















*Joseph*  
BISHOP BUTLER'S

ETHICAL DISCOURSES,

AND

ESSAY ON VIRTUE.

26-3  
ARRANGED

AS A TREATISE ON MORAL PHILOSOPHY;

AND EDITED, WITH AN ANALYSIS,

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## PREFATORY NOTE BY THE EDITOR.

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I OFFER no apology for attempting to present to the public in a more convenient form the views of confessedly the profoundest and most satisfactory writer on morals in the English language. Coming down to us chiefly in the form of sermons, and scattered through his works without any regard to their natural order, these profound treatises have been entirely unavailable for common use. Whereas, by simply dropping the peculiarities of the sermons, as such, and arranging them, with the Dissertation on Virtue, in chapters and sections, quite a complete and orderly system of morals immediately emerges. This is what has been here attempted.

In the further prosecution of my editorial labors, I have added a few notes, divided some of the longer paragraphs (after the example of Dr. Whewell, in his edition of several of Butler's sermons), and prefixed to each paragraph its subject. As these changes have been made solely for the purpose of facilitating the progress of the student, I trust they will not be considered an unwarrantable meddling with the author.

Living a single man, — wedded to science alone, — and from

his singularly sensitive and modest nature holding but little intercourse with others, the life of Butler presents but few incidents. These, with an appreciative estimate of his character and genius, are well presented in the following biographical sketch, by Professor Rogers, author of the "Eclipse of Faith," etc., taken from the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

## JOSEPH BUTLER.

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JOSEPH BUTLER, Bishop of Durham,—one of the most profound and original thinkers this or any other country ever produced,—well deserves a place among the *dii majores* of English philosophy; with Bacon, Newton, and Locke.

The following brief sketch will comprise an outline of his life and character, some remarks on the peculiarity of his genius, and an estimate of his principal writings.

He was born at Wantage, in Berkshire, May 18, 1692. His father, Thomas Butler, had been a linen-draper in that town, but before the birth of Joseph, who was the youngest of a family of eight, had relinquished business. He continued to reside at Wantage, however, at a house called the Priory, which is still shown to the curious visitor.

Young Butler received his first instructions from the Rev. Philip Barton, a clergyman, and master of the grammar school at Wantage. The father, who was a Presbyterian, was anxious that his son, who early gave indications of capacity, should dedicate himself to the ministry in his own communion, and sent him to a Dissenting academy at Gloucester, then kept by Mr. Samuel Jones. "Jones," says Professor Fitzgerald with equal truth and justice, "was a man of no mean ability or erudition;" and adds, with honorable liberality, "could number among his scholars many names that might confer honor on any university in Christendom."\* He instances among

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\* *Life of Butler*, prefixed to Professor Fitzgerald's very valuable edition of the *Analogy*, Dublin, 1849. The memoir is derived chiefly from Mr. Bartlett's more copious "Life;" it is very carefully compiled, and is frequently cited in the present article.

others Jeremiah Jones, the author of the excellent work on the *Canon*; Secker, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury; and two of the most learned, acute, and candid apologists for Christianity England has produced,— Nathaniel Lardner and Samuel Chandler.

The academy was shortly afterwards removed to Tewkesbury. While yet there, Butler first displayed his extraordinary aptitude for metaphysical speculation in the letters he sent to Clarke on two supposed flaws in the reasoning of the recently published *à priori* demonstrations; one respecting the proof of the Divine *omnipresence*, and the other respecting the proof of the *unity* of the “necessarily existent Being.” It is but just to Clarke to say that his opponent subsequently surrendered both objections. Whether the capitulation be judged strictly the result of logical necessity, will depend on the estimate formed of the value of Clarke’s proof of the truths in question,— truths which are happily capable of being shown to be so, independently of any such *à priori* metaphysical demonstration. In this encounter, Butler showed his modesty not less than his prowess. He was so afraid of being discovered, that he employed his friend Secker to convey his letters to the Gloucester post-office, and to bring back the answers.

About this time he began to entertain doubts of the propriety of adhering to his father’s Presbyterian opinions, and consequently, of entering the ministry of that communion; doubts which at length terminated in his joining the Church of England. His father, seeing all opposition vain, at length consented to his repairing to Oxford, where he was entered as a commoner of Oriel College, March 17, 1714. Here he early formed an intimate friendship with Mr. Edward Talbot, the second son of Bishop of Durham, a connection to which his future advancement was in a great degree owing.

The exact period at which Butler took orders is not known, but it must have been before 1717, as by that date he was occasionally supplying Talbot’s living, at Hendred, near Wantage,



In 1718, at the age of twenty-six, he was nominated preacher at the Rolls, on the united recommendation of Talbot and Dr. Samuel Clarke.

At this time the country was in a ferment. What is called the "Bangorian Controversy," and which originated in a sermon of Bishop Hoadley, "On the Nature of Christ's Kingdom" (a discourse supposed to imperil "all ecclesiastical authority"), was then raging. One pamphlet which that voluminous controversy called forth has been attributed to Butler. "The external evidence, however is," as Mr. Fitzgerald judges, "but slight; and the internal for the negative at least equally so." The writer says, "On the whole, I feel unable to arrive at any positive decision on the subject." Readers curious respecting it may consult Mr. Fitzgerald's pages, where they will find a detail of the circumstances which led to the publication of the pamphlet, and the evidence for and against its being attributed to Butler.

In 1721, Bishop Talbot presented Butler with the living of Haughton, near Dorkington, and Secker (who had also relinquished nonconformity, and after some considerable fluctuations in his religious views, had at length entered the Church), with that of Haughton-le-Spring. In 1725, the same liberal patron transferred Butler to the more lucrative benefice of Stanhope.

He retained his situation of preacher at the Rolls till the following year (1726); and before quitting it, published the celebrated *Fifteen Sermons* delivered there; among the most profound and original discourses which philosophical theologian ever gave to the world. As these could have been but a portion of those he preached at the Rolls, it has often been asked what could become of the remainder? We agree with Mr. Fitzgerald in thinking that the substance of many was afterwards worked into the *Analogy*. That many of them were equally important with the *Fifteen* may be inferred from Butler's declaration in the preface, — that the selection of these had been determined by "circumstances in a great measure accidental."

At his death, Butler desired his manuscripts to be destroyed; this he would hardly have done, had he not already rifled their chief treasures for his great work. Let us hope so at all events; for it would be provoking to think that discourses of equal value with the *Fifteen* had been wantonly committed to the flames.

After resigning his preachership at the Rolls, he retired to Stanhope, and gave himself up to study and the duties of a parish priest. All that could be gleaned of his habits and mode of life there has been preserved by the present Bishop of Exeter, his successor in the living of Stanhope eighty years after; and it is little enough. Tradition said that "Rector Butler rode a black pony, and always rode very fast; that he was loved and respected by all his parishoners; that he lived very retired, was very kind, and could not resist the importunities of common beggars, who, knowing his infirmity, pursued him so earnestly as sometimes to drive him back into his house as his only escape." The last fact the bishop reports doubtful; but Butler's extreme benevolence is not so.

In all probability, Butler in this seclusion was meditating and digesting that great work on which his fame, and what is better than fame, his usefulness, principally rests, the *Analogy*. "In a similar retirement," says Professor Fitzgerald, "The Ecclesiastical Polity of Hooker, The Intellectual System of Cudworth, and The Divine Legation of Warburton — records of genius 'which posterity will not willingly let die' — were ripened into maturity." Queen Caroline once asked Archbishop Blackburne whether Butler was not "dead?" "No," said he, "but he is *buried*." It was well for posterity that he was thus, for a while, entombed.

He remained in this meditative seclusion seven years. At the end of this period, his friend Secker, who thought Butler's health and spirits were failing under excess of solitude and study, succeeded in dragging him from his retreat. Lord Chancellor Talbot, at Secker's solicitation, appointed him his

chaplain in 1733; and in 1736 a prebendary of Rochester. In the same year, Queen Caroline, who thought her court derived as much lustre from philosophers and divines as from statesmen and courtiers — who had been the delighted spectator of the argumentative contests of Clarke and Berkely, Hoadley and Sherlock — appointed Butler clerk of the closet, and commanded his “attendance every evening from seven till nine.”

It was in 1736 that the celebrated *Analogy* was published, and its great merits immediately attracted public attention. It was perpetually in the hands of his royal patroness, and passed through several editions before the author’s death. Its greatest praise is that it has been almost universally read, and never answered. “I am not aware,” says Mr. Fitzgerald, “that any of those whom it would have immediately concerned, have ever attempted a regular reply to the *Analogy*; but particular parts of it have met with answers, and the whole, as a whole, has been sometimes unfavorably criticized.” Of its merits, and precise position in relation “to those whom it immediately concerns,” we shall speak presently.

Some strange criticisms on its general character in Tholuck’s *Vermischte Schriften*, showing a singular infelicity in missing Butler’s true “*stand-punkt*,” as Tholuck’s own countrymen would say, and rather unreasonably complaining of obscurity, considering the quality of German theologico-philosophical style in general, are well disposed of by Professor Fitzgerald (pp. 47–50).

About this time Butler had some correspondence with Lord Kaimes, on the *Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion*. Kaimes requested a personal interview, which Butler declined in a manner very characteristic of his modesty and caution. It was, “on the score of his natural diffidence and reserve, his being unaccustomed to oral controversy, and his fear that the cause of truth might thence suffer from the unskilfulness of its advocate.”

Hume was a kinsman of Lord Kaimes, and when preparing

his treatise of *Human Nature* for the press, was recommended by Lord Kaimes to get Butler's judgment on it. "Your thoughts and mine," says Hume, "agree with respect to Dr. Butler, and I should be glad to be introduced to him." The interview, however, never took place, nor was Butler's judgment obtained. One cannot help speculating on the possible consequences. Would it have made any difference?

In the year 1737, Queen Caroline died, but on her death-bed recommended her favorite divine to her husband's care. In 1738, Butler was accordingly made Bishop of Bristol, in place of Dr. Gooch, who was translated to Norwich. This seems to have been a politic stroke of Walpole, "who probably thought" says Fitzgerald, "that the ascetic rector of Stanhope was too unworldly a person to care for the poverty of his preferment, or perceive the slight which it implied." In the reply, however, in which Butler expresses his sense of the honor conferred, he shows that he understood the position of matters very clearly. The hint he gave seems to have had its effect, for in 1740 the King nominated him to the vacant Deanery of St. Pauls, whereupon he resigned Stanhope, which he had hitherto held *in commendam*. The revenues of Bristol, the poorest see, did not exceed £400.

A curious anecdote of Butler has been preserved by his domestic chaplain, Dr. Tucker, afterwards Dean of Gloucester. He says: "His custom was, when at Bristol, to walk for hours in his garden in the darkest night which the time of year could afford, and I had frequently the honor to attend him. After walking some time, he would stop suddenly and ask the question, 'What security is there against the insanity of individuals? The physicians know of none, and as to divines, we have no data, either from Scripture or from reason, to go upon in relation to this affair.' — 'True, My Lord, no man has a lease of his understanding any more than of his life; they are both in the hands of the Sovereign Disposer of all things.' He would then take another turn, and again stop short: 'Why



might not whole communities and public bodies be seized with fits of insanity, as well as individuals? — ‘My Lord, I have never considered the case, and can give no opinion concerning it.’ — ‘Nothing but this principle, that they are liable to insanity equally at least with private persons, can account for the major part of those transactions of which we read in history.’ I thought little of that odd conceit of the bishop at that juncture; but I own I could not avoid thinking of it a great deal since, and applying it to many cases.”

In 1747, on the death of Archbishop Potter, it is said that the primacy was offered to Butler, who declined it, with the remark that “it was too late for him to try to support a falling church.” If he really said so, it must have been in a moment of despondency, to which his constitutional melancholy often disposed him. No such feeling, at all events, prevented his accepting the bishopric of Durham in 1750, on the death of Dr. Edward Chandler. About the time of his promotion to this dignity, he was engaged in a design for consolidating and extending the Church of England in the American Colonies. With this object he drew up a plan marked by his characteristic moderation and liberality; the project, however, came to nothing.

Soon after his translation to the see of Durham, Butler delivered and published his charge on the Use and Importance of External Religion, which gave rise, in conjunction with his erection of a “white marble cross” over the communion table in his chapel at Bristol, and one or two other slight circumstances, to the ridiculous and malignant charge of popery; — a charge, as Mr. Fitzgerald observes, “destitute of a shadow of positive evidence, and contradicted by the whole tenor of Butler’s character, life, and writings.”

The revenues from his see were lavishly expended in the support of public and private charities,\* while his own mode

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\* Butler must have been of a naturally munificent as well as benevolent disposition. He was extremely fond, it appears, of *planning* and *building*;

of life was most simple and unostentatious. Of the frugality of his table, the following anecdote is proof:—“A friend of mine, since deceased, told me,” says the Rev. John Newton, “that when he was a young man, he once dined with the late Dr. Butler, at that time Bishop of Durham; and, though the guest was a man of fortune, and the interview by appointment, the provision was no more than a joint of meat and a pudding. The bishop apologized for his plain fare, by saying, that it was his way of living; ‘that he had long been disgusted with the fashionable expense of time and money in entertainments, and was determined that it should receive no countenance from his example.’” No prelate ever owed less to politics for his elevation, or took less part in them. If he was not “wafted to his see of Durham,” as Horace Walpole ludicrously said, “on a cloud of metaphysics,” he certainly was not carried there by political intrigue or party manœuvres. He was never known to speak in the House of Peers, though constant in his attendance there.

He had not long enjoyed his new dignity before symptoms of decay disclosed themselves. He repaired to Bath in 1752, in the hope of recovering his health, where he died, June 16, in the sixtieth year of his age.

His face was thin, and pale, but singularly expressive of placidity and benevolence. “His white hair,” says Hutchinson,\* “hung gracefully on his shoulders, and his whole figure was patriarchal.” He was buried in the cathedral of Bristol, where two monuments have been erected to his memory. They record in suitable inscriptions (one in Latin by his chaplain,

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a passion not always very prudently indulged, or without danger, in early days, of involving him in difficulties; from which indeed, on one occasion Secker’s intervention saved him. He spent large sums in improving his various residences. It was probably in the indulgence of the love of ornamentation to which this passion led, that the “marble cross” and other imprudent symbols which were so ridiculously adduced to support the charge of popery originated.

\* *History of Durham*, vol. I. p. 578; cited in Fitzgerald’s “Life.”

Dr. Foster, and the other in English by the late Dr. Southey) his virtues and genius. Though epitaphs, they speak no more than simple truth.

A singular anecdote is recorded of his last moments. As Mr. Fitzgerald observes, "it wants direct testimony," but is in itself neither uninteresting nor incredible, for a dying hour has often given strange vividness and intensity to truths neither previously unknown nor unimportant. It is generally given thus: 'When Bishop Butler lay on his death-bed, he called for his chaplain, and said, 'Though I have endeavored to avoid sin, and to please God to the utmost of my power; yet, from the consciousness of perpetual infirmities, I am still afraid to die.' 'My Lord,' said the chaplain, 'you have forgotten that Jesus Christ is a Saviour.' — 'True,' was the answer, 'but how shall I know that he is a Saviour for me?' — 'My Lord, it is written, him that cometh unto me, I will in nowise cast out.' — 'True,' said the bishop, 'and I am surprised, that though I have read that Scripture a thousand times over, I never felt its virtue till this moment; and now I die happy.'"

The genius of Butler was almost equally distinguished by subtlety and comprehensiveness, though the latter quality was perhaps the most characteristic. In his *juvenile* correspondence with Clarke — already referred to — he displays an acuteness which, as Sir James Mackintosh observes, "neither himself nor any other ever surpassed;" an analytic skill, which, in earlier ages, might easily have gained him a rank with the most renowned of the schoolmen. But in his mature works, though they are everywhere characterized by subtle thought, he manifests in combination with it qualities yet more valuable; — patient comprehensiveness in the survey of complex evidence, a profound judgment and a most judicial calmness in computing its several elements, and a singular constructive skill in combining the materials of argument into a consistent logical fabric. This "architectural power" of mind may be wholly or nearly wanting, where the mere analytic faculty may exist in much

vigor. The latter may even be possessed in vicious excess, resulting in little more than the disintegration of the subjects presented to its ingenuity. Synthetically to reconstruct the complex unity, when the task of analysis is completed, to assign the reciprocal relations and law of subordination of its various parts, requires something more. Many can take a watch to pieces who would be sorely puzzled to put it together again.

Butler possessed these powers of analysis and synthesis in remarkable equipoise. What is more, he could not only re-combine, and present in symmetrical harmony, the elements of a complex unity when capable of being subjected to an exact previous analysis, — as in his remarkable sketch of the Moral Constitution of Man, — but he had a wonderfully keen eye for detecting remote analogies and subtle relations where the elements are presented intermingled or in isolation, and insusceptible of being presented as a single object of contemplation previous to the attempt to combine them. This is the case with the celebrated *Analogy*. In the *Sermons on Human Nature*, he comprehensively surveys that nature as a *system* or *constitution*; and after a careful analysis of its principles, affections, and passions, views these elements in combination, endeavors to reduce each of these to its place, assigns to them their relative importance, and deduces from the whole the law of subordination, — which he finds in the Moral Supremacy of Conscience, as a keystone to the arch, — the ruling principle of the “Constitution.” In the *Analogy*, he gathers up and combines from a wide survey of scattered and disjointed facts, those resemblances and relations on which the argument is founded, and works them into one of the most original and symmetrical logical creations to which human genius ever gave birth. The latter task was by far the more gigantic of the two. To recur to our previous illustration, Butler is here like one who puts a watch together without being permitted to take it to pieces, — from the mere presentation of its disjointed fragments. In the former case he resembled the physiologist who has an entire



animal to study and dissect; in the latter he resembled Cuvier, constructing out of *disjecta membra*—a bone scattered here and there—an organized unity which man had never seen except in isolated fragments.

All Butler's productions—even his briefest—display much of this "architectonic" quality of mind; in all he not only evinces a keen analytic power in discerning the "differences" (one phase of the philosophic genius, according to Bacon, and hardly the brightest), but a still higher power of detecting the "analogies" and "resemblances of things," and thus of showing their relation and subordination. These peculiarities make his writings difficult; but it makes them profound, and it gives them singular completeness.

It is not difficult to assign the precise sphere in which Butler, with eminent gifts for abstract science in general, felt most at home. Facts show us, not only that there are peculiarities of mental structure which prompt men to the pursuit of some of the great objects of thought and speculation rather than others—peculiarities which circumstances may determine and education modify, but which neither circumstances nor education can do *more* than determine or modify; but that even in relation to the very same subject of speculation, there are minute and specific varieties of mind, which prompt men to addict themselves rather to this part of it than to that. This was the case with Butler. Eminently fitted for the prosecution of metaphysical science in general, it is always the *philosophy of the moral nature of man* to which he most naturally attaches himself, and on which he best loves to expatiate. Neither Bacon nor Pascal ever revolved more deeply the phenomena of our moral nature, or contemplated its inconsistencies, its intricacies, its paradoxes, with a keener glance or more comprehensive survey; or drew from such survey reflections more original or instructive. As in reading Locke, the young metaphysician is perpetually startled by the palpable apparition, in distinct sharply defined outline, of facts of consciousness which

he recognizes as having been partially and dimly present to his mind before — though too fugitive to fix, too vague to receive a name ; so in reading Butler, he is continually surprised by the statement of moral facts and laws, which he then first adequately recognizes as true, and sees in distinct vision face to face. It is not without reason that Sir James Mackintosh says of the sermons preached at the Rolls, “That in them Butler has taught truths more capable of being exactly distinguished from the doctrines of his predecessors, more satisfactorily established by him, more comprehensively applied to particulars, more rationally connected with each other, and therefore more worthy of the name of *discovery*, than any with which we are acquainted.”

His special predilections for the sphere of speculation we have mentioned are strikingly indicated in his choice of the *ground* from which he proposes to survey the questions of morals. “There are two ways,” says he in the preface to his three celebrated sermons on Human Nature, “in which the subject of morals may be treated. One begins inquiring into the abstract relations of things ; the other, from a matter of fact, namely, what the particular nature of man is, its several parts, their economy or constitution ; from whence it proceeds to determine what course of life it is, which is correspondent to this whole nature.” As might be expected, from the tendencies of his mind, he selects his *latter* course.

The powers of *observation* in Butler must have been, in spite of his studious life and his remarkable habits of abstraction, not much inferior to his keen faculty of introspection, though this last was undoubtedly the main instrument by which he traced so profoundly the mysteries of our nature. There have doubtless been other men, far less profound, who have had a more quick and more vivid perception of the peculiarities of character which discriminate individuals, or small classes of men (evincing, after all, however, not so much a knowledge of *man* as a knowledge of *men*) ; still the masterly manner in

which Butler often sketches even these, shows that he must have been a very sagacious observer of those phenomena of human nature which presented themselves from *without*, as well as of those which revealed themselves from *within*. In general, however, it is the characteristics of *man*, the generic phenomena of our nature, in all their complexity and subtilty, that he best loves to investigate and exhibit. The spirit of his profound philosophy is meantime worthy both of the Christian character and ample intellect of him who excogitated it. It is the very reverse of that of the philosophical satirist or caricaturist; however severely just the foibles, the inconsistencies, the corruptions of our nature, it is a philosophy everywhere compassionate, magnanimous, and philanthropic. Its tone, indeed, like that of the philosophy of Pascal (though not shaded with the same deep melancholy), is entirely modulated by a profound conviction of the frailty and ignorance of man, of the little we know compared with what is to be known, and of the duty of humility, modesty, and caution in relation to all those great problems of the universe, which tempt and exercise man's ambitious speculations. His constant feeling, amidst the beautiful and original reasonings of the *Analogy*, is identical with that of Newton, when, reverting at the close of life to his sublime discoveries, he declared he seemed only like a child who had been amusing himself with picking up a few shells on the margin of the ocean of universal truth, while the infinite still lay unexplored before him. In a word, it is the feeling, not only of Pascal and of Newton, but of all the profoundest speculators of our race, whose grandest lesson from all they learned, was the vanishing ratio of man's knowledge to man's ignorance. Hence the immense value (if only as a discipline) of a careful study of Butler's writings, to every youthful mind. They cannot but powerfully tend to check presumption, and teach modesty and self-distrust.

The feebleness of Butler's imagination was singularly contrasted with the *inventive* and *constructive* qualities of his

intellect, and the facility with which he detected and employed "analogies" in the way of argument. He is, indeed, almost unique in this respect. Other philosophic minds (Bacon and Burke are illustrious examples), which have possessed similar aptitudes for "analogical" reasoning, have usually had quite sufficient of the kindred activity of imagination to employ "analogies" for the purpose of poetical illustration. If Butler possessed this faculty by nature in any tolerable measure, it must (as has been the case with some other great thinkers) have been repressed and absorbed by his habits of abstraction. His defect in this respect is, in some respects, to be regretted, since unquestionably the illustrations which imagination would have supplied to argument, and the graces it would have imparted to style, would have made his writings both more intelligible and more attractive. It is said that once, and once only, "he courted the muses," having indited a solitary "acrostic to a fair cousin" who for the first, and as it seems, the only time, inspired him with the tender passion. But, as one of his biographers says, we have probably no great reason to lament the loss of this fragment of his poetry.

Butler's composition is almost as destitute of wit as of the graces of imagination. Yet is he by no means without that dry sort of humor, which often accompanies very vigorous logic, and, indeed, is in some instances inseparable from it; for the neat detection of a sophism, or the sudden and unexpected explosion of a fallacy, produces much the same effect as wit on those who are capable of enjoying close and cogent reasoning. There is also a kind of simple, grave, satirical pleasantry, with which he sometimes states and refutes an objection, by no means without its piquancy.

As to the complaint of obscurity, which has been so often charged on Butler's style, it is difficult to see its justice in the sense which it has usually been preferred. He is a *difficult* author, no doubt, but he is so from the close packing of his thoughts, and their immense generality and comprehensiveness;

as also from what may be called the *breadth* of his march, and from occasional lateral excursions for the purpose of disposing of some objection which he does not formally mention, but which might harrass his flank; it certainly is not from indeterminate language or (ordinarily) involved construction. All that is really required in the reader, *capable* of understanding him at all, is to do just what he does with lyrical poetry (if we may employ an odd, and yet in this one point, not inapt comparison); he must read sufficiently often to make all the transitions of thought familiar, he must let the mind dwell with patience on each argument till its entire scope and bearing are properly appreciated. Nothing certainly is wanting in the method or arrangement of the thoughts; and the diction seems to us selected with the utmost care and precision. Indeed, as Professor Fitzgerald justly observes, a collation of the first with the subsequent editions of the *Analogy* (the variations are given in Mr. Fitzgerald's edition) will show, by the nature of the alterations, what pains Butler bestowed on a point on which he is erroneously supposed to have been negligent. In subjects so abstruse, and involving so much generality of expression, the utmost difficulty must always be experienced in selecting language which conveys *neither more nor less* than what is intended; and this point Butler must have labored immensely; it may be added successfully, since he has at least produced works which have seldom given rise to disputes as to his meaning. Though he may be difficult to be understood, few people complain of his being liable to be *misunderstood*. In short, it may be doubted whether any man of so comprehensive a mind, and dealing with such abstract subjects, ever condensed the results of twenty years' meditations into so small a compass, with so little obscurity. No doubt greater amplification would have made him more pleasing, but it may be questioned whether the perusal of his writings would have been so useful a discipline; and whether the truths he has delivered would have fixed themselves so indelibly as they now generally do in the minds



of all who diligently study him. It is the result of the very activity of mind his writings stimulate and demand. But, at any rate, if precision in the use of language, and method and consecutiveness in the thoughts, are sufficient to rebut the charge of obscurity, Butler is not chargeable with the fault in the ordinary sense. We must never forget what Whately in his *Rhetoric* has so well illustrated, — that perspicuity is a “relative quality.” To the intelligent, or those who are willing to take sufficient pains to understand, Butler will not seem chargeable with obscurity. The diction is plain, downright Saxon-English, and the style, however homely, has, as the writer just mentioned observes, the great charm of transparent simplicity of purpose and unaffected earnestness.

The immortal *Analogy* has probably done more to silence the objections of infidelity than any other ever written from the earliest “apologies” downwards. It not only most critically met the spirit of unbelief in the author’s own day, but is equally adapted to meet that which *chiefly* prevails in all time. In every age some of the principal, perhaps *the* principal, objections to the Christian Revelation, have been those which men’s *preconceptions* of the Divine character and administration, — of what God *must* be, and what God *must* do, — have suggested against certain facts in the sacred history, or certain doctrines it reveals. To show the objector then (supposing him to be a theist, as nine-tenths of all such objectors have been), that the very same or similar difficulties are found in the structure of the universe and the divine administration of it, is to wrest every *such* weapon completely from his hands, if he be a fair reasoner and remains a theist at all. He is bound by strict logical obligation either to show that the parallel difficulties do not exist, or to show how he can solve them, while he *cannot* solve those of the Bible. In default of doing either of these things, he ought either to renounce all *such* objections to Christianity, or abandon theism altogether. It is true, therefore, that though Butler leaves the alternative of atheism open, he

hardly leaves any other alternative to nine-tenths of the theists who have objected to Christianity.

It has been sometimes said by way of reproach, that Butler *does* leave that door open; that his work does not confute the atheist. The answer is, that it is not its object to confute atheism; but it is equally true, that it does not diminish by one grain any of the arguments against it. It leaves the evidence for theism, — every particle of it, — just where it was. Butler merely avails himself of facts which exist, undeniably exist (whether men be atheists or theists), to neutralize a certain class of objections against Christianity. And, as the exhibition of such facts as form the pivot on which Butler's argument turns, does not impugn the truth of theism, but leaves its conclusions, and the immense preponderance and convergence of evidence which establish them just as they were, so it is equally true that Butler has sufficiently guarded his argument from any perversion; for example, in Part I. chap. vi. and Part II. chap. viii. He has also with his accustomed acuteness and judgment shown that, even on the principles of atheism itself, its confident assumption that, *if* its principles be granted, a future life — future happiness — future misery — is a dream — cannot be depended on; for since men have existed, they may again; and if in a bad condition now, in a worse hereafter. It is not, on such an hypothesis, a whit more unaccountable that man's life should be renewed or preserved, or perpetuated forever, than that it should have been originated at all. On this point, he truly says, "That we are to live hereafter is just as reconcilable with the scheme of atheism, and as well to be accounted for by it, as that we are now alive, is; and therefore nothing can be more absurd than to argue from that scheme, that there can be no future state."

It has been also alleged that the analogy only "*shifts* the difficulty from revealed to natural religion," and that "atheists might make use of the arguments, and have done so." The answer is, not only (as just said) that the arguments of Butler leave



every particle of the evidence for theism just where it was, and that he has sufficiently guarded against all abuse of them; but that the *facts*, of which it is so foolishly said that the atheist *might* make ill use, had always been the very arguments which he *had* used, and of which Butler only made a new and beneficial application. The objections with which he perplexes and baffles the deist, *he* did not give to the atheist's armory; he took them from thence, merely to make an unexpected and more legitimate use of them. The atheist had never neglected such weapons, nor was likely to do so, previous to Butler's adroit application of them. The charge is ridiculous; as well might a man, who had wrested a stiletto from an assassin to defend himself, be accused of having put the weapon into the assassin's hands! It was there before; he merely wrested it thence. It is just so with Butler.

Further; we cannot but think that the conclusiveness of Butler's work as against its true object *The Deist*, has often been underrated, by many even of its genuine admirers. Thus Dr. Chalmers, for instance, who gives such glowing proofs of his admiration of the work, and expatiates in a congenial spirit on its merits, affirms that "those overrate the power of analogy who look to it for any very distinct or positive contribution to the Christian argument. To repel objections, in fact, is the great service which analogy has rendered to the cause of Revelation, and it is the *only service* which we seek for at its hands."\* This, abstractedly, is true; but *in fact*, considering the *position* of the bulk of the objectors, that they have been invincibly persuaded of the truth of theism, and that their objections to Christianity have been exclusively or chiefly of the kind dealt with in the *Analogy*, the work is much more than an *argumentum ad hominem*; it is not simply of negative value. To such *objectors* it logically establishes the truth of Christianity, or it forces them to recede from theism, which the bulk will not do. If a man says, "I am invincibly persuaded of the

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\* *Prelections on Butler, etc.*, p. 7.

truth of proposition A, but I cannot receive proposition B, because objections  $a \beta \gamma$  are opposed to it; if these were removed, my objections would cease;" then, if you can show that  $a \beta \gamma$  equally apply to the proposition A, his reception of which, he says, is based on invincible evidence, you do really compel such a man to believe that not only B *may* be true, but that it *is* true, unless he be willing (which few in the parallel case are) to abandon proposition A as well as B. This is precisely the condition in which the majority of deists have ever been, if we may judge from their writings. It is usually the *á priori* assumption, that certain facts in the history of the Bible, or some portions of its doctrine, are unworthy of the Deity, and incompatible with his character or administration, that has chiefly excited the incredulity of the deist; far more than any dissatisfaction with the positive evidence which substantiates the Divine origin of Christianity. Neutralize these objections by showing that they are *equally* applicable to what he declares he cannot relinquish,—the doctrines of theism, and you show him, if he has a particle of logical sagacity, not only that Christianity may be true, but that it is so; and his only escape is by relapsing into atheism, or resting his opposition on other objections of a very feeble character in comparison, and which, probably, few would have ever been contented with alone; for *apart* from those objections which Butler repels, the historical evidence for Christianity,—the evidence on behalf of the integrity of its records, and the honesty and sincerity of its founders, showing that they *could* not have constructed such a system if they *would*, and *would* not, supposing them impostors, if they *could*,—is stronger than that for any fact in history.

In consequence of this position of the argument, Butler's book, to large classes of objectors, though practically an *argumentum ad hominem*, not only proves Christianity *may* be true, but in all logical fairness proves it *is* so. This he himself, with his usual judgment, points out. He says: "And objections, which are equally applicable to both natural and revealed religion,

are, properly speaking, answered by its being shown that they are so, *provided the former be admitted to be true.*"

The praise which Mackintosh bestowed on this great work is alike worthy of it and himself. "Butler's great work, though only a commentary on the singularly original and pregnant passage of Origen, which is so honestly prefixed to it as a motto, is, notwithstanding, the most original and profound work extant in any language, on the *Philosophy of Religion.*"\* The favorite topics of the *Sermons* are, of course, largely insisted on in the *Analogy*; such as the "ignorance of man;" the restrictions which the limitations of his nature and his position in the universe should impose on his speculations; his subjection to "probability as the guide of life;" the folly and presumption of pronouncing, *á priori*, on the character and conduct of the Divine Ruler from our contracted point of view, and our glimpses of but a very small segment of his universal plan. These topics Butler enforces with a power not less admirable than the sagacity with which he traces the analogies between the "Constitution and Course of Nature," and the disclosures of "Divine Revelation." These last, of course, form the staple of the argument; but to enforce the proper deductions from them, the above favorite topics are absolutely essential.

It has been sometimes, though erroneously, surmised, that Butler was considerably indebted to preceding writers. That in the progress of the long deistical controversy many theologians should have caught glimpses of the same line of argument, is not wonderful. The constant iteration by the English deists of that same class of difficulties to which the *Analogy* replies, could not fail to lead to a partial perception of the powerful instrument it was reserved for Butler effectually to wield. It

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\* A far different and utterly inconsistent judgment in all respects is reported, in his "Life," to have fallen from him. But as Professor Fitzgerald shows, it is so strangely, and, indeed, amusingly contrary to the above, that it must have been founded on some mistake of something that must have been said in conversation.

has been here as with almost every other great intellectual achievement of man ; many minds have been simultaneously engaged by the natural progress of events *about* the same subject of thought ; there have been "coming shadows" and "vague anticipations," perhaps even simultaneous inventions or discoveries ; and then ensues much debate as to the *true* claimants. Thus it was in relation to the calculus, the analysis of water, the invention of the steam engine, and the discovery of Neptune.

