

OBSERVATIONS ON MAN,

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HIS FRAME,

HIS DUTY, AND HIS EXPECTATIONS.

IN TWO PARTS.

BY

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P R E F A C E.

THE Work here offered to the Public consists of papers written at different times, but taking their rise from the following occasion.

About eighteen years ago I was informed, that the Rev. Mr. Gay, then living, asserted the possibility of deducing all our intellectual pleasures and pains from association. This put me upon considering the power of association. Mr. Gay published his sentiments on this matter, about the same time, in a Dissertation on the fundamental Principle of Virtue, prefixed to Mr. Archdeacon Law's Translation of Archbishop King's Origin of Evil.

From inquiring into the power of association, I was led to examine both its consequences, in respect of morality and religion, and its physical cause. By degrees many disquisitions foreign to the doctrine

of association, or at least not immediately connected with it, intermixed themselves. I have here put together all my separate papers on these subjects, digesting them in such order as they seemed naturally to suggest; and adding such things as were necessary to make the whole appear more complete and systematical.

I think, however, that I cannot be called a system-maker, since I did not first form a system, and then suit the facts to it, but was carried on by a train of thoughts from one thing to another, frequently without any express design, or even any previous suspicion of the consequences that might arise. And this was most remarkably the case, in respect of the doctrine of *necessity*; for I was not at all aware, that it followed from that of association, for several years after I had begun my inquiries; nor did I admit it at last, without the greatest reluctance.

There are two things in these papers, which require a particular apology. First, The imperfect state in which they are presented to the reader. Secondly, The great freedom which I have used in respect to all orders of men in the conclusion of the Second Part.

As to the first; If the reader will be so favourable to me as to expect nothing more than hints and conjectures in difficult and obscure matters, and a short detail of the principal reasons and evidences in those that are clear, I hope he will not be much disappointed. However, be this as it will, I have in one part or other of these papers alleged all that I know material, in support of my system; and therefore am now desirous to recommend it to the consideration of others.

I have tried to reconcile such inconsistencies, real or apparent, and to cut off such repetitions and redundancies, as have arisen from my writing the separate parts of this work at different times, and in different situations of mind. But I have still need of great indulgence from the reader on these and other accounts.

As to the second thing; I can truly say, that my free and unreserved manner of speaking has flowed from the sincerity and earnestness of my heart. But I will not undertake to justify all that I have said. Some things may be too hasty and censorious; or, however, be unbecoming my place and station. I heartily wish, that I could have observed the true medium. For, want of candour

is not less an offence against the Gospel of Christ, than false shame, and want of courage in his cause.

Some persons may perhaps think, that I ought not to have delivered my opinions so freely and openly, concerning the necessity of human actions, and the ultimate happiness of all mankind; but have left the reader to deduce these consequences, or not, as should appear most reasonable to him. But this would, in my opinion, have been a disingenuous procedure. Besides, these tenets appear to me not only innocent, but even highly conducive to the promotion of piety and virtue amongst mankind. However, that no one may misapprehend me to his own hurt, I will here make two remarks by way of anticipation.

First, then, I no where deny practical, free-will, or that voluntary power over our affections and actions, by which we deliberate, suspend, and choose, and which makes an essential part of our ideas of virtue and vice, reward and punishment; but, on the contrary, establish it (if so plain a thing will admit of being farther established) by shewing in what manner it results from the frame of our natures.

Secondly, I do most firmly believe, upon the authority of the Scriptures, that the future punishment of the wicked will be exceedingly great both in degree and duration, *i. e.* infinite and eternal, in that real practical sense to which alone our conceptions extend. And were I able to urge any thing upon a profane careless world, which might convince them of the infinite hazard to which they expose themselves, I would not fail to do it, as the reader may judge even from those passages for which I have above apologized.

December, 1748.

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CONTENTS.

THE FIRST PART.

INTRODUCTION.

	PAGE
DEFINITIONS	1
Distribution of the First Part	3

CHAP. I. + (6c10)

THE GENERAL LAWS, ACCORDING TO WHICH THE SENSATIONS AND MOTIONS ARE PERFORMED, AND OUR IDEAS GENERATED.

The doctrines of vibrations and association proposed	4
Their mutual connexion	<i>ib.</i>

SECT. I.

The Doctrine of Vibrations, and its Use for explaining the Sensations.

General evidences for the dependence of sensation and motion on the brain	5
General evidences for the dependence of ideas on the brain	6
Instances shewing that sensations remain in the mind for a short time after the sensible objects are removed.	<i>ib.</i>
The infinitesimal medullary particles vibrate during sensation	8
The æther	<i>ib.</i>