

the picture is sometimes reversed apparently; and the good are afflicted because they do good, and the wicked triumph because they do evil. Evil abounds, but it is not so distributed as righteous retribution would award it; neither is good. Since, therefore, God's justice must be infinitely perfect, there must be some other object for the prevalence of good and evil in the world besides righteous retribution.

Secondly. We learn from the subject that the world is in a fallen condition.

I mean, that man has fallen from holiness and happiness. For the world is evidently not such a world as infinite wisdom and benevolence would prepare for a being perfectly holy and happy. Philosophize as we may, we cannot discover any reason why the abode of such a being should be filled with evils of almost every name; evils which the most consummate prudence and the most elevated virtue cannot wholly avoid; evils which often come upon the good man because he is eminent for holiness. But if man has fallen from original holiness and happiness by transgression, we might expect just such a world to be fitted up for his residence, because evil is indissolubly linked to sin, perhaps in the very nature of things, certainly by divine appointment. We know that it brings a curse upon every thing with which it is connected; and here we see a reason for the blight that has marred some of the fairest features of nature, and introduced pain and suffering into the animal frame, and brought a cloud over man's noble intellect, and hebetude over his moral powers. Such a fallen condition will explain what no other supposition can, namely, the clouded, fettered, and depressed condition of all organic nature.

Yet, thirdly. We should not infer that man's condition was hopeless, but rather that mercy might be in store for him.

The very fact that the world is not in a state of retribution would seem to afford hope that God had other purposes than punishment in allowing evil to be introduced. And then the vast predominance of benevolence and happiness around us cannot but inspire hope for the fallen.

This will be still more manifest if we infer, and can show, fourthly, that the world is in a state of probation or trial.

By this I mean that men are placed in a condition for the trial and discipline of their characters, in order to fit them for