

therefore, which the Atheist is allowed to be capable of, though he is so blind as not to see, that that very sensation is the plainest indication of *will*; though, from the eternal truths which he perceives, he is so absurd, as not to discern an *eternal mind*, from which they result; yet this consciousness of his brings him under obligation to act suitably to what he *does see*, to do, or to forbear what he unavoidably judges to be right or wrong; for no stronger obligation can be laid upon a *free-agent*, than that of standing self-approved, or self-condemned.

If this be not so, I should be glad to be informed, whether we are to suppose, that an Atheist is not accountable in a future state for any enormities he may commit here? Or if this be too great a privilege to allow him, upon what principle he can be justly punishable for doing or not doing, what it is maintained he is under *no obligation* to do or to forbear? If the author of the *Divine Legation* is pleased to take occasion of giving an answer to this question, when he publishes the impatiently expected remainder of his valuable work, it will be acknowledged a great instance of goodness and condescension, to overlook the obscurity and low abilities of the enquirer, in regard to the importance of the *difficulty*.

APPENDIX.

There are two arguments relating to the subjects of the foregoing *Remarks*, that seem to be of great weight with the opposers of Dr. Clarke, being frequently insisted on, and repeated by the best writers among them; though one of them is a mere *fallacy*, (which perhaps themselves are not aware of) and the other at least a very precarious supposition.

sition. It may therefore be of some service in this controversy to set them both in a true light, which I shall here endeavour to do, having but lately had occasion to observe the importance they are thought to be of.

It is maintained by Dr. Clarke and his followers, that there are eternal and immutable relations, essential differences of things, and fitnesses resulting from them, independently of the will of God, which are obligatory to all reasonable beings, *antecedent to any positive appointment or declaration* of the will of God concerning them. In opposition to this, several of their adversaries, in order to establish virtue and moral obligation *solely* on the will of God, have argued in different forms of expression to this purpose: That those relations and fitnesses &c. cannot be eternal, or independent on the will of God, since they are *consequences of the existence of things*, proceeding from the determination of his will. And, for the same reason, they urge, that moral obligation cannot be *antecedent* to the will of God, because it could not commence, till *after the will of God* had exhibited certain relations and fitnesses in the creation, from whence morality arises. Now here is the plain *fallacy* of substituting a quite different consideration of things in the room of that, which they pretend to oppose, viz. *particular existences*, instead of *general abstract ideas*; and the will of God, *as express'd or implied in the creation*, for the will of God *explicitly declared* by the command of moral virtues. And who is concerned in this argument I know not, for surely Dr. Clarke or his followers never pretended, that particular existences were eternal, and independent of the will of God; or that the eternal reason and truth of things were obligatory to reasonable creatures, before the will of God had brought any such into existence. The relations and fitnesses, they speak of, are *truths eternally, in the divine understanding*.

standing, which proceed not from any determination of his will, but are the rules, by which his will is itself determined. The *antecedency* they speak of respects only the explicit declaration of the will of God, by the command of moral virtues. And what can be a greater fallacy than to object to this, that *the will of God is expressed in the creation*, exhibiting those relations and fitnesses, from whence morality arises? For the will of God, as expressed, or rather implied in the creation, is the very same with that reason and truth of things, which are said to be obligatory *as such*; that is, antecedently to any explicit declaration of the will of God concerning them. If these writers will allow the will of God in that sense, viz. *as expressed in the creation*, to be obligatory to morality without any positive appointment, or explicit command, the controversy would be at an end. But if they deny this, why do they amuse their readers or themselves, by seeming to oppose their adversaries with an antecedency of the will of God, when they really mean nothing more, than that the *existence* of creatures capable of moral obligation is a consequence of the determination of the will of God? which is indeed very true, but nothing to the purpose in this debate.