In the present case, however, there can be no doubt that the merit of the systematic construction of the entire argument rests with Butler. Nor would it have much detracted from his merit, even if he had derived far larger fragments of the fabric from his contemporaries than we have any reason to believe he did. They would have been but single stones ; the architectural genius which brought them from their distant quarries and polished them, and wrought them into a massive evidence, was his alone.

Professor Fitzgerald has truly remarked, that the work of Dr. James Foster against Tindal (an author Butler evidently has constantly in his eye), presents some curious parallelisms with certain passages of the *Analogy* ; we have ourselves noted in Conybeare's reply to the same infidel writer (published six years before the *Analogy*), other parallelisms not less striking. But it seems quite improbable that Butler should have derived aid from any such sources, since his work was being excogitated for many years before it was published ; nay, as we have seen, it may be conjectured that he largely transfused into it portions of the sermons delivered so long before at the Rolls, and of which a far greater number must have been preached than the fifteen he published ; so that, perhaps, it is more near the truth to say, that contemporary writers had been indebted to him than he to them.

The "pregnant sentence" from Origen, however, is not the only thing which may have suggested to Butler his great work.

Berkeley, in a long passage of the "Minute Philosopher," cited by Mr. Fitzgerald, clearly lays down the *principle* on which such a work as the *Analogy* might be constructed.

The spirit of the *Analogy* is admirable. Though eminently controversial in its origin and purpose; and though the author must constantly have had the deistical writers of the day in his eye, his work is calm and dignified, and divested of every trace of the controversial spirit. He does not even mention the names of the men whose opinions he is refuting; and if their systems had been merely some new minerals, or ærolites dropped upon the world from some unknown sphere, he could not have analyzed them with less of passion.

Of Butler's ethical philosophy, as expounded especially in the *Sermons on Human Nature*, Sir James Mackintosh's remarks prefixed to this Encyclopædia\* supersede further notice in the present brief article. But it may be remarked in general of the sermons preached at the Rolls, that though not so much read (if we except, perhaps, the three just mentioned) as the *Analogy*, they are to the full as worthy of being read; they deserve all that is so strikingly said of them in the Preliminary Dissertation. Some of them fill one with wonder at the sagacity with which the moral paradoxes in human nature are investigated and reconciled. Take, for example, the sermon on Balaam. The first feeling in many a mind on reading the history in the Old Testament is, that man *could* not so act in the given circumstances. We doubt if ever any man deeply pondered the sermon of Butler, in which he dwells on the equally unaccountable phenomena of human conduct, less observed, indeed, only because more observable, — and questioned any longer man's powers of self-deception, even to such feats of folly and wickedness as are recorded of the prophet.

The editions of Butler's writings, separately or altogether, have been numerous, and it is impossible within the limits of this article to specify them; still less to do justice to the *liter-*

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\* Encyclopædia Britannica.



ature which they have produced. His commentators have been many and most illustrious; seldom has a man who wrote so little, engaged so many great minds to do him homage, by becoming his exponents and annotators. It may be permitted, however, to mention with deserved honor the Remarks of Sir James Mackintosh prefixed to this Encyclopædia; the "Prelections" of Dr. Chalmers on the *Analogy*, the valuable "Essay" of Dr. Hampden on the "Philosophical Evidence of Christianity;" some beautiful applications of Butler's principle in Whately's "Essays on the Peculiarities of Christianity;" and the admirable edition of the *Analogy* by Professor Fitzgerald, which is enriched by many very acute and judicious notes, and by a copious and valuable index.





# CONTENTS.

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Introduction, . . . . . 31

## CHAPTER I.

Moral Constitution of Man, . . . . . 53

### SECTION I.

General Account of Man's Nature, . . . . . 53

### SECTION II.

Human Nature as a Guide in Morals, . . . . . 68

### SECTION III.

Obligations to Obey Conscience, . . . . . 82

### SECTION IV.

Self-love and Particular Affections ; especially Benevolence, . . . . . 91

## CHAPTER II.

Nature of Virtue, . . . . . 112

## CHAPTER III.

Particular Affections and Duties, . . . . . 126

### SECTION I.

Compassion, . . . . . 126

### SECTION II.

Resentment, . . . . . 138

### SECTION III.

Forgiveness of Injuries, . . . . . 151

## SECTION IV.

The Love of our Neighbor,.....162

## SECTION V.

The Love of God,.....176

## INTRODUCTION.\*

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THERE are two ways in which the subject of morals may be treated. One begins from inquiring into the abstract relations of things : the other from a matter of fact, namely, what the particular nature of man is, its several parts, their economy or constitution ; from whence it proceeds to determine what course of life it is, which is correspondent to this whole nature. In the former method the conclusion is expressed thus, that vice is contrary to the nature and reason of things : in the latter, that it is a violation or breaking in upon our own nature.† Thus they both lead us to the same thing, our obligations to the practice of virtue ; and thus they exceedingly

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\* Originally the Author's Preface to his Sermons at the Rolls. A few paragraphs not pertaining to what is here published have been omitted.

"In these Sermons," says Sir James Mackintosh (*Progress of Ethical Philosophy*), "he has taught truths more capable of being exactly distinguished from the doctrines of his predecessors, more satisfactorily established by him, more comprehensively applied to particulars, more rationally connected with each other, and therefore, more worthy of the name of *discovery*, than any with which we are acquainted." — ED.

† The author evidently does not consider the two doctrines as inconsistent with each other. And they are not ; only the former is the more comprehensive. Intemperate self-indulgence is strictly contrary to the economy of human nature, but falsehood is rather contrary to the facts of nature and history, while injustice is a violation of the property-rela-

strengthen and enforce each other. The first seems the most direct formal proof, and in some respects the least liable to cavil and dispute: the latter is in a peculiar manner adapted to satisfy a fair mind: and is more easily applicable to the several particular relations and circumstances in life.

The following Discourses proceed chiefly in this latter method. The three first wholly. They were intended to explain what is meant by the nature of man, when it is said that virtue consists in following, and vice in deviating from it; and by explaining to show that the assertion is true. That the ancient moralists had some inward feeling or other, which they chose to express in this manner, that man is born to virtue, that it consists in following nature, and that vice is more contrary to this nature than tortures or death, their works in our hands are instances. Now a person who found no mystery in this way of speaking of the ancients; who, without being very explicit with himself, kept to his natural feeling, went along with them, and found within himself a full conviction, that what they laid down was just and true; such an one would probably wonder to see a point, in which he never perceived any difficulty, so labored as this is, in the second and third Sermons; insomuch perhaps, as to be at a loss for the occasion, scope, and drift of them. But it need not be thought strange that this manner of expression, though familiar with them, and, if not usually carried so far, yet not uncommon amongst ourselves, should want explaining; since there are several perceptions daily felt and spoken of, which yet it may not be very easy at first view to explicate, to distinguish from all others,

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tions among men, and cruelty of our relations as sensitive beings. The former is the doctrine of Cudworth, Clarke, Wollaston, &c. — ED.

and ascertain exactly what the idea or perception is. The many treatises upon the passions are a proof of this; since so many would never have undertaken to unfold their several complications, and trace and resolve them into their principles, if they had thought what they were endeavouring to show was obvious to every one, who felt and talked of those passions. Thus, though there seems no ground to doubt, but that the generality of mankind have the inward perception expressed so commonly in that manner by the ancient moralists, more than to doubt whether they have those passions; yet it appeared of use to unfold that inward conviction, and lay it open in a more explicit manner than I had seen done; especially when there were not wanting persons, who manifestly mistook the whole thing, and so had great reason to express themselves dissatisfied with it. A late author, of great and deserved reputation says, that to place virtue in following nature, is at best a loose way of talk. And he has reason to say this, if what I think he intends to express, though with great decency, be true, that scarce any other sense can be put upon those words, but acting as any of the several parts, without distinction, of a man's nature happened most to incline him.\*

Whoever thinks it worth while to consider this matter thoroughly, should begin with stating to himself exactly the idea of a system, economy, or constitution of any particular nature, or particular any thing: and he will, I suppose, find, that it is a one or a whole, made up of several parts; but yet, that the several parts even considered as a whole, do not complete the idea, unless in the notion of a whole you include the rela-

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\* Rel. of Nature delin. ed. 1724, pp. 22, 23. [By Wm. Wollaston, Ed.]

tions and respects which those parts have to each other. Every work both of nature and of art is a system: and as every particular thing, both natural and artificial, is for some use or purpose out of and beyond itself, one may add, to what has been already brought into the idea of a system, its conduciveness to this one or more ends. Let us instance in a watch: — Suppose the several parts of it taken to pieces, and placed apart from each other: let a man have ever so exact a notion of these several parts, unless he considers the respects and relations which they have to each other, he will not have any thing like the idea of a watch. Suppose these several parts brought together and anyhow united: neither will he yet, be the union ever so close, have an idea which will bear any resemblance to that of a watch. But let him view those several parts put together, or consider them as to be put together in the manner of a watch; let him form a notion of the relations which those several parts have to each other — all conducive in their respective ways to this purpose, showing the hour of the day; and then he has the idea of a watch. Thus it is with regard to the inward frame of man. Appetites, passions, affections, and the principle of reflection, considered merely as the several parts of our inward nature, do not at all give us an idea of the system or constitution of this nature; because the constitution is formed by somewhat not yet taken into consideration, namely, by the relations which these several parts have to each other; the chief of which is the authority of reflection or conscience. It is from considering the relations which the several appetites and passions in the inward frame have to each other, and, above all, the supremacy of re-

flection or conscience, that we get the idea of the system or constitution of human nature. And from the idea itself it will as fully appear, that this our nature, *i.e.*, constitution, is adapted to virtue, as from the idea of a watch it appears, that its nature, *i.e.*, constitution or system, is adapted to measure time. What in fact or event commonly happens is nothing to this question. Every work of art is apt to be out of order: but this is so far from being according to its system, that let the disorder increase, and it will totally destroy it. This is merely by way of explanation, what an economy, system, or constitution is. And thus far the cases are perfectly parallel. If we go further, there is indeed a difference, nothing to the present purpose, but too important a one ever to be omitted. A machine is inanimate and passive; but we are agents. Our constitution is put in our own power. We are charged with it, and therefore are accountable for any disorder or violation of it.

Thus nothing can possibly be more contrary to nature than vice; meaning by nature, not only the *several parts* of our internal frame, but also the *constitution* of it. Poverty and disgrace, tortures and death, are not so contrary to it. Misery and injustice are indeed equally contrary to some different parts of our nature taken singly: but injustice is moreover contrary to the whole constitution of the nature.

If it be asked, whether this constitution be really what those philosophers meant, and whether they would have explained themselves in this manner; the answer is the same, as if it should be asked, whether a person, who had often used the word *resentment*, and felt the thing, would have explained this



passion exactly in the same manner, in which it is done in one of these Discourses.\* As I have no doubt, but that this is a true account of that passion, which he referred to and intended to express by the word *resentment*; so I have no doubt, but that this is the true account of the ground of that conviction which they referred to, when they said, vice was contrary to nature. And though it should be thought that they meant no more than that vice was contrary to the higher and better part of our nature; even this implies such a constitution as I have endeavored to explain. For the very terms, higher and better, imply a relation or respect of parts to each other; and these relative parts, being in one and the same nature, form a constitution, and are the very idea of it. They had a perception that injustice was contrary to their nature, and that pain was so also. They observed these two perceptions totally different, not in degree, but in kind; and the reflecting upon each of them, as they thus stood in their nature, wrought a full intuitive conviction, that more was due and of right belonged to one of these inward perceptions, than to the other; that it demanded in all cases to govern such a creature as man. So that, upon the whole, this is a fair and true account of what was the ground of their conviction; of what they intended to refer to, when they said, virtue consisted in following nature; a manner of speaking not loose and undeterminate, but clear and distinct, strictly just and true.

Though I am persuaded the force of this conviction is felt by almost every one; yet since, considered as an argument and put in words, it appears somewhat abstruse, and since the connection of it is broken in the three first Sermons, it may not

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\*Chap. iii., Sect. II.

be amiss to give the reader the whole argument here in one view.

Mankind has various instincts and principles of action, as brute creatures have; some leading most directly and immediately to the good of the community, and some most directly to private good.

Man has several which brutes have not; particularly reflection or conscience, an approbation of some principles or actions, and disapprobation of others.

Brutes obey their instincts or principles of action, according to certain rules; suppose the constitution of their body, and the objects around them.

The generality of mankind also obey their instincts and principles, all of them; those propensions we call good, as well as the bad, according to the same rules; namely, the constitution of their body, and the external circumstances which they are in. [Therefore it is not a true representation of mankind to affirm, that they are wholly governed by self-love, the love of power and sensual appetites: since, as on the one hand they are often actuated by these, without any regard to right or wrong; so on the other it is manifest fact, that the same persons, the generality, are frequently influenced by friendship, compassion, gratitude; and even a general abhorrence of what is base, and liking of what is fair and just, takes its turn amongst the other motives of action. This is the partial inadequate notion of human nature treated of in the first Discourse:\* and it is by this nature, if one may speak so, that the world is in fact influenced, and kept in that tolerable order, in which it is.]

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\* Chap. i., Sect. 1.

Brutes, in acting according to the rules before mentioned, their bodily constitution and circumstances, act suitably to their whole nature. [It is, however, to be distinctly noted, that the reason why we affirm this, is not merely that brutes in fact act so; for this alone, however universal, does not at all determine, whether such course of action be correspondent to their whole nature: but the reason of the assertion is, that as in acting thus they plainly act conformably to somewhat in their nature, so, from all observations we are able to make upon them, there does not appear the least ground to imagine them to have any thing else in their nature, which requires a different rule or course of action.]

Mankind also in acting thus would act suitably to their whole nature, if no more were to be said of man's nature than what has been now said; if that, as it is a true, were also a complete, adequate account of our nature.

But that is not a complete account of man's nature. Somewhat further must be brought in to give us an adequate notion of it; namely, that one of those principles of action, conscience or reflection, compared with the rest as they all stand together in the nature of man, plainly bears upon it marks of authority over all the rest, and claims the absolute direction of them all, to allow or forbid their gratification: a disapprobation of reflection being in itself a principle manifestly superior to a mere propension. And the conclusion is, that to allow no more to this superior principle or part of our nature, than to other parts; to let it govern and guide only occasionally in common with the rest, as its turn happens to come, from the temper and circumstances one happens to be in; this is not to act conformably with the constitution of man: neither can any

human creature be said to act conformably to his constitution of nature, unless he allows to that superior principle the absolute authority which is due to it. And this conclusion is abundantly confirmed from hence, that one may determine what course of action the economy of man's nature requires, without so much as knowing in what degrees of *strength* the several principles prevail, or which of them have actually the greatest influence.

The practical reason of insisting so much upon this natural authority of the principle of reflection or conscience is, that it seems in great measure overlooked by many, who are by no means the worst sort of men. It is thought sufficient to abstain from gross wickedness, and to be humane and kind to such as happen to come in their way. Whereas in reality the very constitution of our nature requires, that we bring our whole conduct before this superior faculty; wait its determination; enforce upon ourselves its authority, and make it the business of our lives, as it is absolutely the whole business of a moral agent, to conform ourselves to it. This is the true meaning of that ancient precept, *Reverence thyself*.

The not taking into consideration this authority, which is implied in the idea of reflex approbation or disapprobation, seems a material deficiency or omission in Lord Shaftesbury's Inquiry concerning Virtue. He has shown beyond all contradiction, that virtue is naturally the interest or happiness, and vice the misery, of such a creature as man, placed in the circumstances which we are in this world. But suppose there are particular exceptions; a case which this author was unwilling to put, and yet surely it is to be put: or suppose a case which he has put and determined, that of a sceptic not con-

vinced of this happy tendency of virtue, or being of a contrary opinion. His determination is, that it would be *without remedy*.\* One may say more explicitly, that leaving out the authority of reflex approbation or disapprobation, such an one would be under an obligation to act viciously; since interest, one's own happiness, is a manifest obligation, and there is not supposed to be any other obligation in the case. "But does it much mend the matter, to take in that natural authority of reflection? There indeed would be an obligation to virtue; but would not the obligation from supposed interest on the side of vice remain?" If it should, yet to be under two contrary obligations, *i.e.*, under none at all, would not be exactly the same, as to be under a formal obligation to be vicious, or to be in circumstances in which the constitution of man's nature plainly required that vice should be preferred. But the obligation on the side of interest really does not remain. For the natural authority of the principle of reflection is an obligation the most near and intimate, the most certain and known: whereas the contrary obligation can at the utmost appear no more than probable; since no man can be *certain* in any circumstances that vice is his interest in the present world, much less can he be certain against another: and thus the certain obligation would entirely supersede and destroy the uncertain one; which yet would have been of real force without the former.

In truth, the taking in this consideration totally changes the whole state of the case; and shows what this author does not seem to have been aware of, that the greatest degree of scepticism which he thought possible will still leave men under the

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\* Characteristics, vol. ii., p. 69.

strictest moral obligations, whatever their opinion be concerning the happiness of virtue. For that mankind upon reflection felt an approbation of what was good, and disapprobation of the contrary, he thought a plain matter of fact, as it undoubtedly is, which none could deny, but from mere affectation. Take in then that authority and obligation, which is a constituent part of this reflex approbation, and it will undeniably follow, though a man should doubt of every thing else, yet, that he would still remain under the nearest and most certain obligation to the practice of virtue; an obligation implied in the very idea of virtue, in the very idea of reflex approbation.

And how little influence soever this obligation alone can be expected to have in fact upon mankind, yet one may appeal even to interest and self-love, and ask, since from man's nature, condition, and the shortness of life, so little, so very little indeed, can possibly in any case be gained by vice; whether it be so prodigious a thing to sacrifice that little to the most intimate of all obligations; and which a man cannot transgress without being self-condemned, and, unless he has corrupted his nature, without real self-dislike: this question, I say, may be asked, even upon supposition that the prospect of a future life were ever so uncertain.

The observation, that man is thus, by his very nature, a law to himself, pursued to its just consequences, is of the utmost importance; because from it, it will follow, that though men should, through stupidity or speculative scepticism, be ignorant of, or disbelieve, any authority in the universe to punish the violation of this law; yet, if there should be such authority, they would be as really liable to punishment, as though they had been beforehand convinced that such punishment would



follow. For in whatever sense we understand justice, even supposing, what I think would be very presumptuous to assert, that the end of divine punishment is no other than that of civil punishment, namely, to prevent future mischief; upon this bold supposition, ignorance or disbelief of the sanction, would by no means exempt even from this justice; because it is not foreknowledge of the punishment which renders us obnoxious to it, but merely violating a known obligation.

And here it comes in one's way to take notice of a manifest error or mistake in the author now cited, unless perhaps he has incautiously expressed himself so as to be misunderstood; namely, that *it is malice only, and not goodness, which can make us afraid*.<sup>\*</sup> Whereas, in reality, goodness is the natural and just object of the greatest fear to an ill man. Malice may be appeased or satiated; humor may change, but goodness is a fixed, steady, immovable principle of action. If either of the former holds the sword of justice, there is plainly ground for the greatest of crimes to hope for impunity; but if it be goodness, there can be no possible hope, whilst the reasons of things, or the ends of government, call for punishment. Thus every one sees how much greater chance of impunity an ill man has in a partial administration, than in a just and upright one. It is said, that *the interest or good of the whole must be the interest of the universal Being, and that he can have no other*. Be it so. This author has proved, that vice is naturally the misery of mankind in this world. Consequently it was for the good of the whole that it should be so. What shadow of reason then is there to assert, that this may not be the case hereafter? Danger of future punishment (and if

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\* Characteristics, vol. i., p. 39.

there be danger, there is ground of fear) no more supposes malice, than the present feeling of punishment does.

The account given of *Resentment* in the eighth Sermon\* is introductory to the following one *upon Forgiveness of Injuries*. It may possibly have appeared to some, at first sight, a strange assertion, that injury is the only natural object of settled resentment, or that men do not in fact resent deliberately any thing but under this appearance of injury. But I must desire the reader not to take any assertion alone by itself, but to consider the whole of what is said upon it; because this is necessary, not only in order to judge of the truth of it, but often, such is the nature of language, to see the very meaning of the assertion. Particularly as to this, injury and injustice is, in the Sermon itself, explained to mean, not only the more gross and shocking instances of wickedness, but also contempt, scorn, neglect, any sort of disagreeable behavior towards a person, which he thinks other than what is due to him. And the general notion of injury or wrong plainly comprehends this, though the words are mostly confined to the higher degrees of it.

Forgiveness of injuries is one of the very few moral obligations which has been disputed. But the proof, that it is really an obligation, what our nature and condition require, seems very obvious, were it only from the consideration, that revenge is doing harm merely for harm's sake. And as to the love of our enemies: resentment cannot supersede the obligation to universal benevolence, unless they are in the nature of the thing inconsistent, which they plainly are not.†

This divine precept, to forgive injuries and love our enemies, though to be met with in Gentile moralists, yet is in a

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\* Chap. iii., Sect. 11.

† Chap. III., Sect. iii., 14.

peculiar sense a precept of Christianity; as our Saviour has insisted more upon it than upon any other single virtue. One reason of this doubtless is, that it so peculiarly becomes an imperfect, faulty creature. But it may be observed also, that a virtuous temper of mind, consciousness of innocence, and good meaning towards everybody, and a strong feeling of injustice and injury, may itself, such is the imperfection of our virtue, lead a person to violate this obligation, if he be not upon his guard. And it may well be supposed, that this is another reason why it is so much insisted upon by him, who *knew what was in man*.

The chief design of the eleventh Discourse\* is to state the notion of self-love and disinterestedness, in order to show that benevolence is not more unfriendly to self-love, than any other particular affection whatever. There is a strange affectation in many people of explaining away all particular affections, and representing the whole life as nothing but one continued exercise of self-love. Hence arises that surprising confusion and perplexity in the Epicureans † of old, Hobbes, the author ‡

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\* Chap. i., Sect. iv.

† One need only look into Torquatus's account of the Epicurean system, in Cicero's first book *De Finibus*, to see in what a surprising manner this was done by them. Thus the desire of praise, and of being beloved, he explains to be no other than desire of safety: regard to our country, even in the most virtuous character, to be nothing but regard to ourselves. The author of *Reflections, etc., Morales*, says, Curiosity proceeds from interest or pride; which pride also would doubtless have been explained to be self-love. Page 85, ed. 1725. As if there were no such passions in mankind as desire of esteem, or of being beloved, or of knowledge. Hobbes's account of the affections of good-will and pity are instances of the same kind.

‡ La Rochefoucauld. — Ed.

of *Reflections, Sentences, et Maximes Morales*, and this whole set of writers; the confusion of calling actions interested which are done in contradiction to the most manifest known interest, merely for the gratification of a present passion. Now all this confusion might easily be avoided, by stating to ourselves wherein the idea of self-love in general consists, as distinguished from all particular movements towards particular external objects; the appetites of sense, resentment, compassion, curiosity, ambition, and the rest.\* When this is done, if the words *selfish* and *interested* cannot be parted with, but must be applied to every thing; yet, to avoid such total confusion of all language, let the distinction be made by epithets: and the first may be called cool or settled selfishness, and the other passionate or sensual selfishness. But the most natural way of speaking plainly is, to call the first only, self-love, and the actions proceeding from it, interested; and to say of the latter, that they are not love to ourselves, but movements towards somewhat external: honour, power, the harm or good of another; and that the pursuit of these external objects, so far as it proceeds from these movements (for it may proceed from self-love†), is no otherwise interested, than as every action of every creature must, from the nature of the thing, be; for no one can act but from a desire, or choice, or preference of his own.

Self-love and any particular passion may be joined together; and from this complication, it becomes impossible in numberless instances to determine precisely, how far an action, perhaps even of one's own, has for its principle general self-love, or some particular passion. But this need create no confusion

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\* Chap. i., Sect. iv., 3.

† See Note, Chap. i., Sect. i.

in the ideas themselves of self-love and particular passions. We distinctly discern what one is, and what the others are; though we may be uncertain how far one or the other influences us. And though, from this uncertainty, it cannot but be that there will be different opinions concerning mankind, as more or less governed by interest; and some will ascribe actions to self-love, which others will ascribe to particular passions: yet it is absurd to say that mankind are wholly actuated by either; since it is manifest that both have their influence. For as, on the one hand, men form a general notion of interest, some placing it in one thing, and some in another, and have a considerable regard to it throughout the course of their life, which is owing to self-love; so, on the other hand, they are often set on work by the particular passions themselves, and a considerable part of life is spent in the actual gratification of them; *i.e.*, is employed, not by self-love, but by the passions.

Besides, the very idea of an interested pursuit necessarily presupposes particular passions or appetites; since the very idea of interest or happiness consists in this, that an appetite or affection enjoys its object. It is not because we love ourselves that we find delight in such and such objects, but because we have particular affections towards them. Take away these affections, and you leave self-love absolutely nothing at all to employ itself about;\* no end or object for it to pursue, excepting only that of avoiding pain. Indeed the Epicureans, who maintained that absence of pain was the highest happiness, might, consistently with themselves, deny all affection, and if they had so pleased, every sensual appetite too; but the very idea of interest or happiness other than absence of pain,

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\* Chap. i., Sect. iv., 9.

implies particular appetites or passions ; these being necessary to constitute that interest or happiness.

The observation that benevolence is no more disinterested than any of the common particular passions,\* seems in itself worth being taken notice of ; but is insisted upon to obviate that scorn, which one sees rising upon the faces of people who are said to know the world, when mention is made of a disinterested, generous, or public-spirited action. The truth of that observation might be made to appear in a more formal manner of proof ; for whoever will consider all the possible respects and relations which any particular affection can have to self-love and private interest, will, I think, see demonstrably, that benevolence is not in any respect more at variance with self-love, than any other particular affection whatever, but that it is in every respect, at least, as friendly to it.

If the observation be true, it follows, that self-love and benevolence, virtue and interest, are not to be opposed, but only to be distinguished from each other ; in the same way as virtue and any other particular affection, love of arts, suppose, are to be distinguished. Every thing is what it is, and not another thing. The goodness or badness of actions does not arise from hence, that the epithet, interested or disinterested, may be applied to them, any more than that any other indifferent epithet, suppose inquisitive or jealous, may or may not be applied to them : not from their being attended with present or future pleasure or pain ; but from their being what they are ; namely, what becomes such creatures as we are, what the state of the case requires, or the contrary. Or in other words, we may judge and determine, that an action is morally good or

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\* Chap. i., Sect. iv., 13.



evil, before we so much as consider, whether it be interested or disinterested. This consideration no more comes in to determine whether an action be virtuous, than to determine whether it be resentful. Self-love, in its due degree, is as just and morally good, as any affection whatever. Benevolence towards particular persons may be to a degree of weakness, and so blameable; and disinterestedness is so far from being in itself commendable, that the utmost possible depravity which we can in imagination conceive, is that of disinterested cruelty.

Neither does there appear any reason to wish self-love were weaker in the generality of the world than it is. The influence which it has seems plainly owing to its being constant and habitual, which it cannot but be, and not to the degree or strength of it. Every caprice of the imagination, every curiosity of the understanding, every affection of the heart, is perpetually showing its weakness, by prevailing over it. Men daily, hourly sacrifice the greatest known interest, to fancy, inquisitiveness, love, or hatred, any vagrant inclination. The thing to be lamented is, not that men have so great regard to their own good or interest in the present world, for they have not enough; \* but that they have so little to the good of others. And this seems plainly owing to their being so much engaged in the gratification of particular passions unfriendly to benevolence, and which happen to be most prevalent in them, much more than to self-love. As a proof of this may be observed, that there is no character more void of friendship, gratitude, natural affection, love to their country, common justice, or more equally and uniformly hardhearted, than the *abandoned* in, what is called, the way of pleasure — hard-hearted and totally

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\* Chap. i., Sect. i., 20, 23.

without feeling in behalf of others ; except when they cannot escape the sight of distress, and so are interrupted by it in their pleasures. And yet it is ridiculous to call such an abandoned course of pleasure interested, when the person engaged in it knows beforehand, and goes on under the feeling and apprehension, that it will be as ruinous to himself, as to those who depend upon him.

Upon the whole, if the generality of mankind were to cultivate within themselves the principle of self-love ; if they were to accustom themselves often to sit down and consider, what was the greatest happiness they were capable of attaining for themselves in this life, and if self-love were so strong and prevalent, as that they would uniformly pursue this their supposed chief temporal good, without being diverted from it by any particular passion ; it would manifestly prevent numberless follies and vices. This was, in a great measure, the Epicurean system of philosophy. It is, indeed, by no means the religious or even moral institution of life. Yet, with all the mistakes men would fall into about interest, it would be less mischievous than the extravagances of mere appetite, will, and pleasure ; for certainly self-love, though confined to the interest of this life, is, of the two, a much better guide than passion,\* which has absolutely no bound nor measure, but what is set to it by this self-love, or moral considerations.

From the distinction above made between self-love, and the several particular principles or affections in our nature, we may see how good ground there was for that assertion, maintained by the several ancient schools of philosophy against the Epicureans, namely, that virtue is to be pursued as an end,

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\* Chap. i. Sect. 1., 20-22.

eligible in and for itself. For, if there be any principles or affections in the mind of man distinct from self-love, that the things those principles tend towards, or that the objects of those affections are, each of them, in themselves eligible, to be pursued upon its own account, and to be rested in as an end, is implied in the very idea of such principle or affection. They indeed asserted much higher things of virtue, and with very good reason; but to say thus much of it, that it is to be pursued for itself, is to say no more of it, than may truly be said of the object of every natural affection whatever.

The question, which was a few years ago disputed in France, concerning *the love of God*, which was there called enthusiasm, as it will everywhere by the generality of the world; this question, I say, answers in religion to that old one in morals now mentioned. And both of them are, I think, fully determined by the same observation, namely, that the very nature of affection, the idea itself, necessarily implies resting in its object as an end.

I shall not here add any thing further to what I have said in the two Discourses upon that most important subject, but only this: that if we are constituted such sort of creatures, as from our very nature to feel certain affections or movements of mind, upon the sight or contemplation of the meanest inanimate part of the creation, for the flowers of the field have their beauty; certainly there must be somewhat due to Him himself, who is the Author and Cause of all things; who is more intimately present to us than any thing else can be, and with whom we have a nearer and more constant intercourse, than we can have with any creature: there must be some movements of mind and heart which correspond to his per-

fections, or of which those perfections are the natural objects; and that when we are commanded to *love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our mind, and with all our soul*, somewhat more must be meant than merely that we live in hope of rewards or fear of punishments from him; somewhat more than this must be intended; though these regards themselves are most just and reasonable, and absolutely necessary to be often recollected in such a world as this.



## CHAPTER I.

### MORAL CONSTITUTION OF MAN.

#### SECTION I.

##### GENERAL ACCOUNT OF MAN'S NATURE.\*

1. *General principle stated.*—From a review and comparison of the nature of man as respecting self, and as respecting society, it will plainly appear, that *there are as real and the same kind of indications in human nature, that we were made for society and to do good to our fellow creatures; as that we were intended to take care of our own life and health and private good: and that the same objections lie against one of these assertions, as against the other.* For,

2. *We have benevolent affections.*—First, There is a natural principle of *benevolence*† in man; which is in

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\* First Sermon at the Rolls, with the exception of a few introductory paragraphs. It was preached from the text, —“For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. —ROMANS, 12: 4, 5.”

† Suppose a man of learning to be writing a grave book upon *human nature*, and to show in several parts of it that he had an insight into the subject he was considering; amongst other things, the following one would require to be accounted for; the appearance of benevolence or good-will in men towards each other in the instances of natural relation, and in others.\*

\* Hobbes of Human Nature, c. ix., § 17.



some degree to *society* what *self-love* is to the *individ-*

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Cautious of being deceived with outward show, he retires within himself to see exactly, what that is in the mind of man from whence this appearance proceeds; and, upon deep reflection, asserts the principle in the mind to be only the love of power, and delight in the exercise of it. Would not everybody think here was a mistake of one word for another? that the philosopher was contemplating and accounting for some other *human actions*, some other behavior of man to man?

And could any one be thoroughly satisfied, that what is commonly called benevolence or good-will was really the affection meant, but only by being made to understand that this learned person had a general hypothesis, to which the appearance of good-will could no otherwise be reconciled? That what has this appearance is often nothing but ambition; that delight in superiority often (suppose always) mixes itself with benevolence, only makes it more specious to call it ambition than hunger, of the two: but in reality that passion does no more account for the whole appearance of good-will, than this appetite does.

Is there not often the appearance of one man's wishing that good to another, which he knows himself unable to procure him; and rejoicing in it, though bestowed by a third person? And can love of power any way possibly come into account for this desire or delight? Is there not often the appearance of men's distinguishing between two or more persons, preferring one before another, to do good to, in cases where love of power cannot in the least account for the distinction and preference? For this principle can no otherwise distinguish between objects, than as it is a greater instance and exertion of power to do good to one rather than to another.

Again, suppose good-will in the mind of man to be nothing but delight in the exercise of power: men might indeed be restrained by distant and accidental considerations; but these restraints being removed, they would have a disposition to, and delight in mischief as an exercise and proof of power: and this disposition and delight would arise from, or be the same principle in, the mind, as a disposition to, and delight in charity. Thus cruelty, as distinct from envy and resentment, would be exactly the same in the mind of man as good-will: that one tends to the happiness, the other to the misery of our fellow-creatures, is, it seems, merely an accidental circumstance, which the mind has not the least regard to. These are the absurdities which even men of capacity run into, when they have occasion to belie their nature, and will perversely disclaim that image of God which was originally stamped upon it, the traces of which, however faint, are plainly discernible upon the mind of man.

*ual.* And if there be in mankind any disposition to friendship; if there be any such thing as compassion, for compassion is momentary love; if there be any such thing as the paternal or filial affections; if there be any affection in human nature, the object and end of which is the good of another; this is itself benevolence, or the love of another. Be it ever so short, be it in ever so low a degree, or ever so unhappily confined; it proves the assertion, and points out what we were designed for, as really as though it were in a higher degree and more extensive.

