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Natural Theology;

OR

EVIDENCES

OF

THE EXISTENCE AND ATTRIBUTES

OF

THE DEITY,

COLLECTED FROM THE APPEARANCES
OF NATURE.

BY WILLIAM PALEY, D. D.

ARCHDEACON OF CARLISLE.



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EXCERPT

S. Parkes
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TO THE
HONOURABLE AND RIGHT REVEREND
SHUTE BARRINGTON, LL. D.

LORD BISHOP OF DURHAM.

MY LORD,

THE following work was undertaken at your Lordship's recommendation; and, amongst other motives, for the purpose of making the most acceptable return I could make for a great and important benefit conferred upon me.

It may be unnecessary, yet not perhaps, quite impertinent, to state to your Lordship and to the reader, the several inducements that have led me once more to the press. The favour of my first and ever-honoured Patron had put me in possession of so liberal a provision in the church, as abundantly to satisfy

my wants, and much to exceed my pretensions. Your Lordship's munificence, in conjunction with that or some other excellent Prelates, who regarded my services with the partiality with which your Lordship was pleased to consider them, hath since placed me in ecclesiastical situations, more than adequate to every object of reasonable ambition. In the mean time, a weak, and, of late, a painful state of health, deprived me of the power of discharging the duties of my station, in a manner at all suitable, either to my sense of those duties, or to my most anxious wishes concerning them. My inability for the public functions of my profession amongst other consequences, left me much at leisure. That leisure was not to be lost. It was only in my study that I could repair the deficiencies in the church. It was only through the press that I could speak. These circumstances, in particular, entitled your Lordship to call upon me for the only species of exertion of which I was capable, and disposed me, without hesitation, to obey the call in the best manner that I could. In the choice of a subject I had no place left for doubt: in saying which, I do not so much refer, either to the supreme importance of the subject, or to any scepticism concerning it, with which the present times are charged, as I do, to its connexion with the subjects treated of in my former publications. The following discussion alone was wanted to make

up my works into a system : in which works, such as they are, the public have now before them, the evidences of natural religion, the evidences of revealed religion, and an account of the duties that result from both. It is of small importance, that they have been written in an order, the very reverse of that in which they ought to be read. I commend, therefore, the present volume to your Lordship's protection, not only as, in all probability, my last labour, but as the completion of a consistent and comprehensive design.

Hitherto, My Lord, I have been speaking of myself and not of my Patron. Your Lordship wants not the testimony of a dedication ; nor any testimony from me : I consult therefore the impulse of my own mind alone when I declare, that in no respect has my intercourse with your Lordship been more gratifying to me, than in the opportunities, which it has afforded me, of observing your earnest, active and unwearied solicitude, for the advancement of substantial Christianity : a solicitude, nevertheless accompanied with that candour of mind, which suffers no subordinate differences of opinion, where there is a coincidence in the main intention and object, to produce any alienation of esteem, or diminution of favour. It is fortunate for a country, and honourable to its government, when qualities and dispositions like these are placed in high and influencing stations. Such is the sincere judgment which I have formed of your Lordship's charac-

ter, and of its public value: my personal obligations I can never forget. Under a due sense of both these considerations, I beg leave to subscribe myself, with great respect and gratitude,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's faithful

And most devoted servant,

WILLIAM PALEY.

Bishop Wearmouth,
July, 1802.

Natural Theology;

&c. &c.

CHAPTER I.

STATE OF THE ARGUMENT.

IN crossing a heath, suppose I pitched my foot against a *stone*, and were asked how the stone came to be there, I might possibly answer, that for any thing I knew to the contrary, it had lain there forever : nor would it perhaps be very easy to show the absurdity of this answer. But suppose I had found a *watch* upon the ground, and it should be enquired how the watch happened to be in that place, I should hardly think of the answer which I had before given, that, for any thing I knew, the watch might have always been there. Yet why should not this answer serve for the watch, as well as for the stone? Why is it not as admissible in the second case as in the first? For this reason, and for no other, viz. that, when we come to inspect the watch, we perceive (what we could not discover in the stone) that its several parts are framed and put together for a purpose, e. g. that they are so formed and adjusted as to produce motion, and that motion so regulated as to point out the hour of the day ; that, if the several parts had been dif-

