

LOGICAL TRACTS,

COMPRISING

OBSERVATIONS and ESSAYS

ILLUSTRATIVE OF

Mr. LOCKE'S TREATISE

UPON THE

HUMAN UNDERSTANDING:

With Occasional Remarks on the Writings of the

TWO SCOTTISH PROFESSORS,

REID AND STEWART,

UPON THE SAME SUBJECT:

AND A PREFACE IN VINDICATION OF

Mr. LOCKE,

AGAINST THE

MISTAKES AND MISREPRESENTATIONS

OF THE LATE.

Mr. MILNER, of HULL,

Dr. HORNE, BISHOP OF NORWICH;

Mr. KETT, FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, OXFORD;

AND

Dr. NAPLETON, CANON OF HEREFORD.

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P R E F A C E.

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THE following papers were intended for the improvement in the art of reasoning of such young students in divinity as are *able* to read the writings of Mr. Locke, Bishops Butler, Hurd and Warburton, with those of Dr. Balguy, Powell and Ogden : as for all others, whether the admirers of Messrs. Hutchinson, Jones (of Nayland, commonly called Trinity Jones) Romaine, Milner, Overton, Swedenborg, &c. &c. no man who knows what reasoning is, will think of offering any to such, who reject the very foundation of it, *clear* and *precise* ideas : you might as well think of instructing a man in reading who should refuse to learn his alphabet.

Taught to consider the *attainment of truth* as a matter of the highest concern to intelligent creatures ; and *that* of religious truth as the most important employment in which men can possibly be engaged, I have ever thought my warmest gratitude due to that Being, through whose kind pro-

vidence the care of my education was intrusted to Drs. Powell and Balguy, of St. John's College, Cambridge. Men whose writings have justified the opinion the world entertained of their abilities. Possessed of integrity equal to their abilities, they were much too honest to follow the usual practice of the bigoted partizans of particular opinions : they therefore justly thought it their duty, not to furnish me with their *own* creed, but to teach me to reason, and to use with propriety and fairness, those faculties which God had given me. They had sense enough to see, that if they did their duty in this case, they could neither be responsible for the use I might make of my faculties, or for the folly, or falsity of the opinions I might embrace : and as far as the truth, or the wisdom of these opinions depended upon the quantity of abilities I might possess, they knew performance in this respect would be accepted according to what a man hath, and would not be required according to what a man hath not, because the judge of all the earth will do right. It is surely very strange that there can be more than one opinion upon this matter, and yet I have heard many of those who are called serious Divines, blame the late Norrisian Lecturer, Dr. Hey, for *not* entertaining any *fixed* opinions himself, and for *not* teaching his hearers *any* opinions *at all* ; and I have heard at least an equal number of the same sort of persons blame him for entertaining *false* opinions, or for teaching his hearers *such*. But so it is, though protestants univer-

sally agree to reprobate the infallibility of the Pope they universally act, as if all the different denominations of christians were possessed of it. I was however, taught to pay no regard to human authority in matters of opinion, and to consider *that* truth alone to be worth attention, which was supported by *clear* and uncontrovertible reasoning ; for when the arguments on both sides are in perfect equilibrium, the matter under consideration cannot *possibly* be of any importance. But though I am far from thinking Mr. Locke, or any man to be infallible, yet in vindicating the character of this great writer, from the aspersions thrown upon it so long after his death ; I am but discharging a common duty of humanity, which survivors owe to those who have deserved well of mankind by their literary labours, when they are past the power of appearing in their own defence. It is indeed singular that *all* Mr. Locke's opponents, from Stillingfleet and Edwards, to Kett and Milner, should shew such a decided aversion to the acquisition of *distinct* ideas, and the use of clear reasoning ; and it is surely not a little wonderful that those who have been considered as men of real piety should be *dishonest* enough to bring *general* charges, which no man can refute, because no man can discover the points objected to. Of this sort is that brought by Mr. Joseph Milner, in his reply to Gibbon. In p. 154, he tells us, that Mr. Locke led the fashion of introducing a *pompous parade* of *reasoning* into religion : from that time, says Mr. M.

a rational religion has been the cant term of all who profess to be wiser than others.

