

mind has been sufficient to save us from any doubt, as to that existence, which the obscure and laborious reasonings, *a priori*, in support of it, would have led us to *doubt*, rather than to *believe*.”*

11. We shall not go over the whole unsatisfactory metaphysics of that period—and whereof Dr. Clarke is far the ablest advocate and expounder. For the sake of our intellectual discipline, it is well, however, to familiarize ourselves with his celebrated demonstration, which though in effect vitiated by the one or two assumptions that we have specified, is nevertheless an admirable specimen of close and consecutive reasoning. It is not to be marvelled at, that possessed of such dialectic powers, he should have tinged with his own spirit almost all the authorship of natural theology at that period—till at length, in the impotent hands of his followers and imitators, it wrought itself out of all credit when unaccompanied by those redeeming qualities which buoyed up the performance of this great master, and has perpetuated its character as a standard and classical work, even to the present day. The whole of the Boyle lectureship, for example, was for many years deeply infused by it. Bentley, so able in other departments, presents us in his sermons on the subject, with what we should call, a perfect caricature of this *a priori* extravagance. It even deforms, at times, the pages of Foster, who is the most eloquent, and perhaps the best writer of that age on natural religion. As to Abernethy, we hold his book, in spite of the high character which was

* Brown's Lectures, XCII. and XCIII.