, we find the earlier ages of the world made use of no such arguments ; nay, did not so much as trouble themselves about the question, and either never inquired into it, or took their opinions upon that head merely from tradition. But, allowing that every man is able to demonstrate to himself, that the world, and all things contained therein, are effects, and had a beginning ; which I take to be a most absurd supposition, and look upon it to be almost impossible for unassisted reason to go so far ; yet if effects are, according to your argument, to be ascribed to similar causes, and a good and wise effect must suppose a good and wise cause ; by the same way of reasoning, all the evil and irregularity in the world must be attributed to an evil and unwise cause ; so that either the first cause must be
both

both good and evil, wise and foolish, or else there must be two first causes, an evil and irrational, as well as a good and wise principle. Thus man, left to himself, would be apt to reason. If the cause and its effects are similar and conformable, matter must have a material cause, there being nothing more impossible for us to conceive, than how matter should be produced by spirit, or any thing else but matter. The best reasoner in the world, endeavouring to find out the causes of things by the things themselves, and proceeding on the soundest maxims of philosophy, on which you found your argument, might be led into the grossest errors and contradictions, and find himself, at the end, in extreme want of an instructor. To argue *a priori* on this subject, is little better than nonsense; and the argument *a posteriori* leads to such difficulties, as mere reason is, at least in most men, unable to dissipate. Is the first cause good, wise, and powerful?

Dech. Yes; the effects produced by it demonstrate this.

Shep. Is it infinitely so?

Dech. Undoubtedly; for no being, endowed with a less degree of those attributes, could have given being, form, variety, and harmony, to the universe.

Shep. Does not the evil observed in the world suppose a bad cause?

Dech. I don't know but it may.

Shep. You will not, I believe, ascribe an evil effect to a good cause. And pray how comes it to pass, that the good cause, being infinitely wise and powerful, does not subdue the evil cause, and totally prevent its effects?

Dech. I believe it would have been better to have denied the reality of evil.

Shep. That cannot be done. Our own existence is not more evident, than that pain, sickness, death, &c. to say nothing of immoralities, are evils. All mankind dread and shun them, unless when the fear of greater evils compels them to do otherwise. Is it true, then, that good and evil have their distinct empires, and bound each other? And is the principle, from whence the one is derived, to be feared, as well as the author of the
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other to be loved? Is not fear a cause of adoration, as well as love? Are two opposite and supreme principles, therefore, to be worshiped, according to the belief of almost all the Pagans now in the world? If the mere reason of every man could relieve itself from this difficulty, why should the worship of devils prevail in so many nations, and keep its ground during so long a series of ages? This, I think, is evident, that although reason should be so strong in one man, or in a few, as to find out the being of some superior power; yet this would not, probably, happen, till after many ages spent in vain attempts to account for the origin and regularity of the world; and when some notion of this kind should once be struck out, it would be so imperfect, so uncertain, and blended with so much absurdity and error, that it would scarcely be worth the propagating, which would be also a matter of infinite difficulty. But supposing it to prevail in some nations, or all over the world, having once pre-occupied the minds of men, the improvements made by others in after-times on the first imperfect discovery, instead of having the notions, derived from that discovery, as a basis to build on, would find them, and the prejudices accompanying them, an infinite obstacle to their propagation. What is said of the first improvement, would be as true of all the subsequent ones. The old notions would be so many bars against the new; and, considering the great difficulty of the inquiry, and the vast room for conceit and imagination to graft their wild scions on the fruitful stock, it would require an almost infinite number of debates, refinements, and improvements, each of which must have a course thro' the world before they could be examined, in order to settle the right idea of God, and support it with demonstrations universally convincing. Reason labours under a yet greater difficulty in finding out the right notion of God. Reason, if I be not mistaken, is that faculty by which we form propositions out of ideas already conceived, and, laying those together, the terms of which have a necessary and self-evident connexion or dissonance, draw conclusions from thence. It is that power of the mind by which we hold, as it were, the light of clear and in-

contestable

contestable truths to dark and disputable questions, and endeavour by that means to discover on which side of the latter we ought to fix our assent. He whose ideas of things represent their objects in true and determinate lights, and whose faculty of reason is strong and clear, is called a judicious man. When this faculty is properly and judiciously exercised on a knowable proposition, the result should be called right reasoning, rather than right reason. As the office of reason is not to supply the mind with ideas, but to judge of the connexion or disagreement between those already received; so it can only exercise itself on such materials, as those other faculties, that hold intelligence with objects, supply it with. This latter is the function of the senses alone, which, for that purpose, are turned outward towards their proper objects, and set open as so many avenues and inlets to the ingredients of all our knowledge. It is vain to say we have any proper or immediate idea of spirit, and its operations, or that we have any other source of notions than sensation. If *Brown's Procedure and extent of the understanding* had not clearly demonstrated this, the trials every man may make in his own mind would do it effectually. When we look into ourselves with a sharp and unprejudiced eye, we plainly perceive spirit represented there analogically by our idea of some subtil matter, its operations by those of body, and both, not only in our external, but internal speech, by terms and signs appropriated to sensible objects. If then all our ideas are derived from sensation, if reason can operate no farther than it hath ideas to work on, and if the Divine Being is not the object of any one sense, how much at a loss must reason be to fix our way of thinking concerning that which it is furnished with no idea of!

Dech. Were this argument of yours capable of proving any thing, it would prove too much for your purpose, and reduce us to absolute Atheism, thro' an impossibility of forming any idea of God.

Shep. I did not say, Sir, that it was impossible to form any idea of God; but only, that reason, left to itself, having no power of its own to form any ideas at all, and being supplied with ideas to work on only through
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the senses, could hardly form a right idea of God. This, however, it might be enabled to do by him who taught it to believe, that the soul of man is formed in the image of God ; and that as we represent our souls to our own conceptions by a similitude or analogy to matter, so we ought to represent him in our thoughts by the analogy between him and our souls. Pray, Mr. *Dechaine*, is the soul of man of the same nature with God ?

Dech. I think it would be too bold to say it is.

Shep. It would not only be too bold, but impious and absurd. There is certainly an infinite difference of nature between the uncreated omnipresent Spirit, and even the highest order of Angels. It follows, therefore, that in thinking of God we are forced to help ourselves out by a similitude, which, till it was revealed to us, the force of human reason could not give us a right notion, not to say assurance, of. But now that this resemblance between God and ourselves is discovered to us, we can lay the foundations of our knowledge here on earth, and raise the superstructure above the highest heavens. When you speak of reason, Mr. *Dechaine*, and represent it as able easily to find out God, you deceive yourself for want of considering the vast difference between reason uninstructed, undisciplined, and unfurnished with spiritual ideas, and reason already refined by divine and human culture. All mankind reason, not only in proportion to the various strength of their reasoning faculties, but according, also, to the store of materials laid in to reason on, and the various degrees of care and skill employed in training up their several faculties to an habit or art of perceiving, recollecting, and reasoning. The bodies and minds of men are so contrived, as to stand in need of our continual care and culture. The nourishment of the first, and its health, depend upon the arts of raising food from the earth, and preparing it for use ; of providing cloaths, building houses, keeping ourselves clean, using medicines on occasion, &c. Its graceful carriage depends also on art, and we want to be taught how to sit, stand, walk, and dispose of our arms and hands in a becoming manner. As to the mind, it stands in equal need of skill and management. It comes

comes into the world ignorant, and, what is worse, rude, and prone to wild passions, and fierce dispositions. We have not even the full use of our senses, till art and culture have taught us how to employ them. The eye, of itself, can give us no measure of distance, a thing in which we are greatly concerned. The carrying it to an eminence, to give us a view of an approaching enemy, the preventing the judgment from being imposed on by it, when it represents a direct object, placed in two mediums of different densities, as crooked, when, looking through improper mediums, it shews objects in false colours and sizes, when it exhibits a near hill as larger than a distant mountain, with many other cases of the like nature, make part of the art of seeing, and shew us, that, the eye being but an instrument, we stand in need of an higher faculty to direct us in its use. The same may be said in respect to all our other senses. The imagination, which is subject to great irregularities, requires much skill to attach it to proper objects, to confine it within due bounds, to assist it in forming its assemblages of ideas, and so to refine and exalt it, that due force and dignity may be given to the impressions made on it. The memory likewise wants great exercise and improvement, to make it a ready and effectual instrument to the judgment. Much depends on duly classing and regulating the notions stored up in it, that its materials may be presented to reason in a clear order and method. The laying up of our ideas, as it were, in distinct apartments, the retaining them with firmness, and recollecting them with readiness, depend exceedingly on management and habit. Reason, which is the faculty by which we are rendered teachable, and the very organ, if I may so say, of docility, stands extremely in need of instruction and exercise, tho' the under-faculties of the mind should supply it never so plentifully and methodically with the materials on which it is to operate. You may lay a sufficient quantity of excellent stone, timber, &c. on the spot where you intend to build; yet, if your architect wants taste and skill, he will give you but an indifferent house. Reason, before it is exercised and trained to its office, wants penetration and discernment to distinguish

guish a real and natural connexion of ideas from a seeming and unnatural one, wants attention to keep it close to the point in question, and strength to pursue a long series of arguments commencing at the question, and leading the assent round to the conclusion. If the philosophers had not thought reason wanted assistance, they had never been at the trouble to contrive instruments and rules to regulate its operations.

Dech. In my opinion you might as well talk of teaching a man to hunger and thirst, as to see and reason. Those philosophers who contrived rules and instruments for reasoning, had, I believe, nothing else in view than to reduce the world to such a way of reasoning as might best serve to recommend the systems they had invented, which were often too extraordinary to be approved of, if the disciple was not first artificially trained to a like method of reasoning with that of the philosopher. This gave birth to all the jargon of the antient and modern schools, and it was found necessary to lay it aside, before the learned world could recover a just or intelligible way of reasoning.

Shep. The application of a wrong or defective remedy to a disorder, does by no means prove, that there is no such disorder. If most men reason wrong, as it is plain they do, and on no subjects more remarkably than those of religion; it were certainly a thing much to be wished, that they were taught to reason better. Men who live in times and places of ignorance, hardly reason at all, and are little better than brutes; in comparison of such as have been bred up in ages and countries well enlightened. Uneducated and illiterate men are able to reason on few points, and those such as relate to their daily occupations and affairs; even men of the greatest abilities and learning, not only reason variously and contrarily on the same questions, but conceive differently of reason itself. *Hobbes*, in his *Leviath.* part I. chap. 5. undertakes to define the faculty of reason, and absurdly gives a most whimsical definition of the mere act, drawn from the etymology of the word. He says, *It is reckoning (that is, adding and subtracting) of the*
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consequences of general names agreed upon for the marking and signifying our thoughts.

Dech. That is, indeed, a most wild definition.

Sh p. Cumberland defines right reason to be *affirmation and negation, according to the real nature of things.*

Dech. That comes nearer to the matter.

Shcp. Yet that is neither a definition of reason, considered as a faculty of the mind, nor as an act.

Dech. Is it not a definition of the act of right reasoning?

Shcp. I think not. The whole act of reasoning, whether right or wrong, is over, before we either affirm or deny any thing; or if it is not, we affirm or deny without having reasoned. This definition gives us no idea of the extent or power of reason, and therefore can be of no use in our present inquiry. *Tindal* says, *When we attribute any operation to reason, as distinguishing between truth and falsehood, &c. we mean by it the rational faculties; and by the rational faculties he means, the natural ability to apprehend, judge, and infer.* Here he absurdly puts apprehension into the definition of reason; whereas apprehension is that distinct faculty, by which we previously receive the ideas afterwards to be reasoned on, or perceive the truth of self-evident propositions, from which the faculty of reason, by a distinct and subsequent act, is to draw conclusions. Apprehension therefore, whose office it is by the senses, and a simple act of the mind, to furnish reason with its materials, can neither be reason itself, nor a part of reason. We do not say a man reasons, when he sees or hears, nor when he apprehends the truth of a self-evident proposition, such as, that the whole is greater than any of its parts. Thus men much used to reasoning, and extremely apt to magnify their own reason, speak as differently of it, as if they had quite different faculties. Reason, as commonly taken by controversial writers, is the faculty; whereas it is the act, which for the most part they define. But in the present debate it is our business to consider the faculty alone, that we may see whether, either by its office or power, it is able to furnish us with a right idea of God. Now nothing can be more evident,

dent, than that it furnishes the mind with no ideas ; that it can only perform its office so far as it is supplied by other faculties with ideas ; and that, even when it is, it stands extremely in need of instruction how to manage its materials. As to *Tindal's* definition of the act of reason, it is only a long account of the manner, by which, in his opinion, we receive our ideas, and how we apprehend the truth of self-evident propositions, and from thence deduce demonstrations or probabilities. In order to make reason the faculty, by which God judges and acts, as well as man, he makes intuition a part of reason, and confounds the one with the other ; from whence he draws consequences afterwards ; and those in the words of our divines, extremely prejudicial to revealed religion.

Temp. Pray, Mr. *Shepherd*, in what do you make the mere act of reasoning to consist ? And when may we be said to reason rightly ?

Shep. As to the act of reason, it is the drawing conclusions from premises ; and is said to be right, when those conclusions are rightly drawn from right premises. Yet, in my opinion, reason does her office well, when she draws her conclusions rightly from the best lights she hath, tho' those lights should deceive her. It is the business of the senses, experience, and instruction, to furnish reason with right ideas and principles ; and hers, to draw right conclusions from thence. Till she receives notices, she cannot operate at all. If the notices are imperfect or false, tho' she performs her part never so well, she must unavoidably run into errors. Altho' the notices she receives should be right and perfect, yet she may draw the conclusions imperfectly or falsely ; for there is such a thing as wrong reasoning. As to the faculty of reason, which is what *Tindal*, and all others, who pretend to consider the extent and power of the mind in beating out truths, ought to have defined, it is that ability of the soul, by which in her present state, with the help of certain organs of the brain, she draws conclusions from premises ; in other words, the faculty of judging. It is of no use in this, or any other controversy that I know of, about reason, to determine whether

ther the soul hath only one simple power, which in one instance perceives, and in another judges ; or whether she hath distinct powers for these distinct offices ; because the effects and extent of reasoning may be in either case the same. In our present frame the bodily organs are evidently made necessary, not only to the introduction of notices, but also to the examination and use of them after they are introduced. It is also manifest enough from experience, that distinct organs are set apart for the several operations of the mind. The souls of men are generally confessed to be all equal and unchangeable ; but the soul of one man receives clearer notices, and reasons better from them, than the soul of another. Which difference can arise from nothing else, but some difference in the organs, by which apprehension and reason operate. Nay, even in the same man one faculty exerts itself with more force and clearness, than another ; and we frequently see persons, who have the use of one or two powers of the mind, while the rest seem almost, or totally, obliterated. Some madmen apprehend and imagine with great strength, and reason not at all. In sleep the imagination and memory are extremely active, while the judgment is wholly suspended. Fevers and blows on the head frequently impair or destroy one faculty, and leave the rest intire, or little hurt. The soul, however, is still the same, and her peculiar power or powers unchanged. So is she through all the stages of life ; and yet we see the exercise of her powers grow and decline with the body. Shut up all the senses, and reason cannot at all exert herself for want of materials to work with. Open one sense, and she can operate on the ideas of that class, but no other. Open a second, and her stock being enlarged, she expatiates in a new field of knowlege ; and so on, but not perfectly, till the organs or instruments, by which she operates, are come to full maturity and strength, which are acquired by the same methods exactly with the strength of an hand or leg, that is, by natural growth and exercise. The leg of a child is not so strong and active as that of a full-grown man, nor that of an indolent person so supple and elastic as that of a rope-dancer. Nay, exercise in one
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thing does not produce a perfect agility in another. It is just so in those nearer organs, by which the soul apprehends, recollects, and judges. They vegetate and grow by degrees; use and exercise give them a great part of the strength, with which they operate; and exercise and application, properly managed, give them force and expertness in one branch of knowledge, without much advancing their power in others.

Dech. It follows from your theory, that the body and matter think, recollect, and reason, as well as the soul.

Shep. By no means. Altho' in our present state it is evident, that thought, memory, and judgment, are the result of mind, and matter organized, yet it is only the soul that performs these operations by the use of bodily organs. It is not the hatchet, that fells the tree, nor the compasses, that sweep the circle; it is he, who wields and employs those instruments.

Dech. The soul, then, when stripped from the body, can neither think, nor recollect, cannot reason. This seems strange doctrine for the mouth of a divine.

Shep. If the soul, in any case, or at any time, is totally divested of all material organs, tho' she will then exercise such powers as are peculiar to herself, she will neither have ideas, nor recollect, nor reason. Her operations will be strictly analogous to her present acts, but not of the same kind; so that it may be said with truth, but not in the immediate and proper sense of the word, that she shall think, &c. after her separation from the body. We say with truth, that God is wise and just; but surely we do not mean, that his wisdom operates at all, as ours does, on sensible ideas, and in long deductions of reason. Is his justice determined by law and obligation, like ours? We are relative beings, and our duty arises from the situation we are placed in. But duty and relation cannot be applied to God, who is above all the laws of his creatures, makes, repeals, or dispenses with them, as he thinks fit; and when he varies the relations and conditions of men, of kingdoms, of worlds, causes new, nay and opposite rules of duty to result from thence. The essence of human justice consists in a conformity to the laws, by which the actions
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of men ought to be regulated. Who sees not, that when those laws are removed, and the determinations of a Being, superior to all law, come to be considered, justice cannot be predicated of that Being essentially in the same sense it is of men? Our nature is different from, and infinitely inferior to, that of God. *Tindal* says, *Our reason for kind, tho' not for degree, is of the same nature with God's, and that it is by reason that we are the image of God.* He says much the same in respect to justice, and that *God and man are bound by the same law.* But this, instead of making man the image of God, will make him, as *Dr. Brown* hath well observed, a God in miniature. Man is only formed in the likeness of the Divine Nature; but is no more divine, than the image or picture of a man is human.

Dech. What notion then can we have of God, or his attributes?

Shep. Such an one as serves all our purposes perfectly well. We know, for instance, that he is wise, and attentive to all our thoughts, words, and actions, altho' we are sure he does not perceive and attend in the same manner we do. We know likewise, that he is just; and that altho' justice in him be of a different kind from justice in us, yet, as our God and Governor, he will equitably judge us by the laws he hath given us. This is sufficient; and to look farther is folly and presumption.

Dech. And pray, Doctor, how will the soul of man be conscious of its former good or evil actions, upon your hypothesis, after death?

Shep. I did not say the soul after death will retain no material vehicle. If I had, I must have said more, than either reason or scripture authorizes. Besides, the very soul itself may retain the impressions of its former virtues or vices in a way distinct from memory; or, by the help of analogy, look back into this mixed condition, as it now looks forward into the world of spirits. It may see its former actions in the records of God, and by all or any of these, or other means unknown to us, be conscious of its former good or evil actions. Be that as it will, what you call an hypothesis, is too evident to

experience to be denied. It is, I think, manifest enough from what hath been said, that reason receives all her ideas from other faculties, and stands greatly in need of instruction in order to the right performance of her own office ; but most of all, when she is to weigh propositions, and draw conclusions about objects, that are only to be analogically apprehended and considered. The mind of man imports its rules of reasoning, as well as notions, from abroad ; and one generation teaches another, not only religion, but all other sciences. The art of reasoning rightly, follows instruction, and is progressive, and traditional. We can trace it from *Syria* to *Egypt*, from *Egypt* to *Greece*, from *Greece* to *Italy*, and from thence westward and northward, to the rest of *Europe* ; while all the other nations of the earth, excepting the *Chinese*, who made but little advances in knowlege, lying without the verge of right religious instruction, remained profoundly ignorant. Reason in them, not meeting with opportunities of culture, and the seeds of knowlege, lay fallow, and produced little or no inventions, and scarcely any improvement in arts and sciences. No country, that we know of, ever became ingenious and learned, from barbarous and ignorant, merely of themselves. In all countries, we have an acquaintance with, knowlege bears an exact proportion to instruction. Why does the learned, and well-educated, reason better than the mere citizen ? Why the citizen better than the boor ? Why the *English* boor better than the *Spanish* ? Why the *Spanish* better than the *Moorish* ? Why the *Moorish* better than the *Negro* ? And why does he reason more expertly than the *Hottentot* ? If then reason is found to go hand in hand, and step for step, with education, what would be the consequence, if there were no education ? There is no fallacy more gross, than to imagine reason utterly untaught and undisciplined, capable of the same attainments in knowlege with reason refined and well-instructed ; or to suppose, that reason can as easily find itself in principles to argue from, as draw the consequences, once they are found ; I mean especially in respect to objects not perceivable by our senses. In ordinary articles of knowlege, our senses and experience furnish reason

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with ideas and principles to work on ; and continual conferences and debates give it exercise in such matters ; and that improves its vigour and activity. But, in respect to God, it can have no right idea nor axiom to set out with, till he is pleased to reveal them to it.

Temp. It is too manifest to be disputed, that a man left wholly to himself, and utterly untaught, would reason very imperfectly, if at all. But, as you observed just now, men in their inquiries and debates sharpen and teach one another to reason ; and once they have attained to the right use of their faculties, I cannot see what should hinder them from employing those faculties in the contemplation of effects and causes ; and if one man should form an imperfect idea of the cause or causes of all things, another might improve on his discovery, a third on his, and so on, till the right idea of the one first cause might be found out.

Shep. This might possibly happen ; but how long it might be before reason itself cou'd be sufficiently improved in many or most men for an inquiry after the first causes of things, and how many ages must pass, after this improvement could be made, ere all doubts and uncertainties could be cleared up, and the right idea of God be found out and fixed ; and then what an immense space of time it would take to propagate the right idea over all the world, against the current of all its received errors, and rooted prejudices, without miracles, and without a ministry, let every candid person judge. What must mankind do all this time for want of a Divine law and obligation, the absolute necessity of which we have already considered ? Besides, Gentlemen, if I mistake not, mankind are full as apt to degenerate, as improve in religious knowlege. I am sure we have fewer instances of the latter than the former, in such ages and countries as were not kept in sight of the true religion by a continual series of revelations. If we give credit to the *Jewish* and *Christian* history, we shall be convinced, that all the nations of the world at first knew and served the true God, and fell from his worship, in process of time, to that of idols and devils, except the *Jews*, who were with the greatest difficulty restrained from doing the same,

by revelations, miracles, and national judgments; and the *Christians*, whom the clearest lights have not altogether preserved from the incroachments of idolatry. But as this track of history is of little or no authority with you, Mr. *Dechaine*, be so good as to shew us, from what history you please, an instance of any one nation under the sun, that emerged from absolute atheism or idolatry, into the knowledge or adoration of the one true God, without the assistance of revelation. The *Americans*, the *Africans*, the *Tartars*, and the ingenious *Chinese*, have had time enough, one would think, to find out the true and right idea of God, which you say is more evident to all mankind, than any idea of sense; and yet, after above five thousand years improvement upon their innate ideas of God, and the full exercise of reason, which you exalt, and almost deify, they have at this day got no farther in their progress towards the true religion, than to the worship of stocks, stones, and devils. How many thousand years must be allowed to these nations, to reason themselves into the true religion, by Mr. *Dechaine*, and our other Deists, who insist, that this religion is evident to all men, in all ages and countries? The Christian religion, it seems, came too late into the world, to be true; but natural religion, tho' not yet arrived, is recommended sufficiently by its truth, antiquity, and universality. What the lights of nature and reason could do to investigate the knowledge of God, is best seen by what they have really done. We cannot argue more convincingly on any foundation, than that of known and incontestable facts. Give me leave therefore to be particular in exposing the theology of the Pagans from the records of their own writers. All the nations of the earth, that were left to themselves, fell, some sooner, and others later, into gross idolatry. At first they worshiped the luminaries of Heaven, and then their departed Kings and benefactors, for gods. Then they made images for them, and in a little time terminated the greater part of their adoration in those wooden representatives of their dead deities. It was not long after these first-fruits of nature, till they added to the catalogue of their gods, the most barbarous oppressors,
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the vilest impostors, the lewdest prostitutes, and the most infamous adulterers, murderers, and parricides, the earth ever groaned under. Such deities were to be worshiped with suitable rites and sacrifices. The *Salii* and *Corybantes*, priests of *Mars* and *Cybele*, performed the ceremonies of those deities with frantic dances, and outrageous fits of madness. In the rites of *Bacchus*, not only the priests, but all the people, men, women, and children, having their faces smeared with the lees of wine, and being half-drunk, ran about the fields, and through the woods, in a most horrible fit of distraction, howling like wild beasts, and frisking from place to place with such ridiculous and immodest gesticulations, as nothing but the strong possession of some demon could have prompted them to. It was, no doubt on't, a most rational kind of religion, that could have put the antient men, the discreet matrons, and the modest virgins, on such wild extravagancies. The sight of such a ceremony was, I must own, wonderfully decent and solemn, and its tendency highly edifying and virtuous. Much the same sort of friskings and howlings were used in the ceremonies of many other heathen gods ; and in those of *Baal* they were accompanied with a custom most shocking and unnatural. The priests, as they capered about the altar, gashed their flesh with knives and lancets, and ran into furious fits of distraction. The most solemn act of worship, performed to the *Syrian Baal* by his ordinary devotees, was to break wind, and ease themselves, at the foot of his image. The religious rites performed in honour of *Venus* in *Cyprus*, and at *Aphac* on Mount *Libanus*, consisted in lewdness of the grossest kinds. The young people of both sexes crowded from all parts to those sinks of pollution, and, filling the groves and temples with their shameless practices, committed whoredom by thousands, out of pure devotion. All the *Babylonian* women were obliged to prostitute themselves once in their lives, at the temple of *Venus* or *Mylitta*, to the first man that asked them ; and the money earned by this extraordinary act of devotion, be it more or less, was always esteemed sacred. The nocturnal mysteries at *Rome* were not carried to

such enormous excesses; but they were nevertheless very scandalous meetings, and gave occasion to all sorts of debaucheries. The devils, however, whom nature had chosen for her gods, were not contented with drunkenness and lewdness; they must be worshiped with murder too, and that of the most shocking sort. Human sacrifices were offered up almost in all the heathen countries; and, to make them the more acceptable to their good-natured gods, the parents burned their own children alive to *Baal*, *Moloch*, and many other of their deities. Here in *Britain*, and in *Gaul*, it was a common practice to surround a man with a kind of wicker-work, and burn him to death, in honour of their gods. The *Scythians* sacrificed to *Mars* one in every hundred of the captives taken in war. The *Peruvians*, in their sacrifices, had a custom of tying a living man to a stake, and pulling the flesh off his bones by small pieces, which they broiled and eat in his sight, believing they did him the greatest honour in treating him after this manner. The *Carthaginians*, in times of public calamity, not only burnt alive the children of the best families to *Saturn*, and that by hundreds, but sometimes sacrificed themselves in the same manner in great numbers. Oracles, astrology, soothsaying, superstition, magic, &c. over-ran the whole heathen world, and presided over the very councils of the wisest states. The gods of the heathens are, on all occasions, represented by their own worshipers, as envious of human happiness. This might be made appear by a great variety of quotations from profane writers, who often speak on that topic just as *Amasis* did in his famous letter to *Polycrates*. If in this they gave a true character of their gods, it shews those gods were devils. A female divinity was always remarkable for her spleen, and never failed to be revenged, if any one, when he made an entertainment for the rest of the gods, happened to forget her in his invitation. If nature is left to contrive gods for herself, they must be like herself, and subject to the same passions and infirmities. Such were the bright rays of natural light! Such the blessed effects in Pagan countries to this day, of following the wise dictates of nature!

What

What the *Romans* thought of their gods, may be seen by their behaviour on the death of *Germanicus*. They battered the temples, says *Suetonius*, with stones, they overthrew the altars of the gods, and flung their household deities into the streets. *Le Compte* and *Dubald* assure us, the *Chinese*, after offering largely to their gods, and being disappointed of their assistance, sometimes sue them for damages, and obtain decrees against them from the *Mandarins*. This ingenious people, when their houses are on fire, to the imminent peril of their wooden gods, hold them to the flames, in hopes of an effect, that might be more rationally expected from a small vessel of water. A religion, so highly respected, must, no doubt on't, have excellent effects upon the morality of its professors, and powerfully enforce the laws of society. However, I do not think it reasonable to expect much piety from people towards gods of their own manufacture. What notion do you imagine a statuary must have had of religion, when he was labouring to give a *Jupiter* that awful look, and those eyebrows, with which he was to attract devotion; or when he was giving a *Venus* those charms, by which he supposed she had engaged the affections of *Mars*, *Adonis*, *Anchises*, and the rest of her gallants? The humour of *Lucian*, in his auction of the gods, was probably taken from some real auction of the kind, in which he might have seen a complete set of household deities canted to the highest bidder, and carried away for very trifling sums, as gods of little value, since they could not protect the family, to whom they formerly belonged, from distress, and the necessity of selling all they had. It would certainly have been a very surprising sight to one of us, to have seen a person, whom we knew to be a man of sober mind and good sense in other things, going to a shop to cheapen gods, and differing with the workman for a penny in the price of a *Jupiter*. The *Tyrians* were a wise people, and therefore, when *Alexander* laid siege to their city, they chained *Apollo* to *Hercules*, to prevent his giving them the slip. If the ingenious Mr. *Dechaine* had lived in *Egypt*, during its wonderful fertility of gods, I cannot but think how religiously he would have fed the canine object of

his worship with the favoury-discharge of his own bowels, and then immediately fallen on his knees to adore him. The priestcraft of Christianity is that alone which hath blinded his eyes, and hindered his natural light from pointing out this elegant kind of worship to him.

Dech. Pr'ythee, Parson, observe a little decency, if not in respect to the company, yet at least out of regard to the subject. If we are to deal in such suppositions, I can easily enough guess what would have been the consequence, had the pious Mr. *Shepherd*, instead of a demure and sanctified Christian parson, been a priest of the *Cyprian Venus*. I cannot help laughing within myself, when I consider how powerfully his warmth of heart and zeal would have exerted themselves on the great festivals of the goddesses, and how ably he would have defended the positive institution celebrated on those occasions.

Shep. I must own, the morality of all men will ever be of a piece with their religion. That was the case with the heathens, who never thought themselves obliged to be better than their gods; and accordingly did not only indulge their lusts and appetites out of principle, but ran into general customs of the most horrid and abominable nature, having nothing in their religion to restrain them. Fornication was esteemed no sin among them; nor did they commit sodomy with half the shame or remorse that attend wenching among Christians. They exposed such of their children, as they did not like, to be eaten by wild beasts; a cruelty practised at this day by the *Hottentots*, and some other *African* nations. Several nations, inhabiting the banks of the *Danube*, were wont to fling their new-born children into the river, and those only that swam were taken out and suckled. The *Caribes* frequently castrated their children, that they might grow the fatter, and be the more delicate food. The politest of them were entertained at their public shews with men killing men, and their fellow-creatures engaged in horrible encounters with lions and tygers. Some nations of them eat human flesh, which is a kind of diet, if we may believe our travellers, much relished by several Pagan nations at this day. Others, such were
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their notions of filial piety, killed their parents at a certain age, and feasted on their flesh, thinking it the greatest tenderness to relieve them from the miseries of old age; and the highest honour that could be done them, to entomb them in their own bowels. It was a custom in most of the Eastern nations, and, they say, is sometimes practised at this day, for her, who loved her husband more than the rest of his wives, to kill herself at his funeral. The *Persians* made no scruple of marrying their own mothers or daughters, a thing more abhorred than even murder itself, by other nations; and it was lawful among the *Egyptians* for brother and sister to marry.

Dech. These moral enormities, practised by whole nations, can never serve your purpose, because they were neither agreeable to nature, nor dictated by it, but the mere effects of custom, education, and priestcraft.

Shep. I cannot see what profit any species of priests could have derived from the greater part of these practices; but I shall freely own they were the effects of custom and education. Yet, on the other hand, you must confess, that if the light of nature had as clearly and uniformly shewn every man his duty on all occasions, as his eye shews him the differences between colours, as *Tindal* says it must have done, no man, or at least no body of men, could have ever given into such enormities, much less considered them as acts of piety and duty. Those nations never mistook white for black, nor blue for yellow; never, in open day-light, took an horse for a tree, or a tree for a man; who carried out their sick, as soon as they thought their case desperate, and threw them on the ground to perish by the injuries of the wind and weather; who forced their wives to miscarry, in order to save the expence of maintaining their children; whose women, in the fury of a battle, flung their infants on the lances of their enemies, to terrify them with a dreadful idea of their resolution. We hear much said of the exalted virtue shewn by some antient heathens; but as they had no religious principles to support their virtue, it is to be suspected they only wore it for shew, and to get a name. Revenge and

self-murder were not only tolerated, but esteemed heroic, by the best of them. I know not, in all profane history, six more illustrious characters, than those of *Lycurgus*, *Timoleon*, *Cicero*, *Cato Uticensis*, *Brutus*, and *Germanicus*. The first encouraged tricking and stealing by an express law. The second, upon principle, murdered his own brother. *Cicero*, with all his fine talk about religion and virtue, had very little of either; as may appear by what he says (I think it is in a letter to *Atticus*) on the death of his daughter *Tullia*; *I hate the very gods, who have hitherto been so profuse in their favours to me*; and by deserting his friends and his country, and turning a servile flatterer to *Cæsar*. *Brutus* concludes all his mighty heroism with this exclamation; *Virtue, I have pursued thee in vain, and found thee to be but an empty name*; and then kills himself. *Cato's* virtue was not strong enough to hinder his turning a public robber and oppressor, witness his *Cyprian* expedition; nor to bear up against the calamities of life, and so he cut his own throat, and ran away, like a coward, from his country and the world. *Germanicus*, who exceeded all men in natural sweetness of temper, at the approach of death called his friends about him, and spent his last moments in pressing them to take revenge of *Piso* and *Plancina*, for poisoning or bewitching him, in directing them how this might best be done, and in receiving their oaths for the performance of his request. His sense of religion he thus expressed on that occasion: *Had I died by the decree of fate, I should have had just cause of resentment against the gods, for hurrying me away from my parents, my wife, and my children, in the flower of my youth, by an untimely death*. Here is an instance of piety and humanity, such as the best of natures, left to itself, was able to produce. How infinitely above this was the spirit and temper of mind, which Christianity enabled *Stephen* and the other primitive Martyrs to carry towards their murderers, face to face, and in the very fact! *Germanicus* was only persuaded, that *Piso* had bewitched him; and his suspicions seem to have been founded merely on superstition: *There were found, says Tacitus, on the ground, and in the walls, the relics of*
dead

dead bodies, charms, incantations, leaden tablets with the name of Germanicus, and half-burnt embers smeared with gore, by which the souls of men are delivered over to the infernal gods. This was all that appeared to have been done; and nothing but gross superstition could have induced *Germanicus* to ascribe his own death to such inefficacious means. Besides, he had cause only to suspect *Piso* and *Plancina* to be the authors of these practices, and upon that suspicion breathes out his soul in fury and revenge against them. But *Stephen*, acting upon a nobler principle, and with a more exalted spirit, sees his murderers about him, and, while they are flinging stones at him, is on his knees earnestly soliciting God to forgive them.

Dech. The best men, as well Christians as Heathens, are sometimes guilty of the grossest vices; but we ought rather to trace their principles thro' their general virtues, than their particular failures.

Shep. What you call failures, were crimes of so black a nature, as men of real piety and virtue could hardly have been guilty of. But you ought to observe, Sir, that the crimes I object to these heathen worthies, were committed on principle. If we were to make a catalogue of heathen enormities, perpetrated in violation of the feeble principles dictated by the light of nature, it would be too black for the humanity of a Christian; and too long for the patience of a Deist, to peruse. The thirty tyrants at *Athens* made the daughters dance in the blood of their murdered parents. *Licinius Lucullus*, contrary to express articles, put to death twenty thousand of the *Caucæi*. What monsters were the *Roman* Emperors during Paganism! *Augustus*, having made himself master of *Perusia*, offered up three hundred of the principal inhabitants at the altar of his uncle *Julius*. *Nero*, who had committed incest with his own mother, afterwards murdered her with the most hideous circumstances of cruelty and treachery; and, after bathing the city in the blood of its best citizens, he set it on fire, that it might exhibit in fact what he sung over its flames in his poem concerning the destruction of *Troy*. *Galba*, under a pretence of consulting about their common safety,

safety, assembled the inhabitants of three *Spanish* cities, of whom he massacred seven thousand. *Caracalla* killed his brother *Geta* in the arms of his mother, who, although she was wounded by the blow that dispatched her son, soon after tempted his murderer, by wanton allurements, to marry her, which he did ; and because some citizens of *Alexandria* called him *Oedipus*, and her *Jocasta*, he marched his army thro' *Asia* and *Syria*, and, entering their city with all the appearance of a mild and peaceable disposition, gave up its inhabitants to the sword : nor did he stop the massacre, till that spacious and populous city was reduced to a desert. It is with the greatest justice that we look on *Tiberius*, *Caligula*, *Domitian*, *Commodus*, *Heliogabalus*, and by far the greater number of those Emperors, as devils, rather than men. Had not the ten dreadful persecutions, in which, by the most infernal tortures, they destroyed some millions of innocent and passive people, been exercised on Christians, you would have esteemed them the highest instances of cruelty, and wondered how either the light of nature, or the applauded benevolence of mankind, could have licensed so merciless, and so tedious a scene of murder.

Dech. But you own these instances of cruelty were committed by the Emperors against their own principles.

Shep. Their persecuting the Christians was an effect of regard for their own religion. It was to gratify *Saturn*, who castrated his father, and devoured his own children ; it was to obtain the favour of *Jupiter* the adulterer, of *Venus* the whore, and of *Mercury* the thief, that they thus made war on their Maker, and on Christ Jesus, the author of purity and holiness. Their other flagitious practices were, probably, reprov'd by some inward sense of justice and humanity ; and, possibly, by their very religion, absurd and diabolical as it was, in the main.

Dech. Yet the elder *Romans* were, by the influence of that very religion, kept within the strictest bounds of virtue.

Shep. Not by the influence of their religion, but by their customary temperance, and the limited power of each citizen. This appears from hence, that when luxury was once introduced, and their governors became absolute monarchs, no ties of nature, no fear of their gods, had any influence over them : yet after this people had been, for many ages, steeped in the most execrable and outrageous vices, Christianity, in proportion as it prevailed, introduced a new face of things ; insomuch that, when the Emperors became Christians, such enormities, as I just now mentioned, were seldom or never heard of.

Temp. The Emperors before and after *Constantine* were, indeed, a very different sort of men. Among the first there were but few good ; among the latter few who were enormously wicked.

Shep. This experiment sets before our eyes a wide difference between the effects of Christian and Pagan principles.

Dech. The former had satirists, the latter encomiasts, for historians.

Shep. The Pagan Emperors had Pagan historians, the Christian had Pagans, as well as believers ; and, besides, had always an opposite party of Christian writers to deal with, who did not fail to censure them with sufficient freedom in their books ; nay, some of them had holy men and hermits to reprove them for their faults to their faces, and Bishops, who compelled them to do public penance for their crimes.

Dech. Kings and Emperors are pretty much alike in all ages and countries, and under the influence of all religions. Politics and pleasure give them little time to mind the affair of religion, either internal or external. The people are likewise led, as to their principles, by the documents of their priests ; and, as to their practices, by the example of the great. But he who would know how far nature is qualified to render those who will attend to its dictates, and improve upon them, wise and good, must look for information on this head in the writings and lives of the antient philosophers, with whom
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one of the greatest fathers of the Christian church wished to take his fate in another world.

