

SECTION III.

THE ARGUMENT TAKEN FROM THE CALAMITIES AND SINFULNESS OF MANKIND CONSIDERED.

“THE subject of our present inquiry is threefold : 1. Whether mankind be under God’s displeasure, antecedently to their actual sins. 2. Whether our nature be corrupt from the beginning of life. And, 3. Whether these propositions can be proved from the calamities and sinfulness of mankind.” (Pages 30, 31.)

Whether they can or no, they have been fully proved from Scripture. Let us now inquire if they may not be proved from the state of the world.

But you think Dr. Watts “has here laid too great stress on supposition and imagination.” In proof of which you cite from him the following words : “Can we suppose that the blessed God would place his innocent creatures in such a dangerous habitation? Can we suppose, that, among the roots, and the herbs, and the trees, which are good for food, the great God would have suffered deadly poison to spring up here and there? Would there have been any such creatures in our world as bears and tigers? Can we ever imagine the great and good God would have appointed men to be propagated in such a way as would necessarily give such exquisite pain and anguish to the mothers that produce them, if they had been all accounted in his eyes a race of holy and sinless beings?” (Page 31.)

I answer, It is not true, “that too great stress,” or any stress at all, is “here laid on *mere* supposition and imagination.” Your catching at those two words, *suppose* and *imagine*, will by no means prove it; for the meaning of them is plain. “Can we *suppose* the blessed God would do this?” is manifestly the same with, “How can we reconcile it with his essential attributes?” In like manner, “Can we ever *imagine*?” is plainly equivalent with, “Can we possibly conceive?” So that the occasional use of these words does not infer his laying any stress on supposition and imagination. When, therefore, you add, “Our suppositions and imaginations are not a just standard by which to measure the divine dispensations,” (page 32,) what you say is absolutely true, but absolutely foreign to the point.

Some of the questions which you yourself ask, to expose his

it is not so easy to answer : " Would innocent creatures have been thrust into the world in so contemptible circumstances, and have been doomed to grow up so slowly to maturity and the use of reason ? Would they, when grown up, have been constrained to spend so much time in low and servile labour ? Would millions have been obliged to spend all their days, from early morn until evening, in hewing stone, sawing wood, heaving, rubbing, or beating the limb of an oak, or a bar of iron ?" (Page 33.) I really think they would not. I believe all this toil, as well as the pain and anguish of women in child-birth, is an evidence of the fall of man, of the sin of our first parents, and part of the punishment denounced and executed, first on them, and then on all their posterity.

You add : " He doth not consider this world as a state of trial, but as if it ought to have been a seat of happiness." (Pages 34, 35.) There is no contrariety between these : It might be a state of trial and of happiness too. And such it certainly was to Adam in Paradise ; whether he was holy or no, he was undoubtedly happy. A state of trial, therefore, does not necessarily imply any kind or degree of natural evil ; and, accordingly, the Creator himself assures us, there was none originally in his creation. For so I read at the conclusion of it : " And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." (Gen. i. 31.)

" But natural evil may be mixed with a state of trial ; consequently this world could not be built for a seat of happiness." Admirable drawing of consequences ! It may be ; therefore, it could not be otherwise. Whatever may be, God himself here tells us what was. And from his own declaration, it is infallibly certain, there was no natural evil in the world, until it entered as the punishment of sin.

" Neither doth he take a future state into his representation." (Page 36.) No, nor is there any need he should, when he is representing the present state of the world as a punishment of Adam's sin." " Nor doth he take into his argument the goodness of God." (Page 37.) Not into this argument ; that is of after consideration. So the texts you have heaped together on this head also are very good ; but what do they prove ?

" He supposes our sufferings to be mere punishments." I suppose they are punishments mixed with mercy. But still they are punishments ; they are evils inflicted on account of sin.

"We find, in fact, that the best of men may be made very unhappy, by calamities and oppressions." (Page 39.) It cannot be. The best of men cannot be made unhappy by any calamities or oppressions whatsoever; for they "have learned in every" possible "state, therewith to be content." In spite of all calamities, they "rejoice evermore, and in everything give thanks."

"From punishments inflicted on particular persons, he infers that all men are under the wrath of God. But to infer the state of the whole from the case of some is not a fair way of arguing." (Page 40.) No. The punishments inflicted on particular persons prove nothing, but with regard to those on whom they are inflicted. If, therefore, some men only suffer and die, this proves nothing with regard to the rest. But if the whole of mankind suffer and die, then the conclusion reaches all men.