With equal truth, honesty, and discernment, Mr. Kett, in his history, the interpreter of prophecy, brings a like general charge against Mr. Locke. In vol. iii. p. 17, 18, edit. i. and vol. ii. p. 131, 132 edit. ii. he says, "that Mr. Locke's writings led to a scepticism, eventually hurtful to religion; and though a loyal subject, his political writings generated doctrines hurtful to monarchical government, and indeed to civil society. The Essay on the Human Understanding, in itself so profound and useful, with a considerable degree of erroneous theory, as might be expected from a man even of the greatest genius, exploring untrodden, intricate, and arduous paths, brought a greater accession to man of knowledge of those powers, by which he is peculiarly distinguished, than any book that had ever been written. It tended also to sharpen, and invigorate the faculties. But the caution with which it examined different species and degrees of evidence; a caution right, as far as it merely prevented error, sometimes refused to admit truth, sought proof of a different kind from that which the nature of the subject required, doubted wherein the plain judgment of common sense, no doubt could exist, and afforded supposed data, from whence ingenious men might form the most visionary theories."

It has often been observed, that children can ask questions, which the wisest men cannot an-

swer; it is no less true, that persons, the most slightly acquainted with any subjects, can bring *general* accusations, which it may be, no man, however well acquainted with the subject can refute. If Mr. Milner, or Mr. Kett had specified particular instances, upon which these very serious accusations were founded; such charges would then have had a claim to be considered as something *more than mere* calumnies. But till Mr. Milner's admirers bring *proof where* Mr. Locke introduces a *pompous parade of reasoning* into religion; and till Mr. K. points out that erroneous theory, which, he affirms is to be found in a *considerable degree*, in the Essay upon the Human Understanding; till he shews *where* Mr. Locke refuses to *admit* truth, or seeks proof of a *different* kind from that which the *nature* of the subject *required*; till he acquaints us where Mr. Locke doubted upon subjects, which in the plain judgment of common *sense*, admitted of *no* doubt, and till he points out the matters which afforded data for the theories of visionary men, and what those writings of Mr. Locke are which *necessarily* led to scepticism, and infidelity; we must beg to consider Mr. Kett as an encourager of the present fashionable political slander. For unless Mr. Locke's writings *necessarily* led to scepticism, and infidelity, Mr. Locke is no more to be blamed than the inventors of printing are, for all the atheistical, profane, obscene, and treasonable books, which have ever issued from the press: by which this noble invention has proved *eventually*

hurtful, not only to religion, but also to civil society. Nevertheless, however warm Mr. Kett's zeal may be, we trust, he will not venture to assert, that Mr. Locke ever wrote any thing hostile to limited monarchy, much less will Mr. Kett venture to declare, that *he* thinks *despotism* preferable to a *free* government.

But let us do Mr. Kett justice : all his charges we believe are not imaginary ; whether he will have better luck with his *founded*, than with his *unfounded* charges, will soon appear. Mr. Kett says, that Mr. Locke affirms that we have no *certain* evidence for the existence of any objects, but ourselves individually, and the Deity.—Mr. Kett cannot mean that Mr. Locke denies the evidence of sense.

This charge then I suppose Mr. Kett grounds upon the first, and second sections of the eleventh chapter of the fourth book of Mr. Locke's Essay. The knowledge of our (own) being, says Mr. Locke, we have by intuition. The existence of God, reason (arguing from the information of our several senses, Rom. i. 20.) clearly makes known to us. The knowledge of the existence of all other things we receive only by *actual* sensation. Had Mr. Kett attended more closely to Mr. Locke's meaning, or had he more clearly understood his own, he would never have brought this objection.

The knowledge men are in *general*, and *usually* possessed of, arises from the exertion of our powers, either of perception, or sensation. By our powers

of perception I understand those internal faculties of the mind, through whose action we are conscious of our own existence ; and by whose action we become acquainted with the relations between our ideas ; whether such relations are discoverable, *immediately* and *intuitively*, or *mediately*, that is, by the interposition of other ideas. By the powers of sensation, I understand those corporeal faculties by which we become acquainted with the works of nature, that is, with the different objects of the material world, and the respective effects of these objects upon each other, and also upon ourselves. Now the action of these powers of sense is confined to our own personal presence ; we can receive no information from them respecting any objects existing, or respecting the effects produced by such objects, in places from which we are absent ; and therefore all the proof we can have of the existence and reality of the material world, is confined to the *small* reach of our bodily senses (I consider not now the trifling assistance they can receive from art.) Nothing so certain as that it is utterly impossible that we can have the testimony of our senses, for the existence of such objects, as are removed by *distance* out of the sphere of their operation. This testimony of sense can continue no longer, than while the senses continue to act. Their testimony does, and must *cease* with their action. What therefore we are not *sure* of by the *present*, i. e. the existing testimony of our senses,

may possibly be false, but what *may* possibly be false, cannot *necessarily* be true, that is, cannot be *certain*. And therefore, whatever becomes of the plain judgment of *common sense*, we must doubt of the existence of all such parts of the material world as are not the present objects of our senses. For, with respect to knowledge, there are only two states of mind, certainty and doubt; and of course where the former does not obtain, the latter must. But the works of creation, or the effects of these works upon each other furnish all the objects of that sort of knowledge which we receive through the senses; and therefore this knowledge is a standing and continual proof of the existence of God; which does and must attend the (constant) action of our senses.

