

Of the Being of God.

by John Gill

The existence of God is universally accepted across all nations and ages, and is evident from the natural instinct to seek God and the desire for happiness.

Scripture: Genesis 1:1, Psalm 14:1, Psalm 73:25, Ecclesiastes 2:17, Isaiah 40:26, Acts 17:27, Romans 1:20, Ephesians 2:12, Hebrews 11:3, 1 Peter 5:8

Topics: "The Existence of God", "The Nature of God"

Description

John Gill emphasizes the foundational importance of the Being of God in his sermon 'Of the Being of God,' arguing that the existence of God is self-evident and universally acknowledged across cultures and ages. He presents multiple arguments for God's existence, including the innate sense of Deity in humanity, the evidence of creation, and the moral conscience that points to a higher power. Gill asserts that the belief in God is not only a natural instinct but also essential for understanding morality and accountability. He addresses objections to God's existence, reinforcing that even those who claim atheism often reveal a deep-seated awareness of a divine being. Ultimately, Gill's message is a call to recognize and affirm the reality of God as the source of all truth and morality.

Transcript

A Body of Doctrinal Divinity

Book 1--Chapter 1

OF THE BEING OF GOD

Having undertaken to write a System of Theology, or a Body of Doctrinal Divinity; and Theology being nothing else than a speaking of God, or a discoursing concerning him; his nature, names, perfections, and persons; his purposes, providences, ways, works, and word: I shall begin with the Being of God, and the proof and evidence of it; which is the foundation of all religion; for if there is no God, religion is a vain thing; and it matters not neither what we believe, nor what we do; since there is no superior Being to whom we are accountable for either faith or practice.

Some, because the being of God is a first principle, which is not to be disputed; and because that there is one is a self-evident proposition, not to be disproved; have thought it should not be admitted as a matter of debate: but since such is the malice of Satan, as to suggest the contrary to the minds of men; and such

the badness of some wicked men as to listen to it, and imbibe it; and such the weakness of some good men as to be harassed and distressed with doubts about it at times; it cannot be improper to endeavour to fortify our minds with reasons and arguments against such suggestions and insinuations.

And my 1. First argument to prove the Being of a God, shall be taken from the general consent of men of all nations, in all ages of the world; among whom the belief of it has universally obtained; which it is not reasonable to suppose would have obtained, if it was not true. This has been observed by many heathen writers themselves. Aristotle says, "all men have a persuasion of Deity, or that there is a God." Cicero observes, "There is no nation so wild and savage, whose minds are not imbued with the opinion of the gods; many entertain wrong notions of them; but all suppose and own the divine power and nature."

And in another place he says, "There is no animal besides man that has any knowledge of God; and of men there is no nation so untractable and fierce, although it may be ignorant what a God it should have, yet is not ignorant that one should be had." And again, "It is the sense of all mankind, that it is "innate" in all, and is, as it were, engraven on the mind, that there is a God; but what a one he is, in that they vary; but that he is, none denies." And to the same sense are the words of Seneca, "There never was a nation so dissolute and abandoned, so lawless and immoral, as to believe there is no God."

So Aelianus relates, "None of the barbarous nations ever fell into atheism, or doubted of the gods whether they were or not, or whether they took care of human affairs or not; not the Indians, nor the Gauls, nor the Egyptians." And Plutarch has these remarkable words, "If you go over the earth, says he, you may find cities without walls, letters, kings, houses, wealth, and money, devoid of theatres and schools; but a city without temples and gods, and where is no use of prayers, oaths, and oracles, nor sacrifices to obtain good or avert evil, no man ever saw."

These things were observed and said, when the true knowledge of God was in a great measure lost, and idolatry prevailed; and yet even then, this was the general sense of mankind. In the first ages of the world, men universally believed in the true God, and worshipped him, as Adam and his sons, and their posterity, until the flood; nor does there appear any trace of idolatry before it, nor for some time after. The sins which caused that, and with which the world was filled, seem to be lewdness and uncleanness, rapine and violence.

Some think the tower of Babel was built for an idolatrous use; and it may be that about that time idolatry was set up; as it is thought to have prevailed in the days of Serug: and it is very probable that when the greater part of the posterity of Noah's sons were dispersed throughout the earth, and settled in the distant parts of it; that as they were remote from those among whom the true worship of God was preserved; they, by degrees, lost sight of the true God, and forsook his worship; and this being the case, they began to worship the sun in his stead, and which led on to the worship of the moon, and the host of heaven; which seem to be the first objects of idolatry.