Shep. I cannot help differing widely with that father, because, upon consulting the writings of the philosophers themselves, together with their lives and tenets, as given us by their own Pagan historians, I find they knew little of true religion, and practised less. It was owing to the want of higher and better principles than the mere light of nature and reason can suggest, that the antient philosophers, who carried virtue as high as it was possible without divine assistance, fell into the gross enormities practised by the people they lived among. They made all the efforts human strength was capable of, to find out the true object of worship, and came nearer to the discovery, in proportion as they had opportunities, by traveling into the East, of drawing hints from the stream of true tradition. And, after all, none but *Socrates* and *Plato* talked of one God, and that but obscurely, speaking, at other times, in favour of a plurality of gods, and recommending it to their disciples to worship the deities of their country. However, it must be owned they lived, in the main, as if they had better principles of religion than their countrymen and contemporaries. They did enough to shew, that if they had been well acquainted with the true religion, they would never have taken long journies by land, and made dangerous voyages by sea, to visit the celebrated prostitutes of their time; they would never have lett out their wives for hire, nor kept their misses, nor given the world the strongest reasons to think them guilty of greater crimes, than it was possible to commit with the other sex. What a condition must the Pagan world have been in, when the antient philosophers were esteemed by their contemporaries, as the wisest and best of men! Yet this must have been the case, or the youth of prime quality had never been committed to their tuition. Those philosophers, however, had, generally speaking, little sense of religion, and as little of moral virtue, or even decency. Many of them were Atheists, as *Diagoras*, *Theodorus*, and *Critias*. *Epicurus* denied the spirituality and providence of God,
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and so did all his followers. *Aristotle* denied his providence, as to this lower world. In the opinion of *Hippasus* and *Heracitus*, God was fire ; in that of *Parmenides*, a mixture of fire and earth ; in that of *Xenophanes*, a great impassible sphere of matter. *Socrates* and *Plato* were, at least in practice, Polytheists ; so were *Cicero* and *Plutarch*, the latter holding, among a multiplicity of inferior gods, two supreme deities, the one infinitely good, the other infinitely evil. The *Stoics* believed God to be the soul of the world, and that soul to consist in a subtil flame. They likewise held, with the poets and the vulgar, that God is subject to fate. Among the philosophers there were three hundred different opinions concerning their supreme deity, or rather, as *Varro* testifies, three hundred *Jupiters*, or supreme deities. The followers of *Democritus* and *Epicurus* denied the immortality of the soul. *Pherecydes* and *Pythagoras* believed it to be immortal, but gave it in common to brutes, as well as men. The *Academics* were doubtful as to this important point. *Socrates*, *Plato*, and *Cicero*, who were more inclined to the belief of a future existence, than the other philosophers, plead for it with arguments of no force, speak of it with the utmost uncertainty, and therefore are afraid to found their system of duty and virtue on the expectation of it. Their notions of morality were of a piece with their religion, and had little else for a foundation than vain-glory. *Tully*, in his treatise of friendship, says, that virtue proposes glory as its end, and hath no other reward. Accordingly he maintains that wars, undertaken for glory, are not unlawful, provided they are carried on without the usual cruelty. *Zeno* maintained, that all crimes are equal ; that pardon is never to be granted to one, who offends or injures us ; and that a man may as lawfully use the utmost familiarity with his mother, as stroke her arm. It was not only his, but, likewise, the opinion of *Cleanthes* and *Chrysippus*, that the horrible sin of using the male for the female is a thing indifferent. The two former taught, that sons and daughters may as lawfully roast and eat the flesh of their parents, as any other food. *Diogenes*, and the sect of the *Cynics*, held, that parents have a right to

sacri-

sacrifice and eat their children ; and that there is nothing shameful in committing the grossest acts of lewdness publicly, and before the faces of mankind. *Epicurus* allows of cohabitation with mothers and daughters. *Aristippus*, altho' a man of fortune, refused to maintain his own children, regarding them only as the spittle or vermin produced by his body ; and as he placed the happiness of a man in the pleasures of a brute, so, to indulge those pleasures, he said, a wise man might commit theft, sacrilege, or adultery, if he had an opportunity. The virtuous sentiments, discovered by the philosophers on some occasions, will neither palliate these execrable principles, nor suffer us to think those who could abet them fit instructors for mankind.

Dech. It is not much matter what the philosophers uttered by way of speculation or emblem : the goodness of their lives is a sufficient voucher for the probity of their real principles.

Shep. The very covering of an emblem ought to be chaste and virtuous, lest those, who cannot penetrate to the kernel, should be poisoned by the shell. But that their principles were literally what I have represented them, their practices, which you so confidently appeal to, may fully prove. *Socrates* and *Plato*, the very best of them, have not escaped the censure of antiquity for crimes of the deepest dye. Great and good as they were, some foundation there might have been, for what they were charged with. *Plutarch* also represents *Aristotle* as a fop, a debauchee, and a traitor to *Alexander* his master. *Dion Cassius* is as severe on *Seneca* the moralist. *Lucian*, as well as *Minutius Felix*, represents the sages of antiquity as corruptors of youth; as adulterers, and tyrants. *Diogenes* kept a filthy strumpet, with whom he lay openly in the streets. *Speusippus* was caught, and slain, in the act of adultery. *Aristippus* kept a seraglio of boys and whores, and yet took journies, at the peril of his life, to see the reigning courtesans of his time ; nor was lewdness his only vice ; he actually forswore a sum of money deposited in his hands. *Crates*, and the female philosopher *Hipparchia*, made a practice of strolling from place to place, and lying together publicly.

publicly before multitudes of people. *Xenophon* not only kept a boy, called *Clinias*, with whom he was guilty of unnatural pollutions, but practised the same execrable enormity with persons of riper years. *Herillus* was a filthy pathic in his youth. *Cleanthes*, *Chrysippus*, *Zeno*, *Cleombrotus* and *Menippus*, committed murder on themselves ; the last, because he had lost a considerable sum of money, which, as he was an usurer, went a little too near his heart. That I do not charge the philosophers with worse principles and practices than they themselves maintain, and their own Pagan historians ascribe to them, any one may satisfy himself, who will consult *Diogenes Laertius*, *Sextus Empiricus*, *Lucian*, *Plutarch*, and the works of *Plato*, *Aristotle*, and *Cicero*. Thus, gentlemen, I think it is plain, whether we consider what the human understanding could do, or what it actually did, that it could not have attained to a sufficient knowledge of God without revelation ; so that the demonstration, brought in favour of some religion, ends in a demonstration of the revealed. When we attentively consider the nature of man, we find it necessary he should have some religion ; when we consider the nature of God, we cannot help concluding he would never have made a falsehood necessary to the happiness of his rational creatures ; and that, therefore, there must be a true religion. And when we consider, that by our natural faculties it is extremely difficult to arrive at a right idea of God till he reveals it to us, that all the Gentile world hath run into the grossest theological errors, and, in consequence of those, into the most enormous customs and crimes ; and that no legislator ever founded his scheme of civil government on any supposed religious dictates of nature, but always on some real or pretended revelation ; we cannot help ascribing all the true religion in the world to divine instruction, and all the frightful variety of religious errors to human invention, and to that dark and degenerate nature, by the imaginary light of which you believe the right idea of God may be easily and universally discovered.

Dech. I cannot give myself leave to think, that an infinitely gracious God could have brought a species of creatures

creatures into being, destined to be extremely miserable, if ignorant of their Maker, and yet, by nature, destitute of means to know him ; or that, if he did, he could so long have with-held the external opportunities of that knowlege from them all, excepting one inconsiderable nation. I must confess, I have not credulity enough for such an article of faith as this.

Cunn. Nor I, indeed.

Temp. It seems very strange ; yet flying to the light of nature will not relieve us from the difficulty, since wherever that hath been tried, altho' assisted by some dark traditions and instructions, it hath miserably failed.

Shep. It is true, that light, in the present imbecillity and blindness of human nature, is insufficient ; but God never left us altogether trusting to it, having communicated to us the knowlege of himself and his will thro' *Adam* and *Noah*, the common parents of mankind : but men becoming vain in their own imaginations, as *St. Paul* says, not only departed from the divine instructions, but, in a great measure, extinguished the light of their own reason, whereby their foolish hearts were darkened. And, besides, as they did not like to retain God in their knowlege, God gave them over to a reprobate mind : however, as we are told, he winked at the times of this ignorance ; some compassion and indulgence, no doubt of it, he had for those from whom, in after-ages, the idolatry of their forefathers had, in a great measure, cut off the necessary means of knowing him. This is further intimated to us, by what immediately follows ; But now God commandeth all men every-where to repent ; now, that better means of knowing him are afforded, he expects we should return to the worship of him alone. From both expressions we may conclude, that God requires of mankind as much, but no more, knowlege than he hath given them means of attaining to. What the Heathens suffered in this world by their ignorance of the true God, was hardly a sufficient punishment for their neglecting to make a right advantage of the means still left them in the use of their reason, in the consideration of his works, and in the imperfect theological traditions, handed down to them, in order to recover a right notion
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of God. But of these matters we shall have a more proper occasion to discourse, when we come to consider the last article of the Deistical Creed, under which, I suppose, Mr. *Dechaine* will not forget to press me with the late introduction of Christianity.

Dech. I shall not ; and, besides, as the day is pretty far advanced, it is time to quit our chat. Mr. *Shepherd*, will you step over, and dine with us ?

Shep. I will wait on you, Sir.

Dech. If you stay all night with us, we will return to our subject as early in the morning as you please.

Shep. You may command me.

The End of the Second DIALOGUE.

DIALOGUE

D I A L O G U E III.

DECHAINED,
TEMPLETON,

CUNNINGHAM,
SHEPHERD.

Dechaine. **T**HE conversation of yesterday hath not been out of my thoughts ever since, excepting when I was fast asleep.

Shep. A man left to his own hypothesis, altho' it should happen to be a little inconsistent with itself, is apt to think more uniformly, and rest more quietly, in it, than in a better, after suffering it to be ruffled by the contrary reasonings of others.

Dech. That is the case; for altho' you and I are still firmly attached to our old opinions, yet, let the inconsistency lie on which side it will, we cannot so easily find out arguments to convince each other, as each of us can to satisfy himself. Is it not very strange, that mere nature should, on all occasions, and in all circumstances, tell us so plainly what is our duty, and enforce the performance of it with the most evident rewards and punishments, and yet that her dictates should not be laws, for want of a known authority? I cannot help thinking, that the being and power of God over us are as clearly revealed to us by nature, as the rules of our behaviour. The former lie as open to reason, as the latter. But if the dictates of sentiment and reason are not, in the strict sense of the word, to be admitted for laws, till God is known, and they are believed to be his dictates; yet they are certainly moral rules of action, binding us to the performance of these, and hindering us from the committal of those actions; and therefore they are laws, tho' of a different definition from the laws of men. As our inquiry turns not on names, but on things, if reason and nature on all occasions prescribe and enforce our duty,

duty, that is enough, and we need not take up time in settling the meaning of a word, which every one is at liberty to define, according to his own way of thinking.

Shep. I shall readily allow you, and every body else, a right to define your own words, as you, or he, may think fit. Let us, however, have a law, or a rule of action, an instinct, a reason, or what you please, to act by; but let it be sufficiently clear and cogent, to answer the end. I have already said enough, I think, to shew there can be no law, properly speaking, nor moral obligation, without the knowledge of God. I have likewise shewn, from the nature of our ideas themselves, from our manner of coming by them, from the office and extent of reason, and from the theological errors and ignorance of all unenlightened ages and countries, that since the fall, in order rightly and effectually to know God, revelation is absolutely necessary, at least to the bulk of mankind.

Dech. If our duty on all occasions is sufficiently known and enforced, without instructions, or traditions, or even without a knowledge of God, this may suffice. As to revelation, it can only give us general rules for our moral conduct. It is reason that must interpret those rules, and apply them to particular cases. But reason can dictate, as well as interpret; and is at less trouble, and under less uncertainty, in applying her own, than foreign rules. If we must be taught to reason, which to me is a strange position, to say no worse of it, mankind, by comparing and debating, can teach one another, and improve their reason. Those in whom reason is the least improved, have a simpler and plainer set of duties, than those whose faculties are more refined; and the improvement of reason keeps pace exactly with the calls for it. Place a man in what circumstances you will, and his reason will tell him how he is to act. He knows very well what he would not desire to have done to himself; and that he must be sensible is not fit to be done to another. Crimes of the deepest dye, such as robbery and murder, are naturally attended with great abhorrence in all men, before committal, and with strong remorse afterwards.

wards. Lesser crimes are accompanied with proportionable aversion and compunction, as the necessity of abstaining from them is not so great. The rules for positive duties are as plain, and their enforcements as strong, as in the case of negative. The reason of every man tells him what is a good, and what an evil action; and no man does a good action, but he finds a sensible pleasure in doing it; no man commits a bad one, who does not feel the stings of conscience, and a sense of guilt, for so doing; and as good actions, and their rewards, as well as evil ones, and their punishments, ought to bear proportion to each other, so the aforesaid pleasure and compunction are always proportionable to the good or evil of our actions. Moral duties are upon the same footing with self-evident propositions. As the one sort bring their own light, so the other carry their obligation with them, and need not be taught. No man, for instance, need be told, that he ought to save the life of his fellow-creatures when he can do it with safety to his own; or, that he ought not unnecessarily to aggrieve or destroy another. The fitnesses of things are, in most cases, self-evident, and the duties resulting from thence too plain to be doubted of by the meanest understanding. In nicer cases the reasons of duty are not hard to be deduced, and the duty itself is of less importance. Were it necessary to teach us moral rules and obligations, the Author of our nature, who never employs two causes or means to effect that, which may be brought about by one, would never have conveyed that moral knowledge to us by sentiment and reason, which he intended to have instructed us in another way.

Shep. Two points you have here endeavoured to establish; first, that the rules of our duty are evident to all men, without instruction; and secondly, that they are sufficiently enforced by nature alone. Supposing the first to be true, altho' I can easily account for a man's acting, on particular occasions, directly against what other men may take to be his duty, yet I can by no means account for his ever acting wrong, in important cases, upon principle. Much less am I able to satisfy myself, upon your principle, how it should come to pass, that
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whole nations should have thought themselves obliged to act upon opposite principles, in relation to life, death, property, &c. *Timoleon* killed his own brother in the life-time of their mother, in order to set the *Corinthians* free. This he took to be his duty ; and the generality of mankind, placed in his circumstances, would have thought that action an horrid crime. *Cato* killed himself, and, no doubt on't, thought he had a right to do so ; yet the generality of mankind looked on the action as a sin against his own nature and the community, which stood never more in need of his services, than at the critical juncture, when he thought fit to desert it. Mr. *Blount*, who wrote the *Oracles of Reason*, shot himself, because his sister-in-law would not marry him. In this he acted on principle, as well as *Acosta*, who put an end to his life by the same sort of instrument. If the bulk of mankind did not act on other sentiments of duty, we should have but a thin world of it. All true Christians, and I hope I may add the Deists, think the *Jews* and *Pagans* were guilty of great cruelty in their persecutions of the antient Christians. Yet, immoral and barbarous as their conduct seems to us, they thought they were doing good service to the cause of truth, and to the several objects of their worship. Papists think fire and fagot an excellent way of refuting Protestants, and hope to merit Heaven by a zeal hot enough to reduce their adversaries to ashes. This whole nations of them have taken to be their duty ; witness the crusades against the Protestants in *France*, the massacre of *Paris*, that of *Savoy*, and that of *Ireland* in 1641. Now the Protestants, where they have the upper hand, think it their duty to treat the Papists, and all other recusants, with lenity and forbearance. One nation of men think themselves obliged by nature to suckle and cherish their children with the greatest tenderness. Another think it unreasonable to bring up sickly infants, to be a burden to themselves and the public, and therefore throw them, as soon as they are born, to the wild beasts. The people of one country think it their duty to prolong the lives of their parents with all imaginable affection and indulgence. Those of another put their parents to death, when they
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are become infirm and decrepit, and feast themselves on their flesh. Numberless instances of opposition about the most important points of moral duty, not only in particular persons, but between public communities, might be added to these; but these, I am sure, are sufficient to satisfy every rational thinker, that nature and reason do not, either by a self-evident light, or by indisputable deductions, tell every man how he ought to act, on all occasions, and in all circumstances. If the fitnesses of things were so apparent, or did our moral duties so evidently result from thence, as you seem to imagine, such glaring differences, about matters of the greatest moment to private persons and societies, could never have happened. All mankind are taught from their infancy, and thro' the whole course of their lives, to look upon certain actions as right and fit, and on others as wicked or vile. Parents, masters, conversation, dealings, human laws, &c. all join to teach them this difference, and frequently instruct them to place the right of actions, and moral duty, on opposite sides. If this continual instruction, and the moral habits commencing from thence, and perpetually fed by it, were wholly removed, I cannot tell what would become of the moral sense; but I am afraid it would dwindle away almost to nothing; altho' I will readily grant, that an unbiassed head, and an uncorrupted heart, will of themselves distinguish between right and wrong, in very important cases. And you, I hope, will as freely confess, that were this distinction as clear, as strong, and permanent, as that which the eye makes between colours, which, to answer the whole purpose of morality, it ought to be, it could never yield to so gross a transposition of right and wrong, as in the instances just now mentioned. As we generally see men knowing or ignorant of moral, as well as other sorts of knowledge, allowing for the difference of capacity and application, in proportion to their opportunities, and the pains that have been taken in training them up; so we generally see them, making due allowances for difference of constitution and complexion, affected with greater or less degrees of love for virtue, and aversion to vice; nay,

we often find them even fond of vice, and averse to virtue, avoiding the one with the utmost distaste, and pursuing the other with the greatest delight ; and not only that, but reflecting on it, when over, not with remorse, but pleasure, according to the lessons that have been given them, the examples set them, the company they have kept, and the course of life they have run through.

Dech. Do you mean by this, that actions are not, in themselves, good or evil ; and that there is no natural morality ; but that the whole depends upon opinion and instruction, which in different places may establish opposite rules of duty ?

Shep. I mean, that moral duty arises intirely from the known will of God ; that it is always conformable to the known nature and fitness of things, excepting when God, on account of some superior fitness, unknown to us, orders it otherwise ; in which case the fitness of the duty is to subsist only between the action and the express will of God ; that this exercise of the Divine prerogative, in dispensing with inferior fitnesses, is to be esteemed by us as a moral miracle ; and that neither the sentiments nor reason of man, assisted by all the mere natural knowlege he can have of the fitnesses of things, are able to give him a thorough view of his duty, which ought to be so clear by your hypothesis, as not only to teach him, in all cases and circumstances, what is right, but, also, perpetually to prevent his imbibing bad principles of morality, his confounding right and wrong, or taking the one for the other. I am as fully persuaded as you can be, that there is a law of nature ; but the whole difference between my notion of that law, and the self-sufficient scheme you advance, consists in this, that I call it the law of nature, on account of its conformity to nature ; whereas you maintain, that its authority, its precepts, and its rewards and punishments, are clearly and perfectly made known by nature to the reason of every man, which you must excuse me if I utterly deny.

Cunn. If some of the antients were very ignorant as to many parts of the natural law, others were as knowing ;

ing; and I cannot see why we should take our notions of nature, and its lights, from persons who seem to have degenerated into brutes, rather than from those who, by following reason, thought and acted up to the dignity of human nature. The other *Athenians* had the same opportunities of coming at religious and moral truths, as *Socrates* and *Plato*; but not having the same candour nor attention, they did not arrive at the same attainments of useful knowledge. If men consulted with reason and nature, and not with superstition and prejudice, about moral duties, they could scarcely go astray. I see all men knowing or ignorant, virtuous or vicious, in proportion as they follow the former, or the latter.

Shep. Thus the Deists argue, and thus you take it for granted, that *Socrates* and *Plato*, notwithstanding their outward conformity with the religion of their country, were sound divines; that they drew their right ideas of religion from their own internal light alone; and that all other Pagans might have done the same, had they not stifled the light of nature, and degenerated into a kind of brutes. If the first is true, these two philosophers were a brace of errant knaves; if the second, it must have been owing to their superior capacities, as well as to their greater candor and attention; if the third, all other Pagans, not excepting the philosophers and heroes of antiquity, must fall back into the rank of asses or swine. It is certain, Sir, that one man, by the strength of superior talents, can strike more knowledge out of the same hints, or first principles, than another; and that prejudices, and corrupt affections, whether natural or adventitious, are great obstacles to the pursuit of knowledge; but the want of first principles to build on, is still a greater. *Socrates*, who never travelled out of *Greece*, nor, indeed, far from *Athens*, had nothing to erect a scheme of religion or morality on but the scattered fragments of truth, handed down from time immemorial among his countrymen, or imported by *Pythagoras*, *Thales*, and others, who had been in *Egypt* and the East. These he picked out from an huge heap of absurdities and errors, under which they were buried; and, by the help of a most prodigious capacity, laying them toge-

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ther, comparing them with the nature of things, and drawing consequences from them, found reason to question the soundness of the *Grecian* theology and morality. But this is all the length he seems to have gone. He reasoned extremely well against the prevailing errors of his time ; but was able to form no system of religion or morality. This was a work above the strength of his nature, and the lights he enjoyed ; and his philosophy, like his genius, served to shew him what he ought to shun and reject, but not what he ought to embrace. He seems to have been an instrument, in the hand of Providence, to beat down, or, at least, shake, the errors of Paganism, that the master-builders, who were to come afterwards, might find the readier ground to erect the true religion and morality on. And this work he might have done to more purpose, had he not taught his disciples to worship the gods, and ground the distinction between right and wrong on the laws of their country ; in the latter of which he followed the saying of his master *Archelaus*, who taught, that what is just or dishonest, is defined by law, not by nature. The notions of *Plato*, concerning the Divine nature, were infinitely more sublime, and nearer the truth, than those of his master *Socrates*. He did not content himself merely with removing errors ; he ventured on a system, and maintained that virtue is a science, and that God is the object and source of duty ; that there is but one God, the fountain of all being, and superior to all essence ; that he hath a Son, called the Word ; that there is a judgment to come, by which the just, who have suffered in this life, shall be recompensed in the other, and the wicked punished eternally ; that God is omnipresent, and, consequently, that the wicked, if he were to dive into the deepest caverns of the earth, or should get wings, and fly into the heavens, would not be able to escape from him ; that man is formed in the image of God ; and that, in order to establish laws and government, relations, made by true traditions, and antient oracles, are to be consulted. These points, so much insisted on by *Plato*, are far from being the growth of *Greece*, or his own invention, but derived from eastern traditions, which

we know he travelled for, at least as far as *Egypt*. He was wiser than his teacher, who was a much greater man, because his lights were better; but as they were not sufficient, he ran into great errors, speaking plainly, as if he believed in a plurality of gods, making goods, women, and children, common, &c. But pray, Mr. *Cunningham*, how comes it to pass, that mount *Taurus* in *Asia*, and mount *Atlas*, and the deserts of *Barca* in *Africa*, make so great a difference between the knowlege and politeness of the nations dwelling on the one side of them, and those of the nations dwelling on the other? Is knowlege progressive? And may it be stopped by a mountain, a sea, or a desert? The natural faculties of men in all nations are alike; and did nature itself furnish all men with the means and materials of knowlege, philosophy need never turn traveller, either in order to her own improvement, or to the communication of her lights to the world. How came it to pass, think you, that *Scythia* did not produce so many, and so great, philosophers as *Greece*?

Cunn. I really do not know. We have heard of *Anacharsis*, who came but little short of *Socrates* himself; and perhaps that country produced many more, who, for want of letters and records, are unknown to us.

Shep. I think it is very evident whence the difference between *Scythia* and *Greece*, in point of learning and instruction, arose: the latter had the benefit of commerce with the *Phœnicians*, from whence they came by the knowlege of letters, and, probably, of navigation, and with the *Egyptians*, from whom they learned the greater part of their theology, policy, arts, and sciences. Such advantages the *Scythians* wanted; and therefore, altho' their natural talents were as good as those of the *Greeks*, they were not able to make any improvements in philosophy. If *Scythia* had produced any considerable number of wise men, *Anacharsis* needed not to have travelled into *Greece* to improve himself in knowlege, nor had he been shot to death by his own brother for attempting to introduce the *Athenian* laws among his countrymen. If *Scythia* had abounded with such sages, *Anacharsis inter Scythas* had never become a proverb. If

I should ask you, why the *Asiatic Scythians* are at this this day as ignorant as ever, while the *European Scythians* are little inferior to the other nations of *Europe* in arts and politeness, you would not, surely, say you did not know. As letters and records are the inseparable companions of arts, sciences, and knowlege of all other sorts; so, had antient *Scythia* been as knowing as antient *Greece*, its distinguished geniuses must have improved the arts necessary to the recording what they knew, as well as the sciences themselves; and, consequently, could not have wanted opportunities of leaving some monuments of their knowlege, by which posterity might, at least, have guessed at it. How comes it to pass, Mr. *Cunningham*, that we, at this day, take upon us to approve the philosophy of *Socrates* and *Plato*, rather than of *Epicurus* and *Aristippus*? The *Grecians* were divided in this matter, some following the notions of the former, and others those of the latter.

Cunn. Reason vouches for the former.

Shep. Why did it not put the matter out of question in their own times, or, at least, immediately after? The infinite contradictions and uncertainties among the antient philosophers produced the sect of the Sceptics, who, while they kept within tolerable bounds, had more to say for themselves than all the rest. In respect to religion, *Socrates* and *Plato* either were, or pretended to be, Sceptics, beating down the absurd opinions of others, but seldom building up any of their own, or, when they did, building on mere conjectures, or arguments suspected by themselves.

Cunn. The points in dispute had not, in those days, been sufficiently canvassed, nor tried by the touchstone of nature: this is a work of time, and time hath, at length, effected it.

Shep. Time, then, it seems, is an instructor, as well as nature and reason; but time hath taught the *Tartars*, *Africans*, and *Americans*, little or nothing of true theology or morality, even yet. Time of itself can teach nothing; it was the Christian religion that opened your eyes and mine, nay, and those of Mr. *Dechaine* too, and taught us the true principles by which we are enabled

to examine the philosophy of the antients, and by comparing their several opinions with one another, and with the truths of revelation, to decide in favour of some against the rest. Men are very apt to take that for the spontaneous produce of their own minds, which they were early taught, and long habituated to; and to call that the effect of nature, which was instilled insensibly into them, before they began to consider how notices and informations came in, or to keep any registry in their memories of the times when this or that addition to their fund of knowlege was made. But any man, who considers the matter candidly, will find, that the principles of all he knows, concerning either the authority or nature of morality, were communicated to him by instruction, and that with some expence of time and pains, both to him and his teachers.

Dech. As one man is more ingenious at finding out truths of all kinds than another, so nations differ in the same respect, and make various advances, some brisker, and others slower, towards improvement; but still those who lie farthest behind, in their progress to moral knowlege, know also less of the temptations to vice; and the ignorance of vice answers the same end as the knowlege of virtue.

Shep. Moral knowlege does not then bring its own light with it, like self-evident propositions; moral duties are not equally known to all men; nor do the circumstances a man is in always plainly dictate to him what he is to do. It seems there is room for ingenuity to distinguish itself from simplicity, in finding out points of knowlege, which nevertheless, as they are, in your opinion, more necessary than even the informations given us by the senses, so they ought to be, if possible, more universally evident and certain.

Temp. But pray, *Mr. Shepherd*, is there not a beauty in certain actions, and a deformity in others, independent of our opinion, which may serve very well to distinguish the one sort from the other? And if this beauty and deformity are sufficiently apparent to every man, and on all occasions, will it not serve for a moral standard,

and settle the difference between right and wrong upon a rational footing ?

Shep. Do you mean any thing more by the beauty of an action, than the pleasure you find in doing it, and the honour it reflects on you, when done ?

Temp. No more.

Shep. Does not the deformity of any action consist in the pain and shame attending the perpetration of it ?

Temp. It does.

Shep. Are there not many men who take pleasure, and glory, in such actions as would put others to great pain and shame to commit ?

Temp. There are.

Shep. Whence, think you, does this difference arise ?

Temp. I believe, not from nature, but education and passion.

Shep. Our passions, however, are natural to us ; and were the sense of moral beauty or deformity strong enough to answer the end, that is, were it as evident and irresistible as our sensations of bodily pleasures or pains, of sweet or sour, rough or smooth, no excess of passion, nor force of education, would be able to bring one man to differ with another about it. It behoves us as much to know the difference between good and evil actions, as between black and white ; and yet it is impossible for passion, prepossession, or any other cause of error whatsoever, to hinder a man who can see, from distinguishing between those colours, or to raise any difference between the testimony of two seeing mens eyes about those sensations. Men are taught from their infancy to think certain actions comely, and others dishonourable ; they are rewarded and commended for the first, punished and despised for the last ; hear all, with whom they deal or converse, seconding the impressions made by their education ; find the laws of their country backing those impressions with all the force of temporal emoluments and punishments ; and are made to believe, that the Supreme Being, or Beings, will approve and highly reward those actions they have been taught to think beautiful, and pursue with vengeance such as have been called vile and filthy. These causes, perpetually working

working upon the mind, and coinciding with the natural constitution of things, can hardly fail to introduce an assemblage or firm connexion between the idea of this action and beauty, and the idea of that action and deformity ; which assemblage, falling in with nature, and being strengthened by habit, so that the one idea never occurs without the other, seems to arise intirely out of nature ; and it is at length forgot, that either instruction or habit had any share in its production. From hence, and from the pliancy of the mind to different or opposite moral impressions, it proceeds, as I observed before, that whole nations have placed duty on opposite sides, in respect to the most glaring and important actions. If this does not shew, that the moral sense is intirely acquired, it proves, at least, that it is too weak to serve for a standard of duty, and requires the check of some superior principle.

Temp. The reality of a moral sense, be its efficacy greater or less, can hardly be questioned.

Shep. What you call a moral sense, is, in itself, only a sense, and cannot, without any propriety, be called moral, until it is considered as a rule by which we are to distinguish between good and evil, in order to account for what we do. Man, as we formerly observed, hath, in common with all other animals, a strong desire to preserve himself, to propagate his species, to cherish his offspring, and loves those who partake the same nature with him, merely as such. If these are moral sensations, then brutes and insects are moral agents. Now, Sir, it is much to be questioned whether there is any internal sense distinct from these, as the mere natural beauty of all actions may be traced to a conformity with some one or more of these, and the mere natural deformity, to a neglect thereof. But, granting there is a natural sense of beauty and deformity in actions, independent of these instincts, it is in itself nothing more than a mere mechanical or animal motion, like hunger, and can by no means denominate him morally good, who obeys, nor him morally evil, who acts against it, before it is considered as the will of a being to whom we are to account for our actions. Now this its exaltation

into a law it must borrow from somewhat superior to itself.

Dech. And that is reason, by which the relation and fitness of actions to things are found out, and settled.

Shep. The same instances that prove the insufficiency of the moral sense to fix the distinction between right and wrong, shew as evidently, that reason untaught, and undisciplined, hath been found not altogether equal to the task. The difference between right and wrong, among men, is fixed by their own nature, and the relation they stand in to God and one another, and cannot be changed upon us, but by the alteration of nature, or by the will of him whose pleasure is our law. About this there can be no controversy among reasonable men. But that this difference is not of itself apparent to all men, is evident to common sense and experience, inasmuch as private persons and communities, notwithstanding their moral sense and reason, have not been able so to settle the difference, but that they have run into moral principles and practices, in matters of the greatest moment, directly opposite to one another. If in points relating to life and death, and such as one would be apt to think most obvious, men have held such gross contradictions, it is no wonder to find them differ so widely in civil cases, and matters of equity ; such as that between *Grotius* and *Selden* concerning the liberty of the seas, and a thousand others, needless to mention, which the greatest men have been unable to agree about. How often do we find the best chancery lawyers differing in opinion about one and the same state of a case ! When they deliver their sentiments most peremptorily, they are only called opinions. Nay, the decrees given by the best judges in lower courts of equity are often reversed, upon appeals in higher courts, altho' the evidence produced in both is the same. Those who stand up most strenuously for the universal clearness of the natural light, in dictating the rules of duty to every man, are not ashamed to publish large treatises in defence of it, which must be highly needless and impertinent, if it is universally clear and evident of itself. Every man must see this evidence, if it is so glaring and universal, as well as they ; but they are not
content

content with demonstrating the light of every man's own breast to himself, which, they tell him, is as clear as that of the sun. After assuring him, that nature, on all occasions, evidently points out his duty to him, they inform him what is his duty in numberless cases; and, what is worse, one of them frequently contradicts another, and sometimes himself. They act, in this, exactly as the Quakers do, who maintain, that every man hath the Spirit of God within him, clearly revealing to him all that is necessary for him to know and practise; and yet take upon them to preach to one another. A Deistical book, and a Quaker's sermon, are, in my opinion, two the most impudent absurdities that were ever imposed on mankind. All that which is called Deism and Quakerism, is taught by books and discourses; and yet the Deist says Nature, and the Quaker the Spirit, sufficiently instructs every man. The Papists say, there is a living and infallible guide in religious matters upon earth; but some say it is the pope, others a general council, others the pope and general council together, and others that it is the catholic church at large. The abettors of the law of nature are divided in the same manner about the internal source, or faculty, from whence they suppose it to spring; some deriving it from a sense of moral beauty and deformity, others from reason, and others, again, from the former, under the check and direction of the latter. This is most amazing, that every man should have a clear and powerful light within himself; and yet that he should want to be told whether it arises from his head or heart; that there should be any controversy about the point or source, from which it sends its rays, or that a man should not be able clearly to determine, whether it is a simple sensation, and act of the mind, or a deduction of reason, that dictates his duty to him on all occasions. Either there is no such light, or it is far from being so clear and conspicuous, as its sticklers would have us think; for surely, if it were, we could easily perceive, or at least they could plainly shew us, from what quarter it springs; and if it is kindled up and fed by nature in the breast of every man, they

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need not be at the trouble either to kindle it in the minds of others, or to supply it with oil from their own.

Dech. There is certainly no need of either ; but it is often necessary to remove the dark lantern, which the prejudices of many have placed about it.

Shep. No man, I believe you will grant, is born with prejudices ; and yet every man, till he is instructed by some means or other, is very ignorant of his duty ; and if the natural light of two men, or two nations, is not able to hinder them from being strongly prejudiced in favour of the widest contradictions, in the most important points of morality and duty, if they cannot rightly instruct themselves, or one another, if they can neither prevent or extricate themselves from the strongest attachments to opposite moral principles, I cannot see what great difference there is between having, and wanting, this supposed natural light.

Dech. That is, you can see no difference between having and wanting reason, and the other faculties of the mind.

Shep. Yes, I can perceive a wide difference between these ; but it consists in this, that a mind, void of apprehension, retention, and reason, would be incapable of receiving, retaining, or distinguishing knowledge from ignorance, and right from wrong, were the outward means of knowledge placed never so near it ; whereas a mind endowed with those faculties, altho' by nature it is void of all knowledge, is capable of receiving it, when proposed ; and, if sufficient means of instruction are afforded to it, can distinguish in necessary cases between truth and falsehood. This is a wide difference, Sir ; and it is almost all I am able to discern in the matter before us. There is in this respect a strict analogy between the human mind, and an opaque body ; each in itself is dark, but may be enlightened. Although the Moon, or any other planet, is not in itself a luminous body, yet by its porosity it is fitted to admit some rays from the Sun, and by its density to reflect others ; that is, it is capable of illumination.

Dech. For my part, I believe both men and planets were originally luminous, and have been since incruited ;
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these by an opaque matter, and those by tradition and superstition.

Shep. No, Sir, men were originally enlightened by divine instructions, and afterwards, thro' too high a conceit of their own abilities, fell into religious and moral darkness, their pride and corrupt affections interposing between them and the source of light, and so eclipsing their understandings, as to leave them but a faint glimmering of knowlege. *Horace*, who knew human nature very well, but did not know how mankind were created and instructed by their Maker, and fell in after-times into ignorance and barbarism, speaking of men, before all instruction and improvement, calls them, *mutum & turpe pecus*; which is near the same sentiment with that of *Zophar*, who, after asking *Job*, if he could by searching find out God, says, *Vain man is born like the ass's colt*. The same poet proceeds to tell us the origin of laws :

Jura inventa metu injusti fateri necesse est.

And a little after says,

*Nec natura potest justo discernere iniquum,
Dividit ut bona diversis, fugienda petendis.*

Here, altho' he mistakes the true origin and authority of laws, yet he ventures to tell us from whence the distinction between right and wrong is not derived; that nature is unable to discern between them, as she does between pleasure and pain, and between such things as are naturally useful and agreeable, and the contrary. *St. Paul*, in his epistle to the *Romans*, speaks in much the same manner. *I had not known sin*, says he, *but by the law*. *Cicero*, in the 5th of his *Tusculan* questions, ascribes the original of societies and laws to instruction, and acquired wisdom, which he calls philosophy, and addresses himself to it in these words: *Tu urbes peperisti; tu dissipatos homines in societatem vitæ convocasti; tu eos inter se primo domiciliis, deinde conjugis, tum literarum & vocum communione junxisti; tu inventrix legum; tu magistra mo-*
rum

rum. In the third book of the same work, he ascribes the necessity of learning and instruction expressly to our not being able to discern nature itself. *Si tales nos natura genuisset, ut eam ipsam intueri & perspicere, eaque optima duce cursum vitæ conficere possemus, haud esset sane quod quisquam rationem & doctrinam requireret.* Plato, in his first *Alcibiades*, takes a great deal of pains to shew the difficulty of distinguishing right from wrong; and after endeavouring to prove, that *a man knows not this difference of himself*, he then demonstrates, that *the people are unable to teach it; and even that their leaders are ignorant of it; from whence proceed wars and battles among nations.* But, high as I carry my respect for these great men, I will freely own, that in my opinion they express themselves on this, and some other occasions, more like poets and orators, or rather dogmatists, than men who had studied human nature thoroughly, and were careful to express themselves precisely; for nature and necessity could hardly fail, in length of time, and at a great expence of mischief and confusion, to distinguish good and expedient actions from the contrary, at least in glaring instances. This distinction, however, being faint and dim, and when made, being either not at all, or but weakly, supported by religious sanctions, must very imperfectly answer the great ends of a Divine law.

Temp. Enough I think hath been said on this topic. All parents teach their children moral precepts of some sort or other; which they need not do, if nature did it to their hand. But, no doubt on't, they find by experience, that altho' the world would teach them the difference between right and wrong, yet, unless they were early accustomed to hate the one, and love the other, they would make but very indifferent members either of families, or larger communities.

Dech. And does it not often happen, that they teach them right for wrong, and wrong for right?

Temp. Yes, certainly; but it does not follow, that because some parents have taught their children amiss, therefore others ought not to teach theirs what is good, since children of themselves know nothing. I cannot help saying, that I never in my life heard a more wild
and

and extravagant position advanced, than that parents ought not to instruct their children in the rules of their duty, and the difference between moral good and evil. I every day see numbers of grown people, who, after a great deal of pains taken with them since they came to be men and women, have not yet learned this useful lesson, against which their hearts, if not their understandings, seem to be shut up by rooted prejudices, and bad habits; which perhaps they had never contracted, if the seeds of virtue had been early enough sown in their minds, and the principles of morality had taken the first possession of their reason and affections. People may talk as highly of what nature and reason are able to do, as they please; but if I should see a man so far carried away by a speculative dependence on the mere assistance of nature, as to neglect the moral education of his children, I should make no scruple to pronounce him stark-mad; and I am confident every mortal, except the inhabitants of *Moorfields*, would be of the same opinion with me.

Shep. In the close of what Mr. *Dechaine* said to us, about the natural and universal clearness of moral precepts, he observed, that God never employs two causes to bring about that which may be effected by one; and that therefore, as nature teaches us our duty in all cases, it cannot be supposed, that God should allow us any auxiliary instructor. As this argument was founded on his opinion, that he had clearly proved the natural light to be a sufficient instructor in respect to the difference between right and wrong, and as we have since seen reason enough to think otherwise, there is no occasion for a particular answer to it.

THERE is, however, another point, in regard to the law of nature, of equal importance with the two already considered; and that is, concerning the rewards and punishments annexed to it. Mr. *Dechaine* hath frequently made mention of the pleasure attending a good, and the compunction arising from a bad action, as proceeding intirely from nature, as placing on all occasions a manifest distinction between moral good and evil,

evil, and as giving sufficient weight and cogency to the supposed dictates of nature, which they always accompany. These he sets forth as the rewards and punishments of the natural law. But he is yet to shew us, that these pleasures and pains proceed intirely from nature; that the first always follows such actions as are good in themselves, and the last such only as are evil; and that they are sufficient, without any additional sanctions, to enforce the law to which they are annexed; or, if they are not, that nature gives us full and clear assurances of other rewards and punishments, more efficacious.

Dech. As to the first point, which you oblige me to prove, I own I am utterly unable to bring any arguments in support of it. It is to me, and I thought it had been so to every body, self-evident, that the pleasure we take in doing good, and the pain or remorse we feel upon doing evil, proceed intirely from the natural frame of our own minds, previous to, and independent of, all instruction or habit.

Shep. As this point is self-evident to you, it will indeed be impossible for you to offer any arguments in defence of it. But, as it appears doubtful to me, I can produce some reasons against it, over and above those already offered, which, if they are brought against what you take to be self-evident, you will surely be able easily to refute. Pray are those pleasures and pains, attending good and evil actions, equally strong in all men? Or are they stronger in some, and weaker in others?

Dech. They are stronger in some than in others.

Shep. In what sort of men are they strongest?

Dech. In good men.

Shep. How comes it to pass, that one man is better than another?

Dech. It is partly from nature, and partly from habit; but by no means from instruction.

Shep. Don't you call him the best man, whose life is most conformable to the law of nature?

Dech. I do.

Shep.

Shep. He then, who hath the strongest sense of the rewards and punishments annexed to that law, is I suppose, the most apt to conform himself to it.

Dech. So I think.

Shep. It follows then, that men are made good or evil, in some measure by nature, and in some measure by habit.

Dech. How does that follow?

Shep. You say it is the greater pleasure in doing good, and the greater remorse in doing evil, that make one man better than another; and that it is partly owing to nature, and partly to habit, that men differ in goodness. As therefore some men are very regardless of the law, for want of a due sense of its sanctions, and as that want is confessedly owing to nature as well as habit, it follows, that nature and habit concur to make men evil as well as good.

Dech. Suppose I should grant you this, what will you infer?

Shep. Only that some men are in part rendered wicked by the nature which you say God hath given them. If you maintain the premises, you must allow the consequence.

Dech. I shall never allow it. I revoke what I granted, and do insist, that, as to the motives of duty, all men are by nature put on a level.

Shep. You must then grant, that the wickedness of bad men is intirely owing to habit.

Dech. And what then?

Shep. If the wickedness of bad men is intirely owing to habit, the virtue of good men must be owing to the same cause.

Dech. That is no consequence.

Shep. Do you not say, that nature puts all men on an equality as to the motives of duty, which render men good or evil according to the sense they entertain of them?

Dech. I do.

Shep. The difference then between the good and bad man arises not from nature, but habit; and, consequently, the virtue of the former is owing intirely to an habitual

tual and acquired pleasure in doing good, and remorse in doing evil, as well as the wickedness of the latter to the want of such an habit.

Dech. But the wicked man, Sir, hath by wicked habits suppressed the sanctions of the natural law; whereas the good man hath preserved those ties in their full strength; and to this is owing the whole difference between them.

Shep. What could have induced the good man to follow the dictates of nature, and the wicked man to stifle them within him, since they set out at first on equal motives to virtue?