3. *Benevolence and self-love not in conflict.*— I must, however, remind you, that though benevolence and self-love are different; though the former tends most directly to public good, and the latter to private; yet they are so perfectly coincident, that the greatest satisfactions to ourselves depend upon our having benevolence in a due degree; and that self-love is one chief

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If any person can in earnest doubt, whether there be such a thing as good-will in one man towards another (for the question is not concerning either the degree or extensiveness of it, but concerning the affection itself), let it be observed, that *whether man be thus or otherwise constituted, what is the inward frame in this particular*, is a mere question of fact or natural history, not provable immediately by reason. It is therefore to be judged of and determined in the same way other facts or matters of natural history are: by appealing to the external senses, or inward perceptions, respectively, as the matter under consideration is cognizable by one or the other: by arguing from acknowledged facts and actions; for a great number of actions of the same kind, in different circumstances, and respecting different objects, will prove, to a certainty, what principles they do not, and, to the greatest probability, what principles they do proceed from; and lastly, by the testimony of mankind.

Now that there is some degree of benevolence amongst men, may be as strongly and plainly proved in all these ways, as it could possibly be proved, supposing there was this affection in our nature. And should

security of our right behavior\* towards society. It may be added, that their mutual coinciding, so that we can scarce promote one without the other, is equally a proof that we were made for both.

4. *The other affections, also, are both public and private.*— Secondly, This will further appear, from observing that the *several passions and affections*, which are distinct † both from benevolence and self-love, do

any one think fit to assert, that resentment in the mind of man was absolutely nothing but reasonable concern for our own safety, the falsity of this, and what is the real nature of that passion, could be shown in no other ways than those in which it may be shown, that there is such a thing in *some degree* as real good-will in man towards man. It is sufficient that the seeds of it be implanted in our nature by God. There is, it is owned, much left for us to do upon our own heart and temper; to cultivate, to improve, to call it forth, to exercise it in a steady, uniform manner. This is our work: this is virtue and religion.

\* That is, conduct right in itself, or according to right relations, but not virtuous in the individual, if done from purely selfish motives. God has so arranged things that men must do good to others in seeking their own, but no thanks to them if they do not intend it. — ED.

† Everybody makes a distinction between self-love, and the several particular passions, appetites and affections; and yet they are often confounded again. That they are totally different, will be seen by any one who will distinguish between the passions and appetites *themselves*, and *endeavoring* after the means of their gratification.

Consider the appetite of hunger, and the desire of esteem: these being the occasion, both of pleasure and pain, the coolest *self-love*, as well as the appetites and passions themselves, may put us upon making use of the *proper methods of obtaining* that pleasure, and avoiding that pain; but the *feelings themselves*, the pain of hunger and shame, and the delight from esteem, are no more self-love than they are any thing in the world. Though a man hated himself, he would as much feel the pain of hunger as he would that of the gout: and it is plainly supposable there may be creatures with self-love in them to the highest degree, who may be quite insensible and indifferent (as men in some cases are) to the contempt and esteem of those upon whom their happiness does not in some further respects depend. And as self-love and the several particular passions and

in general contribute and lead us to *public* good as really as to *private*.

5. *Not to be thoroughly classified.*—It might be thought too minute and particular, and would carry us to too great a length, to distinguish between and compare together the several passions or appetites distinct from benevolence, whose primary use and intention is the security and good of society; and the passions distinct from self-love, whose primary intention and design is the security and good of the individual.\*

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appetites are in themselves totally different; so, that some actions proceed from one, and some from the other, will be manifest to any one who will observe the two following very supposable cases.

One man rushes upon certain ruin for the gratification of a present desire: nobody will call the principle of this action self-love. Suppose another man to go through some laborious work upon promise of a great reward without any distinct knowledge what the reward will be: this course of action cannot be ascribed to any particular passion. The former of these actions is plainly to be imputed to some particular passion or affection, the latter as plainly to the general affection or principle of self-love. That there are some particular pursuits or actions concerning which we cannot determine how far they are owing to one, and how far to the other, proceeds from this, that the two principles are frequently mixed together, and run up into each other. This distinction is further explained in the eleventh sermon.

\* If any desire to see this distinction and comparison made in a particular instance, the appetite and passion now mentioned may serve for one. Hunger is to be considered as a private appetite; because the end for which it was given us is the preservation of the individual. Desire of esteem is a public passion; because the end for which it was given us is to regulate our behavior towards society. The respect which this has to private good is as remote as the respect that has to public good; and the appetite is no more self-love, than the passion in benevolence. The object and end of the former is merely food; the object and end of the latter is merely esteem; but the latter can no more be gratified, without contributing to the good of society, than the former can be gratified, without contributing to the preservation of the individual.

6. *Instances of public affections.* — It is enough to the present argument, that desire of esteem from others, contempt and esteem of them, love of society as distinct from affection to the good of it, indignation against successful vice, that these are public affections or passions; have an immediate respect to others, naturally lead us to regulate our behavior in such a manner as will be of service to our fellow-creatures. If any or all of these may be considered likewise as private affections, as tending to private good; this does not hinder them from being public affections too, or destroy the good influence of them upon society, and their tendency to public good.

7. *Private affections often unconsciously tend to the public good.* — It may be added, that as persons without any conviction from reason of the desirableness of life, would yet of course preserve it merely from the appetite of hunger; so by acting merely from regard (suppose) to reputation, without any consideration of the good of others, men often contribute to public good. In both these instances they are plainly instruments in the hands of another, in the hands of Providence, to carry on ends, the preservation of the individual and good of society, which they themselves have not in their view or intention.

8. *Hence our affections show that we should do good to others as well as to ourselves.* — The sum is, men have various appetites, passions, and particular affections, quite distinct both from self-love and from benevolence: all of these have a tendency to promote both public and private good, and may be considered as respecting others and ourselves equally and in common: but some of them seem most immediately to



respect others, or tend to public good; others of them most immediately to respect self, or tend to private good: as the former are not benevolence, so the latter are not self-love: neither sort are instances of our love, either to ourselves or others; but only instances of our Maker's care and love both of the individual and the species, and proofs that he intended we should be instruments of good to each other, as well as that we should be so to ourselves.

9. *We have also a conscience.*—Thirdly, There is a principle of reflection in men, by which they distinguish between, approve and disapprove, their own actions. We are plainly constituted such sort of creatures as to reflect upon our own nature. The mind can take a view of what passes within itself, its propensions, aversions, passions, affections, as respecting such objects, and in such degrees; and of the several actions consequent thereupon. In this survey it approves of one, disapproves of another, and toward a third is affected in neither of these ways, but is quite indifferent. This principle in man, by which he approves\* or disapproves his heart, temper, and actions, is conscience; for this is the strict sense of the word, though sometimes it is used so as to take in more.

10. *Tends to social good.*—And that this faculty tends to restrain men from doing mischief to each

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\* Approbation is merely a *pleasurable assent* to something as *proved, established, defensible*. But assent and feeling are only the necessary sequence and conclusion of an antecedent intellectual process or perception. Hence, conscience must include the perception of right and wrong in actions, as well as the feeling consequent upon such perception or determination. And it is usually taken in a sense sufficiently wide to include this by Butler.—ED.



other, and leads them to do good, is too manifest to need being insisted upon. Thus a parent has the affection of love to his children; this leads him to take care of, to educate, to make due provision for them; the natural affection leads to this: but the reflection that it is his proper business, what belongs to him, that it is right and commendable so to do; this added to the affection becomes a much more settled principle, and carries him on through more labor and difficulties for the sake of his children, than he would undergo from that affection alone, if he thought it, and the course of action it led to, either indifferent or criminal. This indeed is impossible, to do that which is good, and not to approve of it; for which reason they are frequently not considered as distinct, though they really are: for men often approve of the actions of others, which they will not imitate, and likewise do that which they approve not.

11. *Proof of its existence.*— It cannot possibly be denied, that there is this principle of reflection or conscience in human nature. Suppose a man to relieve an innocent person in great distress; suppose the same man afterwards, in the fury of anger, to do the greatest mischief to a person who had given no just cause of offence; to aggravate the injury, add the circumstances of former friendship, and obligation from the injured person; let the man who is supposed to have done these two different actions, coolly reflect upon them afterwards, without regard to their consequences to himself: to assert that any common man would be affected in the same way toward these different actions, that he would make no distinction between them, but

approve or disapprove them equally, is too glaring a falsehood to need being confuted. There is, therefore, this principle of reflection or conscience in mankind.

12. *To be more accurately defined hereafter.*—It is needless to compare the respect it has to private good, with the respect it has to public; since it plainly tends as much to the latter as to the former, and is commonly thought to tend chiefly to the latter. This faculty is now mentioned merely as another part in the inward frame of man, pointing out to us in some degree what we are intended for, and as what will naturally and of course have some influence. The particular place assigned to it by nature, what authority it has, and how great influence it ought to have, shall be hereafter considered.

13. *Man made for Society.*—From this comparison of benevolence and self-love, of our public and private affections, of the courses of life they lead to, and of the principle of reflection or conscience as respecting each of them, it is as manifest, that *we were made for society, and to promote the happiness of it, as that we were intended to take care of our own life, and health, and private good.*

#### MAN'S NATURE SOCIAL.

14. *Men are attracted to each other.*—And from this whole review must be given a different draught of human nature from what we are often presented with.\* Mankind are by nature so closely united, there is such

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\* The allusion is especially to Hobbes, who taught that the natural state of man is that of hostility or war. See his *Leviathan*, Chap. xiii. — ED.

a correspondence between the inward sensations of one man and those of another, that disgrace is as much avoided as bodily pain, and to be the object of esteem and love as much desired as any external goods: and in many particular cases, persons are carried on to do good to others, as the end their affection tends to and rests in; and manifest that they find real satisfaction and enjoyment in this course of behavior. There is such a natural principle of attraction in man toward man, that having trod the same tract of land, having breathed in the same climate, barely having been born in the same artificial district or division, becomes the occasion of contracting acquaintances and familiarities many years after; for any thing may serve the purpose.

15. *Illustrated.*— Thus relations merely nominal are sought and invented, not by governors, but by the lowest of the people; which are found sufficient to hold mankind together in little fraternities and copartnerships: weak ties indeed, and what may afford fund enough for ridicule, if they are absurdly considered as the real principles of that union: but they are in truth merely the occasions, as any thing may be of any thing, upon which our nature carries us on according to its own previous bent and bias; which occasions therefore would be nothing at all, were there not this prior disposition and bias of nature.

16. *Men are virtually one body.*— Men are so much one body, that in a peculiar manner they feel for each other, shame, sudden danger, resentment, honor, prosperity, distress; one or another, or all of these, from the social nature in general, from benevolence, upon the occasion of natural relation, acquaintance, protection, dependence; each of these being distinct cements or

society. And therefore to have no restraint from, no regard to others in our behavior, is the speculative absurdity of considering ourselves as single and independent, as having nothing in our nature which has respect to our fellow-creatures, reduced to action and practice. And this is the same absurdity, as to suppose a hand or any part to have no natural respect to any other, or to the whole body.

17. *Queries about malevolent affections.*— But allowing all this, it may be asked, “Has not man dispositions and principles within, which lead him to do evil to others, as well as to do good? Whence come the many miseries else, which men are the authors and instruments of to each other?” These questions, so far as they relate to the foregoing discourse, may be answered by asking, Has not man also dispositions and principles within, which lead him to do evil to himself as well as good? Whence come the many miseries else, sickness, pain, and death, which men are instruments and authors of to themselves?

18. *Man has neither self-hatred, nor fellow-hatred, nor love of wrong as such.*— It may be thought more easy to answer one of these questions than the other, but the answer to both is really the same; that mankind have ungoverned passions which they will gratify at any rate, as well to the injury of others, as in contradiction to known private interest: but that as there is no such thing as self-hatred, so neither is there any such thing as ill-will in one man toward another, emulation and resentment being away; whereas there is plainly benevolence or good-will: there is no such thing as love of injustice, oppression, treachery, ingratitude; but only eager desires after such and such external

goods; which, according to a very ancient observation, the most abandoned would choose to obtain by innocent means, if they were as easy, and as effectual to their end; that even emulation and resentment, by any one who will consider what these passions really are in nature,\* will be found nothing to the purpose of this objection; and that the principles and passions in the mind of man, which are distinct both from self-love and benevolence, primarily and most directly lead to right behavior with regard to others as well as himself, and only secondarily and accidentally to what is evil. Thus, though men, to avoid the shame of one villany, are sometimes guilty of a greater, yet it is easy to see that the original tendency of shame is to prevent the doing of shameful actions; and its leading men to conceal such actions when done, is only in consequence of their being done; *i.e.*, of the passion's not having answered its first end.

19. *Exceptional cases both of private and public affections.* — If it be said, that there are persons in the world who are in great measure without the natural affections toward their fellow-creatures; there are likewise instances of persons without the common natural

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\* Emulation is merely the desire and hope of equality with, or superiority over others, with whom we compare ourselves. There does not appear to be any *other grief* in the natural passion, but only *that want* which is implied in desire. However, this may be so strong as to be the occasion of great *grief*. To desire the attainment of this equality or superiority by the *particular means* of others being brought down to our own level, or below it, is, I think, the distinct notion of envy. From whence it is easy to see, that the real end, which the natural passion emulation, and which the unlawful one envy aims at, is exactly the same; namely, that equality or superiority; and consequently, that to do mischief is not the end of envy, but merely the means it makes use of to attain its end. As to resentment, see the eighth sermon.



affections to themselves: but the nature of man is not to be judged of by either of these, but by what appears in the common world, in the bulk of mankind.

20. *Men as often contradict self-love as benevolence.* — I am afraid it would be thought very strange, if to confirm the truth of this account of human nature, and make out the justness of the foregoing comparison, it should be added, that, from what appears, men in fact as much and as often contradict that *part* of their nature which respects *self*, and which leads them to their *own private* good and happiness, as they contradict that *part* of it which respects *society*, and tends to *public* good: that there are as few persons, who attain the greatest satisfaction and enjoyment which they might attain in the present world, as who do the greatest good to others which they might do: nay, that there are as few who can be said really and in earnest to aim at one, as at the other.

21. *Proof of this.* — Take a survey of mankind: the world in general, the good and bad, almost without exception, equally are agreed, that were religion out of the case, the happiness of the present life would consist in a manner wholly in riches, honors, sensual gratifications; insomuch that one scarce hears a reflection made upon prudence, life, conduct, but upon this supposition. Yet on the contrary, that persons in the greatest affluence of fortune are no happier than such as have only a competency; that the cares and disappointments of ambition for the most part far exceed the satisfactions of it; as also the miserable intervals of intemperance and excess, and the many untimely deaths occasioned by a dissolute course of life: these things are all seen, acknowledged, by every one ac-



known; but are thought no objections against, though they expressly contradict, this universal principle, that the happiness of the present life consists in one or other of them. Whence is all this absurdity and contradiction? Is not the middle way obvious? Can any thing be more manifest, than that the happiness of life consists in these possessed and enjoyed only to a certain degree; that to pursue them beyond this degree, is always attended with more inconvenience than advantage to a man's self, and often with extreme misery and unhappiness.

22. *Reason of this.* — Whence then, I say, is all this absurdity and contradiction? Is it really the result of consideration in mankind, how they may become most easy to themselves, most free from care, and enjoy the chief happiness attainable in this world? Or is it not manifestly owing either to this, that they have not cool and reasonable concern enough for themselves to consider wherein their chief happiness in the present life consists; or else, if they do consider it, that they will not act conformably to what is the result of that consideration; *i.e.*, reasonable concern for themselves, or cool self-love is prevailed over by passion and appetite. So that from what appears, there is no ground to assert that those principles in the nature of man, which most directly lead to promote the good of our fellow-creatures, are more generally or in a greater degree violated, than those which most directly lead us to promote our own private good and happiness.

23. *Men obey both classes of affections but imperfectly.* — The sum of the whole is plainly this. The nature of man considered in his single capacity, and with respect only to the present world, is adapted and

leads him to attain the greatest happiness he can for himself in the present world. The nature of man considered in his public or social capacity leads him to a right behavior in society, to that course of life which we call virtue. Men follow or obey their nature in both these capacities and respects to a certain degree, but not entirely: their actions do not come up to the whole of what their nature leads them to in either of these capacities or respects: and they often violate their nature in both, *i.e.*, as they neglect the duties they owe to their fellow-creatures, to which their nature leads them; and are injurious, to which their nature is abhorrent: so there is a manifest negligence in men of their real happiness or interest in the present world, when that interest is inconsistent with a present gratification; for the sake of which they negligently, nay, even knowingly, are the authors and instruments of their own misery and ruin. Thus they are as often unjust to themselves as to others, and for the most part are equally so to both by the same actions.

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SECTION II.

HUMAN NATURE AS A GUIDE IN MORALS.\*

1. *Constitution proves intention.*—As speculative truth admits of different kinds of proof, so likewise

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\* Second sermon at the Rolls, preached from the text, "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves."—ROMANS, 2 : 14.

moral obligations may be shown by different methods. If the real nature of any creature leads him and is adapted to such and such purposes only, or more than to any other; this is a reason to believe the author of that nature intended it for those purposes. Thus there is no doubt the eye was intended for us to see with. And the more complex any constitution is, and the greater variety of parts there are which thus tend to some one end, the stronger is the proof that such end was designed.

2. *But should be made out with care.* — However, when the inward frame of man is considered as any guide in morals, the utmost caution must be used that none make peculiarities in their own temper, or any thing which is the effect of particular customs, though observable in several, the standard of what is common to the species; and above all, that the highest principle be not forgot or excluded, that to which belongs the adjustment and correction of all other inward movements and affections; which principle will of course have some influence, but which being in nature supreme, as shall now be shown, ought to preside over and govern all the rest.

3. *For want of which there is not an agreement as to what this constitution is.* — The difficulty of rightly observing the two former cautions; the appearance there is of some small diversity amongst mankind with respect to this faculty, with respect to their natural sense of moral good and evil; and the attention necessary to survey with any exactness what passes within, have occasioned that it is not so much agreed what is the standard of the internal nature of man, as of his external form. Neither is this last exactly settled. Yet we

understand one another when we speak of the shape of a human body: so likewise we do when we speak of the heart and inward principles, how far soever the standard is from being exact or precisely fixed. There is therefore ground for an attempt of showing men to themselves, of showing them what course of life and behavior their real nature points out and would lead them to.

4. *Moral constitution proves intention.*— Now obligations of virtue shown, and motives to the practice of it enforced, from a review of the nature of man, are to be considered as an appeal to each particular person's heart and natural conscience: as the external senses are appealed to for the proof of things cognizable by them. Since, then, our inward feelings, and the perceptions we receive from our external senses, are equally real, to argue from the former to life and conduct is as little liable to exception, as to argue from the latter to absolute speculative truth. A man can as little doubt whether his eyes were given him to see with, as he can doubt of the truth of the science of *optics*, deduced from ocular experiments. And allowing the inward feeling, shame; a man can as little doubt whether it was given him to prevent his doing shameful actions, as he can doubt whether his eyes were given him to guide his steps. And as to these inward feelings themselves; that they are real, that man has in his nature passions and affections, can no more be questioned, than that he has external senses. Neither can the former be wholly mistaken; though to a certain degree liable to greater mistakes than the latter.

5. *Man's constitution tends to the good of society.*—

There can be no doubt but that several propensions or instincts, several principles in the heart of man carry him to society, and to contribute to the happiness of it, in a sense and a manner in which no inward principle leads him to evil. These principles, propensions, or instincts which lead him to do good, are approved of by a certain faculty within, quite distinct from these propensions themselves. All this hath been fully made out in the foregoing discourse.

WHAT IT IS TO FOLLOW NATURE.

6. *But acting from conscience merely as the strongest principle is not virtue.* — But it may be said, “What is all this, though true, to the purpose of virtue and religion? these require, not only that we do good to others, when we are led this way, by benevolence or reflection happening to be stronger than other principles, passions, or appetites; but likewise that the *whole* character be formed upon thought and reflection; that *every* action be directed by some determinate rule, some other rule than the strength and prevalency of any principle or passion. What sign is there in our nature (for the inquiry is only about what is to be collected from thence) that this was intended by its author? Or how does so various and fickle a temper as that of man appear adapted thereto?”

7. *Nor is it any more following nature than following any other strongest principle.* — “It may indeed be absurd and unnatural for men to act without any reflection; nay, without regard to that particular kind of reflection which you call conscience; because this does belong to our nature. For as there never was a man but who



approved one place, prospect, building, before another, so it does not appear that there ever was a man who would not have approved an action of humanity rather than of cruelty; interest and passion being quite out of the case. But interest and passion do come in, and are often too strong for and prevail over reflection and conscience. Now as brutes have various instincts, by which they are carried on to the end the Author of their nature intended them for, is not man in the same condition; with this difference only, that to his instincts (*i.e.* appetites and passions) is added the principle of reflection or conscience? And as brutes act agreeably to their nature, in following that principle or particular instinct which for the present is strongest in them, does not man likewise act agreeably to his nature, or obey the law of his creation, by following that principle, be it passion or conscience, which for the present happens to be strongest in him?

8. *Let each one, then, follow his prevailing principle for the time.* — “Thus different men are by their particular nature hurried on to pursue honor or riches or pleasure: there are also persons whose temper leads them in an uncommon degree to kindness, compassion, doing good to their fellow-creatures: as there are others who are given to suspend their judgment, to weigh and consider things, and to act upon thought and reflection. Let every one then quietly follow his nature; as passion, reflection, appetite, the several parts of it, happen to be strongest: but let not the man of virtue take upon him to blame the ambitious, the covetous, the dissolute; since these equally with him obey and follow their nature. Thus, as in some cases we follow



our nature in doing the works *contained in the law*, so in other cases we follow nature in doing contrary."

9. *But to do as we please is not following nature.* — Now all this licentious talk entirely goes upon a supposition, that men follow their nature in the same sense, in violating the known rules of justice and honesty for the sake of a present gratification, as they do in following those rules when they have no temptation to the contrary. And if this were true, that could not be so which St. Paul asserts, that men are *by nature a law to themselves*. If by following nature were meant only acting as we please, it would indeed be ridiculous to speak of nature as any guide in morals: nay, the very mention of deviating from nature would be absurd; and the mention of following it, when spoken by way of distinction, would absolutely have no meaning. For did ever any one act otherwise than as he pleased? And yet the ancients speak of deviating from nature as vice; and of following nature so much as a distinction, that according to them the perfection of virtue consists therein. So that language itself should teach people another sense to the words *following nature*, than barely acting as we please.

10. *The word nature must be defined.* — Let it however be observed, that though the words *human nature* are to be explained, yet the real question of this discourse is not concerning the meaning of words, any other than as the explanation of them may be needful to make out and explain the assertion, that *every man is naturally a law to himself*, that *every one may find within himself the rule of right, and obligations to follow it*. This St. Paul affirms in the words of the

text, and this the foregoing objection really denies by seeming to allow it. And the objection will be fully answered, and the text before us explained, by observing that *nature* is considered in different views, and the word used in different senses; and by showing in what view it is considered, and in what sense the word is used, when intended to express and signify that which is the guide of life, that by which men are a law to themselves. I say, the explanation of the term will be sufficient, because from thence it will appear, that in some senses of the word *nature* cannot be, but that in another sense it manifestly is, a law to us.

11. *First rejected meaning.*— I. By nature is often meant no more than some principle in man, without regard either to the kind or degree of it. Thus the passion of anger, and the affection of parents to their children, would be called equally *natural*. And as the same person hath often contrary principles, which at the same time draw contrary ways, he may by the same action both follow and contradict his nature in this sense of the word; he may follow one passion and contradict another.

12. *Second rejected meaning.*— II. *Nature* is frequently spoken of as consisting in those passions which are strongest, and most influence the actions; which being vicious ones, mankind is in this sense naturally vicious, or vicious by nature. Thus St. Paul says of the Gentiles, *who were dead in trespasses and sins, and walked according to the spirit of disobedience, that they were by nature the children of wrath.\** They

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\* Ephesians 2; 3.

could be no otherwise *children of wrath* by nature, than they were vicious by nature.

Here, then, are two different senses of the word *nature*, in neither of which men can at all be said to be a law to themselves. They are mentioned only to be excluded; to prevent their being confounded, as the latter is in the objection, with another sense of it, which is now to be inquired after and explained.

13. *Nature has a positive meaning.*—III. The apostle asserts, that the Gentiles *do by NATURE the things contained in the law*. Nature is indeed here put by way of distinction from revelation, but yet it is not a mere negative. He intends to express more than that by which they *did not*, that by which they *did* the works of the law; namely, by *nature*. It is plain the meaning of the word is not the same in this passage as in the former, where it is spoken of as evil; for in this latter it is spoken of as good; as that by which they acted, or might have acted virtuously. What that is in man by which he is *naturally a law to himself*, is explained in the following words; *which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another*.

14. *That part of nature expressed by heart not a law.*—If there be a distinction to be made between the *works written in their hearts*, and the *witness of conscience*; by the former must be meant the natural disposition to kindness and compassion, to do what is of good report, to which this apostle often refers: that part of the nature of man, treated of in the foregoing discourse, which with very little reflection and of

course leads him to society, and by means of which he naturally acts a just and good part in it, unless other passions or interests lead him astray. Yet since other passions, and regards to private interest, which lead us (though indirectly, yet they lead us) astray, are themselves in a degree equally natural, and often most prevalent; and since we have no method of seeing the particular degrees in which one or the other is placed in us by nature; it is plain the former, considered merely as natural, good and right as they are, can no more be a law to us than the latter.

15. *Conscience makes man a law to himself.*— But there is a superior principle of reflection or conscience\* in every man, which distinguishes between the internal principles of his heart, as well as his external actions: which passes judgment upon himself and them; pronounces determinately some actions to be in themselves just, right, good; others to be in themselves evil, wrong, unjust: which, without being consulted, without being advised with, magisterially exerts itself, and approves or condemns him the doer of them accordingly; and which, if not forcibly stopped, naturally and always of course goes on to anticipate a higher and more effectual sentence, which shall hereafter second and affirm its own. But this part of the office of conscience is beyond my present design explicitly to consider. It is by this faculty, natural to man, that he is a moral agent, that he is a law to himself: by this fac-

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\* This is the fullest account of the office of conscience anywhere given by Butler. As here presented, it embraces a perception of actions and principles of action, as according to or not according to right relations, as well as the approval or disapproval of them and the actor, in consequence. — ED.

ulty, I say, not to be considered merely as a principle in his heart, which is to have some influence as well as others; but considered as a faculty in kind and in nature supreme over all others, and which bears its own authority of being so.

PROOFS OF THE SUPREMACY OF CONSCIENCE.

16. *Hence, must be further explained.*—This prerogative, this natural supremacy, of the faculty which surveys, approves, or disapproves the several affections of our mind and actions of our lives, being that by which men are a law to themselves, their conformity or disobedience to which law of our nature renders their actions, in the highest and most proper sense, natural or unnatural; it is fit it be further explained to you; and I hope it will be so, if you will attend to the following reflections.

17. *A rash act unnatural in man.*—Man may act according to that principle or inclination which for the present happens to be strongest, and yet act in a way disproportionate to, and violate his real proper nature. Suppose a brute creature by any bait to be allured into a snare, by which he is destroyed. He plainly followed the bent of his nature, leading him to gratify his appetite: there is an entire correspondence between his whole nature and such an action: such action therefore, is natural. But suppose a man, foreseeing the same danger of certain ruin, should rush into it for the sake of a present gratification; he in this instance would follow his strongest desire, as did the brute creature: but there would be as manifest a disproportion, between the nature of a man and such an action, as



between the meanest work of art and the skill of the greatest master in that art; which disproportion arises, not from considering the action singly in *itself*, or in its *consequences*; but from *comparison* of it with the nature of the agent. And since such an action is utterly disproportionate to the nature of man, it is in the strictest and most proper sense unnatural; this word expressing that disproportion. Therefore instead of the words *disproportionate to his nature*, the word *unnatural* may now be put; this being more familiar to us: but let it be observed, that it stands for the same thing precisely.

18. *Because he has higher principles than impulse.*— Now what is it which renders such a rash action unnatural? Is it that he went against the principle of reasonable and cool self-love, considered *merely* as a part of his nature? No: for if he had acted the contrary way, he would equally have gone against a principle, or part of his nature; namely, passion or appetite. But to deny a present appetite, from foresight that the gratification of it would end in immediate ruin or extreme misery, is by no means an unnatural action: whereas to contradict or go against cool self-love for the sake of such gratification, is so in the instance before us. Such an action, then, being unnatural; and its being so not arising from a man's going against a principle or desire barely, nor in going against that principle or desire which happens for the present to be strongest; it necessarily follows, that there must be some other difference or distinction to be made between these two principles, passion and cool self-love, than what I have yet taken notice of. And this difference, not being a difference in strength or degree, I call



a difference in *nature* and in *kind*. And since, in the instance still before us, if passion prevails over self-love, the consequent action is unnatural; but if self-love prevails over passion, the action is natural: it is manifest that self-love is in human nature a superior principle to passion. This may be contradicted without violating that nature; but the former cannot. So that, if we will act conformably to the economy of man's nature, reasonable self-love must govern. Thus, without particular consideration of conscience, we may have a clear conception of the *superior nature* of one inward principle to another; and see that there really is this natural superiority, quite distinct from degrees of strength and prevalency.

19. *This is obvious from a survey of the nature of man.* — Let us now take a view of the nature of man, as consisting partly of various appetites, passions, affections, and partly of the principle of reflection or conscience; leaving quite out all consideration of the different degrees of strength, in which either of them prevail, and it will further appear that there is this natural superiority of one inward principle to another, and that it is even part of the idea of reflection or conscience.

Passion or appetite implies a direct simple tendency towards such and such objects, without distinction of the means by which they are to be obtained. Consequently it will often happen there will be a desire of particular objects, in cases where they cannot be obtained without manifest injury to others. Reflection or conscience comes in, and disapproves the pursuit of them in these circumstances; but the desire remains. Which is to be obeyed, appetite or reflec-

tion? Cannot this question be answered, from the economy and constitution of human nature merely, without saying which is strongest? Or need this at all come into consideration? Would not the question be *intelligibly* and fully answered by saying, that the principle of reflection or conscience being compared with the various appetites, passions and affections in men, the former is manifestly superior and chief,\* without regard to strength? And how often soever the latter happens to prevail, it is mere *usurpation*: the former remains in nature and in kind its superior; and every instance of such prevalence of the latter is an instance of breaking in upon, and violation of, the constitution of man.

20. *Conscience the superior principle.*— All this is no more than the distinction, which everybody is acquainted with, between *mere power* and *authority*; only instead of being intended to express the difference between what is possible, and what is lawful in civil government; here it has been shown applicable to the several principles in the mind of man. Thus that principle, by which we survey, and either approve or disapprove our own heart, temper, and actions, is not only to be considered as what is in its turn to have some influence; which may be said of every passion, of the lowest appetites; but likewise as being supe-

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\* Conscience is the highest principle in human nature, because it is the highest function of reason, deciding on conduct in view of all the facts in the case, and sustained by the most urgent practical feelings. Following lower principles, therefore, is wrong, just as disregarding other right relations in our conduct is wrong. All wrong is disapproved by conscience, but with the exception of intemperate self-indulgence and selfishness, is no otherwise a violation of our nature, than as it is a violation or disregard of the decisions of conscience. — ED.

rior; as from its very nature manifestly claiming superiority over all others: insomuch that you cannot form a notion of this faculty, conscience, without taking in judgment, direction, superintendency. This is a constituent part of the idea, that is, of the faculty itself; and, to preside and govern, from the very economy and constitution of man, belongs to it. Had it strength, as it has right; had it power, as it has manifest authority, it would absolutely govern the world.

21. *Hence the regulative principle.*— This gives us a further view of the nature of man; shows us what course of life we were made for: not only that our real nature leads us to be influenced in some degree by reflection and conscience; but likewise in what degree we are to be influenced by it, if we will fall in with, and act agreeably to the constitution of our nature: that this faculty was placed within to be our proper governor; to direct and regulate all under principles, passions, and motives of action. This is its right and office; thus sacred is its authority. And how often soever men violate and rebelliously refuse to submit to it, for supposed interest which they cannot otherwise obtain, or for the sake of passion which they cannot otherwise gratify; this makes no alteration as to the *natural right* and *office* of conscience.

22. *The same shown from the absurdity of the contrary.*— Let us now turn this whole matter another way, and suppose there was no such thing at all as this natural supremacy of conscience; that there was no distinction to be made between one inward principle and another, but only that of strength; and see what would be the consequence.

23. *The case stated.*— Consider then what is the latitude and compass of the actions of man with regard to himself, his fellow-creatures, and the Supreme Being? What are their bounds, besides that of our natural power? With respect to the two first, they are plainly no other than these: no man seeks misery as such for himself; and no one unprovoked does mischief to another for its own sake. For in every degree within these bounds, mankind knowingly from passion or wantonness bring ruin and misery upon themselves and others. And impiety and profaneness, I mean, what every one would call so who believes the being of God, have absolutely no bounds at all. Men blaspheme the Author of nature, formally and in words renounce their allegiance to their Creator.

24. *Illustrated.*— Put an instance then with respect to any one of these three. Though we should suppose profane swearing, and in general that kind of impiety now mentioned, to mean nothing, yet it implies wanton disregard and irreverence towards an infinite Being, our Creator; and is this as suitable to the nature of man, as reverence and dutiful submission of heart towards that Almighty Being? Or suppose a man guilty of parricide, with all the circumstances of cruelty which such an action can admit of. This action is done in consequence of its principle being for the present strongest; and if there be no difference between inward principles, but only that of strength; the strength being given, you have the whole nature of the man given, so far as it relates to this matter. The action plainly corresponds to the principle, the principle being in that degree of strength it was: it therefore corresponds to the whole nature of the man. Upon

comparing the action and the whole nature, there arises no disproportion, there appears no unsuitableness between them. Thus the *murder of a father* and the *nature of man* correspond to each other, as the same nature and an act of filial duty. If there be no difference between inward principles, but only that of strength; we can make no distinction between these two actions, considered as the actions of such a creature; but in our coolest hours must approve or disapprove them equally: than which nothing can be reduced to a greater absurdity.

