

is not properly the author of evil, any more than He is the author either of his own understanding, or of the necessary and eternal and immutable truths which have residence there and are for ever present to its contemplation. He did not will the properties of figure, or the relations of quantity and number—and in like manner, is it conceived, that He did not will that countless infinity of objects which have no other being than in the region of possibilities. In this region there exist in idea all possible universes; and, by an act of voluntary and creative power, it is affirmed that God made to exist in reality that one universe which is the best. There is evil, it is further imagined, essentially implicated even in this best form of a universe—but should this, for the sake of a fancied improvement, be done away or converted into an opposite good—it would throw us back to some other of the possible forms, some different economy under which less of good on the whole would be produced than in the actual system of things. This evidently supposes that, in addition to the logical and the mathematical and the moral necessities which it is impossible for God to annul, there are also physical necessities which it is alike impossible for Him to annul. He could not by this hypothesis expunge the evil that is in our actual universe, but at the expense of a short-coming from the maximum of good that is rendered by it. We cannot positively affirm this to be true—but we can at least say that, for aught we know, it may be true. If we cannot assert, neither can we by any reason or by any knowledge of ours overturn it. It seems to be one