Mr. Kett instances, in Berkely and Hume, as some of those visionary writers whose fanciful systems rose from pursuing Locke's principles. It would have been much more to his purpose had he shewn *what* these principles were, and *how* they led to such systems. With the same attention to *precise* proof he quotes Warburton's works *at large*; surely in such a voluminous writer he should not only have quoted the *particular* words, but also have referred to the particular place where they are to be found. Or is it that he thought with his fellow academic, Dr. Knox, to establish truth by the argument of *authority*, just as another of his fellow academics thought to establish it by the argument of *etymology*.

Mr. Kett tells us, that Mr. Locke contributed more than any other writer to the knowledge of those powers of the human mind, by which mankind are peculiarly distinguished. What then is this new faculty which Mr. Kett introduces to us under the title of *common sense*; a faculty which it seems prevents, or removes doubts, that cannot be dispelled by all those wonderful faculties with which Mr. Locke brings us acquainted? What is the object of its action, or the mode of its operation? And wherein does it differ from those other powers of the mind which Mr. Locke so clearly explains? Till Mr. Kett is pleased to give us some more precise account of it, than he has yet done, we must beg to be excused from considering it as worthy of attention. Or is Mr. Kett giving us a sample of it, when at p. 14. Vol. iii. of his first edit. or p. 129. Vol. ii. of his second edit. he accuses certain protestant writers of quitting the *strong holds* of Scripture doctrine, and arguing upon what *they* called, the *principles* of natural religion. It should seem however, as if neither these protestant writers, nor their corrector, knew much of either the one, or the other. An attention to what is meant by the strong holds of Scripture doctrine, and what by natural religion, would have shewn him that the charge was absurd, because the crime was impossible. For what do we mean by natural religion, but the knowledge of *such* truths respecting God, as can be collected by human reason, from a consideration of his works? And is it possible

that such truths should at all clash with those truths, which he is pleased to *declare*, that is with the doctrines of revelation? And what were these principles of natural religion for which Mr. Kett's protestant writers so injudiciously forsook the strong holds of Scripture doctrine? Why the admission "that faith depends not upon the will, but upon the understanding," that "when the evidence for the truth of a proposition is *full* and *clear*, this evidence *constrains* assent, but that no blame is imputable for rejecting a proposition for which the mind cannot see evidence; and that we are *not* called upon to *believe*, what we *cannot* comprehend." Who these protestant writers were, who could not see the difference between the principles of logic, and those of natural religion I know not; but to whatever species of knowledge these principles may belong, they certainly belong no more to natural religion, than they do to natural philosophy. If by *faith* you mean the *mere simple* act of the understanding, expressed by the word belief; (abstracted from all consideration of the influence, which the subject matter of such belief *ought* to have upon the conduct,) the *naked* assent of the mind to the truth of a proposition, not admitting demonstration, or sensible proof: if by the *full* and *clear* evidence for the truth of a proposition, you mean demonstration, and if you further mean that men are not blameable for withholding their assent to propositions, of which no *sufficient* proof is given: and of *this* sufficiency they *themselves* must

judge at their *own* peril (for it is *this* circumstance which constitutes a state of trial) nothing certainly can be more true, than these assertions. And had Mr. Kett's views of *revealed* religion been a whit clearer than those which he seems to have of *natural*, or had his knowledge of the powers of the human mind, and their respective operations, been as distinct, as those persons ought to have, who take upon them to criticise Mr. Locke, he would have better understood the nature of what he calls the strong holds of Scripture doctrine, and what the difference of the ideas is which respect the very *distinct* operations of the mind from which knowledge and belief arise. But we will not follow the example of Mr. Kett, in bringing *general* and *unsupported* charges.

One great purpose of revelation is, to bring men acquainted with *such* truths, as they are *unable* to discover by the *customary* use of their *natural* faculties, or with *such* facts as their *customary* experience might incline them to disbelieve. Not as Mr. Kett affirms to give them information which they cannot understand; yet such must be the case if men can be called upon, i. e. be under *moral* obligations to *believe* what they *cannot comprehend*. The whole knowledge of revelation is a knowledge of *facts*, or of the consequences of *these* facts. *This* knowledge is *now* conveyed to mankind only through the medium of human language. Can we then believe the truth of these facts, or the reality of these effects without comprehending the mean-

ing of the words by which these truths are conveyed to us? If you say we *can*, then all translations of the Scriptures are *needless*: for wherefore are they translated, but because men do not understand the original tongues, that is, because otherwise, men would not be able to comprehend what they are called upon to believe.

