

GOD'S GOODNESS

VINDICATED;

FOR THE

**HELP OF SUCH (ESPECIALLY IN MELANCHOLY) AS ARE TEMPTED
TO DENY IT, AND THINK HIM TO BE CRUEL, BECAUSE OF
THE PRESENT AND FUTURE MISERY OF MANKIND;
WITH RESPECT TO THE DOCTRINE OF RE-
PROBATION AND DAMNATION.**

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT

PHILOSOPHY 101: INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY
Lecture Notes: The Philosophy of Language
Lecturer: Prof. [Name]

THE

PUBLISHER TO THE READER.

How much the glory of God and the salvation of men is concerned in the right understanding of his goodness, in all his ways and counsels towards them, is evidently seen by all that have any true notion of the Divine Excellency and man's felicity. God's goodness is his most solemnly proclaimed name and glory. It is his goodness duly known, that leads sinners to repentance, and unites their hearts to fear his name, and excites, and for ever terminates that love which is our holiness and happiness to eternity. It is also too well known, how much this amiable Divine Goodness is denied or doubted of. What cavils are raised against it by men of corrupt minds! What secret prejudice lies against it, and how deeply rooted in our depraved nature! Yea, with how fearful suggestions and apprehensions are some godly Christians (especially those that lie in the darkness of melancholy) sometimes perplexed about it! And even such as are grounded and settled in it, are liable to be assaulted, and may sometimes stagger and stumble at it. And indeed, though the kindness of God towards men hath appeared in the world, as visible as the sun in the firmament; yet man's darkened understanding, and his connate sensuality and selfishness, taking occasion from the more mysterious parts of providence, and those especially that most contradict the wisdom and interest of the flesh, hath

caused disputes, and raised doubts, against the truth of that which is in itself as clear and sure as that there is a God or a world, or any thing existent. Whereupon this author was earnestly desired by a friend, to collect some principles in a narrow compass, that might silence cavillers, succour the tempted, and confirm the sound mind. And for these ends they are, with his permission, by his friend made public; Hosea xiv. 9. "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them; but the transgressors shall fall therein."

April 27, 1671.

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To help all such persons out of the snare of this dangerous and troublesome temptation, as are described in the propounded case, we must have respect, I. To the special case of the melancholy, who are more liable than others to such disturbances. II. To the common cause of their trouble and perplexity, as it consisteth in such opinions as you describe.

I. With the melancholy, the greatest difficulty lieth in making them capable to receive plain truths: for it will work, not as it is, but as it is received. And melancholy doth breed and feed such kind of thoughts, as naturally as a dead carcase feedeth vermin. Of forty or fifty melancholy persons that I have to deal with, there are scarce four that are not hurried with suggestions to blasphemous thoughts against God and the sacred Scriptures; and scarce two that are not under dismal apprehensions that they are miserable, undone creatures, (except only some that are all carried to conceits of prophecies, revelations, and some rare, exalting communications of light unto themselves.) This unhappy disease of melancholy is first seated in the organs of imagination and passion both; that is, in the spirits, and thereby in the very imagining faculty itself: though the natural parts being without pain or sickness, they will not believe that it is a disease at all. It inclineth them usually to

solitariness, to musing, and to dismal thoughts, that they are undone, graceless, hopeless, &c., which because they passionately seem to feel, no words, which silence them, will satisfy them; or if you seem a little to satisfy them to-day, it is all gone to-morrow: for a melancholy man is like the eye that looketh on all things through a coloured glass, or in an ophthalmy, and seeth them according to the medium.

The disease, in some few, beginneth with over-stretching thoughts and troubles about things spiritual; but in most that I have met with, (ten to one,) it beginneth with some worldly cross, loss, or trouble, which grieveth them, and casteth them into troublesome anxieties and cares; and then when by these the spirits are diseased, it presently turneth upon conscience; first, against themselves, aggravating sin and misery, apprehending calamity from every thing which they see, hear, or think of; and next, against God and Scripture, perplexed in every thing that cometh before them, and quarrelling with all, and offended in all; and usually they are importuned, as if it were by something else within them, to say some blasphemous word against God, or do some mischief against themselves. No doubt through satan's special instigation, who can work on men according to the advantage of their bodily and sensitive distempers, and can do that on a melancholy man, (though a godly man,) which he cannot do on another; as he can also work on the choleric, phlegmatic, &c. according to their temper.

1. The cure of this must be by these means; (1.) You must not suffer them to be much alone. (2.) You must divert them from all musing, and turn it to discourse. (3.) You must keep from them displeasing things and persons, and help them to suitable pleasing company and converse. (4.) You must change their air and company sometimes, that strange objects may change their imagination. (5.) Above all, if they have strength, you must not suffer them to be idle, to lie in bed longer than they sleep in the day; nor to sit musing, but must get them upon the work of a lawful calling, and drive them on to so much diligence, that body and mind may be closely employed. This will be more than all other ordinary means. (6.) In most, meet physic also will do very much, which must be ordered by an experienced physician that is with them, or well knoweth them. (7.)

Lastly, Their false thoughts also must be confuted, and their minds have due satisfaction. And if you cannot have all, or most of these done, you can hardly expect a cure, unless time wear it off, which is doubtful.

II. The falsehood and vexation of such men's thoughts, whether the melancholy or others, are brought to pass, 1. By a false method of reasoning. 11. By false opinions which they have before received.