Dech. The latter, perhaps, had the misfortune to meet with bad education, bad examples, bad company; and these might have suppressed his natural love of virtue, and abhorrence of vice.

Shep. And might not the love of virtue, and aversion to vice, in the former, have been as much owing to an happy opportunity of being well educated, seeing good examples, and conversing with good men? Habit is that propensity, or facility, which proceeds from long use, or frequent repetition; and by its nature is disposed to the service of virtue, as well as vice. But it operates with greatest force, when it builds on a foundation already laid, either by principles heartily embraced, or inclinations strongly turned before-hand to the same point. If all men had by nature strong inclinations to virtue, and aversions to vice, these would at least introduce them into a course of virtue; and that course would, in a little time, add the force of habit to that of nature, and confirm them virtuous; so that few or none would be vicious. But as the greater part of mankind are wicked, tho' some pains, more or less, are taken to make every one good, it seems rather probable, that men by nature love vice, and hate virtue.

Dech. That doctrine, no doubt on't, does great honour to their Maker.

Shep. But since it is a doctrine taught us by universal and undeniable experience, we cannot help subscribing to it, and concluding that human nature is not as God made it. He that says it is, dishonours God; and he

that

that represents it as well-disposed, as pure and perfect, as strongly loving virtue, and abhorring vice, does little honour to his own sense or sincerity. All who have any share in the education of children and young people, think in a different manner. They find an infinite deal of trouble in reducing within tolerable bounds their violent passions, their vicious appetites, their wild desires, their froward and stubborn natures, which began to shew themselves even in their first or second year. Advice, commands, authority, promises, threatenings, rewards, corrections, and a thousand stratagems, are applied with great judgment, vigilance, and assiduity, in the nurture of most children, and yet prove successful in a reasonable degree, only with a few. Is it not very strange, that all the world should take so much pains to teach that which all the world knows, whether it is taught or not?

Dech. But this knowlege does not lie on the surface of every mind. It is a rich ore, and worth the digging for.

Shep. If the labour of digging for it, and, after all, the uncertainty of finding it, should be very great, nay, and if there should be any danger of meeting with poisonous vapours in the way to it, the least encouragement would rather incline me to hope for it from above.

Dech. What, a shower of gold!

Shep. Yes, of metaphorical gold. But, as it is not all gold that glitters in the mental mine, we often see those, who search therein for hidden treasures, mistaking brass for nobler metal.

Dech. Phoo; one cannot throw out a metaphor, but you whip it away, and run such allegorical changes on it! You would have had a rare talent, had you lived in the primitive times, at the mystical interpretation.

Shep. I only complimented you with an improvement on your own allusion. The irregular and untoward dispositions of children are but the natural prognostics of those vices, into which, if good education and discipline do not prevent it, they never fail to ripen with age. That mankind are generally dishonest and wicked, may be proved an hundred different ways. The older any man is, and the more knowlege of mankind his experience and dealings have given him, he is the more diffident and distrustful

distrustful of those he hath any thing to do with ; that is, the more he knows the world, the worse opinion he entertains of it. The excessive care taken in all writings and proceedings at law, to tie up the hands of parties, and prevent unfair advantages from being taken, shew how suspicious men are of one another ; and nobody but a fool will say their suspicions are ill-grounded, or their caution needless. *Horace, Juvenal, Persius, Boileau, Pope, Young, &c.* were keen and severe satirists ; but, in my opinion, you, or any meaner lawyer, scourges the vices and villainy of the world with a much sharper lash in your writings. A deed of sale, a marriage-settlement, or a bill and answer, expose the dishonesty of the world with such truth and seriousness, as infinitely exceed the most pointed wit. The vast length of such writings, the preciseness of every clause, the long strings of synonymous words, &c. are, it seems, all little enough to defend justice against the many and artful attacks to be expected. There is, in short, an universal corruption and depravity among mankind, arise it from whence it will. Now the things of the world must be ill contrived and fitted to us, if they are to blame for this. They continue as they were made, useful, or, at least, harmless. Money, for instance, hurts nobody, is by no means the cause of fraud, rapine, or murder, altho' the love of it be rightly called, the root of all evil. It is, therefore, from within ourselves, from the extreme depravity of our own natures, that all our wickedness proceeds. And that we bring the seeds and principles of this depravity with us into the world, appears more than probable from the indifferent influence, as to virtue or vice, of the things and circumstances we are placed among, and the early disposition to be pleased with what is mischievous and wicked, and to hate what is reasonable and good, which shews itself in children, as soon as their minds can contrive, their hands act, or their tongues speak ; and which, as I have already observed, it costs those who have the care of their education, an infinite deal of pains to break them of, in any tolerable degree, in order to keep them within reasonable bounds. But, if a strong approbation and pleasure were,

were, by our natural frame, inseparably attached to that which is morally good, and a sufficient abhorrence and pain necessarily connected with that which is immoral, they could never change sides as they often do, and make a good action the object of aversion, and an ill one extremely pleasing.

Decb. Altho' the virtuous propensities of nature are very strong, yet they may be overcome by violent passions, and bad habits; in which case a different kind of pleasure and pain from those we have been speaking of (which are purely conscientious, and cannot be perverted), being excited in the mind, and preposterously annexed, the latter to good, and the former to bad actions, are mistaken by you for natural and conscientious sensations.

Shep. A mere habit of acting proceeds, as hath been observed, from the frequent repetition of the same action. But in the case of actions, which at first we are at liberty to do, or let alone, there must be somewhat previous to the first action of the kind, that induces us to do, and repeat it. Every habit of acting hath for its source some outward compulsion, or some inward inclination or aversion. Such actions as are purely moral, are also free, and compelled by no outward embargo. An habit of doing ill must therefore arise within, from some previous disposition to evil. You may call this disposition a passion, if you please; but if our passions are natural to us, then the evil disposition is natural; and it matters not in the least, whether you seat the natural love of evil in this, or any other, part of our nature. Much the same may be said of our aversion to good actions. It cannot become habitual, without a long abstinence from such actions, and a frequent repetition of the contrary. But what was it induced us to abstain so long from doing good, that it became an habitual object of our aversion? Could it be any thing else than a previous aversion to it, that withheld us from it? And could an aversion, previous to all action and habit, proceed from any thing but nature? You say, however, that this distaste to good actions, and love of bad ones, is not at all of the same kind with those conscientious pleasures and pains which you assign to the law of nature, as its sanctions. Be it so;

so ; yet as they are found to spring from nature, in its present state of degeneracy, they have as good a right to plead her authority, so far as it will go (which, upon your hypothesis of following nature, is to the utmost lengths) as any other natural dispositions of the mind. However, Sir, we have given instances enough of whole nations, that have placed the sanctions as well as dictates of conscience on opposite sides. Men are often reproached by their own consciences for doing that, which in itself is good, and comforted from the same quarter for doing evil. There is such a thing as an erroneous conscience ; and our Libertines and Deists have rendered its dictates obligatory and sacred by the doctrine of sincerity, which, contrary to all their notions about the eternity and indispensability of the natural law, hath fairly confounded or nullified all its precepts, and made the opposite natures of right and wrong interchangeable. If a man, say they, sincerely believes in an opinion, and does an action, sincerely looking upon it to be right, altho' that opinion should be erroneous, and that action immoral, yet he is neither to be condemned of heterodoxy nor immorality ; but hath all the merit of thinking rightly, and doing good. This they lay down as a fundamental, indeed as the only fundamental and necessary maxim, without laying much stress on the indispensable duty of using all the means in his power to find out whether his opinions are true, or his actions right. If then the consciences of men are so liable to be led, by the prevailing opinions of the countries they inhabit, into opposite sentiments about moral duties ; if they are so very pliant, and capable of so transposing their approbation and remorse, as to annex the one to a laudable, and the other to a culpable action ; and this not in a few persons, but in whole nations, extremely populous and extended ; either nature adds no conscious pleasures to virtuous actions, nor compunction to evil ones, or else she does it so faintly as hardly to answer any end ; which is nearly the same, to all intents and purposes, as not doing it at all.

Dech. You argue with me, as if I looked on reason to be perfectly useless to the purposes of morality, and
unable

unable to distinguish right from wrong actions, or to direct the moral sense on which side to administer its rewards, and inflict its punishments. Were the heart left wholly to itself, it might indeed be biased, and its sense of good and evil transposed or perverted. But reason, judging of the relations between actions and things, and the fitness of both, is placed in a superior station to that of sentiment, in order that, as often as it sees that lower faculty inclinable, thro' passion, prejudice, or temptation, to misplace its rewards and punishments, it may keep the moral sense close to the real fitness of things. Now, unless you will prove, that the very faculty of reason is acquired, you will be forced to own, that nature hath given us an ability to fix her rewards to good actions, and her punishments to bad ones.

Shep. Reason sometimes admits of first principles that are false, and sometimes deduces wrong consequences from right principles. When she is not only supplied with imperfect or erroneous notices, but also undisciplined to a right exercise of her natural strength, which is often the case, it is no wonder if she suffers herself to be carried away by prejudices, and the lower faculties or propensities of the mind to be perverted or misled. Lord *Shaftesbury* himself is of the same opinion. *Few men, says he, are thinkers, and of those that are, some are vastly less able to manage their thoughts than others (a).* Although, in the original frame of human nature, reason was the governing power or faculty in the mind, and ought to be so still; yet, like a weak Prince, she is in most men dethroned by her usurping subjects, and that on account of her inability to enforce her dictates, inso-much that, for once she issues any orders of her own, she is an hundred times either coaxed or compelled to lend her name and authority, as poor *Henry* the Third did, while in the hands of *Montfort* and the *Barons*, to the grossest extravagancies, and the vilest crimes; and not only that, but to exert all the little ability that is left her, to find out ways and means to execute, and false arguments to palliate, the excesses committed by the under-faculties, the instincts, the sentiments, the passions and appetites,

(a) *Miscell.* 5. Chap. iii.

appetites, to which she is enslaved. She hath not authority enough to prevail with the man of sense, who alone retains any respect for her, to abstain from the high-seasoned, but unwholesome, morsel; nor from the third bottle, when he hath already drank one too much: yet, like an *Irish* proprietor, she is full of her former grandeur, and, in proportion as she is sunk from her real station and prerogative, affects to talk high of her rights and powers, as if they were much greater, and more extensive, than, in truth, they ever were. She is ever giving proofs of her inability to determine points of the greatest plainness, and yet presuming to examine and pronounce most peremptorily about mysteries, and other matters, which, in her highest power and perfection, she was utterly unable to form any competent judgment of. What is most absurd, now that she is fallen extremely low, both in dignity and ability, she claims kindred with God, and says, it is she that dictates to him all the wisdom of his actions. To this presumption she is prompted by those very imaginations and passions, to which she owes her fall from her real dignity and station; for of herself, weak as she is grown, she could never have been capable of so much folly and vanity.

Dech. I find you are no friend to reason, by your reflections; nor she to you, by your arguments.

Shep. And I find she is not to be humbled, at least in you, to a just sense of her own infirmity, which, as I take it, is the first necessary step to the recovery of her original dominion. Were she able rightly to direct the conscience, and to affix its approbation to actions really good in themselves, and its dislike, even to the worst of crimes, she had never suffered, as I have already but too often observed, whole nations to offer human sacrifices to their gods, to kill and eat their own parents, and the very wisest and politest of them to destroy their own children, and feast their eyes, at their public diversions, with the blood and slaughter of their fellow-creatures. If she be not capable of approving the most horrible enormities, why does she, in this late age of the world, when she hath had time enough, one would think, to open her eyes, and come to a right sense of religion and morality,

morality, suffer the *Americans* and *Africans* to worship the devil, and even Christians, contrary to the express and repeated dictates of their religion, to hate, and persecute, and burn one another for God's sake?

Dech. Some people, as *Tindal* hath observed, endeavour to reason themselves and others out of their reason. It must be owned, you don't deal so unfairly by her. You don't turn her own weapons against herself, nor absurdly set herself up to persuade people, with her own mouth, not to mind one word she says. You only heap up reflections of your own against her, and wisely endeavour to make us despise reason, in order to bring us over to Christianity.

Shep. There is this difference, Sir, between your reason and mine, that yours is self-taught and infallible, whereas mine is forced to seek for her materials from other faculties of the mind, to take some pains in acquiring the art and habit of reasoning rightly, and, when all is done, is but too apt to err. These defects, which my reason is modest enough to confess in herself, she also perceives in all other men, not excepting the very Deists. Your reason claims privileges, and pretends to powers, under the present degeneracy of human nature, which mine could never have presumed to ascribe to herself in a state of the highest perfection she is capable of.

Dech. Yet, deficient as reason is, or may be, we have nothing else to examine the truth or falshood of whatsoever is proposed to us, or to determine this or any other controversy with, but reason; and if that is so defective as you would represent it, all we are doing at present is but groping in the dark, all the researches of mankind after truth are vain and fruitless, and our Maker hath so constituted our nature, that error is unavoidable.

Shep. I insist, again, the nature of man is not as God made it; the human understanding, as it came from the hands of its Creator, was equal to the station or office assigned it: yet, altho' it is exceedingly debilitated by its fall, it still retains a considerable degree of vigour: it is dim-sighted, indeed, but not blind; it is like an eye that cannot distinguish objects clearly without the assistance of glasses. Reason could not have come so weak,

nor the passions so strong, from the appointment of infinite wisdom, goodness, and power. You say, reason is set over the lower faculties and propensities of the mind, to regulate the operations of the first, and check the motions of the last. Our appetites and passions bid us enjoy, without confining us to a due distinction of objects, or to safe and moderate bounds. Our reason often prescribes neither distinction nor bounds, and, when she does, for the most part executes her office so weakly, that her prescriptions are afterwards found by herself to have been wrong; and, besides, are little regarded. Did God originally put this internal war, between reason and appetite, into our nature? Did he establish opposition and contradiction in the minds of his rational creatures? Or did he give the government to reason, and yet render her too weak to hold the reins?

Dech. If the mind is at present so unhappily constituted; if, instead of an orderly government, there is nothing but anarchy within us; what then is to be done?

Shep. Reason is to cast her eyes upon some ally, powerful enough to support her against her rebellious subjects; she must call in the fear of God to awe them, and the love of God to attach them to somewhat more worthy and attractive, than their present destructive ends and objects: and as for herself, she is to learn from him the true remedy for her own defects, and the right method of preserving her own dignity and power.

Temp. This, I think, gives us the true picture of ourselves, and the true use of religion.

Dech. You say, Mr. *Shepherd*, that reason is to call on God. Do you not, in this, confess that reason knows there is a God?

Shep. Yes, Sir; reason knows there is a God; for he hath often told her so: he hath often revealed himself in person to her, and his works are sufficient to convince those, whom his revelations have been only related to, that those revelations are true.

Temp. I think it is very plain, that neither reason nor sentiment can sufficiently fix the pleasures, whether of conscience, sense, appetite, or passion, to that which is
morally

morally good, nor their pains and averſions to that which is morally evil, without better lights, and greater ſtrength, than are to be found in the mere nature of man.

Shep. And if that is the caſe, we need not, by any other argument, prove the inſufficiency of ſuch rewards and puniſhments as are vague and undetermined, encouraging, indifcriminately, either virtue or vice, to ſupport and enforce any law.

HOWever, altho' we ſhould even grant, that good actions are always attended with complacency of mind; and evil ones with proportionable remorse; it ſtill remains to inquire, whether this complacency and remorse are, for weight and degree, ſufficient by themſelves to deter mankind, in their preſent proneneſs to vice, from bad actions, and to incite them, under their preſent indifference to virtue, to good and regular lives. Is there nothing more required to enforce the Divine law, on the obſervance of which ſuch an infinite deal depends, upon the minds of a corrupt and degenerate race of creatures? We may ſafely answer, I think, that they are wholly inſufficient.

Dech. If you had left it to me to answer your queſtion, which, perhaps, you ought to have done, I ſhould have answered it in quite another manner. The moral ſenſe rewards our virtues with very agreeable, and puniſhes our vices with very painful, reflections. Theſe reflections are further authorized and heightened by the faculty of reaſon; but if both ſeem too feeble ſanctions, experience cannot fail to make up what is wanting. A regular and virtuous courſe of life is always attended, not only with inward complacency and peace of mind, but alſo with health and proſperity; whereas the contrary courſe produces nothing but remorse, ſickneſs, poverty, untimely death, &c.

Shep. No doubt of it, when either happens, it is a great encouragement to virtue; and that ſo it generally falls out, I ſhall by no means go about to deny: but when it happens otherwiſe, when men ſuffer for virtue, or are enriched and aggrandized for their vices, then the experience of mere temporal events places your re-

wards and punishments on wrong sides, so that vice must be embraced, and virtue rejected, in obedience to this best sanction of the natural law. Now this is too frequent a case not to need a great and effectual remedy; and would be infinitely more frequent than it is, did not men generally stand in awe of much greater sanctions, to be affixed hereafter, by an unerring judgment, to their good or evil actions. Pray, Sir, do you look upon the punishments, annexed to the natural law, to be proportionable to the violations of that law?

Dech. Yes, surely; for a disproportion herein would argue a want of wisdom, power, or justice, in God; who, having made his law a part of our nature, hath, with the nicest regard to justice, annexed higher horrors, and deeper remorse, to the committal of greater crimes, than to transgressions of a less heinous nature.

Shep. This rule does by no means hold in respect to the generality of mankind; for the old habitual sinner, and most men are so in regard to one vice or other, feels less remorse after the committal of the most enormous crimes, than the raw unpractised sinner does after transgressions of a much more venial nature; so that the punishment annexed to the natural law is far from bearing a just proportion to the violation of it, the punishment growing still less, as the crime, to which it is applied, grows greater.

Dech. But why do you ascribe this to nature, when you yourself say it is the effect of habit?

Shep. Because nature, left to itself, runs almost unavoidably into habits of wickedness; and, as fast as it does, rids itself of its remorse, which ought still to be growing stronger and keener, as habit tempts it to greater enormities. From hence it appears, that some greater punishment, nor diminishable by the decay of the moral sense, nor pointed out by the mere light of nature, ought to be expected, in order to prevent our falling into the grossest crimes, or to make examples of us, if we do.

Dich. Perhaps, judging of other men by yourself, you are induced to believe they require stronger sanctions to preserve them virtuous, than are consistent with moral freedom. Man, considered as a moral agent, ought to be

be free: and therefore the rewards and punishments, annexed to any law prescribed him, ought not to be so great as to take away his freedom. Again, if he be free, he may do wrong; to deter him from which, the rewards of virtue, and the punishments of vice, ought to be present and certain; because, if they are otherwise, he may happen to be little affected by distant and doubtful considerations. Now these rewards and punishments we assign to the law of nature, exactly tally with this rule: they are moderate, and do not compel; they are immediate, and cannot be doubted of, or disbelieved.

Shep. The rewards and punishments of the Christian law are future, and matter of faith, and therefore do not compel; they are also of infinite weight, and therefore, when firmly believed in, give force and dignity to the law of God, sufficient to render it respected by men, bad as they are; and, of consequence, bear some proportion to the end or purpose of the law, great and important as it is. Pray, Mr. *Dechaine*, hath God a kingdom?

Dech. Yes.

Shep. Is it of any considerable extent?

Dech. It is universal.

Shep. What proportion does the happiness of any particular kingdom, or society, here on earth, bear to the happiness of God's universal kingdom?

Dech. Scarcely any; such, only, as one small part bears to a boundless whole.

Shep. Are the legislators of any earthly society in the right on't to back their laws with human rewards and punishments?

Dech. No doubt of it, they are.

Shep. Are the laws of *England*, for instance, reasonable and just in punishing certain heinous crimes, such as murder, with death?

Dech. Very just.

Shep. You surprise me. The happiness of this, or any other nation on earth, in your opinion, bears a most minute proportion to that of God's universal kingdom; and yet you insist, that the natural sanctions are sufficient barriers to the happiness of the universe; but add to them others of infinitely greater force and importance, in or-

der to support the laws of a few men, united together in one little society, merely for temporal conveniency. This, I think, seems very preposterous. If the laws of nature were sufficiently clear, those of society need never, in cases purely moral, tell us our duty; and if they were sufficiently enforced, society would have no occasion to institute other enforcements of much greater cogency, in order to their being observed. Nay, if the law of nature were, in the several respects of clearness, authority, and obligation, perfect and sufficient, society itself would be altogether needless. Men would observe justice, and practice beneficence towards one another, without adventitious obligations. A lover of liberty would not care to enter into society to become subject to magistrates, to support expensive contributions, to tie himself up to burdensome forms, and stoop to the will of others, if he found he could live independent, and converse and traffick safely with mankind, in a state of nature. The arguments, drawn from the supposed sufficiency of reason and nature, to invalidate the necessity of revelation, prove with the same force, be it greater or less, that society is unnecessary. If the laws of nature be able to effect their own end, and that end is moral instruction and obligation; then, indeed, there can be no sort of occasion for other laws, neither divine, nor human: however, it will be worth while to consider, whether the evil dispositions and vices of men do not force them into society; and, again, whether civil society, considered in itself, is at all able to remedy the evils they seek to shelter themselves from. As to the laws of nature, as they are called, if they could keep men honest and good in society, there had been no need of associating, because they could have done the same without it, the society adding nothing to moral knowledge or obligation, which are by nature perfectly clear and obligatory without it.

Dech. Make what you will of it, the law of nature is that which obliges us to stand to our compacts, both on entering into society, and afterwards.

Sh. p. But I am sure reason as strongly tells us it is rank folly to enter into social compacts, which may be
extremely

extremely troublesome, at least if we can do as well without them. Were all men naturally just, humble, and beneficent, they might live very comfortably near each other, converse agreeably, and trade securely, without taking any sureties from one another for good behaviour, without calling in laws and magistrates to guarantee peace and justice on all occasions. We see that those few men who believe one another to be strictly honest, to avoid the unhandsome appearance of suspicion, and the plague and expence of troublesome forms, deal together in this very manner, and, instead of drawing bonds with extreme exactness, and calling in witnesses, often make a secret of what they lend or deposit: and thus would all men deal by all men, were it not too plain, that very few are to be trusted.

Dech. And hath Christianity remedied the evil? Are bonds and witnesses no longer necessary?

Shep. No longer, where-ever Christianity hath really taken place; and where it hath taken only place in part, it alone gives all the strength and weight they have to bonds, witnesses, and other social instruments. It is an oath, Sir, remember, it is an oath, that makes the evidence, and proves the bond. Your friend *Hobbes*, in the 26th chapter of his *Leviathan*, says, that *equity, gratitude, and other virtues, commonly called laws, are no laws, but qualities that dispose men to peace, till they are enjoined by a settled commonwealth; and that then they become laws.* And so far he is certainly in the right, that they cannot be laws, till some authority appears, to impose them as such, which if it be divine, they become the laws of God; if human, they become the laws of man, or society. It is from this supposition that man is, by nature, under insufficient laws and ties, he deduces the necessity of compact and society; but, when he represents mankind as passing from a state of nature into a society of their own contrivance, he forgets that, in his fourth chapter, he had ascribed the origin of language to God, and said expressly, that *God taught Adam this useful invention.* Here he allows mankind to have sprung from a common parent, which takes away the possibility of a state of nature; and that God instructed

and conversed with *Adam*, which makes it impossible for mankind to have been without laws before they entered into society. For if *Adam* conversed with God, he must have known him, and that knowledge must have produced obedience and duty to him. Besides, when *Adam* was once instructed in the use of language, we cannot suppose the conversation between his Maker and him to turn on any thing so necessary as the laws by which he and his posterity were to regulate their behaviour to the Supreme Governor, and one another. Our present Deists have found out laws of nature so excellent and perfect, that I cannot see what should induce them to allow of society at all. I really believe, when they come to consider this matter more carefully, and to reflect a little farther, not only on the absolute sufficiency of their own principles, but, also, on what they are so apt to complain of, the heavy burdens laid on them by taxes, the infinite grievances arising from law-suits and partial sentences, the scandalous jobbing of power, and purloining of public money, the cruelty and oppression exercised by those who are entrusted with the power of the state over such as are obliged to obey, the art and craft of politicians, who do but impose on the simplicity of the people, and that they may run snips with the priests in fleecing and tyrannizing over mankind, establish one mode or other of revealed religion in every country upon the face of the earth; when they once come seriously to consider this, and, at the same time, the perfect security, the delightful liberty, which the laws of nature are able to give them in a state of nature; they must, of course, renounce their compact with society; which they may do with the better grace, since it is impossible for the society to prove any such compact against them. I think I see them hastening apace towards this free and natural way of life. They have already laid down the principles, which prove the easy practicability of the thing, and think and act, pursuant to them, for themselves, as far as the laws of society, by which they are yet hampered, will permit: and this is very far; for the laws of the land reach only to outward actions, and, even in respect to them, can be easily evaded by cunning and money,

money, or kept at respectful distance by interest and power. If a law should come forth, although from a known authority, and conceived in the plainest terms, forbidding murder under the penalty of all that severity which men are by nature disposed to exercise upon themselves, after doing such an action; and injoining beneficence by a promise of all those rewards which men, after doing good offices, are enabled by nature to confer on themselves; it would be looked on as a burlesque upon laws. No, Mr. *Dechaine*; the man who is persecuted for his virtue during the greater part of his life, and at length dies in its service, is utterly unable to reward himself; and he who prospers and triumphs in vice, who wallows in the gratification of all his senses and passions, at the expence of other peoples ease and prosperity, perhaps of their lives, will be very unwilling to punish himself: and altho' education and religion may have given him a sort of conscience, which, on some occasions, is apt to reprove his crimes; yet habit can conquer the effects of the first; and false reasonings, helped out by the ill example of others, and ridicule, can stifle the latter. Gay company, music, and wine, are excellent opiates against the first attacks of conscience, immediately after the committal of a crime; and remedies of less power will do the business, when time begins once to wear away the sense of guilt; and as every former crime is a sort of precedent for others of the same kind, a man, long accustomed to bad actions, commits them without any sense of guilt or remorse. Thus, Sir, sin, instead of punishing itself with due justice and severity, comes at length to screen, nay, even to reward itself.

Temp. I cannot see the necessity of taking up so much time to prove a point so extremely plain, and agreed upon by all mankind, excepting a few speculative people; as appears by all the laws and constitutions politic in the world.

CAN you not shew us, Mr. *Dechaine*, that nature gives us assurances of rewards and punishments in a future state, more adequate than these you have mentioned, to the ends of a Divine law?

Shep. How can he do that, when it is his principle, that God never employs two causes, or means, for one purpose ; and that the rewards and punishments, already mentioned by him, are sufficient to enforce the law of God ?

Dech. The Deists do by no means deny the rewards and punishments of another life.

Shep. They do as much in representing those of the present as sufficient. In all they have published upon this head, they are so full of doubtful and evasive expressions, that it is plain they labour to avoid an explanation, and to conceal something that would give the world an ill opinion of them, were it laid open. They have actually objected to the punishments and rewards of another life, as set forth by the Christian religion ; they have trumped up others, and recommended them as adequate and sufficient. This latter is the point they labour with the greatest assiduity : future rewards and punishments are directly contrary to their whole scheme ; first, as we can have no assurance of them, but by revelation ; secondly, as their efficacy in this life, and their influence upon the actions of men, depend on faith, which they despise ; thirdly, as they compel obedience, according to them, and render virtue mercenary ; lastly, and especially, as they utterly destroy that liberty of thinking and acting for themselves, which they so ardently wish and labour for. If they had the rational conviction, and real good of mankind, at heart, or were they, in themselves, honest and upright men, they would speak out on this important topic, and not disingenuously endeavour, by slight and artful expressions, capable of double meanings, to bear their unwary readers in hand, and prevent their taking the alarm, till they have stolen into their minds such principles, as, if once admitted and rooted there, must necessarily lead them, at last, to a disbelief of all futurity. In this they act like the apostles of the great deceiver, and not like those of our Saviour, who, in imitation of their blessed Master, delivered, with the greatest plainness and fidelity, what they had received from God, tho' utterly repugnant to the riveted prejudices, and corrupt affections, of a wicked world ; and
died

died for the glorious cause in the most shocking tortures, but with the firmest assurance and hope of rising again, and triumphing in it before the faces of angels and men. There is nothing more true, than that the dreadful judgment threatened to sinful men at the great day of trial, is that very article of our religion, which hath made so many infidels, so many wretched deceivers of themselves and others. Could these unhappy men follow their brutal pleasures, and unlawful schemes, in this world, and hope on Christian principles to escape the judgments of God in the next, we should have no books published, nor jests crack'd over a bottle by way of arguments, nor florid declamations delivered in coffee-houses, against the Christian religion. Our own religion, were it such as this, would be agreeable enough; and so many among us would not cast a wistful eye towards Mahometism on account of the black-ey'd girls, and other sensualities, promised in Paradise to the faithful Musselmans by their artful prophet. *Tindal*, who, tho' he wrote like a Deist, lived and died like an Atheist, hath by his scheme given us all our punishments and rewards in this world, and laboured to prove them sufficient. It is true, he hath here and there dropped a saving expression concerning the happiness and misery to come, in order to prevent the offence, which doing otherwise might have given, and by that means keep his book open to a class of men, who desire extremely to be deceived, yet are so delicate, that if they saw at first he was endeavouring to lead them into Atheism in effect, they would wholly lay him aside. On the other hand, he takes much pains to inculcate such principles, as, if true, would intirely render needless all accounts to be given in another life, of what is done here. He says expressly, *That God never punishes for the breach of his laws, but in order to the good even of the guilty.* If this be admitted, we can never suppose the greatest delinquent will be eternally punished; and if no acts of sin can deserve eternal punishment, no acts of virtue, for a much stronger reason, can deserve an eternal reward, especially if what he and you all maintain be true, that virtue sufficiently rewards, and vice sufficiently punishes, itself in this life. In the third chapter of *Christianity*

as old as the creation, he speaks of future happiness and misery in such a manner, that an unwary reader would be apt to think him of the same opinion with Christians in respect to those matters. But, upon considering his meaning attentively, it appears to be of quite another nature. He says, God hath made our happiness and misery the necessary and inseparable consequence of our actions; that there are some actions naturally beneficial to us, and others hurtful; that there is no virtue, but what hath some good annexed to it; and no vice, but what necessarily carries with it some evil; that if our rational nature is to be the same in the next life, as it is in this, our actions must produce effects of the same nature, and that in a much higher degree, because in that state the pleasure attending our good actions, being no-way impeded by diseases and disasters, as it is here, will be intire; and the grief and misery annexed to our evil actions, being diverted by no sensual things, will be insupportable. By this scheme, which gives us our rewards and punishments here, for what we do here; and our rewards and punishments hereafter, for what we shall do hereafter; he hath provided a sort of salvo for himself in speaking of a future state, and future rewards and punishments; but he hath so separated this life from the next, that nothing done in this is to be rewarded or punished in that; the morality of the two worlds is kept distinct, and obedience to the Divine law provided for by temporal rewards and punishments only, without leaning in the least on any hopes or fears of what may befall us hereafter. Will you be so good, Sir, as to tell us what you think of this new scheme?

Dech. I must own, I think it highly agreeable to reason to suppose, that God should have so constituted the morality of this world, as to make it independent of the next.

Shep. And I, on the other hand, think it much more reasonable, that man should have an intire prospect of his whole being and duration, that he may so regulate his actions and habits for the present, as to make them correspond with the great things that lie before him. But since, as we have already seen, the main of our pleasures and enjoyments here does not always lie on the side of

of virtue, nor the main of our temporal sufferings, on the side of vice; and since, if they did, we have proved them insufficient to make and preserve us virtuous; it is absolutely necessary, that greater rewards and punishments should be provided in another life, and that they should be clearly notified to us in this. It is no disparagement to the certainty and efficacy of such future sanctions, that they are founded on faith, as you hinted a little while ago, since that faith is built on reasons so clear, and assurances so strong, that no man can be so certain of any rewards or punishments enacted by human authority, as he is, or may be, of those annexed to the Divine law. It is no disparagement to human laws, that the good arising from the observation, and the evil attending the transgression of them, are always future in respect to our actions; nor should it be any to the laws of God, that their sanctions are set at a little greater distance, since there is so much stronger reason to expect them, than the rewards and punishments of men, which accidents, interest, death, foreign or civil wars, &c. may so easily prevent. *Shaftesbury*, speaking of affections in his inquiry concerning virtue, pretty plainly maintains, *That the natural affections produce us a full reward in this life; that as natural affection is perfect or imperfect, so must be the content or happiness arising from it; that perfect natural affection is in the present frame of our minds, and state of things, attended with perfect happiness; and imperfect natural affection with imperfect, but proportionable happiness; and that to have the natural affections, is to have the chief means and power of self-enjoyment.* In the same inquiry he asserts, *That remorse, or conscious punishment, which he makes proportionable to crimes, or degrees of unnatural affection, attends an immoral action, tho' it were supposed, that the person, who did it, believed in no God.* He says further, *Thus we have demonstrated, that as on one side to have the natural and good affections, is to have the chief means and power of self-enjoyment; so, on the other side, to want them, is certain misery and ill. Here virtue is its own complete rewarder, and vice its own full punisher, in this life.* Again, he says, after a good deal more to the same effect, *That the greatest of miseries*
accor-

accompanies that state, which is consequent to the loss of natural affection; and that to have those horrid, monstrous, and unnatural affections, inhumanity, petulancy, barbarity, malignity, envy, moroseness, misanthropy, inhospitality, superstition, and unnatural lust, is to be miserable in the highest degree. He that hath the natural affections, is in this life happy in the highest degree; and he who hath the unnatural, is here most intensely miserable. If this be really the case, there can be no sort of reason to hope for or fear any other rewards or punishments in a life to come. Now all this he sets forth as the mere result of things, as they are at present naturally constituted, without any reference, farther than what is necessary for an artful salvo, to the approbation or displeasure of God, apprehended here or hereafter. In the conclusion of this inquiry he sums up the whole, and asserts the same things over again; and in the two last lines he sums up the substance of this summary, and says, *Virtue is the good, and vice the ill, of every one; not the cause of the good, or ill, but the very good or ill itself.* If the doctrine laid down in this treatise be true, all our rewards and punishments are confined to this life; and the gospel, that brought life and immortality to light, hath done a vain thing. Having already seen, that this doctrine is false, let it suffice to observe, that not only *Tindal* and *Shaftesbury*, but likewise all the other Deists, speak in the very same strain, and lay down this as the grand fundamental doctrine of Deism, by which it appears, that Deism is nothing else in effect, but downright practical Atheism. It is needless to take notice here, that, as *Shaftesbury* is the most affected and conceited of all writers, so, in this treatise particularly, he labours to strike out, and establish, a new system of morality, unhappily founded on a notorious falshood; for good men are often miserable in this world, and bad men triumphant; and on a silly hypothetical distinction between natural and unnatural affections, which hath no foundation in the nature of man, what he calls unnatural affections being only the excess, or depravity, or misapplication, of the natural. But he, who cannot fend out an old subject in a new cloathing, so as that the very subject itself may appear
fresh

fresh and spruce, is but a poor polemical tireman, and can neither hope for applause nor profelytes. To set a man's picture and name at the beginning of a book, with nothing new, surprising, or fine in it, excepting the mere picture, and titles, would be highly ridiculous.

Dech. Altho' the Deists have all imaginable respect for the incomparable performances of those great men, Lord *Shaftesbury*, and Dr. *Tindal*, yet they do not think themselves obliged to subscribe to their opinions, unless when they are recommended by reason. It cannot be proved expressly, nor, for aught I could ever see, by fair consequence, from any performances of theirs, that they disbelieved the rewards and punishments of another life; which as the light of nature is sufficiently qualified to discover, we have all the right in the world to make them a part of the law of nature.

Shep. Yes; but then the law of nature won't be worth contending for. If we may be punished in another world for what we do here, who knows whether it will not be eternally? And if that should be the case, it will be every whit as shocking to foresee it by the light of nature, as by that of revelation. The immortality of the soul, which it is necessary we should firmly believe, before we can have any notion of future rewards and punishments, can hardly (*St. Evremont*, and most other judicious persons, are positive in it) be discovered by the mere light of nature.

Dech. And yet Christians, as well as others, draw strong arguments from the Divine and human nature, independent of all revelation, for the immortality of the soul; and all nations have believed in it; which could scarcely have happened, had it not been an opinion extremely consentaneous to reason.

Shep. It is certain, nothing can be more agreeable to reason, once the doctrine is proposed, and thoroughly canvassed. But it is as certain on the other hand, that there is no one probable opinion in the world, which mankind, left intirely to themselves, would have been more unlikely to have started. Who, if he were not assured of it by good authority, would ever take it into
his

his head to imagine, that man, who dies, rots, and vanishes for ever, like all other animals, should, notwithstanding, still exist? Or, after his body had been crumbled into the common mass of matter, and undergone unnumbered changes and dissipations, that it should be raised again, and he should revive into a new life of thought and action? It is well if this, when proposed, can be thought possible, not to say probable, and easy to be believed. But to strike out the thought itself, is somewhat, I am afraid, too high and difficult for the capacity of man. Besides, it is worth observing, that when any such opinion as this is broached, the arguments that support it, always precede and point out the way to it. Now the only natural argument of any weight for the immortality of the soul, takes its rise from this observation, that justice is not done to the good, nor executed upon the bad man, in this life; and that as the Governor of the world is just, man must live hereafter to be judged. But as this only argument, that can be drawn from mere reason, in order either to lead us to a discovery of our own immortality, or to support the opinion of it, when once started, is founded intirely on the knowlege of God, and his attributes; and as we have already seen, that such knowlege is almost unattainable by the present light of nature; the argument itself, which before the fall could not possibly have been thought of, is since that fall clogged with all the difficulties mere reason labours under, in finding out a right idea of God. Yet this argument, far as you are from being able to find it out of yourself, must be utterly inconclusive, when discovered, to you, and all other Deists.

Dech. How so?

Shep. Because you insist, that virtue fully rewards, and vice fully punishes, itself in this world. Now, if thus it is, the justice of God can be no-way concerned to punish or reward hereafter; since every good action is sufficiently rewarded, and every bad one adequately punished, in the doing. As to what you insinuate, that if the immortality of the soul were not evident to reason and nature, it could not have been believed in by all nations,

nations, it seems to me of very little weight; because such an opinion, once revealed and received, could scarcely have been forgot, or laid aside. No parent would omit to tell his children a thing of such infinite importance to them; or if he did, they would hear it every day from all persons, whom they might have occasion to converse or deal with. However, if, in order to prove the doctrine of immortality natural, it is necessary to prove it to have been universally held, this sort of proof will come to nothing, if we may believe antiquity; for *Herodotus* informs us, that of all the *Scythian* nations there was but one (if I remember, it was that of the *Getæ*, who were taught by their countryman *Zamolxis*, the disciple of *Pythagoras*) that believed the immortality of the soul; on which account, says the historian, they were called by the other nations of *Scythia*, the immortals, probably by way of derision. The *Sadducees* among the *Jews*, and not only the *Epicureans*, but several other sects of philosophers among the *Greeks* and *Romans*, were firmly persuaded, there is no life after this: nay, and *Socrates*, in the *Phædon* of *Plato*, says, *Most men were of opinion, that the soul, upon its separation from the body, is dissipated, and reduced to nothing.* And *Tully* in his first *Tusc. Quest.* says, *Pherecydes Syrus, præceptor to Pythagoras, was the first person, known to the learned world, who taught the immortality of the soul;* which upon your own principle needed never to have been done, had that doctrine been either self-evident, or easily found out and proved by the mere light of nature. The other arguments brought by *Plato* and *Cicero* for the immortality of the soul, beside that already mentioned, are very inconclusive. They themselves thought so. The latter speaks doubtfully of the doctrine itself, and in his treatise of old age makes the elder *Cato* talk of it, as an opinion he was fond of, rather than as a doctrine he could demonstrate; and comfort himself, after enumerating all the arguments he could think of for it, with this reflection upon the whole, that if the soul dies with the body, the petty philosophers, who opposed themselves to the opinion of the soul's immortality, ceasing to be, as well as he, would not laugh at his credulity.

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The former, in his *Phædon*, makes *Socrates* speak with some doubt concerning his own arguments, and introduces *Simmius* saying to *Socrates*, after having listened to his principal reasonings, *We ought to lay hold of the strongest arguments for this doctrine, that either we ourselves, or others can suggest to us. If both ways prove ineffectual, we must, however, put up with the best proofs we can get, till some promise, or revelation, shall clear up the point to us.*

Dech. Is it not evident to reason, that a simple and uncompounded essence cannot be dissolved?

Shep. Such an essence cannot perish by dissolution of parts, because it hath no parts; but is it therefore impossible, that it should cease to be, in some other way, peculiar to the nature of a spirit?

Dech. You mean, I suppose, in a way analogous to dissolution.

Shep. You may make a jest of analogy, if you please; but it is impossible to conceive the annihilation of spirit, or even of matter itself, by any other means, than by its analogy to dissolution; and yet this does not hinder it from being most certain, that all created spirits and matter, as they had a beginning, so may have an end, if their Maker shall think fit; altho' it is utterly impossible for us, immediately or properly, to conceive how any thing either begins or ceases to exist. We can only figure those peculiar acts of omnipotency to ourselves by birth and death, or by composition and dissolution.

Dech. Does not the dread of annihilation plainly intimate immortality to us? If we must cease to be, why is this strong aversion and horror so deeply rooted in our nature?

Shep. Don't all men fear death?

Dech. Yes.

Shep. Yet death happens to all men. The fear of any misfortune, instead of proving, that it will never befall us, is founded on some probability, that it will happen.