Human knowledge is received by several different ways, and this knowledge is called by different names, according to the different ways by which it is received; but in whatever way it is received, unless the ideas of which it is composed are clear and distinct, it ceases to be knowledge, we can learn nothing from such imperfect information. It is just the same as if the faculties of the mind were *unable* to perceive, or those of the body were incapable of transmitting the impressions of external objects; or as if we were *ignorant* of the ideas usually annexed to the words which we hear or see.---
But further—

The only circumstance in which these various sorts of knowledge differ from each other, is in the degree of probability naturally attendant upon each sort. That knowledge therefore which arises from our *own* perceptions, and that which we receive from the information of other beings vary only in their probability, which may approach nearer to absolute certainty than by any assigned difference. And the *degree* of probability, attached to each sort of knowledge, depends, not upon the clearness or obscurity of the ideas composing such knowledge,

but upon the manner by which it is received. A lie is not less a lie for being more or less clearly understood. Now certain knowledge arises from our perceptions *only*, whether *internal* or *external*; it wholly depends upon the *accuracy* of our *natural* powers; but probable knowledge (which arises chiefly from the information of others, and is the peculiar subject of faith, built upon mere human testimony) depends not upon the strength of our original powers, i. e. of those powers which our Creator has given us, so much as upon our acquired dexterity in the use of them: and judgment is that operation of the mind by which we estimate the *value* of probability. For judgment is not a faculty of the mind, but, like attention and consideration, an act of the understanding. The perceptive faculties then, i. e. our original powers, enable us to *discern* the various circumstances upon which the probability of events depends, and by the judgment we are enabled to estimate the value of this probability. But we can no more estimate the value of probability, than we can discern the circumstances upon which it depends, unless the ideas relating to both these matters, are *clear* and distinct, that is, unless we comprehend them. It is impossible therefore to exercise any act of faith about matters of which we are intirely ignorant: *some* knowledge we must have; but though this knowledge may be more, or less particular, yet it must be clear, and we cannot believe any farther than it is so; that is, we can *no more* believe, than *we can* know what we do *not*

comprehend. An instance will explain this matter. All persons, who are convinced of the truth of the Scriptures; must believe that Jesus is the Son of God; yet no person believes that Jesus is the Son of God in the *same way* that he believes, every man-child born into the world, is the son of his father. This *no* person believes, because *every* person *knows* it to be impossible, in the literal sense of the words, according to all human acceptance. But we believe not what we *cannot* comprehend, but what we perfectly can: that as children derive their existence, not from any act of their own, but from their parents, so Christ derived his existence from God, John v. 26. Thus faith is *ἔλεγχος πραγμάτων ἢ ἐλερομένων*---the proof of *matters* which are *not* objects of sense to us, and which therefore admit of no other proof than testimony. But testimony which we can not understand, that is, information which we cannot comprehend, is no information at all. I Cor. xiv. 11.

Such however is the force of prejudice, aided by confused and imperfect knowledge, that many good persons are persuaded, that both themselves, and others *believe*, what they *cannot* comprehend. Yet is there just as much difference between believing the truth, i. e. the reality of a matter of fact, and believing the *way* by which such matter of fact has been brought to pass, as there is between experiencing our *own belief* of a matter of fact, and experiencing the *fact* itself. When therefore our belief of the creation is urged as an instance of our believ-

ing what we do not comprehend, because we do not comprehend *how*, or by *what particular* means, God made the world, the argument has no force. Because though all persons believe that God made the world, no persons believe *how*, or by what particular means, he made it. But it is *that* matter *only* which we do not comprehend. We know the world exists by the testimony of our senses; and we know from reason that things cannot create themselves, that being to act, *before* they had the power of acting. He therefore who built all things is God.

Just in the same way as these good people cannot see the difference between believing the existence of a matter of fact, and believing the way *by which* this existence is produced; so neither can they see the difference between the information communicated by positive, or by (what are called) negative ideas. (See Hey's Norrison Lectures, Vol. III. Book IV. Introduction to Part II. Sect. vii. p. 124.) Yet from this latter sort of information we do not learn what a thing *is*, but what *it is not*. A very scanty species of knowledge indeed! But upon the ground of this imaginary knowledge it has been said, "you believe that God is a spirit, that is, you believe what you cannot comprehend. To be sure no person comprehends what a spirit is, the term spirit conveys only a negative idea. A spirit hath *not* flesh and bones. But though you do not comprehend what a spirit

is, neither do you *believe* what a spirit is : you only believe what it is *not* ; it is not any such matter as you are acquainted with ; and this you *fully* comprehend. You believe God does not consist of any such matter as you are acquainted with. Can any thing be more intelligible ?