1. It is a grossly deluding and subverting way of reasoning, to begin at dark and doubtful consequents, thence to argue against certain, clear, fundamental principles. As if from some doubts about the position and motion of the stars, or of the nature of light, heat, and motion, men should argue that there is no sun, or moon, or stars at all; or that they have no power of light, heat, or motion: or as if from the many difficulties in anatomy, about the circulation of the blood the 'oleum nervosum,' the 'lymphe,' and its vessels, the passages and the 'succus' of the pancreas and gall, the transcolation through the intestines into the 'venæ lactæ,' the chyly glandules, and such like, one should arise to a conclusion, that there is no blood, no chyle, no veins, no glandules, no head, no body; or from the controversy, whether the heart be a mere muscle without any proper 'parenchymæ,' one should grow to conclude that there is no heart: so such persons, from points beyond man's reach, about God's decrees and intentions, and the mysteries of providence, conclude or doubt against God's goodness; that is, whether indeed there be a God. I have spoken so fully to this case, in my "Reasons of the Christian Religion," chapter iv. that I would desire you to peruse it. I shall now only give you twenty questions which the tempted person may challenge all the subtlety and malice of hell to answer; for it is easy to justify the goodness of God.

Quest. 1. 'Is it not certain that there is a world, in which is abundance of created goodness?' The earth is but a point as to all the world. There is a sun, and moon, and multitudes of glorious stars, which are many of them manifold greater than the earth. There are angels, there are men, there are variety of creatures in this lower part of the creation, which have all their excellency; all the men on earth

cannot by any contribution of their counsels, discern the ten thousandth part of the excellency of this little parcel of God's works. And as to the whole, it is next to nothing which we comprehend: every worm, every plant excelleth the highest human apprehension. Is there no physical goodness in all this unmeasurable, this harmonious, this glorious frame? Look about you, look upwards, and deny it if you can. And is there no moral goodness in holy men and angels? And is there no felicity and glorious goodness in all the heavens? What mind can be so black, as to deny all created goodness?

Quest. 2. 'Is not all the goodness of the whole creation communicated from God?' Did it make itself? Or who else made it? Are not all effects from their causes? And is he not the first cause? See what I have said to prove this fully in the aforesaid Treatise.

Quest. 3. 'Hath God made a world that is better than himself?' Could he give more goodness than he had to give? Must not he needs be better than all his works?

Quest. 4. 'Is he fit to be quarrelled with for want of goodness, who hath infinitely more goodness than the whole world besides?' More than sun and stars, heaven and earth, angels and men, all set together in all their single and their united, harmonious worth? If he be better than all, is he not most beyond accusation or exception?

Quest. 5. 'Must not God necessarily excel his works? Must he needs make every worm a god? Or must he make any god, or equal to himself?' Is not that a contradiction? And is there not necessarily an imperfection in all that is not God? Nothing can be so great, so wise, so good, so holy, so immutable, so self-sufficient, so blessed, as God.

Quest. 6. 'Is not God's creation a harmonious universe, of which individuals are but the parts?' Are not the parts for the whole, and their worth to be valued for the whole, or for the common ends? Must every pin in a watch, or every stitch in your garment, or every part of your house, or every member of your body, and every humour or excrement in it, have that excellency which may simply dignify itself in a compared or separated sense? Or rather, must it not have that excellency which belongeth to it as a part of the whole for the common end of all together? Is not that best, that

is best to the order, beauty, and usefulness of the universal frame ?

Quest. 7. ' Is it necessary to this end, or to prove God's goodness, that all individuals, or species of creatures, must be of the highest rank or excellency ?' Is God wanting in goodness, if every man be not an angel, or every angel made unchangeable, or every unlearned man a doctor, or every star a sun, or every cloud or clod a star, or every beast a man, or every worm an elephant, or every weed a rose, or every member a heart or head, or every excrement blood and spirits ? Will you think that a man doth reason like a man who thus disputeth, ' He that doth not do that which is best when he can do it, is not perfectly good, and therefore is not God. But he that maketh toads and serpents, and maketh the guts the passage of filthy excrements, when he could have made them equal with the heart, doth not do that which is best, when he can do it. Therefore he is not perfectly good ; therefore he is not God : therefore there is no God ; therefore there is no Creator ; therefore the world hath no cause, or made itself, and preserveth itself. Therefore I made myself, and must rule and preserve myself.' Conclude next, ' Therefore I will never suffer, nor die,' and thus prove the wisdom of such reasoning, if you can.

Quest. 8. If God made man and all things, ' did he not make them for himself, for the pleasure of his own will ? Must he not needs in reason be the end of all, who is the beginning and cause of all ?' And is not that means the best which is aptest to the end ? And doth not the proper goodness of a means consist in its aptitude to promote the end ? And then is not that the goodness of all creatures (partly to be what the Creator efficiently maketh them, and partly) to fulfil his will, and what creature hath not this goodness, as to the absolute will of his decrees, which all fulfil ?

Quest. 9. ' Are not now both these conclusions of infallible certainty, and therefore not at all contradictory ?' 1. That God is most good, because he is the cause of all the good in the whole creation ? 2. And yet that there are toads, serpents, darkness, death, sickness, pains, &c. which therefore are no whit inconsistent with his goodness ? Neither of them being capable of a denial, or of a sober doubt.

