mentation, we ſhould be in a great meaſure deprived of the preſent reward of virtue ; and therefore this associating principle contributes much to our happiness But the benevolence of a Being, who ſeems as it were thus anxious to furniſh us with both ſenſual and intellectual enjoyments, and who has made our duty our greateſt pleaſure, cannot be queſtioned ; and therefore we muſt infer, that the Author of Nature wiſhes the happineſs of the whole ſenſible and intel­ligent creation.

To ſuch reaſoning as this in ſupport of the Divine Be­nevolence many objections have been made. Some of them appear at firſt sight plauſible, and are apt to ſtagger the faith of him who has beſtowed no time on the ſtudy of that branch of general ſcience which is called *physics* (ſee Phy­sics). To omit theſe altogether in ſuch an article as this might be conſtrued into neglect ; whilſt it is certain that there is in them nothing worthy of the attention of that man who is qualified either to eſtimate their force, or to underſtand the arguments by which they have often been repelled.

It has been aſked, Why, if the Author of Nature be a be­nevolent Being, are we necessarily ſubject to pain, diſeaſes, and death ? The ſcientific phyſiologiſt replies, Becauſe from theſe evils Omnipotence itſelf could not in our preſent ſtate exempt us, but by a constant series of miracles. He who admits miracles, knows likewiſe that mankind were origi­nally in a ſtate in which they were not ſubject to death ; and that they fell under its dominion through the fault of their common progenitors. But the fall and reſtoration of man is the great ſubject of revealed religion ; and at preſent we are diſcuſſing the queſtion like philoſophers who have no other data on which to proceed than the phenomena of nature. Now we know, that as all matter is diviſible, every ſyſtem compoſed of it muſt necessarily be liable to decay and dissolution ; and our material ſyſtem would decay and be dissolved long before it could ſerve the purpoſes of na­ture, were there not methods contrived with admirable wiſdom for repairing the waſte occaſioned by perpetual friction. The body is furniſhed with different fluids, which continual­ly circulate through it in proper channels, and leave in their way what is necessary to repair the solids. Theſe again are supplied by food *ab extra ;* and to the whole processes of digeſtion, circulation, and nutrition, the air we breathe is abſolutely necessary. (See Physiology, Sect, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5). But as the air is a very heterogeneous fluid, and ſubject to violent and ſudden changes, it is obvious that theſe changes muſt affect the blood, and by conſequence the whole frame of the human body. We ſee the air indeed in proceſs of time consume even marble itſelf; and therefore cannot won­der, that as it is in one ſtate the parent of health, it ſhould in another be the ſource of diſeaſe to ſuch creatures as man and other terreſtrial animals. Nor could theſe conſequences be avoided without introducing others much more deplo­rable. The world is governed by general laws, without which there could be among men neither arts nor ſciences ; and tho’ laws different from thoſe by which the ſyſtem is at preſent governed might perhaps have been eſtabliſhed, there is not the ſmalleſt reaſon to imagine that they could on the whole have been better, or attended with fewer inconveniencies. As long as we have material and ſolid bodies capable of motion, liable to reſiſtance from other ſolid bodies, ſupported by food, ſubject to the agency of the air, and divi­ſible, they muſt necessarily be liable to pain, diſeaſe, corrup­tion, and death, and that too by the very influence of thoſe laws which preſerve the order and harmony of the universe. Thus gravitation is a general law ſo good and ſo necessary, that were it for a moment ſuſpended, the world would instantly fall to pieces ; and yet by means of this law the man muſt inevitably be cruſhed to death upon whom a tower ſhall chance to tumble. Again, the attraction of cohesion is a general law, without which it does not appear that any corporeal ſyſtem could possibly exiſt : it is by this law too, or a modification of it, that the glands and lacteals of the human body extract from the blood ſuch particles as are ne­cessary to nouriſh the ſolids ; and yet it is by means of the very same modification of the very same law that a man is liable to be poiſoned. How are theſe effects to be prevented ?

Shall burning Ætna, if a ſage requires,

Forget to thunder, and recal her fires ?

On air or ſea new motions be impreſt,

Oh blameleſs Bethel ! to relieve thy breaſt :

When the looſe mountain trembles from on high

Shall gravitation ceaſe if you go by ?

Or ſome old temple nodding to its fall,

For Charters’ head reſerve the hanging wall ?

Such a perpetual miracle, ſuch a frequent ſuſpending of the laws of nature in particular inſtances, we cannot doubt to be within the compaſs of Almighty power : but were this ſuſpenſion really to take place, mankind would be in­volved in ignorance greater than that of childhood ; for not one of them could know, or have any means of diſcovering this moment, what was to happen the next ; and the conſe­quence would be, that, uncertain but the ſingle motion of **a si**ngle joint might bring on them ſudden deſtruction, they would all periſh in **a** ſtate of abſolute inactivity.

But though the human body could not have been pre­ferred from dangers and diſſolution but by introducing evils greater on the whole than thoſe to which it is now liable, why, it has ſometimes been aſked, is every diſorder to which it is ſubject attended with ſickneſs or with pain ? and why is ſuch a horror of death implanted in our breaſts, seeing that by the laws of nature death is inevitable ? We anſwer, That ſickneſs, pain, and the dread of death, ſerve the very beſt purpoſes. Could a man be put to death, or have his limbs broken without feeling pain, the human race had long ago been extinct. Felt we no uneasineſs in a fever, we ſhould be inſenſible of the diſeaſe, and die before we suſpected our health to be impaired. The horror which generally accompanies our reflections on death tends to make us more careful of life, and prevents us from quitting this world raſhly when our affairs proſper not according to our fond wiſhes. It is likewiſe an indication that our exiſtence does not terminate in this world ; for our dread is ſeldom excited by the proſpect of the pain which we may ſuffer when dying, but by our anxiety concerning what we may be doomed to ſuffer or enjoy in the next ſtage of our exiſtences and this anxiety tends more perhaps than any thing elſe to make us live while we are here in such a manner as to enſure our happineſs hereafter.

Thus from every view that we can take of the works and laws of God, and even from considering the objections which have ſometimes been made to them, we are compelled to ac­knowledge the benevolence of their Author. We muſt not, however, ſuppoſe the Divine benevolence to be a fond and weak affection like that which is called benevolence among men. All human affections and passions originate in our dependence and wants ; and it has been doubted whether any of them be at firſt disintereſted (ſee Passion) : but he **to** whom exiſtence is eſſential cannot be dependent ; he who is the Author of every thing can feel no want. The divine benevolence therefore muſt be wholly diſintereſted, and of courſe free from thoſe partialities originating in ſelf-love, which are alloys in the most ſublime of human virtues. The moſt benevolent man on earth, though he wiſhes the happineſs of