

feelings, is, that their lips are taught to pronounce sentiments, extracted from the very dregs of the European drama.

Par. Then it seems you do not approve of females speaking at all?

Precep. Not on a public stage, unless I wished to see them divested of half their charms. Such masculine employments as ill become them, as the labours of the field, or the habits of the stronger sex. I would have them taught to read and pronounce well at school; but nature never designed them for public orators; much less, that they should be degraded to the vile purpose of entertaining the votaries of theatrical amusements.

Par. Why, you differ widely from many, whose pride is to be considered as the standards of modern taste. It does not now offend against the rules of delicacy, for the different sexes to make exchange of garments now and then, provided the grand object of amusement be promoted by it. I was in Boston last week, and there I saw a beautiful young lady, rigged out from top to toe in men's apparel, astride a gay horse, parading through the streets, for the entertainment of the ladies and gentlemen of that polite metropolis. And none appeared to be offended, except a few who had not attained a relish for refined pleasures.

Precep. Yes, and I am told, that, at their theatres, it is no uncommon thing for a woman to make her appearance, in that apparel, with a sword by her side, strutting across the stage, and swearing oaths big enough to choke an Algerine pirate; and yet it is so agreeable to the modern *ton*, that even ladies of distinguished refinement are *ashamed to blush* at her!

Par. You have made me so far a convert to your sentiments on this subject, and given me such proofs of your superiour judgment in the education of youth, that I am determined to commit my son, without any reserve, to your care and instruction. Till you hear from me again, I am, Sir, your obedient servant.

THE

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD, DEMONSTRATED FROM THE WORKS OF CREATION; BEING A SERMON PREACHED AT PROVIDENCE, BY JONATHAN MAXCY, A. M. PRESIDENT OF RHODE-ISLAND COLLEGE, 1795, FROM ROMANS i. 20.

[N. B. When found expedient, the following Sermon may conveniently be divided into three or four parts, suitable for declamations. The author of this work did not intend a first to insert the whole; but, in attempting to make a selection, he could find no part which he was willing to leave.]

NOTHING will more effectually guard us against vice, than a firm belief in the existence of God. For surely if we realize that there is such a Being, we shall naturally infer from his perfections, from the nature of his moral government, and from our situation as rational creatures, that we are amenable at his awful tribunal. Superior power, wisdom, and goodness always lay us under restraint, and command our veneration. These, even in a mortal, overawe us. They restrain not only the actions, but the words and thoughts of the most vicious and abandoned. Our happiness depends on our virtue. Our virtue depends on the conformity of our hearts and conduct to the laws prescribed us by our beneficent Creator.

Of what vast importance then is it to our present as well as future felicity, to possess in our hearts a feeling sense, and in our understanding a clear conviction, of the existence of that Being whose power and goodness are unbounded, whose presence fills immensity, and whose wisdom, like a torrent of lightning, emanates through all the dark recesses of eternal duration! How great must be the effect of a sense of the presence of the great Creator and Governor of all things, to whom belong the attributes, eternity, independency, perfect holiness, inflexible justice, and inviolable veracity; complete happiness and glorious majesty; supreme right and unbounded dominion!

A sense

A sense of accountability to God will retard the eager pursuit of vice; it will humble the heart of the proud, it will bridle the tongue of the profane, and snatch the knife from the hand of the assassin. A belief of the existence of God is the true original source of all virtue, and the only foundation of all religion, natural or revealed. Set aside this great luminous truth, erase the conviction of it from the heart, you then place virtue and vice on the same level; you drive afflicted innocence into despair; you add new effrontery to the marred visage of guilt; you plant thorns in the path, and shed an impenetrable gloom over the prospects of the righteous.

Sin has alienated the affections, and diverted the attention of men from the great Jehovah. "Darkness has covered the earth, and gross darkness the people." Men have worshipped the works of their own hands, and neglected the true God, though his existence and perfections were stamped in glaring characters on all creation. From the regularity, order, beauty, and conservation of this great system of things, of which man makes a part; from the uniform tendency of all its divisions to their proper ends, the existence of God shines as clearly as the sun in the heavens. "From the things that are made," says the text, "are seen his eternal power and Godhead."

1. Man himself is a proof of God's existence. Let us place him before us in his full stature. We are at once impressed with the beautiful organization of his body, with the orderly and harmonious arrangement of his members. Such is the disposition of these, that their motion is the most easy, graceful, and useful; that can be conceived. We are astonished to see the same simple matter diversified into so many different substances, of different qualities, size, and figure. If we pursue our researches through the internal economy, we shall find, that all the different opposite parts correspond to each other with the utmost exactness and order; that they all answer the most beneficent purposes.