Dech. But our other fears are given us to keep off for ever, or as long as possible; the evils we apprehend; whereas this dread of annihilation can neither preserve nor prolong our being; and we cannot conceive why

why it makes a part of our nature, unless it is because annihilation, to which it is wholly repugnant, does not. Our nature cannot, surely, be so contrived, as to be most shocked at that, of all things, which must happen to us.

Shep. And yet if, as you observe, this dread of annihilation is of no use to us ; nay, if it often fills our minds with gloomy and terrible thoughts ; why is it made a part of our nature ?

Dech. I answer, in order to intimate our immortality to us, that we may provide for our happiness in a state that is never to have an end. Try if you can assign a better use, and more agreeable to the point you are endeavouring to make good.

Shep. If the desire of being, and the dread of annihilation, which I take to arise from thence, carried with them any real proof of our immortality, I should be as ready to acquiesce in it, as any man. But I can see no more in this desire and fear, than in many others. When we have been long accustomed to set our hearts on the expectation of some mighty happiness, promised to us, any thing that damps or checks that expectation, fills us with strong apprehensions and fears. Mere being, considered in itself, and simply, is not the object of desire. If happiness is annexed to it, we desire it ; if misery, we would be glad to shake it off. But as happiness, without being, is impossible ; we desire to prolong, and dread to terminate, even a miserable being ; because we please ourselves with an imagination, that it may, possibly, be better with us hereafter. No man, I believe, would eagerly desire being, and dread annihilation, if that being were to be void of all enjoyment, altho' it were, at the same time, free from all pain ; much less, if it were subject to perpetual misery. It appears, from hence, that it is not mere simple being we are so fond of, but being happy ; nor mere annihilation we abhor, but the impossibility of all enjoyment necessarily annexed to it. The love of being is nothing more than the desire of life ; and the dread of annihilation is only the fear of death, in a mind taught and accustomed to hope for endless duration. All our passions of desire grasp at an eternal fruitio

tion of their objects, and if indulged, run out to insatiability and excess; and all our passions of aversion maintain an everlasting enmity with their objects. Now as immortality is only life continued on for ever, and annihilation only total death; the same passion that bids us desire life, must more strongly prompt us to the love of immortality; and the same passion that excites in us a fear of death, cannot but fill us with still greater horror, at the apprehension of ceasing to be: yet, as our love of life does not prove to us, that life will never come to an end; and as the fear of death is no proof, that we shall never die; so the mere desire of immortality cannot demonstrably prove it, nor the mere dread of annihilation refute it, to us.

Dech. But can we suppose, that God hath given us any desire, for the gratification of which he hath made no provision, even tho' we should fix that desire on its proper object, restrain it within due bounds, and so act, as not to deprive ourselves of any original reason we may have had to hope for the enjoyment of what he hath thus by nature made desirable? Surely the strong desire of being, or, if you will, of being happy for ever, could not have been so universally impressed on the nature of all men in vain, and for no end.

Shep. I am really of the same opinion; and that, therefore, this argument, for the immortality of the soul, carries with it no small degree of evidence in favour of that doctrine: but it is only to those who believe in God, and have right notions of him; who, as we have already seen, are only those who have been taught to think and believe rightly of God. That so it is, appears from your own way of arguing: for, in order to enforce your reasoning for the immortality of the soul, you are obliged to insist on something farther than the bare desire of being, and aversion to annihilation, to insist, that a wise and good God could not have impressed that desire and aversion so strongly and universally on the nature of man, if he had not intended immortality for man. This argument, therefore, draws all its force from revelation and instruction, and not at all from the mere light of nature; but the light of nature hath prompted *Plato* with
some

some other arguments for the immortality of the soul, which I suppose you forget, or you would mention them, on this occasion, as doing particular honour to that light.

Temp. What are those?

Shep. He lays it down for a maxim, that *every cause produces an effect contrary to itself*; and *that, therefore, as life produces death, so death shall produce life.*

Temp. Nothing can be more false, or trifling.

Shep. Cicero, it is probable, was of your opinion; for, if I forget not, he omits this in summing up *Plato's* arguments for the immortality of the soul. To prove that the soul will exist after it is separated from the body, he endeavours to prove it existed before it was joined to it.

Temp. That, indeed, would prove the existence of the soul to be independent on the body; but could never demonstrate its eternity. But, pray, how does he prove its pre-existence?

Shep. By endeavouring to shew, that what we call aptness in children to learn, is nothing more than memory; so that what they see or learn in this world, only revives the dim traces of what they knew in a former life.

Temp. Is not that a very weak argument, Mr. *Dechaine*?

Dech. It is, I own. The light of nature, however, is not answerable for every absurdity of the philosophers.

Shep. True; but the darkness of nature is; for I am sure their absurdities were not revealed to them. The same philosopher says in his *Phædrus*, *That alone which moves itself, inasmuch as it is never deserted by itself, never ceases to move; but the mind moves itself, and borrows not its motion from any thing else; and therefore must move, and consequently exist, for ever.*

Temp. These are strange arguments, and, in my opinion, incapable of proving any thing, tho' in the hands of the greatest disputant.

Shep. We have now seen, that the law of nature must be extremely defective, if it do not give us full assurances of very great rewards and punishments in another life, for what we do here; that this is impossible, without
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clearly proving to us, that our souls are imperishable and immortal; and that the light of nature hath been so far from doing this, that it hath suffered whole nations to remain for several ages in a perfect ignorance of this important truth; nay, and what is worse, hath suffered the greater part of its most unerring oracles, the philosophers, to deny it; and, to the reproach of self-sufficient and over-weening nature, hath put little into the mouths of those few, that believed in it, almost *gratis*, to defend it with, but nonsense and sophistry, altho' nature had done her utmost, and human literature had lent her assistance, to make them the greatest men in the world. The wisdom of *Socrates* and *Plato*, united, produce such arguments for a most favourite opinion, as they themselves are dissatisfied with, and therefore call for more than human help. *Cicero*, being so fond of this opinion, that, as he says, he *would rather err with Plato in holding it, than think rightly with those who deny it*, poorly echoes the arguments of *Plato*, adds little to them himself, and, at the conclusion, in a manner giving up the point, with all the arguments brought to support it, he endeavours to comfort himself, and others, against the approach of death, by proving death to be no evil, even supposing the soul to perish with the body. Thus, gentlemen, these sanctions of the universal law, that ought to be most evident to all men, nay, to the most ignorant, are, by the boasted light of nature, evident to no man, not even to the most learned. For how can it be evident to unassisted reason, that the good man shall hereafter be happy, and the bad man miserable, when reason is able, of itself, to produce no tolerable proof, that either of them shall be at all?

Temp. I am surpris'd, that *Plato* and *Cicero*, who were not far from thinking rightly of the Supreme Being, should not have deduced the necessity of a future state, together with its rewards and punishments, from the justice of God, the misery of good men, and the happiness of bad men, in this life.

Shep. Their philosophy was wholly repugnant to this only demonstration for a future life. They held, that the chief good consists in following nature, placed it in
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this life, and made virtue its own reward. These notions, which, in times over-run with errors of the most hideous aspect, served to put a better face on their philosophy, made it as absurd in them, as in our modern Deists, to establish moral obligation on a belief in future rewards and punishments. And yet *Plato*, in his *Phædon*, actually does it; that is, notwithstanding his making virtue its own reward, he assigns it another in the future life; but it admits of a better excuse in him, who always founds virtue on religion, and makes them but one and the same thing, than in *Cicero*, who, in the fifth book of his *Tusculan* questions, maintains, that *virtue of itself, in spite of all the miseries to which human nature is liable, is sufficient to make life happy*, and who makes a jest of the future punishments described by the poets, and believed by the vulgar, without substituting or supposing any others more rational. All this, however, does not hinder him from frequently referring the actions of men to the approbation or displeasure of the gods, and even talking a good deal of the happiness, which virtuous men will enjoy in another life. But neither he, nor even *Plato*, who fully asserts the eternity of rewards and punishments, in all their distress for arguments to prove the immortality of the soul, ever think of deducing it from the justice of God, and the manifest want of justice in this world. But, granting the immortality of the soul to be rendered by sentiment or reason (I will not stay to ask you which) so plain, not only to philosophers, but to all men, without the least instruction, that nobody can be ignorant of it; yet this will be far from fixing the future sanctions of the natural law, and giving us strong assurances of being hereafter gloriously rewarded, or terribly punished, for what we do here. A man who hath no instructor but himself, and sees no authority or law above him but those of his country, altho' it were possible for him to foresee, that his soul will exist for ever; yet, if he is disappointed of a reward for what he does here, and can escape from the punishment of his evil actions in this life, he will hardly dread the one, or hope for the other, in a life to come. As he is not sure there is an infinitely wise, just, and powerful God, he

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will take it for granted, that death is an act of oblivion for all that is past; that justice and right, like all the other concerns of this life, are bounded by the grave; and that his soul is to pass from this world to the next just as he does, who, quitting the laws and constitutions of one community, goes over to, and becomes a member of another, in which no cognizance is taken of what he did before his removal. How shall such a man find out, that all his good and evil actions will be remembered; that rewards and punishments, proportionable to the ends of a law, on which the happiness of the universe depends, will be conferred or inflicted on him; and that, in order to this, he is to be judged by a Being who is present every-where, who knows all things, even the thoughts of mens hearts; whose justice cannot be biased, and whose power cannot be resisted, altho' the whole world should conspire against him? *Cicero*, with all his knowledge, gives but one lot to the good and evil in another life. It was his opinion, that *if the soul is immortal, it must be happy; if it perishes with the body, it cannot be miserable.* This consolation he administers alike to all men, without making any distinction; I mean in his *Tusc. Disp.* and his *Cato Major*; and consequently, leaves moral obligation on a mere temporal footing, which, in effect, is not a whit better than downright Atheism. But, in his dream of *Scipio*, when he does not reason, nor seem to inculcate any particular doctrine, he indeed introduces the elder *Scipio* telling the younger, by way of dream, that *those who served their country, and cultivated justice and the other virtues, should go to heaven after death; but that the souls of those who had violated the laws of the gods and men, should, after leaving their bodies, be tossed about on the earth, and not return to heaven for many ages.* How inconsistent is this with what is said, in the same performance, that *the soul of man is a God!* Can a Divine Being be wicked, and for its wickedness be excluded, for a long time, from the place of happiness? It was this notion of the soul's divinity, that hindered *Cicero* from supposing it liable to eternal sufferings, and induced him to assign it only a temporary and purgative exclusion from heaven; and that not so much by

way of punishment for the transgression of a divine law, as in order to cleanse it from earthly defilements, and rest it for its native habitation above. But if one should ask how the soul's being tossed about on earth, for many ages, should cleanse it from the defilements of sin, neither *Cicero*, nor any body else, could return a rational answer. Now if a person of *Cicero's* abilities and learning could, from the light of nature, work out no better scheme than this, which renders futurity almost useless to moral obligation; how much farther from truth and reason must we suppose the bulk of mankind to stray, if each ignorant person is to be left intirely to his own thoughts and discoveries in respect to the future rewards of virtue, and punishments of vice?

Dech. Yet the Heathens, if we may judge by what their historians and poets have left us on record, did actually expect rewards and punishments in another life for what they did in this, and such, too, as were of sufficient weight to enforce the law of nature.

Shep. You cannot shew, however, that they founded these expectations on convincing reasons or assurances, or their wisest philosophers would not so generally have made a jest of them, as they did. The odd situation, and the ridiculous circumstances, assigned by the vulgar and the poets to the future judgment, and the happiness or misery to come, which set their whole scheme in a direct opposition to reason and common sense, they drew from their own imaginations. As to the mere expectation of such a judgment, and its consequences, those they could have borrowed from nothing else but tradition, or their notions of Divine justice; but as these latter taught them to believe in many gods, and those as wicked and unjust as the worst of men, the rewards and punishments to be expected from them were better fitted to pervert, than support and enforce, the law of righteousness.

Dech. You must grant, however, that *Plato's* notions of future rewards and punishments were very just. They may serve to shew us what the light of nature, tho' left to itself, is capable of doing.

Shep. That philosopher, who makes all religious knowlege to depend on revelation, either drew his theory of futurity from his travels into countries bordering on the light of revelation, and the hints of those who were not altogether unacquainted with the sacred writings, and the religion of the *Israelites*; or else he refined it from the crude opinions of his countrymen; extracting and separating, by the force of amazing talents, what was original and true, from that which was novel and superstitious. But upon your scheme, Sir, every man ought to have been a *Plato*. It concerned themselves and others, as much as it did him, that all the rest of the world should have known the sanctions of the divine law as well as he; and, in your opinion, they were able to find them out by their own natural light: but this we see, by experience, they could not do; and, after all, he, who alone was capable of speaking rationally on the subject of future rewards and punishments, was not able to satisfy himself about the immortality of the soul, on which, of necessity, they must be founded. Yet, had he been never so able to convince himself, and convert all the world to his sentiments; he came, however, too late upon the stage to be, in your opinion, an universal instructor.

Dech. Pray, Sir, is conscience natural or artificial? Does it make a part, or is it a faculty, of the soul, as well as judgment or imagination? If it is, which I believe nobody will deny, its dictates must be natural; and as in all men it annexes hope to good actions, and fear to evil ones, it seems itself to bind over every moral agent to a future judgment, and its consequences.

Shep. Deists, I know, talk much of conscience, as a sufficient rule of duty; and, by their doctrine of sincerity, make the judgment of God to second that of conscience, even altho' it should be wrong informed; which is the same as either to make all actions indifferent in themselves, or, at least, to place their good or evil nature, with regard to the agent, merely in his opinion. How they will be able to reconcile this with their sentiments concerning the eternal and unalterable fitnesses of actions and things, I cannot tell; but as to the hopes
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and fears excited in the mind by conscience, they proceed intirely from the lights, whether natural or revealed, which the mind is furnished with, of God, and his justice. Conscience is not, itself, a faculty of the mind, but only that habitual judgment which a man passes on his moral actions, before he does them, and that remembrance of them after they are done, to which their conformity or non-conformity to his religious principles adds pleasing or boding expectations. The conscience cannot dictate, till it be itself informed; that is, no man can pronounce this action good, and hope to be hereafter rewarded for it; nor condemn that action as evil, and found on the committal of it the fear of future punishment; till he be furnished with some rule to censure his actions by, and have reason to believe he will be judged hereafter by that rule for what he does. Now we have already seen, that revelation alone can supply us with a right rule of action, and set before us a sufficient authority to enforce conformity between our actions and that rule. As there can be no conscience without religion, so the goodness of conscience depends on the goodness and truth of the religion by which it is informed, and that again on revelation. Most men have been trained up in a belief, that God is present every-where, knows all our thoughts and actions, and will hereafter judge us for them. This belief, operating continually on the mind, and being strengthened by its own reasonableness, takes deep root, becomes natural, and adds pleasing hopes, or guilty fears, to what we do. If we suppose a man habituated to no such opinion, a man fed, but never taught, we must suppose him utterly void of conscience, and as yet incapable of virtue or vice.

Dech. Do you not confess by this, that the good or evil of his actions, as soon as he acquires a conscience, depends intirely on it? And surely, Sir, if conscience depends wholly on instruction, he, whose conscience is wrong informed, is not guilty of the evil he does pursuant to it.

Shep. All actions, strictly speaking, are right or wrong in themselves. But men, being unable of themselves sufficiently to distinguish right from wrong, are liable to be

set astray by wrong instructions. He whose ignorance, for want of instruction, and he whose errors, by means of wrong instructions, lead him to bad actions, is excusable in the sight of God, provided his ignorance and errors were invincible; for God will require no more of any man, than he hath been pleased to furnish him with means of attaining to.

Dech. But I say, God hath given reason to every man, by which he is able to inform himself about such things as are necessary, and to correct the wrong instructions that may be given him.

Shep. If his reason is able to teach him all things necessary for him to know, he can never stand in need of instruction, nor a preservative against wrong instructions. But I think I have sufficiently shewn, that reason itself stands extremely in need of instructions and preservatives to prevent its falling into the grossest errors, and leading us to the most enormous crimes; and therefore, till it is well instructed itself, it can be no proper instructor.

Dech. When right and wrong instructions are offered to any man, how is he to determine his choice?

Shep. By his reason.

Dech. Why then the dernier resort is in reason after all, and that is the only instructor.

Shep. By no means. When two masters teach you two physical problems, contrary to each other, and each of them proposes and explains his demonstration to you, it is your reason, no doubt on't, that determines you to close with the one or the other; but it is the master, who lays the proposition before you, who gives you the demonstration, and who enables your reason to form the right judgment, or misleads it into a wrong one. It is so in respect to conscience. It passes no judgment upon actions, till the mind is furnished with some rule of action; and if that rule happens to be wrong, and reason, by the assistance of other lights, is not able to correct it, the conscience, in that case, dictates what is wrong. Neither does the conscience always add pleasure or pain to the reflections we make on what we have done, till we are habituated to think this action comely and laudable, and that action base and culpable. Nor does it

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entertain the mind with hopes, or dash it with fears, till reason is persuaded there is a God, who watches over all we do, and will hereafter call us to an account for it.

YOU have asserted, Sir, almost in the words of *Tindal*, and the other Deists, that as God is a perfect Being, so his law must, in all respects, be most perfect ; and that every man, by the mere light of nature, without the least instruction, is able clearly and easily to apprehend it. But, upon considering the extent and strength of the human faculties, we have found them at present utterly incapable of attaining to any competent notion of a divine law, if left wholly to themselves. They have no innate idea of God, no congenite rule of action, no foresight of rewards and punishments, impressed on them by mere nature. Nor is the reason of a man, left to himself, and utterly uninstructed, able to trace out a right idea of God and his attributes, an infallible distinction between right and wrong, or sanctions of force and validity proportionable to the important ends of an universal law. This argument, so clear and convincing to those who are acquainted with the natural powers and extent of the human mind, is vastly strengthened by an appeal to experience ; from which it appears, that mankind, instead of being able, thro' a long series of ages, by the mere light of nature, to find out a right idea of God and his laws, on the contrary, after having, without doubt, been well acquainted at first with both, gradually, and at length almost universally, lost sight of both, insomuch that idolatry, as bad as Atheism, and wickedness, worse than Brutality, were established for religion and law in all countries. The philosophers, who lived, and sought, in the most knowing countries, for religious and moral truth, but sought, as the wisest of them confess, in vain, render this argument still more cogent and conclusive. I need not be particular, in order to shew this, by recounting to you their infinite absurdities, and eternal contradictions. Nor need I tell you, that *Pliny* says, man could know nothing without instruction ; that *Plutarch* asserts, he would be the wildest of all the animals,

if left wholly to himself; that all the antient heathen poets, historians, and philosophers, represent the first men as the most fierce and outrageous race of savages in all the woods; that *Plato* calls philosophy, by which they were civilized, *the gift*, and *Cicero*, *the invention*, of the gods; that *Iamblichus*, observing the ignorance of human nature, confesses there is no remedy for all its errors, but some portion of divine instruction or light; that, as to moral obligation, *Plato* asserts, there are no such things by nature, as just things, inasmuch as men perpetually differ in opinion about them, and are for ever contriving new standards to distinguish right from wrong, and that therefore there can be no law, except God gives it to us; that *Socrates*, *Aristippus*, *Diogenes*, *Pyrrho*, refer the distinction between right and wrong to the laws of society; and that all legislators founded the obligation and authority of social laws upon either real or pretended revelations. If you would have further satisfaction on these heads, and desire to have it proved to you, that all the little advances made among the *Greeks*, in theology or morality, were derived from *Egyptian*, *Phœnician*, and *Syrian* traditions, either oral or written, and brought into *Greece* and *Italy* by *Thales*, *Pherécides*, *Pythagoras*, *Plato*, and others, who travelled for their improvement

into the afore-mentioned countries, you may, at your leisure, consult *Gale's Court of the Gentiles*, where unnumbered testimonies are drawn together from the writings of the antients, to prove these points, and the passages, from whence they are taken, fairly and faithfully referred to. Thus, Sir, I think it plainly appears, that the second and subsequent articles of your creed are without foundation; that thro' mere unassisted nature, in its present state of blindness and corruption, we can neither have a religion, nor a law, sufficient to answer the ends of society, or to render individuals good and happy; and that we may therefore say with *Cicero*, in his third book *De natura Deorum*, *If it is a thing agreed on by all the philosophers, that no man attains to true wisdom, we are all in a most wretched condition, altho' it is said, that God hath taken the utmost care to provide for our happiness; for as it is the same thing, whether nobody is in*
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health, or whether nobody hath it in his power to be in health, so to me there is no difference, whether no man is wise, or no man can be wise.

Temp. Till now I thought there had been a law and religion of nature.

Shep. And so there is; but that law and religion, which are but one and the same thing, are rather to be called the law or religion of nature, on account of their conformity with the real nature of God, of man, and of the relation between God and man, and the circumstances man is placed in, than because they are sufficiently manifested to all men by the mere light of nature, without the least occasion for instruction.

Temp. This, I think, you have made very plain.

Cunn. Mr. *Shepherd* seems not sufficiently to consider the texts of scripture that are against him, in relation to his long-laboured hypothesis about the religion and law of nature*. *St. Paul*, in the second chapter of his epistle to the *Romans*, says, *The Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, and, having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which shew the work of the law written in their hearts,*

* Since the first edition of this work, the author, finding his explanation of the following passages in the *Epistle to the Romans* censured, as forced and unnatural, hereby solemnly declares, he would much rather never have written a single line in his whole life, nay, much rather have *never been*, than have wilfully wrested one tittle of the Scriptures. It is for this reason, that, while diffident of himself, he submits what he hath done to the sensible part of the world with meekness and fear, according to the advice of *St. Peter*; he humbly begs the thinking reader would consider whether either the Holy Spirit, speaking by *St. Paul*, or *St. Paul*, speaking as from himself, could have intended to say any thing, that might make the world, as it then stood, think Divine Revelation unnecessary to it. Let it be considered how difficult a matter it was to keep the *Jews* to the worship of the true God, and how much more difficult still for the *Gentiles* to restore themselves, by the unassisted efforts of natural light, to the purity of that worship. Let it then be considered, what God hath done by Angels, by Prophets, by Miracles, by his Son, to plant the true religion in the world. Lastly, let it be considered, that *St. Paul* firmly believed in all that had been done. And then let the reader ask himself, whether, in the opinion of *St. Paul*, revelation could have been unnecessary, or he could possibly have understood what he wrote as destructive of its necessity, as mankind were then circumstanced.

their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing, one another. Here *St. Paul* speaks plainly of a law written in the hearts of the *Gentiles*; and maintains, that they act by the dictates of that law. Now experience, which *Mr. Shepherd* seems to lean to more than Scripture, vouches strongly for this assertion of the apostle: what can be more manifest, than that all men naturally hate robbery, theft, adultery, murder, and the like? which, altho' they may, on some occasions, be tempted, by the violence of their passions, to commit, yet that committal is immediately followed by remorse and shame: It is also as evident on the other side, that all men find a natural pleasure and complacency in doing good. This difference between good and evil, so clearly pointed out by nature, and so remarkably distinguished by rewards and punishments, is a law, a law of conscience, as *St. Paul* maintains; which it can never be, according to *Mr. Shepherd's* own doctrine, unless it is founded on the knowledge of God, and a sense of religion.

Temp. This seems sufficient to overturn all we have been doing in our last and present conference, if *St. Paul* is allowed to have spoken by inspiration.

Shep. If he did, revelation was certainly necessary; for to what end should a revelation have been made to men who knew, or could easily have known, the true religion without it? But if he did not, what he says on this subject must pass for no more, than the opinion of any other man as knowing as he. You have told us, *Mr. Cunningham*, that *St. Paul* says, there is a law written in the hearts of the *Gentiles*; whereas he only says, *the work of the law is written there*, τὸ ἔργον τῆ νόμου γραπτόν, not γραπτόν.

Cunn. And what then? Does he not say, they are a law unto themselves?

Shep. Yes; but he says, in the very same sentence, that they have not the law. If we are to catch at the precise meaning of his words, those for me it is plain he meant literally, and those for you are spoken in a metaphor; for no man can, in the proper and immediate sense

sense of the word, be called a law ; so that here I must have a great advantage.

Dech. Ay, if you allow the apostle to have contradicted what he says literally, by what he says metaphorically.

Shet. No, Sir, without any such allowance. If by the law here spoken of we understand the moral law, enforced by natural religion, the apostle flatly denies that the *Gentiles* have this law ; and only says, that they do by natural instinct the things contained in that law, which being their only rule of action, they are to be judged by it as if it were a law. But whosoever considers the whole chapter must own, the law he here speaks of is the law of *Moses*, and the *Gentiles* he speaks of are, by all the antient commentators, and most of the modern, said to be those who knew the true God, such as *Melchisedek* and *Job*, who lived before the law ; as the *Ninevites*, who repented on a right religious principle, altho' they lived not under the law ; as *Cornelius*, who was a worshiper of the true God. Pray, Mr. *Cunningham*, have we not agreed, that religion is necessary to moral virtue, and the well-being of society ?

Cunn. We have.

Shet. And do you not allow, that the worship of oppressors, adulterers, and devils, would, instead of answering these good ends, be productive of wickedness, and prejudicial to society ?

Cunn. I do.

Shet. It follows then, that the apostle speaks not, in this passage, of idolaters, and worshipers of devils, since he says they shall be justified ; for he, and all the other inspired writers, condemn idolatry as a damnable sin. Do you think, Sir, he will be justified by God, who is not pleasing and acceptable in the sight of God ?

Cunn. By no means.

Shet. Therefore, by the doctrine of St. *Paul*, that Gentile, who does not believe in the true God, but adores, and consequently imitates, the worst of beings, cannot be justified by the law of God ; for, in the eleventh chapter of his epistle to the *Hebrews*, he says, *Without faith it is impossible to please God.* Hence it follows,

follows, that, if those Gentiles, who worshiped devils, are to be saved, it cannot be by any law, nor by any possibility of their pleasing God; but by an act of infinite compassion, which God for Christ's sake may extend to such of them as were idolaters thro' invincible ignorance; yet, as to moral honesty, chose to follow the better dictates of natural instinct. *If there had been a law, that could have given life, righteousness should have been by the law; but the Scripture hath concluded all under sin; so that even supposing the Gentiles to have the law of God, you see they cannot be justified merely by that law, the very best of them having, in numberless instances, transgressed it. Wherefore, when glory, honour, and peace, are promised to those of them who do well, it is plain, such only are to be understood, as turn from the worship of devils to that of the true God, and endeavour to lead a good life, conformable to his will.*

Cunn. And pray what use would you make of the concession, in case I should allow, that the apostle here speaks only of believing Gentiles?

Shep. The use is easily apprehended; for you concluded from this passage, that the Gentiles, having the law of God written in their hearts, are justified by that law, if they act up to it; yet you see, by examining the passage a little more carefully, by considering the context, and by comparing what is here delivered, with what the same apostle says elsewhere, that he meant not in the least to maintain, that the idolatrous Gentiles, who knew not God, have this law written in their hearts; and that he only intended to prove against the *Jews*, who appropriated the law of God and salvation to themselves, that the Gentiles, altho' they receive not the written law of God, may, nevertheless, entertain his spiritual law in their hearts; which if a few, who had the benefit of inspiration and instruction, did, how can this prove, that all the rest, who were destitute of those advantages, either did, or could?

Cunn. The apostle tells us how; namely, by nature.

Shep. St. Paul speaks not in this place of what nature might have done, but of what was actually done agreeable to nature in a few; for he was sensible the gross of
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the Gentiles were far from having the work, that is, the practical spirit and power of God's law, actually written in their hearts by the mere light of nature, since they either did not terminate their defective morality in religion ; or, if they did, it was in a false and diabolical religion. I will not here insist on what some commentators do, that the *Greek* word *νόμος*, for which we put nature, signifies in this place only custom, as it does in some other parts of *St. Paul's* writings ; for instance, in the eleventh chapter of his first epistle to the *Corinthians*, where he asks, whether nature does not teach, that if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him. Here also our translation puts nature for *νόμος*, which in this place can signify nothing but custom. It is, however, worth observing, on this occasion, that the *Greeks* and *Romans* took that which is now understood to be a law of nature, only for a law of custom ; for the former call that *ethics*, which the latter call *morality* ; now *ἥθος*, from which the first, and *mos*, from which the last is derived, both signify custom only. As to what you said awhile ago, that experience vouches for the doctrine drawn by your interpretation from this passage, I need only put you in mind, that our appeal to experience is over, that the arguments deducible from thence are against you, and that experience concurs in this matter exactly with the language of Scripture throughout, and with what *St. Paul* inculcates in other places, which admit of no interpretation, but such as is contrary to that, which you and the *Deists* put on this. Besides, Sir, you ought a little better to consider, what sort of experience it is you appeal to. All men, you say, approve of virtue, and abhor vice. But I say, all men are taught to do so by the laws of their own country, by the instructions of their parents, and by the conversation of all their acquaintances, from their very infancy ; yet many, in spite of all this, and of the real conformity of virtue to the nature of things, abhor virtue, and love vice ; so dim is the light of nature, and so feeble is the moral sense.

Cunn. Pray, Sir, are not even the idolatrous Gentiles to be judged by God ?

Shep. They are.

Cunn. Must they not be judged by some law ?

Shep. They must, as *St. Paul* says, be judged without law, that is, without the law of *Moses*, or any Divine law, in the literal and proper sense of the words. When a law is sufficiently promulgated, if the subjects know it, they are to be judged by it ; if they do not, they are to be condemned for their ignorance of it, at least in case they transgress it. So far as the Heathens knew the will of God, or might have known it, they are accountable to him.

Cunn. But you seem to think they could not have known it at all.

Shep. You wrong me, Sir ; I only insisted, that it was extremely difficult for them to have a right idea of God, and his will ; not that it was impossible. But, from natural reason and sentiment, the grossest idolaters had some notion of the difference between a very good and a very bad action ; disliked the one, and approved the other. They had moreover, from tradition, some notion of a superior nature, altho' very defective and erroneous. How far any one among them might have advanced, upon the strength of these notices, towards a tolerable system of duty, God only knows ; and therefore God only can judge them. From thence I think it reasonable to conclude, that, altho' God hath not comprehended them in the scheme of salvation by covenant ; yet those of them may stand in his sight as objects of his mercy, thro' the extensive merits of Christ, who made the best use they could of the lights they enjoyed.

Dech. As objects of his justice rather, if they must account rigorously for their opportunities.

Shep. I do not think they will be judged with rigour, altho' mercy is promised only thro' faith to Christians. But, in cases of this nature, I look upon it to be our duty, on the one hand, to know what God hath declared, and, on the other, to suspend our opinions, where he hath been pleased to terminate his declarations. When God is silent, it becomes us to be so too. You cannot deny it, nor I assign the providential reason for it ; but so it is in fact, that the illiterate Christian is, in regard to the knowlege of natural religion and morality, upon

an infinitely better footing, than the most knowing Pagan.

Cunn. The Divine nature and attributes, and of consequence our duty on all occasions, are more easily discoverable by the light of nature, than you are aware of. *St. Paul* says, in the first chapter of his epistle to the *Romans*, *That which may be known of God, is manifest in, or to, them; namely, to all mankind; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.*

Shep. Do you infer from hence, that all mankind could have easily arrived at a right notion of God, merely by contemplating the works of creation?

Cunn. Most certainly.

Shep. What! even those who were born in countries where nothing but idolatry had long prevailed?

Cunn. Even those.

Shep. How came it to pass then, that none of them ever did?

Cunn. I only insist on the words of the apostle. Please to shew they do not make directly against you.

Shep. This doctrine, if true, will damn all the Heathen; for *St. Paul*, after the words you have repeated, says, *So that they are without excuse.*

Dech. Never trouble yourself with the consequence. Do you allow the premises?

Shep. Sir, if the premises necessarily lead to this conclusion, the abettors of the self-sufficient scheme will be more concerned than I, to consider whether *Mr. Cunningham* hath put a right-interpretation on the apostle's words, or not; because, if they are taken precisely in his sense, Deism must be a dreadful truth. If all the Heathen had full and sufficient means of knowing God by the mere light of nature; and if, notwithstanding, they continued all their lives worshiping stocks, stones, and devils; what will become of them?

Dech. Bless us all! you are in mighty pain about the Heathen. If *Paul* damns them all, what is that to me, who believe them to be on as good a footing for salvation, as himself?

Shep.

Shep. It does concern you not a little, since you hold the same damnatory doctrine which you have ascribed to *St. Paul*. If, as you maintain, every Heathen had sufficient means of knowing God, and his duty; and if every Heathen, notwithstanding, through a neglect of those means, was grossly ignorant of both; it follows, that every Heathen must be damned for wilfully sinning against, or stifling the clear light of his own nature. But *Mr. Cunningham* is not only concerned to refute this doctrine he hath adopted, but likewise to vindicate *St. Paul* against all who shall charge him with holding an opinion, which, upon *Mr. Cunningham's* own principles, must be very shocking. Wherefore, I own, the stress of this argument lies rather on him, than you. Pray, *Mr. Cunningham*, do you think, *St. Paul* intended by this passage to shew, that revelation is absolutely useless?

Cunn. I mean no such thing, Sir.

Shep. Yet you infer from it, that all men, in the darkest ages and countries, could have easily found out a right idea of God, and human duty, by the unassisted light of nature. This surely makes revelation, in the opinion of *St. Paul*, not only unnecessary, but impertinent.

Dech. Was there ever so unfair a disputant! You do not seem, Sir, to seek for the truth, but only to distress your antagonist, by drawing consequences from his interpretation, without proposing one of your own.

Shep. If *Mr. Cunningham* would once acknowledge the insufficiency of his, it would then lie upon me either to own I do not understand the passage, or to furnish a better. Pray, *Mr. Cunningham*, may I ask you another question?

Cunn. Provided it is a fair one.

Shep. Do you think *St. Paul* believed in the *Mosaic* history?

Cunn. An excellent question! Yes.

Shep. Then he must have believed, that *Adam* was once in a state of innocence, and fell from thence into a state of corruption, by an act of disobedience, which corruption he entailed on all his posterity; that, before
he

he fell, God conversed with him, revealing not only his own being, but also his will, in some respects, to him that God also revealed himself and his will to *Noah*; and, that both *Adam* and *Noah*, by their sacrifices, and other acts of worship, as well as in the way of conversation, must have made known to their posterity such notices of God, and their duty, as they themselves had received by immediate revelation.

Cunn. All this *St. Paul* must have believed.

Shep. But *St. Paul* could hardly have believed a tittle of it, had he been persuaded, as you think he was, that all men could have known God, and their duty, without revelation; for, to say nothing of *Noah*, *Adam* in the full perfection of his nature must have enjoyed as much at least of the natural light, as any other man, and therefore stood as little in need of preternatural instruction, as either *Mr. Dechaine* or you. But if *St. Paul* did actually believe all you have granted, an easy interpretation of the words you have cited from him will result from his faith in the *Mosaic* history, which will not be liable to the inconveniences of yours. The language of nature might have been more intelligible to man, before his faculties were impaired by sin, than it hath been since. But if he had failed to find the knowledge of his Maker by this language, the voice of God himself, instructing him, must have been sufficient for this purpose. The first men having, by either or both these means, a right idea of God from their common parents, the works of nature became a standing proof or remembrancer of that idea, bearing perpetual witness to the truth and rectitude thereof, insomuch that whosoever fell therefrom into Atheism, or unworthy notions of the Deity, must have been inexcusable. Yet men, being now grown wicked and vain, could no longer bear the opposition between their own principles and practices, could no longer endure *to hold the truth in unrighteousness; and therefore did not like to retain God in their knowledge; but changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Thus were their foolish hearts darkened; upon which God gave them over to a reprobate mind,*

mind, gave them up to uncleanness, to sins of all kinds, even such as were utterly against nature. This is certainly the true meaning of the whole passage; from whence give me leave to observe, that there are two kinds of criminals pointed out to us therein. The first is of those, who, having an actual knowlege of the true God, did nevertheless pervert and corrupt this knowlege, both in themselves and their posterity. These, no doubt of it, were most horribly guilty and odious in the sight of God, because they sinned against actual knowlege. The other sort is of those, who, descending from the original corrupters, acquiesced in the entail of blindness and idolatry, when they might have recovered, altho' indeed not without extreme difficulty, the right idea of God, by the force of reason, arguing from the works of creation, and assisted by the imperfect idea of Divinity, which could never be totally extinguished. These were infinitely less culpable than the former, inasmuch as they only sinned in the neglect of very feeble lights, and defective means. I have already intimated, that God will judge both these classes of men, according to their respective opportunities.

Cunn. You may bestow as high encomiums as you please on your own sense of St. Paul's words; you are, however, not only unsupported, but opposed therein, by all the divines and commentators.

Shcp. We are to be concluded by the drift of St. Paul himself in this passage, rather than by the sentiments of his commentators, who, writing before the present controversy about the sufficiency of the natural light was set on foot, had not occasion to look so sharply into the sense of this, and some other places of Scripture, as hath been done since. St. Chrysostom, in his descant on the passage, says as much as you, or any Deist, could wish, upon the loudness and clearness of that language, by which the works of nature proclaim the being, power, and wisdom of God: yet, after all, he says, *the Gentiles fell into a kind of madness; insomuch that, having deprived themselves of the light, and involved their minds in the darkness of their own thoughts, their attempt to travel towards heaven ended in a miserable shipwreck, as his must do,*

do, who, in a dark night, undertakes a voyage by sea. This is a true representation of *St. Paul's* meaning, in which the Gentiles stand charged with departing from the light and reason bestowed on them by God, and plunging themselves into such a state of ignorance and reprobation, as they were never afterwards able to extricate themselves out of. The book of nature was still as legible as ever; but they ceased to understand its language and characters. The way to true religious knowledge lay still open; but they, being misguided by conceit, and too great attachment to sensible things, entered upon a wrong way; so that still the longer they travelled, the farther they wandered from the knowledge of the true God, and right religion. The doctrine of *St. Paul* concerning the blindness into which the Gentiles fell, is so confirmed by the state of religion in *Africa, America*, and even *China*, where, to this day, no advances towards the true religion have been made, that we can no longer be at a loss to judge either of his meaning, or of the insufficiency of unassisted reason to dissipate the prejudices of the Heathen world, and open their eyes to religious truths.

Temp. I never in my life attended so closely to any debate; and, I must own, I am not without my reward. While I watched every argument on both sides, I kept history and experience still in view, and compared them with the words of the inspired writer, with which they seemed at first to clash; but I now clearly see a perfect harmony between the words of the apostle, on the one hand, and our knowledge of human nature, or the other; insomuch that I cannot help observing, upon the whole, how much greater appearance of truth there is in the apostle's account of antient theology, than in that of Heathen writers. If our knowledge of God had come by observation or philosophy, it must have arisen, by degrees, from a discovery of causes by their effects; then the works of creation must have been found out to be effects; afterwards, the first cause must have been sought for; and, in the end, the nature of that cause must have been traced by the nature of the effects. Thus must reason, in its inquiry after God, have proceeded;
and

and its last deductions must have been more perfect than its first. If the works of creation can, in our present blind condition, easily discover to us the Being and Attributes of God, surely they must be still better qualified to support that discovery, after it is made, and to correct any mistakes that might have arisen in the making of it; which is an easier matter by far, than to make the discovery itself. But *St Paul* gives us quite another history of the business: he says, that *from the creation, καὶ τὸ κτίσθαι, the invisible things of God are clearly seen*; and afterwards, thro' philosophy, and the boasted wisdom of man, almost wholly lost, or changed into idolatry, worse in itself than even total ignorance. This seems plainly to intimate, that our knowledge of God did not take its rise from mere reason, but from revelation, or, at least, from some extraordinary power or faculty in the nature of our first parents, which their posterity are destitute of, and which to suppose, is, in respect to our present debate, the same thing as to suppose a revelation.

Cunn. If you go on, at this rate, to vilify reason, you must soon quit it intirely, and give yourself up to vain traditions, or old wives tales.

Shep. Mr. *Dechaine* should have said that, and not an incumbent of two parishes, who ought to have remembered how *St. Paul* speaks of human wisdom in respect to the knowledge of God and religion. In his first epistle to the *Corinthians* he says, *God had foretold, that he would destroy and confound the wisdom of the wise*; and he asks, *Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.* Here the apostle expressly asserts, that the world did not, by its own wisdom, philosophizing on the wisdom of God, displayed in the works of creation, find out God; and that God was therefore pleased, by the preaching of the gospel, which to the conceited *Greeks* appeared *foolishness*, to supply the vast defects of human wisdom, that faith might effect that, which philosophy had failed of. The same apostle, in the eleventh chapter of his epistle to the *Hebrews*, distinguishes faith from knowledge, and defines it, *the substance*
of

of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen; and then adds, *Thro' faith we understand, that the worlds were framed by the Word of God.* So that, according to him, the very first and fundamental principle, on which the philosopher can build his investigation of religion, must be communicated to him by faith, not his own researches. And, indeed, nothing but revelation and faith can, with any certainty, teach us, that *the things which are seen, namely, matter, and all its various modifications, were made out of things that do not appear, that is, out of nothing, and by a pure Spirit.* Philosophy could hardly have beat out so inconceivable a mystery, but must have either concluded matter to have been eternal, or must have supposed its efficient cause to have been material. This we see verified by experience: the Heathens, as *Porphyry* himself acknowledges, never ascribed the creation of the world to God; but maintained, that either the universe is God, or that its matter was coeval with God. *If we look back, says the learned Shuckford, and make a fair inquiry, we shall find, that the antient wise men did not fall into their errors by paying too great a deference to tradition, and pretended revelations, but by setting up what they thought a reasonable scheme of religion, in opposition to the traditional; and that the frame*

and course of nature was not sufficiently understood, to make men masters of true philosophy. The same author further observes, that *there is nothing so extravagant or ridiculous, which men of the greatest parts, and eminency for the natural strength of their understandings, have not defended; as is evident, by what Plato and Plutarch have said in vindication of the Egyptian superstitions.* As for the latter, he says, in his book concerning *Isis and Osiris*, that *there is nothing in the Heathen mythology unreasonable, idle, or superstitious; and that a good moral, historical, or philosophical reason, may be given for every part of every fable therein.*

Temp. I imagined such persons as *Plato, Plutarch, Cicero, &c.* had, in reality, despised the theology of their respective countries.