"He is not quite just, in pronouncing the present form of the earth 'irregular, abrupt, and horrid;' and asking, 'Doth it not bear strongly on our sight, the ideas of ruin and confusion, in vast broken mountains, dreadful cliffs and precipices, immense extents of waste and barren ground?' If this be the case, how can 'the invisible things of God' be 'clearly seen from' such a ruined 'creation?'" (Page 41.) Perfectly well. "His eternal power and Godhead," the existence of a powerful and eternal Being, may still be inferred from these his works, grand and magnificent, though in ruin. Consequently, these leave the Atheist without excuse. And whatever objections he might form (as Lucretius actually does) from these palpable blemishes and irregularities of the terraqueous globe, the scriptural account of natural, flowing from moral, evil, will easily and perfectly solve them; all which is well consistent with the words of the Psalmist: "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches!" (Page 42.) So undoubtedly it is, though it bears so visible signs of ruin and devastation.

"We have no authority from Scripture to say, that the earth, in its present constitution, is at all different from what it was at its first creation." Certainly we have, if the Scripture affirms that God "said," after Adam sinned, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee;" and, that "the earth was of old, standing out of the water, and in the water;" till God destroyed it for the sin of its inhabitants.

You go on: "I cannot agree, 'that disease, anguish, and death have entered into the bowels and veins of multitudes, by an innocent and fatal mistake of pernicious plants and fruits for proper food.'" (Page 43.) Why not? Doubtless, multitudes also have perished hereby, if we take in the account of all ages and nations; multitudes, also, have been the living prey of bears and tigers, wolves and lions; and multitudes have had their flesh and bones crushed and churned between the jaws of panthers and leopards, sharks and crocodiles. And would these things have come upon mankind, were it not on account of Adam's sin?

Yet you think, we have "now a more extensive dominion over all creatures, than Adam had even in his innocence, because we have the liberty of eating them, which Adam never had." (Page 44.) This will not prove the point. That I have liberty to eat a lamb, does not prove that I have dominion over a lion. Certainly I have not dominion over any creature which I can neither govern nor resist; yea, and if the dread of me is on every beast and fowl, this does not prove that I have any dominion over them. I know, on the contrary, that not only a tiger or a bear, but even a dove, will not stoop to my dominion.

"However, we have no authority to say, man himself was cursed, though the ground was." (Pages 45, 46.) Yes, we have,—the authority of God himself: "Cursed is every man that continueth not in all things" which God hath commanded. The moment, therefore, that he sinned, Adam fell under this curse. And whether the toil and death to which he and his posterity were sentenced, and the pain of child-birth, be termed curses or no, sure it is, they are punishments, and heavy ones too; though mercy is often mixed with judgment. (Pages 47-50.)

The main argument follows, taken from the state of mankind in general, with regard to religion. But you say, "It is impossible we should make a just estimate of the wickedness of mankind." (Page 51.) Yes, an exactly just estimate of the precise degree of wickedness in the whole world; but it is very possible, nay, very easy, to make an estimate in the gross, with such a degree of justness as suffices for the present question.

Indeed you "think we carry our censures of the Heathens too far." I dare not carry them so far as to say, no Heathen shall be saved. But this I say; I never knew an Heathen

yet (and I have personally known many out of various nations) who was not a slave to some gross vice or other. Bad, therefore, as nominal Christians are, I cannot yet place them on a level with the Heathens; not even with the mild, courteous, conversable Heathens who border on Georgia and Carolina. Much less would I say, "Possibly the Heathens may be less vicious than the Christian world in general." If I believed this, I should bid adieu to Christianity, and commence Heathen without delay.

"But if we allow mankind to be ever so wicked, suppose there is not one upon earth who is truly righteous, it will not follow that men are naturally corrupt; for a sinful action does not infer a sinful nature. If it does, then Adam brought a sinful nature with him into the world. But if we cannot infer from Adam's sin, that his nature was originally corrupt, neither can we infer from the wickedness of all mankind, be it ever so great, that they have a sinful nature." (Pages 52, 53.)