This

"This wonderful machine, the human body, is animated, cherished, and preserved, by a spirit within, which pervades every particle, feels in every organ, warns us of injury, and administers to our pleasures. Erect in stature, man differs from all other animals. Though his foot is confined to the earth, yet his eye measures the whole circuit of heaven, and in an instant takes in thousands of worlds. His countenance is turned upward, to teach us that he is not, like other animals, limited to the earth, but looks forward to brighter scenes of existence in the skies.

Whence came this erect, orderly, beautiful constitution of the human body? Did it spring up from the earth, self-formed? Surely not. Earth itself is inactive matter. That which has no motion can never produce any. Man surely could not, as has been vainly and idly supposed, have been formed by the fortuitous concurrence of atoms. We behold the most exact order in the constitution of the human body. Order always involves design. Design always involves intelligence. That intelligence, which directed the orderly formation of the human body, must have resided in a being whose power was adequate to the production of such an effect.

Creation surely is the prerogative of a self-existent, uncaused Being. Finite creatures may arrange and dispose, but they cannot create; they cannot give life. It is a universal law through all nature, that like produces like. The same laws most probably obtain through the whole system in which we are connected. We have therefore no reason to suppose that angels created man. Neither can we, without the greatest absurdity, admit that he was formed by himself, or by mere accident. If in the latter way, why do we never see men formed so in the present day? Why do we never see the clods of earth brightening into human flesh, and the dust under our feet crawling into animated forms, and starting up into life and intelligence?

R 2

If we even admit that either of the forementioned causes might have produced man, yet neither of them could have preserved him in existence one moment. There must therefore be a God uncaused, independent and complete. The nobler part of man clearly evinces this great truth. When we consider the boundless desires and the inconceivable activity of the soul of man, we can refer his origin to nothing but God. How astonishing are the reasoning faculties of man! How surprising the power of comparing, arranging, and connecting his ideas! How wonderful is the power of imagination! On its wings, in a moment, we can transport ourselves to the most distant part of the universe. We can fly back, and live the lives of all antiquity, or surmount the limits of time, and sail along the vast range of eternity. Whence these astonishing powers, if not from a God of infinite wisdom, goodness, and power?

2. "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world," says the text, "are clearly seen." Let us for a moment behold our earth. With what a delightful scene are we here presented! the diversification of its surface into land and water, islands and lakes, springs and rivers, hills and vallies, mountains and plains, renders it to man doubly enchanting. We are entertained with an agreeable variety, without being disgusted by a tedious uniformity. Every thing appears admirably formed for our profit and delight. There the vallies are clothed in smiling green, and the plains are bending with corn. Here is the gentle hill to delight the eye, and beyond, slow rising from the earth, swells the huge mountain, and, with all its load of waters, rocks, and woods, heaves itself up into the skies. Why this pleasing, vast deformity of nature? Undoubtedly for the benefit of man. From the mountains descend streams to fertilize the plains below, and cover them with wealth and beauty.

The earth not only produces every thing necessary to support our bodies, but to remedy our diseases, and gratify

gratify our senses. Who covered the earth with such a pleasing variety of fruits and flowers? Who gave them their delightful fragrance, and painted them with such exquisite colours? Who causes the same water to whiten in the lily, that blushes in the rose? Do not these things indicate a Cause infinitely superiour to any finite being? Do they not directly lead us to believe the existence of God, to admire his goodness, to revere his power, to adore his wisdom, in so happily accommodating our external circumstances to our situation and internal constitution?

3. But how are we astonished to behold the vast ocean, rolling its immense burden of waters! Who gave it such a configuration of particles as to render it moveable by the least pressure, and at the same time so strong as to support the heaviest weights? Who spread out this vast highway of all the nations under heaven? Who gave it its regular motion? Who confined it within its bounds? A little more motion would disorder the whole world! A small incitement on the tide would drown whole kingdoms. Who restrains the proud waves, when the tempest lifts them to the clouds? Who measured the great waters, and subjected them to invariable laws? That great Being, "who placed the sand for the bound thereof, by a perpetual decree that it cannot pass; and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over." With reason may we believe, that from the things that are made are clearly seen eternal power and wisdom.

4. Passing by the numerous productions and appendages of the earth, let us rise from it, and consider the body of air with which we are surrounded. What a convincing proof do we here find of the existence of God! Such is the subtilty and transparency of the air, that it receives the rays of the sun and stars, conveying them with inconceivable velocity to objects on the earth, rendering them visible, and decorating the whole

whole surface of the globe with an agreeable intermixture of light, shade, and colours. But still this air has a sufficient consistency and strength to support clouds, and all the winged inhabitants. Had it been less subtle, it would have intercepted the light. Had it been more rarified, it would not have supported its inhabitants, nor have afforded sufficient moisture for the purposes of respiration. What then but infinite wisdom could have tempered the air so nicely, as to give it sufficient strength to support clouds for rain, to afford wind for health, and at the same time to possess the power of conveying sound and light? How wonderful is this element! How clearly does it discover infinite wisdom, power, and goodness!