The other argument, which I design here to consider, is urged by those, who acknowledge no moral obligation, but what is founded on self-interest, or a prospect of *future rewards and punishments*. First they lay it down as a *postulatum*, that *the sole end of God in the creation was to communicate happiness*, and that he appointed the practice of virtue to be the necessary means of obtaining that end. In consequence of this they argue, that man ought to make *that his end*, which God has made so, that a consideration of the end must be the motive to choosing the means, and therefore virtue should only be chosen with *respect to the recompence of reward*,

ward, without which view it would neither be beautiful nor orderly, nor reasonable, nor fit*.

That happiness was the *sole end* the creator had in view, is too precarious a supposition to be taken for granted. Had that been so, probably the utmost possibilities of it would have been produced; which does not seem to be the case. However, *rewards and punishments* have not the least pretence to be the sole end of God in the creation, tho' necessary for the *after* government of degenerate creatures. The very notion of reward and punishment implies merit or demerit arising from a compliance with or neglect of some end, which moral agents were *previously* obliged to have pursued; so that obligation must be founded on some principle *prior* to all consideration of reward and punishment, otherwise there could be no ground for them. And why should God have so over-rated virtue, as to propose inestimable rewards for the practice of it, if it had no self-excellence, or if it had not been one great end of his creating moral agents? If an earthly king should promise some great honours or privileges to such of his subjects as amidst a rebellious people had continued faithful to him, or would timely return to their duty; would any one doubt, that the king's *chief end* was to preserve, or to recover his subjects to their obedience; and that the proposed rewards were intended as *means* the better to secure that end? And if some of his subjects should profess, that they would have persisted in their fidelity, or returned to it, from a sense of the reasonableness of their duty, though his majesty had made them no such gracious promises; would the king think them the worse men, or the worse subjects for this, or that they were the less worthy of the honours he intended them? I

* This point is largely insisted on, in *The Cure of Deism*, Chap. xvi,

dare say nobody will imagine it. Why then should not the rewards proposed by the king of heaven for the practice of virtue, be esteemed as *means* to promote universal rectitude? And that contributing each his part towards that great end ought to be the *chief view* of all his reasonable creatures?

That *one* design of God in the creation was to communicate *happiness*, so far as was consistent with *order and rectitude*, or as it is a consequence of them, I believe will not be questioned. But since the infinitely *bappy* Creator is likewise infinitely *perfect*, I think there is as little reason to question, that *one great end* he had in view was to communicate some degree of all his communicable *perfections*, to produce beings capable of imitating his moral attributes, of conforming to that sacred rule of truth and rectitude, by which his own unerring will is always directed; that they might be perfect *even as he is perfect*. And if this was one design of God in creating mankind, which can scarce be doubted; then certainly they ought to have the same end in view; and if, in order to it, God could give them no other law but that of moral virtue, as these writers allow, then the obligation to practise it must arise, with virtue itself, from the very nature of such a system, not solely from a prospect of rewards and punishments.

I am far from intending to depreciate a proper regard to future retributions, as they are gracious assistances to the frailty of man; but let them not change place with that, which they were appointed to promote; be made *sole ends*, whilst virtue is degraded into *bare means*; tho' if doing right actions purely *because they are right*, is not the proper idea of virtue, it will be hard to say what is; but aiming *solely* at a reward certainly is not. Where the will of God is known, there is an additional obligation, that strongly enforces the practice of virtue, from a desire of being acceptable to the supreme

supreme being, who wills the perfection of his creatures, in which their chief good consists; and therefore the consideration of the will of God ought never to be omitted in any Christian schemes of morality. But neither ought moral virtue to be established solely on such principles, as would leave men loose from every obligation, who are either not so *wise*, as to discover the will of God in the *nature of things*, or not so *bappy*, as to be acquainted with his *revealed will*, and the *sanctions* of his laws.

These Remarks are, with the utmost Deference, inscribed to ALEXANDER POPE, Esq. by an admirer of his Moral Character.

END of the FIRST VOLUME.