The consequence is not good: "If one man's committing a sin does not prove that he was naturally inclined to evil, then the wickedness of all mankind for six thousand years will not prove that they are naturally inclined to evil." For we may easily account for one man's committing sin, though he was not naturally inclined to evil; but not so easily, for "all flesh corrupting themselves," for the wickedness of all mankind in all ages. It is not possible rationally to account for this, for the general wickedness of mankind; for such a majority of men, through all generations, being so corrupt; but on the supposition of their having a corrupt nature. Sin in one or a few cases, does not prove a sinful nature; but sin over-spreading the earth, does. Nor is your argument drawn from the sin of the angels, (pp. 54, 55,) of any more force than that drawn from the sin of Adam, unless you can prove that as great a majority of angels as of men have rebelled against their Creator.

"Again: If our first parents felt fear and shame, and yet their nature was not originally corrupt, then it will not follow that ours is so, notwithstanding our uneasy and unruly passions." Empty sound! Had any one said to Adam, "Your nature was originally corrupt, for you feel uneasy and unruly passions;" would he not readily have answered, "But these began at such an hour; till then my nature was without either pain or corruption." Apply this to any child of Adam; and if he can answer in like manner, "Till such an hour no uneasy

or unruly passion had any place in my breast ;” we will then grant, these passions no more prove a corrupt nature in the sons than in their first father. But no man can answer thus. You, and I, and every man, must acknowledge, that uneasy and unruly passions are coeval with our understanding and memory at least, if not with our very being.

“Again: Adam by his sin brought sufferings on himself and his posterity. Yet it does not follow, that his nature was corrupt. Therefore, though others by their sins bring sufferings on themselves and their posterity, it will not follow that their nature is corrupt, or under the displeasure of God.” Two very different things are here blended together. The corruption of their nature is one thing, the displeasure of God another. None affirms that those sufferings which men by their sins bring on themselves or posterity prove that their nature is corrupt. But do not the various sufferings of all mankind prove that they are under the displeasure of God? It is certain no suffering came upon Adam till he was under the displeasure of God.

Again: “If our first parents, by their sin, brought suffering both on themselves and others, and yet their nature was not originally corrupt, nor under the displeasure of God, it clearly follows that the nature of those who suffer purely in consequence of their sin is not originally corrupt, nor are they under God’s displeasure.” This argument is bad every way. For, 1. At the time when Adam brought the sentence of suffering both on himself and others, his nature was corrupt, and he was under the actual displeasure of God. But, 2. Suppose it were otherwise, all you could possibly infer, with regard to his posterity, is, that their suffering does not prove their corruption, or their being under the displeasure of God. How could you think their suffering would prove them not corrupt, not under God’s displeasure? Therefore, neither this nor the preceding argument (seeing both are utterly inconclusive) “take off anything that Dr. Watts has said,” touching the present state of the world, as a proof of God’s displeasure, and the natural corruption of man. So far, therefore, is “his argument from the sinfulness and misery of mankind from being altogether insufficient in every part,” that it is strong and conclusive, anything you have advanced to the contrary notwithstanding.

You add: "Suffering may happen where there is no sin; as in the case of brutes and infants; or where there is the most perfect innocence; as in the case of our blessed Lord." Absolutely true; that is, where there is no personal sin, but only sin imputed. There was no personal sin in our blessed Lord; there can be none either in brutes or infants. He suffered, therefore, for the sins of others, which were thus imputed to him; as is the sin of Adam to infants, who suffer death through him; and, in some sense, to the whole creation; which was "made subject to vanity, not willingly," but on account of his transgression. But where there is no sin, either personal or imputed, there can be no suffering.

"I may add, from the present state of things, a directly opposite argument may be taken: From the enjoyments and comforts, the good things and blessings, which abound in the world, I might ask, Are these creatures, so well provided for, under God's displeasure? Are they not the care of his goodness? Does he not love them, and delight to do them good?" (Pages 58-61.) I answer, God does still give us many good things, many enjoyments, comforts, and blessings. But all these are given through the "Seed of the woman;" they are all the purchase of his blood. Through Him we are still the care of the divine goodness, and God does delight to do us good: But this does not at all prove, either that we have not a sinful nature, or that we are not, while sinful, under his displeasure.

SECTION IV.

SOME CONSEQUENCES OF THE DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN.

"By this doctrine some have been led to maintain, 1. That men have not a sufficient power to perform their duty. But if so, it ceases to be their duty." (Pages 63-69.) I maintain, that men have not this power by nature: But they have or may have it by grace; therefore it does not cease to be their duty. And if they perform it not, they are without excuse.

"Hence some maintain, 2. That we have no reason to thank our Creator for our being." (Pages 70-73.) He that will maintain it, may. But it does by no means follow from this