

stomach, but it is no counsel of ours that determines how the good shall be there separated and apportioned to its several uses.

Now these natural agents work constantly for those ends which themselves cannot perceive; they must be directed by some high and over-ruling wisdom. Who can be their director but He who gave them being? Who could give them being but that great architect who works in all of them. If the maker of a watch were within it and invisible to us, we should say the watch grew into its perfect power. So the great invisible artificer of all things, He is not visible to our mortal eyes, and we therefore say His creations grow, but it must be *one Being* who thus rules the world, that steers the great ship—the law of this universal commonwealth, the general of all the hosts of heaven and earth. Thus we are driven to find an independent Being on whom everything depends, and by whom all things are governed, and this is our first notion when we say “I believe in God.”

But further, all nations and peoples concur that there is a God. When the Roman standard floated over most parts of the known world, the bearers of the eagle met with *Atheism* nowhere, but rather by the miscellaneous collection of Deities which grew at Rome with Roman victories, it was shewn that no nation was without its god or gods. There has never yet been a country discovered, no matter how barbarous its people, where there was not retained some religious observance, and some divinity acknowledged. Therefore, so much of the Creed “I believe in God,” hath been the general confession of the nations.

But God has revealed himself by prophecy. By whatsoever means we may be assured of prophecy, by the same we may be assured of Divinity. The wisest man can of his own wisdom only weigh probabilities, and thus conjecture things to come.

None but He who made all things and gave them power to be and to work, who ruleth all things, and directeth all operations to their ends, none but He upon whose will the actions of all things depend, can foresee accurately the ends dependent in future upon mere causes. Except then, all the annals of the world be forgeries, and all statements of history designed to put a cheat upon posterity, we can have no reason to suspect God's existence, having so ample testimonies of his influence.

*Testimony by Miracles.*—What says David in Psalm xlv. 1, “We have heard with our ears and our fathers have declared unto us, the noble works thou didst in their days, and in the old times before them.” “Blessed be the Lord God who only doeth wondrous works.” That man must be possessed with a strange opinion of the utter weakness (imbecility were the better term) of our forefathers, who shall deny that ever any miracles had been wrought.

The testimony of the Conscience to God's existence is very powerful. Why do men's thoughts even accuse and excuse them? Why do they feel a comfort

from these virtuous actions which they have wrought, and the sting of remorse for vicious acts and impious designs. Nay more, those who strive most to deny a God and obliterate all sense of Divinity from the face of their own souls have not been the least sensible of the inward monitor, Conscience. *Caligula*, the impious emperor, professed himself an Atheist, and with that profession in his mouth, he runs under the bed when the thunder strikes his ears and the lightning flashes around him. Those terrible works of nature put him in mind of the power of God, and his own guilt in persecuting the Christians and in blasphemy puts him in mind of the justice of God. In his wilful opinion he denies God, in his involuntary action he strongly acknowledges Him.

It is necessary to believe in God, for without such a belief all faith is vain, all worship superfluous. As a matter of fact men ever have been, especially in past ages, more prone to idolatry than to Atheism, to multiply gods and to worship false gods, than to the denial of any God. Our belief is a protest both against Atheism and Polytheism—no god and many gods. “Unto thee it was shown” said Moses to Israel, “that thou mightest know that the Lord He is God, there is none other beside Him.” And as the law so the gospel teaches us the same—1 Cor. viii. 14, “We know that an idol is nothing in the world and there is none other God but one.”

“I believe in God the Father.” He is our father, and we his sons, in many senses.

1. *By Creation* in common with matter. “Hath the rain a father? or who hath begotten the drops of dew?” by which Job would signify that there is no other cause for rain assignable but God working in the power of nature. But in the great mass of creatures some works of His creation more properly call him Father.

He is the creator of irrational beings, he is more properly the Father of rational creatures.

Hence He is called by St. Paul, “The father of spirits,” and the blessed angels are spoken of as “His sons” “who when the world was made” says Job “when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” Hence Adam is called the son of God, St. Luke iii. 38. The prophet Malachi taught the Israelites to say, “Have we not all one Father, hath not God created us?”

2. *He is our Father by Redemption.* Well might Moses tell the children of Israel “Is not He thy Father that hath bought thee, hath He not made thee and established thee?” in the words of Isaiah. “Doubtless thou art our Father though Abraham be ignorant of us and Israel acknowledge us not; thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; from everlasting is Thy name.”

3. *By Regeneration* or Re-birth and adoption. What did Christ say? He acknowledged the force of Nicodemus' saying that a man cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb, nor pass through the same door of nature into

life again, but He told us “Except a man (person is the better translation, the word being an indefinite pronoun; *tis—any one*,) be born of water and of the spirit he cannot see the kingdom of God.” St. James speaks of God as “the Father of lights, who of his own will begat us with the word of truth.” St. John in his Epistle: “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God” (but note, no man dare say he *believes* if he does not obey the commands of Jesus.) “Beloved,” says St. John, writing to Christians throughout the world, “Beloved now are we, the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear, (or as a more exact translation would render it, it hath not yet been made manifest, *ephanerothe*, what we shall be, but we know that if he appear, we shall be like Him.” St. Peter says, “[Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for us.”—1 St. Peter i. 3-4.

*I believe in God the Father is necessary:—*

1. *As a ground of filial duty.* “Whosoever” says Jesus “shall do the will of my Father which is in Heaven, the same is my brother.” 2. *As a spur to Devotion.* Christ when he taught us how to pray, did not set forth the knowledge of God or the power of God, the omniscience or omnipotence, but taught us “When ye pray, say ‘Our Father which art, &c.’” 3. *For our solace in affliction.* “Like as a father pitieth his children so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.” “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.” 4. *A motive to imitate Him.* “Be ye therefore,” says the Apostle, “followers (or rather, imitators) of God, as dear children. “Love your enemies, bless them that persecute you” says the Lord; “do good to them that hate you.” And what reason doth the Lord give us “that ye may be the children of our Father which is in Heaven.”

So then confession of Faith in God as our Father is necessary, for when I say “I believe in God the Father” I am assured that God is the Father of all things, especially of all men and angels, as far as the act of creation may be styled generation, that He is yet further and in a more peculiar manner the Father of all those whom He regenerateth by His Spirit, whom He adopteth as His Son, as heirs and co-heirs with Him, whom He crowneth with the reward of an eternal inheritance in Heaven.

Love and sorrow to our souls resemble the fire in some deep mines; it may for a long time be apparently smothered, we fancy that it is entirely extinguished, but some sudden draught, some ashes dropped, and the flames, wild and consuming, will break forth with redoubled fury.—*Bremer.*