Shep. *Socrates* and *Plato* saw an infinite deal of absurdity, and even wickedness, in the Pagan worship: yet, having

having no thorough assurances of a better, and seeing plainly the necessity of religion, they laboured to correct that of their own country; but, as for *Cicero* and *Plutarch*, they had both of them a warm zeal for the superstitions they were educated in, especially the latter, who, it must be confessed, was one of the wisest and greatest men that ever enriched the commonwealth of letters. If such men as these were capable of thinking so like the vulgar and illiterate, how could the more ignorant, that is, almost the whole race of mankind, have beat out from their own observations a right notion of God, and their duty to him? When I consider either the narrow bounds of human reason in articles of knowledge more attainable, or the full experiment made of its weakness in former ages, and in men of the greatest abilities, and the highest improvements; I cannot but conclude it almost incapable of arriving at a right or sufficient knowledge of God by its own unassisted efforts.

Cunn. Be that as it will, in the tenth chapter of the *Acts*, *Peter* says, *I perceive God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.* This, surely, is as much as to say, that in every nation some may know and fear God, and live good lives.

Shep. And altho' some should, what is that to the bulk of mankind? He that worketh righteousness, must, in order to it, fear God; and he that feareth God, must first know him, namely, the true God, before he can render himself agreeable to him. But no shadow of an argument can be drawn from this reflection of *St. Peter*, that all mankind may, without instruction, easily know him; nor from the particular case of *Cornelius*, which gave occasion to that reflection: for this good man, having spent some time among the *Jews*, was already a convert to the worship of the only true God, and, in consequence of this, was very devout, and gave much to the poor; yet, not satisfied with this, he sent for *St. Peter*, by the command of an Angel, with an earnest desire to become a Christian. Such a person, and in such a disposition, altho' no *Jew*, could not fail to be acceptable in the sight of God: but this is nothing at all to the

the present purpose, because it was his living among the *Jews* that made him a worshiper of the true God; and it was the vision of an Angel that inclined him to Christianity. Had he been centurion of a band in *Spain* or *Britain* at that time, and not favoured with a particular message from God, I am apt to think he could hardly have made such advances towards the truth. There is no one so blind, but may perceive, by the whole passage, that *St. Peter* himself was converted, on this occasion, from the narrow and rigid partiality of a *Jew*, who thought the benefits of the Christian religion were to be confined to his own nation; and made to understand the extent of the new dispensation, which is laid open to the *Gentiles*, as well as the *Jews*, if they will, like *Cornelius*, shew the necessary dispositions to embrace it. Although nothing can be more obvious than this, yet *Tindal* hath the assurance to place the reflection before-mentioned at the front of his book; where, being separated from the context, it seems to speak against the necessity of revelation, and to refute the Sacred Writings, from whence it is borrowed. Had you not taken it upon his authority, and neglected to read over the passage where it lies, you could never have brought it thus, in defence of his opinion, against the religion you profess.

Cunn. I do not think it any way prejudicial to the Christian religion, to shew from Scripture, either that the religion and law of nature are good in themselves, or discoverable by the light of natural reason.

Shep. What do you think, Mr. *Dechaine*?

Dech. No matter whether it is, or not; even Scripture may be quoted, if, on any occasion, it serves the cause of truth. Does not *St. Paul* acknowledge to the *Athenians*, that certain of the *Greek* poets had held the omnipresence of God; and *that in him we live, and move, and have our being*?

Shep. What then? It does not follow, that all the *Greeks*, much less all the barbarous nations, either had, or could have, a right notion of God; nor even that those poets thought properly of him in any other respect. If *St. Paul* had been sensible they did, he would not have failed to quote them for other points of theology, as
well

well as this, because nothing could have better served his purpose ; as we may perceive, not only by this quotation, but by his taking the *exordium* of this very discourse from the inscription on an altar at *Athens*, *To the unknown God*. It is easy to perceive, he was glad to catch at the smallest glimmerings of truth preserved among the *Greeks*, in order to recommend the worship of the only true God, as a thing not altogether new to all their countrymen.

Dech. He says, in his short discourse at *Lystra*, that *God left not himself without witnesses among the darkest nations, in that he did good, and gave them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons ; filling their hearts with food and gladness.*

Shep. It is true, God gave all men, and the *Lystrians* among the rest, full evidence of his being and goodness ; that is, sufficient evidence, in the works of creation and Providence, to prove both, in case a proof should, at any time, become necessary. Observe, however, Sir, that the starting a proposition is one thing, and the proof of it quite another. But the *Lystrians* were as blind to this evidence as other Heathens, and attributed the goodness of God to false deities ; in consequence of which, taking *Barnabas* and *Paul* for *Jupiter* and *Mercury*, whom they thanked for the common blessings of life, they were going to offer sacrifices to them for the miraculous cure of the cripple. We see evidently, by their behaviour, there was a necessity for turning their eyes towards the works of creation, and the effects of God's goodness, in order to guide them to the knowledge of the true cause. Every science hath its proofs in the nature of things : yet all sciences require to be taught ; and those require it most, the first principles of which lie a little out of the reach of ordinary capacities. The first principles of religion, being of an high and spiritual nature, are harder to be found out, than those of any other science ; because the minds of men are gross and earthy, used to objects of sense ; and all their depraved appetites, and corrupt dispositions, which are by nature opposite to the true religion, help to increase the natural weakness of their reason, and clip the wings of their contemplations, when
they

they endeavour, by their own strength, to soar towards God, and heavenly things. No man, in his, nor hardly in any other time, knew better how to catch at the evidence of Divine truths, discovered in the works of creation, nor had better opportunities, than *Plato*: yet, with all the helps he derived from foreign and domestic instruction, he finds himself, on every occasion, at a loss, when he speaks of God, and Divine matters; relies on oracles, traditions, and revelations; and, having got a little taste of this kind of instruction, is every now-and-then confessing his want of more, and wishing for it with the greatest anxiety.

Temp. Mr. *Shepherd*, do you not take revelation to be necessary?

Shep. I do.

Temp. I would be glad to hear wherein you make that necessity to consist: for altho' you represent the blindness of human nature as extremely great, in respect to the investigation of true religion, which, indeed, I think it is; yet you express yourself, on some occasions, as if you thought mankind capable of finding out a right idea of God, and their duty. From hence arises no small confusion in my mind, which, otherwise, reflecting on the horrible errors into which all uninstructed nations plunged themselves, in relation to the nature and will of the Deity, and considering the narrowness of the human understanding, immersed in matter, and forming, of itself, no other but sensible ideas, is now inclined to think we could never have found out the true religion, had not some superior Being instructed us therein.

Dech. Well said, *Templeton*! O the swallow of thy credulity! The lessons of the nursery are uppermost again, and the faith of *Templeton* the scholar outruns the arguments of *Shepherd* the master.

Shep. Surely that can never happen, as long as the reasonings of Mr. *Dechaine* are so convincing, and his wit so very keen. Pray, Mr. *Templeton*, do you think God is absolutely bound, by his justice, to give us a true religion, and every other good thing we may stand in need of?

Temp

Temp. I rather think this, and all other his gifts, proceed from his infinite goodness.

Shep. Is his goodness voluntary, or determined by necessity?

Temp. Without question, it is voluntary; and therefore merits our deepest acknowledgements.

Shep. From the attributes of God, then, it cannot be proved, that every man must necessarily have the true religion given to him; and, accordingly, we find, some have not been blessed with sufficient means of attaining to it; which could never have happened, had God been obliged by justice, or any necessity of fate, or his own nature, to bestow those means on all men.

Temp. Yet men cannot be happy without the true religion.

Shep. Right; and it is from hence, and the extreme difficulty, not impossibility, of finding out that religion by the unassisted light of nature, that the necessity of a revelation arises. Besides, altho' a few persons of superior talents and application should discover the true religion, this could be of little use, because merely by their own efforts, and without the assistance of miracles and grace, they could never so propagate their discovery, as to convert the world thereunto, and universally convince mankind of its truth. If all men therefore, stand in absolute need of the true religion, in order to arrive at true and perfect happiness; and if few or none can attain to that religion by the mere light of nature, in its present dark and degenerate circumstances, and in the midst of violent appetites, of rooted prejudices, and of sensible objects and ideas only; it will follow, that nothing but revelation can make us perfectly happy. I will further explain myself, by a parallel instance. If you can earn bread for yourself and family by no other means, but surveying of land, or taking the command of a ship; must you not, in order to a thorough skill in either of those employments, understand geometry?

Temp. I must.

Shep. Can you invent a system of geometry, without the assistance of any book or master?

Temp. I cannot.

Shep.

Shep. Altho' you possibly might, it would, at least, require the greater part, if not the whole of your life, to perfect such a discovery; but, in the mean time, your necessary subsistence would not allow you so much time for speculation; or, if it should, there is a million to one, the tediousness and trouble, attending such a course of study, would deter you from the attempt.

Temp. I should never once think of setting about it.

Shep. If, therefore, you must be a geometrician, the branch of knowlege you stand so much in need of, must be revealed to you by the books of *Euclid*, or some living instructor.

Temp. I now plainly perceive wherein you place the necessity of revelation.

Shep. In this subordinate sense, revelation is necessary, in order to a competent knowlege of natural religion; that is, in order to our arriving at a right idea of God and his attributes, of the relation we stand in to him as the Creator and Governor of the world, and of adequate sanctions to enforce his law. The wisest of the Heathen sages judged, in this, exactly as I do; and made our knowlege of God to depend, not on philosophical inquiries, but on tradition. *Plato* is full of reflections to this purpose; and, not thinking the traditions, which he was acquainted with, sufficient, he talks of a future instructor to be sent from God, to teach the world a more perfect knowlege of religious duties. *The truth is*, says he, speaking, in his first book *De Legibus*, concerning future rewards and punishments, *to determine or establish any thing certain about these matters, in the midst of so many doubts and disputations, is the work of God only.* In his *Phædon*, one of the speakers says to *Socrates*, concerning the immortality of the soul, *I am of the same opinion with you, that, in this life, it is either absolutely impossible, or extremely difficult, to arrive at a clear knowlege in this matter.* In the apology he wrote for *Socrates*, he puts these words into his mouth, on the subject of reformation of manners: *You may pass the remainder of your days in sleep, or a despair of finding out a sufficient expedient for this purpose, if God, in his providence, doth not send you some other instructor.* And in his *Epinomis* he

says, *Let no one take upon him to teach, if God do not lead the way.* In the book *De Mundo*, ascribed to *Aristotle*, we have a remarkable passage to this effect: *It is an old tradition, almost universally received, that all things proceeded from God, and subsist thro' him; and that no nature is self-sufficient, or independent of God's protection and assistance.* In his metaphysics he ascribes the belief of the gods, and of this, that the Deity encompasses and comprehends all nature, to a traditional habit of speaking, handed down from the first men to after-ages. *Cicero*, in his treatise concerning the nature of the gods, introduces *Cotta* blaming those who endeavoured, by argumentation, to prove there are gods, and affirming that this only served to make the point doubtful, which, by the instructions and traditions of their forefathers, had been sufficiently made known to them, and established. *Plutarch*, speaking of the worship paid to a certain ideal divinity, which his friend had called in question, says, *It is enough to believe pursuant to the faith of our ancestors, and the instructions communicated to us in the country where we were born and bred; than which we can neither find out, nor apply, any argument more to be depended on (a).* So much for the necessity of revelation, in respect to natural religion. There are, however, other articles of religion, as necessary to be known as the natural; which we cannot possibly have the least notion of, without revelation: such as the doctrine of the Trinity, of the incarnation, of the satisfaction, of grace, and of the resurrection. To the knowlege of these, revelation is absolutely necessary. Man, in the utmost perfection of his nature, is utterly incapable of conceiving such mysteries, without the assistance of a Divine instructor; nor, after they are revealed, can they be effectually, if at all, propagated, without the aid of miracles.

Dech. We have other matters, Parson, to talk about, before we come to your miracles and mysteries.

Temp. But pray, Mr. *Shepherd*, is the knowlege of these latter articles necessary to salvation?

Shep. No man can be saved, who, having an opportunity of knowing them, neglects it; or who, being once instructed

(a) *Plut. de Amat.*

instructed in them, remains, or turns an unbeliever. As to those who never had any such opportunity, we are noway concerned to inquire what God intends to do with them; and, accordingly, God hath given us, in holy Scripture, little or no grounds whereon to build even an opinion, in a matter so unfathomable, and so wholly foreign to all the valuable purposes of useful knowledge. I have already observed to you, that, on the principles of Deism, they must be all infinitely guilty, in the sight of God, for wilfully acting in the grossest manner against the clear light, theological, as well as moral, which God, say the Deists, hath bestowed, by nature, abundantly on every man. There is no such heavy sentence passed on them by revelation; for if, on the one hand, the means of entering into the Christian covenant are denied them, and many expressions wholly exclude them from the scriptural terms of salvation, it is certain, that, on the other, there is reason given us, in Scripture, to hope that the merits of Christ's death may, in some measure, be extended to them, provided they make the best use they can of their reason, and endeavour to live unblameable lives. For we are told, that Christ died for the sins of the whole world; and God is said to be the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe. This may be rationally concluded, also, from what our Saviour says, in the fifteenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. *John*; where, speaking of those who rejected him after his having appeared to them, preached to them, and wrought miracles for their conviction, he says, *If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father.* From hence it is natural to infer, that sin, at least the sin of resisting the light of his Gospel, will not be imputed to such persons as that light was never communicated to; such persons as Christ never manifested himself, his religion, or his miracles to. To much the same effect St. *Paul* says, *Where no law is, there is no transgression.* From whence we must conclude, that the Heathen are only so far to be condemned for the breach of God's

law, as they have means of knowing it ; and that a revelation, made to others, puts them, to whom it was never made, in no worse condition than they were before. It is, however, a point that will admit of no question, That if the true religion is necessary to refine human nature, to restore it to its original dignity, and promote its real happiness, Christians must be in an infinitely better condition than Pagans. For altho' Christianity should, in many respects, be a false religion: yet its bitterest enemies must confess, that it comes incomparably nearer to truth and nature, than Paganism ; that its morality is purer, its sanctions stronger, and the ideas it conveys of God and his attributes, juster ; and that where-ever, throughout the whole world, its preternatural doctrines are not known or admitted, others, of a nature most repugnant to reason, and most destructive of virtue and happiness, are established. Other men may think as they will ; but, for my own part, I am clear in this, that natural religion hath a necessary dependence on revelation, and on that part of Christianity which may be called supernatural : for religion, in any sense, is but a name, without a well-grounded hope of immortality, which no man ever had, or, for aught we can tell, ever could have had, if some superior Being had not revealed it to him. That man who does not believe in his own immortality, can never conceive himself to be any thing else, than a better kind of brute, concerned only in present and sensible things, given up to appetite and passion, and, after a few years existence in vanity and vexation, perishing for ever in the dreadful gulf of annihilation. Yet, to believe in the immortality of the soul, and to be convinced we shall account hereafter for our actions to Almighty God by any law, is to all men, for all have sinned, a most shocking article of faith, if an atonement for sin is not also believed in ; because it affords us no other prospect, but that of a judgment, wherein as we must plead guilty, and stand self-convicted, so there is nothing to prevent our being condemned by Almighty God to a punishment, of which we know not the limits, either in point of severity or duration. Now, Mr. Templeton, the doctrine of an atonement carries us directly to that

that of Christ's incarnation, and a personal distinction in God. This I hope to prove so clearly hereafter, as to convince you, that the mere light of nature, in our present circumstances, can afford us either no religion, or such an one as can serve no other purpose, but that of driving a rational and thinking mind to despair.

Temp. I foresee this part of our controversy will open an extraordinary scene, which I long to be in the midst of.

Dech. You have, indeed, a prodigious taste for the marvellous in religion; and therefore, the more it is decorated with the scenery and machinery of Divine interpositions, the more apt I am convinced it will be to take your imagination. For this reason, the poet would be your best apostle, or prophet; and the word *vates* might serve you, as it did the old *Romans*, to represent him in both capacities.

Shep. By the words, *divine revelation*, strictly taken, we understand only such religious informations as we could not possibly, or, at least, not without the greatest difficulty, come to the knowledge of by the mere force of our own natural faculties; or, in the lowest sense, we mean, by them, the discovery of such religious truths as mankind in general were actually ignorant of before that discovery was made, whether we suppose the cause of their ignorance to have been neglect, or incapacity. Concerning the incapacity of mankind to find out true religion, we have said enough, already, for our present purpose; but, as to the neglect of those means which nature alone hath afforded them, in order to this important end, if such there are, it hath been so great and universal, as to make instruction not a whit less necessary, than it would have been, had human nature the benefit of no such means. This must, I think, be acknowledged by those who look on Deism to be the true religion, if they consider how few Deists there are in the world, and how long it was before Deism made its appearance. If we are, therefore, so apt to shut our eyes to the light of nature, we certainly stand in need of somewhat foreign to nature, or above it, to teach us what we will not receive from nature. If such positive institutions, as

the sabbath, the sacraments, and a ministry to instruct us, may be highly conducive to this end, the necessity of Divine interposition, without which the aforesaid means cannot be effectually instituted, must be granted. It was the noble sentiment of *Plato*, that *every dependent nature must be governed by a superior nature*; and, from a thorough knowlege of mankind, he concluded, that *they must be governed by the Divine Being*. If, therefore, man is enslaved to wickedness by the corruption of his nature, it is not enough that he knows the law of God, which, of himself, he is unable to observe; he must, in order to a due observance of that law, have some assistance from God, sufficient to counterbalance the prevalence of his natural corruption, and make him free. As the blindness of human understanding requires Divine instruction, so the perversity of human will stands in absolute need of Divine grace, to bend it back again from its inclination to vice, and set it upright. To deny this latter, is to deny that the passions and appetites have a powerful influence on the will, or that they themselves are corrupt and violent; both of which are, I think, too evident, to be disputed; for all the sins of those who believe in God, and know his law, are a full proof of both, since they shew, that a bare knowlege of God, and his will, are not enough to keep us in our duty; which they fail to do in us all, in proportion as the grace of God is wanted, or resisted. Thus, gentlemen, the assistance, required to make us good and happy, is not only scientific, but practical.

Dech. And so all the good we do, and for which we hope to be rewarded with the joys of heaven, must be done, not by ourselves, but by God. This, I think, is childish.

Temp. I believe you do not understand Mr. *Shepherd*. He only says, the assistance of God is necessary to counterbalance the corrupt bias in our nature to wickedness, in order to make us free agents; after which, the good we do, is, in some measure, our own, being the effect of a free choice, and therefore may be rewarded.

Shep. You do me justice. To sum and illustrate what hath passed on this latter topic; The book of nature contains

contains the science of Divine things ; but without instruction we cannot, in the blindness of our present condition, rightly understand its language and characters ; after we are taught to understand them, we cannot, without powerful inducements, be prevailed on to peruse and study the contents of that book ; and, after we have perused it, we are unable to apply the knowledge, we gather from it, to practice, till the impediments, arising from the corruption of our nature, are removed, or balanced, by Divine assistance.

Dech. And when the utmost lights, reason can give us from the book of nature, are attained to, still a second volume is wanting, to teach us mysterious and preternatural religion. It is now near three, so that there is hardly sufficient time left to dress ourselves.

The End of the Third DIALOGUE.

D I A L O G U E IV.

DECHAINED,
TEMPLETON,

CUNNINGHAM,
SHEPHERD.

Temp. SINCE we finished our yesterday's conference, I have been trying to recollect what passed, and to extract from it a settled system of thinking on religious subjects, that may serve me during my whole life. But whether it is that my memory fails me, or that my former high opinion of the natural light still retains a corner of my assent, and from thence batters whatever I attempt to build, I am still considerably embarrassed.

Shep. This is natural. It shews a sensible and ingenious mind to preserve a mean between too lightly divorcing a former system, and too obstinately declining the espousal of a new one. But, while two opposite principles, at the head of their respective arguments, contend for preference, while the mind, in respect to the decline of former opinions, and the growth of new ones, is as it were molting, there is a struggle, a disorder, felt in an honest and rational breast, which others are strangers to, who either, thro' a too easy wantonness of mind, know not how to be chaste to any principle, or, thro' a stupid immobility, remain for ever riveted to their first attachments, altho' contracted without examination, and, consequently, without sufficient reason or grounds. Your present uneasiness, however, will vanish as soon as it ought, I mean, as soon as the arguments on one side so far preponderate, as to make this yet necessary wariness no longer useful. What Mr. *Dechaine* said the other day, will hasten the re-settlement of your thoughts.

Dech. What, a compliment from Mr. *Shepherd*!

Shep. A little patience, Sir. You said something to this effect; that, as the ends of religion are of more

importance to us than the use of our outward senses, the ideas it gives us of God and our duty, ought, if possible, to be more clear and determinate to our reason, than the distinction between colours to our eye. And, indeed, I must confess, if nature were the only canal through which God intended to convey the absolutely necessary knowledge of himself, and all human duties, its voice would have been made a little louder, and more intelligible, to all men, and all capacities, than we find it is: it must, perhaps, as you have frequently insisted, be so plain, that there could be no controversy about it. Hunger, thirst, love, fear, and other natural motions, are universally strong and evident in all men. Were religious and moral obligations notified to us by our Maker, only thro' the light of nature, they too would by nature, one should think, be universally evident and incontestable. Yet we find the wisest unassisted men, in all ages, have differed widely about them; and those who trusted most to their own abilities, who rejected traditional knowledge, and drew all from within themselves, have given us the most absurd schemes of religion and morality. If a man were disposed to shut his eyes against all other lights but the natural, and put himself on the mere dictates of philosophy, shall he trust only to his own sentiments and reason? If he does, let him first give back all he hath got by instruction and conversation, by reading, by business, by the laws of his country, &c. and then let us see what his unassisted nature will be able to produce. If he finds it defective, we will allow him all the antient and modern philosophers, who drew the first principles and hints of all they have delivered to the world from instruction, and let him try if he can extract a right system of obligation and duty from their lucubrations. Will he join himself to the *Stoics*? No; nature refutes their doctrine of apathy, and places a wide difference between pleasure and pain: its infirmities make their pretensions to infallibility and perfection ridiculous. Shall he herd with the *Epicureans*? If he does, as religion will be wholly out of the question, and pleasure the only good, he must quit society, which can have no other foundation but religion, and make one

among goats or swine, as *Horace* styles himself, while an *Epicurean*. But as it is extremely slavish and disagreeable to be wedded to any set of principles, the *Pyrrhonian* philosophy will relieve him from their ridiculous notions, and also from the endless refinements of the *Athenian*, *Cyrenaic*, and other schools. But what sort of a father, husband, neighbour, or commonwealth's-man is he to be, who hath no opinions, no principles? Is he, as to matters of religion, to take up with the theology of *Egypt*, *Greece*, *Rome*, or any other country that contrived a religion, and made gods for itself? No; this will set him on his knees to a parricide, an adulterer, a drunkard, a dog, an onion, a wooden, a rotten god, or a devil. Can *Socrates* or *Plato* relieve him, and dictate a right religion to him? No; they confess the necessity of revelation. If such men as these are unable to instruct him sufficiently in his duty, and bind it on his conscience with motives and authorities so cogent and awful, as to keep the corrupt tendencies and wild sallies of his nature within due bounds, much less will *Seneca*, *Marcus Aurelius*, *Plutarch*, *Hierocles*, &c. be able to do it; for they only build on the older philosophers, already found insufficient: and, besides, if in any thing they come nearer to reason, it is as evidently owing to the Christian religion, as the reformation of Paganism made by *Julian*. If he hopes for information from either the religion or philosophy of the antient Pagan world, he will find himself as much disappointed and out of humour with both, as *Lucian* was; and if he be of a ludicrous turn, as ready to make a jest of both. If he applies himself to our *English* philosophers, he will find the greater part of them declaring and arguing strenuously for revelation at one time, and, at another, advancing, and endeavouring to maintain, particular schemes of their own, consistent neither with revelation, nor one another. As to the rest, who declare for Deism, he will perceive they borrow all their materials from the former; adopt their inconsistencies; speak for and against revelation, and future rewards and punishments; for and against innate ideas of God, and moral duty; for and against the being of immaterial substances; make the knowledge and obli-

gation of moral duties to arise, some from an internal sense, with *Cumberland* and *Hutcheson*; others, from reason, and the fitnesses of things, with *Clarke* and *Balguy*; others, from the laws of society, as *Hobbes* and his followers, who have not even a pretender to Christianity for a precedent. He will find them dealing artfully and doubly in every thing; and, what renders them most unfit for his purposes, referring him intirely to himself, and bantering him with repeated assurances, that he already knows all those matters perfectly well, about which he is seeking with so much solicitude for satisfaction.

Dech. This referring of a man to himself, you may dress out as ridiculously as you please; and you may teach people to look for the knowlege of themselves without them; but, surely, if any man would know himself, he ought to look within, and converse with himself. It is by that method only that he can perceive his own strength or weakness. He can never know what is amiss with him, till he examines himself. His sentiments and reason speak a plain and expressive language; but if, instead of listening to them, he will ramble about from one quack, or undertaker of minds, to another; if he must needs look for himself in others, and for the knowlege of his duty in books; it is little wonder, and as little matter, if he spend his days in ignorance. The disorders of our minds proceed from without; and it is in vain to look for our cure from that quarter, from whence the malady is received. If my Lord *Shaftesbury's* advice concerning soliloquy and self-converse were followed, we should want no other instructors but ourselves. Do we not acquire the knowlege of all other things, by considering and examining those things themselves? And do we hope to know what is within us, if we do not consider and examine ourselves? Our duty may be wrote in strong and capital characters upon our own hearts; but if we never read nor peruse ourselves, it will be hard to convince us we have any such provision made for information within; and if we neglect this, as there is no other source of religious or moral knowlege to draw from, we must be for ever in the dark as to our duty, our disorders, and their cure.

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But, no doubt on't, they, who make a livelihood by prescribing to the souls of men, are in the right on't to render people as distrustful of themselves as they can, to call them out, from the faithful monitor within, to a slavish dependence on their venal instructions, and to put out their eyes, that they may be paid for leading them about, the Lord knows whither.

Shep. But we Parsons recommend nothing more earnestly to our hearers than meditation and self-examination, which are as good as *Shaftesbury's* soliloquy and self-converse.

Decb. Yes ; but you pretend to know us better, than we ourselves. You will needs guide us thro' our own minds, and are at every turn for finding out disorders, which you alone can cure.

Shep. Some disorders of the mind may be cured, like some distempers of the body, by medicine of its own. But there are others, that require a physician. Besides, it often happens, that as we stand in need of advice to direct us how to cure our own bodily ailments, so in like manner we frequently want the skill of some one more knowing than ourselves, to point to us the very natural cures for our mental complaints, that are placed within ourselves, and to teach us how to apply them. The philosophy of *Shaftesbury*, which he modestly calls *a revelation made by him to mankind*, consists in seeking out resources within ourselves, which nevertheless he takes upon him to instruct us in the manner of doing. He enlarges very sensibly and agreeably upon the topic of self-converse, in his advice to an author ; altho' it must be owned, in the most affected terms and phrases. It is true indeed, that a man, in order to be good and happy, ought, by all means, to know himself ; and that soliloquy and meditation are absolutely necessary to this important science. But if a man should trust wholly to his own contemplations on himself, ignorance and vanity would infallibly be the result. Without conversing with the world, and putting ourselves to frequent trials by affairs and intercourse with mankind, we can never furnish ourselves with materials for secret meditation. Without having tried our strength, our weakness, our incli-

inclinations and aversions, we shall want experiments to reason from. A work of this sort can by no means be effected merely in solitude, and at a distance from the world. He who mixes with the world, hath frequent opportunities of trying his own strength, and seeing in what particularly it consists, and how far he may depend on it. Nor hath he fewer occasions of seeing his own infirmities. This accident puts him in mind, that he is timorous; that adventure discovers to him, that he is envious. This acquaintance lets him know, that he is proud and choleric; that tells him, he is rash and injudicious. Having collected a sufficient stock of such observations, it will be then a proper time for him to meet himself in his closet, or the lonely walk, and cast up the full accounts of himself; which if he does with impartiality and penetration, he will find in the result, that he is a weak and irregular creature, and cannot depend on himself; that his understanding is dark and short-sighted, and his passions wild and ungovernable. What then must he do?

Dich. He must arm himself the best he can against such lapses as he may have made on former occasions.

Shep. But he finds, to his great mortification, that he is unable to form resolutions of sufficient firmness to withstand the trials he is to expect, and to subdue the stubbornness of his own degenerate nature; and that, little as he can do to prevent the repetitions of his former weaknesses, he can do still less to defend himself against the attacks of surprize, and unforeseen trials. What resource hath he then in himself, or what supplies of strength can he draw from his own breast, the source of all his infirmities? Why, none at all. They are the irregularities of that very breast he wants to reduce and correct, and can hope for no succours from thence. Which way then is he to turn himself? What ally is he to call in? There is one at hand, and present with him, who neither wants compassion, nor power, to assist him; and that is God. If he be as sensible, as his experience ought to have made him, of his own insufficiency, and humbly applies himself to this never-failing friend of the lowly and sincere in distress, he shall quickly find relief.

It is true, this powerful assistant will not appear visibly to him, nor converse with him, as one man does with another; having done that already in his word, where the remedies of all his disorders, and the bridle necessary for all his headstrong irregularities, are set forth to him in the strongest terms; nay, where his own infirmities and corruptions are more truly represented to him by that wisdom, which made and knows him, than it is possible for the most severe scrutiny he can make into himself, to do it. There he sees, that his corruptions are original and natural; that his heart is desperately wicked; and that he hath the world, the devil, and his own fleshly lusts, to contend with. There he sees the omnipresence and perpetual inspection of Almighty God into the deepest recesses, and most secret thoughts, of his heart. There he finds the gracious assistance of God in all emergencies, above the strength of nature, by the words of eternal truth faithfully promised to him. Let him then quit his conversation with his deceitful self, and enter into close conference with God, who will not lye to him, like his own vain and fallacious heart. Do not such and such of my dispositions, he may say, lead me to actions pleasing in the sight of God? And will he not crown those actions, if I perform them, with infinite happiness, and true glory? Do not certain other propensities in my degenerate nature prompt me to actions extremely offensive to him? And are not the punishments he threatens to such, in his word, if I commit them, inconceivably severe? Is he present every-where? And will he be with me when I mount the stage of action, as well as here in my closet or walk? What have I then to do, but to imprint on my mind a deep and perpetual apprehension of his presence and inspection? So shall he become to me a continual monitor, or guide, in all I think, speak, or do. My infirmities supplied by his strength; and my passions awed by his majestic presence; I may hope to hold on steadily towards the great purposes and good ends of my being. Here, Sir, is a way of establishing, between the soul and God, a most useful and happy intercourse; which no lights from within a man's self are able to introduce him to, nor all the philosophy,

losophy of the world can point out to him. I will suppose the mere pleasure of doing good, and abhorrence of evil, to be natural, and as strong in all men as you please ; but would not our motives to good actions, and detriments to evil ones, be much stronger, if we believed, that a Being of infinite wisdom knew all we thought or did, and would gloriously reward, or terribly punish, all our actions, and even intentions ?

Dech. I must own I think so.

Shep. In that case, no secret villainies could hope to escape unpunished, tho' they might evade the laws, and screen themselves from the animadversions of men.

Dech. True.

Shep. And a good man on the rack, or in flames, for the cause of truth, or in the service of his country, would have good reason to stand to his purpose, and brave the pains and terrors of death, if he were fully persuaded, that an infinitely gracious and powerful Being stood ready to receive his soul, and cherish it with the tenderness of a most affectionate Father, to all eternity.

Dech. Undoubtedly.

Shep. If all the world were of the same principles with this man, what a different face, from the present, must you suppose this would put on all the affairs of life ! What an Heaven would it turn this earth into !

Dech. No doubt on't, the consequence would be most happy.

Shep. Consider, Sir, the passions of men ; are they not very strong ?

Dech. Yes, generally speaking.

Shep. Consider likewise their understandings ; are they not for the most part dark, and incapable either of moderating those passions, or fixing them on proper objects ?

Dech. Men themselves are to blame for that.

Shep. Be that as it will, the thing itself is an incontestable fact. But further, pray, Sir, consider habit : does it not add a kind of second nature, nay, rather, a sort of necessity, to the passions, when it happens to coincide, and graft itself on them ?

Dech. It does indeed.

[*Shep.* Pray tell me, now ; are the inconsiderable re-
wards

wards of the moral sense, altho' never so inviolably conferred on good actions, able to bridle such passions and habits, prompted and solicited by greater wealth, honour, and power, than the society can afford to deal out to every man? He, Mr. *Dechaine*, who foregoes that grandeur, which he hath an opportunity of seizing, must expect an equivalent some other way. On the other hand, are the mere reproaches of the moral sense a sufficient bar to a wicked action, when some furious passion rushes to the tempting object, with all the violence of a corrupt nature, and an inveterate habit? Consider *Sextus* and *Cæsar*; the first entering the chamber of *Lucretia*, and the latter on the further bank of the *Rubicon*.

Dech. And pray consider *Osbert* in the chamber with *Brocard's* wife; *Valentinian* the third, with that of *Maximus*; and *Alexander* the sixth, preparing a banquet for his rich cardinals. These, Mr. *Shepherd*, were *Christians*, and had your mighty sanctions before their eyes.

Shep. Christians I am sure they were not.

Dech. What, were there Popes who were no Christians?

Shep. Pray, Mr. *Dechaine*, don't all Christians believe in the omnipresence, omniscience, infinite justice, and power of God? And do they not expect a judgment to come, with an Heaven or Hell to follow it?

Dech. I believe they do.

Shep. Could *Alexander* the sixth then have been a Christian?

Dech. It does not concern me to say, whether they were Christians or not: but surely, if there be any reason for believing in Christ, a Pope must be acquainted with it.

Shep. You despise the Papists for pinning their faith on the papal sleeve, and yet don't perceive, that you pin your own infidelity on the very same filthy spot of that sleeve. If we consider the anarchy and misery, made by various contending passions in one mind, where avarice and prodigality, anger and fear, pride and envy, struggle for superiority, and distract the soul, we shall find nothing in such a mind, capable of procuring peace, or establishing virtue; and therefore, in order either to relieve it from its own grievous disorders, or to prevent its running into the most criminal enormities, the fear of
God

God is to be called in. Let us suppose, Mr. *Dechaine*, an island peopled by *Philip*, his son *Alexander* the Great, *Archelaus* of *Macedonia*, the *Dionysii*, *Pisistratus*, *Silofon*, *Atrous*, *Thyestes*, *Egisthus*, *Paris*, *Achilles*, *Marius*, *Sylla*, *Cæsar*, *Tiberius*, *Nero*, *Heliogabalus*, *Montfort* Earl of *Leicesters*, *Richard* the third, *Cromwell*, *Rhodope*, *Lais*, *Parisatis*, *Cleopatra*, *Tullia* the wife of *Tarquin*, *Agrippina*, *Messalina*, *Margaret* of *France*, *Catharine de Medicis*, and a competent number of such spirits; you will readily grant, I believe, that plots, rapes, treachery, murder, &c. would be the very first things they would lay their heads and hands to.

Dech. That I shall.

Shep. Let reason be called in to regulate and suppress these enormities; will she be able, think you, to do it?

Dech. I believe hardly.

Shep. Introduce philosophy, and let her try her skill: perhaps she may convert the whole island to stoicism and apathy.

Dech. That would be a strange metamorphosis.

Shep. Well; let us suppose these islanders, in order to defend themselves from one another, to enter into a society, and make laws for its support and regulation. What think you? Will those laws be well observed, and justice duly administered?

Dech. They will be of no use, in my opinion, as the parties are all contemners of law and justice.

Shep. Human expedients, therefore, being of no efficacy, what think you would be the consequence, if God should shew himself on his throne, with Heaven and Hell in view, to the assembly of these islanders?

Dech. I believe, while such a prospect was before their eyes, they would be as far from committing any sort of wickedness, as an equal number of the very best people that ever lived.

Shep. Yes, all their outrageous passions would immediately subside. Such a view would in an instant bear down the most insolent and rebellious spirits among them. Now faith, Sir, when it is strong and lively, puts us in the presence of Almighty God, puts us into the bar, and places Heaven and Hell in a manner sensibly before us.

Dech.

Dech. And yet in this very bar people have found the way to be as wicked, as elsewhere. Usurpation, murder, treason, poisoning, are Christian, as well as Pagan enormities.

Shep. Such crimes are less frequent in Christian countries, than they were among the Pagans, as is evident to any man, in the least acquainted with history. But have we not already agreed, Sir, that if people of the worst dispositions saw God present with them, and watching their behaviour at all times, they could not be guilty of such monstrous actions?

Dech. Yes.

Shep. Have we not also agreed, that if their faith amounted to a full assurance, it would prevent their wickedness, almost as effectually, as if God were always visibly present?

Dech. I believe it possibly might, if their faith was very strong.

Shep. It follows then, that the wicked actions, committed by persons professing themselves to be Christians, were not done by real believers, or Christians.

Dech. And it follows again from thence, that as those wicked professors had an equal opportunity of seeing into the evidence of Christianity with other Christians, that evidence must be deficient, or they had been believers.

Shep. All I dispute for at present, is the excellent nature and tendency of our religion. If this way of arguing is to be admitted, the Christian evidence must appear very strong; since by far the greater number of those, to whom it hath been conveyed, were convinced, and restrained, by the faith arising out of conviction, from all sorts of crimes. It is not only the force of an argument, but also the strength of reason, and candour of mind, with which it is received, that produces conviction. Men bred up in Christian countries, but under the unhappy influence of a most untoward nature, of ignorance, luxury, and bad examples, are not likely to lend an open ear to arguments, which, if admitted, must put a severe bridle on all their passions and corruptions. Passion, we may be sure, had in most of those wicked men, who professed Christianity, little or no faith to
struggle

struggle with, and faith little or no knowlege, candour, or reflection, to found itself on.

Dech. If such may be the failure of a religion, that requires to be taught, commend me to that which does not depend on parents, priests, or masters, who may neglect to instruct us, or defeat their own instructions by their bad examples.

Shep. If I found such a religion springing up of itself within me, I should as little trouble myself to inquire farther about religion, as you; or, if I found it planted by mere nature in the minds of others, I should certainly spare all the pains I take with my flock.

Dech. If you had not nature for an assistant in teaching these sheep of yours, you could do nothing. She, like a good curate, does all that work, the honour of which you, like other conceited rectors, are willing to take to yourself; I mean, all the work that is worth the doing, that is, making honest men. But as the Christian methods of making men honest are continually canted up to the people, and not a word said to them about their own internal and natural principles, they themselves come at length to ascribe their honesty to your instructions, though, in reality, it proceeds intirely from their own natures. Thus the physician, who prescribes a little powder of liquorice, perhaps a bolus of brick-dust, or some other trifle, is paid for the cure, tho' it is wrought intirely by the strength of nature. Doctor, I will tell thee a parable, which may serve to illustrate this matter better to thee, than any thing I know. A certain poor man travelling homeward with two or three of his children, they grew lazy, and complained they were not able to proceed any farther; upon which the father cut horses for them from the neighbouring hedge, and, having mounted his children thereon, they finished their journey with great briskness.

Shep. This, I think, will not prove, that real horses are not necessary on some occasions. In matters of a low and sensible nature, such as painting or geometry, we require to be taught, in order to a short and easy acquisition of knowlege; altho' mankind, by improving, one on the inventions of another, can make a considerable

able progress, and may at length arrive to perfection in such matters. But then it is because the objects of those, and such-like arts, are perpetually in their sight; and their properties, so far as is needful for their purposes, easily enough discovered. But it is otherwise in respect to religion, the objects, and first principles of which, lie a little farther out of the reach of apprehension; so far, indeed, that it is a question with many, whether it is possible to arrive at them by the strength of our unassisted faculties. This, Sir, makes a wide difference. We can discover a natural beauty in sensible objects with an eye untaught; but there are other beauties, which most people never see, till they are pointed out to them; and, it may be, not perfectly even then. A right or wrong in actions, which some affect to call a beauty or deformity, may, in some glaring cases, be discovered by a mind uninstructed; but, in other cases, this discovery, either thro' the natural obscurity of the distinction between right and wrong, or for expedition's sake, requires to be made by instruction. Yet, when this distinction, whether by nature or teaching, is discovered, unless other discoveries, still more difficult, are made at the same time, it carries nothing of morality or obligation with it, and is almost useless; because few people, if any, will do that which is right, merely because it is so; or abstain from that which is wrong, purely because it is wrong. But if you annex honour and profit to the first, and shame and punishment to the last, I mean, such as temporal laws can confer or inflict, these will superinduce that kind of obligation called civil, and that only. This obligation, however, will be very insufficient, unless these rewards and punishments can, by some means or other, be constantly and equitably administered; and unless the legal honour and profit, or shame and suffering, are considerably and apparently greater, than the honour and profit to be got by doing ill, and the shame and suffering, that may, in many cases, attend the doing well. Mankind are influenced and determined in their actions, as *Shaftesbury*, *Tindal*, and all men, who know either themselves, or others, allow, by self-love. Now the higher the rewards of doing good, and the punishments of doing ill, are carried,

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the stronger the tie to good actions becomes. If they are infinite, the tie to virtue becomes infinitely strong, when it is duly apprehended. But, as I said, care must be taken to have a due administration of these encouragements to virtue, and detriments to vice; otherwise they will, in proportion to the defects of this administration, lose of their force. Now this can never be provided for, without infinite wisdom, justice, and power, in the aforesaid administration. As soon as God, who alone is possessed of those high attributes, is known, or believed to preside over the world, and to prepare such rewards for virtue, and punishments for vice; then, and not till then, the distinction between right and wrong becomes religious, moral, and obligatory; and it also becomes the interest, and must be the choice, of every truly rational being, to act in pursuance of that distinction on all occasions, and against all the temptations this world can throw in its way. I return, Gentlemen, to this argument, after having spoken to it more than once before, because I am sensible, Deism is mainly founded on, and chiefly recommended to the looser part of mankind by, a disbelief of future eternal rewards and punishments; and because in this article of our faith consists the marrow and force of all religion. The arguments therefore for it, altho' they are clearly demonstrative, can never be too often, or too pressingly, inculcated, especially as there is, in the depravity of human nature, a strong reluctance to them.