ferently shaped from what they are, or of a different size from what they are, or placed after any other manner or in any other order, than that in which they are placed, either no motion at all would have been carried on in the machine, or none which would have answered the use, that is now served by it. To reckon up a few of the plainest of these parts, and of their offices, all tending to one result :—We see a cylindrical box containing a coiled elastic spring, which, by its endeavour to relax itself, turns round the box. We next observe a flexible chain (artificially wrought for the sake of flexure) communicating the action of the spring from the box to the fusee. We then find a series of wheels, the teeth of which, catch in and apply to, each other, conducting the motion from the fusee to the balance, and from the balance to the pointer ; and at the same time, by the size and shape of those wheels, so regulating that motion, as to terminate in causing an index, by an equable and measured progression, to pass over a given space in a given time. We take notice that the wheels are made of brass, in order to keep them from rust ; the springs, of steel, no other metal being so elastic ; that over the face of the watch there is placed a glass, a material employed in no other part of the work ; but, in the room of which, if there had been any other than a transparent substance, the hour could not be seen without opening the case. This mechanism being observed (it requires indeed an examination of the instrument, and perhaps some previous knowledge of the subject, to perceive and understand it ; but being once, as we have said, observed and understood,) the inference, we think, is inevitable ; that the watch must have had a maker ; that there must have existed, at some time and at some place or other, an artificer or

artificers, who formed it for the purpose which we find it actually to answer ; who comprehended its construction, and designed its use.

I. Nor would it, I apprehend, weaken the conclusion, that we had never seen a watch made ; that we had never known an artist capable of making one ; that we were altogether incapable of executing such a piece of workmanship ourselves, or of understanding in what manner it was performed ; all this being no more than what is true of some exquisite remains of ancient art, of some lost arts, and to the generality of mankind, of the more curious productions of modern manufacture. Does one man in a million know how oval frames are turned ? Ignorance of this kind exalts our opinion of the unseen and unknown artist's skill, if he be unseen and unknown, but raises no doubt in our minds of the existence and agency of such an artist, at some former time, and in some place or other. Nor can I perceive that it varies at all the inference, whether the question arise concerning a human agent, or concerning an agent of a different species, or an agent possessing, in some respects, a different nature.

II. Neither, secondly, would it invalidate our conclusion, that the watch sometimes went wrong, or that it seldom went exactly right. The purpose of the machinery, the design, and the designer, might be evident, and in the case supposed would be evident, in whatever way we accounted for the irregularity of the movement, or whether we could account for it or not. It is not necessary that a machine be perfect, in order to show with what design it was made: still less necessary, where the only question is, whether it were made with any design at all.

III. Nor, thirdly, would it bring any uncertainty into the argument, if there were a few parts of the watch, con-

cerning which we could not discover, or had not yet discovered, in what manner they conduced to the general effect; or even some parts, concerning which we could not ascertain, whether they conduced to that effect in any manner whatever. For, as to the first branch of the case; if, by the loss, or disorder, or decay of the parts in question, the movement of the watch were found in fact to be stopped, or disturbed, or retarded, no doubt would remain in our minds as to the utility or intention of the parts, although we should be unable to investigate the manner according to which, or the connexion by which, the ultimate effect depended upon their action or assistance; and the more complex is the machine, the more likely is this obscurity to arise. Then, as to the second thing supposed, namely, that there were parts, which might be spared without prejudice to the movement of the watch, and that we had proved this by experiment—these superfluous parts, even if we were completely assured that they were such, would not vacate the reasoning which we had instituted concerning other parts. The indication of contrivance remained, with respect to them, nearly as it was before.

IV. Nor, fourthly, would any man in his senses think the existence of the watch, with its various machinery, accounted for, by being told that it was one out of possible combinations of material forms; that whatever he had found in the place where he found the watch, must have contained some internal configuration or other; and that this configuration might be the structure now exhibited; viz. of the works of a watch, as well as a different structure.

V. Nor, fifthly, would it yield his inquiry more satisfaction to be answered, that there existed in things a prin-

principle of order, which had disposed the parts of the watch into their present form and situation. He never knew a watch made by the principle of order; nor can he even form to himself an idea of what is meant by a principle of order, distinct from the intelligence of the watch-maker.

VI. Sixthly, he would be surprised to hear, that the mechanism of the watch was no proof of contrivance, only a motive to induce the mind to think so.

VII. And not less surprised to be informed, that the watch in his hand was nothing more than the result of the laws of *metallic* nature. It is a perversion of language to assign any law, as the efficient, operative cause of any thing. A law presupposes an agent; for it is only the mode, according to which an agent proceeds: it implies a power; for it is the order, according to which that power acts. Without this agent, without this power, which are both distinct from itself, the *law* does nothing; is nothing.

The expression, "the law of metallic nature," may sound strange and harsh to a philosophic ear, but it seems quite as justifiable as some others which are more familiar to him; such as "the law of vegetable nature"—"the law of animal nature," or indeed as "the law of nature" in general, when assigned as the cause of phenomena, in exclusion of agency and power; or when it is substituted into the place of these.