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SECTION III.

OBLIGATION TO OBEY CONSCIENCE.\*

1. *Meaning of nature as a rule of conduct.*—The natural supremacy of reflection or conscience being thus established; we may from it form a distinct notion of what is meant by *human nature*, when virtue is said to consist in following it, and vice in deviating from it.

As the idea of a civil constitution implies in it united strength, various subordinations, under one direction, that of the supreme authority; the different strength of each particular member of the society not coming into the idea; whereas, if you leave out the subordination, the union, and the one direction, you destroy and lose it: so reason, several appetites, passions, and affections, prevailing in different degrees of strength, is not *that* idea or notion of *human nature*;

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\* Third sermon at the Rolls.



but *that nature* consists in these several principles considered as having a natural respect to each other, in the several passions being naturally subordinate to the one superior principle of reflection or conscience. Every bias, instinct, propension within, is a real part of our nature, but not the whole: add to these the superior faculty, whose office it is to adjust, manage, and preside over them, and take in this its natural superiority, and you complete the idea of human nature. And as in civil government the constitution is broken in upon, and violated by power and strength prevailing over authority; so the constitution of man is broken in upon and violated by the lower faculties or principles within prevailing over that which is in its nature supreme over them all.

2. *Used in this sense by ancient moralists.* — Thus, when it is said by ancient writers,\* that tortures and death are not so contrary to human nature as injustice; by this to be sure is not meant, that the aversion to the former in mankind is less strong and prevalent than their aversion to the latter: but that the former is only contrary to our nature considered in a partial view, and which takes in only the lowest part of it, that which we have in common with the brutes; whereas the latter is contrary to our nature, considered in a higher sense, as a system and constitution, contrary to the whole economy of man.†

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\* The reference is to the Stoics. See their doctrine on this point as given by Cicero (*Officiis* III. 5.). — ED.

† Every man in his physical nature is one individual single agent. He has likewise properties and principles, each of which may be considered separately, and without regard to the respects which they have to each other. Neither of these are the nature we are taking a view of. But it is the inward frame of man considered as a *system* or *constitution*; whose



3. *Man by constitution a law to himself.* — And from all these things put together nothing can be more evident, than that, exclusive of revelation, man cannot be considered as a creature left by his Maker to act at random, and live at large up to the extent of his natural power, as passion, humor, wilfulness, happen to carry him; which is the condition brute creatures are in: but that *from his make, constitution, or nature, he*

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several parts are united, not by a physical principle of individuation, but by the respects they have to each other; the chief of which is, the subjection which the appetites, passions, and particular affections have to the one supreme principle of reflection or conscience. The system or constitution is formed by and consists in these respects and this subjection.

Thus the body is a *system* or *constitution*: so is a tree: so is every machine. Consider all the several parts of a tree without the natural respects they have to each other, and you have not at all the idea of a tree; but add these respects, and this gives you the idea. The body may be impaired by sickness, a tree may decay, a machine be out of order, and yet the system and constitution of them not totally dissolved. There is plainly somewhat which answers to all this in the moral constitution of man. Whoever will consider his own nature, will see that the several appetites, passions, and particular affections, have different respects amongst themselves. They are restraints upon, and are in a proportion to, each other.

This proportion is just and perfect, when all those under principles are perfectly coincident with conscience, so far as their nature permits, and in all cases under its absolute and entire direction. The least excess or defect, the least alteration of the due proportions amongst themselves, or of their coincidence with conscience, though not proceeding into action, is some degree of disorder in the moral constitution. But perfection, though plainly intelligible and supposable, was never attained by any man. If the higher principle of reflection maintains its place, and as much as it can corrects that disorder, and hinders it from breaking out into action, this is all that can be expected in such a creature as man. And though the appetites and passions have not their exact due proportion to each other; though they often strive for mastery with judgment or reflection: yet, since the superiority of this principle to all others is the chief respect which forms the constitution, so far as this superiority is maintained, the character, the man, is good, worthy, virtuous.

*is in the strictest and most proper sense a law to himself.* He hath the rule of right within: what is wanting is only that he honestly attend to it.

4. *The law easily applied.*—The inquiries which have been made by men of leisure, after some general rule, the conformity to, or disagreement from, which, should denominate our actions good or evil, are in many respects of great service. Yet let any plain, honest man, before he engages in any course of action, ask himself, Is this I am going about right, or is it wrong? Is it good, or is it evil? I do not in the least doubt, but that this question would be answered agreeably to truth and virtue, by almost any fair man in almost any circumstance. Neither do there appear any cases which look like exceptions to this: but those of superstition, and of partiality to ourselves.\* Superstition may perhaps be somewhat of an exception: but partiality to ourselves is not; this being itself dishonesty. For a man to judge that to be the equitable, the moderate, the right part for him to act, which he would see to be hard, unjust, oppressive in another; this is plain vice, and can proceed only from great unfairness of mind.

5. *The law involves an obligation to obey it.*—But allowing that mankind hath the rule of right within himself, yet it may be asked, “What obligations are we under to attend to and follow it?” I answer: it has been proved that man by his nature is a law to himself, without the particular distinct consideration

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\* If a right decision in regard to conduct depends upon a right view of things, we should expect men to vary in their moral judgments according to their knowledge and love of the truth, *i.e.*, of things as they really are.—ED.

of the positive sanctions of that law ; the rewards and punishments which we feel, and those which from the light of reason we have ground to believe are annexed to it. The question then carries its own answer along with it. Your obligation to obey this law, is its being the law of your nature. That your conscience approves of and attests to such a course of action, is itself alone an obligation. Conscience does not only offer itself to show us the way we should walk in, but it likewise carries its own authority with it, that it is our natural guide ;\* the guide assigned us by the Author of our nature : it therefore belongs to our condition of being, it is our duty to walk in that path, and follow this guide, without looking about to see whether we may not possibly forsake them with impunity.

#### OBJECTIONS TO OBEYING CONSCIENCE.

6. *But why regard others in our conduct ?* — However, let us hear what is to be said against obeying this law of our nature. And the sum is no more than this : “ Why should we be concerned about anything out of and beyond ourselves ? If we do find within ourselves regards to others, and restraints of we know not how many different kinds ; yet these being embarrassments, and hindering us from going the nearest way to our own good, why should we not endeavor to suppress and get over them ? ”

7. *Because necessary to our happiness.* — Thus people go on with words, which, when applied to human

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\* Conscience is our natural guide only because it is the strongest light in our nature. It obligates us to the right by the cogency of its reasons and the urgency of its feelings. — ED.

nature, and the condition in which it is placed in this world, have really no meaning. For does not all this kind of talk go upon supposition, that our happiness in this world consists in somewhat quite distinct from regard to others; and that it is the privilege of vice to be without restraint or confinement? Whereas, on the contrary, the enjoyments, in a manner all the common enjoyments of life, even the pleasures of vice, depend upon these regards of one kind or another to our fellow-creatures. Throw off all regards to others, and we should be quite indifferent to infamy and to honor; there could be no such thing at all as ambition; and scarce any such thing as covetousness; for we should likewise be equally indifferent to the disgrace of poverty, the several neglects and kinds of contempt which accompany this state; and to the reputation of riches, the regard and respect they usually procure. Neither is restraint by any means peculiar to one course of life: but our very nature, exclusive of conscience and our condition, lays us under an absolute necessity of it. We cannot gain any end whatever without being confined to the proper means, which is often the most painful and uneasy confinement. And in numberless instances a present appetite cannot be gratified without such apparent and immediate ruin and misery, that the most dissolute man in the world chooses to forego the pleasure, rather than endure the pain.

8. *Virtue the true way to happiness.* — Is the meaning then, to indulge those regards to our fellow-creatures, and submit to those restraints, which upon the whole are attended with more satisfaction than uneasiness, and get over only those which bring more uneasiness and inconvenience than satisfaction?

“Doubtless this was our meaning.” You have changed sides then. Keep to this; be consistent with yourselves; and you and the men of virtue are *in general* perfectly agreed. But let us take care and avoid mistakes. Let it not be taken for granted that the temper of envy, rage, resentment, yields greater delight than meekness, forgiveness, compassion, and good-will: especially when it is acknowledged that rage, envy, resentment, are in themselves mere misery; and the satisfaction arising from the indulgence of them is little more than relief from that misery; whereas the temper of compassion and benevolence is itself delightful; and the indulgence of it, by doing good, affords new positive delight and enjoyment. Let it not be taken for granted, that the satisfaction arising from the reputation of riches and power, however obtained, and from the respect paid to them, is greater than the satisfaction arising from the reputation of justice, honesty, charity, and the esteem which is universally acknowledged to be their due. And if it be doubtful which of these satisfactions is the greatest, as there are persons who think neither of them very considerable, yet there can be no doubt concerning ambition and covetousness, virtue and a good mind, considered in themselves, and as leading to different courses of life; there can, I say, be no doubt which temper and which course is attended with most peace and tranquillity of mind, which with most perplexity, vexation, and inconvenience. And both the virtues and vices which have been now mentioned, do in a manner equally imply in them regards of one kind or another to our fellow-creatures.

9. *Nor does virtue have any disadvantage as to re-*



*straint.* — And with respect to restraint and confinement: whoever will consider the restraints from fear and shame, the dissimulation, mean arts of concealment, servile compliances, one or other of which belong to almost every course of vice, will soon be convinced that the man of virtue is by no means upon a disadvantage in this respect. How many instances are there in which men feel and own and cry aloud under the chains of vice with which they are enthralled, and which yet they will not shake off! How many instances, in which persons manifestly go through more pains and self-denial to gratify a vicious passion, than would have been necessary to the conquest of it! To this is to be added, that when virtue has become habitual, when the temper of it is acquired, what was before confinement ceases to be so, by becoming choice and delight. Whatever restraint and guard upon ourselves may be needful to unlearn any unnatural distortion or odd gesture; yet, in all propriety of speech, natural behavior must be the most easy and unrestrained.

10. *Self-love consistent with duty.* — It is manifest that, in the common course of life, there is seldom any inconsistency between our duty and what is *called* interest: it is much seldomer that there is an inconsistency between duty and what is really our present interest; meaning by interest, happiness and satisfaction. Self-love then, though confined to the interest of the present world, does in general perfectly coincide with virtue; and leads us to one and the same course of life. But, whatever exceptions there are to this, which are much fewer than they are commonly thought, all shall be set right at the final distribution of things. It is a manifest absurdity to suppose evil prevailing finally



over good, under the conduct and administration of a perfect Mind.

11. *Recapitulation.*— The whole argument, which I have been now insisting upon, may be thus summed up and given you in one view. The nature of man is adapted to some course of action or other. Upon comparing some actions with this nature, they appear suitable and correspondent to it: from comparison of other actions with the same nature, there arises to our view some unsuitableness or disproportion. The correspondence of actions to the nature of the agent renders them natural: their disproportion to it, unnatural. That an action is correspondent to the nature of the agent, does not arise from its being agreeable to the principle which happens to be the strongest: for it may be so, and yet be quite disproportionate to the nature of the agent. The correspondence therefore, or disproportion, arises from somewhat else. This can be nothing but a difference in nature and kind, altogether distinct from strength, between the inward principles. Some, then, are in nature and kind superior to others. And the correspondence arises from the action being conformable to the higher principle; and the unsuitableness from its being contrary to it. Reasonable self-love and conscience are the chief or superior principles in the nature of man: because an action may be suitable to this nature, though all other principles be violated; but becomes unsuitable, if either of those are. Conscience and self-love, if we understand our true happiness, always lead us the same way. Duty and interest are perfectly coincident: for the most part in this world, but entirely and in every instance if we take in the future, and the whole; this being implied

in the notion of a good and perfect administration of things. Thus they who have been so wise in their generation as to regard only their own supposed interest, at the expense and to the injury of others, shall at last find, that he who has given up all the advantages of the present world, rather than violate his conscience and the relations of life,\* has infinitely better provided for himself, and secured his own interest and happiness.

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SECTION IV.

SELF-LOVE AND PARTICULAR AFFECTIONS, ESPECIALLY BENEVOLENCE.†

1. *Whether self-love may not contradict private good.*

—It is commonly observed, that there is a disposition in men to complain of the viciousness and corruption of the age in which they live, as greater than that of former ones; which is usually followed with this further observation, that mankind has been in that respect much the same in all times. Now, not to determine whether this last be not contradicted by the accounts of history; thus much can scarce be doubted, that vice and folly takes different turns, and some particular kinds of it are more open and avowed in some ages than in others: and, I suppose, it may be spoken of as very much the distinction of the present to profess a contracted spirit, and greater regards to self-interest,

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\* We see from this passage, as also from many others, that while the grand aim of Butler was, to show that virtue and interest are consistent with each other, he made virtue the guide to interest, and not the reverse.  
— Ed.

† The eleventh Sermon at the Rolls; preached from the text, — “And if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. — ROMANS, 13 : 9” —

than appears to have been done formerly. Upon this account it seems worth while to inquire, whether private interest is likely to be promoted in proportion to the degree in which self-love engrosses us, and prevails over all other principles; or *whether the contracted affection may not possibly be so prevalent as to disappoint itself, and even contradict its own end—private good.*

2. *Whether benevolence be specially opposed to self-love.*— And since, further, there is generally thought to be some peculiar kind of contrariety between self-love and the love of our neighbor, between the pursuit of public and of private good; insomuch that when you are recommending one of these, you are supposed to be speaking against the other; and from hence arises a secret prejudice against, and frequently open scorn of all talk of public spirit, and real good-will to our fellow creatures; it will be necessary to *inquire what respect benevolence hath to self-love, and the pursuit of private interest to the pursuit of public:* or whether there be any thing of that peculiar inconsistency and contrariety between them, over and above what there is between self-love and other passions and particular affections, and their respective pursuits.

These inquiries, it is hoped, may be favorably attended to: for there shall be all possible concessions made to the favorite passion, which hath so much allowed to it, and whose cause is so universally pleaded: it shall be treated with the utmost tenderness and concern for its interests.

3. *The nature of self-love and affection to be considered.*— In order to this, as well as to determine the fore-mentioned questions, it will be necessary to *consider the nature, the object, and end of that self-love, as*

*distinguished from other principles or affections in the mind, and their respective objects.*

4. *General difference between them.*—Every man hath a general desire of his own happiness; and likewise a variety of particular affections, passions, and appetites\* to particular external objects. The former proceeds from, or is self-love; and seems inseparable from all sensible creatures, who can reflect upon themselves and their own interest or happiness, so as to have that interest an object to their minds: what is to be said of the latter is, that they proceed from, or together make up that particular nature, according to which man is made. The object the former pursues is somewhat internal, our own happiness, enjoyment, satisfaction; whether we have, or have not, a distinct particular perception what it is, or wherein it consists: the objects of the latter are this or that particular external thing, which the affections tend towards, and of which it hath always a particular idea or perception. The principle we call self-love never seeks any thing external for the sake of the thing, but only as a means of happiness or good: particular affections rest in the external things themselves. One belongs to man as a reasonable creature reflecting upon his own interest or happiness. The other, though quite distinct from reason, are as much a part of human nature.

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\* The impulsive principles of our nature are: 1st. Appetites, as *hunger and thirst*; 2d. Affections or Passions (regarded alike as *agitations or movements* of our sensitive nature, though passion has the wider meaning, and often denotes something *excessive* in the affection), as *anger, compassion*, and the various *forms of love*; 3d. Desires, *i.e.*, wants, cravings, as *the desire of property, the desire of society*, etc. But as appetites and affections may also be considered as wants, these, too, are often included under the general term, desire. — ED.

5. *Affections tend to objects themselves.* — That all particular appetites and passions are towards *external things themselves*, distinct from the *pleasure arising from them*, is manifested from hence; that there could not be this pleasure, were it not for that prior suitability between the object and the passion: there could be no enjoyment or delight from one thing more than another, from eating food more than from swallowing a stone, if there were not an affection or appetite to one thing more than another.

6. *Are affections self-love because they belong to self?* — Every particular affection, even the love of our neighbor, is as really our own affection, as self-love; and the pleasure arising from its gratification is as much my own pleasure, as the pleasure self-love would have, from knowing I myself should be happy some time hence, would be my own pleasure. And if, because every particular affection is a man's own, and the pleasure arising from its gratification his own pleasure, or pleasure to himself, such particular affection must be called self-love; according to this way of speaking, no creature whatever can possibly act but merely from self-love; and every action and every affection whatever is to be resolved up into this one principle.

7. *This would confound principles of action.* — But then this is not the language of mankind: or if it were, we should want words to express the difference between the principle of an action, proceeding from cool consideration that it will be to my own advantage; and an action, suppose of revenge, or of friendship, by which a man runs upon certain ruin, to do evil or good to another. It is manifest the principles



of these actions are totally different, and so want different words to be distinguished by: all that they agree in is, that they both proceed from, and are done to gratify an inclination in a man's self. But the principle or inclination in one case is self-love; in the other, hatred or love of another. There is then a distinction between the cool principle of self-love, or general desire of our own happiness, as one part of our nature, and one principle of action; and the particular affections towards particular external objects, as another part of our nature, and another principle of action. How much soever therefore is to be allowed to self-love, yet it cannot be allowed to be the whole of our inward constitution; because, you see, there are other parts or principles which come into it.

8. *Self-love produces interested, affection passionate action.*—Further, private happiness or good is all which self-love can make us desire, or be concerned about: in having this consists its gratification: it is an affection to ourselves; a regard to our own interest, happiness, and private good: and in the proportion a man hath this, he is interested, or a lover of himself. Let this be kept in mind; because there is commonly, as I shall presently have occasion to observe, another sense put upon these words. On the other hand, particular affections tend towards particular external things: these are their objects; having these is their end: in this consists their gratification: no matter whether it be, or be not, upon the whole, our interest or happiness. An action done from the former of these principles is called an interested action. An action proceeding from any of the latter has its denomination of passionate, ambitious, friendly, revengeful, or any other,



from the particular appetite or affection from which it proceeds. Thus self-love as one part of human nature, and the several particular principles as the other part, are, themselves, their objects and ends, stated and shown.

THEIR RESPECTS TO PRIVATE GOOD.

9. *Happiness does not consist in self-love, but in the gratification of particular affections.* — From hence it will be easy to see, how far, and in what ways, each of these can contribute and be subservient to the private good of the individual. Happiness does not consist in self-love. The desire of happiness is no more the thing itself, than the desire of riches is the possession or enjoyment of them. People may love themselves with the most entire and unbounded affection, and yet be extremely miserable. Neither can self-love any way help them out, but by setting them on work to get rid of the causes of their misery, to gain or make use of those objects which are by nature adapted to afford satisfaction. Happiness or satisfaction consists only in the enjoyment of those objects, which are by nature suited to our several particular appetites, passions, and affections. So that if self-love wholly engrosses us, and leaves no room for any other principle, there can be absolutely no such thing at all as happiness, or enjoyment of any kind whatever; since happiness consists in the gratification of particular passions, which supposes the having of them.

10. *Hence self-love may fail to promote private good.* — Self-love then does not constitute *this* or *that* to be our interest or good; but our interest or good being

constituted by nature and supposed, self-love only puts us upon obtaining and securing it. Therefore, if it be possible, that self-love may prevail and exert itself in a degree or manner which is not subservient to this end; then it will not follow, that our interest will be promoted in proportion to the degree in which that principle engrosses us, and prevails over others.

11. *Nay, may prevent it.* — Nay, further, the private and contracted affection, when it is not subservient to this end, private good, may, for any thing that appears, have a direct contrary tendency and effect. And if we will consider the matter, we shall see that it often really has. *Disengagement* is absolutely necessary to enjoyment: and a person may have so steady and fixed an eye upon his own interest, whatever he places it in, as may hinder him from *attending* to many gratifications within his reach, which others have their minds *free* and *open* to. Over-fondness for a child is not generally thought to be for its advantage: and, if there be any guess to be made from appearances, surely that character we call selfish is not the most promising for happiness. Such a temper may plainly be, and exert itself in a degree and manner which may give unnecessary and useless solicitude and anxiety, in a degree and manner which may prevent obtaining the means and materials of enjoyment, as well as the making use of them.

12. *May even produce misery.* — Immoderate self-love does very ill consult its own interest: and, how much soever a paradox it may appear, it is certainly true, that even from self-love we should endeavor to get over all inordinate regard to, and consideration of, ourselves. Every one of our passions and affections

hath its natural stint and bound, which may easily be exceeded; whereas our enjoyments can possibly be but in a determinate measure and degree. Therefore such excess of the affection, since it cannot procure any enjoyment, must in all cases be useless; but is generally attended with inconveniences, and often is downright pain and misery. This holds as much with regard to self-love as to all other affections. The natural degree of it, so far as it sets us on work to gain and make use of the materials of satisfaction, may be to our real advantage; but beyond or besides this, it is in several respects an inconvenience and disadvantage. Thus it appears, that private interest is so far from being likely to be promoted in proportion to the degree in which self-love engrosses us, and prevails over all other principles; that *the contracted affection may be so prevalent as to disappoint itself, and even contradict its own end, private good.*

#### SELF-LOVE AND BENEVOLENCE.

13. *Are they specially opposed?* — “But who, except the most sordidly covetous, ever thought there was any rivalry between the love of greatness, honor, power, or between sensual appetites, and self-love? No, there is a perfect harmony between them. It is by means of these particular appetites and affections that self-love is gratified in enjoyment, happiness, and satisfaction. The competition and rivalry is between self-love and the love of our neighbor: that affection which leads us out of ourselves, makes us regardless of our own interest, and substitutes that of another in

its stead." Whether then there be any peculiar competition and contrariety in this case, shall now be considered.

14. *Benevolence distinct from, but not opposed to, self-love.* — Self-love and interestedness was stated to consist in or be an affection to *ourselves*, a regard to our own private good: it is therefore distinct from benevolence, which is an affection to the good of our fellow-creatures. But that benevolence is distinct from, that is, not the same thing with self-love, is no reason for its being looked upon with any peculiar suspicion; because every principle whatever, by means of which self-love is gratified, is distinct from it: and all things which are distinct from each other are equally so. A man has an affection or aversion to another: that one of these tends to, and is gratified by doing good, that the other tends to, and is gratified by doing harm, does not in the least alter the respect which either one or the other of these inward feelings has to self-love.

15. *They do not exclude each other.* — We use the word *property* so as to exclude any other persons having an interest in that of which we say a particular man has the property. And we often use the word *selfish* so as to exclude in the same manner all regards to the good of others. But the cases are not parallel: for though that exclusion is really part of the idea of property; yet such positive exclusion, or bringing this peculiar disregard\* to the good of others into the idea

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\* A positive disregard of the happiness of others in seeking our own, is what is commonly called *selfishness*, though the distinction does not always seem to have been made by Butler. When self-love embraces this additional element, it ceases to be simply a love of self, and becomes a wrong principle. — ED.

of self-love, is in reality adding to the idea, or changing it from what it was before stated to consist in, namely, in an affection to ourselves.\* This being the whole idea of self-love, it can no otherwise exclude good-will or love of others, than merely by not including it, no otherwise, than it excludes love of arts or reputation, or of any thing else. Neither on the other hand does benevolence, any more than love of arts or of reputation, exclude self-love. Love of our neighbor then has just the same respect to, is no more distant from, self-love, than hatred of our neighbor, or than love or hatred of any thing else.

16. *Any affection may be considered interested or disinterested.* — Thus the principles, from which men rush upon certain ruin for the destruction of an enemy, and for the preservation of a friend, have the same respect to the private affection, and are equally interested, or equally disinterested: and it is of no avail, whether they are said to be one or the other. Therefore to those who are shocked to hear virtue spoken of as disinterested, it may be allowed that it is indeed absurd to speak thus of it; unless hatred, several particular instances of vice, and all the common affections and aversions in mankind, are acknowledged to be disinterested too.

17. *And hence bear the same relation to self-love as benevolence does.* — Is there any less inconsistency, between the love of inanimate things, or of creatures merely sensitive, and self-love; than between self-love and the love of our neighbor? Is desire of and delight in the happiness of another any more a diminution of self-love, than desire of and delight in the esteem of

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\* See No. 8.



another? They are both equally desire of and delight in somewhat external to ourselves: either both or neither are so. The object of self-love is expressed in the term *self*: and every appetite of sense, and every particular affection of the heart, are equally interested or disinterested, because the objects of them all are equally self or somewhat else. Whatever ridicule therefore the mention of a disinterested principle or action may be supposed to lie open to, must, upon the matter being thus stated, relate to ambition, and every appetite and particular affection, as much as to benevolence.

18. *The whole perplexity in the case is merely verbal.* — And indeed all the ridicule, and all the grave perplexity, of which this subject hath had its full share, is merely from words. The most intelligible way of speaking of it seems to be this: that self-love and the actions done in consequence of it (for these will presently appear to be the same as to this question) are interested; that particular affections towards external objects, and the actions done in consequence of those affections, are not so. But every one is at liberty to use words as he pleases. All that is here insisted upon is, that ambition, revenge, benevolence, all particular passions whatever, and the actions they produce, are equally interested or disinterested.

PURSUIT OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE GOOD.

19. *Is there any special contrariety between them?* — Thus it appears that there is no peculiar contrariety between self-love and benevolence; no greater competition between these than between any other particular affections and self-love. This relates to the affections themselves. Let us now see whether there be any



peculiar contrariety between the respective courses of life which these affections lead to ; whether there be any greater competition between the pursuit of private and of public good, than between any other particular pursuits and that of private good.

20. *That an affection carries us to do good to others does not prevent its tending to our own good also.* — There seems no other reason to suspect that there is any such peculiar contrariety, but only that the course of action which benevolence leads to, has a more direct tendency to promote the good of others, than that course of action which love of reputation, suppose, or any other particular affection leads to. But that any affection tends to the happiness of another, does not hinder its tending to one's own happiness too. That others enjoy the benefit of the air and the light of the sun, does not hinder but that these are as much one's own private advantage now, as they would be if we had the property of them exclusive of all others. So a pursuit which tends to promote the good of another, yet may have as great tendency to promote private interest, as a pursuit which does not tend to the good of another at all, or which is mischievous to him.

21. *The particular end of a pursuit does not alter its relation to private good.* — All particular affections whatever, resentment, benevolence, love of arts, equally lead to a course of action for their own gratification, *i.e.*, the gratification of ourselves ; and the gratification of each gives delight : so far then it is manifest they have all the same respect to private interest. Now take into consideration further, concerning these three pursuits, that the end of the first is the harm, of the second, the good of another, of the last, somewhat in-

different; and is there any necessity, that these additional considerations should alter the respect, which we before saw these three pursuits had to private interest; or render any one of them less conducive to it than any other?

22. *Benevolence produces as much happiness as ambition, or any other particular pursuit.* — Thus one man's affection is to honor as his end; in order to obtain which he thinks no pains too great. Suppose another, with such a singularity of mind, as to have the same affection to public good as his end, which he endeavors with the same labor to obtain. In case of success, surely the man of benevolence hath as great enjoyment as the man of ambition; they both equally having the end their affections, in the same degree, tended to: but in case of disappointment, the benevolent man has clearly the advantage; since endeavoring to do good considered as a virtuous pursuit, is gratified by its own consciousness; *i.e.*, is in a degree its own reward.

23. *And a much happier temper.* — And as to these two, or benevolence and any other particular passions whatever, considered in a further view, as forming a general temper, which more or less disposes us for enjoyment of all the common blessing of life, distinct from their own gratification: is benevolence less the temper of tranquillity and freedom than ambition or covetousness? Does the benevolent man appear less easy with himself, from his love to his neighbor? Does he less relish his being? Is there any peculiar gloom seated on his face? Is his mind less open to entertainment, to any particular gratification? Nothing is more manifest, than that being in good humor, which

is benevolence whilst it lasts, is itself the temper of satisfaction and enjoyment.

24. *Is something above and additional to the common pleasures of life.*— Suppose then a man sitting down to consider how he might become most easy to himself, and attain the greatest pleasure he could; all that which is his real natural happiness. This can only consist in the enjoyment of those objects, which are by nature adapted to our several faculties. These particular enjoyments make up the sum total of our happiness: and they are supposed to arise from riches, honors, and the gratification of sensual appetites: be it so: yet none profess themselves so completely happy in these enjoyments, but that there is room left in the mind for others, if they were presented to them: nay, these, as much as they engage us, are not thought so high, but that human nature is capable even of greater. Now there have been persons in all ages, who have professed that they found satisfaction in the exercise of charity, in the love of their neighbor, in endeavoring to promote the happiness of all they had to do with, and in the pursuit of what is just and right and good, as the general bent of their mind, and end of their life; and that doing an action of baseness or cruelty, would be as great violence to *their* self, as much breaking in upon their nature, as any external force.

25. *And is attended with the conscious satisfaction that it meets the approbation of God.*— Persons of this character would add, if they might be heard, that they consider themselves as acting in the view of an infinite Being, who is in a much higher sense the object of reverence and of love, than all the world besides; and therefore they could have no more enjoyment from a

wicked action done under his eye, than the persons to whom they are making their apology could, if all mankind were the spectators of it: and that the satisfaction of approving themselves to his unerring judgment, to whom they thus refer all their actions, is a more continued settled satisfaction than any this world can afford; as also that they have, no less than others, a mind free and open to all the common innocent gratifications of it, such as they are.

26. *Hence virtue may be the best course of self-love.*  
 — And if we go no further, does there appear any absurdity in this? Will any one take upon him to say, that a man cannot find his account in this general course of life, as much as in the most unbounded ambition, and the excesses of pleasure? Or that such a person has not consulted so well for himself, for the satisfaction and peace of his own mind, as the ambitious or dissolute man? And though the consideration, that God himself will in the end justify their taste, and support their cause, is not formally to be insisted upon here; yet thus much comes in, that all enjoyments whatever are much more clear and unmixed from the assurance that they will end well. Is it certain, then, that there is nothing in these pretensions to happiness? especially when there are not wanting persons, who have supported themselves with satisfactions of this kind in sickness, poverty, disgrace, and in the very pangs of death; whereas it is manifest all other enjoyments fail in these circumstances. This surely looks suspicious of having somewhat in it. Self-love methinks should be alarmed. May she not possibly pass over greater pleasures, than those she is so wholly taken up with?

27. *Thus benevolence promotes private good.*— The short of the matter is no more than this. Happiness consists in the gratification of certain affections, appetites, passions, with objects which are by nature adapted to them. Self-love may indeed set us on work to gratify these: but happiness or enjoyment has no immediate connection with self-love, but arises from such gratification alone. Love of our neighbor is one of those affections. This, considered as a *virtuous principle*, is gratified by a consciousness of *endeavouring* to promote the good of others; but considered as a natural affection, its gratification consists in the actual accomplishment of this endeavour. Now indulgence or gratification of this affection, whether in that consciousness, or this accomplishment, has the same respect to interest, as indulgence of any other affection; they equally proceed from, or do not proceed from self-love, they equally include or equally exclude this principle. Thus it appears, that *benevolence and the pursuit of public good hath at least as great respect to self-love and the pursuit of private good, as any other particular passions, and their respective pursuits.*

#### SUPPOSED EXCEPTIONS.

28. *Covetousness forms no exception to the above view.*— Neither is covetousness, whether as a temper or pursuit, any exception to this. For if by covetousness is meant the desire and pursuit of riches for their own sake, without any regard to, or consideration of, the uses of them; this hath as little to do with self-love, as benevolence hath. But by this word is usually meant, not such madness and total distraction of mind,



but immoderate affection to and pursuit of riches as possessions, in order to some further end; namely, satisfaction, interest, or good. This therefore is not a particular affection, or particular pursuit, but it is the general principle of self-love, and the general pursuit of our own interest; for which reason the word *selfish* is by every one appropriated to this temper and pursuit. Now as it is ridiculous to assert, that self-love and the love of our neighbor are the same; so neither is it asserted, that following these different affections hath the same tendency and respect to our own interest. The comparison is not between self-love and the love of our neighbor; between pursuit of our own interest, and the interest of others: but between the several particular affections in human nature towards external objects, as one part of the comparison; and the one particular affection to the good of our neighbor, as the other part of it: and it has been shown, that all these have the same respect to self-love and private interest.

29. *Bestowing property, attention, etc., on others really interferes less with private interest, than the course dictated by other affections.*— There is indeed frequently an inconsistency or interfering between self-love or private interest, and the several particular appetites, passions, affections, or the pursuits they lead to. But this competition or interfering is merely accidental; and happens much oftener between pride, revenge, sensual gratifications, and private interest, than between private interest and benevolence. For nothing is more common, than to see men give themselves up to a passion or an affection to their known prejudice and ruin, and in direct contradiction to manifest and real in-



terest, and the loudest calls of self-love: whereas the seeming competitions and interfering, between benevolence and private interest, relate much more to the materials or means of enjoyment, than to enjoyment itself. There is often an interfering in the former, when there is none in the latter. Thus as to riches: so much money as a man gives away, so much less will remain in his possession. Here is a real interfering. But though a man cannot possibly give without lessening his fortune, yet there are multitudes might give without lessening their own enjoyment; because they may have more than they can turn to any real use or advantage to themselves. Thus, the more thought and time any one employs about the interests and good of others, he must necessarily have less to attend his own; but he may have so ready and large a supply of his own wants, that such thought might be really useless to himself, though of great service and assistance to others.