Dech. I am sure you must be little acquainted with the writings of our Deists, or you would own they speak in the highest terms of religion, and of future punishments and rewards, as things taken for granted.

Shep. It is true, *Shaftesbury*, in his inquiry into virtue, speaks favourably of future rewards and punishments, and of religion, in general terms; nay, and even of the difficulty of finding out God (1). Both he and *Tindal*, when for the present, to recommend their systems, they turn their best side to us, say, the law of nature is universally clear, intelligible, and perfect; yet, in numberless places, when they would either run down the in-

structions

(1) Book the first, p. 3. 54.

structions given by others, or exalt their own, talk abundantly of the moral ignorance and barbarism of mankind, and of the necessity of instruction (1). They both, as I have already shewn, labour to prove, that virtue is its own perfect reward, and vice its own perfect punishment, in this life; that the religion and law of nature are perfect, and a rule of action to God himself; that we ought to love God for his own sake, and not for the rewards he gives (2). I grant, we ought to love God for his own excellence, as the most amiable of all objects; and would love him infinitely more than all things, were we as inclinable, as we ought to be, to love that most which is best, and did we know him as well as we do other things: but ought we not also to love him for the favours we have already received from him? And surely this love ought not to hinder, but rather strongly excite, our utmost endeavours to serve and please him, on account of the good things he hath promised, and the miseries he hath threatened. As to our loving virtue for its own sake, which *Shaftesbury* speaks of, as distinct from the love of God; I can only say, that as some love, and others hate it, no matter whether by nature or habit, the love of it can never be put on a more natural, a more safe, and generous footing, than to love it because it is the will of God. Nor can we have any reason for hating vice so strong, as because God hates it, and will punish it. He who places the judgment of God, and his eternal indignation at vice, before his eyes, walks by a wise and safe rule. Surely it is the most reasonable thing in the world for a poor weak man, who knows himself to be every moment in danger of transgressing, to fear the displeasure of an infinitely wise, just, and powerful Judge. If, however, this fear be strong and uniform, it will preserve the man, who is blessed with it, in his duty: and, in a little time, infallibly guide him up, through virtue, and an innocent conscience, to the love of God. Having once attained to this height, he hath then the noblest principle in the world to act on. He denies himself, as vile and unworthy; he goes out from himself,

(1) Adv. to an author, vol. 1. p. 299.
the creation, ch. 7.

(2) Chr. as old as

himself, as a low and despicable creature; and, transported with the most pure and exalted of all emotions, fixes his heart on the most illustrious and glorious of all beings, the most gracious of all benefactors, the source of all good, and the centre of all duty and happiness. As he does not consider himself, or his own reason, as his legislator and master, so he does not seek to gratify or obey himself. As he does not look upon a Patron, or a King, to be the first object of his services, so his attachments are not so much to parties or kingdoms, as to the whole intellectual world, of which God is the Head and Father. A Christian, it is true, hath greater reason to fear God, than a Deist; but, as he knows God to be the farthest of all beings from tyranny, so his fear can never become slavish; but is usually the beginning of true wisdom, which banishes all other fears; and altho' it springs from this low and humble principle, yet it rears itself to Heaven, and ripens into Divine love. A Christian hath also infinitely stronger reasons for loving God, than the light of nature, tho' you suppose it never so great, can dictate to a Deist. For what can nature tell the latter, but that God hath made him; impressed a law on his heart, by which he will justly judge him; and either given him, or left him to, such sinful dispositions, as make it impossible for him to conform himself to that law? This is a most shocking information, and tends strongly downward to despair or Atheism. But the Christian is informed by his religion, that God schemes for his happiness with the tenderness of a most compassionate Father; that his Son hath taken the nature of man upon him, and, by a most painful death, made atonement for his sins to Divine justice, and thereby delivered him from the dreadful curse of the law; and that the Spirit of God, knowing the manifold infirmities of human nature, like a kind and faithful friend, leads him, as it were, by the hand, through all the temptations and dangers of this wretched life. Here is a foundation for the sweetest hopes, and inducements to the most ardent love. Our Libertines, in order to put a specious face on their destructive system, speak highly of benevolence of humanity, of public love; and shew as little of it in
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their actions, as any sort of men on earth. But were their benevolence really as extensive as their pretences, it could reach no farther than the boundaries of this narrow world, nay, not so far, but only to such as have not, by any real or fancied injury, provoked their resentment; and what is this to Christian charity, that does good for evil, prays for its persecutors, and forms one universal society of God, of angels, of dead and living saints, of all, in short, that is good, either in Heaven or on earth? The benevolence of a Deist terminates, at best, in man; but may be shewn to an unworthy object, may be perverted into a vile affection by the mixture of other passions, and hath always the lowest kind of self-interest, mere temporal preservation and well-being, which mankind, united in society, mutually promote for one another, as its only motive; and, consequently, whenever a man is severely treated, or basely used, by the world, turns to downright misanthropy.

Dech. No, Sir; natural benevolence still warms the heart with sentiments of humanity for even bad men and enemies; and natural justice will not suffer us to hate one man, on account of the injuries we have received from another.

Shep. Whatever nature may do in a Deist, when left to itself, it may, surely, do as much in a Christian, who is obliged, moreover, by an express command, to love his enemies, and do good for evil. It is a dictate of nature, to hate our enemies; and it is an infirmity too incident to nature, to be often out of humour, even with our friends and benefactors: but Christian charity, having God for its chief object, and loving mankind, not so much on their own account, as for the sake of God, with eternal happiness and celestial glory for its motive, is in no danger of being perverted by low and unworthy views or affections, nor of being destroyed by disgust. As God is the only source of all good, so he ought to be the principal and final object of all love; the centre to which all the thoughts, desires, and actions, of intelligent beings ought to point. As lines, tending directly to one common centre, can never divaricate, nor obstruct one another, but must still draw nearer and nearer,

the more they approach towards that centre; so, in like manner, all true Christians, endeavouring to approach the universal object of love, instead of being carried out of their way by other objects, so as to interfere with, and cross one another, perpetually draw nearer and closer together. All virtue consists of holding on steadily towards this grand point in view, and all the degrees of virtue in the swifter or slower, the more or less constant, tendency of this pursuit, and all vice in deviating from it to other views or ends. As all lines, meeting in a common centre, unite and lose themselves therein; so, when all our views, affections, and courses, meet in God, we shall there find true charity and union with him, and all that are his: we shall rejoice to lay aside that particular self, which hath hitherto been the motive of all we did, and, becoming one with God, shall, to all eternity, have no other self but him. Now, as no line can be drawn towards a centre, but on some *substratum*, or area; so no man can come to God, but through his Son. It is by the rectitude and strength of his covenant, and the saving merits of his death alone, that man, weak and unworthy in himself, can possibly come to God.

Dech. After all you have said about Christian charity, I cannot see that you found it, or any other Christian principle, on ought else than mere self-love, between which and charity there seems to be so great a contrariety, as makes it impossible for the one to arise out of the other.

Shep. Both *Shaftesbury* and *Tindal*, far as they carry the principle of benevolence, make self-love the supreme principle in man (1): it is, however, certain, that this, like all our other affections, being blind in itself, requires the assistance of reason to direct its motions towards such objects and means as may promote the real happiness, and not merely gratify the mistaken or depraved appetites, of the man. And if the greatest happiness of man is placed beyond the sight of reason, then reason itself stands in need of information and direction. If man had no other principle but that of self-love,

(1) *Christ. old as creat.* ch. 2. *Shaftes.* vol. I. p. 310.

love, which is the opinion of many, and that were sufficient to make him good and happy, as far as a mere motive is capable of contributing to that end ; in that case, we should have no occasion to inquire about any other principle or motive. But I think it easy to shew, that we have also a principle of benevolence, or charity ; and as easy, likewise, to trace this principle of charity to self-love, as its true source, notwithstanding the contrariety you apprehend between them, which, if I be not greatly mistaken, never happens, but through some error of judgment, that leads us to a wrong kind of self-love, or charity. Don't you love him, Sir, who does you some considerable service, or good office ?

Dech. I do.

Shep. And does not your love proceed from the pleasure he gives you by that act of kindness ?

Dech. No doubt on't, it does.

Shep. It is therefore the love of yourself, that produces love in you towards your benefactor ; and does not this love, thus produced, move you sometimes to make him such returns as are a real loss to yourself, of money, interest, or somewhat else, on which you set a value ?

Dech. I never consider those returns as losses, because they gratify my love.

Shep. You certainly do ; for I believe you will own, you would rather chuse to shew your gratitude, if it could be done, and would answer his occasions as well, by services that would cost you nothing. Besides, to gratify your love for him, is, strictly speaking, as selfish, as gratifying your love for any thing else ; for, in all such cases, you love the object for the good you derive from it, and you carry your love into execution, on account of the pleasure you find in so doing. What is it induces you to love your own, rather than a foreign country ?

Dech. My life, my liberty, my property, are all defended by my own, and often attacked by other countries.

Shep. Would you risque your fortune, or your life, for your country ?

Dech. Yes, if I thought, by so doing, I should render it any signal service.

Shep. It appears, then, that you love your country only because you love yourself; and that self-love may induce a man to sacrifice even his life.

Dech. But what is it makes me love mankind in general?

Shep. It is a doubt with me, whether you love all mankind, or not; and whether you do not love only those, from whom you have received, or hope to receive, some benefit; and hate those who have done, or are likely to do, you an injury.

Dech. But I do love those, from whom I neither have received, nor hope to receive, any services, merely because they are men.

Shep. There is, I own, such a thing as natural affection in men towards one another; but whether this affection springs from self-love, is a question not easily decided. You love mankind, perhaps, because they are men; that is, because they are men like yourself, and like those you love: this sort of affection, however, which is not very strong, is almost wholly habitual, and may proceed originally from self-love. You are a man, and therefore, according to the saying of the comedian, you think every thing, that relates to mankind, concerns yourself, in some measure.

Dech. Upon your selfish principle, those men, such as *Codrus*, and the *Decii*, who sacrificed their lives purely for others, must have been mad.

Shep. If those persons did not hope for a reward in another world, of more value than life, they were certainly the most vain-glorious and delirious of all mankind. No sober man gives away his fortune, nor even a part of it, for nothing; much less will he sacrifice his life, for which any man, in his senses, would give up his fortune, tho' it were never so great, till he is strongly possessed with hopes of an equivalent. He is absolutely mad, who, when he might avoid it, without any such hopes, runs himself into dangers or distresses, or gives up life itself; and he is next to a mad-man, or a fool who does the same on precarious hopes of an equivalent.

Those libertines who are at a great deal of pains to banish from the minds of others the hopes and fears of futurity, are little better than mad : for what are they to get for all their trouble ? what recompence for the infamous character of seducers, since infidelity hath no rewards ? The principle of self-love, and self-preservation, is certainly the most powerful of all our instincts ; of which, if they must be called laws, this is certainly the first. He that denies this, and says he loves others better than himself, is either a fool, or a liar. If, merely for a friend, a mistress, or the public, he sacrifices his life, he is a fool, who grossly mistakes his own interest ; or a mad-man, who knowingly acts against it. No wise man gives up his self-interest in one thing, but in order to promote it in another, that seems greater, or more certain. As to life, there is no equivalent for it but eternal life ; and as we can have no tolerable assurance of that but by revelation, so no man can rationally chuse death, but upon Christian principles. No man, therefore, can attain to true heroism, but the Christian ; he, alone, can have reason to deny himself the honours, profits, and pleasures of this world, which dishonestly, or evil arts, might offer him ; or to meet death, with all its terrors, from which cowardice or treachery might deliver him.

Dech. Your picture of a Christian hero makes him but a mere mercenary.

Shep. And yours, of any other sort of hero, makes him an errant mad-man, or a fool.

Dech. There can be no hero without virtue, nor virtue without disinterestedness. That is, no doubt on't, a fine sort of virtue and heroism, which encounters a less evil for fear of a greater, and which, in hopes of an infinite reward, surrenders a trifling interest or pleasure. At this rate, the most narrow-hearted miser, the basest coward, or even the vilest thief, may be set up for an hero.

Shep. It is true, they might, if they had sense enough to see and consider their greatest interest : and surely nothing, Sir, can so strongly recommend any principle, as that, if it were heartily closed with, it would infallibly transform the very worst of men into saints and heroes.

We may say, on the other side, that yours is a most glorious kind of virtue, that is either unable to prevail on a man voluntarily to undergo the slightest suffering; or, if it does, makes it folly and distraction in him to do it.

Dech. Is he, then, a fool, who suffers for virtue? Or he an honest man, who is hindered from stealing merely by the gallows?

Shep. These questions are only calculated to amuse. He, Sir, is a fool, who suffers death for a name; and virtue, without religion, without love for, and dependence on God, without any manner of good to be found in it, or derived from it, is but a mere name. He who is kept from stealing, only by the gallows, is far from being honest; because he will lye, perjure, cheat, and steal too, as often as he can do it with hopes of escaping the gallows. But he who abstains from stealing, and all other immoral actions, because he is sure God will see and punish the committal of them, will never commit an ill action; and he who will never do an ill action, is certainly a very honest man; nay, he loves a good action, and hates an ill one, on account of their consequences, and because God does: and therefore the gallows, or any other kind of punishment, is not all he considers. You will own, nevertheless, that he who is deterred from stealing by the fear of the gallows, is a good man, in comparison of him who steals under the very gallows. But he is better, who, in hopes of a glorious reward, as well as for fear of a most grievous punishment, resists temptations, denies himself unlawful pleasures, and does all the good he can. And he is best of all, who, having the inferior affections and passions bridled by the prospect of eternal punishments and rewards, raises the soul itself, by love and gratitude, to a noble desire and endeavour to please God, as the most beneficent and amiable of all beings. This man admires the beauty of a good, and abhors the foulness of an ill action, as much, nay, more than any man, who is less religious; because, whatsoever lights mere nature may lend other men to see them with, he hath the same; and, besides, considers the one as infinitely displeasing, and the other as extremely acceptable, to that Being, whose goodness he loves, and
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whose power he reveres, above all things. Any goodness, in the natural man, is a compliment to his own nature, and to himself; but the goodness of a Christian is love and duty to his greatest friend and benefactor: his hopes and fears do honour to God, because they are so many testimonies of confidence and veneration for Almighty God, founded on faith in his own laws. They are less selfish, too, than the pretended virtue of the self-sufficient and natural man (which makes him his own director, his own governor, his own punisher and rewarder) inasmuch as they terminate without himself, in that gracious Being, to whom he is infinitely beholden, in that just Judge, from whom he can hope for neither connivance, nor partiality, such as a deceitful heart might be apt to shew itself.

ALTHO' I cannot help thinking it hath been clearly proved, that the mere light of nature, as we now find it in ourselves, cannot furnish us with a sufficient standard for our moral conduct, not to say an adequate law, to regulate the actions of men, and that the Christian religion does actually prescribe a sufficient law; it will be further useful to observe, that the thoughts of men, in regard to any internal law, will be always mainly influenced by their sentiments concerning the chief good. Whatsoever power or force may do, in respect to the outward actions of a man, nothing can oblige him to think or act, as often as he is at liberty, against what he takes to be his chief good, or interest. No law, nor system of laws, can possibly answer the end and purpose of a law, till the grand question, What is the chief happiness and end of man, be determined, and so cleared up, that every one may be fully satisfied about it. Before our Saviour's time, the world was infinitely divided on this important head: the philosophers were miserably bewildered in all their researches after the chief good. Each sect, each subdivision of a sect, had a chief good of its own, and rejected all the rest. They advanced, as *Varro* tells us, no fewer than two hundred and eighty-eight opinions, in relation to this matter; which shews, by a strong experiment, that the light of nature was altogether unable

to settle the difficulty. Every man, if left to the particular biases of his own nature, chuses out a chief good for himself, and lays the stress of all his thoughts and actions on it. Now if the supposed chief good of any man should lead him, as it often does, to violate the laws of society, to hurt others, and to act against the general good of mankind; he will be very unfit for society, and, consequently, as he cannot subsist out of it, an enemy to himself. Robbers, thieves, assassins, rebels, are all instances of this; and so are, also, those more cunning, but more dangerous persons, who know how to evade the laws, or even, by their assistance, to gain unjust advantages to themselves, and hurt society. As self is, unquestionably, the ruling principle in man, it is highly necessary to every man to know in what his main interest consists, and how to obtain it: and as that happiness (if we allow the world to be the work of a wise and beneficent author) must be such, as is consistent with the happiness of others; so it cannot be riches, pleasure, honour, power, or any thing else, about which mankind may be tempted to contend; and yet it must be one and the same to all men: for we cannot imagine there is a distinct kind of chief good, or happiness, allotted to every individual. But what it is, or by what means to be arrived at, is a question, which, if nature, reason, or philosophy, could have done it, might have been determined long before our Saviour came into the world.

Dech. How the antient philosophers came to differ so widely about this matter, I cannot guess; but this I am sure of, that nothing is more plain and obvious to reason, than that the chief *happiness of man consists in living up to the dictates of his nature* (a). I will, for the present, grant you, that the principle from which all human actions flow, is the desire of happiness. Now *the happiness of all beings whatever consists in the perfections of their nature; and the nature of a rational being is most perfect, when it is perfectly rational. God, who does nothing in vain, would in vain have planted the desire of happiness in mankind, if he had not given them reason to distinguish such actions as make for their happiness, from*

(a) Christ, as old as Creation, chap. 3.

such as oppose it. I have here given you, Sir, the right notion of our chief end and good; and you will allow, I believe, that I have not been beholden to revelation for it.

Shep. But *Tindal*, from whom you borrow it, and whose revelations are, I find, of more authority with you, than those of the Scriptures, took the principle, upon which he falsely concludes this to be our chief happiness, from revelation. He says, *We are made in the image of God*; which, I am sure, neither he, nor any man else, could have known, had he not been told it by revelation. He says, moreover, and produces no other reasons for it but a bold passage from *Dr. Scot*, that *The happiness of God consists in the purity and rectitude of his nature; and, consequently, as man is made in the image of God, the happiness of man must be nothing else but the perfection of his own nature.* And hath the great *Tindal*, at length, by the force of his own natural reason, settled the grand difficulty, that distracted all the geniuses of antiquity? To the eternal confusion of himself, and all other abettors of natural light, he hath taken the maxim, on which he hath built his hypothesis, from that very revelation he brings it to refute; and can no otherwise support his consequence, but by determining in what the happiness of God consists, which God himself only knows. But if you make the chief good of man to consist barely in living up to the dictates of his nature; I must tell you, this is neither that good, nor even the means of obtaining it; for there are some dictates of nature, in its present blindness and corruption, which, if obeyed, would bring on unavoidable destruction. Nor is the perfection of our nature the chief happiness of man, but the means of it. Let us suppose futurity out of the question, and we shall quickly find, that the most perfect man alive, in the rage of a fever, in the pangs of the stone or gout, or stretched on the rack, with no hopes of an hereafter, is far enough from being in the enjoyment of the greatest happiness. Now the best of men are as little exempted from poverty, oppression, sickness, pain; and other natural evils, incident to this life, as other people; perhaps I might say, with

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truth,

truth, they are rather more exposed to them. You make the perfection and happiness of a man to consist in the perfection of his reason. Pray, hath not a man other faculties, beside reason, such as apprehension, imagination, memory?

Dech. He hath.

Shep. Hath he not, also, passions, appetites, instincts, &c.?

Dech. He hath.

Shep. In his present state he hath a body too. Now I should think, tho' his faculty of reason were never so perfect in itself, yet, if his apprehension be dull or confused, his imagination irregular and wild, his memory weak and irretentive, his passions, appetites, and instincts, corrupt and vitiated, and his body unsound and sickly; he is very far from being perfect.

Dech. In that case, Sir, his reason cannot be perfect; and therefore, when we say, the reason of a man is perfect, we mean, that all his inferior faculties, his passions, and his body, which are the instruments of his reason, are sound, and in good order.

Shep. Reason, I find, is very comprehensive; and a sickly man is always a bad reasoner: let this, however, pass. Pray, Sir, is reason given us in order to any end, or purpose?

Dech. Yes; that we may form right judgments of things.

Shep. What is the use of right judging?

Dech. Right judging is, in order to right acting.

Shep. And is it of any advantage to us, to act rightly?

Dech. It is that, alone, can make us happy.

Shep. Right reasoning, then, is not our happiness, but only the means of our happiness, and not the only means, neither: for if, after having reasoned rightly, we do not act as rightly, which often happens; the better we reason, the less excuseable we are, and, consequently, the farther from happiness, if happiness follows virtue only. Neither do the means of our chief happiness consist in living up to the dictates of our nature: nature often dictates such actions to us as are evil in themselves, and, if done, would destroy us. Lust, pride, wrath, ambition, envy,

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are all natural to us; and the most sensible Libertines I ever conversed with, called so many of our passions and appetites, as they themselves delighted in the gratification of, the laws of God and nature. He who obeys these dictates of his nature, adds the fuel of habit to their fire, which was but too violent before, and will be far enough from arriving, by these means, at either the perfection, or happiness of man.

Dech. Is it criminal to gratify the passions, or appetites, which God hath given us? Or hath he given us such as are evil?

Shep. No; but our passions and affections are not as he made them: they are corrupt, and prone to the wildest excesses; and, to gratify such, in the full extent of their natural dictates, would be highly criminal.

Dech. What is our reason given us for, but to regulate our passions and desires according to the eternal fitnesses of actions and things, of which reason is the only judge allowed us?

Shep. Reason alone, even when it judges best, is not able to bridle our headstrong passions; and, as it is extremely subject to prejudice and error, it is oftener found, among men who follow nature, in the inferior office of purveying for the gratification of the passions, and apologizing for their vices, than in that of curbing and subduing them. It is true, while things remain as they are, there is an unalterable fitness and unfitness in actions; it is also true, that reason is the immediate dictator of what is fit, or otherwise: but then reason is unable to dictate rightly, till she herself is instructed; and, when she dictates best, it is without effect, till she is backed by some authority, and strength, superior to her own. Every finite nature, as *Plato* hath observed, must, in order to its perfection, and true happiness, be governed by some superior nature. Man, left wholly to himself, will only degenerate, and fall from bad to worse. If he will not suffer himself to be led to perfection by his Maker, he must sink into an utter depravity.

Dech. And pray, Sir, what is the *summum bonum* of Christians?

Shep. The enjoyment of God to all eternity.

Dech. And are not the perfection of our nature, and the enjoyment of God, one and the same thing?

Shep. No more than a good ear is the pleasure of music: the rectitude and perfection of nature is not our happiness; it is only previous and necessary to it.

Dech. Is it not, then, the means of our happiness?

Shep. It is the immediate means; but acting up to the mere dictates of our nature, instead of raising nature to its true dignity and perfection, will only serve to corrupt and debase it.

Dech. I still think your chief good too selfish to be the foundation of true virtue, which all men ought to love for its own sake.

Shep. You may think as you will: but to love virtue, because it produces a conformity of our nature to that of God, and of our actions to his will; and because, by these means, it makes us happy; is a most rational and noble principle; is, in short, the only principle that can teach us to despise ourselves. How proud is man, when none is present, but such as are inferior to him in understanding and dignity! when he is with those whom he knows to be his superiors in wisdom and goodness, he shrinks in, and begins to think humbly and meanly of himself. Bring him into the presence of God, and he immediately loaths and despises himself, and turns all his love and admiration to an object infinitely more excellent and glorious. Now faith, by placing us in the presence and inspection of God, fills us with humility, and distrust of ourselves, and love for God; which two dispositions are the most powerful means to perfect our nature here, and to make us happy hereafter. Does not nature dictate to every man the pursuit of his own good, preferably to every thing else?

Dech. Yes; but she, also, bids him be kind and beneficent to other men.

Shep. Whatever it is that bids us be beneficent to others, it only so far obliges us to beneficence, as doing good to others is consistent with our own good.

Temp. The distinct provinces of self-interest and humanity, or benevolence; their sometimes opposing, and sometimes resulting from, each other; their respective powers

powers and operations, points already touched on, are still but imperfectly apprehended by my understanding: the clearing up of these might be a great step towards settling the grand questions about our chief good, and the ruling principle of our actions.

Shep. Taking human nature as we find it, and considering it with due attention and candour, we must, I think, conclude, that the grand, or, rather, only principle of a man's actions, is the desire of his own happiness. It is thro' this that other principles, which seem opposite to it, are enabled to operate upon the soul. In every man there is a set of instincts, or appetites, accommodated to particular objects; such as hunger, thirst, curiosity, &c. that draw in the ruling principle towards the centre, and employ it in providing for the gratification and preservation of himself. There is, also, in him, another set of instincts, or affections; such as humanity, gratitude, compassion, &c. that dilate his ruling principle, and call it forth to objects which promise a more generous gratification, altho' not so immediately connected with the preservation of himself: the instincts, or affections, of both classes, operate upon him by pain, till they are carried into execution, and then by pleasure. It is equally to relieve himself from this pain, and to enjoy this pleasure, that he feeds the poor, or himself. It is a great error to imagine, that any of these instincts, whether of the former or latter class, such, for instance, as humanity or compassion, are by nature contrary to self-love; they are only inlets to a noble kind of self-gratification, and engines to play off the energy of the ruling principle to a distance from the individual. Considered either as the one, or the other, they serve, under self-love, to excellent purposes; employing all its force in acts of beneficence, which are sometimes so widely extended, and carried to such an height, as to constitute the hero, the patriot, or the martyr. It is only by mistake that any affection or appetite, of either class, ever runs counter to the real interest of the man, or prevails on his self-love to operate against its own natural end, the chief good of the individual.

Temp.

Temp. I begin to comprehend your system, and shall have a perfect idea of it, if you will tell me, particularly, how it is, that self-love produces charity, or becomes the ruling principle of social affection.

Shep. Self-love does not produce charity; for charity is an inherent instinct of the heart, as well as self-love, but subordinate to it: but I can easily tell you how self-love produces an *act* of charity. When you see a person in misery, the tie of a common nature, that binds you to him, fills you with pain, which you naturally desire to exchange for the pleasure you expect in relieving him. These sensations awaken the ruling principle, which instantly seeks its own relief and pleasure in the relief and comfort of your fellow-creature: but if you expect, that your act of charity will be regarded, by Almighty God, as the act of a faithful steward, as an act of gratitude to him, in thus relieving the distresses of his beloved creature; your ruling principle is then employed by a double motive, and exercises all its force. As to your other inquiry, How it is that self-love becomes the ruling principle of social affection; I answer, that, even in a state of nature, as we love mankind, we seek to gratify ourselves in conversing with them, and entering into a mutual intercourse of good offices. Besides, it must be observed, that self-preservation strongly enforces the necessity of society to man, who cannot subsist apart from others; and benevolence still further qualifies him for a social life. But a man very often thinks the interest of the public opposite to his own, and, whenever he does, prefers the latter, because the pursuit of his own good is his first and strongest principle. Now the light of nature does not always point out his real good to him, nay, hath never been able to direct him to his chief good. Hence it comes, that the good of one man is often set in opposition to the good of another, to the hindrance and damage of both; and in opposition to that of the public, to the destruction of society. It is in vain to say, that while men regard no higher will than their own, and look no farther forward than the present life, they will have any other good in view, than such as is found in this life, or that they will ever con-
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sider the good of society as their own, further than as it actually and visibly, and, I may say, immediately, promotes their own. I entered into society, says man, for my own sake, and not for the sake of others; and if the society is against me, as it thwarts my ends, I will be against it. So *Phalaris*, *Syloson*, *Cæsar*, *Cromwell*, reasoned; so all men reason, who break or evade the laws. What does nature say all the while? Why it pushes them violently towards their own good, and mere reason does not shew them any greater good than the enjoyment of much power, and the possession of much wealth. It is likewise in vain to say, that nature proves her dictates to be the voice of God: they are often wicked and contradictory, and she is ignorant of God, and, consequently, of the chief good. Yet whatever the nature and reason of man take to be his chief good, towards that they eagerly hurry him over all public regards: hence law-suits, fraud, violence, oppression, rapine, wars.

Dech. Yes, among Christians as well as Heathens.

Shep. I imagined I had already sufficiently demonstrated, that such persons as are guilty of the most enormous crimes, cannot be Christians. It is the misfortune of this sort of debates, that a point already proved must be proved over again, and yet still be questioned. Was *Cromwell* a Christian, who prostituted only the mere enthusiastic pretence of religion to tyranny and usurpation? A Christian, truly such, believes his chief good to consist in pleasing God, and enjoying him for ever; and with this infinite good in view he cannot, as a Christian, do injustice for the sake of any thing in this world, nor indeed be much affected with mere worldly considerations and attachments, although never so equitable in their tendency. When faith is as strong as the evidence of Christianity ought to make it, and the interest of the man, or of men in general, requires it should be, it carries the views and attachments of him whom it possesses to matters of infinite consequence. But where it is weak, in proportion to that weakness the natural man prevails over the Christian; and so it comes to pass, that those vices and crimes, that are really owing to the depraved nature of the man, and the weakness of his faith, are often,

often, but ignorantly and maliciously, ascribed to the weakness of our religion ; whereas nothing can be more plain, than that if Christianity were duly attended to, duly believed and obeyed, such enormities would never happen. The societies of this world are considered by Christianity only as probationary and preparative to the universal society above ; so that none are to be admitted there, but such as have proved themselves amenable, and just, and beneficent here ; who have postponed their own fleshly wills to that of God, their own pleasures to his commands, their temporal and private interests to the general interest of mankind ; and to a much nobler and higher interest of their own, in a life of infinitely greater importance. Upon the whole, that the enjoyment of God is the chief happiness of man, may appear evident from these considerations : First, that man is by nature made capable of knowing God : and he who knows God, must be sensible he is infinitely more excellent and amiable, than all other beings ; and that it is the greatest happiness to enjoy him. Secondly, as nothing can give him an enjoyment of God, but the refinement and perfection of his own nature ; so nothing but the knowledge of God, and the most ardent love for him, can prompt and enable him to labour effectually in the adorning and perfecting his own nature. If he knows God, he hath the noblest example to copy after, and the fairest original to transcribe from, that the whole system of being can afford ; and, as he knows it is impossible to enjoy God without being pure as he pure, and perfect as he is perfect, he hath the most powerful inducement to watch over himself, to cleanse his corrupted nature, and fit his soul for those all-seeing eyes, that cannot behold iniquity ; and that piercing light, which shines through all things, and lays open every secret. Lastly, he considers with himself, that, if he can but obtain the favour of God, and be admitted to the blessed vision of this glorious Being, he shall have infinite wisdom to direct him, infinite power to defend him from all evil, and infinite goodness to bestow on him new occasions, and eternal accessions of happiness. All other considerations, that can be offered to self-love, shrink into nothing, when

compared to this. The opportunities of indulging his other good dispositions will be equally great and happy. He will have infinite excellence to admire and love. He will have power, commensurate with his love and gratitude, to serve his great Benefactor, and the delightful satisfaction of being always sure his services will be well accepted by his gracious and indulgent Master. He will receive infinite favours, and have it also in his power to shew he is grateful; which, to a generous soul, is the most exalted perfection human happiness can arrive at. He will have Angels to converse with. He will be present when new worlds are made; and, looking into the causes of things, will see more in one moment than *Newton*, in his whole life, was able to guess at; he will feast his transported soul with the wonders of creating wisdom and power. Yet, great as this happiness will be, if, speaking by comparison, I should say it will make but a small part of his enjoyments, I should say the truth; for he shall see God. All that is great, or delightful, or glorious, is summed up in this. The hopes of it are sufficient to turn this otherwise unhappy life into a paradise, and change the martyr's fiery furnace into a bed of roses; and the thing itself is what the language of mortals is unable to utter, or the heart of man to conceive. Is it from this glorious prospect that Libertinism would turn our eyes downward upon a wretched world, and fix our affections on things below? And shall Libertinism call itself Philosophy and Wisdom? Yes; but God calls it *the wisdom of this world*, and tells us it is *foolishness*. It is the child of vain curiosity, and false appetite; and continues, as it began, to feed on forbidden fruit, and teach its admirers the knowledge of sin.

IT surprises me not a little, that the antient philosophers, who inquired with so much anxiety and debate after the chief good, should have given themselves little or no trouble about the greatest evil; for self-love is as much concerned to know, and self-preservation to avoid, the one, as it is to pursue the other. Besides, as a prudent man will voluntarily forego a smaller good to obtain a greater, and give up all occasions of limited plea-

pleasure or satisfaction to obtain an infinite good, so will he also undergo a small evil to avoid a greater; and encounter all the limited evils incident to human nature, that he may escape an infinite evil. Now if such an evil there be, it infinitely concerns us to know it.

Dech. There may be, there certainly is, a chief good and evil; but whether they be infinitely great, is a question. As the nature of man is only finite, to me it should seem, that his happiness and misery must be also finite and limited. But be that as it will, our greatest evil must be the reverse of our greatest good; and, consequently, he who knows the one cannot be ignorant of the other. Now, as our greatest good consists in the perfection, so our greatest evil must consist in the depravity, of our nature.

Shep. We have already seen, that the perfection of our nature is not our greatest good, but only the immediate means of it. It will follow therefore, if your rule of opposites is admitted, as I think indeed it ought to be, that the utmost depravity of our nature is not our greatest evil, but only the immediate means of it. The same arguments that led us to the former conclusion, must lead us to the latter also; and, therefore, I shall not repeat, but refer you to them. As the greatest happiness of man consists in the eternal enjoyment of God, and his favour; so the greatest evil, by the rule of opposites, must consist in the displeasure of Almighty God, and its effects, namely, an eternal exclusion from him, to which the extreme depravity of our nature must infallibly subject us. But by what effects, and to what degree, the displeasure of God will manifest itself to a creature thoroughly depraved, revelation only can inform us; nay, revelation only can tell us, that certain actions, to which nature prompts us with the greatest importunity, if committed, especially if often repeated, tend to the utter depravation of our nature, and, in consequence of that, to our greatest misery. This we have already proved; and it follows, that revelation only can point out to us this grand and interesting sanction of the divine law.

Dech. Your revelation tells you, that the greatest misery of man consists in the eternal displeasure of God, and its effects, namely, confinement to a lake of fire and brimstone for ever. This sort of punishment, to be inflicted on a mere spirit, is impossible and absurd; for mere corporal inflictions cannot affect an unbodied spirit.

Shep. Altho' we should understand the Scriptures literally in these and such-like expressions, yet no absurdity will arise from thence, if, as the same Scriptures inform us, the soul is to be reunited to the body at the resurrection. Such an union will make corporal pains and torments as possible to us then, as they are now. But, however, as among the expressions, by which the miseries of the damned are set forth to us in Scripture, there are some that cannot well be taken literally, such as concerning the worm that dieth not, by which are to be understood the everlasting reproaches of a guilty conscience; so the rest are probably, in a great measure, figurative, and used to convey the strongest and most affecting idea possible, to minds accustomed to sensible notions, of the future miseries to be suffered by the reprobate.

Dech. It may be so; but, surely, that revelation could never have come from God, which represents him as unjust and cruel, as punishing to all eternity, with the most frightful tortures, the transgressions of his poor frail creatures. And if the justice of God, which cannot punish finite offences with infinite and endless misery, makes the belief of such a punishment absurd and blasphemous; his mercy, which is also infinite, must make it still more so. If there were nothing else to prove a revelation false, that pretends to come from God, but its recommending to our belief such notions of his severity, as represent him unjust and cruel, that alone would do it effectually. *David*, it seems, had other notions of God; for he asks, *Shall thy jealousy burn like fire for ever?* We may be sure, the true and natural answer is, No. When God shall have punished his disobedient creatures in proportion to their offences, justice being then satisfied, mercy will, at length, take place; and, surely, a temporal punishment,

nishment, especially if it be long and great, may be equal to the most enormous offences of men.

Shep. That which happens in respect to the punishments annexed to God's law, happens also in respect to the penalties of human laws. He who is threatened with death for robbery or murder, thinks what he is to suffer too grievous, and wishes it were lighter. But the lawgivers, magistrates, and subjects, whose safety lies in the great severity of his punishment, think otherwise. He also who, knowing himself guilty, is threatened by religion with eternal vengeance, wishes God would only correct him, and then make him infinitely happy ; that is, that he would no otherwise punish him for the greatest enormities, but by rendering his nature more perfect, in which he places the chief happiness of man ; in order to which, if some medicinal sufferings are necessary, altho' he cannot clearly see how, he does not think it altogether unjust in God to lay them on him. These fond wishes of his deceitful heart he works up into a sort of arguments for an universal purgatory, and strengthens them all he can with others as fallacious and groundless, drawn from the supposed insignificancy of his sins, from God's indifference as to all a finite creature can do, from the justice of God, confounded with, and lost in, his infinite mercy, and the like. These arguments help to make him easy when he reflects on his former transgressions, and afford him more licence and latitude as to his future conduct. Thus man deals by himself, as soon as he is persuaded he hath a right to be his own lawgiver. But the just and good God, who does not give every man a law peculiar to himself, and calculated for his present pleasure, and private conveniency, consulting the general good of all his creatures, gives one law to all, and proportions its sanctions to the infinite importance of its ends, rather than to the degree of virtue or vice in the agent, considered as of greater or less importance to the good or evil of the world ; for if the motives to virtue were only equivalent to the inducements to vice, the will must be suspended.

Dech. This charges injustice upon God.

Shep.

Shep. By no means. If happiness, infinite in duration, is promised to a being, who by his best actions can never deserve it, in case he shall approve himself by the law of God; there is no injustice done him, if he is also threatened with a punishment, infinite in duration, upon his disobedience, altho' by his worst actions he should not be able to bring on others a degree of misery equal to that he is to suffer for so doing. In this I suppose him an intelligent being, and endued with a perfect freedom of choice. If such a being shall, through a wilful course of wickedness, pursue an infinite evil, rather than an infinite good, who is to blame for what shall follow? Surely himself only. If the temptations to sin are but equally balanced by the sanctions of the law, that law can never sufficiently enforce virtue, as being of too little weight to sink the scale, in which virtue is placed. That there is a strict proportion between crimes, and the temptations that prevail on us to commit those crimes, is manifest; because it always requires a greater degree of temptation to produce a greater crime, than it does to produce a less; for instance, the same degree of temptation, that makes a man a thief, would not induce him to commit murder, to which his nature hath a greater reluctance. If then our crimes and temptations are proportionable to each other, and if it is necessary, that the detriments to wickedness should exceed the inducements, it will follow, that those detriments must also exceed our crimes; for how otherwise can those crimes be prevented? If the pleasure a man finds in doing evil is equal to the pain he is to endure, he hath an equivalent for his sufferings, and is neither a gainer, nor a loser, by his guilt. But it is not he alone who is to be considered in this matter. The good of the whole, in which he makes but a part, is to be provided for, and secured; but by such methods indeed, as shall not break in upon his moral freedom of choice, that is, by rewards and punishments of the greatest importance, answerable to the happiness of God's universal kingdom, of which they are the securities. When such rewards, and punishments are beforehand proposed to free and rational beings, and they chuse, notwithstanding,

ing, to transgress; what else is this, than despising the rewards, and chusing the punishments? Now, if men are capable of such a conduct, and I appeal to fact and experience, whether they are or not; surely the sanctions, altho' infinite, are not too great. What then is to be done with such delinquents? If, in spite of all the malignancy and perversity of their nature, they can be turned to excellent account in God's kingdom, what hinders, but that this should be done? They will not obey; let them therefore contribute to the eternal obedience of others, by the eternal example of their own sufferings. God, in no instance, shews his tenderness for the good, or his concern for virtue, more effectually, than in this severity to the wicked. He knows, that the heart of man is partial to itself, and wicked; and therefore, in tenderness to other men, leaves it not to dictate a loose and indulgent law to itself, but gives it a plain rule of duty, and enforces that rule with eternal rewards and punishments. By acting thus, he gives an higher demonstration of his goodness to all men, than could be shewn in a less interesting law; for surely, Sir, you must own, in respect to the punishments annexed to his law, that you, and others, are better defended against any designs I might be tempted to form upon your life or fortune, if I am fully persuaded I shall be punished with eternal torments for such designs, than you could be, if I believed I should only undergo such temporal sufferings for them, as must at length terminate in the reformation and perfection of my nature, and settle peace between God and me. God also, by threatening me with eternal punishments for sin, shews infinite goodness to me in particular, because he furnishes me with the strongest argument for a good life, he puts into my own hands the most powerful instrument to perfect my own nature with, and consequently, in so doing, affords me the most efficacious means of my own happiness. You, Sir, insist, that the infinite greatness of the rewards and punishments annexed to the Christian law is too compulsory; but every day's experience may teach you, Sir, that they are by no means too great for the end, that they
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compel nobody, and prove of too little force with the generality of men.