But it is not merely a want of *clear* ideas, and *precise* knowledge, a common, but utterly groundless prejudice, respecting the nature of mysteries, has contributed not a little to establish this notion of the possibility of believing what we cannot comprehend ; i. e. what is unintelligible. It has been imagined that mysteries, *as* mysteries, made a *necessary* part of revealed religion ; as if it was *requisite*, that revelation should never be *without* some parts unintelligible, and incomprehensible to the human understanding. But though it is reasonable to expect that we should be left ignorant of many things both in the works, and the word of God ; and though many important ends may be answered, by things being kept secret for *some time*, yet what benefit can possibly arise from secrets which are *never* to be revealed ? It cannot therefore be of the essence of a mystery that it should *never* be disclosed : for that is to make it essential to a mystery that it should be *useless*. And we may observe, that *this* word is most usually applied in Scripture to matters which *once* were secrets, but which for certain important reasons are *now* revealed, Matt. xiii. 11. Rom. xi. 25. xvi. 25. Eph. iii. 4.*

* A fondness for the delusive moon-shine of imagination, and an aversion to the *clear* and *strong* light of reason, so conspicuous in many

A want of ability to perceive the difference, between *original* and *transmitted* revelation, and the metaphorical expression, the *word* of God, affectedly applied to the Scriptures,* has occasioned many persons to ascribe the same authority to the writings of inspired men, as is due to the *immediate*, and if I may so say, *personal* declarations of God himself ; and it has been asked respecting the *present* assurance of faith, “ what then, does not the evidence of God carry *certainty* along with it ? Undoubtedly it does. God has unquestionably given information to particular persons, at sundry times, and in divers manners ; in dreams, and visions, and by an audible voice, as well as by the

pious persons, leads them equally aside from the truth in contrary directions. Thus while some are so eager to make mysteries a necessary part of revelation, others write as if they meant to discard every thing of that kind from *it* ; and so the author of the *Horæ Solitariae* deduces almost all the peculiarities of Christianity from the verbal expressions of the *Jewish* Scriptures ; inasmuch that the antient Jews (if they understood their own mother tongue as well as this author) must have been very little behind the Apostles (even after the descent of the Holy Ghost) in their knowledge of Christian salvation. And though Paul profited in the knowledge of the Mosaic economy above many of his own countrymen, and though he received his knowledge of the Christian dispensation from the author of it, Gal. i. 12. yet must he have been strangely mistaken when he asserts that what he spoke was the *hidden* wisdom of God, which in other ages was *not* made *known* to (any of) the sons of men ; if it be true (as this author asserts) that our present very imperfect knowledge of the Hebrew tongue is sufficient to prove the very contrary.

* All that any man (says Dr. Hey, *Norrifian Lectures*, B. I. Chap. i. Sect. 6. & Chap. xii. Sect. 14. parag. 2. in vol. I. pages 4, & 111. & B. IV. Introduction to Part 2d. Sect. 14. p. 131) should really be understood to mean, when he speaks of the word of God, is human interpretations of it.

incomprehensible mode of secret inspiration. But in all these cases, they who received such information, received, we may be sure, unquestionable *marks* of the divinity of it, though we are, and must be ignorant of the nature of *these* marks. For had not this been the case, every idle fancy of folly, and every extravagant freak of enthusiasm might have passed for divine revelation. At present however we know of no other mark by which we can be assured that we receive truth upon the *immediate* evidence of God, but that it has been miraculously conveyed to us. We may indeed reasonably presume that words spoken to us by God himself, must be free from all uncertainty, because God not only clearly knows what Himself means; He also knows *as* clearly, whether his communication is *perfectly* understood; but this cannot be the case with knowledge communicated by any other being, since God *alone* knoweth the thoughts. But when original revelation is transmitted to us by uninspired men (and in these days we have no other) by the *usual* mode of human communication, i. e. by human language, such information must (without a miracle) partake of all the imperfections, and uncertainty, of this imperfect, and uncertain mode of communication.