VIII. Neither, lastly, would our observer be driven out of his conclusion, or from his confidence in its truth, by being told that he knew nothing at all about the matter. He knows enough for his argument. He knows the utility of the end: he knows the subserviency and adaption of the means to the end. These points being known, his

ignorance of other points, his doubts concerning other points, affect not the certainty of his reasoning. The consciousness of knowing little, need not beget a distrust of that which he does know.

i.e., no special knowledge required—it is not necessary to actually understand the complexity of the phenomenon in question! This is a point of view often expressed by creationists today, i.e., it's just 'common sense'.

Stretching the analogy to be more like a living organism!

CHAPTER II.

STATE OF THE ARGUMENT CONTINUED.

SUPPOSE, in the next place, that the person who found the watch, should, after some time discover, that in addition to all the properties which he had hitherto observed in it, it possessed the unexpected property of producing in the course of its movement, another watch like itself (the thing is conceivable;) that it contained within it a mechanism, a system of parts, a mould for instance, or a complex adjustment of laths, files, and other tools, evidently and seperately calculated for this purpose; let us inquire, what effect ought such a discovery to have upon his former conclusion.

I. The first effect would be to increase admiration of the contrivance, and his conviction of the consummate skill of the contriver. Whether he had regarded the object of the contrivance, the distinct apparatus, the intricate, yet in many parts intelligible, mechanism by which it was carried on, he would perceive, in this new observation, nothing but an additional reason for doing what he had already done; for referring the construction of the watch to design, and to supreme art. If that construction *without* this property, or, which is the same thing, before this property had been noticed, proved intention and art to have been employed about it; still more strong would the proof appear, when he came to the knowledge of this further property, the crown and perfection of all the rest.

i.e. production of a watch by another watch cannot account for DESIGN

II. He would reflect, that though the watch before him were, *in some sense*, the maker of the watch, which was fabricated in the course of its movements, yet it was in a very different sense from that, in which a carpenter, for instance, is the maker of a chair; the author of its contrivance, the cause of the relation of its parts to their use. With respect to these, the first watch was no cause at all to the second: in no such sense as this, was it the author of the constitution and order, either of the parts which the new watch contained, or of the parts by the aid and instrumentality of which it was produced. We might possibly say, but with great latitude of expression, that a stream of water ground corn: but no latitude of expression would allow us to say, no stretch of conjecture could lead us to think, that the stream of water built the mill, though it were too ancient for us to know who the builder was. What the stream of water does in the affair is neither more nor less than this; by the application of an intelligent impulse to a mechanism previously arranged, arranged independently of it, and arranged by intelligence, an effect is produced: viz. the corn is ground. But the effect results from the arrangement. The force of the stream cannot be said to be the cause or author of the effect, still less of the arrangement. Understanding and plan in the formation of the mill were not the less necessary, for any share which the water has in grinding the corn; yet is this share the same, as that which the watch would have contributed to the production of the new watch, upon the supposition assumed in the last section. Therefore,

III. Though it be now no longer probable, that

Origin of phrase "the argument from design" often applied to adaptation.

the individual watch which our observer had found was made immediately by the hand of an artificer, yet doeth not this alteration in any wise effect the inference, that an artificer had been originally employed

and concerned in the production. The argument from design remains as it was. Marks of design and contrivance are no more accounted for now, than they were before.

In the same thing, we may ask for the cause of different properties. We may ask for the cause of the colour of a body, of its hardness, of its heat; and these causes may be all different. We are now asking for the cause of that subserviency to an use, that relation to an end, which we have remarked in the watch before us. No answer is given to this question by telling us that a preceding watch produced it.

There cannot be design without a designer; contrivance without a contriver; order without choice; arrangement, without any thing capable of arranging; subserviency and relation to a purpose, without that which could intend a purpose; means suitable to an end, and, executing their office in accomplishing that end, without the end ever having been contemplated, or the means accomodated to it. Arrangement, disposition of parts, subserviency of means to an end, relation of instruments to an use, imply the presence of intelligence and mind. No one, therefore can rationally believe, that the insensible, inanimate watch, from which the watch before us issued, was the proper cause of the mechanism we so much admire in it; could be truly

said to have constructed the instrument, disposed its parts, assigned their office, determined their order, action, and mutual dependency, combined their several motions into one result, and that also a result, connected

Note similarity of this argument to Whewell's, which was based on Cuvier's 'conditions of existence'—the relations among parts.

with the utilities of other beings. All these properties therefore, are as much unaccounted for, as they were before.

IV. Nor is any thing gained by running the difficulty farther back, i. e. by supposing the watch before us to have been produced from another watch, that from a former, and so on indefinitely. Our going back ever so far brings us no nearer to the least degree of satisfaction upon the subject. Contrivance is still unaccounted for. We still want a contriver. A designing mind is neither supplied by this supposition, nor dispensed with.