Dech. But you yourself have often maintained, that if they were firmly believed in by all men, they would inevitably make all men good. This, I think, proves them compulsory.

Shep. Mankind, however, are at liberty to believe in them, or not; for, as they are not set directly before our eyes, but only proved to our reason by arguments, we have it in our power to turn away our minds from those arguments, and give them up to such as tend to induce a contrary persuasion. Men find it but too easy to tutor themselves to certain soothing persuasions, and chuse such opinions as they please, especially men who think for themselves, and place self in an indulgence of their desires and pleasures. But it does not follow, that if the arguments for infinite rewards and punishments were such as must convince all men, and make them all amenable to the Divine law, they would therefore make slaves of all men. If we suppose judgment already past, and the wicked, in the sight of Angels and Men, sent away to a place of endless torment; those, who, having seen this sight, are admitted to the joys of Heaven, are still free, as to their future conduct, and have a natural power to do good or evil. And if they shall be free, who have seen so evidently the fearful punishment of sin, and feel so sensibly the sweets of virtue, we must suppose mankind to be still more at liberty, or perhaps, I should say, more disposed, to transgress; who, tho' in this life they have the firmest faith in future rewards and punishments, yet are surrounded with innumerable weaknesses, and violent temptations, to counterbalance the influence of their faith. Pray, Mr. *Dechaine*, are mankind free to chuse good or evil, when they are set before them?

Dech. If they appear to be what they really are, we cannot help rejecting the one, and chusing the other; for no man can chuse evil, as evil, nor reject good, as good.

Shep. In respect then to the choice of good or evil, whether greater or less, no man is free.

Dech.

Dech. But we may mistake the one for the other, or the degrees of either; and so are not necessarily determined in our choice.

Shep. At that rate, then, our freedom of choice arises intirely from our ignorance. But if we are necessarily determined to the choice of good, and the rejection of evil, then we have, in that respect, no liberty; and, consequently, the setting our greatest good and evil before our eyes, cannot deprive us of liberty, because they cannot take from us that which we never had. If, on the other hand, we are at liberty to chuse either good or evil; and this should seem necessary to make us accountable agents, to make us rewardable or punishable, or, at least, to prevent our resolving all sin into the sin of ignorance; our liberty cannot be infringed, nor injustice done us, by placing good and evil before us, and making us sensible of the difference, in order to a prudent choice. And as dealing thus with us, in respect to lower degrees of good and evil, can in no sense be an hardship or grievance to us, so neither can we suppose ourselves aggrieved in having infinite happiness and misery placed within our reach, and thoroughly laid open to us, since we are at liberty to chuse which we will.

Dech. But as God might make the misery less, if he pleased, we cannot suppose he would make it infinite; since such is the ignorance and frailty of man, that he may possibly chuse it under some mask, or appearance of good.

Shep. Here you, who make the natural light so strong as to be able always to point out to every man the distinction between good and evil, at least, between the greatest good, and the greatest evil; will not allow it sufficient, when assisted by revelation, to determine our choice between infinite happiness and misery.

Dech. Between the happiness and misery you speak of, Sir, the light of nature enables us to make no distinction, because it points out no such happiness and misery to us. And as to what your revelation says on that subject, you must excuse me, if I do not believe it, till I have better reasons for so doing than I see at present.

Shep. The reasons for believing in revelation have, I find, in respect to you, been but too long insisted on already, altho' we have as yet but touched on those reasons, any further, than as we have endeavoured to induce the necessity of a revelation from the utter insufficiency of the natural light. But as to the present question, whether the eternity of future punishments can reflect at all on the justice of God, I believe it may be easily cleared up. If your Prince, Sir, should bid you chuse, whether you would enjoy a very plentiful and honourable employment under him, during the rest of your life; or be confined, till the day of your death, in a most loathsome dungeon; would you think he dealt unjustly by you?

Dech. No, Sir, provided my Prince had any right to confine me to a dungeon.

Shep. If he gave you such a choice, and you chose the dungeon, it would be you yourself that confined you, and not he. God proposes Heaven and Hell to the choice of a rational and free being: if that being should chuse the latter, what injustice is done him? For his folly, and his wickedness, he deserves what he is to endure; and therefore hath no sort of reason to complain. Besides, as no merit of his could have intitled him to the joys of Heaven, the happiness proposed to him is matter of bounty; and, consequently, as there is great and undeserved goodness shewn him in the one case, and the strictest justice in the other, he hath all the reason in the world thankfully to close with the terms proposed to him in our religion by Almighty God. I believe there is no man on earth, who, in any other case, would not be extremely pleased with the proposal of a considerable good, and an equal evil, provided he were perfectly at liberty to chuse which he pleased. He could not, in such a case, avoid reasoning thus with himself: “ This proposal puts me in
 “ a much better condition, than I was in before, because
 “ I have it now in my power to add greatly to my hap-
 “ piness; and altho' I may, by a wrong choice, make
 “ myself miserable, yet, as I am free, the just appre-
 “ hension I have of the evil, only strengthens my mo-
 “ tives to the choice of the good; and if the desire of
 “ good were not sufficient to fix my choice, my fear and
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“dread of evil could not fail to do it.” But, supposing mankind had no eternal happiness proposed to them at all, but only eternal misery threatened, in case they should transgress the laws of God, I cannot by any means see how it could be thought unjust. Those laws of society, that are purely penal, are never on that account deemed unjust, because the general good of the community requires such laws; and all who are subject to them, are able to obey them, and consequently deserve what they suffer, if they are punished for transgressing them. Now all laws are, or ought to be, proportioned to the ends proposed by them; and as the ends proposed by the laws of a great society are of more importance than those of a less, so the penalties annexed to those laws in a great society ought to be of greater importance and cogency, than those of a small one. It is for this reason that the head of a family cannot punish with death, nor that of a commonwealth with damnation. This last sort of punishment alone is adequate to the great ends of God’s universal kingdom, and to the infinite majesty and justice of its Governor. We are told in Scripture, that many Angels, highly dignified, and infinitely happy in Heaven, have rebelled against God; and we see thousands of men every day here on earth, who shew a contempt for all laws human and divine. What a precedent would it be for God’s other intelligent creatures, who are yet in their duty, to see these delinquents escape unpunished! And should they be only given over to wholesome severities, and such as, according to *Tindal* and you, are for their good, the laws of God must, in that case, lose one half of the force and dignity necessary to the ends proposed by them. Angels and men behold what is a doing here on earth, and mark the ways and measures of Divine Justice, from whence they draw the motives of their own obedience. When this world shall be called to judgment, the whole Host of Heaven will be present; and having beheld the infinite goodness of God demonstrated to the just in eternal happiness, and the horrible example made of the evil in their everlasting misery, will carry away from that great event such motives to duty, as may be sufficient to preserve them therein for ever.

Besides,

Besides, we have no reason to imagine, that the Divine œconomy will not make a further use of the wicked, after judgment shall be passed upon them. There are probably places and stations in various parts of the universe, where Devils and diabolical men may be employed to excellent purpose, at the same time that they are tormented, in carrying on, although against their wills, the designs of Providence. We may rationally enough suppose a kind of mines for the malefactors of God's kingdom to work in, where they may labour, in the quality of slaves, for the benefit of better beings, whom they hate and envy. As the happy, from motives of love and gratitude, will, in the midst of their eternal hallelujahs, be active in the service of their gracious Master; so it is agreeable to the analogy of things to believe, that the miserable, as a part of their punishment, will, in the midst of their blasphemies, be forced to concur with the schemes of God, and, contrary to their nature and intentions, be employed in doing good. As the calls for these services, and the necessity of an example, arising from the punishment of wicked beings, may be eternal, so their duration in this state of servitude and misery may likewise be eternal. Be this as it will, there is yet another strong and natural reason for the eternal misery of the wicked, which seems to make it unavoidable. Evil habits long indulged, become natural, and make reformation impossible. Were, however, a cure for such inveterate and rooted maladies of the soul attempted, it must be by such excessive and lasting severities, as no patience could endure, and such therefore, as must be attended with a deep and obstinate despair, out of which nothing but blasphemy and defiance against God could arise; that is, out of which only greater depravity, and more enormous guilt, could be produced. If the hardened offender is to continue for ever wicked, he must of consequence continue for ever miserable. We may, upon the whole, I think, judge how necessary the belief of eternal punishments is to our living good lives, by this; that all men, in proportion as they hanker more or less after forbidden objects, or unlawful pleasures, labour with more or less earnestness and art to persuade themselves.

that the punishment of sin will not be eternal ; and that all men, generally speaking, actually lead better or worse lives, in proportion as they entertain stronger or weaker fears of what is to come. Now that principle, which is so necessary to the good behaviour of every private person, and of consequence to the public good, cannot, as we took occasion to observe before, be a false or groundless principle, since God would never have so constituted the world, as to make the good of all mankind to depend almost absolutely on a falshood, a religious falshood.

Dech. Give me leave also to make my observation on the whole of what was said concerning infinite punishments and rewards. The greatest villain will be good, if you offer him a sufficient bribe, and threaten him with a sufficient penalty, in case he continues to act like a villain ; I mean, he will act as if he were good, although his real principles will be still the same. This I am sure of ; to threaten us with eternal punishments, and to allure us with infinite rewards, in order to make us virtuous, can never answer the end, because true virtue can never spring from selfishness or fear ; neither is this method at all suited to the nature of free and rational beings. To frighten them into their duty by the dread of fire and brimstone, is to destroy their freedom : and to entice them to be virtuous by the promise of eternal crowns and kingdoms, is to deal with them as children, not on the footing of reason, but desire. Now true virtue can never be founded on any thing else, but freedom and reason.

Temp. You forget, Sir, that Mr. *Shepherd* endeavoured, and I think, not altogether unsuccessfully, to shew that the reason and freedom of man are made the basis of the Christian virtues, notwithstanding the application of infinite rewards and punishments. He made these sanctions of the Divine law necessary in the first step towards virtue, and provided an higher principle, namely, the love of God, to take up the mind, already disciplined by these sanctions to some sense of duty, and exalt it to the highest pitch of goodness. What you said on this subject, Mr. *Shepherd*, affected me not a little ; but I am still
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at a loss to conceive the transition from the lower motives to the higher, and how it is, that the selfish dread of misery, and desire of happiness, serve to inspire us with the love of God. Could you be a little more explicit and demonstrative on this point, it would be of singular use to the cause you are defending; for altho' selfishness cannot be, by its own nature, the very basis of virtue, yet if it necessary, and preparatory to a nobler principle, this will sufficiently recommend it.

Shep. If Mr. *Dechaine* is under any mistake in the present dispute, it proceeds from hence, that he forms too high an idea of the generosity and dignity of human nature in its present condition; and, in consequence of that idea, concludes, that man may, and ought to be won to virtue, by the mere love of abstract virtue alone. But our knowledge of mankind will not suffer us to draw this conclusion. The first hold, by which the mind is to be seized, is the desire of happiness, and the dread of misery. To these, all parents, tutors, masters, and governors, are forced to apply by effectual rewards and punishments, under the discipline of which after the mind of a young person hath for some time been formed, it acquires by experiment an approbation of virtue, and dislike of vice; the first of which is ripened into love, and the latter into detestation, by habit. Hence the forward and disingenuous boy is improved into a man of humanity and honour. In like manner the soul, under the influence of religion, being at first awakened by desire and fear, is reclaimed to an abstinence from vice, and an endeavour to be virtuous. Soon after this short initiation, it begins to taste the sweets of virtue, which it had never done, had it continued vicious. Now its relish for virtue arises, not so much from an abstract love thereof, as from an experimental proof of its good effects, already felt in part, and hoped for in a much fuller measure from the favour and approbation of Almighty God. It is not long after these first-fruits, till a larger harvest is reaped; for the soul, being now disentangled from the trammels of vice, from impure imaginations, from gross and sensual pleasures, breathes upward in the clearer air of religion; and, mounting on medi-

tation and devotion, as on the wings of an Angel, visits the springs of Divine love, from whence Creating Goodness, and Redeeming Mercy, pour upon it in full streams of pleasure, infinitely more transporting, than all that the eye can see, or the ear hear. To perfect and confirm the soul in this most happy disposition, the Spirit of God infuses into it his heavenly consolations, and fills it with the love of God. Then the soul, instead of the fears and agonies of mind, felt in the commencement of its spiritual birth, feels unutterable touches of hope and joy. Then flow its tears, from an high sense of love and gratitude, faster than formerly from the deep sense of its sins. In this manner, *Mr. Templeton; do fear and trembling work out the salvation*, and, in due time, produce the happiness, of a true Christian.

Temp. This process hath, I own, something very natural in it, and gives us a beautiful idea of Christianity.

Dech. It favours much of cant and enthusiasm; and gives, after all, but a mercenary foundation to virtue.

Shep. You do not consider, Sir, what the eternal reward proposed by the Christian religion is: it is the enjoyment of God for ever, which cannot be obtained without loving God for his own sake, and for his infinite goodness to us. The love of God is the noblest principle, and the happiness of pleasing him the most exalted motive, by which the actions of an intelligent being can be influenced. And as to the dread of eternal misery, if it be a low motive to the doing of some actions, and to the abstaining from others, it is the better fitted to low minds, and therefore, at worst, rational. If there is a mind that cannot be won by all the infinite goodness, and mercy, and long-suffering patience of God. why should not such a mind have somewhat to fear, proportionable to the baseness and malignity, to the unconquerable ingratitude, and the immoveable insensibility, of its nature? Do you think, *Mr. Templeton*, that, upon the footing of justice, he who hath done incomparably more mischief, than good, in the world, ought to have a lot assigned him, in which his sufferings shall be as nothing, and his felicity unspeakable?

Temp. Reason and justice will never allow it.

Shep.

Shep. Supposing a wicked man punished with the most exquisite torments, during the longest conceivable series of ages, if he were at length to exchange his miseries for the joys of Heaven, as his sufferings would bear no proportion to his enjoyments, so the whole of his lot could no-way quadrate with his demerits; besides, his expectation of deliverance could not fail considerably to abate the severity of his torments, insomuch that those torments could neither by himself, nor others, be looked on as a punishment, but only as a short and salutary purgation, in order to an eternity of happiness. As such a discipline must be a great encouragement to wickedness, I cannot help thinking, a base and ill-disposed mind ought to have something further to fear.

Temp. I really think it ought, and I own you have said enough to clear the *justice* of Almighty God from any imputation on account of eternal punishments; but I think you have been far from reconciling the doctrine to his mercy. After ages spent in misery, and a thorough example having been made of the wicked, if their reformation becomes, as you think it will, impossible, I believe God will greatly mitigate their tortures, or reduce them to nothing. There is something within one, that is infinitely shocked at the thoughts of eternal torments, and seems to tell us, a good and compassionate God will some time or other put an end to the miseries of the damned.

Shep. That within you, which seems to tell you so, may be sin; which, fearing for the past, and earnestly desiring more latitude for the future, than religion will allow, pleads powerfully with reason, for the soothing hope of a final deliverance from misery.

Temp. That is not the case in me; for I am shocked at the thoughts of another's being eternally miserable, when my own hopes of happiness are at the highest. I have often supposed myself in heaven, and, even then, have found, that the eternal miseries of my fellow-creatures would greatly damp my joys, and fill me with pity and pain; nay, I have carried my supposition farther, and represented the man I abhorred most, on account of his enormous crimes in general, and his cruel

treatment of myself, as confined to eternal flames; and I found I could not bear the thoughts of it. If now I, who am merciful and compassionate, perhaps, in a lower degree than many other men, could thus be affected with the mere supposition of my greatest enemy's being eternally tormented; how much more tender must we suppose an infinitely merciful God to be, in relation to the sufferings of his own unhappy creatures!

Dech. And when you consider, *Templeton*, that those creatures never sinned, but thro' the mere infirmity of that nature God had given them; and, even when they did sin, never considered themselves as acting against the authority of Almighty God, never intended, in their worst actions, any the least insult on him, or his laws, but only the gratification of their own depraved appetites and passions; this will make your reasoning against the belief of eternal torments still the stronger.

Temp. It does, indeed, add considerably to their force.

Shep. You proceeded, in your way of arguing with yourself, Mr. *Templeton*, intirely on suppositions. You first supposed your own apprehensions of eternal misery to be intirely out of the question; and yet you cannot tell but they might have still been at the bottom of all your reasonings on this subject: the mind is apt to deceive itself, in such cases as these, and often thinks for itself, when it believes it is only thinking impartially for others. Again, you supposed yourself in heaven, and perceived that, even there, you could not help being concerned for the eternal miseries of the damned; but all the time of this supposition you were only on earth, and subject to some small apprehensions, probably, for yourself. You cannot, at present, tell how you will stand affected, when in heaven, towards the contemners of virtue, and eternal happiness; towards the wilful corrupters of themselves, towards the oppressors of mankind, towards such as chuse to serve the devil, and herd with him and his horrible associates for ever, towards the enemies of God, and the opposers of his glory, and human happiness. As to what you have said, Mr. *Dechaine*, to encourage Mr. *Templeton* in his way of think-

ing about eternal punishments, it will, I believe, appear to have little in it, when it comes to be closely considered. God did not give us a sinful nature: nothing, surely, could reflect more impiously on his goodness, than to suppose he did. Our first parents corrupted themselves and us, and, to counterbalance our original corruption, which we were not accessory to ourselves, God hath given us a religion, and a portion of his Holy Spirit, sufficient to reinstate us in that capacity of obeying him, from which our first parents, by their transgression, fell: and, even when we neglect to apply these means, and thereby are led into a vicious course of life; if we repent, and return to the use of those means, he hath provided an atonement for our offences in the death, and a method of reconciliation with him thro' the intercession, of our blessed Redeemer. Again, it by no means follows, that, because mankind do not, in their bad actions, intend to insult God, and violate his laws, they therefore are not actually guilty of both: they know there is a just God; they know his will; they also believe he will judge them hereafter; and, if they have done what he commanded, reward them with eternal happiness; or, if they have transgressed his laws, that he will punish them with eternal misery. He who knows, or firmly believes, these things; and yet wilfully chuses vice instead of virtue, evil instead of good, and perseveres in that monstrous choice, as long as he lives; is a despiser of God, his laws, and all the happiness he can bestow, or misery he can inflict. Nay, he all along believes God will look upon him as such, and knows he commits all his evil deeds in the very presence and sight of God; yet he goes on; and you, to excuse him from rebellion and insult, say he acts thus in obedience to his depraved appetites and passions. But what is there more in that apology, than to say, he regards the gratification of his own wicked and abominable will more than the dictates of conscience, more than the promises of a gracious, and the threatenings of a just and all-powerful God? This fond excuse, which corrupt nature would make for itself, is refuted, and the relief it therein seeks from the terrors of future justice is prevented, by what happens in this

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world, every day, and before our eyes ; for men, who are moved by the corruption of their nature, and without a direct intention to insult Almighty God, being guilty of drunkenness and lewdness, such is the appointment of God in the natural constitution of things, suffer poverty, sickness, and untimely death, as the mere effect of their crimes. He who breaks the laws of his country, does not do it merely to insult the supreme magistrate, and shew his contempt for those laws ; yet, nevertheless, he does actually despise the one, and insult the other. I really believe, Mr. *Templton*, you earnestly desire to know the truth, and are open to conviction on religious subjects.

Temp. There is nothing in this life I desire so ardently.

Shep. In order to that most excellent end, you will, I believe, give me an ingenuous answer to the question I am going to ask you.

Temp. I certainly will.

Shep. Don't you find yourself more inclinable to the gratification of a criminal desire, in proportion as you are, at any time, less apprehensive of an eternal punishment for so doing ?

Temp. I must own, I do.

Shep. When you consider the infinite mercy of God apart from his justice, and look on the punishments, annexed to his law, to be only temporary ; do you not perceive yourself, as it were, untied, and more prone to sin, than when you consider God as infinitely just, and his punishments as infinitely terrible ?

Temp. I owe too much to truth, to deny it.

Shep. Such a mind as yours can hardly fail to find out the truth, and lead you to happiness. May I ask you one question more ?

Temp. With the greatest freedom ; and I will answer you, as if there were a window in my breast, thro' which you might see whether I spoke the real truth.

Shep. Was there not a time when you were more fully persuaded, than you have been of late, that the punishments of sin will be eternal ?

Temp.

Temp. When I was very young, I made no question of the matter ; but for these six or seven years past I have either doubted, or wholly disbelieved, the thing.

Shep. Did you not stand more in awe, and were you not more afraid of doing a wicked action, under the influence of your former persuasion, than under that of the latter ?

Temp. I should but impose on myself, and resist the truth, if I did not own I was. Since I began, in my own imagination, to set bounds to the punishment of sin, I have (God forgive me !) set little or no bounds to my pleasures, many of which were, I am afraid, highly prejudicial to the souls of others, as well as my own.

Shep. It is evident, then, that the belief of eternal punishments is necessary to a good life ; and, if it is necessary to such an end, I say, again, it cannot be vain, or groundless.

Temp. To this argument, drawn from within myself, I can make no reply ; yet I am still shocked at the seeming inconsistency between the infinite mercy of God, and the eternity of future torments.

Shep. Let this shock be changed into an utter abhorrence of sin, and a deep apprehension of God's displeasure, and it will deliver you from the wicked course of life, into which, it seems, the want of it hath unhappily betrayed you. As the devil could quote Scripture, in an attempt upon the human nature of Christ ; so he artfully argues with you, in favour of vice, from your just and respectful idea of God's infinite mercy. But the sins you have fallen i to, in consequence of his arguments, and in obedience to your own natural corruptions, shew evidently, that he argued deceitfully from good principles.

Cunn. That way of talking, about the devil, is idle, and superstitious : I hope the devil hath never argued with Mr. *Templeton* at all.

Shep. If you, Sir, will not suffer us to ascribe vice and wickedness to the suggestions of the devil, we must either ascribe it to nature, notwithstanding your defence of all her dictates, or to some emissaries of the devil, that have

been tampering with one of the fairest, and most virtuous minds, I ever had the happiness to be acquainted with.

Cunn. Your hint, Sir, is most shockingly rude, but, at the same time, most contemptible, because it is perfectly insignificant.

Shep. I hope it is not altogether insignificant to him, for whose use I intended it. If he makes a right application of it, I assure you, Sir, I am in little pain how your conscience, or that of any body else, shall apply it.

Temp. Mr. *Cunningham*, you have yourself given occasion to this too severe *innuendo*: however, I cannot help admiring and loving the zealous frankness of Mr. *Shepherd*, who is not hindered, by forms and *decorums*, from speaking his mind, when he thinks his duty, and the recovery of a poor soul from bad principles, and wicked courses, call upon him for openness and resolution.

Shep. I hope God will take me out of the world, before a false complaisance, or even stronger worldly considerations, shall render me deaf to such a call. But as you, Sir, who know Mr. *Cunningham* better than I do, have thought my *innuendo* too severe; I beg his pardon for it, and hope he will not again provoke the too great warmth of my temper, by calling what I say, idle and superstitious, at least till he hath first proved it to be so. Let him, moreover, consider, that he who is ready to apply a general reflection to himself, makes above one half of the censure.

Dech. And pray, Doctor, remember, that he who, thro' a mistaken zeal, commits hostilities in the defence of God's cause, when milder methods would be more becoming, and more effectual; does but give vent to his own pride and spleen, and betray the cause he pretends to serve.

Temp. Oh! Sir, Mr. *Shepherd* hath corrected himself; and this unhandsome sort of chat only serves to suspend our useful inquiries.

PRAY, Mr. *Shepherd*, have you any further objections to the Deistical creed?

Shep.

Shep. I have two very material objections to it, scarcely touched on yet.

Temp. What are those?

Shep. I think the Deists talk too boldly, and, if they do not know a great deal more of the Divine nature, than either the light of their own nature, or revelation, can inform us, very absurdly, concerning God, when they tell us he is obliged to obey the laws of nature, and that those laws are eternal, and indispensable.

Dech. The law of nature is no other than the law of reason; and reason, truly such, always distinguishes right from wrong, and obliges all good and rational beings to chuse that which is right. Now as God is the best, and most rational, of all Beings, he must be more influenced by reason, than any other being. He does that which is right, because it is right; and, were it not right, antecedently to his will, it could not be the object of his choice. The right or wrong of actions and things does not depend on mere will and arbitrariness, I mean, does not depend on even the will of God, but on the nature and fitness of circumstances and things, which is certainly eternal, and unalterable; so that what is good, could never have been evil; and what is evil, could never have been good. It is a contradiction to God's own nature, either to do that which is evil, or to turn evil into good, or good into evil. To do good, and avoid evil, must have been the Divine rule of action from all eternity; and, consequently, as that rule must have been eternal, so must it, also, have been indispensable: he who says the contrary, speaks blasphemy. For nothing, surely, can be more derogatory to Almighty God, than either to say he can do wrong, or that he can change the nature of right and wrong, and destroy the distinction between them. If, then, the rule of right reason is that which God himself acts by, in all things, it must, of consequence, be the rule of action to all his rational creatures, unless we may suppose, that God would, on any occasion, make it the duty of a rational creature to do that which is wrong; that is, to act by a rule contrary to his own. Why do we say God is infinitely wise, good, and just; but because he always does that which is most wise,
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most good, and most just? And why do we call him a most wise and equitable ruler, but because he requires no other rule of action to be observed by his rational creatures, than that which he always observes himself? God will never do that which is wrong, nor will he ever desire any of his creatures to do that which he himself would not do, were he in the place and circumstances of that creature.

Shep. You say, Sir, I think, that God, and all other rational beings, are, on all occasions, obliged to do that which is right, and abstain from that which is wrong?

Dech. I do.

Shep. And do the right and wrong of actions depend on the nature and fitness of things?

Dech. They do.

Shep. You mean, I suppose, by things, when you speak of the fitnesses of things, such things as have been fitted to one another; and not such things as are no-way relative.

Dech. Yes, Sir.

Shep. Had not all relative beings once a beginning?

Dech. No doubt on't, they had.

Shep. Their fitnesses, therefore, must have been older than themselves; or, otherwise, the law, or rule of action, resulting from those fitnesses, could not have been eternal.

Dech. The fit and unfit of things existed in the Divine mind from all eternity, and therefore are eternal.

Shep. The law, then, does not result from the things, or their nature and fitness; but the things, and their fitness, from the law.

Dech. How is that?

Shep. Why, you say the law of fitness is eternal, and the nature of things, temporary; therefore the law was before the things; and, consequently, could not have resulted from them.

Dech. It is true, I do say so; but I mean, in saying this, that God framed all things according to the plan or archetype of things existing in his own mind from all eternity; so that the eternal law of reason gave birth to all

all the forms and relations of things. This, however, does not hinder the law of human duty to result from the fitnesses of things.

Shep. If things, then, had been made otherwise than they are, other duties, than those which at present bind us, must have resulted from thence; and this would make the nature of right and wrong interchangeable.

Dech. Things are wisely made, and God could not have made them otherwise.

Shep. Was God necessarily determined to the work of creation? Or was that work matter of choice and free-will?

Dech. It was matter of choice.

Shep. Was he tied down to the present forms or relations of things? Or could he have given other forms and relations to things, if he had pleased?

Dech. He could have produced things in no other forms, nor with any other relations, than such as were wise, good, and fit.

Shep. But as he is under no necessities of any kind, nor compulsions, he could have found out, and bestowed on the materials of this world, other forms and relations; and all of them as wise, as good, and as fit, as the present. You speak of a plan and archetype of things existing in his mind from all eternity; did he contrive that plan himself? Or was it a necessarily existing part of the Divine nature, coeval with his being and attributes?

Dech. It existed for ever in his foreknowledge.

Shep. He could not, then, have chosen to abstain from the work of creation, or to have created any other thing, or otherwise than as it is.

Dech. This would make him a necessary agent, both as to the substances and forms of all things.

Shep. So I think. The truth is, Sir, when you speak of God, if you do not confine yourself to such assertions, in relation to him, as are necessary to your own occasions, and, consequently, capable of being known, and cleared up, by reason; but give into bold speculations, above the capacity of man; you cannot help running into the most unfathomable mysteries, to call them by
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no harder name. God, Mr. *Dechaine*, made all things as he pleased : he ordered and constituted, according to his own will and pleasure, the whole frame of things, immaterial and corporeal ; and it is therefore we say, he shewed infinite wisdom and goodness in the creation. For how can we call him wise, or good, for making any thing which he could not have abstained from making, nor made otherwise than he did ? The nature and fitness, the forms and relations of things, which were not yet in being, did not determine the will of God, but resulted intirely from thence ; and out of those, again, resulted a fitness and unfitness in actions.

Dech. But the wisdom of God determined his will ; for something there must have been, to determine it ; or else it acted by mere accident and chance. God must have had some reason and design in making things as they are.

Shep. Let us not, when we speak of God, presume to say, this attribute is prior in its operation to, and determines that : to talk after this manner, is to talk like vain and ignorant men. We only know, that the works of God are wise and good ; but to assert, with assurance, that he made them by an eternal plan and archetype, or that one power in God dictated what another executed, is to speak presumptuously, if not absurdly. God raised the whole spiritual and material world out of nothing ; what plan could there have been for the creating of something out of nothing, or for the giving being to matter by a single act of the Divine will ? Who can explain this inconceivable mystery, or tell us how spirit could produce matter ? If God made every thing as he pleased, and fitted the several constituent parts of each system to one another, so as to render the whole of his works both beautiful and good ; and if the various species of things, with all their qualities and relations, were dictated to him by no necessities of the things themselves, nor of fate, nor of his own nature ; it will follow, that wisdom and choice presided over all the works of creation, and that God gave this sort of being, and manner of being, to one thing, and that sort to another, when he could, instead of that, have left the whole pre-
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sent system of created being uncreated, and raised another, wholly different, out of nothing ; or for ever abstained, if he pleased, from the work of creation. But having once, by his free-will and choice, made all things, and fitted them wisely to one another ; a natural law did necessarily result from the nature and fitness of things ; and it became the duty of every intelligent being, as soon as it knew the Creator and Governor of the world, and the fitness of things, to regulate its actions according to that law. By this it appears, that the law resulting from the fitnesses of things, and those, again, from the free-will of God, and at a certain time ; the law itself could not have been eternal, but must have commenced with the birth of those things to which it is a law. It is also plain, from the same principles, that this law, which sprung intirely from the free-will and choice of God, could not have bound the actions of God himself, nor been indispensable. While things remain as they are, all intelligent creatures are obliged to act according to the known fitnesses of things ; unless when God requires the contrary ; in which case, the superior fitness of obeying him supersedes the inferior fitnesses of actions to other things. Now although God chuses to govern the world by the nature impressed on it, and the law arising from thence ; yet, as that law is no law to him, but only to his creatures, he may dispense with it, when he pleases.

Dech. Will he ever dispense with this law, but for good and weighty reasons ?

Shep. Never.

Dech. The law of reason, then, is a law to him ; for still he acts by reason, and that reason can arise from nothing else than the fitnesses of the things, and the good of the whole system of things ; which, in some cases, may require a suspension of the law, in respect to lower and narrower fitnesses.

Shep. But as he created all things, so he also created the reasons of things ; and can not only annihilate or change the things, but also dispense with, or change, the reasons of things. It is not by the superior virtue of one clause in the law of nature, that he can dispense with

with another of inferior expediency and obligation, but by his superiority over all things, and all law ; by which he hath an unlimited and uncontroulable right to dispense with the whole law.

Dech. This represents him as an arbitrary being ; and if this way of thinking about God is admitted, *we cannot tell how often he may change his law upon us : for, if he can dispense with the reasons of things, there is nothing left to render his proceeding steady, uniform, and good ; and then what a miserable condition must the world be in ! since an arbitrary will might change every moment (a).* No, Mr. *Shepherd*, God cannot act against the reason and nature of things, in any case.

Shep. Say, rather, he will not ; for God is both naturally and morally free ; and, in acting by reason, chuses to do so ; being thereunto compelled by no necessity nor obligation, but such as he is, at any time, pleased to enter into with his creatures : and his having an uncontroulable right to do whatsoever he pleases, is by no means an argument, that he will be either fickle or tyrannical. Men, indeed, are not to be trusted with unlimited freedom and power, because men are weak and wicked : but a man is not to *imagine that God is such an one as himself.* He is invariably good and wise, and always does that which is best ; not because he is obliged, by any law, to do it, or accountable to any other being for what he does ; but because he is good, and always freely chuses to do that which is good. Any other idea of his goodness would represent it as involuntary, and subject his will to some superior power ; whereas there is nothing above the will of God, nothing to govern that will, which is a law to all things. *Shaftesbury* and *Tindal* often insist, that if the will of God were not bounded by the law of nature, he might, without reason, change his will, on all occasions : but in this there is not the least shadow of a consequence, nor do they even attempt to assign the reason for saying so ; a will may be steady that is uncontrouled, and even the wills of men are not controuled by laws for any other reason, but because they are variable, or ill-disposed. All men allow, that

(2) Chr. as old as the creation.

that laws are given for the bad, and not for the good ; and as there is no man perfectly good, so there is no man left intirely to himself, and without some law or other : but as God is perfectly good, so he is also perfectly free, and bounded in his actions by no laws at all.

Dech. Does a law take away freedom from him who is obliged to obey it ?

Shep. He is still at liberty to obey or disobey, but cannot do the latter without forfeiting the rewards, and incurring the penalties, annexed to the law, which renders him subject, and, consequently, not perfectly free. Besides, he is not perfectly free, who hath any superior ; and all laws are imposed by some superior, on some one or more inferiors ; and therefore God can be subject to no law, because he hath no superior. There is not one ingredient in a law that does not prove, to demonstration, the impossibility of any law to bind the actions of God. Every law is dictated by some higher power to him or them who are to obey it ; but there is no higher power to dictate to Almighty God. Every law is given to teach those, who are obliged to observe it, how they are to act ; but God is infinitely wise, and cannot be taught any thing. Every law hath a penalty or reward, or both, annexed to it, which are to be conferred or inflicted on those to whom it is given ; but God can neither be rewarded, nor punished. Every law renders those, who are subject to it, accountable to some superior ; but God is accountable to none, nor can he be judged by any. Every law necessarily supposes those, on whom it is laid, to be fallible and peccable ; but God is infallible, impeccable, and absolutely perfect. Thus, Sir, it is manifest, beyond all contradiction or question, that the actions of God are bounded by no law : yet all his creatures are perfectly safe, and may, if they please, be happy in his hands ; for he is infinitely wise and good ; and, having it in his power to do what he pleases, will do only that which is good.

Dech. His wisdom and goodness, then, are laws to him ; and that is all I ever insisted on, though in other words.

Shep.

Shep. Say, rather, his wisdom and goodness are to him, what his laws are to us,

Dech. When I say that reason, or wisdom and goodness, are laws to God; I do not mean, that they are laws, in the strict and immediate sense of the word, as used among men.

Shep. Yet you Deists, and many others, without ever defining your meaning for the word, use it as familiarly, when speaking of God's actions, as you do when you speak of your own, or those of other men; by which you bring yourselves, and others, to talk of God as a limited being, as subject either to some eternal superior, or to himself; as bound, obliged, and governed; which are most derogatory expressions, and highly absurd in themselves, as well as dangerous in their consequences, and repugnant to truth and religion. Great errors, in all sorts of knowledge, arise from the abuse of words; and, among all the misapplications of words, none hath been more general than that of the word *law*: it hath been raised infinitely above all sense and signification by some, in order to apply it to God; and by others impiously applied to him in its own proper and natural sense. It hath been also sunk, although not quite so far, beneath its rational or possible import, by a metaphorical application to the qualities of matter, and the causes of mere physical *phænomena*. Attraction, or gravitation, is called a *law*; and the properties of motion, with the mechanical powers, are all enacted into *laws*, by natural philosophers. The heavenly bodies are all carried about by due course of *law*; the ebbing and flowing of the tides, and even the most irregular motions of the winds, are perfectly *legal*: no wonder, when such liberties as these are taken with the word, if the more regular dictates of human nature are by many, and its most vicious propensities by some, called laws, before any authority appears to establish and enforce them as such. To conclude, the reason of man, when duly informed, can be a law only to man; and to say that reason, of any sort, can be, in any sense or propriety, a law to God, who lays his laws on us, and not on himself, seems to me to be nonsense, if not blasphemy: and, in my
opinion,

opinion, this way of expressing ourselves ought to be abstained from, inasmuch as it leads us into unfathomable depths and difficulties, which may be avoided by more guarded expressions, that will serve all our purposes as well ; such as, that God, being infinitely wise, good, and just, will always *chuse* to act right, without being bound so to do by any law. To say that this law, laid on man, is eternal, is the same as to say, that human nature, to which alone it can be a law, is eternal. And to say that God himself cannot dispense with it, is to say, God is subject to the laws he hath imposed on his creatures, and destitute of that prerogative which all earthly legislators claim to themselves.

THE other objection, which, I think, bears very hard upon the Deistical creed, is this : If we suppose the law of nature, as set forth in that creed, and in the writings of all our Deists, to be the only rule of action given us by Almighty God, and the only law by which we are hereafter to be judged ; if we likewise suppose this law is so fully promulgated to every man, by his own sentiments and reason, as to leave him without excuse for any ignorance of his duty, into which he may happen to fall, and enforced, proportionably to its great and important ends, by future rewards and punishments, sufficiently inducing or alarming ; the condition of mankind must be most forlorn and frightful.

Dech. Pray, Sir, how so ?

Shep. Don't you say the law of nature is sufficiently made known to all men ?

Dech. I say, every man hath sufficient means of knowing, by the light of nature, what is his duty, on all occasions (a).

Shep. You say this law is perfect, and neither needs nor admits of any alteration, addition, or diminution.

Dech. I do.

Shep. Are all men to be judged by this law, whenever God shall please to call them to an account ?

Dech. They are.

Shep.

(a) Christ. old as Creation, chap. I. and elsewhere.

Shep. If any man shall be found, on tryal before the judgment-seat of God, to have been a strict observer of this law, he will, I suppose, be acquitted, and remain, for ever afterwards, in the favour of God.

Dech. He will.

Shep. But if he shall be found to have been a transgressor of this law, will he not be condemned?

Dech. So I think.

Shep. Have not all men transgressed this law?

Dech. They have.

Shep. All men, therefore, shall be condemned.

Dech. As no man can live up to the strictness of a perfect law, God, who is infinitely merciful, will not exact a perfect obedience. The law or rule of action must be perfect; but it does not follow from thence, that a perfect obedience shall be required, with rigour, from frail man, by a gracious God.

Shep. You suppose, then, that God will forgive the breaches of this law.

Dech. Look you, Sir, I do not suppose he will forgive a total or enormous violation of it.

Shep. That is, if a man hath not violated every single article of it, he will be forgiven.

Dech. Neither is that what I mean; but if a man hath not been guilty of the most atrocious breaches, and hath done more good than evil in the whole of his life, taken together; God will reward him according to his overplus of good.

Shep. It seems, then, man can merit in the sight of God, or deserve somewhat of God.

Dech. I think he may; and Christians think so too, or they would not always call eternal happiness a reward.

Shep. The Papists, indeed, say a man may, in some sense, merit of God; but the Scriptures say the contrary, and bid us look upon ourselves, when we have done our best, as *unprofitable servants*. Those eternal joys, therefore, which are proposed in Scripture as an encouragement to virtue, are, in that sense, called rewards; not that our best actions can deserve them, but because the infinite goodness of God is pleased freely to bestow

bestow them on us for Christ's sake, if we do our utmost to live according to the Christian covenant. Christ imputes his merit to us, and it is on the strength of that, and not of our own merit, that we are said to be rewarded. But the Deists, who make virtue its own sufficient reward, are fully paid, perhaps over-paid, for all the good they do, in this life: however, I cannot but tremble for the fate of man, when I consider, that his sins, I mean the sins of the best man, appear so plainly to exceed his good actions; when I consider likewise, that man, having received all he hath, and particularly his power of doing good, from God, owes him the utmost good he can do; and therefore, in his best actions, does but pay a small part of his debt, not place an obligation on God; and in his bad actions, which are in your opinion committed wilfully, and against the well-known law of God, gives great and grievous cause of offence to his just Maker and Judge. *Lucretius* had good reason to object to the Pagan, that is, as you and Lord *Herbert* call it, the natural theology, that it afforded no hope of forgiveness after sinning.

— *At mens sibi conscia facti,
Præmetuens adhibet stimulos, terretque flagellis;
Nec videt interea, qui terminus esse malorum
Possit, nec qui sit pœnarum denique finis;
Atque eadem metuit magis hæc ne in morte gravescant.*

Dech. Fear not. Man is in the hands of a merciful God, and may safely trust to his goodness.

Shep. It is a most pleasing thought. But, lest man should presume on this goodness, and be thereby encouraged to become evil himself, it is, I should think, highly necessary he should consider God, not only as merciful, but as just also, and capable of inflicting punishments, as well as dispensing rewards. If the subjects know they are to be forgiven, the penalties of the law are of no effect. But if, in any case, the delinquent cannot be both pardoned and punished, or if it should seem doubtful, whether a just and merciful God should exact justice, or confer mercy, I must own I think it
most

most consistent with the wisdom, nay, with the goodness of God, that justice should be preferred, because, on the due distribution of justice, the order and happiness of the whole depend; whereas the good of individuals only can result from the pardon of individuals. Justice, timely executed on some, may prevent the sins of many; but mercy, shewn publicly to all, can hardly fail of encouraging all to transgress, should they be tempted to it.

