

the same path, and guide them to pursue with ardour the same practice. But where is the man to be found that, on the principle of reason alone, hath exhibited this beautiful example? The light and beauty of a virtuous conversation is more convincing than the mere light of good principles, or the eloquence of the best orators.

It is a method above all others of promoting true virtue in the world.

A shining light instructs, an ardent light inflames, a beautiful light persuades the passions of the heart, and excites imitation; but where is such a shining, ardent, and beautiful light to be found on the principles of reason?

v. *Reason is unable to make an high advancement in the power and beauty of virtue.*—True religion ought to be of a progressive nature. Vital virtue should resemble the advancing light of the rising sun.

As the sun rises higher and higher toward the meridian, so a truly virtuous man should be still advancing in goodness. Internal virtue should urge him on, by a rational and forcible stimulus, to a farther growth in knowledge, perfection, and usefulness.—But here the powers of unassisted reason utterly fail.

(1.) *A truly virtuous man ought to improve his knowledge of God and himself.*—He will strive
to

to advance in clearer apprehensions of the infinite perfections of his maker. His conceptions of the dignity of GOD, and of the powers and affections of his own soul, will be more vivid and distinct, his mind will be more free from pride and haughtiness, his reason more free from error, his judgment more purged from prejudices, and more correct in its decisions. But where is the man to be found in the whole world that is capable of these noble advancements on the principles of reason alone?

(2.) *Reason is unable to produce a fixed adhesion of the will to GOD and virtue: it cannot give us strength and firmness in true religion.*

An adhesion of the will to GOD is properly the strength of virtue. If reason were sufficient for the happiness of man, we should find a natural progress in the life of virtue; and this adhesion of the will to the goodness, rectitude, and beauty of GOD, would grow stronger with time, so as to bear a proportion with the growing apprehensions of GOD, and the enlarged views of the human understanding. There is a great degree of strength in the union of the will to GOD, and in this union true virtue consists. But did reason alone ever produce it? A soul that truly feels it, hopes to have the approbation of GOD before the whole rational world—but reason can neither produce nor cherish this hope.

(3.) *Reason*

(3.) *Reason cannot excite us to that sublime virtue which will enable a man to shine in the perfection of his example and character.*

A man of true virtue will go on to higher degrees of beauty and perfection. He has fewer blemishes than other men, and fewer than he himself once had—he is more purified from the vices of flesh and spirit—he corrects whatever is amiss in his temper and conduct—his example was formerly good, but it is now much brighter and better, more lovely and instructive. The man of high and delicate virtue labours about his example and character, as a painter doth upon a picture, or a statuary, on a piece of first-rate sculpture; and, before he finishes his piece, he strives to give a beauty to the whole, and to spread a grace over his whole character.* But we challenge the whole world to produce one man that hath done this on the mere principles of reason.

(4.) *Reason can never enable a man to advance sweetly in the ease and pleasure of virtuous action, and increase in the high-spirited joy of well-doing.*

A man of true virtue will find, to his unspeakable pleasure, that he advances in facility of action—he will find the pleasure of right conduct still increasing—he will feel his faculties more and more adapted to actions of generous greatness,

* See Grove on the Certainty and Pleasures of Religion, 8vo.

greatness, and the pleasures of social benevolence. By a kind of divine and god-like instinct, he will run naturally into worthy manners and practices; whilst a wicked man will make a swift progressive motion into all the plagues and miseries of vice. Where is the man who, on the principles of mere reason, hath pursued the former, and avoided the latter?

VI. *Reason alone is unable to carry any man into such purity of heart, and life, as shall at last issue in a state of perfection in the full fruition of GOD.*—The perfection of virtue, in the order and operations of our noblest powers and affections, would certainly be the result of a rich advance in perfect goodness. But here reason eternally fails.

Human reason, in its present state, is utterly unable to guide us to that perfection of happiness in God, and that rich enjoyment of the whole soul, in all its principles and powers of fruition, which our nature appears to be designed for in its original constitution.

And as reason is defective in this second motive, (viz.) it cannot display, in a lively and convincing manner, the present advantages and pleasures of virtue and obedience. So we affirm, that,

III. REASON is defective in a third MOTIVE to DUTY, (viz.) it doth not give us a clear and striking

striking view of FUTURE rewards and pleasures, to repay and recompence us for all present disadvantages and hardship we suffer for the sake of God and virtue.