This was as early as the times Job, who plainly refers to it, (Job 31:26, 27). And, indeed, when men had cast off the true object of worship, what more natural to substitute in his room than the sun, moon, and stars, which were above them, visible by them, and so glorious in themselves, and so beneficial to the earth and men on it? Hence the people of Israel were exhorted to take care that their eyes were not ensnared at the sight of them, to fall down and worship them; and which in later times they did (Deut. 4:19; 2 King 21:3).

It appears also that men took very early to the deifying of their heroes after death, their kings, and great personages, either for their wisdom and knowledge, or for their courage and valour, and martial exploits, and other things; such were the Bel, or Belus, of the Babylonians; the Baalpeor of the Moabites. ;and the Molech of the Phoenicians, and other Baalim lords, or kings, mentioned in the Scriptures: and such were Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Mercury, Hercules; and the rest of the rabble of the heathen deities; and indeed their Lares, and Penates, or household gods, were no other than the images of their deceased parents, or more remote ancestors, whose memory they revered; and in process of time their deities became very numerous; they had gods many and lords many: even with the Jews, when fallen into idolatry, their gods were according to the number of their cities (Jer. 2:28).

And as for the Gentiles, they worshipped almost everything; not only the sun, moon, and stars; but the earth, fire, and water; and various sorts of animals, as oxen, goats, and swine, cats and dogs, the fishes of the rivers, the river horse, and the crocodile, those amphibious creatures; the fowls of the air, as the hawk, stork, and ibis; and even insects, the fly; yea, creeping things, as serpents, the beetle, &c.; as also vegetables, onions, and garlic; which occasioned the satirical poet to say, "O sanctas gentes quibus haec nascuntur in hortis, numina!"

O holy nations, whose gods are born in their gardens! Nay, some have worshipped the devil himself, as both in the East and West Indies; and that for this reason, that he might not harm them. Now though all this betrays the dreadful depravity of human nature; the wretched ignorance of mankind; and the sad stupidity men were sunk into; yet at the same time such shocking idolatry, in all the branches of it, is a full proof of the truth and force of my argument, that all men, in all ages and countries, have been possessed of the notion of a God; since, rather than to have no God, they have chosen false ones; so deeply rooted is a sense of Deity in the minds of all men.

I am sensible that to this it is objected, that there have been, at different times, and in different countries, some particular persons who have been reckoned atheists, deniers of the Being of a God. But some of these men were only deriders of the gods of their country; they mocked at them as unworthy of the name, as weak and insufficient to help them; as they reasonably might; just as Elijah mocked at Baal and his worshippers. Now the common people, because they so behaved towards their gods, looked upon them as atheists, as such who did not believe there was any God.

Others were so accounted, because they excluded the gods from any concern with human affairs; they thought they were other ways employed, and that such things were below their notice, and not becoming their grandeur and dignity to regard; and had much the same sentiments as some of the Jews had (Eze. 9:9; Zep. 1:12). But these men were not deniers of the existence of God, only of his providence as to the affairs of the world: and others have been rather practical than speculative atheists, as the fool in Psalm 14:1, who not only live as if there was no God; but wish in their hearts there was none, rather than believe there is none; that so they might take their fill of sin, without being accountable to a superior Being.

The number of real speculative atheists have been very few, if any; some have boldly asserted their disbelief of a God; but it is a question whether their hearts and mouths have agreed; at least they have not been able to maintain their unbelief long without some doubts and fears. And at most this only shows how much the reason of man may be debased, and how low it may sink when left to itself: these few instances are only particular exceptions to a general rule; which is not destroyed thereby, being contrary to the common sense of mankind; even as it is no sufficient objection to the definition of man, as a rational creature, that there is now and then an idiot born of his race, so not to the general belief of Deity, that

there is now and then an atheist in the world.

It is further objected, that there have been whole nations in Africa and America, who have no notion of Deity. But this is what has not been sufficiently proved; it depends upon the testimonies of travellers, and what one affirms, another denies; so that nothing can with certainty be concluded from them. "I should rather question, says Herbert, Lord Cherbury, whether the light of the sun has shone on the remotest regions, than that the knowledge of the Supreme Being is hidden from them; since the sun is only conspicuous in its own sphere; but the Supreme Being is seen in everything."