Mr. Kett thinks himself justified, if *not* in the *truth* at least in the *propriety* of bringing these charges against Mr. Locke, by the authority of Warburton and Mackintosh, who Mr. Kett affirms, (p. 17. Vol. iii. edit. i. or p. 131. Vol. ii. edit. ii.) justly

observe, "that we cannot exceed the bounds prescribed for human knowledge, without involving ourselves in contradiction and absurdity: that nothing has produced more pernicious mischief to society, than the pursuit of principles in themselves good, far beyond the bounds, in which they are good." Now what are we to understand in this place by principles? Not principles of *mere* knowledge surely! These may be *true*, or *false*; but whoever thought of intuitive truths, which is what we usually mean by principles being *good* or *bad*? Not principles of morality! For these, if good, must for *ever* continue to be good. There are no bounds, or limits to what is fit, right, proper; commendable, praise-worthy in *itself*, after which it becomes unfit, wrong, improper, wicked, detestable, abominable. When we describe moral principles as *right* in *themselves*, we mean that they are *eternally* right, that they do not admit of any change. That truth, justice, humanity, honesty, cannot become falsehood, fraud, cruelty, knavery, how far soever carried. Or are we to suppose that these authors meant, what *alone can* be meant, principles of *expediency* or *utility*; all this may be very true, but is very trifling. Because who sees not that the general benefit of mankind must depend upon a great variety of circumstances, for which no *fixed* rule can possibly be given?

But what are *these bounds* prescribed for human knowledge? and who has prescribed them? The

powers of the human mind are certainly not unlimited, but who can say what these limits are? Ideas suggested by external objects, and these ideas variously modified by the different faculties of the understanding, are the materials of all our knowledge; and where ideas are either absolutely wanting, or are much confused, and very obscure, we shall either have no knowledge at all, or it will be exceedingly imperfect; which of these two is the case with Messrs. Milner and Kett, the public must determine; and those who can find out Mr. Locke's faults by the light such writers afford, must have good eyes indeed.

Mr. Kett has also recourse to testimony for the proof of the mischiefs generated by Mr. Locke's mistakes; and when he *produces* this testimony, or those mistakes upon which this testimony is founded, it will be time enough to consider of a reply to such vague, *confused* and unmeaning, accusations.

Dr. Napleton, in his advice to students in divinity, follows not a little the practice of Messrs. Milner and Kett; and at p. 34, warns those who read Mr. Locke's Theological writings, "to be cautious how they follow his opinions in such passages of Scripture as relate to the divinity of our Lord, or the assistance of the Holy Spirit." He would have done more credit to the *fairness* of his advice, if he had pointed out the exceptionable passages, and to the *value* of it, if he had pointed

out his reasons for thinking these passages exceptionable.

Bishop Horne also has thought proper to controvert Mr. Locke's notions of civil government; but he has done it, as all honest inquirers after truth ought to do, by endeavouring to shew the falsity of Mr. Locke's reasoning; with what success the readers of this defence of Mr. Locke, must determine.

The Bishop begins his Discourse upon the Origin of civil government, with observing, "that it is a natural, and a laudable curiosity to inquire into the origin of civil government, and to know at *what* time, and under *whose* direction, an institution was devised capable of contributing so much to the production, furtherance, and establishment of human happiness." It would be a curiosity equally natural, and equally laudable, to inquire into, and ascertain, at *what* time, and under whose direction, the various arts of life, which contribute so much to the comfort and well being of mankind were *invented*, and by *whom* they were brought to their present state of perfection. And is not each of these inquiries equally practicable? And does not the nature and constitution of this world plainly shew, that both are alike impossible? Not only the *constitution* of that *nature*, which God has unalterably appointed, is a progressive one; that state of happiness also, which mankind are enabled to attain, by the exertion of those faculties which God has given them, is likewise a progressive state.

The productions of nature can no more reach that degree of perfection they are capable of at *once*, or of a sudden, than the habits and dispositions of the moral, the wisdom of the intellectual, or the dexterity and address of the active world. Time and labour, and cultivation, must mature the first; attention, diligence, and repeated efforts must complete the last. Whatever the state of our first parents, of the animal, vegetable, and material world might be, it was, and must be totally different, from that of each individual thing, which was to succeed. The *origin* of a state of nature, and the *continuance* of *that* state, have nothing in common. The first was a miracle, not to be repeated; the second, though no less wonderful, loses the name of miracle, from its continual repetition. We know no more how the natural and moral world were set agoing, than we know how the planets were projected in their orbits, and you might just as well ask when an acorn became an oak, a child a man, or when London became a city, as to ask at *what* time, and under whose direction civil government was established? The British government is universally and deservedly admired; but who can say *when*, and under whose direction it was, or whether it is even *yet* established? It has received gradual improvements and amendments, through a long course of year's, and will probably continue to do so pro re nata. Its various excellencies were attained by slow degrees, and are no more the worse for being the