IV. REASON is defective in a fourth MOTIVE to VIRTUE, (viz.) It cannot discover, in a clear and striking manner, those terrible punishments which God will most surely execute on all resolute and determined rebels against his government.

V. REASON is defective in a fifth MOTIVE to virtue, (viz.) It cannot shew us one example of pure and spotless virtue in the whole world of mankind.

Examples move to action; precepts only teach. Laws and precepts only instruct us what ought to be done. But reason can neither furnish precepts or examples to excite effectually one man to vital virtue.

VI. REASON is defective in a sixth MOTIVE and MEANS to VIRTUE, (viz.) It cannot discover the least assistance from God for the great work of obedience to God, or benevolence to mankind.

Thus far we have shewn the utter insufficiency of reason to make proper discoveries of God and his infinite perfections—to point out the true manner of worshipping Him—to shew the supreme good or true happiness of man—to discover a perfect rule of morality, or plan of sound

virtue and morals—and to discern the most powerful motives to virtue and religion. We now proceed to shew that reason cannot discover the pardon of sin—the refinement of the soul by sanctification—support under troubles, and comfort in death.

VII. REASON is unable to discover the PARDON
of SIN.

1. Reason cannot discern the estimate which GOD made of the first act of sin, nor how he treated the first parents of mankind after their act of treason and rebellion.

2. Reason could never discover the least institution of a propitiatory offering to atone for the guilt of sin, nor can it intimate the way in which GOD would be propitious to a rebel.

3. Reason is unable to discern GOD inviting and alluring men to repentance; it can discover no command of GOD to repent. The light of nature shews that GOD is affronted and displeased, but it shews no command to repent.

4. Reason cannot discover one sinner pardoned from the beginning of the world to this very hour.

5. Reason is unable to discern the great design of GOD's patience towards a wicked world for thousands of years. This is an incomprehensible
conduct

conduct in GOD, which no sagacity of man can account for or solve.

6. Reason is insufficient to shew us any happy souls bursting into songs of praise for pardon from GOD as a merciful being.

7. Reason can discover no holy and spiritual worship appointed by GOD for any of his rebellious creatures, nor does it assure us that any worship will be acceptable to him: no worship at all is commanded by GOD on the foot of reason: this is an awful thought, viz. that GOD commands no man to worship, nor exhorts or commands any man to repent and return to GOD.

8. Reason can never discover one purpose in the HEART of GOD, nor one promise in the MOUTH of GOD, nor one action in the CONDUCT of GOD, that gives a sure and certain indication of the pardon of one sin—much less can it discern ten thousand promises and actions flowing from the heart of GOD in streams of light and love upon lost mortals.

9. Reason cannot discover one name belonging to GOD that inspires a solid hope of pardon.

10. Reason can never discover one perfection in GOD, that can pardon—it never possibly can discern the harmony of justice and mercy in the pardon of *one sin* in the whole world.

The united reason and wisdom of all mankind

can never discover how justice and mercy may be shewn in the same moment to a criminal in civil government, much less in the government of God. This thought deserves to be amplified and urged to the utmost.

11. Reason is not in the least able to discover a suitable provision for a divine and infinite governor, to the end that he may pardon sin with honour to his moral character and government.

It can discern no ransom paid to a divine and infinite conqueror—no sacrifice or atonement to a divine and injured monarch—no satisfaction in the least to a divine and infinite judge.

Reason can discover no friend to us, who could, by the dispositions of his heart, and by his actions and sufferings, provide for the full meridian glory of divine justice—as making laws—as rewarding obedience to laws—as punishing the violation of laws in the most perfect and impartial manner:—and this surety likewise freely and kindly obeying all the righteous commands, and bearing all the righteous curses of the law, which it otherwise required of us in order to escape punishment, and to have a right to eternal happiness in God.

Concerning all this, reason is at an inexpressible loss.

12. Reason cannot discover one man sent by God to proclaim one word of pardon to a guilty world.

Not

Not any one man, nor any set of men, can be discovered by reason as sent with a commission from God, and sealed with the broad seal of heaven, to proclaim so much as a single hint of pardon to a guilty world, or to any individual on earth one moment through thousands of years. We defy all mankind to deny this and prove the contrary.

13. Reason is not able to discover God issuing out any commands to rebels to forgive one another the crimes they commit against each other, and the offences they give to one another.