Quest. 10. ' Is not an angel and man, endued with reason and freewill, and left to choose or refuse his own rectitude

and felicity (or misery) capable of knowing, loving, serving, and enjoying God, if he will? and instructed by a perfect holy law (with rewards and punishments) to choose aright? I say, is not such a creature as noble and as meet for God to make as a stone, or a toad, or worm, or serpent? If God choose to please his own holy will, by making a world of such intellectual, free agents, whom he will (ordinarily) rule by the way of moral laws and motives; is this any disparagement to his wisdom and goodness? It is true, that such a mutable freewill is below a confirmed, immutable will. But it is as true, that a toad is below a man; and that infinite wisdom thought not meet to make all his creatures of one rank or size, not to make all faces alike, nor all the stones in the street alike, but in wonderful variety. It is not then unbecoming God, to make a world of rational free-agents, under such a moral government by laws.

Quest. 11. If all these free-agents have abused their liberty and undone themselves, if he so far shew mercy to them all, as that they may be all happy if they will, and none of them shall perish but for wilful and final refusing of the saving means and mercy which is offered to them; and if they will, they may live with God himself, and Christ and angels in endless glory; and none shall lose this free-given felicity, but for final refusal and contempt, preferring certain vanity and dung before it. And if officers be commissioned, and means provided, to acquaint all, in several measures, with the reasons why they should choose heaven and holiness before the dirty pleasures of sin, and to importune them daily to such a choice; and if a life of mercies be granted to allure them, and afflictions to drive them, and examples to invite them to choose aright. I say, after all this, 'have any of these persons cause to complain, that God dealeth not mercifully with them?' Shall they, that will not accept of life and mercy offered them, accuse him as cruel that importuneth them to accept it?

Quest. 12. 'Is the goodness of a king to be judged of by the interest of murderers in the gaol?' When he restrained them by laws, when he warned them by legal penalties, when he encourageth and protecteth all the good; when the lives of the innocent need this severity against the wicked; when the commonwealth would take him to be bad, that would not restrain thieves and murderers by penalties. Yea,

though this king could, if he would, have set a constant guard on these men to have kept these men from murdering, but he thinketh meet only to govern them by laws; will you rather argue, that the gaol is a place of misery, therefore the king is cruel, than, the rest of the kingdom flourish in prosperity and peace, therefore the king is wise and gracious. And is not this little dirty spot of earth, the next door to hell, a place defiled by wilful sin, and unfit to be the index of God's benignity, from whence we should take an estimate of it?

Quest. 13. 'Do not all men in the world confess God's goodness first or last?' Do not all true believers, that are themselves, acknowledge that he is infinitely good, and good to them, and that his mercy is over all his works, and endureth for ever? And do not the consciences of the damned grind and tear them for the contempt of goodness, and setting against mercy, even mercy to themselves? This is the fuel that feedeth hell, not by way of delusion, but experimental conviction. If the man that doubteth of God's goodness and mercy to him, do despair, or fear damnation, he foolishly contradicteth himself. For hell and damnation is a state of misery and torment, in the loss, and in the conscience and sense of refused and abused mercy. If therefore God be not merciful to you, then you need not fear being damned for sinning against and refusing mercy. For that which is not, cannot be sinned against, or abused. If God be merciful, you may be saved if you will accept this mercy; if he be not, you cannot in justice be damned for rejecting that mercy which was none. And if God be not merciful and just, he is not God. And if there be no God, there is none to damn you. But all confess, in heaven and hell, some with joy, and some with self-tormenting anguish, that God was inconceivably good and merciful.

Quest. 14. 'What if it were but one or two in a whole kingdom that were damned, and that only for obstinate unpersuadable, final refusal of grace and salvation, and all the rest of the world should be saved; tell me, would you then still suspect God of cruelty, or deny his goodness?' If not, I further ask you:

Quest. 15. 'Have you so good acquaintance with the extent of the universe, the superior world, the number of angels and blessed spirits, as that you are sure that it is pro-

portionably more in the whole universe, that are miserable? Though some peevish men have wrangled at what I have said of this in my forecited books, I am so far from flattering their self-conceited wisdom that I will say it over again, That it is agreed on by philosophers, that the earth, as to the universe, is no bigger than a point or inch is to the whole earth; we see over our heads, a wonderful sun, a multitude of fixed and unfixed stars, of wonderful magnitude, divers of them many times bigger than all the earth; besides the vast ethereal interspaces; we see in a tube or telescope, a marvellous likeness of the moon to this earth, with shades, inequalities, &c. Multitudes of stars in the galaxy and elsewhere, are discernible in the telescope, which without it no eye can see; little know we how far the world extendeth itself, beyond all these stars and sun which we can see; or whether there be millions of the like beyond our sight. The Scripture telleth us of innumerable angels, holy and glorious spirits, that attend Christ in the service of this lower world. No Scripture telleth us whether all the glorious or blessed spirits be thus employed as angels for mankind, or whether ten thousand thousandfold more be otherwise employed. No Scripture or reason telleth, whether sun or moon, stars and intermediate æther, be inhabited or not? It is temerity to affirm that they are. And it is a great temerity to say that they are not. It is lawful to doubt, and it is lawful to conjecture, that it is most probable they are, considering, 1. That life is the excellency of the creation, and the deadest parts are the basest. 2. That the earth, and water, and air, are full of men, beasts, fishes, birds, worms, flies, &c. 3. That it is incredible to him that looketh upward, that sun, moon, stars, and æther, are baser regions than this dirty earth; and consequently that they are baser as to their use and inhabitants. These thoughts of an uncertain thing, are lawful, to him that will go no further than he hath evidence, and not make an uncertain thing seem certain; and certain it is, that spirits are innumerable. And though some of these have fallen to be devils, God hath not told us how many; nor can we know that it is one to a million of happier creatures. And can that man then, who is offended with God, not for damning a very few, but for the proportion of the damned in comparison of others, tell what he saith? Can he say, if God had cast off all this

earth, that it had been more than one of a million of millions as to the whole creation? It is true I cannot tell the number; but it is as true that when our foundation is sure, that God is infinitely wise and good, it is madness to accuse him as unwise, or evil, or cruel, for that which we must confess we do not know; and to talk against him in the dark. Stay till you see who dwelleth in all the superior regions, and then take yourselves for fitter discerners of your Maker's ways.