Diodorus Siculus says, a few of the Ethiopians were of opinion there was no God; though before he had represented them as the first and most religious of all nations, as attested by all antiquity. The Hottentots about the Cape of Good Hope have been instanced in, as without any knowledge of Deity: and certainly they are a most beastly and brutish people that can be named, and the most degenerate of the human species, and have survived the common instincts of humanity; yet, according to Mr.

Kolben's account of them, published some years ago, they appear to have some sense of a Supreme Being, and of inferior deities. They express a superstitious joy at new and full moons; and it is said they pray to a Being that dwells above; and offer sacrifice of the best things they have, with eyes lifted up to heaven. And later discoveries of other nations, show the contrary to what has been asserted of them; which assertions have arose either from want of intimate knowledge of them, and familiar acquaintance with them, or from their dissolute, wicked, and irreligious lives; when, by conversing with them, it appears that they have a notion of the sun, or sky, or something or another being a sort of deity.

Thus it has been observed of the Greenlanders, that "they had neither a religion nor idolatrous worship; nor so much as any ceremonies to be perceived tending to it: hence the first missionaries entertained a supposition, that there was not the least trace to be found among them of any conception of a divine Being, especially as they had no word to express him by. But when they came to understand their language better, they found quite the reverse to be true, from the notions they had, though very vague and various, concerning the soul, and concerning spirits; and also from their anxious solicitude about the state after death.

And not only so, but they could plainly gather from a free dialogue they had with some perfectly wild Greenlanders, that their ancestors must have believed a supreme Being, and did render him some service; which their posterity neglected by little and little, the further they were removed from more wise and civilised nations; till at last they lost every just conception of the Deity; yet, after all, it is manifest, that a faint idea of a divine Being lies concealed in the minds even of this people, because they directly assent, without any objection, to the doctrine of a God, and his attributes."

And as to what is concluded from the irreligious lives of the inhabitants of some nations, we need not be sent to Africa and America for such atheists as these; we have enough of them in our own nation; and I was just ready to say, we are a nation of atheists in this sense: and, indeed, all men in an unregenerate state, be they Jews or Gentiles, or live where they may, they are ayeoi, "atheists"; as the apostle calls them, (Eph 2:12) they are "without God in the world, being alienated from the life of God", (Eph 4:18) otherwise there is such a general sense of Deity in mankind; and such a natural inclination to religion, of some sort or another, though ever so bad, that some have thought that man should rather be defined as a religious than a rational animal.

I take no notice of the holy angels, who worship God continually; nor of the devils, who believe there is one God and tremble; my argument being only concerned with men. 2. The second argument shall be taken from the law and light of nature; or from the general instinct in men, or impress of Deity on the mind of every man; that is, as soon as he begins to have the exercise of his rational powers, he thinks and speaks of God, and assents to the Being of a God. This follows upon the former, and is to be proved by it; for as Cicero says, "The consent of all nations in anything, is to be reckoned the law of nature."

And since all nations agree in the belief of a Deity, that must be a part of the law of nature, inscribed on the heart of every man. Seneca makes use of this to prove there is a God; he says: "because an opinion or sense of Deity, is "implanted" in the minds of all men." And so likewise Cicero, as observed before; and who calls them the notions of Deity implanted and innate. And whoever believes the Mosaic account of the creation of man, cannot doubt of this being his case, when first created; since he is said to be made in the image, and after the likeness of God; for the image of God surely could not be impressed upon him, without having the knowledge of him implanted in him; and though man by sinning has greatly come short of this image and glory of God, yet this light of nature is not wholly obscured, nor the law of nature entirely obliterated in him; there are some remains of it.

There are some indeed among us, who deny there are any innate ideas in the minds of men, and particularly concerning God: but to such writers and reasoners I pay but little regard; when the inspired apostle assures us, that even the Gentiles, destitute of the law of Moses, have "the work of the law written in their hearts", (Rom. 2:15) which, as it regards duty to God, as well as man, necessarily supposes the knowledge of him; as well as of the difference between good and evil, as founded upon his nature and will: and though this light of nature is not sufficient to lead men, in their present state, to a true spiritual and saving knowledge of God; yet it furnishes them with such a sense of him, as puts them upon seeking him; "if haply they may feel and grope after him, and find him", (Acts 17:27).