30. *Confusion of happiness and property.*— The general mistake, that there is some greater inconsistency between endeavoring to promote the good of another and self-interest, than between self-interest and pursuing any thing else, seems, as hath already been hinted, to arise from our notions of property; and to be carried on by this property's being supposed to be itself our happiness or good. People are so very much taken up with this one subject, that they seem from it to have formed a general way of thinking, which they apply to other things that they have nothing to do with. Hence, in a confused and slight way, it might well be taken for granted, that another's having no interest in an affection (*i.e.*, his good not being the object of it), ren-

ders, as one may speak, the proprietor's interest in it greater; and that if another had an interest in it, this would render his less, or occasion that such affection could not be so friendly to self-love, or conducive to private good, as an affection or pursuit which has not a regard to the good of another. This, I say, might be taken for granted, whilst it was not attended to, that the object of every particular affection is equally somewhat external to ourselves; and whether it be the good of another person, whether it be any other external thing, makes no alteration with regard to its being one's own affection, and the gratification of it one's own private enjoyment. And so far as it is taken for granted, that barely having the means and materials of enjoyment is what constitutes interest and happiness; that our interest or good consists in possessions themselves, in having the property of riches, houses, lands, gardens, not in the enjoyment of them; so far it will even more strongly be taken for granted, in the way already explained, that an affection's conducing to the good of another, must even necessarily occasion it to conduce less to private good, if not to be positively detrimental to it. For, if property and happiness are one and the same thing, as by increasing the property of another, you lessen your own property, so by promoting the happiness of another, you must lessen your own happiness.

31. *This is an error.* — But whatever occasioned the mistake, I hope it has been fully proved to be one; as it has been proved, that there is no peculiar rivalry or competition between self-love and benevolence: that as there may be a competition between these two, so there may also between any particular affection whatever

and self-love; that every particular affection, benevolence among the rest, is subservient to self-love by being the instrument of private enjoyment; and that in one respect benevolence contributes more to private interest, *i.e.*, enjoyment or satisfaction, than any other of the particular common affections, as it is in a degree its own gratification.

32. *Religion does not disallow self-love.* — And to all these things may be added, that religion, from whence arises our strongest obligation to benevolence, is so far from disowning the principle of self-love, that it often addresses itself to that very principle, and always to the mind in that state when reason presides; and there can no access be had to the understanding, but by convincing men, that the course of life we would persuade them to, is not contrary to their interest. It may be allowed, without any prejudice to the cause of virtue and religion, that our ideas of happiness and misery are of all our ideas the nearest and most important to us; that they will, nay, if you please, that they ought to prevail over those of order and beauty and harmony and proportion,\* if there should ever be, as it is impossible there ever should be, any inconsistency between them: though these last too, as expressing the fitness of actions, are real as truth itself. Let it be allowed, though virtue or moral rectitude does indeed consist in affection to and pursuit of what is right and

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\* That is, that which constitutes right as being founded in the nature of things. What seems to be right we always believe to be good, and could not be reconciled to it if we did not. But our notions of right are not determined by an actual perception in each case, that the act will be for our good. Nor is this what is intended to be taught by the author.  
--ED.

good, as such; yet, that when we sit down in a cool hour, we can neither justify to ourselves this or any other pursuit, till we are convinced that it will be for our happiness, or at least not contrary to it.

33. *Virtue must seem consistent with interest.*— Common reason and humanity will have some influence upon mankind, whatever becomes of speculations: but, so far as the interests of virtue depend upon the theory of it being secured from open scorn, so far its very being in the world depends upon its appearing to have no contrariety to private interest and self-love.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE NATURE OF VIRTUE.

1. *Moral faculty necessary in subjects of moral government.* — That which renders beings capable of moral government, is their having a moral nature, and moral faculties of perception and of action. Brute creatures are impressed and actuated by various instincts and propensions: so also are we. But additional to this, we have a capacity of reflecting upon actions and characters, and making them an object to our thought: and on our doing this, we naturally and unavoidably approve some actions, under the peculiar view of their being virtuous and of good desert; and disapprove others, as vicious and of ill desert.

2. *Proofs that we have such a faculty.* — That we have this moral approving and disapproving\* faculty, is certain from our experiencing it in ourselves, and

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\* This way of speaking is taken from *Epictetus*,\* and is made use of as seeming the most full, and least liable to cavil. And the moral faculty may be understood to have these two epithets, δοκιμαστικῆ and ὑποδοκιμαστικῆ, upon a double account; because, upon a survey of actions, whether before or after they are done, it determines them to be good or evil; and also because it determines itself to be the guide of action and of life, in contradistinction from all other faculties, or natural principles of action; in the very same manner as speculative reason *directly* and naturally judges of speculative truth and falsehood; and at the same time is attended with a consciousness upon *reflection*, that the natural right to judge of them belongs to it.

\* Arr. Epict. Lib. I. cap. 1.

recognizing it in each other. It appears from our exercising it unavoidably, in the approbation and disapprobation even of feigned characters: from the words *right* and *wrong*,\* *odious* and *amiable*, *base* and *worthy*, with many others of like signification in all languages, applied to actions and characters; from the many written systems of morals which suppose it; since it cannot be imagined, that all these authors, throughout all these treatises, had absolutely no meaning at all to their words, or a meaning merely chimerical: from our natural sense of gratitude, which implies a distinction between merely being the instrument of good, and intending it: from the like distinction every one makes between injury and mere harm, which, *Hobbes* says, is peculiar to mankind; and between injury and just punishment, a distinction plainly natural, prior to the consideration of human laws. It is manifest great part of common language, and of common behavior over the world, is formed upon supposition of such a moral faculty: whether called *conscience*, *moral reason*, *moral sense*, or *divine reason*; whether considered as a perception† of the understanding, or as a sentiment of the heart, or, which seems the truth, as including both.

3. *Not doubtful what this faculty approves.* — Nor is it at all doubtful in the general, what course of action this faculty, or practical discerning power within us, approves, and what it disapproves. For, as much as it

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\* Wrong means what is *wrung* or *twisted*; i.e., something out of place, out of keeping with other things. And right, of course, means the opposite of this. It is thus that right and wrong have their foundation in the nature of things. — ED.

† [The editions have “a sentiment of the understanding or a perception of the heart,” but I think it cannot be doubtful that Butler intended to write as I have printed it. W.]



has been disputed wherein virtue consists, or whatever ground for doubt there may be about particulars; yet, in general, there is in reality an universally acknowledged standard of it. It is that which all ages and all countries have made profession of in public: it is that which every man you meet, puts on the show of: it is that which the primary and fundamental laws of all civil constitutions over the face of the earth, make it their business and endeavor to enforce the practice of upon mankind: namely, justice, veracity, and regard to common good. It being manifest, then, in general, that we have such a faculty or discernment as this: it may be of use to remark some things, more distinctly, concerning it.

4. *Its object is actions.*—First, It ought to be observed, that the object of this faculty is actions,\* comprehending under that name active or practical principles: those principles from which men would act, if occasions and circumstances gave them power; and which, when fixed and habitual in any person, we call his character. It does not appear that brutes have the least reflex sense of actions, as distinguished from events: or that will and design, which constitute the very nature of actions as such, are at all an object to their perception. But to ours they are: and they are the object, and the only one, of the approving and disapproving faculty. Acting, conduct, behavior, abstracted from all regard to what is, in fact and event, the consequence of it, is itself the natural object of the moral discernment; as speculative truth and falsehood is of speculative reason.

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\* Ουδὲ ἡ ἀρετὴ καὶ κακία—ἐν πείσει ἀλλὰ ἐνεργεία, M. Anton., lib. ix., 16.  
Virtutis laus omnis in actione consistit. Cic. Off., lib. i., c. 6.

5. *Including intention, not consequences.*—Intention of such and such consequences, indeed, is always included; for it is part of the action itself: but though the intended good or bad consequences do not follow, we have exactly the same sense of the action as if they did. In like manner we think well or ill of characters, abstracted from all consideration of the good or the evil, which persons of such characters have it actually in their power to do. We never, in the moral way, applaud or blame either ourselves or others, for what we enjoy or what we suffer, or for having impressions made upon us which we consider as altogether out of our power: but only for what we do, or would have done, had it been in our power; or for what we leave undone which we might have done, or would have left undone though we could have done it.

6. *Moral discrimination implies a sense of desert.*—Secondly, Our sense or discernment of actions as morally good or evil, implies in it a sense or discernment of them as of good or ill desert. It may be difficult to explain this perception,\* so as to answer all the questions which may be asked concerning it: but every one speaks of such and such actions as *deserving punishment*; and it is not, I suppose, pretended that they have absolutely no meaning at all to the expression.

7. *This not a feeling that something is due to society.*—Now the meaning plainly is not, that we conceive it for the good of society, that the doer of such actions should be made to suffer. For if unhappily it were resolved, that a man who, by some innocent action was infected with the plague, should be left to perish,

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\* Is not the sense of desert a *feeling*, rather than a proper perception? — ED.

lest, by other people's coming near him, the infection should spread; no one would say, he deserved this treatment. Innocence and ill desert are inconsistent ideas.

8. *Ill desert supposes guilt.*—Ill desert always supposes guilt, and if one be not part of the other, yet they are evidently and naturally connected in our mind. The sight of a man in misery raises our compassion towards him; and, if this misery be inflicted on him by another, our indignation against the author of it. But when we are informed that the sufferer is a villain, and is punished only for his treachery or cruelty; our compassion exceedingly lessens, and, in many instances, our indignation wholly subsides. Now what produces this effect, is the conception of that in the sufferer, which we call ill desert.

9. *It is the mediating idea between vice and misery.*—Upon considering, then, or viewing together, our notion of vice and that of misery, there results a third, that of ill desert. And thus there is in human creatures an association of the two ideas, natural and moral evil, wickedness and punishment. If this association were merely artificial or accidental, it were nothing: but being most unquestionably natural, it greatly concerns us to attend to it, instead of endeavoring to explain it away.

10. *The sense of good desert is feeble in common instances of virtue.*—It may be observed further, concerning our perception of good and of ill desert, that the former is very weak with respect to common instances of virtue.\* One reason of which may be, that it does

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\* Virtue means *manliness*. It is a manful and successful struggle against evil tendencies, temptations, etc. Where there is no call for such

not appear to a spectator, how far such instances of virtue proceed from a virtuous principle, or in what degree this principle is prevalent: since a very weak regard to virtue may be sufficient to make men act well in many common instances.

11. *The sense of ill desert lessens with the temptation.*— And on the other hand, our perception of ill desert in vicious actions lessens in proportion to the temptations men are thought to have had to such vices. For, vice in human creatures consisting chiefly in the absence or want of the virtuous principle; though a man be overcome, suppose by tortures, it does not from thence appear, to what degree the virtuous principle was wanting. All that appears is, that he had it not in such a degree as to prevail over the temptation: but possibly he had it in a degree, which would have rendered him proof against common temptations.

12. *Moral discriminations arise from a comparison of actions with the capacities of the agent.*— Thirdly, Our perception of vice and ill desert arises from, and is the result of, a comparison of actions with the nature and capacities of the agent. For, the mere *neglect* of doing what we ought to do, would, in many cases, be determined by all men to be in the highest degree vicious. And this determination must arise from such comparison and be the result of it; because such neglect would not be vicious in creatures of other natures and capacities, as brutes. And it is the same also with respect to *positive vices*, or such as consist in doing what we ought not. For, every one has a different sense of harm done by an idiot, madman, or child, and

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a struggle, right conduct has not the *peculiar* merit of virtue, though still right and good.—ED.

by one of mature and common understanding; though the action of both, including the intention which is part of the action, be the same: as it may be, since idiots and madmen, as well as children, are capable not only of doing mischief, but also of intending it. Now this difference must arise from somewhat discerned in the nature or capacities of one, which renders the action vicious; and the want of which in the other, renders the same action innocent or less vicious: and this plainly supposes a comparison, whether reflected upon or not, between the action and capacities of the agent, previous to our determining an action to be vicious. And hence arises a proper application of the epithets, *incongruous*, *unsuitable*, *disproportionate*, *unfit*, to actions which our moral faculty determines to be vicious.

13. *Prudence is approved as virtuous, and the reverse.* — Fourthly, It deserves to be considered, whether men are more at liberty, in point of morals, to make themselves miserable without reason, than to make other people so: or dissolutely to neglect their own greater good, for the sake of a present lesser gratification, than they are to neglect the good of others, whom nature has committed to their care. It should seem, that a due concern about our own interest or happiness, and a reasonable endeavor to secure and promote it, which is, I think, very much the meaning of the word, *prudence*,\* in our language; it should seem, that this is virtue, and the contrary behavior faulty and blameful; since,

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\* Prudence is but the fruit of self-love: And although it is a virtue as against self-indulgence, yet it is not, as against our duty to others. To give, or withhold giving to the distressed, or to obey the commands of God, from prudential considerations, is not virtue. — ED.



in the calmest way of reflection, we approve of the first, and condemn the other conduct, both in ourselves and others.

14. *This a real moral discrimination.* — This approbation and disapprobation are altogether different from mere desire of our own, or of their happiness, and from sorrow upon missing it. For the object or occasion of this last kind of perception, is satisfaction or uneasiness: whereas, the object of the first is active behavior. In one case, what our thoughts fix upon, is our condition; in the other, our conduct.

15. *The disapprobation of imprudence, however, is not so sensible as that of injustice, etc.* — It is true, indeed, that nature has not given us so sensible a disapprobation of imprudence and folly, either in *ourselves* or *others*, as of falsehood, injustice, and cruelty: I suppose, because that constant habitual sense of private interest and good, which we always carry about with us, renders such sensible disapprobation less necessary, less wanting, to keep us from imprudently neglecting our own happiness, and foolishly injuring ourselves, than it is necessary, and wanting to keep us from injuring others, to whose good we cannot have so strong and constant a regard: and also because imprudence and folly appearing to bring its own punishment more immediately and constantly than injurious behavior, it less needs the additional punishment, which would be inflicted upon it by others, had they the same sensible indignation against it, as against injustice, and fraud and cruelty.

Besides, unhappiness being in itself the natural object of compassion; the unhappiness which people bring upon themselves, though it be wilfully, excites in



us some pity for them : and this of course lessens our displeasure against them.

16. *Yet it is clear and real.* — But still it is a matter of experience that we are formed so as to reflect very severely upon the greater instances of imprudent neglects and foolish rashness, both in ourselves and others. In instances of this kind, men often say of themselves with remorse, and of others with some indignation, that they deserved to suffer such calamities, because they brought them upon themselves, and would not take warning. Particularly when persons come to poverty and distress by a long course of extravagance, and after frequent admonitions, though without falsehood or injustice : we plainly do not regard such people as alike objects of compassion with those who are brought into the same condition by unavoidable accidents.

17. *Hence prudence is a species of virtue, and folly of vice.* — From these things it appears that prudence is a species of virtue, and folly of vice : meaning by *folly*, somewhat quite different from mere incapacity ; a thoughtless want of that regard and attention to our own happiness, which we had capacity for. And this the word properly includes ; and, as it seems, in its usual acceptation : for we scarcely apply it to brute creatures.

18. *But it is the thing, not the words, which is contended for.* — However, if any person be disposed to dispute the matter, I shall very willingly give him up the words *virtue* and *vice*, as not applicable to prudence and folly : but must beg leave to insist, that the faculty within us, which is the judge of actions, approves of prudent actions, and disapproves imprudent

ones ; I say prudent and imprudent *actions* as such, and considered distinctly from the happiness or misery which they occasion. And by the way, this observation may help to determine what justness there is in that objection against religion, that it teaches us to be interested and selfish.

19. *Benevolence not the whole of virtue.*—Fifthly, Without inquiring how far, and in what sense, virtue is resolvable into benevolence, and vice into the want of it; it may be proper to observe, that benevolence and the want of it, singly considered, are in no sort the whole\* of virtue and vice. For if this were the case, in the review of one's own character or that of others, our moral understanding and moral sense would be indifferent to every thing, but the degrees in which benevolence prevailed, and the degrees in which it was wanting. That is, we should neither approve of benevolence to some persons rather than to others, nor disapprove injustice and falsehood upon any other account, than merely as an overbalance of happiness was foreseen likely to be produced by the *first*, and of misery by the *second*.

20. *This shown by examples.*—But now, on the contrary, suppose two men competitors for any thing whatever, which would be of equal advantage to each of them ; though nothing indeed would be more impertinent, than for a stranger to busy himself to get one of them preferred to the other ; yet such endeavor would be virtue in behalf of a friend or benefactor,

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\* The following paragraphs show clearly that Butler did not regard the production of happiness as the ground of right. He does in various places express the opinion that the right and the good really coincide. But the right is our guide to the good, and not the reverse.—ED.

abstracted from all consideration of distant consequences : as that examples of gratitude, and the cultivation of friendship, would be of general good to the world. Again, suppose one man should, by fraud or violence, take from another the fruit of his labor, with intent to give it to a third, who, he thought, would have as much pleasure from it, as would balance the pleasure which the first possessor would have had in the enjoyment, and his vexation in the loss of it ; suppose also that no bad consequences would follow : yet such an action would surely be vicious. Nay, farther, were treachery, violence, and injustice, no otherwise vicious, than as foreseen likely to produce an overbalance of misery to society ; then, if in any case a man could procure to himself as great advantage by an act of injustice as the whole foreseen inconvenience, likely to be brought upon others by it, would amount to ; such a piece of injustice would not be faulty or vicious at all : because it would be no more than, in any other case, for a man to prefer his own satisfaction to another's in equal degrees.

21. *Hence, the production of happiness is not our standard of moral approbation.*— The fact then appears to be that we are constituted so as to condemn falsehood, unprovoked violence, injustice, and to approve of benevolence to some preferably to others, abstracted from all other consideration, which conduct is likeliest to produce an overbalance of happiness or misery. And, therefore, were the Author of nature to propose nothing to himself as an end but the production of happiness, were his moral character merely that of benevolence : yet ours is not so. Upon that supposition, indeed, the only reason of his giving us the

above-mentioned approbation of benevolence to some persons rather than others, and disapprobation of falsehood, unprovoked violence, and injustice, must be, that he foresaw this constitution of our nature would produce more happiness, than forming us with a temper of more general benevolence. But still, since this is our constitution; falsehood, violence, injustice, must be vice in us, and benevolence to some preferably to others, virtue; abstracted from all consideration of the overbalance of evil or good, which they may appear likely to produce.

22. *What moral government must be, therefore.*— Now if human creatures are endued with such a moral nature as we have been explaining, or with a moral faculty, the natural object of which is actions: moral government must consist in rendering them happy and unhappy, in rewarding and punishing them, as they follow, neglect, or depart from, the moral rule of action interwoven in their nature, or suggested and enforced by this moral faculty; in rewarding and punishing them upon account of their so doing.

23. *This view necessary in order to guard against erroneous teachings on the point.*— I am not sensible that I have, in this fifth observation, contradicted what any author designed to assert. But some\* of great and distinguished merit have, I think, expressed themselves in a manner which may occasion some danger to careless readers, of imagining the whole of virtue to consist in singly aiming, according to the best of their judgment, at promoting the happiness of mankind in the present state; and the whole of vice, in doing

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\* The reference is especially to Shaftesbury. — Ed.

what they foresee, or might foresee, is likely to produce an overbalance of unhappiness in it: than which mistakes none can be conceived more terrible. For it is certain that some of the most shocking instances of injustice, adultery, murder, perjury, and even of persecution, may, in many supposable cases, not have the appearance of being likely to produce an overbalance of misery in the present state; perhaps sometimes may have the contrary appearance. For this reflection might easily be carried on, but I forbear.—The happiness of the world is the concern of Him who is the Lord and proprietor of it: nor do we know what we are about when we endeavor to promote the good of mankind in any ways but those which he has directed; that is indeed, in all ways not contrary to veracity and justice. I speak thus upon supposition of persons really endeavoring, in some sort, to do good without regard to these. But the truth seems to be, that such supposed endeavors proceed, almost always, from ambition, the spirit of party, or some indirect principle concealed perhaps in great measure from persons themselves.

24. *We should endeavor to do good within the bounds of justice and veracity, though we may often miscarry from short-sightedness.*—And though it is our business and our duty, to endeavor, within the bounds of veracity and justice, to contribute to the ease, convenience, and even cheerfulness and diversion of our fellow-creatures: yet, from our short views, it is greatly uncertain whether this endeavor will, in particular instances, produce an overbalance of happiness upon the whole; since so many and distant things must come into the account. And that which makes it our duty is, that



there is some appearance that it will, and no positive appearance sufficient to balance this, on the contrary side; and also, that such a benevolent endeavor is a cultivation of that most excellent of all virtuous principles, the active principle of benevolence.

25. *But there can be no falsehood without intending it.* — However, though veracity, as well as justice, is to be our rule of life; it must be added, otherwise a snare will be laid in the way of some plain men, that the use of the common forms of speech generally understood, cannot be falsehood; and, in general, that there can be no designed falsehood without designing to deceive. It must likewise be observed, that in numberless cases, a man may be under the strictest obligations to what he foresees will deceive,\* without his intending it. For it is impossible not to foresee that the words and actions of men in different ranks and employments, and of different educations, will perpetually be mistaken by each other: and it cannot but be so whilst they will judge with the utmost carelessness, as they daily do, of what they are not, perhaps, enough informed to be competent judges of, even though they considered it with great attention.

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\* As in the case of a physician, who resorts to a surgical operation as the only chance of cure, when ignorant persons are sure to think it mere cruelty, or if unsuccessful, murder. — ED.



## CHAPTER III.

### PARTICULAR AFFECTIONS AND DUTIES.

#### SECTION I.

#### COMPASSION.\*

1. *Compassion as a social principle.*— Every man is to be considered in two capacities, the private and public; as designed to pursue his own interest, and likewise to contribute to the good of others. Whoever will consider, may see, that in general there is no contrariety between these; but that from the original constitution of man, and the circumstances he is placed in, they perfectly coincide, and mutually carry on each other. But, amongst the great variety of affections or principles of action in our nature, some in their primary intention and design seem to belong to the single or private, others to the public or social capacity. The affections required in the text are of the latter sort. When we rejoice in the prosperity of others, and compassionate their distresses, we, as it were, substitute them for ourselves, their interest for our own; and have the same kind of pleasure in their prosperity, and sorrow in their distress, as we have from reflection upon our own. Now there is nothing strange or unaccount-

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\* Consisting of portions of the fifth and sixth sermons at the Rolls; preached from the text — “Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.” — ROMANS, 12: 15.

able in our being thus carried out, and affected towards the interests of others. For, if there be any appetite, or any inward principle besides self-love; why may there not be an affection to the good of our fellow-creatures, and delight from that affection's being gratified, and uneasiness from things going contrary to it?\*

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\* There being manifestly this appearance of men's substituting others for themselves, and being carried out and affected towards them as towards themselves; some persons, who have a system which excludes every affection of this sort, have taken a pleasant method to solve it; and tell you it is *not another* you are at all concerned about, but *yourself only*, when you feel the affection called compassion; *i.e.* here is a plain matter of fact, which men cannot reconcile with the general account they think fit to give of things: they therefore, instead of *that* manifest fact, substitute *another*, which is reconcilable to their own scheme.

For does not everybody by compassion mean an affection, the object of which is another in distress? Instead of this, but designing to have it mistaken for this, they speak of an affection or passion, the object of which is ourselves, or danger to ourselves. Hobbes defines *pity, imagination, or fiction of future calamity to ourselves, proceeding from the sense* [he means sight or knowledge] *of another man's calamity.*

Thus fear and compassion would be the same idea, and a fearful and a compassionate man the same character, which every one immediately sees are totally different.

Further, to those who give any scope to their affections, there is no perception or inward feeling more universal than this: that one who has been merciful and compassionate throughout the course of his behavior, should himself be treated with kindness, if he happens to fall into circumstances of distress. Is fear, then, or cowardice, so great a recommendation to the favor of the bulk of mankind? Or is it not plain, that mere fearlessness (and therefore not the contrary) is one of the most popular qualifications? This shows that mankind are not affected towards compassion as fear, but as somewhat totally different.

Nothing would more expose such accounts as these of the affections which are favorable and friendly to our fellow-creatures, than to substitute the definitions, which this author, and others who follow his steps, give of such affections, instead of the words by which they are commonly expressed. Hobbes, after having laid down, that pity or compassion is only fear for ourselves, goes on to explain the reason why we pity our friends in distress more than others. Now substitute the *definition* instead

2. *Is a distinct principle.*— Of these two, delight in

of the word *pity* in this place, and the inquiry will be, why we fear our friends, etc., which words (since he really does not mean why we are afraid of them) make no question or sentence at all. So that common language, the words *to compassionate, to pity*, cannot be accommodated to his account of compassion. The very joining of the words to *pity our friends*, is a direct contradiction to his definition of *pity*: because those words, so joined, necessarily express that our friends are the objects of the passion: whereas his definition of it asserts, that ourselves (or danger to ourselves) are the only objects of it.

He might indeed have avoided this absurdity, by plainly saying what he is going to account for; namely, why the sight of the innocent, or of our friends in distress, raises greater fear for ourselves than the sight of other persons in distress. But had he put the thing thus plainly, the fact itself would have been doubted; that *the sight of our friends in distress raises in us greater fear for ourselves, than the sight of others in distress.*

And in the next place, it would immediately have occurred to every one, that the fact now mentioned, which at least is *doubtful*, whether true or false, was not the same with this fact, which nobody ever doubted, that *the sight of our friends in distress raises in us greater compassion, than the sight of others in distress*: every one, I say, would have seen that these are not the *same* but *two different* inquiries; and consequently, that fear and compassion are not the same.

Suppose a person to be in real danger, and by some means or other to have forgot it; any trifling accident, any sound might alarm him, recall the danger to his remembrance, and renew his fear: but it is almost too grossly ridiculous (though it is to show an absurdity) to speak of that sound or accident as an object of compassion; and yet, according to Mr. Hobbes, our greatest friend in distress is no more to us, no more the object of compassion, or of any affection in our heart: neither the one nor the other raises any emotion in our mind, but only the thoughts of our liability to calamity, and the fear of it; and both equally do this. It is fit such sort of accounts of human nature should be shown to be what they really are, because there is raised upon them a general scheme which undermines the whole foundation of common justice and honesty.—See *Hobbes of Human Nature*, c. 9, § 10.

There are often three distinct perceptions or inward feelings upon sight of persons in distress: real sorrow and concern for the misery of our fellow-creatures; some degree of satisfaction from a consciousness of our freedom from that misery; and as the mind passes on from one thing to another, it is not unnatural from such an occasion to reflect upon our

the prosperity of others, and compassion for their distresses, the last is felt much more generally than the former. Though men do not universally rejoice with all whom they see rejoice, yet, accidental obstacles removed, they naturally compassionate all, in some degree, whom they see in distress: so far as they have any real perception or sense of that distress: insomuch that words expressing this latter, pity, compassion, frequently occur; whereas we have scarce any single one, by which the former is distinctly expressed. Congratulation indeed answers condolence; but both these words are intended to signify certain forms of civility, rather than any inward sensation or feeling. This difference or inequality is so remarkable, that we plainly consider compassion as itself an original, distinct, par-

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own liableness to the same or other calamities. The two last frequently accompany the first, but it is the first *only* which is properly compassion, of which the distressed are the objects, and which directly carries us with calmness and thought to their assistance. Any one of these, from various and complicated reasons, may in particular cases prevail over the other two; and there are, I suppose, instances, where the bare *sight* of distress, without our feeling any compassion for it, may be the occasion of either or both of the two latter perceptions.

One might add, that if there be really any such thing as the fiction or imagination of danger to ourselves from sight of the miseries of others, which Hobbes speaks of, and which he has absurdly mistaken for the whole of compassion; if there be any thing of this sort common to mankind, distinct from the reflection of reason, it would be a most remarkable instance of what was furthest from his thoughts; namely, of a mutual sympathy between each particular of the species, a fellow-feeling common to mankind. It would not indeed be an example of our substituting others for ourselves, but it would be an example of our substituting ourselves for others. And as it would not be an instance of benevolence, so neither would it be an instance of self-love: for this phantom of danger to ourselves, naturally rising to view upon sight of the distresses of others, would be no more an instance of love to ourselves, than the pain of hunger is.

ticular affection in human nature; whereas to rejoice in the good of others, is only a consequence of the general affection of love and good-will to them.

3. *Reason for the affection.*—The reason and account of which matter is this: when a man has obtained any particular advantage or felicity, his end is gained; and he does not in that particular want the assistance of another: there was therefore no need of a distinct affection towards that felicity of another already obtained; neither would such affection directly carry him on to do good to that person: whereas men in distress want assistance; and compassion leads us directly to assist them. The object of the former is the present felicity of another; the object of the latter is the present misery of another. It is easy to see that the latter wants a particular affection for its relief, and that the former does not want one, because it does not want assistance. And upon supposition of a distinct affection in both cases, the one must rest in the exercise of itself, having nothing further to gain; the other does not rest in itself, but carries us on to assist the distressed.

4. *As seen from the course it dictates.*—Thus, to relieve the indigent and distressed, to single out the unhappy, from whom can be expected no returns either of present entertainment or future service, for the objects of our favors; to esteem a man's being friendless as a recommendation; dejection, and incapacity of struggling through the world, as a motive for assisting him; in a word, to consider these circumstances of disadvantage, which are usually thought a sufficient reason for neglect and overlooking a person, as a motive for helping him forward: this is the course of



benevolence which compassion marks out and directs us to: this is that humanity, which is so peculiarly becoming our nature and circumstances in this world.

AFFECTIONS NOT A WEAKNESS.

5. *Is it a weakness?* — But, supposing these affections natural to the mind, particularly the last; “Has not each man troubles enough of his own? must he indulge an affection which appropriates to himself those of others? which leads him to contract the least desirable of all friendships, friendships with the unfortunate? Must we invert the known rule of prudence, and choose to associate ourselves with the distressed? or, allowing that we ought, so far as it is in our power to relieve them, yet is it not better to do this from reason and duty? Does not passion and affection of every kind perpetually mislead us? Nay, is not passion and affection itself a weakness, and what a perfect being must be entirely free from?”

6. *No: but is necessary in man.* — Perhaps so: but it is mankind I am speaking of; imperfect creatures, and who naturally and, from the condition we are placed in, necessarily depend upon each other. With respect to such creatures, it would be found of as bad consequence to eradicate all natural affections, as to be entirely governed by them. This would almost sink us to the condition of brutes; and that would leave us without a sufficient principle of action. Reason alone, whatever any one may wish, is not in reality a sufficient motive of virtue in such a creature as man; but this reason joined with those affections which God has impressed upon his heart: and when these are allowed



scope to exercise themselves, but under strict government and direction of reason; then it is we act suitably to our nature, and to the circumstances God has placed us in.

7. *Is no more a weakness than our senses.*—Neither is affection itself at all a weakness; nor does it argue defect, any otherwise than as our senses and appetites do; they belong to our condition of nature, and are what we cannot be without. God Almighty is, to be sure, unmoved by passion or appetite, unchanged by affection: but then it is to be added, that he neither sees, nor hears, nor perceives things by any senses like ours; but in a manner infinitely more perfect. Now, as it is an absurdity almost too gross to be mentioned, for a man to endeavor to get rid of his senses, because the Supreme Being discerns things more perfectly without them; it is as real, though not as obvious an absurdity, to endeavor to eradicate the passions he has given us, because he is without them.

8. *Both belong to our nature.*—For, since our passions are as really a part of our constitution as our senses; since the former as really belong to our condition of nature as the latter; to get rid of either is equally a violation of and breaking in upon that nature and constitution he has given us. Both our senses and our passions are a supply to the imperfection of our nature: thus they show that we are such sort of creatures, as to stand in need of those helps which higher orders of creatures do not. But it is not the supply, but the deficiency; as it is not a remedy, but a disease, which is the imperfection. However, our appetites, passions, senses, no way imply disease: nor indeed do they imply deficiency or imperfection of any

sort; but only this, that the constitution of nature, according to which God has made us, is such as to require them.

## USES OF COMPASSION.

9. *Without affections men would not do their duty.*—The private interest of the individual would not be sufficiently provided for by reasonable and cool self-love alone; therefore the appetites and passions are placed within as a guard and further security, without which it would not be taken due care of. It is manifest our life would be neglected, were it not for the calls of hunger and thirst and weariness; notwithstanding that without them reason would assure us, that the recruits of food and sleep are the necessary means of our preservation. It is therefore absurd to imagine, that, without affection, the same reason alone would be more effectual to engage us to perform the duties we owe to our fellow-creatures. One of this make would be as defective, as much wanting, considered with respect to society, as one of the former make would be defective, or wanting, considered as an individual, or in his private capacity. Is it possible any can in earnest think, that a public spirit, *i.e.*, a settled reasonable principle of benevolence to mankind, is so prevalent and strong in the species, as that we may venture to throw off the under affections, which are its assistants, carry it forward and mark out particular courses for it; family, friends, neighborhood, the distressed, our country? The common joys and the common sorrows, which belong to these relations and circumstances, are as plainly useful to society, as the

pain and pleasure belonging to hunger, thirst, and weariness, are of service to the individual.

10. *Compassion gives the indigent access to us.* — In defect of that higher principle of reason, compassion is often the only way by which the indigent can have access to us: and therefore, to eradicate this, though it is not indeed formally to deny them that assistance which is their due; yet it is to cut them off from that which is too frequently their only way of obtaining it.

11. *The unfeeling are restrained by the compassion of others.* — And as for those who have shut up this door against the complaints of the miserable, and conquered this affection in themselves; even these persons will be under great restraints from the same affection in others. Thus a man who has himself no sense of injustice, cruelty, oppression, will be kept from running the utmost lengths of wickedness, by fear of that detestation, and even resentment of inhumanity, in many particular instances of it, which compassion for the object towards whom such inhumanity is exercised, excites in the bulk of mankind. And this is frequently the chief danger, and the chief restraint, which tyrants and the great oppressors of the world feel.

12. *Apathy is a moral disease.* — In general, experience will show, that as want of natural appetite to food supposes and proceeds from some bodily disease; so the apathy the Stoics talk of, as much supposes, or is accompanied with, somewhat amiss in the moral character, in that which is the health of the mind. Those who formerly aimed at this upon the foot of philosophy, appear to have had better success in eradicating the affections of tenderness and compassion, than they had with the passions of envy, pride, and

resentment: these latter, at best, were but concealed, and that imperfectly too. How far this observation may be extended to such as endeavor to suppress the natural impulses of their affections, in order to form themselves for business and the world, I shall not determine. But there does not appear any capacity or relation to be named, in which men ought to be entirely deaf to the calls of affection, unless the judicial one is to be excepted.