No man, by the exercise of reason alone, can discern that God has ordered him to forgive his fellow-creatures their offences; no, not in one instance for a moment. Hence see the horrid spirit of revenge amongst the hot-blooded heroes of the heathen world.

VIII. REASON is utterly insufficient to suppress VICIOUS INCLINATIONS, and root them out of the SOUL; or to refine and purify the HEART by a powerful and effectual SANCTIFICATION.

How blind was the heathen world, how dark their wisest philosophers, how childish and silly are all the best means they prescribe. Plato bids you purify your souls by music and the mathematics.

Can a violin charm away lust? Can Euclid's Elements subdue your pride, and purge out uncleanness

cleanness and adultery, avarice, malice, and rash anger?

Reason cannot produce and cherish any of those noble and excellent qualities in the soul which are necessary for a life of virtue and holiness.

1. A vigorous bent of the mind, or a powerful and ardent inclination and propensity of heart to virtue, is necessary to the practice of it.—But here reason utterly fails.

All mankind have an actual bent and propensity of heart to moral evil, or vice and wickedness.

2. A cordial peace and heart-felt friendship with God, is absolutely necessary to a life of vital virtue and sanctification in the sight of God.

Nothing less than a strong sense of peace with God can produce an earnest desire after a resemblance to God.—But here reason, with all its united powers, utterly fails.

3. A sufficiency of strength and light from God is absolutely necessary for a life of holiness towards God, and conformity to his image or moral perfections: to be like God in wisdom, a man must be wise; to resemble his goodness, a man must be good at heart; to bear the likeness of his holiness, a man must be purified and refined in the temper of his soul; to resemble God's justice and truth, a man must be impressed with a sense
of

of the beauty of justice, and be filled with sincerity and integrity of heart.—But did mere reason ever produce these charming qualities? Where is the man to be found? In what age, in what country did he live, that performed all this by the power of reason alone?

4. A lively hope of being happy in the presence of God to eternity is absolutely necessary to a life of genuine virtue in the present world.

Without this vigorous hope, no man on earth will ever practice universal virtue—this love to God and all mankind. And where is this man to be found, who, on the principles of reason alone, ever pursued and practised universal virtue? Where was he born? Where was he educated? Where did he live?—No answer can be given! our infidels are struck dumb for ever; they cannot for their lives and souls give us a satisfactory answer to these queries, consequently their scheme of infidelity is ruined; and if they had any moral honesty in their hearts they would openly declare and confess it before the whole world.

For a rational creature in his present state, and with all the prodigious imperfections of his internal character, to look for an eternity of happiness in God, *is to look very high indeed*; it is to form very grand and exalted conceptions and hopes; and it is demonstrably and undoubtedly certain,

certain, that no man in the world will go to the expence of denying all his vile appetites and passions after present good, without a strong sensation of invisible and eternal good, to reward him for his self-denial, and the resolute practice of pure and perfect virtue.—Now I ask again, Where is the man to be found that has preserved in his bosom an high hope of the eternal fruition of GOD as the supreme good, and on this principle has denied every bad appetite, every polluted passion, every impure inclination, and has exerted all his powers in love to GOD and to all mankind? There is no such man to be found in the whole world—he is yet to be born.

Reason cannot discover the true and only source of holiness, nor the foundation on which it is enjoyed, (viz.) a union of heart with GOD. Reason cannot discover the method and order of holiness—nor the means of holiness—consolations of GOD—good and bright examples—nor the grand efficient of holiness, or sanctification, the holy and eternal Spirit of GOD—nor the grand secret of living to GOD, by a new constitution of soul—nor the right use of all the means of increasing holiness—nor the beauty, the rich advantages, and pleasures of holiness in time and eternity. Reason cannot give any solid comfort from GOD for one moment to enable us to perform the duties of his reasonable, just, and good law.