These notices of a divine Being do not flow from the previous instructions of parents and others; but from a natural instinct; at most, they are only drawn forth by instruction and teaching; Velleius, the Epicurean, says, "that there is a Deity nature itself has impressed the notion of on the minds of all men; for what nation, or sort of men, "he adds, "that has not a certain anticipation of it without being taught it, "or before taught it, as Julian expresses it: nor do these notices take their rise from state policy; or are the effects of that originally: if this was the case, if it was the contrivance of politicians to keep men in awe, and under subjection, it must be the contrivance of one man, or more united together.

If of one, say, who is the man? in what age he lived, and where? and what is his name, or his son's name? If of more, say, when and where they existed? and who they were that met together? and where they formed this scheme? And let it be accounted for; if it can, that such a number of sage and wise men, who have been in the world; that no man should be able to get into the secret, and detect the fallacy and discover it, and free men from the imposition. Besides, these notices appeared before any scheme of politics was formed; or kings or civil magistrates were in being.

Plato has refuted this notion; and represents it as a very pestilent one, both in private and in public. Nor are these notices by tradition from one to another; since traditions are peculiar to certain people: the Jews had theirs, and so had the Gentiles; and particular nations among them had separate ones from each other; but these are common to all mankind: nor do they spring from a slavish fear and dread of punishment; for though it has been said, that fear makes gods, or produces a notion of Deity; the contrary is true, that Deity produces fear, as will be seen in a following argument.

Under this head may be observed the innate desires of men after happiness, which are so boundless as not to be satisfied. Let a man have ever so great a compass of knowledge and understanding; or possess ever so large a portion of wealth and riches; or be indulged with the gratification of his senses to the highest degree; or enjoy all the pleasure the whole creation can afford him; yet after all, according to the wise man, the conclusion of the whole is, "all is vanity and vexation of spirit" (Eccl. 2:17).

Now these desires are not in vain implanted, there must be an object answerable unto them; a perfect Being, which is no other than God; who is the first cause and last end of all things, of whom the Psalmist says, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth my soul desires besides thee" (Ps. 73:25). 3. The third argument, proving the Being of God, shall be taken from the works of creation; concerning which the apostle says, "the invisible things of God, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen; being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead" (Rom. 1:20).

Plutarch, in answer to a question, Whence have men the knowledge of God? replies, "They first receive the knowledge of him from the beauty of things that appear; for nothing beautiful is made in vain, nor by chance, but wrought with some art: that the world is beautiful, is manifest from the figure, the colour, and magnitude of it; and from the variety of stars about the world." And these so clearly display the Being and power of God, as to leave the heathen without excuse, as the apostle observes; and as this, and other instances, show.

Most admirable was the reasoning of a wild Greenlander, which he declared to a missionary to be the reasoning of his mind before his conversion; he said to him, "It is true we were ignorant heathens, and knew nothing of God, or a Saviour; and, indeed, who should tell us of him till you come? but thou must not imagine that no Greenlander thinks about these things. I myself have often thought: a "kajak" (a boat) with all its tackle and implements, does not grow into existence of itself; but must be made by the labour and ingenuity of man; and one that does not understand it would directly spoil it.

Now the meanest bird has far more skill displayed in its structure, than the best "kajak"; and no man can make a bird: but there is still a far greater art shown in the formation of a man, than of any other creature. Who was it that made him? I thought myself that he proceeded from his parents, and they from their parents; but some must have been the first parents; whence did they come? common report informs me, they grew out of the earth: but if so, why does it not still happen that men grow out of the earth? and from whence did this same earth itself, the sea, the sun, the moon, and stars, arise into existence?

Certainly there must be some Being who made all these things; a Being that always was, and can never cease to be. He must be inexpressibly more mighty, knowing, and wise, than the wisest man. He must be very good too, because that everything that he has made is good, useful, and necessary for us. Ah, did I but know him, how would I love him and honour him! But who has seen him? who has ever conversed with him? None of us poor men. Yet there may be men too that know something of him.

O that I could but speak with such! therefore," he said, "as soon as ever I heard you speak of this great Being, I believed it directly, with all my heart; because I had so long desired to hear it." A glaring proof this, that a supreme Being, the first cause of all things, is to be concluded from the works of creation. The notion of the eternity of the world has been imbibed by some heathens, but sufficiently confuted by others. And even Aristotle, to whom it is ascribed, asserts, that "it was an ancient doctrine, and what all men received from their ancestors; that all things are of God, and consist by him."