5. But when we cast our eyes up to the firmament of heaven, we clearly see that it declares God's handy work. Here the immense theatre of God's works opens upon us, and discloses ten thousand magnificent, splendid objects. We dwindle to nothing in comparison with this august scene of beauty, majesty, and glory. Who reared this vast arch over our heads? Who adorned it with so many shining objects, placed at such immense distances from each other, regular in their motions, invariably observing the laws to which they were originally subjected? Who placed the sun at such a convenient distance as not to annoy, but refresh us? Who, for so many ages, has caused him to rise and set at fixed times? Whose hand directs, and whose power restrains him in his course, causing him to produce the agreeable changes of day and night, as well as the variety of seasons?

The order, harmony, and regularity in the revolutions of the heavenly bodies, are such incontestible proofs of the existence of God, that an eminent poet well said, "An undevout astronomer is mad." In the time of Cicero, when the knowledge of astronomy was very imperfect, he did not hesitate to declare, that in his opinion the man who asserted the heavenly bodies were not framed and moved by a divine understanding, was him-
self

self void of all understanding. Well indeed is it said, that the heavens declare the glory of God.

This great Being is every where present. He exists all around us. He is not, as we are apt to imagine, at a great distance. Wherever we turn, his image meets our view. We see him in the earth, in the ocean, in the air, in the sun, moon, and stars. We feel him in ourselves. He is always working round us; he performs the greatest operations, produces the noblest effects, discovers himself in a thousand different ways, and yet the real GOD remains unseen. All parts of creation are equally under his inspection. Though he warms the breast of the highest angel in heaven, yet he breathes life into the meanest insect on earth. He lives through all his works, supporting all by the word of his power. He shines in the verdure that clothes the plains, in the lily that delights the vale, and in the forest that waves on the mountain. He supports the slender reed that trembles in the breeze, and the sturdy oak that defies the tempest. His presence cheers the inanimate creation.

Far in the wilderness, where human eye never saw, where the savage foot never trod, there he bids the blooming forest smile, and the blushing rose opens its leaves to the morning sun. There he causes the feathered inhabitants to whistle their wild notes to the listening trees and echoing mountains. There nature lives in all her wanton wildness. There the ravished eye, hurrying from scene to scene, is lost in one vast blush of beauty. From the dark stream that rolls through the forest, the silver-scaled fish leap up, and dumbly mean the praise of God. Though man remain silent, yet God will have praise. He regards, observes, upholds, connects, and equals all.

The belief of his existence is not a point of mere speculation and amusement. It is of inconceivable importance to our present, as well as future felicity. But while we believe there is a God, we should be extremely careful to ascertain, with as much accuracy as possible

ble, what is his real nature. The most prominent features of this are exhibited in that incomprehensible display of wisdom, power, and goodness, made in the works of creation. A virtuous man stands in a relation to God which is peculiarly delightful. The divine perfections are all engaged in his defence. He feels powerful in God's power, wise in his wisdom, good in his goodness.

The vicious man, on the contrary, stands in a relation to God, which is of all things the most dreadful. He is unwilling to know that God has sufficient wisdom to search out all his wickedness, sufficient goodness to the universe to determine to punish that wickedness, and sufficient power to execute that determination. A firm belief in the existence of God will heighten all the enjoyments of life, and, by conforming our hearts to his will, will secure the approbation of a good conscience, and inspire us with the hopes of a blessed immortality.

Never be tempted to disbelieve the existence of God, when every thing around you proclaims it in a language too plain not to be understood. Never cast your eyes on creation without having your souls expanded with this sentiment, "There is a God." When you survey this globe of earth, with all its appendages: when you behold it inhabited by numberless ranks of creatures, all moving in their proper spheres, all verging to their proper ends, all animated by the same great source of life, all supported at the same great bounteous table; when you behold not only the earth, but the ocean and the air, swarming with living creatures, all happy in their situation; when you behold yonder sun darting an effulgent blaze of glory over the heavens, garnishing mighty worlds, and waking ten thousand songs of praise; when you behold unnumbered systems diffused through vast immensity, clothed in splendour, and rolling in majesty; when you behold these things, your affections will rise above all the vanities of time; your full souls will struggle with ecstasy. and
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your reason, passions, and feelings, all united, will rush up to the skies, with a devout acknowledgment of the existence, power, wisdom, and goodness of God.