13. *Hardness of heart in men of pleasure.* — And as to those who are commonly called the men of pleasure, it is manifest that the reason they set up for hardness of heart, is to avoid being interrupted in their course, by the ruin and misery they are the authors of: neither are persons of this character always the most free from the impotences of envy and resentment. What may men at last bring themselves to, by suppressing their passions and affections of one kind, and leaving those of the other in their full strength? but surely it might be expected that persons who make pleasure their study and their business, if they understood what they profess, would reflect, how many of the entertainments of life, how many of those kind of amusements which seem peculiarly to belong to men of leisure and education, they become insensible to by this acquired hardness of heart.

SUGGESTS THE RIGHT AIM OF LIFE.

14. *Tranquillity to be sought, rather than high enjoyment.* — And now to go on to the uses we should make of the foregoing reflections, the further ones they lead to, and the general temper they have a tendency to be-

get in us. There being that distinct affection implanted in the nature of man, tending to lessen the miseries of life, that particular provision made for abating its sorrows, more than for increasing its positive happiness, as before explained; this may suggest to us what should be our general aim respecting ourselves, in our passage through this world: namely, to endeavor chiefly to escape misery, keep free from uneasiness, pain, and sorrow, or to get relief and mitigation of them; to propose to ourselves peace and tranquillity of mind, rather than pursue after high enjoyments. This is what the constitution of nature before explained marks out as the course we should follow, and the end we should aim at. To make pleasure and mirth and jollity our business, and be constantly hurrying about after some gay amusement, some new gratification of sense or appetite, to those who will consider the nature of man and our condition in this world, will appear the most romantic scheme of life that ever entered into thought. And yet how many are there who go on in this course, without learning better from the daily, the hourly disappointments, listlessness, and satiety, which accompany this fashionable method of wasting away their days!

15. *The miseries of life viewed through compassion promote this.*—The subject we have been insisting upon would lead us into the same kind of reflections, by a different connection. The miseries of life brought home to ourselves by compassion, viewed through this affection considered as the sense by which they are perceived, would beget in us that moderation, humility, and soberness of mind, which has been now recommended; and which peculiarly belongs to a season of



recollection,\* the only purpose of which is to bring us to a sense of things, to recover us out of that forgetfulness of ourselves, and our true state, which it is manifest far the greatest part of men pass their whole life in.

16. *Hence the use of the house of mourning.*— Upon this account Solomon says, that *it is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting; i.e.*, it is more to a man's advantage to turn his eyes towards objects of distress, to recall sometimes to his remembrance the occasions of sorrow, than to pass all his days in thoughtless mirth and gayety. And he represents the wise as choosing to frequent the former of these places; to be sure not for its own sake, but because *by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better*. Every one observes how temperate and reasonable men are when humbled and brought low by afflictions, in comparison of what they are in high prosperity. By this voluntary resort to the house of mourning, which is here recommended, we might learn all those useful instructions which calamities teach, without undergoing them ourselves; and grow wiser and better at a more easy rate than men commonly do.

17. *Such a view opens the heart to religion.*— And as to that obstinacy and wilfulness which renders men so insensible to the motives of religion; this right sense of ourselves and of the world about us would bend the stubborn mind, soften the heart, and make it more apt to receive impression: and this is the proper temper in which to call our ways to remembrance, to

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\* The original sermon was preached at the season of Lent.— Ed.



review and set home upon ourselves the miscarriages of our past life. In such a compliant state of mind, reason and conscience will have a fair hearing; which is the preparation for, or rather the beginning of, that repentance, the outward show of which we all put on at this season.

18. *And turns our thoughts to a better state.*—Lastly, The various miseries of life which lie before us wherever we turn our eyes, the frailty of this mortal state we are passing through, may put us in mind that the present world is not our home; that we are merely strangers and travellers in it, as all our fathers were. It is therefore to be considered as a foreign country; in which our poverty and wants, and the insufficient supplies of them, were designed to turn our views to that higher and better state we are heirs to: a state where will be no follies to be overlooked, no miseries to be pitied, no wants to be relieved; where the affection we have been now treating of will happily be lost, as there will be no objects to exercise it upon: for *God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away.*

## SECTION II.

## RESENTMENT.\*

1. *Why have we resentment?* — Since perfect good-

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\* Eighth sermon at the Rolls; preached from the text, — “Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.” — MATTHEW, 5 : 43, 44.

ness in the Deity is the principle from whence the universe was brought into being, and by which it is preserved; and since general benevolence is the great law of the whole moral creation: it is a question which immediately occurs, *Why had man implanted in him a principle, which appears the direct contrary to benevolence?* Now the foot upon which inquiries of this kind should be treated is this: to take human nature as it is, and the circumstances in which it is placed as they are; and then consider the correspondence between that nature and those circumstances, or what course of action and behavior, respecting those circumstances, any particular affection or passion leads us to.

2. *Not, why should we need it?* — This I mention to distinguish the matter now before us from disquisitions of quite another kind; namely, *Why we are not made more perfect creatures, or placed in better circumstances?* these being questions which we have not, that I know of, any thing at all to do with. God Almighty undoubtedly foresaw the disorders, both natural and moral, which would happen in this state of things. If upon this we set ourselves to search and examine why he did not prevent them; we shall, I am afraid, be in danger of running into somewhat worse than impertinent curiosity. But upon this to examine how far the nature which he hath given us hath a respect to those circumstances, such as they are; how far it leads us to act a proper part in them; plainly belongs to us: and such inquiries are in many ways of excellent use. Thus the thing to be considered is, not, *Why we were not made of such a nature, and placed in such circumstances, as to have no need of so harsh and turbulent a passion as resentment:* but, taking our nature and con-

dition as being what they are, *Why or for what end such a passion was given us*: and this chiefly in order to show what are the abuses of it.

3. *It is not hatred.*—The persons who laid down for a rule, *Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy*, made short work with this matter. They did not, it seems, perceive any thing to be disapproved in hatred, more than in good-will: and, according to their system of morals, our enemy was the proper natural object of one of these passions, as our neighbor was of the other of them.

This was all they had to say, and all they thought needful to be said, upon the subject. But this cannot be satisfactory; because hatred, malice, and revenge, are directly contrary to the religion we profess, and to the nature and reason of the thing itself.

4. *Must inquire what it is.*—Therefore, since no passion God hath endued us with can be in itself evil; and yet since men frequently indulge a passion in such ways and degrees that at length it becomes quite another thing from what it was originally in our nature; and those vices of malice and revenge in particular take their occasion from the natural passion of resentment: it will be needful to trace this up to its original, that we may see, *what it is in itself, as placed in our nature by its Author*; from which it will plainly appear, *for what ends it was placed there*. And when we know what the passion is in itself, and the ends of it, we shall easily see, *what are the abuses of it, in which malice and revenge consist*; and which are so strongly forbidden in the text, by the direct contrary being commanded.

5. *Is of two kinds: sudden and settled.*—Resentment

is of two kinds: *hasty and sudden*, or *settled and deliberate*. The former is called anger, and often *passion*; which, though a general word, is frequently appropriated and confined to the particular feeling, sudden anger, as distinct from deliberate resentment, malice, and revenge. In all these words is usually implied somewhat vicious; somewhat unreasonable as to the occasion of the passion, or immoderate as to the degree or duration of it. But that the natural passion itself is indifferent, St Paul has asserted in that precept, *Be ye angry, and sin not* :\* which though it is by no means to be understood as an encouragement to indulge ourselves in anger, the sense being certainly this, *Though ye be angry, sin not*; yet here is evidently a distinction made between anger and sin; between the natural passion and sinful anger.

## SUDDEN RESENTMENT.

6. *Sudden anger is mere instinct*. — *Sudden anger*, upon certain occasions, is mere instinct: as merely so, as the disposition to close our eyes upon the apprehension of somewhat falling into them; and no more necessarily implies any degree of reason. I say *necessarily*: for to be sure *hasty*, as well as *deliberate*, anger may be occasioned by injury or contempt; in which cases reason suggests to our thoughts that injury and contempt, which is the occasion of the passion: but I am speaking of the former only so far as it is to be distinguished from the latter. The only way in which our reason and understanding can raise anger, is by representing to our mind injustice or injury of some

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\* Ephesians, 4 : 26.

kind or other. Now momentary anger is frequently raised, not only without any real, but without any apparent, reason; that is, without any appearance of injury, as distinct from hurt or pain. It cannot, I suppose, be thought, that this passion, in infants, in the lower species of animals, and, which is often seen, in men towards them—it cannot, I say, be imagined, that these instances of this passion are the effect of reason: no, they are occasioned by mere sensation and feeling. It is opposition, sudden hurt, violence, which naturally excites the passion; and the real demerit or fault of him who offers that violence, or is the cause of that opposition or hurt, does not, in many cases, so much as come into thought.

7. *Its office is to resist sudden force, etc.*—The reason and end, for which man was made thus liable to this passion is, that he might be better qualified to prevent, and likewise (or perhaps chiefly) to resist and defeat sudden force, violence, and opposition, considered merely as such, and without regard to the fault or demerit of him who is the author of them. Yet, since violence may be considered in this other and further view, as implying fault; and since injury, as distinct from harm, may raise sudden anger; sudden anger may likewise accidentally serve to prevent, or remedy, such fault and injury. But, considered as distinct from settled anger, it stands in our nature for self-defence, and not for the administration of justice. There are plainly cases, and in the uncultivated parts of the world, and where regular governments are not formed, they frequently happen, in which there is no time for consideration, and yet to be passive is certain destruction; in which, sudden resistance is the only security.



## DELIBERATE RESENTMENT.

8. *Deliberate anger implies wrong.*—But from *this, deliberate anger or resentment* is essentially distinguished, as the latter is not naturally excited by, or intended to prevent mere harm without appearance of wrong or injustice. Now, in order to see, as exactly as we can, what is the natural object and occasion of such resentment; let us reflect upon the manner in which we are touched with reading, suppose, a feigned story of baseness and villany, properly worked up to move our passions. This immediately raises indignation, somewhat of a desire that it should be punished. And though the designed injury be prevented, yet that it was designed is sufficient to raise this inward feeling. Suppose the story true, this inward feeling would be as natural and as just: and one may venture to affirm, that there is scarce a man in the world, but would have it upon some occasions. It seems *in us* plainly connected with a sense of virtue and vice, of moral good and evil. Suppose further, we knew both the person who did and who suffered the injury; neither would this make any alteration, only that it would probably affect us more.

9. *It is not malice.*—The indignation raised by cruelty and injustice, and the desire of having it punished, which persons unconcerned would feel, is by no means malice. No, it is resentment against vice and wickedness: it is one of the common bonds by which society is held together; a fellow-feeling which each individual has in behalf of the whole species, as well as of himself. And it does not appear that this, generally speaking, is at all too high amongst mankind.



10. *Is stronger when we ourselves are concerned.*— Suppose now the injury I have been speaking of to be done against ourselves; or those whom we consider as ourselves. It is plain, the way in which we should be affected would be exactly the same in kind: but it would certainly be in a higher degree, and less transient; because a sense of our own happiness and misery is most intimately and always present to us; and from the very constitution of our nature, we cannot but have a greater sensibility to, and be more deeply interested in, what concerns ourselves.

11. *And this is the whole of the natural passion.*— And this seems to be the whole of this passion, which is, properly speaking, natural to mankind: namely, a resentment against injury and wickedness in general; and in a higher degree when towards ourselves, in proportion to the greater regard which men naturally have for themselves, than for others.

12. *Hence, as appears, it is excited by injury.*— From hence it appears, that it is not natural but moral evil; it is not suffering, but injury, which raises that anger or resentment, which is of any continuance. The natural object of it is not one, who appears to the suffering person to have been only the innocent occasion of his pain or loss; but one, who has been in a moral sense injurious either to ourselves or others. This is abundantly confirmed by observing what it is which heightens or lessens resentment; namely, the same which aggravates or lessens the fault: friendship, and former obligations, on one hand; or inadvertency, strong temptations, and mistake, on the other.

13. *Degrees of the affections.*— All this is so much understood by mankind, how little soever it be reflected

upon, that a person would be reckoned quite distracted who should coolly resent a harm, which had not to himself the appearance of injury or wrong. Men do indeed resent what is occasioned through carelessness: but then they expect observance as their due, and so that carelessness is considered as faulty. It is likewise true, that they resent more strongly an injury done, than one which, though designed, was prevented, in cases where the guilt is perhaps the same: the reason however is, not that bare pain or loss raises resentment, but, that it gives a new, and, as I may speak, additional sense of the injury or injustice. According to the natural course of the passions, the degrees of resentment are in proportion, not only to the degree of design and deliberation in the injurious person; but in proportion to this, joined with the degree of the evil designed or premeditated; since this likewise comes in to make the injustice greater or less. And the evil or harm will appear greater when they feel it, than when they only reflect upon it: so therefore will the injury: and consequently the resentment will be greater.

14. *Its final cause.*—The natural object or occasion of settled resentment then being injury, as distinct from pain or loss: it is easy to see, that to prevent and to remedy such injury, and the miseries arising from it, is the end for which this passion was implanted in man. It is to be considered as a weapon, put into our hands by nature, against injury, injustice, and cruelty: how it may be innocently employed and made use of, shall presently be mentioned.

15. *Recapitulation.*—The account which has been now given of this passion is, in brief, that sudden anger is raised by, and was chiefly intended to prevent

or remedy, mere harm distinct from injury: but that it *may* be raised by injury, and *may* serve to prevent or to remedy it; and then the occasions and effects of it are the same with the occasions and effects of deliberate anger. But they are essentially distinguished in this, that the latter is never occasioned by harm, distinct from injury; and its natural proper end is to remedy or prevent only that harm, which implies, or is supposed to imply, injury or moral wrong.

16. *Such is the unchanged affection.*— Every one sees that these observations do not relate to those, who have habitually suppressed the course of their passions and affections, out of regard either to interest or virtue; or who, from habits of vice and folly, have changed their nature. But, I suppose, there can be no doubt but this, now described, is the general course of resentment, considered as a natural passion, neither increased by indulgence, nor corrected by virtue, nor prevailed over by other passions, or particular habits of life.

#### ABUSES OF RESENTMENT.

17. *Passion an abuse of anger.*— As to the abuses of anger, which it is to be observed may be in all different degrees, the first which occurs is what is commonly called *passion*; to which some men are liable, in the same way as others are to the *epilepsy*, or any other sudden particular disorder. This distemper of the mind seizes them upon the least occasion in the world, and perpetually without any real reason at all: and by means of it they are plainly, every day, every waking hour of their lives, liable and in danger of running into the most extravagant outrages.

18. *Also peevishness.* — Of a less boisterous, but not of a more innocent kind, is *peevishness*; which I mention with pity, with real pity to the unhappy creatures, who, from their inferior station, or other circumstances and relations, are obliged to be in the way of, and to serve for a supply to it. Both these, for aught that I can see, are one and the same principle: but, as it takes root in minds of different makes, it appears differently, and so is come to be distinguished by different names. That which in a more feeble temper is peevishness, and languidly discharges itself upon every thing which comes in its way; the same principle, in a temper of greater force and stronger passions, becomes rage and fury. In one, the humor discharges itself at once; in the other, it is continually discharging. This is the account of *passion* and *peevishness*, as distinct from each other, and appearing in different persons. It is no objection against the truth of it, that they are both to be seen sometimes in one and the same person.

19. *Abuses of deliberate resentment.* — With respect to deliberate resentment, the chief instances of abuse are: when, from partiality to ourselves, we imagine an injury done us, when there is none: when this partiality represents it to us greater than it really is: when we fall into that extravagant and monstrous kind of resentment, towards one who has innocently been the occasion of evil to us; that is, resentment upon account of pain or inconvenience, without injury; which is the same absurdity, as settled anger at a thing that is inanimate: when the indignation against injury and injustice rises too high, and is beyond proportion to the particular ill action it is exercised upon: or, lastly,

when pain or harm of any kind is inflicted merely in consequence of, and to gratify, that resentment, though naturally raised.

20. *Obstinacy an abuse.*—It would be endless to descend into and explain all the peculiarities of perverseness and wayward humor which might be traced up to this passion. But there is one thing, which so generally belongs to and accompanies all excess and abuse of it, as to require being mentioned: a certain determination, and resolute bent of mind, not to be convinced or set right; though it be ever so plain, that there is no reason for the displeasure, that it was raised merely by error or misunderstanding. In this there is doubtless a great mixture of pride; but there is somewhat more, which I cannot otherwise express, than that resentment has taken possession of the temper and of the mind, and will not quit its hold. It would be too minute to inquire whether this be any thing more than bare obstinacy: it is sufficient to observe, that it, in a very particular manner and degree, belongs to the abuses of this passion.

#### USES OF RESENTMENT.

21. *Indignation a balance to pity.*—But, notwithstanding all these abuses, “Is not just indignation against cruelty and wrong one of the *instruments of death* which the Author of our nature hath provided? Are not cruelty, injustice, and wrong, the natural objects of that indignation? Surely then it may one way or other be innocently employed against them?” True. Since therefore it is necessary for the very subsistence of the world that injury, injustice, and



cruelty should be punished; and since compassion, which is so natural to mankind, would render that execution of justice exceedingly difficult and uneasy; indignation against vice and wickedness is, and may be allowed to be, a balance to that weakness of pity, and also to any thing else which would prevent the necessary methods of severity.

22. *As in punishing crime.* — Those who have never thought upon these subjects, may perhaps not see the weight of this: but let us suppose a person guilty of murder, or any other action of cruelty, and that mankind had naturally no indignation against such wickedness and the authors of it; but that everybody was affected towards such a criminal in the same way as towards an innocent man: compassion, amongst other things, would render the execution of justice exceedingly painful and difficult, and would often quite prevent it. And notwithstanding that the principle of benevolence is denied by some, and is really in a very low degree, that men are in a great measure insensible to the happiness of their fellow-creatures; yet they are not insensible to their misery, but are very strongly moved with it: insomuch that there plainly is occasion for that feeling, which is raised by guilt and demerit, as a balance to that of compassion. Thus much may, I think, justly be allowed to resentment, in the strictest way of moral consideration.

23. *General good influence of the affection.* — The good influence which this passion has in fact upon the affairs of the world, is obvious to every one's notice. Men are plainly restrained from injuring their fellow-creatures by fear of their resentment; and it is very happy that they are so, when they would not be



restrained by a principle of virtue. And after an injury is done, and there is a necessity that the offender should be brought to justice; the cool consideration of reason, that the security and peace of society require examples of justice should be made, might indeed be sufficient to procure laws to be enacted, and sentence passed: but is it that cool reflection in the injured person, which, for the most part, brings the offender to justice? Or is it not resentment and indignation against the injury and the author of it? I am afraid there is no doubt which is commonly the case. This however is to be considered as a good effect, notwithstanding it were much to be wished that men would act from a better principle, reason and cool reflection.

The account now given of the passion of resentment, as distinct from all the abuses of it, may suggest to our thoughts the following reflections:

24. *Indignation a practical proof of virtue.*—First, That vice is indeed of ill desert, and must finally be punished. Why should men dispute concerning the reality of virtue, and whether it be founded in the nature of things, which yet surely is not matter of question; but why should this, I say, be disputed, when every man carries about him this passion, which affords him demonstration, that the rules of justice and equity are to be the guide of his actions? For every man naturally feels an indignation upon seeing instances of villany and baseness, and therefore cannot commit the same without being self-condemned.

25. *Shows the wisdom of God.*—Secondly, That we should learn to be cautious, lest we *charge God foolishly*, by ascribing that to him, or the nature he has

given us, which is owing wholly to our own abuse of it. Men may speak of the degeneracy and corruption of the world, according to the experience they have had of it; but human nature, considered as the divine workmanship, should be treated as sacred: for *in the image of God made he man*. That passion, from whence men take occasion to run into the dreadful vices of malice and revenge; even that passion, as implanted in our nature by God, is not only innocent, but a generous movement of mind. It is in itself, and in its original, no more than indignation against injury and wickedness: that which is the only deformity in the creation, and the only reasonable object of abhorrence and dislike. How manifold evidence have we of the divine wisdom and goodness, when even pain in the natural world, and the passion we have been now considering in the moral, come out instances of it!

## SECTION III.

## FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES.\*

1. *Affections adapted to disorders.*—As God Almighty foresaw the irregularities and disorders, both natural and moral, which would happen in this state of things; he hath graciously made some provision against them, by giving us several passions and affections, which arise from, or whose objects are, those disorders. Of this sort are fear, resentment, compassion,

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\* Part of the ninth sermon at the Rolls; preached from the text, — “Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.”—MATT. 5: 43, 44.

and others; of which there could be no occasion or use in a perfect state: but in the present we should be exposed to greater inconveniences without them; though there are very considerable ones, which they themselves are the occasions of. They are encumbrances indeed, but such as we are obliged to carry about with us, through this various journey of life: some of them as a guard against the violent assaults of others, and in our own defence; some in behalf of others: and all of them to put us upon, and help to carry us through a course of behavior suitable to our condition, in default of that perfection of wisdom and virtue, which would be in all respects our better security.

2. *Forgiveness not inconsistent with just resentment.* — The passion of anger or resentment hath already been largely treated of. It hath been shown that mankind naturally feel some emotion of mind against injury and injustice, whoever are the sufferers by it; and even though the injurious design be prevented from taking effect. Let this be called anger, indignation, resentment, or by whatever name any one shall choose; the thing itself is understood, and is plainly natural. It has likewise been observed, that this natural indignation is generally moderate and low enough in mankind, in each particular man, when the injury which excites it doth not affect himself, or one whom he considers as himself. Therefore the precepts to *forgive*, and to *love our enemies*, do not relate to that general indignation against injury and the authors of it, but to this feeling, or resentment when raised by private or personal injury. But no man could be thought in earnest, who should assert that, though indignation against injury, when others are the sufferers,

is innocent and just; yet the *same indignation* against it, when we ourselves are the sufferers, becomes faulty and blamable. These precepts therefore cannot be understood to forbid this in the latter case, more than in the former. Nay they cannot be understood to forbid this feeling in the latter case, though raised to a higher degree than in the former: because, as was also observed further, from the very constitution of our nature, we cannot but have a greater sensibility to what concerns ourselves. Therefore the precepts in the text, and others of the like import with them, must be understood to forbid only the excess and abuse of this natural feeling, in case of personal and private injury: the chief instances of which excess and abuse have likewise been already remarked; and all of them, excepting that of retaliation, do so plainly in the very terms express somewhat unreasonable, disproportionate, and absurd, as to admit of no pretence or shadow of justification.

3. *What is to be shown.*—But since custom and false honor are on the side of retaliation and revenge, when the resentment is natural and just; and reasons are sometimes offered in justification of revenge in these cases; and since love of our enemies is thought *too hard a saying* to be obeyed: I will show *the absolute unlawfulness of the former; the obligations we are under to the latter*; and then proceed to *some reflections, which may have a more direct and immediate tendency to beget in us a right temper of mind towards those who have offended us.*

#### UNLAWFULNESS OF REVENGE.

4. *To be shown from the reason of the thing.*—In showing the unlawfulness of revenge, it is not my

present design to examine what is alleged in favor of it, from the tyranny of custom and false honor, but only to consider the nature and reason of the thing itself; which ought to have prevented, and ought now to extirpate every thing of that kind.

5. *Anger begets anger.* — First, let us begin with the supposition of that being innocent, which is pleaded for, and which shall be shown to be altogether vicious, the supposition that we were allowed to *render evil for evil*, and see what would be the consequence. Malice or resentment towards any man hath plainly a tendency to beget the same passion in him who is the object of it; and this again increases it in the other. It is of the very nature of this vice to propagate itself, not only by way of example, which it does in common with other vices, but in a peculiar way of its own; for resentment itself, as well as what is done in consequence of it, is the object of resentment: hence it comes to pass, that the first offence, even when so slight as presently to be dropped and forgotten, becomes the occasion of entering into a long intercourse of ill offices: neither is it at all uncommon to see persons, in this progress of strife and variance, change parts; and him, who was at first the injured person, become more injurious and blamable than the aggressor.

6. *Retaliation begets retaliation.* — Put the case then, that the law of retaliation was universally received and allowed as an innocent rule of life, by all; and the observance of it thought by many (and then it would soon come to be thought by all) a point of honor: this supposes every man in private cases to pass sentence in his own cause; and likewise that anger or resentment is to be the judge. Thus, from the numberless



partialities which we all have for ourselves, every one would often think himself injured when he was not: and in most cases would represent an injury as much greater than it really is; the imagined dignity of the person offended would scarce ever fail to magnify the offence. And, if bare retaliation, or returning just the mischief received, always begets resentment in the person upon whom we retaliate, what would that excess do?

7. *And this without limit.* — Add to this, that he likewise has his partialities — there is no going on to represent this scene of rage and madness: it is manifest there would be no bounds, nor any end. *If the beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water*, what would it come to when allowed this free and unrestrained course? *As coals are to burning coals, or wood to fire*; so would these contentious men be to kindle strife. And, since the indulgence of revenge hath manifestly this tendency, and does actually produce these effects in proportion as it is allowed; a passion of so dangerous a nature ought not to be indulged, were there no other reason against it.

8. *Resentment is a painful remedy.* — Secondly, it hath been shown that the passion of resentment was placed in man, upon supposition of, and as a prevention or remedy to, irregularity and disorder. Now whether it be allowed or not, that the passion itself and the gratification of it joined together are painful to the malicious person; it must, however, be so with respect to the person towards whom it is exercised, and upon whom the revenge is taken. Now, if we consider mankind according to that fine allusion of St. Paul, as *one body, and every one members one of another*; it



must be allowed that resentment is, with respect to society, a painful remedy. Thus then the very notion or idea of this passion, as a remedy or prevention of evil, and as in itself a painful means, plainly shows that it ought never to be made use of, but only in order to produce some greater good.

It is to be observed that this argument is not founded upon an allusion or simile; but that it is drawn from the very nature of the passion itself, and the end for which it was given us. We are obliged to make use of words taken from sensible things, to explain what is the most remote from them: and every one sees from whence the words prevention and remedy are taken. But, if you please, let these words be dropped: the thing itself, I suppose, may be expressed without them.

9. *Mankind being a community.*—That mankind is a community, that we all stand in a relation to each other, that there is a public end and interest of society which each particular is obliged to promote, is the sum of morals. Consider then the passion of resentment, as given to this one body, as given to society. Nothing can be more manifest, than that resentment is to be considered as a secondary passion, placed in us upon supposition, upon account of, and with regard to, injury; not, to be sure, to promote and further it, but to render it, and the inconveniences and miseries arising from it, less and fewer than they would be without this passion. It is as manifest that the indulgence of it is, with regard to society, a painful means of obtaining these ends. Considered in itself, it is very undesirable, and what society must very much wish to be without. It is in every instance absolutely an evil in itself, because it implies producing misery: and consequently

must never be indulged or gratified for itself, by any one who considers mankind as a community or family, and himself as a member of it.

10. *Can be gratified only by producing misery.* — Let us now take this in another view. Every natural appetite, passion, and affection may be gratified in particular instances, without being subservient to the particular chief end, for which these several principles were respectively implanted in our nature. And, if neither this end, nor any other moral obligation, be contradicted, such gratification is innocent. Thus, I suppose, there are cases in which each of these principles, this one of resentment excepted, may innocently be gratified, without being subservient to what is the main end of it: that is, though it does not conduce to, yet it may be gratified without contradicting, that end, or any other obligation. But the gratification of resentment, if it be not conducive to the end for which it was given us, must necessarily contradict, not only the general obligation to benevolence, but likewise that particular end itself. The end for which it was given is, to prevent or remedy injury; *i. e.*, the misery occasioned by injury; *i. e.*, misery itself: and the gratification of it consists in producing misery; *i. e.*, in contradicting the end for which it was implanted in our nature.

11. *As revenge, it aims at evil.* — This whole reasoning is built upon the difference there is between this passion and all others. No other principle, or passion, hath for its end the misery of our fellow-creatures. But malice and revenge meditate evil itself; and to do mischief, to be the author of misery, is the very thing which gratifies the passion: this is what it directly

tends towards, as its proper design. Other vices eventually do mischief: this alone aims at it as an end.

12. *Revenge not justified by any good effects.*— Nothing can with reason be urged in justification of revenge, from the good effects which the indulgence of it was before mentioned\* to have upon the affairs of the world; because, though it be a remarkable instance of the wisdom of Providence to bring good out of evil, yet vice is vice to him who is guilty of it. “But suppose these good effects are foreseen:” that is, suppose reason in a particular case leads a man the same way as passion? Why then, to be sure, he should follow his reason, in this as well as in all other cases. So that turn the matter which ever way you will, no more can be allowed to this passion, than what hath been already.\*

#### OBLIGATION TO LOVE OUR ENEMIES.

13. *Forgiveness of injuries is love of enemies.*— As to that love of our enemies, which is commanded; this supposes the general obligation to benevolence or good-will towards mankind: and this being supposed, that precept is no more than to forgive injuries; that is, to keep clear of those abuses before mentioned: because that we have the habitual temper of benevolence is taken for granted.

14. *Resentment is consistent with good-will.*— Resentment is not inconsistent with good-will; for we often see both together in very high degrees: not only in parents towards their children, but in cases of friend-

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\* Chap. iii. Sect. II: 21, 23.

ship and dependence, where there is no natural relation. These contrary passions, though they may lessen, do not necessarily destroy each other. We may therefore love our enemy, and yet have a resentment against him for his injurious behaviour towards us. But when this resentment entirely destroys our natural benevolence towards him, it is excessive, and becomes malice or revenge. The command to prevent its having this effect, *i.e.*, to forgive injuries, is the same as to love our enemies; because that love is always supposed, unless destroyed by resentment.

15. *Injury does not excuse us from it.*—“But though mankind is the natural object of benevolence, yet may it not be lessened upon vice, *i.e.*, injury?” Allowed: but if every degree of vice or injury must destroy that benevolence, then no man is the object of our love; for no man is without faults.

16. *However great it may be.*—“But if lower instances of injury may lessen our benevolence, why may not higher, or the highest, destroy it?” The answer is obvious. It is not man’s being a social creature, much less his being a moral agent, from whence *alone* our obligations to good-will towards him arise. There is an obligation to it prior to either of these, arising from his being a sensible creature; that is, capable of happiness or misery. Now this obligation cannot be superseded by his moral character.\* What justifies public executions is, not that the guilt or demerit of the criminal dispenses with the obligation of

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\* That is, his capability of right and wrong, and hence of vice and injury. As this higher nature in a being is not an indispensable condition of our good-will towards him, so its perversion cannot release us from the obligation of good-will to him.—ED.

good-will, neither would this justify any severity; but, that his life is inconsistent with the quiet and happiness of the world: that is, a general and more enlarged obligation necessarily destroys a particular and more confined one of the same kind, inconsistent with it. Guilt or injury then does not dispense with or supersede the duty of love and good-will.

17. *And even when we are the sufferers from it.*— Neither does that peculiar regard to ourselves, which was before allowed to be natural\* to mankind, dispense with it: because that can no way innocently heighten our resentment against those who have been injurious to ourselves in particular, any otherwise than as it heightens our sense of the injury or guilt; and guilt, though in the highest degree, does not, as hath been shown, dispense with or supersede the duty of love and good-will.

18. *Self-partiality alone denies this.*— If all this be true, what can a man say who will dispute the reasonableness, or the possibility, of obeying the Divine precept we are now considering? Let him speak out, and it must be thus he will speak. “Mankind, *i.e.*, a creature defective and faulty, is the proper object of good-will, whatever his faults are, when they respect others; but not when they respect me myself.” That men should be *affected* in this manner, and *act* accordingly, is to be accounted for like other vices; but to *assert* that it *ought*, and *must* be thus, is self-partiality possessed of the very understanding.

19. *To love enemies is not rant.*— Thus love to our enemies, and those who have been injurious to us, is so

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\* Chap. iii. Sect. II., 10.



far from being a *rant*, as it has been profanely called, that it is in truth the law of our nature, and what every one must see and own, who is not quite blinded with self-love.

20. *Degree of love to enemies.*—From hence it is easy to see, what is the degree in which we are commanded to love our enemies, or those who have been injurious to us. It were well if it could as easily be reduced to practice. It cannot be imagined, that we are required to love them with any peculiar kind of affection. But suppose the person injured to have a due natural sense of the injury, and no more; he ought to be affected towards the injurious person in the same way any good men, uninterested in the case, would be; if they had the same just sense, which we have supposed the injured person to have, of the fault: after which there will yet remain real good-will towards the offender.

21. *All this is reasonable.*—Now what is there in all this, which should be thought impracticable? I am sure there is nothing in it unreasonable. It is indeed no more than that we should not indulge a passion, which, if generally indulged, would propagate itself so as almost to lay waste the world: that we should suppress that partial, that false self-love, which is the weakness of our nature: that uneasiness and misery should not be produced, without any good purpose to be served by it: and that we should not be affected towards persons differently from what their nature and character require.