And those that believe the divine revelation, cannot admit of any other doctrine; but must explode the notion of the eternity of the world, and of its being of itself; since that assures us, that "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth": also that all things were made, "not of things which do appear", but out of nothing, (Gen. 1:1; Heb. 11:3) for, be it, that the heavens and the earth were made out of a chaos, or out of pre-existent matter; it may be reasonably asked, out of what was that pre-existent matter made? the answer must be, out of nothing; since it was by creation, which is the production of something out of nothing: and which can never be performed by the creature; for out of nothing, nothing can be made by that.

If therefore all things are originally produced out of nothing, it must be by one that is almighty, whom we rightly call God. No creature can produce itself; this involves such contradictions as can never be admitted; for then a creature must be before it was; as that which makes must be before that which is made: it must act and operate before it exists; and be and not be at one and the same time; which are such glaring contradictions, as sufficiently confute the creature's making itself; and therefore its being must be owing to another cause; even to God, the Creator; for between a creature and God, there is no medium: and if it could be thought or said, that the most excellent creatures, men, made themselves; besides the above contradictions, which would be implied, it might be asked, why did not they make themselves wiser and better; since it is certain, they have knowledge of beings superior to them? and how is it that they know so little of themselves, either of their bodies or their souls, if both were made by them? and why are they not able to preserve themselves from a dissolution to which they are all subject?

It may be further observed; that effects, which depend upon causes in subordination to one another, cannot be traced up "ad infinitum"; but must be reduced to some first cause, where the inquiry must rest; and that first cause is God. Now here is an ample field to survey; which furnishes out a variety of objects, and all proofs of Deity. There is nothing in the whole creation the mind can contemplate, the eye look upon, or the hand lay hold on, but what proclaims the Being of God.

When we look up to the heavens above us; the surrounding atmosphere; the air in which we breathe, which compresses our earth, and keeps it together; the stellar space, and spreading sky, bespangled with stars of light, and adorned with the two great luminaries, the sun and moon, especially the former, that inexhaustible fountain of light and heat; and under whose benign influences, so many things are brought forth on earth; whose circuit is from one end of the heaven to the other; and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof: when we consider its form, magnitude, and virtue; its proper distance from us, being not so near us as to scorch us; nor so remote as to be of no use to us; the motion given it at first, in which it has proceeded without stopping, but once as is supposed, in the days of Joshua; a motion it has had now almost six thousand years; the course it has steered, and steers, so that all parts of the earth, at one season or another, receive benefit by it; and the way it has been guided in, without varying or erring from it all this while.

Whoever reflects on these things, must acknowledge it to be the work of an all wise and almighty agent, we call God; and that it must be upheld, guided, and directed by his hand alone. When we take a view of the earth, of the whole terraqueous globe, hanging on nothing, like a ball in the air, poised with its own weight; the different parts of it, and all disposed for the use of man; stored with immense riches in the heart of it, and stocked with inhabitants upon it; the various sorts of animals, of different forms and shapes, made, some for strength, some for swiftness, some for bearing burdens, and others for drawing carriages, some for food and others for clothing: the vast variety of the feathered birds that cut the air; and the innumerable kinds of fishes that swim the ocean.

The consideration of all this will oblige us to say, "Lord, thou art God, which hast made the heaven, earth, and sea; and all that in them is" (Acts 4:25). In short, there is not a shell in the ocean, nor a sand on the shore, nor a spire of grass in the field, nor any flower of different hue and smell in the garden, but what declare the Being of God: but especially our own composition is deserving of our notice; the fabric of the body, and the faculties of our souls. The body, its form and shape; while other animals look downwards to the earth, "os homini sublime dedit Deus", as the poet says, man has a lofty countenance given him, to behold the heavens, to lift up his face to the stars; and for what is this erect posture given him, but to adore his Creator?

And it is remarkable that there is a natural instinct in men to lift up their hands and eyes to heaven, when either they have received any unexpected mercy, by way of thankfulness for it; or are in any great distress, as supplicating deliverance from it; which supposes a divine Being, to whom they owe the one, and from whom they expect the other. Each of the parts and members of the body are so framed and disposed, as to be subservient to one another; so that "the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor the head to the feet, I have no need of you".