fruit of strife and contention, than the religion of Christ is, Philip. i. 15. and provided the happiness of mankind is but promoted, we have unquestionable cause to rejoice, and as lovers of our country may say with the Apostle, "yea and we will rejoice." To take an instance in our own memory. During the long administration of Sir Robert Walpole, whenever the minister was teased with a troublesome pamphlet, he used to send his myrmidons with a *general* warrant to search the printing-offices for treasonable papers; not indeed with the hopes, or even the expectations of finding any, but merely to plague the *opposition* printers, by overturning their *cases* and making *pye* of their *letter*; because he had nothing upon which he could ground a legal process. But these *general* warrants have since been declared *illegal*, and now no minister dares to issue them, and we may venture to predict never will. The Bishop indeed speaks of civil society as if it was the invention of an hour, or the work of a day. For, who that thought otherwise, would expect to ascertain "at *what* time, and under whose direction, a machine was constructed capable, by a variety of well adjusted springs and movements, of controlling the irregularities of depraved nature, &c. and securing to us the numerous benefits of government."

Aristocratic and democratic forms of government, the Bishop tells us are *illegitimate* forms of government.—No law surely but that of God can

ordain a form of government for *all* mankind. These friends of the good Bishop then, who thought his Sermon worth republishing in that wise compilation, called the Scholar Armed, would be kind to his memory and his reputation, if they would tell us in what part of the Bible these forms are declared to be illegitimate; and also in what part of it a description of that legitimate form is to be found, which the Bishop and his friends seem so anxious to establish. Whether his, and their anxiety arose from a desire to derive every thing from a religious original, just as certain other pious persons were anxious to derive all arts and sciences, from the Bible, I know not; but considering how very careful good persons often are of their own interest, it would not be strange, if having heard of that celebrated maxim, "no bishop, no king," they might be apprehensive, the converse should be no less true. However when these friends of his Lordship can shew where directions for this legitimate form of government are to be found in the word of God, I will undertake to answer those questions which the Bishop asks with such an air of triumph, viz. *Where* the universal assembly was convened? and who had authority to convene it? and how the proceedings of this assembly were regulated, &c. &c.?^{*}

* Had the Bishop's understanding been as good as his dispositions he would have seen, that when writers on *moral* subjects (meaning by moral subjects, such subjects as respect the conduct of mankind) describe the manner in which such conduct may be attained: they do not mean to describe the conduct which *actually*, and in fact prevails, but such as would prevail, were men governed by their reason,

To fathers in their private families, says the Bishop, after Mr. Hooker (whom by the by with the usual honesty of polemical writers, he can either quote, or pass over in silence, as best suits his purpose) nature has given supreme power.

judging, from the nature, and faculties their Creator has given them, and the situation and circumstances in which he has placed them. Just as mathematicians, when they demonstrate the various properties of different figures, mean only to shew the *relations* between certain *ideas*. For these relations no longer obtain when you pass from *abstract* ideas to *real* existence. Not a single proposition in Euclid is true of a triangle drawn upon paper, or cut out of any material whatsoever; that is, when from ideas in the mind they become objects of our corporeal senses. It is unquestionably true that the three angles of a triangle are *exactly* equal to two right ones. But draw the figure, and the proposition, as referred to *that* figure, or to any triangular figure, in which matter is concerned, is no longer true. Thus again we are told, that "by the first law of motion, a body when acted upon by a single impulse, will continue to move uniformly *for ever*, and will *for ever* persevere in its *original* direction. Yet when this law is applied to matter *actually* existing, it *ceases* to be true. Nobody ever saw *such* motion. So again, when Sir Isaac Newton discovered that the moon's motion was of the *like* kind, that it would be, if the *law* of gravitation, observable upon the *surface* of the *earth*, reached to that planet; he did not mean to assert, that gravitation was the *cause* of the moon's motion; because for aught any one can tell, an angel may carry it about, but he meant to shew that such a force would produce the *same* effect. And when writers assert certain matters relative to civil government, or church authority, they do not mean to assert, that civil government, or church authority, *actually* arose from such circumstances, but that these circumstances would certainly produce *such* civil government and such church authority, as in the want of either, would answer the ends *proposed* by *such* institutions.

Proofs that matters *can* arise from certain circumstances may be derived from abstract reasoning, proofs, that matters *actually* did arise from certain circumstances, can only be derived from our *own* experience, or from *that* of others, made known to us by their testimony. Those therefore who assert that the writers upon civil society have contributed to the madness of French philosophy, misunderstand the nature of the reasoning employed by these writers.