Let us behold him, let us wonder, let us praise and adore. These things will make us happy. They will wean us from vice, and attach us to virtue. As a belief of the existence of God is a fundamental point of salvation, he who denies it runs the greatest conceivable hazard. He resigns the satisfaction of a good conscience, quits the hopes of a happy immortality, and exposes himself to destruction. All this for what? for the short-lived pleasures of a riotous, dissolute life. How wretched, when he finds his atheistical confidence totally disappointed! Instead of his beloved sleep and insensibility, with which he so fondly flattered himself, he will find himself still existing after death, removed to a strange place; he will then find that there is a God, who will not suffer his rational creatures to fall into annihilation as a refuge from the just punishment of their crimes; he will find himself doomed to drag on a wretched train of existence in unavailing woe and lamentation. Alas! how astonished will he be to find himself plunged in the abyss of ruin and desperation! God forbid that any of us should act so unwisely as to disbelieve, when every thing around us proclaims his existence!

THE DIGNITY OF HUMAN NATURE.

EXTRACT OF AN ORATION DELIVERED AT RHODE-ISLAND COLLEGE, 1796.

GUIDED by reason, man has travelled through the abstruse regions of the philosophic world. He has originated rules by which he can direct the ship through the pathless ocean, and measure the comet's flight over the fields of unlimited space. He has established society and government. He can aggregate the profusions of every climate, and every season. He can meliorate the severity, and remedy the imperfections,
of

of nature herself. All these things he can perform by the assistance of reason.

By imagination, man seems to verge towards creative power. Aided by this, he can perform all the wonders of sculpture and painting. He can almost make the marble speak. He can almost make the brook murmur down the painted landscape. Often, on the pinions of imagination, he soars aloft where the eye has never travelled; where other stars glitter on the mantle of night, and a more effulgent sun lights up the blushes of morning. Flying from world to world, he gazes on all the glories of creation; or, lighting on the distant margin of the universe, darts the eye of fancy over the mighty void, where power creative never yet has energized; where existence still sleeps in the wide abyss of possibility.

By imagination he can travel back to the source of time; converse with the successive generations of men, and kindle into emulation while he surveys the monumental trophies of ancient art and glory. He can sail down the stream of time until he loses "sight of stars and sun, by wandering into those retired parts of eternity, when the heavens and the earth shall be no more."

To these unequivocal characteristics of greatness in man, let us adduce the testimony of nature herself. Surrounding creation subserves the wants and proclaims the dignity of man. For him day and night visit the world. For him the seasons walk their splendid round. For him the earth teems with riches, and the heavens smile with beneficence.

All creation is accurately adjusted to his capacity for bliss. He tastes the dainties of festivity, breathes the perfumes of morning, revels on the charms of melody, and regales his eye with all the painted beauties of vision. Whatever can please, whatever can charm, whatever can expand the soul with ecstasy of bliss, allures and solicits his attention. All things beautiful, all things grand, all things sublime, appear in native loveliness, and proffer man the richest pleasures of fruition.

INFERNAL

INFERNAL CONFERENCE.

Satan. FRIENDS and confederates, welcome!
for this proof

Of your affiance, thanks. On every call,
Whether we need your counsel or your arms,
Joyful I see your ready zeal displays
Virtues, which hell itself cannot corrupt.
I mean not to declaim: the occasion told
Speaks its own import, and the time's dispatch
All waste of words forbids. God's Son on earth,
Christ, the reveal'd Messiah, how t' oppose
Is now the question; by what force, or power;
(Temptations have been tried, I name not them;)
Or dark conspiracy, we may pull down
This Sun of Righteousness from his bright sphere,
Declare, who can. I pause for a reply.

Baal. Why thus on me, as I were worthy; me
Lost being like yourselves; as I alone
Could compass this high argument; on me,
Least in your sapient conclave; why you point
These scrutinizing looks, I muse; and, aw'd
By this your expectation, faint would shrink
From the great task to silence, had you not
O'er these poor faculties such full control,
As to put by all pleas, and call them forth
In heaven or earth, or hell's profound abyss,
Yours in all uses, present at all hours.
Our kingly chief hath told us we are met
To combat Christ on earth. Be't so! We yet
May try our fortune in another field;
Worse fortune than in heav'n befel our arms;
Worse downfall than to hell, we cannot prove.
But with the scene our action too must change:
How? to what warfare? Circumvention, fraud,
Seduction; these are earthy weapons; these
As man to man opposes, so must we
To Christ incarnate. There be some, who cry,

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Hence