If the difficulty were diminished the further we went back, by going back indefinitely we might exhaust it. And this is the only case to which this sort of reasoning applies. Where there is a tendency, or, as we increase the number of terms, a continual approach towards a limit, *there*, by supposing the number of terms to be what is called *infinite*, we may conceive the limit to be attained: but where there is no such tendency or approach, nothing is effected by lengthening the series. There is no difference as to the point in question, (whatever there may be as to many points) between one series and another; between a series which is finite

and a series which is infinite. A chain, composed of an infinite number of links, can no more support itself, than a chain composed of a finite number of links.

And of this we are assured, (though we never *can* have tried the experiment) because, by increasing the number of links, from ten, for instance, to a hundred, from a hundred to a thousand, &c. we make not the smallest approach, we observe not the smallest tendency, towards self-support. There is no difference in this respect (yet there may be a great difference in several respects) between a

chain of a greater or less length, between one chain and another, between one that is finite and one that is indefinite.

This very much resembles the case that is before us. The machine, which we are inspecting, demonstrates, by its construction, contrivance and design. Contrivance must have had a contriver; design, a designer; whether the machine immediately proceeded from another machine or not. That circumstance alters not the case. That

other machine may, in like manner, have proceeded from a former machine: nor does that alter the case: contrivance must have had a contriver. That former one from one preceding it: no alteration still: a contriver is still necessary. No tendency is perceived, no approach towards a diminution of this necessity. It is the same with any and every succession of these machines; a succession of ten, of a hundred, of a thousand; with one series as with another; a series which is finite, as with a series which is infinite. In whatever other respects they may differ, in this they do not. In all equally, contrivance and design are unaccounted for.

The question is not simply, How came the first watch into existence? which question, it may be pretended, is done away by supposing the series of watches thus produced from one another to have been infinite, and consequently to have had no such *first*, for which it was necessary to provide a cause. This perhaps, would have been nearly the state of the question if nothing had been before us but an unorganized, unmechanized substance, without mark or indication of contrivance. It might be difficult to show that such substance could not have existed from eternity, either in succession (if it were possible, which I think is not, for unorganized bodies to spring from one another,) or by individual

perpetuity. But that is not the question now. To suppose it to be so, is to suppose that it made no difference whether we had found a watch or a stone. As it is, the metaphysics of that question have no place; for, in the watch which we are examining, are seen contrivance, design; an end, a purpose; means for the end, **adaptation to the purpose.** And the question, which irresistibly presses upon our thoughts, is, whence this contrivance and design? The thing required is the intending mind, the adapting hand, the intelligence by which that hand was directed. This question, this demand, is not shaken off, by increasing a number of succession of substances, destitute of these properties; nor the more, by increasing that number to infinity. If it be said, that, upon the supposition of one watch being produced from another in the course of that other's movements, and by means of the mechanism within it, we have a cause for the watch in my hand, viz. the watch from which it proceeded, I deny, that for the design, the contrivance, the suitability of means to an end, the adaptation of instruments to an use (all which we discover in a watch,) we have any cause whatever. It is in vain, therefore, to assign a series of such causes, or to allege that a series may be carried back to infinity; for I do not admit that we have yet any cause at all for the phenomena, still less any series of causes either finite or infinite. Here is contrivance, but no contriver: proofs of design, but no designer.

V. Our observer would further also reflect, that the maker of the watch before him, was, in truth and reality the maker of every watch produced from it; there being no difference (except that the latter manifests a more exquisite skill) between the making of another watch

with his own hands by the mediation of files, lathes, chisels, &c. and the disposing, fixing, and inserting, of these instruments, or of others equivalent to them, in the body of the watch already made, in such a manner as to form a new watch in the course of the movements which he had given to the old one. It is only working by one set of tools, instead of another.

The conclusion which the *first* examination of the watch, of its works, construction, and movement suggested, was, that it must have had, for the cause and author of that construction, an artificer, who understood its mechanism, and designed its use. This conclusion is invincible. A *second* examination presents us with a new discovery. The watch is found, in the course of its movement, to produce another watch, similar to itself: and not only so, but we perceive in it a system of organization, separately calculated for that purpose. What effect would this discovery have or ought it to have, upon our former inference? What, as hath already been said, but to increase, beyond measure, our admiration of the skill, which had been employed in the formation of such a machine? Or shall it, instead of this, all at once turn us round to an opposite conclusion, viz. that no art or skill whatever has been concerned in the business, although all other evidences of art and skill remain as they were, and this last and supreme piece of art be now added to the rest? Can this be maintained without absurdity? Yet this is atheism.

And by extension, any evolutionary interpretation