Quest. 16. 'Are you well acquainted with the nature and degrees of the future miseries which tempt you to think that God is cruel?' They are not all of one degree; what if much of them be still voluntary to the miserable souls? The devils who are now tormented in hell, are yet inhabitants of the air, and exercised in voluntary acts of malice. I take it to be no small degree of hell which the ungodly choose, and love, and possess among us here on earth, and will not be dissuaded from; they are without all holy communion with God, and they would be so; they are out of heaven, and they would be so; they are debased and confined to sensual pleasures, and worldly vanities, and they will be so; they are the drudges of the devil, and the servants of the flesh, and the slaves of men, and they would be so; they are defiled with sin, and imprisoned in their own concupiscence, and they would be so; they are corrupted, and tantalized, and vexed, and tossed up and down by their irregular desires; in a word, they have the plague of sin, and have neither holiness nor true happiness, and so they will have it to be, and will not be cured; now these tempted persons can see a misery in pain; but can see no such evil in sin, for which such pain should be inflicted; when as sin itself, and that which they are willing of, is so great a part of their misery, as that in this life, the rest is as nothing to it. And though, no doubt, much will be involuntary hereafter, we know not what the proportion will be between the voluntary and involuntary part.

And what makes these men that they do not pity a drunkard, a fornicator, a worldling, a sensual lord or gentleman, that hath no better than the shadows which he chooseth? Neither the tempted, nor they themselves, would call God cruel if he would let them so live in health for ever; even a healthful beggar would call God merciful if he might

never die, nor be more miserable. But princes or lords would call him cruel, if he should put them into the beggar's or labourer's case. You accuse not God as cruel for making toads and serpents, worms and vermin, because they are not troubled with their own condition; but if you could imagine them to have the knowledge how much happier men are, the case would alter. Or if God should change men into toads and serpents, you would call him unmerciful; when yet he is no more bound antecedently to man than unto them. Thus because these tempted persons have, as Adam when his eyes were opened, a disquieting knowledge, to know good and evil penally; their own apprehension (as Adam's of his nakedness) maketh that seem cruelty, which seemed a fruit of goodness before.

The sum is, when you come into another world, and see what manner of punishment it is that God exerciseth on the damned (as well as on how many) you will then be perfectly satisfied, that there is nothing but that amiable justice, which is the fruit of holiness, goodness, and wisdom in it all; and you shall see nothing in the punishment of the miserable which you shall either blame or wish were otherwise, if you come to heaven.

To which let me add, when you come to see the heavenly glory, and how the God of infinite goodness hath advanced such innumerable hosts (if not worlds) of men and angels into such wonderful felicity, and compare this with the sufferings of the devil and of his damned followers, instead then of quarrelling with the goodness of God, you will be wrapt up in the admirations and praises of it with full delights, to all eternity.

Quest. 17. 'And tell me, is he fit to entertain suspicions and quarrels with God, who knoweth God to be God, and knoweth himself to be but a man?' I speak not only in respect of our inferiority, as the potsherd should not quarrel with the potter; but in respect of our great and certain ignorance. Are we not puzzled about the poorest worm and pile of grass, whose manifold mysteries no mortal man can yet discover? Are we not grossly ignorant about every thing (even visible and palpable) which we see, and touch, and have to do with? Do we not know that we know but little, even of ourselves, or of any thing about us in the world? And shall the darkened soul, while it must operate

in such a puddle of brains and humours, be so madly proud, as to presume of a knowledge, which findeth out errors and badness in God, who is infinitely wise and good? Nothing is more sure than that God is most wise and good; and nothing should be more easily known to us, than that we are very blind and bad. And if such wretches then cannot reconcile their thoughts about God's works, should they not rather suspect themselves than him? Suspect, did I say; should they not take it as the surest verity, that it is God, that is not only justifiable, but infinitely amiable and laudable, and that it is worse than brutishness, for such moles to be his accusers?

Quest. 18. Yea, 'is this accusing God a fit employment for that person, who liveth in a land of mercies: who hath been bred up in mercy, preserved by mercy, yea, differenced by saving mercy from the ungodly, who hath been called from blindness, carnality, and profaneness, and entertained many a time in holy worship with God; who hath been washed in Christ's blood, and justified from so many and grievous sins, and made of an enemy an adopted child, and of a heir of hell a heir of heaven, and all this by the tender mercies of a provoked God, a gracious Redeemer, and a holy Sanctifier?' Shall this person, I say, this, be one that instead of praising God with the raptures of continual joy, shall turn his accuser? O let the guilty that readeth this stop here, and fall down on his knees to God, and melt into tears in the sense of such unkindness.

Quest. 19. 'But can a child of God be possibly guilty of so great a sin as this?'