Dech. They must take care therefore not to proceed to such enormity and hardness, as mercy, bounded by justice, cannot forgive.

Shep. There are then certain lengths, to which they may carry their transgressions, with hopes of impunity.

Dech. There certainly are sins which a man may be forgiven; and others, for which he will be punished. There are greater and lesser sins.

Shep. Sins, considered in themselves, and their effects, are of different degrees; however, if they be considered as done against the authority of God, they must deserve his animadversion. God, if we believe the Deists, is neither the better nor the worse for what we do, is infinitely happy without our obedience, and in spite of our vices; and is no way affected by our actions (a). It must be therefore your opinion, that all our actions are equal in the sight of God, that is, equally insignificant, and incapable of pleasing or offending him, which totally destroys all practical religion.

Dech. This opinion, even as you misrepresent it, is more to his honour, than that principle of Christians, which represents all our sins as highly and equally offensive to him. He, you know, who transgresses one commandment, is by your religion said to be guilty of the whole law.

Shep. But a man may transgress the whole law more heinously in one instance, than in another. In any instance, however, he who transgresses the law, sins against infinite Majesty, and is very guilty. Now this is by far a more wholesome position, than that God is utterly unconcerned about our actions. Perhaps a man is not dis-
posed

(a) Christ, old as Creation, chap. 5.

posed from within, nor tempted from without, to commit murder; but, however, is covetous, and defrauds his neighbour. This man shews no respect for the majesty of God, and the authority of his law; and were he as strongly tempted to commit murder, I cannot see what there is to restrain him. He certainly is lawless, and does all the mischief he hath an inclination to; which to God, who sees his heart, renders him as guilty, as if he had actually broken all his other commandments.

Dech. You may refine upon this matter as you please; but nothing can be more manifest, than that some sins, being more prejudicial to mankind than others, and done in violation of stronger and higher reluctances, planted in our nature by God, are therefore in his sight more offensive.

Shep. And what will follow, but that the greater shall be punished with more severity, and the smaller with less? In the laws of God, as well as man, there are different degrees of punishment; yet the smallest and mildest is still a punishment. I would be glad to know, however, what degrees of vice they are, into which a man may give with impunity, and where he ought to stop; this being the only point of importance to accountable and punishable creatures, inasmuch as the venial degrees of sin, in respect to punishment, are as no sins at all. Does the light of nature, with the clearness of all its other dictates, inform us of this? Does the law itself tell us what part of it we may safely transgress, that is, what part of it is useless and insignificant?

Dech. That would be a strange absurdity in a perfect law. If we transgress, Sir, we are then at the mercy of God, to which we are to set no bounds.

Shep. Not, unless he hath told us what bounds he intends to set to his own mercy; and I only inquired whether this had been done thro' the light of nature, or not. Since I find it is not, and that we have by that light no hope of mercy, if we transgress the law, but such as is defeated by an utter ignorance, whether we are within the pardonable degree of sin or not; as I also find, that all we have to expect from a perfect obedience to the law of nature is a bare acquittal; be so good as to tell us, on what

dictate of nature you found your expectation of a future reward. *Tindal*, I know, gives it as his dictate, that we can by no means merit in the sight of God (a).

Dech. Reason tells us, God is infinitely bountiful; and it is on that divine attribute we found our hopes of happiness.

Shep. If a man makes a present of a considerable sum to one he never received any service from, can that be called a reward?

Dech. No.

Shep. The future happiness you expect, then, cannot be in the nature of a reward. God is not obliged by your law to make you eternally happy, altho' you should conform yourselves never so strictly to it; or if he is, let us hear what assurance you have from nature of this obligation lying upon God.

Dech. We know, that a good being is pleasing in his sight; and that whosoever is so, must be happy.

Shep. Then our goodness gives him pleasure, contrary to what you all maintain concerning the insignificance of our actions in the sight of God. Your law, in short, strips you of all pretensions; and as you all transgress it, renders you liable, for ought I can see, to all the effects of God's displeasure, be those what they will. I cannot find in the light of nature, as it shines from *Shaftesbury*, *Tindal*, or you, the least glimmering prospect of reconciliation with God.

Dech. Tell me, Doctor, if a man should offend you, and, repenting of what he had done, should acknowledge his fault, and ask pardon; would you not forgive him?

Shep. Yes, or I should act against the express commandment of Christ.

Dech. Very well; and do you not believe Christ to be God?

Shep. I do.

Dech. Do you believe God would command you, who are a frail passionate creature, as poor *Cunningham*, the Devil's emissary, can witness, to do that which he himself, who is infinitely patient and forgiving, would not do?

Shep.

Shep. I believe, were it possible for him to be in my place, he would do what he hath commanded me to do.

Dech. Why, do you really think his place makes forgiveness less proper than yours does?

Shep. In many cases it certainly does. I commit many offences against him, and my neighbour; and cannot reasonably hope to be forgiven myself, if I do not forgive others. But he is without sin; and besides, as he is supreme Monarch of the whole universe, it belongs to him to see justice done, *to render to every man according to his deeds*, in order to support the dignity of his laws, on which the happiness of all the free and intelligent creation depends; and which if any one might transgress with impunity, on merely repenting, I cannot see how his kingdom, at least this earthly province of it, could be preserved. Every one will repent some time or other, if he thinks he is to be pardoned, and thereby exempted from intolerable punishments; by which means it will come to pass, that no one shall suffer, and so the penal laws of God will be in vain, altho' the world shall be filled with wickedness, and by no temptation so much, as by this very expectation of impunity on repentance deferred as long as the delinquent pleases.

Dech. That is as much as to say, there is no room for pardon, and consequently no encouragement to repentance; and that God, tho' he hath ordered every one to forgive, will himself never forgive any one. This I think is shocking.

Shep. So it is indeed; and I never said any thing like it. At present I want to know whether the law of nature promises pardon for sin; whether for all sins, or only for some; and, if some only, what those sins are, and whether absolutely, or on certain conditions; and, if the latter, what those conditions are. These, if I be not mistaken, are points well worth inquiring after.

Dech. Why then I tell you, God will pardon no sins, great nor small, if not repented of; because while a man perseveres in sin, he is incapable of receiving the favours of God. On the other hand, God will forgive all sins, truly repented of, because the true penitent is an object of his pity. Can any thing be more evident, than that, if doing evil is the only foundation of God's displeasure;

sure ; ceasing to do evil, and doing the contrary, must take away God's displeasure ?

Shep. The true penitent, I believe, is an object of God's mercy ; but, as one who hath offended, and is debtor to the law of God, he is still an object of his justice too ; and to prevent the law, on which the general good depends, from falling into contempt, he must be punished. Besides, God's assistance is necessary to a true repentance. Before a sinner can begin to be the object of God's favour, he must cease to be what he was before, and commence a new man. Now no man can make a man. None but the Creator can make a new man, or a new creature. There is a degree of strength necessary to a true repentance, such as no man is master of. But as I said a little while ago, that the case of God and any particular Christian was, in respect to forgiveness, widely different ; so you have this moment acknowledged it, and made it wider than I ever took it to be.

Dech. Have I, Sir ?

Shep. Did you not just now say, that God will pardon no sins, but such as are truly repented of ? And yet you have been very lately arguing with me upon a supposition, that God requires it of man, that he should forgive all sorts of sins, without any limitation.

Dech. You Christians say he does, and I only reasoned with you on your professed principles.

Shep. But pray what is your own way of thinking in this matter ? Doth the law of nature bid us forgive those, who make no submission nor reparation ?

Dech. I believe it does.

Shep. Believe ! Are you not clear in a point of such moment, which the conversation and dealing of almost every day make it necessary for us to understand ?

Dech. Upon second thoughts, it certainly does.

Temp. Beyond all question ; or else the Christian religion, which bids us love those who hate us, and pray for those who persecute us, would be a religion of vastly more tenderness, than that of nature ; and Christian charity would be highly preferable to philosophical benevolence.

Dech. I hope nobody thinks it was to avoid that preference, that I said the law of nature obliges us to forgive

give our enemies, without acknowledgement or reparation of the injuries they have done us.

Shep. We are bound to believe, Sir, you have discovered this useful truth on the spot. Were it not so, or had you known it before, you could not have hesitated a moment for an answer. But nature is sometimes like a flint, and will not emit its light without a little force. But if the law of nature bids us forgive unrepented offences; and if that law be not only the voice of God speaking in us, but the very law that binds the actions of God himself; surely then God will forgive us all our offences against him without repentance.

Temp. Upon my word, Mr. *Dechaine*, the Parson hath fairly thrown your own principles and arguments back upon yourself.

Dech. I do not see any thing in this piece of sophistry that affects the law of nature. As none of our offences can reach or injure God, so, were he to consider himself only, he would forgive all the breaches of his laws; but, as he is the conservator of society, of justice, and good order, according to your own doctrine, and according to that of Dr. *Tindal* in his third chapter, he will not forgive an offender, till he is reformed, and become fit for the society of rational and good beings.

Shep. Let me understand you. If an offence should be committed against God alone, does it for that reason contain nothing of immoral or criminal in it?

Dech. By no means, or it could not be properly said to be forgiven; but as it could not provoke God to anger, nor any way dishonour or injure him, we may be sure he would forgive it.

Shep. If the offender should persevere for ever in blaspheming and hating God, and, for supposition's sake, should carry well enough towards mankind; would God pass by all, suffer him to be for ever happy in Heaven, and join his blasphemies with the concert of hymns, poured out by the blessed spirits to their benefactor?

Dech. Your questions are sometimes very shocking.

Shep. Well, let us quit this perplexing topic. I insist, however, that altho' God should never punish on his

own account, yet if he does it for the sake of the general good, and merely as the conservator of justice and order, it amounts to the same thing exactly, as to the point in hand; and I am still at a loss to conceive, how mere repentance, which at best can only render us the objects of pity, but make no sort of amends for the evil we have committed, should hinder us from being still the objects of justice notwithstanding.

Dech. Can the same man be both an object of mercy and justice at the same time?

Shep. O most easily, Sir. A judge often thinks the case of a criminal, whom he pities, highly deserving of punishment.

Dech. But a judge acts for another, and must punish; whereas God acts for himself, and may pardon.

Shep. Surely you forget. God, as the Judge and Governor of the world, acts for the good of all his subjects; and altho' *his mercy is over all his works*, yet his justice also presides as extensively over his whole universal empire. God can, and would, always forgive, were it not that his wisdom and justice, taking place, as well as his mercy, make the punishment of particulars conducive to the general good. Any inferior judge, tho' he pities the criminal, he in justice is obliged to condemn, would, in most cases, condemn him, were he to act for himself; because, were he to make the contrary the rule of his practice, he would, as far as his jurisdiction extended, totally destroy the effect of law, and ruin the community, were he supreme.

Dech. Well; but reason tells me, that God, who is infinitely gracious, will accept of repentance as an atonement, and not destroy his creature, after he is reformed, and disposed to do good.

Shep. Those are very arbitrary assertions; and my copy of the law of nature hath a various reading here, that makes me doubt of the certainty and clearness of yours, which, I am afraid, you at least take the liberty of a commentator with. Mere repentance can make no satisfaction to justice for injuries and offences past; it can only put a man in the way of his duty for the time to come, which he owes to God, and which, therefore, can clear no scores for him. As to the reformation of a transgressor,

transgressor, together with his disposition to lead a new life for the time to come, it may be rendered very precarious by the supposed easiness of obtaining pardon. Nay, it cannot be effected without the grace of God, which the light of nature gives no hope of, and which all light-of-nature men make a jest of: and, as the grace of God is the free gift of God, man can neither offer up it, nor its fruits, as an atonement for his sins. Man, Sir, is frail, and, in hopes of being pardoned again, may again transgress, unless his reason tells him he cannot be forgiven a second or a third offence. Pray, what does reason say in that case?

Dech. It gives him hopes of forgiveness, if he sins and repents ten thousand times.

Shep. Nay, that he will sin so often, I will venture to assure him, unless he dies very young. But, whether he will repent so often, or ever sincerely and finally, or not, ere the terrors of death are set before him, is a great question, having from nature no sufficient incitements to so irksome a duty. Our Deists have no-where proved, or, as far as I have read, attempted to prove, from the light of nature, that the mercy of God can take place upon a penitent offender, while his justice stands neuter, or lies dormant, and suffers the wrongs done to his subjects to go unpunished, to the great encouragement of wickedness. Altho' he, who murders a man, repents, and, for the time to come, carefully avoids the least approach to such an action; yet, in his latter behaviour, he only does what it was always his duty to do, and no more; but makes no atonement to his poor neighbour, whom he hath deprived of life; nor to the community, from which he hath cut away a member; nor to God, whose creature and image he hath defaced. The Deists can never shew, on their principles, that the murderer, or any other criminal, can make the least atonement or reparation for either the offences he commits against God, or the wrongs he does to man, in cases where restitution is out of the question. They say the observation of the natural law alone can render men acceptable in the sight of God; and propose it as the only rule by which they are to act, and, consequently, to be judged. It is by this that, according to the

deistical hypothesis, all men must stand issue before Almighty God, and be acquitted for the observation, or condemned for the transgression, of it. Now I must appeal to experience, and to the heart and conscience of every man, whether he does not live in the daily transgression, be it in higher or lower instances, of those laws, which he believes God requires the observation of at his hands; and whether, after the most sincere repentance, and the most thorough reformation he can make of his life and conduct, he finds not enough of evil dispositions and lapses to lament in himself, and put him in mind, that he is one of those debtors, who, having nothing to pay in towards former accounts, is still adding to, and inflaming, the debt. Thus, I think, it appears pretty plainly, that, if all men have sufficient means of knowing their duty, as you insist they have; and if every man transgresses the rules of his duty, as his conscience cannot but inform him he does; the whole race of mankind are lost for ever.

Temp. You, Mr. *Dechaine*, seem to forget, that God is just; and you, Mr. *Shepherd*, that he is merciful.

Dech. I insist, that, as God is merciful, he will forgive.

Shep. And I insist, that, as he is just, he will punish.

Temp. Pray, Mr. *Dechaine*, are you able, upon the deistical scheme, to rid yourself of this difficulty?

Dech. I see no difficulty in it at all. God gives us laws only for our good, and will never suffer those laws to become a snare to us, and the occasion of our eternal misery. Besides, he is infinitely compassionate and indulgent to the frailties of his creatures; and, as they will not always continue to offend, so neither will he always persevere in punishing.

Temp. God, it is true, gives us laws only for our good; but those laws cannot be for our good, if he does not punish us for the violation of them, and that in a degree equal to the end and purpose of those laws, that is, I must own, in a very high degree of severity.

Dech. Can it be for our good to be punished so severely?

Temp. It is certainly for the good of men in general, and of all intelligent beings, that the laws of God, on which all order and happiness necessarily depend, should be duly enforced; and this they can never be, at least
among

among men, if the punishment, annexed to the transgression of them, is inadequate to the end, or may be evaded by repeated repentances, after repeated sins; which is but trifling with the laws, and the majesty of their author. You own yourself, he who transgresses the law of nature is without excuse, since that law is sufficiently made known to him, and placed even within his own heart. This makes wilful offenders of us all, and justifies our judge in laying on us all those severities, whatever they are, which he hath annexed to the transgression of his law, and made fully known to us, as a main and necessary enforcement of that law. Whether sinful men will ever cease to sin, if they do not stand in awe of such severities, or whether they will ever give up their sinful, but long-indulged delights, if they be not encouraged so to do by better-grounded hopes of pardon, than the mere light of nature can give them, I much question. In this life I am confident they will not, and to repent in the next life may, for ought nature can tell us, be too late. Pray, Mr. *Shepherd*, can you solve the difficulty before us, upon Christian principles?

Shep. Does not the difficulty consist in this, that infinite mercy will forgive all sorts of sins, and infinite justice will suffer no sin to go unpunished?

Temp. It does.

Shep. If man suffers the full punishment of the law, justice only operates, and mercy does not interpose. If man is exempted from the punishment of the law, then mercy only is consulted with, and justice is laid aside. But, on the Christian scheme, justice is satisfied, by the death of Christ, and so mercy takes place. The sins of all men are fully punished in his sufferings, the curse of the law is taken off, and the sting of death is broken.

Dech. The sufferings of one cannot atone for the sins of another, nor would justice punish the innocent for the guilty.

Shep. God hath a right to accept of this as an atonement, and justice did not lay the punishment of our sins on Christ, till Christ voluntarily undertook to endure the punishment due by the law to our transgressions.

Dech. As men cannot be made miserable by the sins of other men, so neither can one man be made happy by the virtue and sufferings of another. To say that they

may, is to speak against reason, and the common notions of justice. Now a religion, the fundamental article of which contradicts the common sense of mankind, can never be received by mankind, as the dictates of Almighty God, till mankind have lost their senses.

Shep. That, I find, may be contrary to common sense, which is confirmed by universal experience. The son every-where suffers for the sins of his father, in hereditary poverty and sickness. To deny the fact, is to deprive yourself of a right to be disputed with; and to say it is inconsistent with the justice of God, is to run into Atheism or Blasphemy. Estates are often, and justly, settled on the posterity of a person, who died in the service of his country, and they enjoy the benefit of their patent, without any merit of their own, while unattainted of high treason, merely for the merit of their ancestor. This legal imputation of merit, or application of the fruits arising from the merit of another, is never deemed unjust among men. Even when the reward is pecuniary, and arises out of the public funds, those who are taxed for these funds, never grudge the bounty, paid out of their own pockets, to the descendants of such as have sacrificed their lives for the good of the community. In this chancel, estates, annuities, and honours, descend to many generations; and I question much, whether any other tenure gives, in the eye of reason, so equitable a title. Thus, Sir, both naturally, and politically, the entail of merit and demerit goes down, from a good or bad man, to his posterity, by a necessity of nature, or a constitution of state, independent of the will, and previous to the behaviour, of him who inherits. Now, Sir, it will be impossible for you to shew, that God may not do that by grace, which he hath done by nature, and which the head of every community hath a right to do by legal and civil appointment.

Dech. The imputation of merit, not one's own, does by no means furnish an argument for the pardon of crimes, on account of another's merit; yet this is the point at which your instance ought to have been levelled.

Shep. I thank you for the hint. Is the son never justly pardoned even the crime of high treason, on account of his father's services, and fidelity? Can any thing be more

consistent with justice, than a pardon thus obtained, provided sufficient security can be produced for the future loyalty of the son ?

Temp. There is, I see, a beautiful conformity between the government of God's kingdom, and that of human societies.

Shep. They ought always to be the same, so far as the diversity of circumstances, and the subordination of human governors, to the absolute prerogative of the universal governor, will permit : for we must still remember, that God is vested with an higher plenitude of power to prescribe terms, on which imputed and vicarious merits may be accepted, than an earthly legislature, or king.

Cunn. I cannot see how the laying on one person the punishment due to the sins of another, can be reconciled with what God tells us by the mouth of *Ezekiel* ; that *the father shall not suffer for the iniquity of the son, nor the son for the iniquity of the father ; but that the soul that sinneth, it shall die.*

Shep. That passage hath no reference to the case in question. The *Israelites* complained, that they had been punished for the sins of their forefathers ; and nothing can be plainer, from a variety of passages, than that they had actually suffered severely by means of the idolatry, and other sins, of their ancestors and kings, which brought on them an long train of calamities ; such as drought, famine, pestilence, the sword, and captivity. But God, in this passage, declares, that it shall be no longer so ; and that, for the future, every man shall suffer only for sins of his own committal. This, now, is only a particular dispensation, and contrary to another, that had continued till that time, and therefore cannot, but by implication, be applied to the supposed substitution of our Saviour's sufferings, in the room of ours : nor can it, even by implication, shew, that this substitution is unjust : for, whereas the *Israelites* complained of the sufferings before-mentioned, it appears, they did not consent to them ; but our Saviour, who had a right to chuse either life or death, voluntarily submitted to the death of the cross, in order to take away sin ; he, of his own accord, became our surety ; and, upon our non-payment of our

debt, paid it for us. He was an hostage for our performance of a covenant, and upon our transgressing the articles of that covenant; did, freely undergo the penalty, annexed thereunto; and, having made a full atonement for our breach of the former, made a new covenant between God and us, by his blood.

Cunn. Surely, if the penalty of the former covenant was eternal death, Christ did not undergo that penalty; for he suffered only a temporary death.

Shep. But if he suffered what, in the sight of his Father, was equivalent, and all that he at first engaged to suffer; this must be sufficient.

Dech. If Christ was a mere creature, he could make no equivalent atonement for us; and if he was God, he could make none, because God can neither die, nor suffer.

Shep. But as his person consisted of both the Divine and human nature, the one rendered him capable of suffering, and the other gave sufficient dignity to that suffering. The continual afflictions, the horrible agonies of mind and body, with the shameful and grievous death of a person consisting of God and man, was equal, in the sight of an infinitely tender and affectionate Father, to all the eternal sufferings which mankind were liable to for their sins. It is impossible for us to conceive that excessive anguish, which could force the blood of our Saviour through his pores; and the still greater torments that could compel him, when on the cross, notwithstanding the full assurance he had of his Father's eternal love for him, to cry out, *My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?* It is manifest, from these instances, that his sufferings were not like those of other men; and that nothing, but the intimate union of the Divine nature with the human, could have upheld the latter under such an infinite extremity of anguish. This must have been a more piteous and moving sight to the eyes of an infinitely gracious and loving Father, than the eternal miseries of man, guilty and rebellious man. There is another consideration, by which the value of our Saviour's sufferings ought to be estimated. As an indignity is always rated by the presumption, and as the presumption bears an exact proportion to the meanness of the person insult-

insulting, and to the greatness of the party insulted ; so, in like manner, all acts of condescension being estimated by the humility, and that, again, by the dignity, of the condescending person, and by the lowness and demerit of the party condescended to ; it will follow, that the condescension of our Saviour, in taking our nature on him, and suffering therein, must have been an act of infinite condescension, if it is allowed, that the dignity of his person is infinite, not only in itself, but also in respect to the unworthiness of those for whom, and the cruelty of those by whom, he suffered. His innocence and goodness, whereof the one is infinite, and the other perfect, constituting an essential part of his dignity, do particularly enhance the value of his mercy and condescension ; especially when, at the same time, our guilt is considered.

Dech. Nothing, in my opinion, can be more inconsistent with reason, and common sense, than to imagine any atonement can be made for sin by the sufferings of an innocent representative.

Shep. All nations of the world, then, have thought and acted, in this respect, against reason, and common sense : for in all nations sacrifices, and vicarious atonements, have been offered up to God ; and the light of nature did not forbid the world to hope for pardon of their sins, upon taking away the life of even a beast, with that view.

Dech. It was not reason, nor nature, I am sure, that put mankind on this strange expedient.

Shep. No ; nor could mankind have ever so much as thought of such an expedient, had it not been appointed by Almighty God, as a representative of the great Sacrifice. But neither reason nor nature, Sir, made any objections to it, till mankind lost sight of the end for which vicarious sacrifices were instituted ; and then God, who himself appointed and ordained them, reprov'd them, as superstitious and inefficacious. Nay, the reason of mankind in general, and even of the wisest men among the Heathens, was not so strong as to abolish, or so much as discountenance, the use of sacrifices, even after the rational end of their institution ceased to be known. The practice

etice went on, and it was believed, that the gods were appeased by the savoury steam of roasted flesh.

Cunn. But how does all this discourse, about sacrifices, and the natural light, shew that your faith does not ascribe injustice to God, in putting an innocent person to death for the transgressions of the guilty?

Shep. Was Christ innocent?

Cunn. He was without sin.

Shep. And was he put to death by the appointment and predetermination of God?

Cunn. The Jews put him to death.

Shep. Do not evade the question. Was he not the *Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*? Was he not *so delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, that the Jews, having taken him, by wicked hands crucified and slew him*?

Cunn. And what then?

Shep. Nothing; but that you are to answer, as well as I, for saying that God predetermined the death of this only innocent person. It now lies equally on us both to look out for a reason sufficient to justify God in sending an innocent person into the world, and fore-ordaining his death.

Cunn. He suffered persecution and death, that he might set us an example of resignation and patience.

Shep. Was this all? Or is this enough? The prophets before him, and the apostles after him, did the like; but they had been guilty of sin, and were liable to death, the wages of sin: their example, therefore, in respect to resignation only, may seem a more natural object of our imitation, than that of our Saviour; so that if to set us an example of resignation was all our Saviour died for, this might have been done as effectually, and, upon your principles, more justly, by the death of one, whose natural infirmities brought him nearer to a resemblance of ourselves. No, Mr. *Cunningham*; some higher view must be looked for in our Saviour's death, some end, which the death of no mere man, no sinner, is qualified to answer; namely, that which the Scriptures so often mention, and so strongly insist on, the remission of sins. If you can conceive it just in God to consent, that his most innocent and holy Son should die the death of a malefactor,

factor, merely to set us an example of patience; how can you call it unjust, when another, and yet a much greater and better, end is added; the disappointment of diabolical envy and malice, the restoration of mankind to peace with God, and the healing that horrible breach which sin had made in the moral world? If any thing can reflect on the justice of God for causing, or even suffering, his innocent Son to be put to death, it must be the want of a sufficient end, or purpose. Now, in the name of wisdom and justice, was the mere setting an example of patience a sufficient end? Patience is but one, in the circle of virtues, which it is our duty to cultivate, and which, after all the influence of our Saviour's example, we may fail to exercise as we ought. And did the Son of God suffer the death of a guilty slave, merely to supply us with a precarious help towards the cultivation of one virtue, which altho' we should cultivate to the utmost, it would neither make us good, nor happy, if the other virtues should be wanting? Surely the scheme of Divine wisdom looked much farther than this; and surely every Christian must renounce the word of God, or else believe, that Jesus Christ, *the righteous, is the propitiation for our sins; and that we are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ.*

Dech. This scheme tends strongly to encourage men in their sins: for if another man, or a beast, may be made to endure the punishment of our sins for us, we need be in no pain about what we do. If the law of conscience can have any effect, it must proceed from a full persuasion, in the breast of every man, that he himself, and not another, is to suffer for his own offences. He cannot, I think, entertain any opinion, of more dangerous consequence to morality, than that all his debts of sin are already paid; and that the fund of merit, provided for that purpose, is so infinitely great, as to make it impossible for him to exhaust it, by his utmost wickedness.

Shep. Your objection to Christianity is founded upon your ignorance of it. Christ hath, through his blood, made a covenant between God and us, by which we are obliged to forsake our sins, and keep the commandments of God, on pain of forfeiting all the privileges, to which we are intitled by his death, and by the covenant established

blished therein. He hath made no atonement for those who persist in their sins ; but as he knows mankind are very corrupt and weak by nature, and, consequently, unable by their own strength to observe the articles of this covenant, he hath, in his holy ordinances, conveyed to us such Divine assistances, as, if duly concurred with on our part, may sufficiently help our natural infirmity. As we are sinful, he hath called us to repentance, and made atonement for us ; as we are weak, he hath imparted to us his own strength ; and as we are, in ourselves, unworthy of eternal happiness, he hath graciously imputed his own righteousness to us. Thus hath God, in the dispensation of our religion, been pleased to deal with us ; and nothing can do so much honour, either to his justice, or mercy.

Dech. Pray, Sir, did the blood of Christ make a full satisfaction, to the justice of his Father, for the sins of the whole human race ?

Shep. It did.

Dech. And all who repent, and believe, are to be saved thro' Christ ?

Shep. They are.

Dech. It follows, then, that the justice of God only is taken into the Christian scheme, and his mercy left out ; for if a full amend is made for our sins, we have a right to be saved, and do by no means lie at the mercy of God for our salvation.

Shep. Was it no act of mercy in God to assume our nature, and in that nature to undergo the punishment of our sins ? Is it no act of mercy in God to bestow on us a saving faith, and by his grace to work in us a true repentance ? Will it be no act of his mercy to accept of us, who are unworthy in ourselves, for the sake of Christ Jesus, our Redeemer ?

Dech. In the defence of this amazing scheme, you can scarcely offer any other arguments, but that God had a right to execute such a scheme ; and that he was pleased to do it. Now I may use the same way of arguing, and insist that he hath a right to proceed with us in another manner, and accept of repentance, as a sufficient atonement.

Shep. We cannot only prove, Sir, that God had a right to chuse this scheme of redemption, but, likewise,
that

that he did actually chuse, and execute it. This, I hope, we shall do, to the satisfaction of Mr. *Templeton*, in our future conferences; and with it prove, what is necessary to it, the divinity of our blessed Saviour. As for you, Sir, and the other Deists, you cannot, surely, say, that God can forgive sins on a mere repentance; because you maintain, that he acts by the eternal law of reason and justice, and that he is as much obliged, as any man can be, to conform himself to that law. If this is the case, as governor of the world, and judge of all men, he cannot pardon a delinquent, on his bare repentance: that would be to act against the eternal fitnesses of things, and the indispensable law of nature; which if it dictates any thing, it must be this; that the law of God is not given for nothing, nor its penalties instituted in vain; that as every offender would repent, rather than be punished, if that alone would serve the turn, the law, and its penalties, would be rendered utterly ineffectual; and that therefore impartial and universal justice must be done, in order to the preservation and happiness of that boundless and important kingdom, over which God is pleased to preside, as an equitable ruler and judge. You may combat this argument, drawn from the justice of God, and founded on your own principles, with others deduced from his mercy, as strenuously as you can; but all such arguments will only serve to involve you in endless and inextricable difficulties, from which unassisted reason can never set you free: it is the Christian scheme, alone, that can do this. What other means or expedients, beside the Christian, God might have made use of for the satisfaction of his own justice, and the manifestation of mercy to his fallen creatures, we cannot tell; neither you, nor I, nor the wisest man that ever lived, is able to form the least notion of any other method, sufficiently qualified to answer the end: all other schemes we can think of, either sink the one attribute, to give scope to the other; or, as they are both infinitely active, leave them mutually to suspend each other's operations for ever.

Dech. That is to say, the sins of men have excited a kind of struggle and combat between the attributes of God.

Shep.

Shep. No, Sir ; it does not so much as insinuate any such thing. The wisdom of God, and the goodness of his Son, immediately upon the unhappy breach made in the kingdom of God by the sin of man, contrived the blessed means to repair it, set forth in our holy religion ; by which the great difficulty is removed, and mankind taught that solution to it, which no created wisdom was ever able, of itself, to find out. The Angels are said, by *St. Peter*, to have had a desire to look into the mystery of our redemption ; but *St. Paul* says, it was hid in God from the beginning of the world ; and that the wisdom of God, manifested therein, *was made known to the principalities and powers in heavenly places, by the church of Christ*. The reason of man is altogether unable to fathom such depths, and, when it sets itself to inquire how the justice of God can be satisfied consistently with his infinite compassion, is lost in an endless maze of difficulties, and seeming contradictions, which it knows not how to get over. The Angels themselves were, it seems, unequal to this discovery, which, now that it is laid open by revelation, even man himself can conceive.

Dech. By what I can find, this scheme of redemption, as you call it, is still a mystery, too hard for the digestion of you Christians. Many of you deny the divinity of Christ, on which you found the dignity of his atonement, as, for instance, *Dr. Clarke*, &c. yet maintain the doctrine of the atonement : others, who seem to be less remote from the truth, deny both : so that if mankind were, on any occasion, at a loss to know how they should be proceeded with, they are still as much in the dark as ever, Christianity affording no certain lights herein, that may be depended on.

Cunn. Christianity, rightly understood, promises forgiveness of sins, and eternal life, only to a true repentance ; and those men do but deceive themselves, who are led, by their own interpretations of Scripture, to depend on foreign or imputed merit, for their salvation. Christ is called our Saviour, because he set us an example, which if we follow, and gave us a law, or rule of action, which if we observe, we shall save ourselves. Nothing hath hurt Christianity so much, and given its
adver-

adversaries so great an advantage against it, as the endeavour of divines to reconcile the terms of salvation, therein proposed, to a careless and sinful life. The first step they made towards this, was by persuading themselves, and others, to expect forgiveness of their sins for Christ's sake, and all the blessings proposed in the Gospel for his righteousness, not their own. Popery went a step farther; and, as if conscious, that Christ's merits were not sufficient to excuse the sins of all mankind, nor intitle them to infinite favours, it added to it the merits of all the Saints, and sold them to such as were not disposed to acquire merit by any other means than their money. This is the most dangerous article of popery, because it strikes more directly, than any other, at the foundation of all morality. As this error was older than popery itself, and as our reformers every-where, except a few, considered nothing as an error, but what was purely popish; they threw out the imputed merits of the Saints, and retained that of Christ only; not reflecting, as they ought to have done, that the one is as apt to infuse expectations hurtful to real religion and virtue, as the other. To make the merits of Christ sufficiently efficacious, they taught, also, that Christ is God; and so clogged the reformation with the Incarnation, the Trinity, and I know not what other unintelligible mysteries: however, there were some who went farther, and gave us Christianity as its author left it.

Shep. Namely, *Socinus*, and his followers. The church of *England* hath been, to the full, as guilty of this fault you find with the reformation, as any other church, nay, rather more so. She sets forth the doctrine of the Incarnation, the Trinity, and the satisfaction made for sin by the death of Christ, most expressly, in her articles; she makes a constant use of the *Nicene* and *Athanasian* creeds, in her public service; nay, she does a great deal more than all this; for she mixes those doctrines with her liturgy so essentially, that it is impossible for any body to join in prayer with her, but he must call Christ, and the Holy Ghost, God, and pray to them as such. If Christ, and the Holy Ghost, be not God, this is rank idolatry; and idolatry is a damnable sin: yet *Mr. Cunningham* holds two parishes by a solemn subscription to our articles
repeats

repeats our creeds in public with an audible voice ; and offers up his own, and the prayers of a whole congregation, to *God the Son*, and *God the Holy Ghost* : he knowingly and wilfully commits what he takes to be idolatry, and a damnable sin ; he encourages others, by his public example, to persist in this crime, which he represents, to his own conscience, as one of the first magnitude, and deepest dye : but, then, he makes amends for all this, by arguing in private against the saving merits of Christ, and the Trinity : such is the new-fashioned kind of sincerity, in which some of our modern divines, and all our Deists, make the whole of religion to consist.

Cunn. This is only railing at me, Sir, and not proving the doctrine of satisfaction to be no novelty, or reproach to Christianity.

Shep. You say, Sir, this error of expecting salvation, through the merits of Christ, is older than popery ?

Cunn. I do.

Shep. Was it not held by one party, in the time of the Nicene council ?

Cunn. It was.

Shep. And did not some, among the fathers of the first and second century, lean a little to it ?

Cunn. I believe some did.

Shep. I am sure the apostles held it, or they could never have used such expressions as these : *Ye are bought with a price. We are redeemed, not with corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Christ. We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. Him hath God set forth to be a propitiation for sins. Christ hath suffered for sins, the just for the unjust. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*

Dech. We did not meet to hear you cap texts.

Shep. I have only quoted a few, out of innumerable texts that might be cited from the writings of the apostles, to shew they held the doctrine of the satisfaction ; and the two last shew they believed, also, in that of our Saviour's divinity. He, too, sets forth the same doctrine : *I will lay down my life for the sheep.* The same was also believed all along in the Jewish church, and gave all the merit to their sacrifices. *Isaiah* believed it ; for he says,
He

He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. Nay, he founds his office of intercession on his satisfaction: *He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.* Job calls him *his Redcemer*; and he is said to have been *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.* Thus, Sir, your censure of this doctrine includes the church of Christ in all ages, the Apostles, Christ himself, and the Prophets: and although, if we believe the Scriptures, it was settled between God the Father, and God the Son, at the creation of the world, and, consequently, must have been foreseen, as predetermined from all eternity; yet you are pleased to call it a novelty, and an error. What is still more extraordinary, you subscribed to this error when you were admitted into holy orders: you solemnly declared, in the face of the church, your unfeigned assent and consent to it, when you entered upon your first living; you repeated that declaration, in order to your enjoying the second; and, I presume, would do the same, after all you have now said, for a third: you daily read the Scriptures, and repeat the creeds, to your people, in which it is set forth in the strongest terms; nay, and, not satisfied with all this, you profess it, as often as you perform divine service, in an hundred solemn acts of devotion, to God's own face: yet you believe it to be a novelty, an error, a reproach to Christianity, and a provocative to vice and wickedness.

Temp. Good God!

Shep. Yet you believe there is nothing required to make you acceptable, in the sight of God, but sincerity.

Temp. This scene is a little too shocking, Mr. *Shepherd*; pray close it.

Shep. Let wickedness hide its own head, if it can; it is my duty to tear away its cloak: complaisance is as much out of this question, as when a criminal is condemned for murder. I have already shewn, gentlemen, that Deism is utterly defective, inasmuch as it wants an atonement for sin, truly repented of. A few words will suffice, to reconcile the doctrine of such an atonement to reason, and take away all objections to it. Our sins
might

might be justly punished in our Saviour, since he was by no means compelled to suffer for them, but did it voluntarily. Besides, he did not suffer, either as being in himself a just, or guilty person ; but as undertaking the office of our representative and sacrifice, and as one who had power, of and in himself, to lay down his life, and to take it again. His Father did not, by an arbitrary act, take away his life, or he could not have reasoned as he did ; *Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life.* Nay, his infinite goodness discharges mankind of this guilt : *No man taketh it from me ; but I lay it down of myself.* His righteousness, also, might be rewarded in us, and no offence to reason ; he might transfer it as justly, as a man can make a present of any good thing he possesses, or make over, by free gift, his title to an estate, to one he loves. In all this there is nothing repugnant to reason, but somewhat perfectly agreeable to infinite goodness. If we consider the ends proposed by the sufferings of our blessed Saviour, they were most suitable to the attributes of God, to the government of the world, and to the wants of man ; for they, alone, could at once satisfy the justice of God, and make us objects of his mercy ; they, alone, could demonstrate to the whole intellectual world, the heinous nature of sin, and the strictness of Divine justice ; and yet, at the same time, preserve from total destruction a species of rational creatures. I challenge the whole world to assign a scheme, by which any of these important ends can be answered, without forgetting the rest. This now is so far from being an encouragement to sin, that nothing can so effectually deter us from it. *If the word spoken by Angels, says St. Paul, was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward ; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him ? If we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy,*
who

who hath trodden under-foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace? Let no Socinian, after this, say there is little stress laid in Scripture on the blood of Christ; nor no Deist, that, because Christ hath died for our sins, we may therefore be in no pain about them: for altho' nothing can be more sweet than the hope of forgiveness, proposed to us thro' the blood of Christ, yet is this a most awful comfort, a most alarming mercy. If the tenderest love can win us, or the most dreadful denunciation of justice can frighten us, to our duty, here are both in perfection; here is something to melt the thinking mind into gratitude, and something to rouse the stupid to a just concern for his ways.

Dech. Enough, to answer both purposes, is deducible from the light of nature.

Shep. Little or nothing is deducible from thence, if it does not give us a right idea of God, and our duty. Yet, altho' it should, if it does not give us well-grounded hopes of pardon, after transgressing his law, it will only drive us to the despair of devils, to an endless progress in sin; but if, by that light, we have hope of forgiveness, upon an unlimited repetition of sinning and repenting, that light is then a temptation and encouragement to sin, sufficient to invite over to itself, from the strictness of Christianity, not only the loose and ill-disposed, but even those who have the highest esteem for virtue.

Cunn. The application of Christ's merit, if it were granted, must be a thing of great uncertainty: for who can tell whether he is within the terms, on which it is to be expected?

Shep. The doubts arising from this uncertainty in some minds (for they do not affect all) are of unspeakable use to them; besides, it is better to have even the lowest hopes of pardon, than to be sure of condemnation, which is all can be expected from a perfect knowledge of God's will, and a continual transgression of it, without the least idea of an atonement. Pray, Mr. Cunningham, upon what terms do you expect salvation?

Cunn.

Cum. Upon my own obedience to the will of God, Do you expect yours upon any other?

Shep. Beside my own obedience, which is very imperfect, I hope for salvation thro' the righteousness of Christ. Do you think your obedience is such as to merit heaven, when examined by the law of God, either natural, or revealed?

Cum. If it is not, it is my own fault; for it might be such.

Shep. Then you have more to answer for than any other man; for sure I am, no man can be good enough, if left to himself, to merit eternal glory. The Scriptures speak so very often, and so very strongly, in a contrary strain, that I think it needless to quote them. A perfect obedience is, in my mind, too little to merit heaven, as it is all due for being, and the comforts and honours annexed to that being here. But the misery of it is, no man pays, or is able to pay, a perfect obedience to the will of God; so that, upon a fair balance of temporal accounts, every man is a debtor to God. With how ill a grace, then, shall he claim a glorious crown, and an eternal kingdom, for his deserts!

Temp. For my part, I disclaim all such pretensions, and hope God will not judge me merely by my obedience, either before or after the most thorough reformation of my life I have any hopes of making.

Dech. Have you not enough of Mr. *Shepherd's* harangues?

Temp. I like his reasonings so well, that I am determined to hear him upon the last article of the Deistical creed, which denies all revelation.

Shep. Will you be so good, then, Gentlemen, as to finish what is to be done at my turret? for my duty, and my other little affairs, require I should be within call.

Dech. Very scrupulous! Well, we will.

Temp. Ay, and we will go to church to-morrow; sha'n't we, Mr. *Dechaine*?

Dech. We can't tell how we shall be disposed, till to-morrow comes.

The End of the Fourth DIALOGUE.