The same may be observed of the other members. The inward parts, which are weak and tender, and on which life much depends, were they exposed, would be liable to much danger and hurt; but these are "clothed with skin and flesh, and fenced with bones and sinews"; and every bone, and every nerve, and every muscle, are put in their proper places. All the organs of the senses, of sight, hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling, are most wonderfully fitted for the purposes for which they are made.

Galen, an ancient noted physician, being atheistically inclined, was convinced of his impiety by barely considering the admirable structure of the eye; its various humours, tunics, and provision for its defence and safety. The various operations performed in our bodies, many of which are done without our knowledge or will, are enough to raise the highest admiration in us: as the circulation of the blood through all parts of the body, in a very small space of time; the respiration of the lungs; the digestion of the food; the chylication of it; the mixing of the chyle with the blood; the nourishment thereby communicated; and which is sensibly perceived in the several parts of the body, and even in the more remote; which having been weakened and enfeebled by hunger, thirst, and labour, are in an instant revived and strengthened; and the accretion and growth of parts by all this.

To which may be added other things worthy of notice; the faculty of speech, peculiar to man, and the organs of it; the features of their faces; and the shape of their bodies, which all differ from one another; the constant supply of animal spirits; the continuance of the vital heat, which outlasts fire itself; the slender threads and small fibres spread throughout the body, which hold and perform their office seventy or eighty years running: all which, when considered, will oblige us to say, with the inspired Psalmist, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well": and will lead us to ascribe this curious piece of workmanship to no other than to the divine Being, the God of all flesh living.

But the soul of man, the more noble part of him, more fully discovers the original author of him; being possessed of such powers and faculties that none but God could give: it is endowed with an understanding, capable of receiving and framing ideas of all things knowable, in matters natural, civil, and religious; and with reason, to put these together, and compare them with each other, and discourse concerning them; infer one thing from another, and draw conclusions from them: and with judgment, by which it passes sentence on things it takes cognizance of, and reasons upon; and determines for itself what is right or wrong; and so either approves or disapproves: it has a "mind" susceptible of what is

proposed unto it; it can, by instruction or study, learn any language; cultivate any art or science; and, with the help of some geographical principles, can travel over the globe, can be here and there at pleasure, in the four parts of the world; and in a short time, visit every city of note therein, and describe the situation of every country, with their religion, manners, customs, &c. it can reflect on things past, and has a foresight of, and can forecast and provide for things to come: it has a "will", to accept or reject, to embrace or refuse, what is proposed unto it; with the greatest freedom of choice, and with the most absolute power and sovereignty: it has affections, of love and hatred, joy and grief, hope and fear, &c. according to the different objects it is conversant with.

There is also the conscience, which is to a man as a thousand witnesses, for him or against him; which, if it performs its office as it should do, will accuse him when he does ill, and commend, or excuse him, when he does well; and from hence arise either peace of mind, or dread of punishment, in some shape or another, either here or hereafter: to which may be added the memory, which is a storehouse of collections of things thought to be most valuable and useful; where they are laid up, not in a confused, but orderly manner; so as to be called for and taken out upon occasion: here men of every character and profession lay up their several stores, to have recourse unto, and fetch out, as their case and circumstances may require.

And besides this, there is the "fancy or imagination", which can paint and describe to itself, in a lively manner, objects presented to it, and it has entertained a conception of; yea, it can fancy and imagine things that never were, nor never will be: and, to observe no more, there is the power of invention; which in some is more, in others less fertile; which, on a sudden, supplies with what is useful in case of an emergency. But above all, the "soul" of man is that wherein chiefly lay the image and likeness of God, when man was in his pure and innocent state; and though it is now sadly depraved by sin, yet it is capable of being renewed by the spirit of God, and of having the grace of God implanted in it, and is endowed with immortality, and cannot die: now to whom can such a noble and excellent creature as this owe its original? but to the divine Being, who may, with great propriety, be called, the Father of spirits, the Lord, the Jehovah, who "formeth the spirit of man within him". 4.