Answ. I speak not now of the malignant atheist; but of the melancholy, tempted persons. Alas, it is the melancholy disease, and the devil, more than he. God pitieth his children's frowardness, especially when necessitated naturally by diseases; and he that pardoned peevish Jonas, that said, "I do well to be angry to the death;" and complaining Job; and excused his sleepy disciples with "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak," will not condemn an upright soul, for the effect of a feverish deliration, or a melancholy that overcomes his natural power of resistance.

Quest. 20. 'Would you thus argue or quarrel against God's greatness and wisdom, as you do against his goodness?' You suspect him to be unmerciful, because he cur-

eth not men's sins, and preventeth not their damnation. And have you not the like occasion to argue against his other perfections? Do you think he reasoneth soberly that saith, 'He that maketh asses when he might have made them men, or maketh idiots, or maketh stones that know nothing; he that is the governor of such a foolish, distracted, confused world as mankind is, is foolish himself, or unskilful in government, or wanteth wisdom. But God doth thus.' Is he not worse than a fool that will accuse his God of folly? Doth not the admirable harmony of all the world, and his wonderful work in every creature, prove his incomprehensible wisdom? And what would you say to him that should thus reason: 'He that maketh impotent worms, that suffereth the good to die, that suffereth the tyrants of the earth to persecute his church and cause, is impotent, and not almighty. But so doth God?' Would you not say, 'I have the wonderful frame of heaven and earth, the sun and stars, the sea and land, to prove to me that he is Almighty. This therefore is a proved foundation truth, to which all doubts must be reduced?' And if you dare not be so impudent as to deny his Omniscience or Omnipotence, when you think there is error or impotency in his works, why will you any more deny his goodness, when you dream that there is badness in his works? Do you not know, that power, wisdom, and goodness are God's three essential principles of operation, virtues, or properties? And that they are none of them greater or less than other? And that his goodness (though not as to be measured by human interest) is equal to his wisdom and his greatness? And do you not know, that to deny any one of the three, yea, to deny the perfection of any one of them, is to deny that there is any God? And is he sober that will argue, 'There are frogs and toads, there are worms and asses, there are fools and miserable sinners, therefore there is no God.' When as there could neither be any of these, nor any world or being, if there were no God?

Quest. 21. Lastly, now consider, 'whether evidently, the root of all this sin be not (besides melancholy and satan) the power of selfishness, and sensual or fleshly interest.' Alas! poor men, that were made for their God, to rejoice wholly in pleasing him, and to shew forth the lustre of his glory, are fallen unto themselves and flesh; and now they that should

wholly devote and refer themselves to God, do strive to make God a servant to themselves, and measure his goodness by the standard of their fleshly sense and interest; and God shall be with them no longer good, that is, no longer God, than he will give them their wills, and serve their flesh, and keep them from crosses, and losses, and pains, and govern the world according to their fancies; and when they are committing this odious, self-exalting idolatry, and abasing God, even then will they judge themselves both wiser, and more merciful than he. Yea, when a melancholy man despaireth in the sense of his own sin and badness, at that very time he thinketh himself more merciful than the God of infinite goodness, and accuseth his God for being more cruel than he himself. O man, into what distraction and confusion art thou fallen, when thou departest from thy God, and sinkest into that blind and wretched self.

And tell me, what if but the wills of all the poor, the pained, the dying, &c. were but reconciled to their suffering state. Would that which pleaseth the will be matter of any complaint? You may see then that it is not God's providence, &c. but the wills and ways of sinners, that are the diseased causes of all their wranglings. And if our wills were cured, and reduced to God's will, we should find no fault with him; if I can but be truly willing of imprisonment, poverty, or death, how can I feel any thing in it to complain of? When even sinners, as aforesaid, do obstinately here take their misery for their happiness, and are contented with it so far as it is voluntary.

By that time these twenty questions are answered, the accusations of God as wanting goodness, will all turn to the accuser's shame.

11. I am next briefly to detect the false opinions which do ordinarily cause these persons' errors.

1. It is false doctrine to affirm that God condemneth the greatest part of his intellectual creatures (as I have shewed) though he condemn never so many of this ungodly world.

2. It is not true that God decreeth to condemn any man but for sin, (for sin, I say, as the cause of his damnation).

3. God decreeth to condemn none at age (which I add but to exclude foolish cavils) for Adam's sin only; nor for

any other sin only that is not conjoined with an obstinate, final impenitency, and rejecting offered mercy, and neglecting means appointed for their salvation.

4. God's decrees do cause no man's sin (nor his damnation any further than as supposing sin), for Dr. Twisse himself still professeth, 1. That reprobation is an immanent act, and 'nihil ponit in objecto,' putteth nothing at all into the person. 2. And that reprobation inferreth no necessity of sin or misery, but that which is called 'necessitas consequentiæ,' and not any 'necessitas consequentis;' and Arminius and all confess that God's bare foreknowledge causeth or inferreth a 'necessity consequentiæ,' which truly is but a logical necessity in order of argumentation, when one thing is proved by another; and not by physical necessity in order of causation, as one thing is caused by another.

And whereas they say, 'Then man might have frustrated God's decree.' I ask them, whether man can frustrate God's foreknowledge; suppose God to foreknow sin without decreeing it (of which more anon), is not this a good argument, 'All that God foreknoweth will certainly come to pass. But God foreknoweth, e. g. Judas's sin, therefore it will certainly come to pass.' And what of all this? It doth not come to pass, because God foreknoweth it, any more than the sun will rise to-morrow, because you foreknow it.