## SECTION IV.

## THE LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOR.\*

1. *Different senses of the precept.*— This precept, in its first delivery by our Saviour, is thus introduced: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength; and thy neighbor as thyself.* These very different manners of expression do not lead our thoughts to the same measure or degree of love common to both objects; but to one, peculiar to each. Supposing then, which is to be supposed, a distinct meaning and propriety in the words, *as thyself*; the precept we are considering will admit of any of these senses: that we bear the *same kind* of affection to our neighbor as we do to ourselves: or, that the love we bear to our neighbor should have *some certain proportion or other* to self-love: or, lastly, that it should bear the particular proportion of *equality*, that *it be in the same degree.*

2. *The love must be of the same kind.*— First, the precept may be understood as requiring only that we have the *same kind* of affection to our fellow-creatures as to ourselves: that, as every man has the principle of self-love, which disposes him to avoid misery, and consult his own happiness, so we should cultivate the affection of good-will to our neighbor, and that it should influence us to have the same kind of regard to him. This at least must be commanded: and this will not only prevent our being injurious to him, but will also put us upon promoting his good. There are bless-

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\* Part of the twelfth sermon at the Rolls; preached from the text,—  
 “And if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”—Rom. 13: 9.

ings in life which we share in common with others; peace, plenty, freedom, healthful seasons. But real benevolence to our fellow-creatures would give us the notion of a common interest in a stricter sense: for in the degree we love another, his interest, his joys and sorrows, are our own. It is from self-love that we form the notion of private good, and consider it as our own: love of our neighbor would teach us thus to appropriate to ourselves his good and welfare; to consider ourselves as having a real share in his happiness. Thus the principle of benevolence would be an advocate within our own breasts, to take care of the interests of our fellow-creatures in all the interfering and competitions which cannot but be, from the imperfection of our nature, and the state we are in. It would likewise, in some measure, lessen that interfering; and hinder men from forming so strong a notion of private good, exclusive of the good of others, as we commonly do. Thus, as the private affection makes us in a peculiar manner sensible of humanity, justice, or injustice, when exercised towards ourselves; love of our neighbor would give us the same kind of sensibility in his behalf. This would be the greatest security of our uniform obedience to that most equitable rule; *Whatever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.*

3. *This is a right temper.*— All this is, indeed, no more than that we should have a real love to our neighbor: but then, which is to be observed, the words *as thyself*, express this in the most distinct manner, and determine the precept to relate to the affection itself. The advantage which this principle of benevolence has over other remote considerations is, that it is itself the

temper of virtue; and likewise, that it is the chief, nay, the only effectual security of our performing the several offices of kindness we owe to our fellow-creatures. When from distant considerations men resolve upon any thing to which they have no liking, or perhaps an averseness, they are perpetually finding out evasions and excuses; which need never be wanting if people look for them: and they equivocate with themselves in the plainest cases in the world. This may be in respect to single determinate acts of virtue: but it comes in much more where the obligation is to a general course of behavior; and most of all, if it be such as cannot be reduced to fixed determinate rules. This observation may account for the diversity of the expression in that known passage of the prophet Micah: *to do justly, and to love mercy*. A man's heart must be formed to humanity and benevolence, he must *love mercy*, otherwise he will not act mercifully in any settled course of behavior. As consideration of the future sanctions of religion is our only security of persevering in our duty, in cases of great temptations: so to get our heart and temper formed to a love and liking of what is good, is absolutely necessary in order to our behaving rightly in the familiar and daily intercourses amongst mankind.

4. *Our love of others must bear a certain proportion to self-love.* — Secondly, the precept before us may be understood to require that we love our neighbor in some certain *proportion* or other, *according as* we love ourselves. And, indeed, a man's character can not be determined by the love he bears to his neighbor, considered absolutely: but the proportion which this bears to self-love, whether it be attended to or not, is the

chief thing which forms the character, and influences the actions. For, as the form of the body is a composition of various parts; so likewise our inward structure is not simple or uniform, but a composition of various passions, appetites, affections, together with rationality; including in this last both the discernment of what is right, and a disposition to regulate ourselves by it. There is greater variety of parts in what we call a character, than there are features in a face; and the morality of that is no more determined by one part than the beauty or deformity of this is by one single feature: each is to be judged of by all the parts or features, not taken singly, but together. In the inward frame the various passions, appetites, affections, stand in different respects to each other. The principles in our mind may be contradictory, or checks and allays only, or incentives and assistants to each other. And principles, which in their nature have no kind of contrariety or affinity, may yet accidentally be each other's allays or incentives.

5. *The proportion of affections to be considered.*— From hence it comes to pass, that though we were able to look into the inward contexture of the heart, and see with the greatest exactness in what degree any one principle is in a particular man; we could not from thence determine how far that principle would go towards forming the character, or what influence it would have upon the actions, unless we could likewise discern what other principles prevailed in him, and see the proportion which that one bears to the others. Thus, though two men should have the affection of compassion in the same degree exactly, yet one may have the principle of resentment, or of ambition, so

strong in him, as to prevail over that of compassion, and prevent its having any influence upon his actions; so that he may deserve the character of a hard or cruel man: whereas the other having compassion in just the same degree only, yet having resentment or ambition in a lower degree, his compassion may prevail over them, so as to influence his actions, and to denominate his temper compassionate. So that, how strange soever it may appear to people who do not attend to the thing, yet it is quite manifest, that, when we say one man is more resenting or compassionate than another, this does not necessarily imply that one has the principle of resentment or of compassion stronger than the other. For if the proportion which resentment or compassion bears to other inward principles is greater in one than in the other; this is itself sufficient to denominate one more resenting or compassionate than the other.

6. *As of self-love and benevolence.*—Further, the whole system, as I may speak, of affections (including rationality), which constitute the heart, as this word is used in Scripture and on moral subjects, are each and all of them stronger in some than in others. Now the proportion which the two general affections, benevolence and self-love, bear to each other, according to this interpretation of the text, denominates men's character as to virtue. Suppose then one man to have the principle of benevolence in an higher degree than another: it will not follow from hence, that his general temper, or character, or actions, will be more benevolent than the other's. For he may have self-love in such a degree as quite to prevail over benevolence; so that it may have no influence at all upon his actions; whereas benevolence in the other person, though in a lower de-



gree, may yet be the strongest principle in his heart; and strong enough to be the guide of his actions, so as to denominate him a good and virtuous man. The case is here as in scales: it is not one weight, considered in itself, which determines whether the scale shall ascend or descend; but this depends upon the proportion which that one weight hath to the other.

7. *Which is implied in the text.* — It being thus manifest that the influence which benevolence has upon our actions, and how far it goes towards forming our character, is not determined by the degree itself of this principle in our mind; but by the proportion it has to self-love and other principles: a comparison also being made in the text between self-love and the love of our neighbor; these joint considerations afforded sufficient occasion for treating here of that proportion: it plainly is implied in the precept, though it should be questioned, whether it be the exact meaning of the words, *as thyself*.

8. *The due proportion to be determined in conduct.* — Love of our neighbor then must bear some proportion to self-love, and virtue to be sure consists in the due proportion. What this due proportion is, whether as a principle in the mind, or as exerted in actions, can be judged of only from our nature and condition in this world. Of the degree in which affections and the principles of action, considered in themselves, prevail, we have no measure: let us then proceed to the course of behavior, the actions they produce.

9. *Provision for ourselves to be limited.* — Both our nature and condition require that each particular man should make particular provision for himself: and the inquiry, what proportion benevolence should have to



self-love when brought down to practice, will be, what is a competent care and provision for ourselves. And how certain soever it be, that each man must determine this for himself; and how ridiculous soever it would be, for any to attempt to determine it for another: yet it is to be observed that the proportion is real; and that a competent provision has a bound; and that it cannot be all which we can possibly get and keep within our grasp without legal injustice. Mankind almost universally bring in vanity, supplies for what is called a life of pleasure, covetousness, or imaginary notions of superiority over others, to determine this question; but every one who desires to act a proper part in society, would do well to consider, how far any of them come in to determine it, in the way of moral consideration. All that can be said is, supposing, what, as the world goes, is so much to be supposed that it is scarce to be mentioned, that persons do not neglect what they really owe to themselves; the more of their care and thought and of their fortune they employ in doing good to their fellow-creatures, the nearer they come up to the law of perfection, *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*

10. *Suppose our affection for ourselves and others, equal.*—Thirdly, If the words, *as thyself*, were to be understood of an equality of affection; it would not be attended with those consequences which perhaps may be thought to follow from it. Suppose a person to have the same settled regard to others, as to himself; that in every deliberate scheme or pursuit he took their interest into the account in the same degree as his own, so far as an equality of affection would produce this; yet he would in fact, and ought to be, much

more taken up and employed about himself, and his own concerns, than about others, and their interests. For, besides the one common affection toward himself and his neighbor, he would have several other particular affections, passions, appetites, which he could not possibly feel in common both for himself and others; now these sensations themselves very much employ us; and have perhaps as great influence as self-love. So far indeed as self-love and cool reflection upon what is for our interest, would set us on work to gain a supply of our own several wants; so far the love of our neighbor would make us do the same for him; but the degree in which we are put upon seeking and making use of the means of gratification, by the feeling of those affections, appetites, and passions, must necessarily be peculiar to ourselves.

11. *There are many affections which we cannot feel for others.* — That there are particular passions (suppose shame, resentment), which men seem to have, and feel in common, both for themselves and others, makes no alteration in respect to those passions and appetites which cannot possibly be thus felt in common. From hence (and perhaps more things of the like kind might be mentioned) it follows, that though there were an equality of affection to both, yet regard to ourselves would be more prevalent than attention to the concerns of others.

12. *We are intrusted with ourselves.* — And from moral considerations it ought to be so, supposing still the equality of affection commanded: because we are in a peculiar manner, as I may speak, intrusted with ourselves; and therefore care of our own interests, as well as of our conduct, particularly belongs to us.

13. *We have a constant perception of our own interest.* — To these things must be added, that moral obligations can extend no further than to natural possibilities. Now we have a perception of our own interests, like consciousness of our own existence, which we always carry about with us; and which, in its continuation, kind, and degree, seems impossible to be felt in respect to the interests of others.

14. *Hence there is no danger of neglecting ourselves.* — From all these things it fully appears, that though we were to love our neighbor in the same degree as we love ourselves, so far as this is possible; yet the care of ourselves, of the individual, would not be neglected; the apprehended danger of which seems to be the only objection against understanding the precept in this strict sense.

15. *Benevolence the whole of virtue.* — I proceed to consider lastly, what is affirmed of the precept now explained, that it comprehends in it all others; *i.e.*, that to love our neighbor as ourselves includes in it all virtues.

Now the way in which every maxim of conduct or general speculative assertion, when it is to be explained at large, should be treated, is, to show what are the particular truths which were designed to be comprehended under such a general observation, how far it is strictly true; and then the limitations, restrictions, and exceptions, if there be exceptions, with which it is to be understood. But it is only the former of these; namely, how far the assertion in the text holds, and the ground of the pre-eminence assigned to the precept of it, which in strictness comes into our consideration.

16. *But is, of course, under the direction of reason.* —

However, in almost every thing that is said, there is somewhat to be understood beyond what is explicitly laid down, and which we of course supply; somewhat, I mean, which would not be commonly called a restriction, or limitation. Thus, when benevolence is said to be the sum of virtue, it is not spoken of as a blind propension, but as a principle in reasonable creatures, and so to be directed by their reason: for reason and reflection come into our notion of a moral agent. And that will lead us to consider distant consequences, as well as the immediate tendency of an action: it will teach us, that the care of some persons, suppose children and families, is particularly committed to our charge by Nature and Providence; as also that there are other circumstances, suppose friendship or former obligations, which require that we do good to some, preferably to others. Reason, considered merely as subservient to benevolence, as assisting to produce the greatest good, will teach us to have particular regard to these relations and circumstances; because it is plainly for the good of the world that they should be regarded. And as there are numberless cases, in which, notwithstanding appearances, we are not competent judges, whether a particular action will upon the whole do good or harm; reason in the same way will teach us to be cautious how we act in these cases of uncertainty. It will suggest to our consideration, which is the safer side; how liable we are to be led wrong by passion and private interest; and what regard is due to laws, and the judgment of mankind. All these things must come into consideration, were it only in order to determine which way of acting is likely to produce the greatest good. Thus, upon supposition

that it were in the strictest sense true, without limitation, that benevolence includes in it all virtues; yet reason must come in as its guide and director, in order to attain its own end, the end of benevolence, the greatest public good. Reason then being thus included, let us now consider the truth of the assertion itself.

17. *Benevolence promotes the happiness of others.*— First, It is manifest that nothing can be of consequence to mankind or any creature, but happiness. This then is all which any person can, in strictness of speaking, be said to have a right to. We can therefore *owe no man any thing*, but only to further and promote his happiness, according to our abilities. And therefore a disposition and endeavor to do good to all with whom we have to do, in the degree and manner which the different relations we stand in to them require, is a discharge of all the obligations we are under to them.

18. *Makes us attend to our social relations.*— As human nature is not one simple uniform thing, but a composition of various parts, body, spirit, appetites, particular passions, and affections: for each of which reasonable self-love would lead men to have due regard, and make suitable provision: so society consists of various parts, to which we stand in different respects and relations; and just benevolence would as surely lead us to have due regard to each of these, and behave as the respective relations require. Reasonable goodwill, and right behavior towards our fellow-creatures, are in a manner the same: only that the former expresseth the principle as it is in the mind; the latter, the principle as it were become external, *i.e.*, exerted in actions.



19. *May promote temperance, etc.*— And so far as temperance, \* sobriety, and moderation in sensual pleasures, and the contrary vices, have any respect to our fellow-creatures, any influence upon their quiet, welfare, and happiness; as they always have a real, and often a near influence upon it; so far it is manifest those virtues may be produced by the love of our neighbor, and that the contrary vices would be prevented by it. Indeed if men's regard to themselves will not restrain them from excess; it may be thought little probable, that their love to others will be sufficient: but the reason is, that their love to others is not, any more than their regard to themselves, just, and in its due degree. There are, however, manifest instances of persons kept sober and temperate from regard to their affairs, and the welfare of those who depend upon them. And it is obvious to every one, that habitual excess, a dissolute course of life, implies a general neglect of the duties we owe towards our friends, our families, and our country.

20. *Hence all virtue may be traced to benevolence.*— From hence it is manifest that the common virtues, and the common vices of mankind, may be traced up to benevolence, or the want of it. And this entitles the precept, *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*, to the pre-eminence given to it; and is a justification of the Apostle's assertion, that all other commandments are comprehended in it; whatever cautions and restrictions † there are, which might require to be considered,

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\* Temperance is used here in the generic sense of *self-control*. In this sense it constitutes one of the four cardinal virtues; which are;— Temperance, Veracity, Justice, and Benevolence. — ED.

† For instance; as we are not competent judges, what is upon the



if we were to state particularly and at length, what is virtue and right behavior in mankind. But,

21. *Benevolence includes all that is good.*— Secondly, It might be added, that in a higher and more general way of consideration, leaving out the particular nature of creatures, and the particular circumstances in which they are placed, benevolence seems in the

whole for the good of the world, there may be other immediate ends appointed us to pursue, besides that one of doing good, or producing happiness. Though the good of the creation be the only end of the Author of it, yet he may have laid us under particular obligations, which we may discern and feel ourselves under, quite distinct from a perception, that the observance or violation of them is for the happiness or misery of our fellow-creatures. And this is in fact the case.

For there are certain dispositions of mind, and certain actions, which are in themselves approved or disapproved by mankind, abstracted from the consideration of their tendency to the happiness or misery of the world : approved or disapproved by reflection, by that principle within, which is the guide of life, the judge of right and wrong. Numberless instances of this kind might be mentioned. There are pieces of treachery, which in themselves appear base and detestable to every one. There are actions, which perhaps can scarce have any other general name given them than indecencies, which yet are odious and shocking to human nature. There is such a thing as meanness, a little mind ; which, as it is quite distinct from incapacity, so it raises a dislike and disapprobation quite different from that contempt, which men are too apt to have, of mere folly.

On the other hand ; what we call greatness of mind is the object of another sort of approbation, than superior understanding. Fidelity, honor, strict justice, are themselves approved in the highest degree, abstracted from the consideration of their tendency.

Now, whether it be thought that each of these are connected with benevolence in our nature, and so may be considered as the same thing with it ; or whether some of them be thought an inferior kind of virtues and vices, somewhat like natural beauties and deformities ; or lastly, plain exceptions to the general rule ; thus much however is certain, that the things now instanced in, and numberless others, are approved or disapproved by mankind in general, in quite another view than as conducive to the happiness or misery of the world.

strictest sense to include in it all that is good and worthy; all that is good, which we have any distinct particular notion of. We have no clear conception of any positive moral attribute in the Supreme Being, but what may be resolved up into goodness. And, if we consider a reasonable creature or moral agent, without regard to the particular relations and circumstances in which he is placed; we cannot conceive any thing else to come in towards determining whether he is to be ranked in a higher or lower class of virtuous beings, but the higher or lower degree in which that principle, and what is manifestly connected with it, prevail in him.

22. *Not excepting piety even.* — That which we more strictly call piety, or the love of God, and which is an essential part of a right temper, some may perhaps imagine no way connected with benevolence: yet surely they must be connected, if there be indeed in being an object infinitely good. Human nature is so constituted, that every good affection implies the love of itself; *i.e.*, becomes the object of a new affection in the same person. Thus, to be righteous, implies in it the love of righteousness; to be benevolent, the love of benevolence; to be good, the love of goodness; whether this righteousness, benevolence, or goodness, be viewed as in our own mind, or in another's: and the love of God as a being perfectly good, is the love of perfect goodness contemplated in a being or person. Thus morality and religion, virtue and piety, will at last necessarily coincide, run up into one and the same point, and *love* will be in all senses *the end of the commandment*.

## SECTION V.

## THE LOVE OF GOD.\*

1. *Affections rest in their appropriate objects as reason does in truth.*—As mankind have a faculty by which they discern speculative truth; so we have various affections towards external objects. Understanding and temper, reason and affection, are as distinct ideas, as reason and hunger; and one would think could no more be confounded. It is by reason that we get the ideas of several objects of our affections: but in these cases reason and affection are no more the same than sight of a particular object, and the pleasure or uneasiness consequent thereupon, are the same. Now, as reason tends to and rests in the discernment of truth, the object of it; so the very nature of affection consists in tending towards, and resting in, its objects as an end.

2. *When a thing is done not for itself, but for something else, the latter is the object of the affection.*—We do indeed often in common language say, that things are loved, desired, esteemed, not for themselves, but for somewhat further, somewhat out of and beyond them: yet, in these cases, whoever will attend will see that these things are not in reality the objects of the affections, *i. e.*, are not loved, desired, esteemed, but the somewhat further and beyond them. If we have no affections which rest in what are called their objects, then what is called affection, love, desire, hope, in hu-

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\* Consisting of portions of the thirteenth and fourteenth sermons at the Rolls; preached from the text, — “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”—MATT. 22; 37.

man nature, is only an uneasiness in being at rest; an unquiet disposition to action, progress, pursuit, without end or meaning. But if there be any such thing as delight in the company of one person rather than of another; whether in the way of friendship, or mirth and entertainment, it is all one, if it be without respect to fortune, honor, or increasing our stores of knowledge, or any thing beyond the present time; here is an instance of an affection absolutely resting in its objects as its end, and being gratified in the same way as the appetite of hunger is satisfied with food.

3. *The advantage of an affection is in its exercise.*— Yet nothing is more common than to hear it asked, what advantage a man hath in such a course, suppose of study, particular friendships, or in any other; nothing, I say, is more common than to hear such a question put in a way which supposes no gain, advantage, or interest, but as a means to somewhat further: and if so, then there is no such thing at all as real interest, gain, or advantage. This is the same absurdity with respect to life, as infinite series of effects without a cause is in speculation. The gain, advantage, or interest consists in the delight itself, arising from such a faculty's having its object: neither is there any such thing as happiness or enjoyment, but what arises from hence. The pleasures of hope and of reflection are not exceptions: the former being only this happiness anticipated; the latter, the same happiness enjoyed over again after its time. And even the general expectation of future happiness can afford satisfaction only as it is a present object to the principle of self-love.

4. *If in the present life our happiness is in the pursuit, it must be in the possession in the life to come.*— It was

doubtless intended that life should be very much a pursuit to the gross of mankind. But this is carried so much further than is reasonable, that what gives immediate satisfaction, *i. e.*, our present interest, is scarce considered as our interest at all. It is inventions which have only a remote tendency towards enjoyment, perhaps but a remote tendency towards gaining the means only of enjoyment, which are chiefly spoken of as useful to the world. And though this way of thinking were just with respect to the imperfect state we are now in, where we know so little of satisfaction without satiety; yet it must be guarded against when we are considering the happiness of a state of perfection; which happiness being enjoyment, and not hope, must necessarily consist in this, that our affections have their objects, and rest in those objects as an end, *i. e.*, be satisfied with them. This will further appear in the sequel of this discourse.

5. *Being good implies the love of goodness.* — Of the several affections, or inward sensations, which particular objects excite in man, there are some, the having of which implies the love of them, when they are reflected upon.\* This cannot be said of all our affections, principles, and motives of action. It were ridiculous to assert that a man upon reflection hath the same kind of approbation of the appetite of hunger, or the passion of fear, as he hath of good-will to his fellow-crea-

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\* St. Austin observes, *Amor ipse ordinate amandus est, quo bene amatur quod amandum est, ut sit in nobis virtus qua vivitur bene. i. e. The affection which we rightly have for what is lovely, must (ordinate justly, in due manner and proportion) become the object of a new affection, or be itself beloved, in order to our being endued with that virtue which is the principle of a good life.* Civ. Dei. l. xv. c. 22.



tures. To be a just, a good, a righteous man, plainly carries with it a peculiar affection to our love of justice, goodness, righteousness, when these principles are the objects of contemplation. Now if a man approves of, or hath an affection to, any principle in and for itself, incidental things allowed for, it will be the same whether he views it in his own mind or in another; in himself or in his neighbor. This is the account of our approbation of, our moral love and affection to good characters; which cannot but be in those who have any degrees of real goodness in themselves, and who discern and take notice of the same principle in others.

6. *We may conceive and love ideal goodness.* — From observation of what passes within ourselves, our own actions, and the behavior of others, the mind may carry on its reflections as far as it pleases; much beyond what we experience in ourselves, or discern in our fellow-creatures. It may go on and consider goodness as become an uniform continued principle of action, as conducted by reason, and forming a temper and character absolutely good and perfect, which is in a higher sense excellent, and proportionably the object of love and approbation.

7. *Suppose such a human character.* — Let us then suppose a creature perfect according to his created nature: let his form be human, and his capacities no more than equal to those of the chief of men: goodness shall be his proper character, with wisdom to direct it, and power within some certain determined sphere of action to exert it: but goodness must be the simple actuating principle within him; this being the moral quality which is amiable, or the immediate object of love as distinct from other affections of appro-



bation. Here then is a finite object for our mind to tend towards, to exercise itself upon: a creature, perfect according to his capacity, fixed, steady, equally unmoved by weak pity or more weak fury and resentment; forming the justest scheme of conduct: going on undisturbed in the execution of it, through the several methods of severity and reward, towards his end, namely, the general happiness of all with whom he hath to do, as in itself right and valuable.

8. *Such a character must excite our love.*— This character, though uniform in itself, in its principle, yet exerting itself in different ways, or considered in different views, may by its appearing variety move different affections. Thus the severity of justice would not affect us in the same way as an act of mercy: the adventitious qualities of wisdom and power may be considered in themselves: and even the strength of mind, which this immovable goodness supposes, may likewise be viewed as an object of contemplation, distinct from the goodness itself. Superior excellence of any kind, as well as superior wisdom and power, is the object of awe and reverence to all creatures, whatever their moral character be: but so far as creatures of the lowest rank were good, so far the view of this character, as simply good, must appear amiable to them, be the object of, or beget, love.

9. *Epecially if considered as friendly to us.*— Further, suppose we were conscious, that this superior person so far approved of us, that we had nothing servilely to fear from him; that he was really our friend, and kind and good to us in particular, as he had occasionally intercourse with us: we must be other creatures than we are, or we could not but feel the same kind of

satisfaction and enjoyment (whatever would be the degree of it) from this higher acquaintance and friendship, as we feel from common ones; the intercourse being real, and the persons equally present, in both cases. We should have a more ardent desire to be approved by his better judgment, and a satisfaction in that approbation of the same sort with what would be felt in respect to common persons, or be wrought in us by their presence.

10. *Still more if considered our guardian and governor.*—Let us now raise the character, and suppose this creature, for we are still going on with the supposition of a creature, our proper guardian and governor; that we were in a progress of being towards somewhat further; and that his scheme of government was too vast for our capacities to comprehend: remembering still that he is perfectly good, and our friend as well as our governor. Wisdom, power, goodness, accidentally viewed anywhere, would inspire reverence, awe, love: and as these affections would be raised in higher or lower degrees, in proportion as we had occasionally more or less intercourse with the creature endued with those qualities; so this further consideration and knowledge, that he was our proper guardian and governor, would much more bring these objects and qualities home to ourselves; teach us they had a greater respect to us in particular, that we had an higher interest in that wisdom and power and goodness. We should, with joy, gratitude, reverence, love, trust, and dependence, appropriate the character, as what we had a right in; and make our boast in such our relation to it. And the conclusion of the whole would be, that we should refer ourselves implicitly to him, and cast our-

selves entirely upon him. As the whole attention of life should be to obey his commands; so the highest enjoyment of it must arise from the contemplation of this character, and our relation to it, from a consciousness of his favor and approbation, and from the exercise of those affections towards him which could not but be raised from his presence. A Being who hath these attributes, who stands in this relation, and is thus sensibly present to the mind, must necessarily be the object of these affections: there is as real a correspondence between them, as between the lowest appetite of sense and its object.

11. *That this Being is God, and invisible, alters not the case.* — That this Being is not a creature, but the Almighty God; that he is of infinite power and wisdom and goodness, does not render him less the object of reverence and love, than he would be if he had those attributes only in a limited degree. The Being who made us, and upon whom we entirely depend, is the object of some regards. He hath given us certain affections of mind, which correspond to wisdom, power, goodness; *i.e.*, which are raised upon view of those qualities. If then he be really wise, powerful, good; he is the natural object of those affections, which he hath endued us with, and which correspond to those attributes. That he is infinite in power, perfect in wisdom and goodness, makes no alteration, but only that he is the object of those affections raised to the highest pitch. He is not indeed to be discerned by any of our senses. *I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him. O*

*that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!*\* But is he then afar off? does he not fill heaven and earth with his presence? The presence of our fellow-creatures affects our senses, and our senses give us the knowledge of their presence; which hath different kinds of influence upon us; love, joy, sorrow, restraint, encouragement, reverence. However, this influence is not immediately from our senses, but from that knowledge. Thus suppose a person neither to see nor hear another, not to know by any of his senses, but yet certainly to know, that another was with him; this knowledge might, and in many cases would, have one or more of the effects before mentioned.

12. *It is natural that we should be affected by such a presence.*—It is therefore not only reasonable, but also natural, to be affected with a presence, though it be not the object of our senses: whether it be, or be not, is merely an accidental circumstance, which needs not come into consideration: it is the certainty that he is with us, and we with him, which hath the influence. We consider persons then as present, not only when they are within reach of our senses, but also when we are assured by any other means that they are within such a nearness; nay, if they are not, we can recall them to our mind, and be moved towards them as present: and must He, who is so much more intimately with us, that *in him we live and move and have our being*, be thought too distant to be the object of our affections? We own and feel the force of amiable and worthy qualities in our fellow-creatures: and can we be insen-

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\* Job, 23.

sible to the contemplation of perfect goodness? Do we reverence the shadows of greatness here below, are we solicitous about honor and esteem and the opinion of the world: and shall we not feel the same with respect to him, whose are wisdom and power in their original, who *is the God of judgment by whom actions are weighed?* Thus love, reverence, desire of esteem, every faculty, every affection, tends towards, and is employed about its respective object, in common cases: and must the exercise of them be suspended with regard to him alone, who is an object, an infinitely more than adequate object, to our most exalted faculties; him, *of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things?*

13. *Religion does not demand new affections, but the direction of what we already have.*—As we cannot remove from this earth, or change our general business on it, so neither can we alter our real nature. Therefore no exercise of the mind can be recommended, but only the exercise of those faculties you are conscious of. Religion does not demand new affections, but only claims the direction of those you already have, those affections you daily feel; though unhappily confined to objects, not altogether unsuitable, but altogether unequal to them. We only represent to you the higher, the adequate objects of those very faculties and affections. Let the man of ambition go on still to consider disgrace as the greatest evil; honor as his chief good. But disgrace in whose estimation? Honor in whose judgment? This is the only question. If shame, and delight in esteem, be spoken of as real, as any settled ground of pain or pleasure; both these must be in proportion to the supposed wisdom and worth of him, by



whom we are contemned or esteemed. Must it then be thought enthusiastical to speak of a sensibility of this sort, which shall have respect to an unerring judgment, to infinite wisdom; when we are assured this unerring judgment, this infinite wisdom, does observe upon our actions?

14. *It is thus with the love of God.* — It is the same with respect to the love of God in the strictest and most confined sense. We only offer and represent the highest object of an affection, supposed already in your mind. Some degree of goodness must be previously supposed: this always implies the love of itself, an affection to goodness: the highest, the adequate object of this affection is, perfect goodness: which therefore we are to *love with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength.*

15. *Nor do we thus forget our own interest.* — “Must we then, forgetting our own interest, as it were go out of ourselves, and love God for his own sake?” No more forget your own interest, no more go out of yourselves, than when you prefer one place, one prospect, the conversation of one man to that of another. Does not every affection necessarily imply that the object of it be itself loved? If it be not, it is not the object of the affection. You may and ought if you can, but it is a great mistake to think you can love or fear or hate any thing, from consideration that such love or fear or hatred may be a means of obtaining good or avoiding evil. But the question, whether we ought to love God for his sake or for our own, being a mere mistake in language; the real question, which this is mistaken for will, I suppose, be answered by observing that the goodness of God already exercised towards us, our pres-

ent dependence upon him, and our expectation of future benefits, ought, and have a natural tendency, to beget in us the affection of gratitude, and greater love towards him, than the same goodness exercised towards others : were it only for this reason, that every affection is moved in proportion to the sense we have of the object of it ; and we cannot but have a more lively sense of goodness, when exercised towards ourselves, than when exercised towards others.' I added expectation of future benefits, because the ground of that expectation is present goodness.

16. *God is the natural object of the several religious affections.* — Thus Almighty God is the natural object of the several affections, love, reverence, fear, desire of approbation. For though he is simply one, yet we cannot but consider him in partial and different views. He is in himself one uniform being, and forever the same without *variableness or shadow of turning* : but his infinite greatness, his goodness, his wisdom, are different objects to our mind. To which is to be added, that from the changes in our own characters, together with his unchangeableness, we cannot but consider ourselves as more or less the objects of his approbation, and really be so. For if he approves what is good, he cannot, merely from the unchangeableness of his nature, approve what is evil. Hence must arise more various movements of mind, more different kinds of affections. And this greater variety also is just and reasonable in such creatures as we are, though it respects a Being simply one, good and perfect. As some of these affections are most particularly suitable to so imperfect a creature as man, in this mortal state we are passing through ; so there may be other exercises of

mind, or some of these in higher degrees, our employment and happiness in a state of perfection.

17. *Man is conscious of wants which nothing earthly can fill.*— Let us then suppose a man entirely disengaged from business and pleasure, sitting down alone and at leisure, to reflect upon himself and his own condition of being. He would immediately feel that he was by no means complete of himself, but totally insufficient for his own happiness. One may venture to affirm, that every man hath felt this, whether he hath again reflected upon it or not. It is feeling this deficiency, that they are unsatisfied with themselves, which makes men look out for assistance from abroad; and which has given rise to various kinds of amusements altogether needless any otherwise than as they serve to fill up the blank spaces of time, and so hinder their feeling this deficiency, and being uneasy with themselves.

Now, if these external things we take up with were really an adequate supply to this deficiency of human nature, if by their means our capacities and desires were all satisfied and filled up; then it might be truly said, that we had found out the proper happiness of man; and so might sit down satisfied, and be at rest in the enjoyment of it. But if it appears, that the amusements, which men usually pass their time in, are so far from coming up to or answering our notions and desires of happiness, or good, that they are really no more than what they are commonly called, somewhat to pass away the time; *i.e.*, somewhat which serves to turn us aside from, and prevent our attending to, this our internal poverty and want; if they serve only, or chiefly, to suspend, instead of satisfying our concep-

tions and desires of happiness; if the want remains, and we have found out little more than barely the means of making it less sensible, then are we still to seek for somewhat to be an adequate supply to it.

18. *God alone can satisfy them.*—It is plain that there is a capacity in the nature of man, which neither riches, nor honors, nor sensual gratifications, nor any thing in this world can perfectly fill up, or satisfy: there is a deeper and more essential want than any of these things can be the supply of. Yet surely there is a possibility of somewhat, which may fill up all our capacities of happiness; somewhat in which our souls may find rest; somewhat which may be to us that satisfactory good we are inquiring after. But it cannot be any thing which is valuable only as it tends to some further end. Those, therefore, who have got this world so much into their hearts, as not to be able to consider happiness as consisting in any thing but property and possessions, which are only valuable as the means to somewhat else, cannot have the least glimpse of the subject before us; which is the end, not the means; the thing itself, not somewhat in order to it. But if you can lay aside that general, confused, undeterminate notion of happiness, as consisting in such possessions; and fix in your thoughts that it really can consist in nothing but in a faculty's having its proper object; you will clearly see, that in the coolest way of consideration, without either the heat of fanciful enthusiasm, or the warmth of real devotion, nothing is more certain than that an infinite Being may himself be, if he pleases, the supply to all the capacities of our nature. All the common enjoyments of life are from the faculties he hath endued us with, and the objects he hath

made suitable to them. He may himself be to us infinitely more than all these: he may be to us all that we want. As our understanding can contemplate itself, and our affections be exercised upon themselves by reflection, so may each be employed in the same manner upon any other mind: and since the supreme Mind, the Author and Cause of all things, is the highest possible object to himself, he may be an adequate supply to all the faculties of our souls; a subject to our understanding, and an object to our affections.

19. *The same wants must continue in another state.* — Consider then, when we shall have put off this mortal body, when we shall be divested of sensual appetites, and those possessions, which are now the means of gratification, shall be of no avail; when this restless scene of business and vain pleasures, which now diverts us from ourselves, shall be all over, we, our proper self, shall still remain: we shall still continue the same creatures we are, with wants to be supplied, and capacities of happiness. We must have faculties of perception, though not sensitive ones; and pleasure or uneasiness from our perceptions, as now we have.