The fourth argument will be taken from the sustaining and government of the world; the provision made for the supply of creatures, and especially of man, and for his safety. As the world, as we have seen, is made by a divine Being, so by him it consists. Was there not such an almighty Being, "who upholds all things by the word of his power", they would sink and fall. Did he not bear up the pillars of the earth, they would tremble and shake, and not be able to bear its weight: the most stately, firm, and well built palace, unless repaired and maintained, will fall to decay and ruin; and so the grand and magnificent building of this world would soon be dissolved, did not the divine agent that made it, keep it up: as he that built all things is God, so he that supports the fabric of the universe must be so too; no less than an almighty hand can preserve and continue it; and which has done it, without any visible appearance of age or decay, for almost six thousand years; and though there is such a vast number of creatures in the world, besides men, the beasts of the field, and "the cattle on a thousand hills", the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea; there is food provided for them all, and they have "every one their portion of meat in due season": and as for man, he is richly provided for, with a plenty and variety of all good things; not only for necessity, but for delight; every man has a trade, business, and employment of life; or is put into such a situation and circumstances, that, with care, diligence, and industry, he may have enough for himself and family, and to spare: the earth produces a variety of things for food and drink for him; and of others for medicine, for the continuance of health, and restoration of it.

And can all this be without the care, providence, and interposition of a wise and almighty Being? Can these ever be thought to be the effects of blind chance and fortune? Is it not plain and clear, that God hereby "has not left himself without a witness of his existence and providence, in that he does good to all his creatures, and gives rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons; filling mens' hearts with food and gladness"; and continuing the certain and constant revolutions of "summer and winter, seedtime and harvest"; as well as night and day, cold and heat; all which have their peculiar usefulness and advantages to human life; and cannot be attributed to anything else than the superintendency of the divine Being.

And as there is a provision made for the wants of men, so for their safety: were it not that God had put the fear of man upon the wild beasts of the field, and the dread of him in them, there would be no safety for him, especially in some parts of the world; and had he not put a natural instinct into them to avoid the habitations of men, and to resort to woods and deserts, and dwell in uninhabited places; to prowl about for their prey in the night, and in the morning return to their caves and dens, and lurking places; when men go forth to their work, they would be in the utmost danger of their lives: yea, were it not for the overruling providence of God, which governs the world, and restrains the lusts of men, "homo esset homini lupus"; "one man would be a wolf to another"; neither life nor property would be secure; but must fall a prey to the rapine and violence of powerful oppressors.

Human laws, and civil magistracy, do something to restrain men, but not everything; notwithstanding these, we see what outrages are committed: and how greater still would be their number, was it not for the interposition of divine providence: and even it is owing to a divine Being that there are human forms of government, and political schemes framed, and laws made for the better regulation of mankind, and these continued; for it is by him "kings reign, and princes decree justice": and particularly, was it not for a divine agency, such is the rage and malice of Satan, and his principalities and powers, whose numbers fill the surrounding air; and who go about our earth like roaring lions, seeking whom they may devour; were they not chained by almighty power, and limited by the providence of God, the whole race of men would be destroyed by them, at least the godly among them. 5.

The fifth argument may be taken from the uncommon heroic actions, prodigies, wonders, and miraculous things done in the world; which cannot be thought to be done without a superior and divine influence. Heroic actions, such as that of Abraham, who, with three hundred household servants, pursued after, and engaged with four kings who had beaten five before, and recovered the goods they had taken away: of Shamgar, who fought with and killed six hundred Philistines with an ox goad: and of Samson, who slew a thousand of them with the jawbone of an ass: of Jonathan, and his armour bearer, who attacked and took a garrison of the same people, and threw a whole army of theirs into a panic and confusion; who had been for some time a terror to the whole land of Israel: and of David, a stripling, fighting with and conquering Goliath, a monstrous giant.

These are scripture instances; and if scripture is only regarded as a common history; these merit our notice and credit, as any of the relations in profane history; in which are recorded the magnanimous actions of heroes, kings, and generals of armies; their wonderful successes, and amazing conquests; as of the Babylonians, Persians, Grecians, and Romans; which made such strange revolutions and changes in kingdoms and states; all which can never be supposed to be done without superior power, and the overruling, influencing providence of the divine Being; who inspired men to do things beyond their natural skill and courage; prodigies, strange and wonderful events; for which no natural cause can be assigned; such as the strange sights seen in the air, and voices heard in the temple, before the destruction of Jerusalem; with other things, related by Josephus, and confirmed by Tacitus, an heathen historian; to

which might be added many others, which histories abound with: but besides these, things really miraculous have been wrought, such as are not only out of, and beyond the course of nature, but contrary to it, and to the settled laws of it; such as the miracles of Moses and the prophets, and of Christ and his apostles; which are recorded in the scriptures; and others in human writings; which are so well attested as oblige us to give credit to them: now, though these were not done to prove a divine Being; which needs them not; yet they necessarily suppose one, by whose power alone they are performed. 6.