And if you say, that no power can frustrate God's foreknowledge, I answer, they are delusory words of one that knoweth not what he saith. For it is one thing to have power to make God ignorant, and another thing to have power to do otherwise than that which he foreknoweth you will do. No man hath power to make God ignorant; but all sinners may have power to do otherwise than that which God foreknoweth they will do. For God doth not foreknow that, e. g. Gehezi, shall not have power to forbear a lie; but only that he will not forbear it. Yea, more, God's foreknowledge doth prove that sinners have power to do otherwise; for that which God foreknoweth will be. But God foreknoweth that men will abuse their power to sin, or will sin when they had power to do otherwise, therefore it will be so in the event.

Now if you will call their power to do otherwise, a power to frustrate God's foreknowledge, you will but speak

foolishly. For the power itself is foreknown; and the object of knowledge 'in esse cognito,' is not after the act of knowledge. And if the person will not actually sin, God could not foreknow that he will sin. So that foreknowledge is here (when it is not casual) but a medium in a syllogism, and inferreth only the necessity of the consequence in arguing, and doth not cause the thing foreknown.

Now when Dr. Twisse saith, that all the schoolmen agree, that no necessity, 'consequentis,' or of causation, but only 'consequentiaë,' doth follow the decree of reprobation, see how far he and Arminius are in this agreed, (though I know some give another sense of 'necessitas consequentiæ'). But I come closer to the matter yet.

4. God decreeth no man's sin; neither Adam's, nor any other's. He may decree the effect, which sinners accomplish (as the death of Christ), and he may overrule men in their sin, and bring good out of it, &c. But sin is not a thing that he can will or cause, and so not decree, which signifieth a volition.

5. God cannot be proved to decree, or will the permission of man's sin. For to permit is nothing. It is but not to hinder; which is no act: and to decree and will is a positive act. And if you fain God to have a positive volition or nolition, of every thing, or negative, then he must have positive decrees of every mere possible atom, sand, worm, name, word, thought of man, &c. That such and such a nothing shall never be; whereas, there needeth no more to keep any thing from being (in this case) than God's not causing it, not willing it, not decreeing it. The creature's active nature, disposition, objects, and circumstances, are here pre-supposed; and the impedition necessary, is by act, or substraotion of these aforesaid, and God's 'non-agere' needs no positive decree. I must tell the learned reader, that this room will not serve to answer his foreseen objections. But I hope I have done it sufficiently elsewhere.

6. God hath not only decreed to give, but actually given a great deal of mercy to them that perish, which had a natural tendency to their salvation. Christ hath so far died for all, as that none shall perish for want of a sufficiency in the satisfaction made: he hath purchased and given for all a grant or gift of himself, with pardon, justification, adoption and right to glory, on condition of acceptance

(where the Gospel cometh). In a word, so that none of them shall perish, that do not finally refuse the grace and salvation offered them.

7. Men are not impenitent and unbelievers for want of that called natural faculty, or power to choose and refuse aright; but for want of a right disposition of their own wills; and by such a moral impotency, which is indeed their viciousness, and the wickedness of their wills, and doth not excuse, but aggravate the sin. (See Mr. Truman of "Natural and Moral Impotency.")

8. To rectify men's wicked wills and dispositions, God giveth them a world of means; the whole creation, and documents of providence; all the precepts, promises, threats of Scripture; preaching, example, mercies, judgments, patience and inward motions of the Spirit; all which might do much to men's conversion and salvation, if they would but do what they could on their own part.

9. Adam could have stood, when he fell, without any more grace than that which he abused and neglected. God's grace, which was not effectual to him, was as much as was necessary to his standing, if he would have done his best: and it was left to his freewill, to have made that help effectual by improvement. He fell, not because he could not stand, but because he would not.

10. For aught any can prove, multitudes that believe not now, but perish, may have rejected a help as sufficient to their believing, as Adam's was to his standing.

11. All men have power to do more good, and avoid more evil than they do; and he that will not do what he can do, justly suffereth.

12. Heathens and infidels are not left unredeemed under the remediless curse, and covenant of innocency, which we broke in Adam; but are all brought by the redemption wrought by Christ, under a law or terms of grace. 1. God made a covenant of grace with all mankind in Adam; (Gen. iii. 15.) who was by tradition to acquaint his posterity with it, as he did to Cain and Abel, the ordinances of oblation and sacrifice. 2. This covenant was renewed with all mankind in Noah. 3. This covenant is not repealed, otherwise than by a more perfect edition to them that have the plenary Gospel. 4. The full Gospel-covenant is made for all, as to the tenor of it, and the command of preaching and offering

it to all. 5. They that have not this edition, may yet be under the first edition. 6. The Jews, under the first edition, were saved without believing in this determinate person of Jesus, or that he should die for sin, and rise again, and send down the Spirit: for the apostles believed it not beforehand; (Luke xviii. 34. John xii. 16. Luke ix. 45. Mark ix. 34. Luke xxiv. 21, 25, 26. Acts i. 6—8.) yet were they then in a state of saving grace, as appeareth by John xiv. xv. xvi. xvii. throughout. 7. The rest of the world that had not the same supernatural revelation, were not then bound to believe so much as the Jews were, about the Messiah. 8. God himself told them all, that they were not under the unremedied curse of the covenant of innocency, by giving them a life full of those mercies which they had forfeited, which all did tend to lead them to repentance, and to seek after God (Rom. ii. 4. Acts xvii. 27.), and “find him; yea, he left not himself without witness, for that which may be known of him, and his invisible things are manifested and clearly seen in his works;” so that the wicked are without excuse; Rom. i. 19, 20. Acts xiv. 17. So that all heathens are bound “to believe that God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him;” (Heb. xi. 6.) And are all under the duty of using certain means, in order to their own recovery and salvation, and to believe that they are not commanded to do this in vain: so that God’s own providence by a course of such mercies, which cannot stand with the execution of the unremedied, violated law of innocency, together with his obliging all men to repentance, and to the use of a certain course of means, in order to their salvation, is a promulgation of a law of grace, according to the first edition, and distinguisheth man from unredeemed devils.