20. *Our love of order, etc., may be gratified in God.* — There are certain ideas which we express by the words *order, harmony, proportion, beauty*, the furthest removed from any thing sensual. Now what is there in those intellectual images, forms, or ideas, which begets that approbation, love, delight, and even rapture, which is seen in some person's faces upon having those objects present to their minds? — “Mere enthusiasm!” — Be it what it will, there are objects, works of nature and of art, which all mankind have delight from, quite



distinct from their affording gratification to sensual appetites; and from quite another view of them, than as being for their interest and further advantage. The faculties from which we are capable of these pleasures, and the pleasures themselves, are as natural and as much to be accounted for, as any sensual appetite whatever, and the pleasure from its gratification. Words, to be sure, are wanting upon this subject: to say that every thing of grace and beauty throughout the whole of nature, every thing excellent and amiable shared in differently lower degrees by the whole creation, meet in the Author and Cause of all things; this is an inadequate, and perhaps improper way of speaking of the Divine nature: but it is manifest that absolute rectitude, the perfection of being, must be in all senses, and in every respect, the highest object to the mind.

21. *The attributes and being of God may hereafter be directly contemplated.* — In this world it is only the effects of wisdom, and power, and greatness, which we discern: it is not impossible that hereafter the qualities themselves, in the Supreme Being, may be the immediate object of contemplation. What amazing wonders are opened to view by late improvements! What an object is the universe to a creature, if there be a creature who can comprehend its system! But it must be an infinitely higher exercise of the understanding, to view the scheme of it in that mind which projected it, before its foundations were laid. And surely we have meaning to the words, when we speak of going further; and viewing, not only this system in his mind, but the wisdom and intelligence itself from whence it proceeded. The same may be said of power. But since

wisdom and power are not God, he is a wise, a powerful Being; the Divine nature may therefore be a further object to the understanding. It is nothing to observe that our senses give us but an imperfect knowledge of things: effects themselves, if we knew them thoroughly, would give us but imperfect notions of wisdom and power; much less of his Being, in whom they reside. I am not speaking of any fanciful notion of seeing all things in God; but only representing to you how much an higher object to the understanding an infinite Being himself is, than the things which he has made: and this is no more than saying, that the Creator is superior to the works of his hands.

22. *This illustrated.* — This may be illustrated by a low example. Suppose a machine, the sight of which would raise, and discoveries in its contrivance gratify, our curiosity: the real delight in this case would arise from its being the effect of skill and contrivance. This skill in the mind of the artificer would be a higher object, if we had any senses or ways to discern it. For, observe, the contemplation of that principle, faculty, or power which produced any effect, must be a higher exercise of the understanding, than the contemplation of the effect itself. The cause must be a higher object to the mind than the effect.

23. *But the contemplation of goodness is our chief good.* — But whoever considers distinctly what the delight of knowledge is, will see reason to be satisfied that it cannot be the chief good of man: all this, as it is applicable, so it was mentioned with regard to the attribute of goodness. I say goodness. Our being and all our enjoyments are the effects of it: just men bear its resemblance: but how little do we know of the original, of what it is in itself? Recall what was

before observed concerning the affection to moral characters; which, in how low a degree soever, yet is plainly natural to man, and the most excellent part of his nature: suppose this improved, as it may be improved, to any degree whatever, in the *spirits of just men made perfect*; and then suppose that they had a real view of that *righteousness which is an everlasting righteousness*; of the conformity of the Divine will to the *law of truth*, in which the moral attributes of God consist; of that goodness in the sovereign Mind which gave birth to the universe: add, what will be true of all good men hereafter, a consciousness of having an interest in what they are contemplating; suppose them able to say, *This God is our God forever and ever*: would they be any longer to seek for what was their chief happiness, their final good? Could the utmost stretch of their capacities look further? Would not infinite perfect goodness be their very end, the last end and object of their affections; beyond which they could neither have, nor desire; beyond which they could not form a wish or thought?

24. *All this may be realized in the presence of God, in another world.* — Consider wherein that presence of a friend consists, which has often so strong an effect as wholly to possess the mind, and entirely suspend all other affections and regards; and which itself affords the highest satisfaction and enjoyment. He is within reach of the senses. Now, as our capacities of perception improve, we shall have, perhaps, by some faculty entirely new, a perception of God's presence with us in a nearer and stricter way; since it is certain he is more intimately present with us than any thing else can be. Proof of the existence and presence of any being is quite different from the immediate percep-

tion, the consciousness of it. What then will be the joy of heart which his presence, and *the light of his countenance*, who is the life of the universe, will inspire good men with, when they shall have a sensation that he is the sustainer of their being, that they exist in him; when they shall feel his influence to cheer and enliven and support their frame in a manner of which we have now no conception? He will be in a literal sense *their strength and their portion forever*.

25. *It is warranted by Scripture.*—When we speak of things so much above our comprehension, as the employment and happiness of a future state, doubtless it behooves us to speak with all modesty and distrust of ourselves. But the Scripture represents the happiness of that state under the notions of *seeing God, seeing him as he is, knowing as we are known, and seeing face to face*. These words are not general or undetermined, but express a particular determinate happiness. And I will be bold to say, that nothing can account for, or come up to these expressions, but only this, that God himself will be an object to our faculties, that he himself will be our happiness; as distinguished from the enjoyments of the present state, which seem to arise, not immediately from him, but from the objects he has adapted to give us delight.

26. *Conclusion.*—To conclude: Let us suppose a person tired with care and sorrow, and the repetition of vain delights, which fill up the round of life; sensible that every thing here below in its best estate is altogether vanity. Suppose him to feel that deficiency of human nature, before taken notice of; and to be convinced that God alone was the adequate supply to it. What could be more applicable to a good man in this

state of mind; or better express his present wants and distant hopes, his passage through this world as a progress towards a state of perfection, than the following passages in the devotions of the royal prophet? They are plainly in an higher and more proper sense applicable to this than they could be to any thing else. *I have seen an end of all perfection. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever. Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after thee, O God. My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God: when shall I come to appear before him? How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! and the children of men shall put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be satisfied with the plenteousness of thy house: and thou shalt give them drink of thy pleasures, as out of the river. For with thee is the well of life: and in thy light shall we see light. Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and receivest into thee: he shall dwell in thy court, and shall be satisfied with the pleasures of thy house, even of thy holy temple. Blessed is the people, O Lord, that can rejoice in thee: they shall walk in the light of thy countenance. Their delight shall be daily in thy name, and in thy righteousness shall they make their boast. For thou art the glory of their strength: and in thy loving kindness they shall be exalted. As for me, I will behold thy presence in righteousness: and when I awake up after thy likeness I shall be satisfied with it. Thou shalt show me the path of life; in thy presence is the fullness of joy, and at thy right hand there is pleasure for evermore.*



## APPENDIX.

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### BUTLER AND PALEY AS MORALISTS.

[From Dr. Whewell's edition of the "Three Sermons on Human Nature."]

THE points of opposition between Butler and Paley are obvious enough. Paley declares his intention (B. I., c. vi.) to omit the "usual declamation" on the dignity and capacity of our nature; the superiority of the soul to the body, of the rational to the animal part of our constitution; upon the worthiness, refinement, and delicacy of some satisfactions, or the meanness, grossness, and sensuality of others. Butler, on the contrary, teaches that there *is* a difference of *kind* among our principles of action, which is quite distinct from their difference of strength; that reason was intended to control animal appetite, and that the law of man's nature is violated when the contrary takes place. Paley teaches us to judge of the merit of actions by the advantages to which they lead; Butler teaches that good desert and ill desert are something else than mere tendencies to the advantage and disadvantage of society. Paley makes virtue depend upon the consequences of our actions: Butler makes it depend upon the due operation of the moral constitution. Paley is the moralist of utility; Butler, of conscience.

We must take care, however, that we do not press the antithesis of the two moralists too far; especially as both of them have, by their mode of writing, given openings for misapprehensions. Paley, aiming above all things to say what was lucid and what was practical, often selects modes of expression which violate the habits of previous moral writers, for the very

reason that they do so ; as in the passage just quoted, when he calls it " declamation," to speak of the dignity and capacity of our nature, the superiority of the soul to the body, of the rational to the animal part of our nature ; adding, " I hold that pleasures differ in nothing but in continuance and intensity." So also in his declaration that " whatever is expedient is right." Such expressions as this last, if taken in the usual sense of the words, are altogether immoral ; since they acknowledge no necessary moral superiority of truth over falsehood, or kindness over cruelty ; and the preceding tenet, recognizing no necessary superiority of human pleasures over those of animals, might be called brutish. Yet Paley's own right feeling leads him to explain away the greater part of that which is vicious and debasing in these expressions. He had no turn for speculative morality ; and the errors of his fundamental principles are compensated by other errors in applying them and reasoning from them, so that most of his practical conclusions admit of a harmless sense ; although there is likely to remain, in the mind of his readers, a pernicious influence, produced by his disparaging rejection of so many of the most familiar and significant forms in which the moral convictions of all ages have been expressed.

If Butler's mode of speaking of Conscience may possibly place him more entirely in opposition to Paley than his real view does ; on the other hand, his doctrines may appear to approach more nearly to Paley's than is their true position, in consequence of his speaking of Virtue sometimes as identical, in the main, with the pursuit of our real happiness, and sometimes as tending to promote in the greatest degree the happiness of mankind. Thus [C. I., S. III. 8.] he employs himself in showing that if we seek happiness, we shall find virtue the best way to it, and asserts that self-love generally coincides with virtue. And in other places, he makes the like assertions or concessions. Thus in his eleventh sermon, [C. I., S. IV. 32] he says, " It may be allowed without any prejudice to the cause of virtue and religion, that our ideas of happiness

and misery are of all our ideas the nearest and most important to us; that they will, nay, if you please, that they *ought* to prevail over those of order and beauty and harmony and proportion, if there ever should be, *as it is impossible there ever should be*, any inconsistency between them;—though these last two [that is, order and beauty and harmony and proportion], as expressing the fitness of action, are *as real as truth itself*." The passages which I have marked in italics show how far Butler is from giving up our internal standard of virtue, when he acknowledges its ultimate coincidence with the pursuit of happiness; yet an adherent of Paley, by omitting these notices of Butler's real opinion, might assert an agreement between the two writers. And in the next sentence, he again says, "Let it be allowed, *though virtue or moral rectitude does indeed consist in affection to, and pursuit of, what is right and good, as such*; yet that when we sit down in a cool hour, we can neither justify to ourselves this or any other pursuit, till we are convinced that it will be for our happiness, or at least not contrary to it."

The agreement in the results of two systems of morality, constructed by two thoughtful and virtuous men, is what we might naturally look for: and a very little attention will suffice to show how it comes to pass that Butler so readily assents to a formula which is mainly characteristic of a school very different from his: although it is true, that the use of this formula, as the motto of a school, has become much more distinct and frequent since Butler's time. But Butler, in asserting that virtue is the right road to happiness, asserted what was in entire consonance with his own more peculiar doctrine, that virtue consists in the right operation of man's internal constitution; because Butler necessarily includes, in his idea of happiness, the tranquillity and peace of mind and satisfaction which arises from a harmonious operation of man's inward faculties and principles. He may well allow that virtue is the pursuit of happiness, because he cannot allow happiness to exist where

virtue is not. He allows that we ought to aim at happiness; and one element of the happiness at which we ought to aim is the approval of our actions by our own conscience. We have to seek happiness under the impulse of various desires, affections, and principles of action; and among these principles, is that which approves and disapproves of our actions, and which, as Butler has shown, is superior in kind and authority to the rest. This, as well as the others, must exercise its due sway, and must be duly satisfied, in order that we may approach towards happiness. Butler could not allow that state to be happiness, in which we gratify the desires and affections, and disregard the voice of conscience. Upon his doctrine, this would be a most unhappy discord and disorder of our nature.

It would not have been possible, therefore, for Butler to assent to such an account of happiness as that given by Paley (B. I., c. vi.), that it consists in the exercise of the social affections, of the faculties of body and mind, the prudent constitution of the habits, and health. He would naturally say that all these, without the pursuit of good ends by good means, could not make a man happy; still less could they do so, if, with all these, a man were pursuing criminal purposes, or living a life of vice, or laboring under self-accusation or remorse; in all which there is nothing inconsistent with Paley's account of happiness. And thus, whatever casual coincidence there may be in the phrases used here and there by Butler and by Paley, there is a very wide difference in reality between the moral philosophy of the one and of the other.

Paley's chapter on Human Happiness is, indeed, a curious example of his combination of good sense and good feeling with an entire inaptitude for systematic thinking and writing. The chapter might be read as a very pleasing and sensible essay upon those elements of happiness which have *least* to do with the foundations of morality (for even the social affections are considered only so far as they affect "the spirits"); but it has not any connection with any thing which goes before or

comes after it. The chapter is, indeed, verbally connected with the beginning of the succeeding one, in so far that the word *happiness* is prominent in both places. "Virtue is the doing good to mankind in obedience to the will of God, and for the sake of everlasting happiness." But it is evident that there is scarcely the vestige of a connection between the sense of the word *happiness* in the one passage and in the other. But the passage in which this word *happiness* comes in, so as to show its real place in Paley's scheme of morality, is Chapter v. of the second Book; where he says "that the method of coming at the will of God concerning every action by the light of nature, is to inquire into the tendency of that action to promote or diminish the general happiness." This mode of determining the moral character of actions, by tracing their influence upon the general happiness of mankind, is the mode professed by Paley; but not followed out by him with any logical coherence, in consequence, among other things, of his not having given any account of human happiness which can be used for such a purpose. More recent writers on morals have endeavored to execute his plan more completely, by following the course which it obviously suggests;—analyzing happiness into its elements, and using this analysis in estimating the moral value of actions. I conceive it might be shown that the analysis thus given, besides being precarious, is in all cases either incomplete, or is itself dependent upon moral ideas; but I shall not here pursue the subject.

But I may point out what is Butler's view of such a system of morality. In the Dissertation on Virtue he teaches us that good desert is not mere tendency to the good of society, and that benevolence is not the whole of virtue: and says, with reference to Shaftesbury, what we may say with reference to Paley, that writers "of great and distinguished merit have expressed themselves in a manner which may occasion some danger to careless readers;" namely, the danger of imagining the whole of virtue to consist in aiming rightly at promoting the



happiness of mankind in the present state: and the whole of vice in the contrary; than which mistakes, Butler emphatically says, none can be conceived more terrible. Again: in a note on his twelfth Sermon (upon the Love of our Neighbor) he says:—

“As we are not competent judges what is upon the whole for the good of the world, there may be other immediate ends appointed us to pursue, besides that of doing good, or producing happiness. Though the good of the creation be the only end of the Author of it, yet he may have laid us under particular obligations, which we may discern and feel ourselves under, quite distinct from a perception, that the observance or violation of them is for the happiness or misery of our fellow-creatures.”

“And this is in fact the case.” And he then goes on to show, that “there are certain dispositions of mind, and certain actions, which are in themselves approved and disapproved by mankind, abstracted from their tendency to the happiness or misery of the world;—approved or disapproved by that principle within which is the guide of life, the judge of right and wrong.” He proceeds to mention treachery, indecency, meanness, as dispositions which we disapprove; greatness of mind, fidelity, honor, justice, as things which we approve, “in quite another view than as conducive to the happiness or misery of the world.”

It would be easy to adduce from Butler other passages of the same import: but from what has already been said, it must be obvious how far he is removed from those who define and measure virtue by its tendency to promote human happiness. He does not say that virtue does not do this; but he says that we are not competent judges of what is upon the whole for the good of the world. He willingly grants that the good of the creation may be the only end of the Author of it; but he holds that the same Author of Creation has laid us under particular obligations, which we are to discern and feel in some

other way. And this way is, in his creed, a reference to our internal faculties and powers, not to external objects and effects. The means of discovering our duty which he mainly recommends are, the consideration of the plain office and authority of our various faculties, and the judgment of our minds in our calmer hours, when passion and interest are silent. By such a consideration he conceives that we cannot fail to see the moral value of such ideas as benevolence, justice, veracity, decency, and the like.

Among the other phrases which Butler suggests as used to describe the moral faculty of man, he introduces *moral sense*; a term which has become more celebrated in consequence of its being employed, or supposed to be employed, by some moralists to imply a sense which discerns the moral qualities of its objects directly and immediately, as the sight discerns colors, or the taste savors. It may be doubted whether such a crude and physical notion of a moral sense was ever entertained by any thoughtful moralist; for the judgment of man concerning actions as good or bad cannot be expressed or formed, without reference to language, to social relations, to acknowledged rights: and the apprehension of these implies the agency of the understanding in a manner quite different from the perceptions of the bodily senses. It is plain, at least, as I have already said, that Butler never dreamt of asserting a moral sense in any such use of the term as this. Paley, with his usual love of clearness, and his usual inaptitude in what concerns systems, has stated the question of the moral sense in the most exaggerated physical form. He supposes a case of parricide to be stated to "a savage without experience, and without instruction, cut off in his infancy from all intercourse with his species, and consequently under no possible influence of example, authority, education, sympathy, or habit;" and he inquires whether such a creature would disapprove of the parricide. To this we might reply, that such a creature would be no evidence of what is the natural operation of the faculties of

man, as man, a social creature, necessarily educated by social intercourse; any more than Casper Hauser, the wild boy, who, after being kept pinioned from childhood to manhood, tottered into the streets of Nuremberg, is evidence of man's natural faculty of walking. Such a creature as Paley describes is, for the present, not so much a man as a brute. But we may add further, that though a brute, he *would*, as a brute, disapprove of parricide, if his disapproval be collected from his actions; which, language being supposed to be excluded, is the only way in which the sentiments of brutes can be collected. The mutual affection of the parents and offspring among brutes is a germ of the human affections which make us condemn parricide and child-murder as *unnatural* crimes.

With regard to Paley's subsequent remarks in the same chapter, that we approve at first those qualities in others which are beneficial to ourselves, that the sentiment thus becomes associated with the quality, and that this is the way in which men come to a general agreement with regard to the moral qualities which they admire, — I conceive that Butler would by no means agree with him, or allow men are led at first to admire fidelity, honor, justice, magnanimity, by considering that these qualities are beneficial, or likely to be beneficial, to ourselves. Nor do we conceive that either the nature of the admiration which we bestow, or the manner in which it grows up, so far as we can observe its growth (for instance, in children), agrees with this account of it. As I have said, Butler does not assert a moral sense to exist in any technical or distinct form; but I conceive that he does assert it to be the natural tendency of the human mind to approve benevolence, veracity, justice, and the like, without waiting for a calculation of the consequences of such qualities. And this doctrine is not inconsistent with the actual and unblamed practice of actions which are not benevolent, faithful, and just; because it may be that the acts in question are considered by the actors under some other point of view; if, indeed, they are treated at

all as matters of morality; and are not rather the results of ungoverned impulses of passion. Thus, cruelty to enemies is, perhaps, considered as fidelity to friends, or as justice; and however narrow and blind this morality be, it does not approve of cruelty *as such*. To see what benevolence, veracity, and justice really require of men, under given circumstances, is, no doubt, the office not of any simple sense or faculty, operating by direct perception, but of the rational and moral faculties of man, guided by the best light that can be procured for them. But this does not prove that they must arrive at their decision by calculating the total amount of pleasure or happiness which any given course of conduct would produce. This, Butler, in a passage which I have already quoted, conceives to be a point of which we are not competent judges; and he refers us to other methods of determining what is our duty.

But though to calculate the consequences of actions be not a safe way, nor generally, a practicable way, and still less, the only way of determining how far they are virtuous or vicious, no thoughtful moralist ever doubts that virtuous acts do really, and upon the whole, promote the good and happiness of mankind, when all the elements of good and happiness are taken into the account. And though many of these elements may be too subtle and various to be described and measured in our calculation (as the state of mind and heart), and though the operation of our actions upon these elements (the effect of our actions upon our own minds and those of others) may be impossible to appreciate, — yet we can, to a certain extent, trace the way in which virtuous actions tend to the happiness, and vicious actions to the unhappiness of mankind. And so far as we can do this it is a pleasant and healthful employment of our minds. In several instances Paley has pursued this employment in a lucid, lively, and sensible manner; and in this point of view, parts of his work may be read with profit and pleasure. If the work had been entitled *Morality as Derived from General Utility*, and if the principle had been taken for granted,

instead of being supported by the proofs which Paley offers, the work might have been received with unmingled gratitude; and the excellent sense and temper which for the most part it shows, in the application of rules, might have produced their beneficial effect without any drawback.

In this place, where we are familiar with the study of the great moral writers of antiquity, it is interesting to us to note the points of resemblance between their doctrines and those of our most admired modern moralists. The agreement between the moral philosophy of Plato and of Butler is, indeed, very striking. In Plato's *Dialogue on the Republic*, as in Butler's *Sermons*, the human soul is represented as a system, a constitution, an organized whole, in which the different elements have not merely their places side by side, but their places above and below each other, with their appointed offices; and virtue or moral rightness consists in the due operation of this constitution, the actual realization of this organized subordination. We may notice, too, that Plato, like Butler, is remarkable among moralists for the lucid and forcible manner in which he has singled out from man's springs of action the irascible element (his *Θυμοειδὲς*; Butler's *Resentment*;) and taught its true place and office in a moral scheme.

Aristotle's ethical doctrines are less philosophically definite than those of Plato; but in their general import they agree very nearly with those asserted by Butler. Thus Aristotle begins by treating of the end of human action, *happiness*; and though he thus appears to make an external end the sovereign guide of action, and thus to differ from Butler, he soon introduces an element which makes this guide cease to be an external one, by telling us (*Eth. Nicom. i. 7*), that the happiness of man involves "the activity of the mind in the way of virtue." For thus, virtue and happiness always and necessarily coincide, which Butler everywhere asserts; while virtue is not derived from external objects, which would be contrary to Butler's scheme.



Butler's sympathies, however, as to philosophical doctrine, are undoubtedly with the Stoics. In order to describe the peculiar sentiment of rejection and disapproval with which we regard actions unjust or otherwise wrong, he borrows the *formula* of the Stoics, which Cicero had borrowed before him, and in which such actions are said to be *contrary to nature*. See the passage in Cicero's Offices (iii. 4: "Redeo ad formulam. Detrahare aliquid alteri, et hominem hominis incommodum suum augere commodum magis est contra naturam quam mors, quam paupertas, quam dolor, quam cætera, quæ possunt aut corpori accidere aut rebus externis.") And in the Dissertation on Virtue [1] he quotes the commencement of that classical work of the later Stoics, Arrian's *Epicetetus*, in which we read that "Of the other faculties, you will find none which contemplates itself (*αὐτὴν αὐτῆς θεωρητικὴν*), still less which approves and disapproves its own acts:" (*δοκιμαστικὴν ἢ ὑποδοκιμαστικὴν*;) which way of speaking, Butler says, he has adopted as the most full and the least liable to cavil.

It is, indeed, evident that the two opposite moral schools of antiquity, the Stoical and the Epicurean, have had their antagonism prolonged into modern times; nor can it cease to subsist so long as there is a school of independent morality, which, like Butler, seeks the ground of virtue or moral rightness in the faculties of man and their relation to each other; and another school of dependent morality, which, like Paley, looks for the criterion of rightness to external things;—pleasure, utility, expediency, or by whatever name it may be called. That Paley is the successor of the Epicurean, as Butler is the adherent of the Stoical school, is evident on the face of his system. And this is a view which probably he would not himself have repudiated.

His first literary production, I believe, was a "Bachelor's prize" Essay, to which the prize was adjudged by the University in 1765. The subject of this essay was a comparison between the Stoic and Epicurean philosophy, and in this he had, as was

natural with his habits of mind, taken the Epicurean side. Nor was this an effusion hastily and lightly flung from his pen; for it was accompanied with elaborate notes in English, and is still recollected as bearing marks of that vivacity of thought and expression, for which his writings were afterwards so justly admired.

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[The gentleman to whom John Foster addressed his noted Restorationist Letter.]

"Thanks for the noble gift. . . . I think you have treated the subject in a manner which must command the attention of scholars on both shores of the Atlantic. I truly congratulate you on having been enabled to render this signal service to the cause of that which seems to be important truth."

Those who think no great change of opinion on this subject is to be looked for, may respect the following presage of ISAAC TAYLOR: "When once this weighty question of the after life has been opened, and when it shall have come into the hands of well-informed biblical interpreters, a controversy will ensue, in the progress of which it will be discovered that, with unobservant eyes, we and our predecessors have been so walking up and down, and running hither and thither, among dim notices and indications of the future destinies of the human family, as to have failed to gather up or to regard much that has lain upon the pages of the Bible, open and free to our use. . . . The renovation which we look for will come in as the splendor of day comes in the tropics;—it will be a sudden brightness that makes all things glad!" (Wesley and Methodism, pp. 289, 290.)

VINET has said: "Even now, after eighteen centuries of Christianity, we may be involved in some enormous error, of which the Christianity of the future will make us ashamed."

The doctrine of the book is commonly ascribed to Abp. WHATELY (Scripture Revelations of a Future State, c. 8). It is urged by Sir JAMES STEPHEN, as the only way of meeting the growing scepticism of the age (Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography, Epilogue), and is commanding general respect in England. The gentleman above referred to says opinion on this subject "is undergoing a great but steady change in the best quarters."

In Germany it has been maintained by Prof. C. H. WEISSE (Christian Eschatology, Studien u. Kritiken, 1836), and is very ably stated by Dr. ROTHE (Theological Ethics, § 490). Of him and his work see Schaff's "Germany," c. 33.

In our own country it is not only maintained by various ministers who have lost an orthodox connexion by withdrawal or disfellowship, but it is known to be held by several pastors of orthodox churches, who expect duly to publish the fact, wisely guarding their flocks against the dangers of schism—not specially by proselyting, but by discovering to them what are the fundamental and "necessary things" of the Christian Faith.

Is the doctrine of immortal woe one of these?

## The main points made in the argument are as follows :

1. The eternal sinfulness of wicked beings would involve perplexing relations to the Divine Government, and give a kind of dignity to the wicked themselves. And eternal wickedness, though in punishment, and however overruled for good, would be an eternal evil. This must be either God's choice, or his necessity; and either view brings insuperable difficulties into our theology. But *temporary* evil may be neither God's choice nor his necessity, being simply permitted, in a system of probation or of recovery. The distinction between evil temporary and evil eternal appears important from such facts as these: A learned writer closes an account of the dispute between Bayle and his opponents by saying, "No one can deny that the very great difficulties which press the doctrine of the origin of evil and its reconciliation with the justice and goodness of God, could be more easily overcome if an end of hell-punishments is supposed, and not their eternity." And Dr. Müller concludes his work on "The Christian Doctrine of Sin" thus: "A solution of the problem of the world would be possible, if the evil were not; — the evil which . . . is capable of being maintained, by the will of the personal creature, persistently hardening itself, through endless ages."

2. The scriptural doctrine of a Future Life is, endless life for the righteous. "The doctrine of the 'immortality of the soul' and the name are alike unknown to the entire Bible." (Olshausen, on 1 Cor. xv. 19, 20.) This supposed fundamental truth is treated with profound silence in the Scriptures, while the Divine Existence, with which it is often compared, is named continually. The phrase "everlasting punishment," put in contrast with "eternal life," does not imply immortal life in suffering. This is shown from the terms used, from Jewish opinions, and from the concession of orthodox divines that eternal extinction would be eternal punishment. The phrase "their worm dieth not, etc.," (Isa. lxvi. 24; Mark ix. 44,) as much proves the immortality of carcasses as of souls. The phrase "unquenchable fire" was used by Eusebius in speaking of the martyrdom of Christians. These and other like expressions properly denote a complete and utter destruction of that to which they are applied.

3. The phrase "immortal soul" is not found in a Christian document until A. D. 135; nor such phrases as "eternal misery" until a later period. Such expressions resulted from the combination of Christian doctrine with Platonic opinions. This combination is apparent in the earlier writings of Justin Martyr, A. D. 140; but his later writings warrant the statement of Gieseler, that he "appeared to regard it as possible that the souls of the ungodly will at some time be wholly annihilated." Irenæus, (A. D. 178,) opposing the Rationalism of his day, speaks very plainly of "continuance for ever and ever to those who are saved;" and of others as "depriving themselves of the gift of duration to all eternity." It would be easier to show that even Athanasius, the "Father of Orthodoxy," held this, than that he held the now orthodox view. The results of the above named combination were, Manichæan difficulty on the one hand, and Restorationism on the other. The latter, unknown before, soon prevailed extensively, produced the doctrine of Purgatory, and continues to this day.

4. The practical tendency of the view here offered is suggested by the last statement. A punishment too fearful — is unfearful. This is illustrated in the history of the English criminal code, ere its reform by the efforts of Romilly and his coadjutors. And the history of the Church goes to show that the new — rather, old and forgotten — doctrine of Life in Christ only, would give the Gospel new energy and power.



# CONTENTS.

## CHAPTER I.—THE DIGNITY OF HUMAN NATURE.

§ 1. The Rationalist Theory. — 2. The Christian Theory. — 3. Influence of the two Theories. — 4. Combination of the two Theories. — 5. Effects of the Combination. — 6. The Dignity of Wickedness. . . . . Page 1

## CHAPTER II.—EVIL AND GOD.

§ 1. Natural Evil. — 2. Sin. Its Mystery. — 3. The Origin, Economy, and End of Evil. — 4. The Idea of God and the Conception of God. — 5. The Four Theologies. — 6. The Notion of Evil as an Eternal Necessity is Dualistic. — 7. The Analytic Argument. — 8. Historical Illustration. — 9. The Reaction. Agony of Faith. — 10. Absolutism. — 11. Reaction. Prostitution and Prostration of Faith. — 12. Pantheism. Eclipse of Faith. . . . 19

## CHAPTER III.—THE THEODICIES.

§ 1. Theodicy a Duty. Absolutism. — 2. Sin against God as an Infinite Being. — 3. Sin against God as Infinite Love. — 4. Sin as against the Divine Government. — 5. Universal Distrust. — 6. Sin as against the Universal Welfare. — 7. In Suo Infinitu. — 8. The Imperative Nature of Duty. — 9. Historical Eternity of Sin. — 10. Sin as the Greatest Evil. — 11. Scientia Media Dei. — 12. Free Will. — 13. Choice of two Infinities. — 14. Choice of Penalties. — 15. Infinite Motives. — 16. The Redemption. — 17. Pre-existence. — 18. Eternal Sinfulness. — 19. Law of Nature. — 20. Phrensy. — 21. Restraint. — 22. Twilight. . . . 67

## CHAPTER IV.—EVIL TEMPORARY.

§ 1. Evil not Needful. — 2. The Frailty of Evil. — 3. The Permission of Evil. Theism. — 4. Is Evil only Now? — 5. The Triumph of Faith. . . . . 129

## CHAPTER V.—THE SCRIPTURAL ARGUMENT.

§ 1. Is the Immortality of the Soul *assumed* in the Bible? — 2. Is the Immortality of the Soul *implied* in the Language of the Scriptures? — 3. The General Tenor of Scriptural Language respecting Man's Destiny. — 4. Passages supposed to prove the Immortality of the Lost. — 5. Circumstantial Evidence. . . . . 160

## CHAPTER VI.—THE RATIONAL ARGUMENT.

§ 1. The Metaphysical Argument. — 2. The Psychological Argument. — 3. The Moral Argument. — 4. The Analogical Argument. . . . . 227

## CHAPTER VII.—SOUL AND BODY.

§ 1. Matter and Mind. — 2. The Detention. — 3. Do the Dead sleep? — 4. Resurrection of the Unjust. . . . . 243

## CHAPTER VIII.—THE HISTORICAL ARGUMENT.

§ 1. Eastern and Ancient Doctrine. — 2. The Grecian Schools. — 3. The Popular Faith. The Pious Fraud. — 4. Fourfold Doctrine of the Immortality of a Class. — 5. Early Christian Doctrine. — 6. Man's Intermediate Nature. — 9. The Origin of the Conflict. — 8. Results in the Eastern Church. — 9. Results in the Western Church. — 10. Jewish and Mediæval Doctrine. — 11. Modern History. . . . . 265

## CHAPTER IX.—PHILOSOPHY OF ERROR.

§ 1. Reflex Influence of Theodicy. — 2. Faith in Second Causes. — 3. The Temporal and the Eternal. — 4. The Unseen World. — 5. The Mystery of Sin. — 6. The Advantages of Evil over Good. — 7. Theory of Satisfaction for Sin. — 8. Theology of the Feelings. — 9. Exegetical Causes. — 10. Sense of Human Depravity. — 11. Lack of Faith in the Power of Goodness. — 12. Draco. — 13. The Notion of Punishment as specially Moral. — 14. Negative and Positive Evil. — 15. Anchorite Conceptions of the Heavenly State. — 16. Self-suspicion. . . . . 357

## CHAPTER X.—HARMONY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE.

§ 1. Of Providence. — 2. Of Grace. — 3. Of Death. — 4. Of Original Sin. — 5. Of Punishment. — 5. Of Pardon. — 7. The Redeemer. . . . . 377

## CHAPTER XI.—PARADOXES OF PENALTY.

§ 1. Fear and Shame. — 2. Severity and Certainty. — 3. Mystery and Conviction. — 4. Eternal Death is Eternal Punishment. — 5. The Second Death. — 6. Far and Near. — 7. Wrath and Love. . . . . 405

## CHAPTER XII.—THE MISSIONARY SPIRIT.

§ 1. Vicarious Immortality. — 2. The Maternal Character of the Church. — 3. The Missionary Motive. — 4. The Campaigning Spirit. — 5. A Test of Christian Character. — 6. Gospel for the Heathen. . . . . 430

## CHAPTER XIII.—THE HIGHEST GOOD.

§ 1. Life the True Good. — 2. Sensation and Motion. — 3. Thought. — 4. Free Will. — 5. The Election. — 6. Virtue. — 7. The Atonement. — 8. Faith. — 9. Love. . . . . 446

INDEX OF SCRIPTURES REFERRED TO. . . . p. viii. — INDEX OF CITATIONS. . . . . 469













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