VIII. REASON cannot support us under the TROUBLES and bitter AFFLICTIONS of this LIFE.

Reason can give no sufficient relief to the mind under any troubles, trials, or pinching and critical times of distress—she cannot discover any certain supplies in want; nor discover God's providence taking special notice of any one of the human race, having a care for sparrows, or numbering the hairs of our head—she knows not that there is any one being in our world whom God will vouchsafe to call his friend, nor can discover one angel in the universe employed in taking care of us, nor can discern any promise that God has made; no, not the utmost exertion of reason can tell that God has ever made one promise, or ever will to eternity—she knows not that God has any people on earth or in heaven. Reason knows of no true and pure holiness and righteousness on earth; she can only shew you a parcel of loathsome rags, smeared with the putrid ulcers of sinful souls. Reason knows not the Son of God; she cannot form one thought of him, nor tell that God has a son; but is stone blind about a saviour. Reason knows not the Spirit of God, or that God's spirit has any existence, that God has an eternal spirit—she finds eternity all in horrid darkness; even blackness of darkness. Reason knows not a word of heaven: an eternal heaven, with all its spiritual pleasures and fulness of joy, is totally unknown—she is quite blind about God's kingdom in our

world, or in the world to come; can discern nothing but eternal poverty in the soul. Reason is blind to all GOD's salvations of every kind, and ignorant of assurances of interest in GOD. She has no discernment or experience of GOD's special favour and faithfulness in the least: knows of no sweetness in GOD our saviour and redeemer. Reason cries, if the sweetness of the world is lost, all is lost to me for ever—she knows not that there is any drop of love in GOD for one soul. Reason is blind concerning the true and solid usefulness of afflictions, trials, troubles, and distresses in life: she cannot discern their use to the souls of men, nor make all troubles work for good—she can give no FEAR-NOTS: she knows not a word or a syllable of any FEAR-NOT from the voice of GOD: is totally at a loss as to all final and happy issues of our affairs with GOD at the concluding scenes of life. Reason is deaf as death to all notices of GOD's oath, life, soul, arm, and consolations to sinners and penitent rebels—she cannot give a lively and strong apprehension of the weight and worth of eternal good. Reason cannot impress on the soul a sweet sense of happiness; can give no prospect of heaven; cannot infuse the least taste for heaven; cannot inspire the least sense of the sweetness, reality, and solidity of invisible things. Reason knows nothing of the appearances of GOD—nothing of the last
state

state of the universe and empire of GOD—nothing of his singular and free interpositions in our favour, either for time or eternity—all is dark! dark! dark! dark as death.

IX. REASON cannot support us in the AGONIES of DEATH, nor arm us against its APPROACHES and its TERRORS.

Reason hates to think of death, it flies from it as the terrible of all terrors—fondly promises a long life—looks to second causes to preserve life, (viz.) physicians, diet, exercise—clings to this world and the present life, as the ivy to the trunk of the oak—cannot enable and excite any man to forsake the inward love of sin, which makes death so dreadful—nor wean and divorce him from the power of a lustful taste and impure desires—cannot inspire us with a calm repose on GOD's tender care, or encourage a confidence in his love—can give no consolations against the terrors of death—cannot discover that GOD will live with us and abide by us for one moment in life or death, we are such sorry guilty wretches—can discern no right to dare to call GOD father, in our present depraved and guilty state. Reason has not one idea of a friendly mediator between GOD and us—cannot tell that Christ is either dead or alive, or that he has any existence, or ever had any—knows not a word of the incarnation, sufferings, resurrection, or ascension of Christ—is absolutely blind

concerning union with God's heart, and love for a poor lost soul, a vile sinner—it never could start a thought of union with Christ as a living head. Reason, if it speaks out the clear truth, must terribly tell us that death is the door to all evils, the passage into a world of horrors—if she tells the whole truth, will curse every man to eternal sinfulness, and assure him that sin shall never, never leave him; no, no, nor ever forsake his filthy wretched soul—knows of no happiness after death, no, not for one soul in all the world. Reason knows nothing of a resurrection of our dead bodies—has not one thought of it. Corrupt reason scorns the least notices of it—disdains to receive any news of the resurrection—scoffs at any man as a mad fool, and a babbling fellow,* who shall speak one word about it. Reason, if it speaks out the whole truth concerning every sinner, must conclude on our eternal separation from God, without any hope of his favour.

X. Of the INSUFFICIENCY of REASON to lead us to eternal HAPPINESS—arising from a six-fold general VIEW of the whole world.

As an illustration of what has hitherto been discovered for demonstrating the insufficiency of natural religion, we shall here offer a six-fold view of the experience of the world in general, without

* Σπερμολογῆς, a retailer of scraps, or a contemptible prating fellow. Acts xvii. 18.