And they that say that all the infidel world have all this mercy, duty, means and hope, without any redemption or satisfaction of Christ as the procuring cause, are in the way to say next, ‘That the church’s mercies too, might have been given without Christ.’ 9. “Of a truth, God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with him;” Acts x. 34, 35. For “God will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honour, and incorruptibility, eternal life;” Rom. ii. 6, 7. “Glory, honour, and peace, to

every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek ;" ver. 10. " For there is no respect of persons with God ;" ver. 11. " For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves, which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another ;" ver. 14, 15. And they shall be judged according to that law which they were under, natural or mosaical, " even by Jesus Christ ;" ver. 12. 16. And it is the work of the Spirit promised to believers, to write the law of God in their hearts.

11. Though a special promise was made to Abraham, as an eminent believer, and the Jewish nation were the peculiar people of God, advanced to greater privileges than any others in the world ; yet were they not the whole kingdom of God the Redeemer, nor the only people that were in a covenant of grace, or in a state of salvation. For Shem was alive after Abraham's death, who was not like to be less than a king, and to have a kingdom and a people governed according to his fidelity. And Melchisedec was a king of righteousness and peace, not like to be Shem by the situation of his country. And a righteous king would govern in righteousness. Job and his friends are evidences of the same truth. And we have no proof or probability that all Abraham's seed by Ishmael, and Esau, and Keturah, were apostates, for they continued circumcision. And what all the rest of the world was we know not, save that in general most grew idolatrous, and the Canaanites in special. But that they all apostatized from the covenant of grace made with Adam and Noah, there is no proof. We have not the history of any of their countries fully, so as to determine of such cases. In Nineveh God ruled by that law of grace which called them to repent, and spared them upon their belief and repentance ; " Because he was a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth of the evil ;" Jonah iv. 2.

And that God dealeth not with mankind now as the mere judge of the violated law of innocency ; he declareth not only by the full testimony of his providence, or mercies given to the sinful world ; but also by the very name, which he proclaimeth unto Moses (which signifieth his nature,

and his mind towards others, and not what he is to the Jews alone) Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." All which is inconsistent with the relation of God, as a judge of a people, only under the curse of an unremedied violated law, and unredeemed, though he add, "and that will by no means clear the guilty." &c. that is, will neither judge them innocent that are guilty of the crime, nor judge them to life that are guilty of death, according to the tenor of the law which they are under; 'Purificando non purificabit' as the literal version; that is, will not judge unjustly, by acquitting him that is to be condemned, or as the Chaldee paraphrase hath it, 'not justifying those that are not converted.'

It is enough for us therefore to know, that the visible church hath manifold privileges above all others; Rom. iii. 1—3., &c. And that salvation is more easy, sure, and plentiful, where the Gospel cometh, than with any others; and that we have therefore great cause to rejoice with thankfulness for our lot, and that the poor world lieth in wickedness, and must be pitied, prayed for, and helped to our power, and that "God is the Saviour of all men, but especially of them that believe; and that he is good to all, and his mercies are over all his works;" and that he will never damn one soul that loveth him as God. But what is in the hearts of all men in the world, and consequently how they shall be used at last, he only that searcheth the heart can tell; and it is neither our duty nor our interest, nor possible to us, to know it of all particulars, much less to conclude, that none among them have such love, who believe him to be infinitely good, and to be to them a merciful, pardoning God. And we know withal, that all they that know not Jesus Christ, as this determinate person that was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, buried, rose again, &c., do yet receive all the aforesaid mercies by him, and not by any other name or mediation, nor yet without his purchasing mediation.

13. And if besides all the mercy that God sheweth to others, he do antecedently and positively elect certain persons, by an absolute decree, to overcome all their resistances

of his Spirit, and to draw them to Christ, and by Christ to himself, by such a power and way as shall infallibly convert and save them, and not leave the success of his mercy, and his Son's preparations, to the bare uncertainty of the mutable will of depraved man, what is there in this that is injurious to any others? Or that representeth God unmerciful to any but such whose eye is evil, because he is good, and as a free benefactor, may give more mercy to some than others of equal demerits? If they that hold no grace but what is universal, and left, as to the success, to the will of man, as the determining cause, do think that this is well consistent with the mercifulness of God; surely they that hold as much universal grace as the former; and that indeed all have so much, as bringeth and leaveth the success to man's will, and deny to no man any thing which the other give, do make God no less merciful than they; but more, if they moreover assert a special decree and grace of God, which with a chosen number, shall antecedently infallibly secure his ends in their repentance, faith, perseverance, and salvation. Is this any detraction from, or diminution of his universal grace? Or rather a higher demonstration of his goodness? As it is no wrong to man that God maketh angels more holy, immutable and happy.