Nature ! The God of nature surely ! The term nature is a *mere* word, and when we talk of the gifts of nature, we mean those gifts of God, those powers, faculties, qualifications, qualities, which he bestows *indiscriminately*, though perhaps not equally upon all the various species of beings respectively : and from considering these various natural powers, faculties, &c. we collect the purposes they were intended to answer, and of course the end for which they were given : and this is the *great* and *general* argument of final causes from which most of our knowledge is derived. What then, I ask, are the purposes for which this supreme power is given ? and why is it given by *nature* to fathers *only*, and not to mothers ? and how does it appear that this power is given to *one* parent *only* ? and what are we to understand by *supreme power* ? If I have any ideas to the words supreme power, it means the highest possible degree of power, which can be exercised over whatever is the object of it. Now the highest degree of power which human creatures can exercise over living beings is, the power of life and death. What then are those circumstances of mankind, from which we are to conclude, that *nature* gives *this* *supreme* power, i. e. the power of *life* and *death* over their offspring to fathers in their private families ? what is the use of such a power, and why is it given to the father *only*, and not to the mother ? of whom the Bishop says nothing !

Or is it meant only to shew that *some* sort of

power does, and must exist amongst mankind ? But whatever power may exist amongst men, natural reason, and divine revelation equally shew that it cannot be the *right* (for that is what we mean in the present case by the word power) of life and death, except in the case of self-defence. In civil society indeed men may agree to establish any punishment for offences against the *State* (such are all crimes in the proper sense of the word) which they may think proper. Because all punishments for *crimes* are upon the ground of *self-defence*, nor can such an agreement be unjust. *Public* punishments when not inflicted upon the innocent, may be *harsh*, or *cruel*, but they cannot be *unjust*. But what is all this to the establishment of civil power ? a power instituted for very different purposes, than those of fathers in their private families. Political and paternal power differ so *much* in the *ends* to be answered by them, that no inference can be made, nor any conclusion drawn from one to the other. A father may bring up his children in what religion he pleases ; and he has this power (right) if he has it any way by *nature*. But may a king provide such religion for his subjects as he thinks proper, and *compel* them to receive it ? Indeed nothing but the utmost ignorance of human nature, and the strongest prejudice could make any person entertain a notion that civil government, can have any *other end* than the temporal benefit of mankind ; or any other foundation, than the *actual* or *tacit* consent, (whatever

the motives to such consent may be) of those, who for their *general* interest, submit to it.

What work men made, when the fashion was to determine the *origin* and *form* of civil government, the extent of authority, and the degree of subjection due to it, (not from the reasons of things, the laws of our common nature, the practice of particular nations, the tempers, character, and dispositions of mankind in different ages and countries but) from precepts, and precedents, supposed to be contained in the Bible, will, one should think, never be forgotten in *this* nation. And what could follow from so injudicious an appeal to, and so absurd an application of holy scripture, than what did follow, confusion and strife, and every evil work? For while *one* party esteemed monarchy the appointment of God, and princes the Lord's anointed, the other concluded from the *same* authority, and therefore with *equal* reason, that kings were given by God in his anger to scourge the folly of the people who desired them. But an impartial reader of the scriptures must have *clearly* perceived, how little ground there is in them for such decisions: because we no where find any thing more than *general* exhortations to submit to government, to honour magistrates, to be obedient to laws: all these matters are the duties of subjects---not a word of the duties of governors; and have they therefore no duties? Nor is the least hint given in the word of God, that any particular form is either more *preferable* to others, or more

acceptable to him. We no where find any descriptions of the several orders of magistrates; any notices of the particular powers with which they should be invested; any declarations by whose consent or authority the laws should be established, or annulled, altered, or executed. And what is of no less importance, (though very seldom attended to) viz. that had the form of civil government been thus *expressly* appointed of God, it must either have admitted of *no defects*, or *no remedies* for them. The constitution of the English government is deservedly esteemed the most excellent in the world; but could this judicious Bishop, or can his equally judicious admirers find a limited monarchy in the Bible? This constitution has arrived at this high degree of excellence by *numerous*, *slow*, and *repeated alterations*, all which, were monarchy, the appointment of God, would, *without* the *same* appointment, have been utterly sinful.—So much for the political abilities of those zealous persons who thought fit to countenance this courtly publication of the Scholar Armed: their republication of Mr. Willat's Sermon against the Religion of Nature, is an equal proof of their knowledge, and discernment.