The sixth argument may be formed from the prophesies of contingent future events, and the exact fulfilment of them. This is what is challenged and required from heathen deities, to prove their right to such a character; as being what none but God can do: "Let them bring forth and show us what shall happen: or declare us things for to come: show the things that are to come hereafter; that we may know that ye are gods: which is what none but the true God can do, and has done; and which being done, proves there is a God, and one that is truly so; instances of which there are many in the sacred writings; prophesies which relate both to particular persons and to whole kingdoms and states; which have had their exact accomplishment: but not to insist on these, since those who are atheistically inclined, disbelieve the divine revelation; let it be observed, that the heathens have had their auguries, soothsayings, divinations, and oracles; by which pretensions have been made to foretell future events.

That there is such a thing as divination, is said to be confirmed by the consent of all nations; and is explained of a presension and knowledge of future things: now this being granted, it may be reasoned upon, that if there is a foretelling of future things, which certainly come to pass, there must be a God; since none but an omniscient Being can, with certainty, foretell what shall come to pass, which does not depend on necessary causes; and cannot be foreseen by the quickest sight, and sharpest wit, and sagacity of a creature. 7.

The seventh argument may be urged from the fears of men, and the tortures of a guilty conscience, and the dread of a future state. Some are terribly frightened at thunder and lightning, as Caligula, the Roman Emperor, used to be; who, at such times, would hide himself in, or under his bed; and yet this man set himself up for a god. Now these fears and frights are not merely on account of the awful sound of the thunder, and the dreadful flashes of lightning; but because of the divine and tremendous Being who is supposed to send them: the Heathens were sensible that thunder is the voice of God, as the scriptures represent it, and therefore called their Jove, "Jupiter tonans"; "the thundering Jupiter".

Many have been so terrified in their consciences on account of sin, that they could get no rest, nor enjoy peace any where, or by any means: as Cain, under the terrors of an evil conscience, fancied that "everyone that found him would slay him": and those wicked traitors, Catiline and Jugurtha: and those wicked emperors, those monsters in impiety, Tiberius and Nero, and especially the latter, who was so tortured in his conscience, as if he was continually haunted by his mother's ghost, and by furies with burning torches: and Hobbes, our English atheist, as he was reckoned, was wont to be very uneasy when alone in the dark: and Epicurus, the philosopher, though he taught men to despise death, and out brave it; yet, when he perceived that he himself was about to die, was most terribly frightened; and this has been the case of many others: bold and "strong spirits", as atheistical persons love to be called, have been sometimes found to be very timorous and fearful.

And, indeed, this is natural to all men, and which is proof of a superior Being. Thus a wild Greenlander argued, before he had knowledge of the true God: "Man has an intelligent soul, is subject to no creature in the world; and yet man is afraid of the future state: who is it that he is afraid of there? That must be a great

Spirit that has dominion over us, O did we but know him! O had we but him for our friend!" Now what do all these fears and tortures of conscience arise from, but from the guilt of sin, and a sense of a divine Being; who is above men, and will call them to an account for their sins, and take vengeance on them?

And, indeed, the eternal punishment that will be inflicted on them, will greatly lie in the tortures of their conscience, which is the worm that will never die; and, in a sense of divine wrath, which is that fire that will never be quenched. 8. The eighth and last argument shall be taken from the judgments in the world; not only famine, sword, pestilence, earthquakes, &c, but such that have been inflicted on wicked men, atheistical persons, perjured ones, blasphemers, and the like.

Not to take notice of the universal flood, which swept away a world of ungodly men; and of the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah, with other cities of the plain, by fire and brimstone from heaven; which yet are abundantly confirmed by the testimonies of heathen writers; nor of the awful instances in the New Testament, of Herod being smitten by an angel, and eaten of worms, and died, while the people was shouting him as a God, and he assented to their flattery; and of Ananias and Sapphira, being struck dead for lying unto God: besides these, there are innumerable instances of judgments, of the same or a like kind, in all ages and countries, recorded in the histories of them; and in our nation, and in our age, and within our knowledge; and who now can hear or read such awful judgments, and disbelieve the Being of God?

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