14. And what if men cannot here tell how to resolve the question 'Whether any, or how many are ever converted and saved, by that mere grace which we call sufficient, or rather necessary, and common to those that are not converted; and whether man will ever make a saving, determining improvement of it;' must plain truth be denied, because difficulties cannot easily be solved? And yet in due place I doubt not but I have shewed, that this question itself is formed upon false suppositions, and is capable of a satisfactory solution.

15. I conclude in general, that nothing is more sure, than that God is most powerful, wise, and good, and that all his works, to those that truly know them, do manifest all these in conjunction and perfect harmony; and that as to his decrees and providences, he is the cause of all good, and of no sin in act or habit, and that our sin and destruction is of ourselves, and of him is our holiness and salvation; and that he attaineth all his ends as certainly, as if men's will had no liberty, but were acted by physical necessita-

tion : and yet that man's will hath as much natural liberty, as if God had not gone before it with any decree of the event, and as much moral liberty as we have moral virtue or holiness.

And these principles I have laid down in a little room, that tempted persons may see, that it is our dark and puzzled brains, and our selfish, diseased hearts, that are the cause of our quarrelling with God, his decrees and providences ; and as soon as we come to ourselves and are cured, these odious apprehensions vanish, and God appeareth as the unclouded sun, in the lustre of his amiable goodness : and when we come to heaven, we shall see to our joy, and his glory, that heaven, earth and hell, declare him to be all perfectly good, without any mixture of evil in himself, or in any of his word or works. And we shall find all our sinful suspicions and murmurings turned into a joyful consent to the angelical praises. Psal. cxxxvi. 1. 2. 26. &c. " O give thanks unto the Lord for he is good, for his mercy is for ever. O give thanks unto the God of heaven, for his mercy is for ever ; Rev. iv. 8. 11. Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come— Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power ; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created.— Rev. vii. 12. Amen, blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, unto our God for ever and ever, Amen. The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger, and of great mercy ;" Psal. cxlv. 8, 9. " The word of the Lord is right, and all his works are done in truth : he loveth righteousness and judgment ; the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord ;" Psal. xxxiii. 4, 5. " O how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee ; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men ;" Psal. xxxi. 19. " O therefore that men (instead of quarrelling with his unknown mysteries) would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men ;" Ps. cvii. 8. 15. 21. 31.

In the conclusion, I take it to be wholesome advice to those that are under this temptation :

1. That they will oft read over the Psalms of praise, and think when they read them, whether David and the ancient

church, were not more likely to know what they said, than a self-conceited, or a melancholy tempted sinner ?

That they would consider, who it is that is the grand enemy of the glory of God's goodness, and they shall soon find that it is none other than the devil ; none but he that is most evil, can most envy Infinite Goodness his honour. And is the devil fit to be believed against God ? And that after the warning of our first parents' ruin, which befel them for believing satan, when he slandered both God's wisdom, truth, and goodness to them ?

3. That they would bethink them to what end it is, that the tempter, and the enemy of God, do thus deny his goodness. Is it not a plain act of malice against God and us ? Is it not that he may disgrace God as evil, and rob him of his glory ; and also that he may hinder man from loving him, and so destroy all piety, and virtue, and goodness in the world ? Who can love him whom he believeth to be bad, and so unlovely ? And what grace or happiness can there be without the love of God ?

4. That they would think what horrid wickedness this sin containeth (where melancholy and involuntarieness do not extenuate it). Is it any better than a denying that there is any God ? As is said before ; to be God, is to be perfectly powerful, wise and good : and if there be none such, there can be no God. And then who made the world, and all that is good in it by derivated goodness ? Yea, is it not to represent the most amiable blessed God, in satan's image (who is most evil and a murderer from the beginning ;" John viii. 44.) that so men may hate him, and fly from him as they do from devils ? And can you tell how great a crime this is ?

5. That they would consider, how this impious conceit is calculated for the licensing of all manner of villany in the world, and to root out all the relics of goodness from among mankind. For who can expect that any man should be better than his Maker, and that he should have any good, who denieth God to be good ?

6. That they would labour hard to be better themselves ; for he that hath a true created goodness, is thereby prepared to relish and admire God's primitive uncreated goodness : whereas a wicked, or a guilty sinner, cannot much value that which he is so unsuitable to, and which he thinks will

ne to him a consuming fire. "Truly God is good to Israel, and to such as are of a clean heart;" Psal. lxxiii. 1. But he that liveth in the love of sin, will be doubting of the love of God, and fearful of his wrath, and unfit to relish and delightfully perceive his goodness. "Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him;" Psal. xxxiv. 8.

7. Study God's love as manifested in Christ; then you shall see what man on earth may see. But think not falsely, narrowly, or basely of his office, his performance, or his covenant.

8. Dwell in the believing foresight of the celestial glory; the reflections of which may wrap up a believing soul on earth, into ecstasies of gratitude and delight.

9. Remember what goodness there is in the holiness of God, which is demonstrated in his severest justice; yea, what mercy it is to forewarn men of the punishment of sin, that they may want no necessary means to escape it.

10. Remember how unfit the selfish interest of obstinate despisers of grace and salvation is, to be the measure or index of the goodness of God: and how much more credible the concordant testimony of the heavenly host is, who live in the love of Love itself, and are everlastingly delighted in the praises of the infinite greatness, wisdom, and goodness of the most perfect, blessed, glorious God.

END OF THE EIGHTH VOLUME.