light, enemies to common sense, maintaining the first-born of absurdities, etc. But perhaps an impartial consideration of the things which have been observed in the preceding parts of this inquiry, may enable the lovers of truth better to judge, whose doctrine is indeed absurd, abstruse, self-contradictory, and inconsistent with common sense, and many ways repugnant to the universal dictates of the reason of mankind.

The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended (1758)

Author’s Preface

The following discourse is intended, not merely as an answer to any particular book written against the doctrine of original sin, but as a general defense of that great important doctrine. Nevertheless, I have in this defense taken notice of the main things said against this doctrine, by such of the more noted opposers of it, as I have had opportunity to read; particularly those two late writers, Dr. Turnbull, and Dr. Taylor of Norwich; but especially the latter, in what he has published in those two books of his, the first entitled, The Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin Proposed to Free and Candid Examination; the other, his Key to the Apostolic Writings, with a Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistle to the Romans.1 According to my observation, no one book has done so much towards rooting out of these western parts of New England, the principles and scheme of religion maintained by our pious and excellent forefathers, the divines and Christians who first settled this country, and alienating the minds of many from what I think are evidently some of the main doctrines of the gospel, as that which Dr. Taylor has published against the doctrine of original sin. The book has now for many years been spread abroad in the land, without any answer to it, as an antidote; and so has gone on to prevail with little control. . . . The providing one is what I have attempted in the following work; wherein I have closely attended to that piece, in all its parts, and have endeavored that no one thing there said, of any consequence in this controversy, should pass unnoticed, or that anything which has the ap-

appearance of an argument in opposition to this doctrine should be left unanswered. I look on the doctrine as of great importance; which everybody will doubtless own it is, if it be true. For, if the case be such indeed, that all mankind are by nature in a state of total ruin, both with respect to the moral evil they are subjects of, and the afflictive evil they are exposed to, the one as the consequence and punishment of the other, then doubtless the great salvation by Christ stands in direct relation to this ruin, as the remedy to the disease; and the whole gospel or doctrine of salvation, must suppose it; and all real belief, or true notion of that gospel, must be built upon it. Therefore, as I think the doctrine is most certainly both true and important, I hope, my attempting a vindication of it, will be candidly interpreted, and that what I have done towards its defense, will be impartially considered, by all that will give themselves the trouble to read the ensuing discourse ...

Part I. Wherein Are Considered Some Evidences of Original Sin from Facts and Events, as Found by Observation and Experience, Together with Representation and Testimonies of Holy Scripture, and the Confessions and Assertions of Opposers

Chapter I. Evidences of Original Sin from What Appears in Fact of the Sinfulness of Mankind

SECTION I. ALL MANKIND DO CONSTANTLY IN ALL AGES, WITHOUT FAIL IN ANY ONE INSTANCE, RUN INTO THAT MORAL EVIL, WHICH IS IN EFFECT THEIR OWN UTER AND ETERNAL PERDITION, IN A TOTAL PRIVATION OF GOD’S FAVOR AND SUFFERING OF HIS VENGEANCE AND WRATH

By original sin, as the phrase has been most commonly used by divines, is meant the innate sinful depravity of the heart. But yet when the doctrine of original sin is spoken of, it is vulgarly understood in that latitude, as to include not only the depravity of nature, but the imputation of Adam’s first sin; or in other words, the liableness or exposedness of Adam’s posterity, in the divine judgment, to partake of the punishment of that sin. So far as I know, most of those who have held one of these, have maintained the other; and most of those who have opposed one, have opposed the other.

Both are opposed by the author chiefly attended to in the following discourse, in his book against original sin. And it may perhaps appear in our future consideration of the subject, that they are closely connected, and that the arguments which prove the one establish the other, and that there are no more difficulties attending the allowing of one than the other.

I shall in the first place consider this doctrine more especially with regard to the corruption of nature; and as we treat of this, the other will naturally come into consideration in the prosecution of the discourse, as connected with it.

As all moral qualities, all principles, either of virtue or vice, lie in the disposition of the heart, I shall consider whether we have any evidence, that the heart of man is naturally of a corrupt and evil disposition. This is strenuously denied by many late writers, who are enemies to the doctrine of original sin, and particularly by Dr. Taylor. ...

But for the greater clearness, it may be proper here to premise one consideration, that is of great importance in this controversy, and is very much overlooked by the opposers of the doctrine of original sin in their disputing against it; which is this—

That is to be looked upon as the true tendency of the natural or innate disposition of man’s heart, which appears to be its tendency when we consider things as they are in themselves, or in their own nature, without the interposition of divine grace. Thus, that state of man’s nature, that disposition of the mind, is to be looked upon as evil and pernicious, which, as it is in itself, tends to extremely pernicious consequences, and would certainly end therein, were it not that the free mercy and kindness of God interposes to prevent that issue. It would be very strange, if any should argue that there is no evil tendency in the case, because the mere favor and compassion of the Most High may step in and oppose the tendency, and prevent the sad effect tended to. Particularly, if there be anything in the nature of man, whereby he has an universal, unfailing tendency to that moral evil, which according to the real nature and true demerit of things, as they are in themselves, implies his utter ruin, that must be looked upon as an evil tendency or propensity; however divine grace may interpose, to save him from deserved ruin, and to overrule things to an issue contrary to that which they tend to of themselves. Grace is a sovereign thing, exer-
cised according to the good pleasure of God, bringing good out of evil; the
effect of it belongs not to the nature of things themselves, that otherwise
have an ill tendency, any more than the remedy belongs to the disease; but
is something altogether independent on it, introduced to oppose the
natural tendency, and reverse the course of things. But the event that
things tend to, according to their own demerit, and according to divine
justice, that is the event which they tend to in their own nature; as Dr.
Taylor's own words fully imply. "God alone," says he, "can declare whether
he will pardon or punish the ungodliness and unrighteousness of man-
kind, which is in its own nature punishable." Nothing is more precisely
according to the truth of things, than divine justice; it weighs things in an
even balance; it views and estimates things no otherwise than they are
true in their own nature. Therefore undoubtedly that which implies a
tendency to ruin according to the estimate of divine justice, does indeed
imply such a tendency in its own nature. . . .

One thing more is to be observed here, viz. that the topic mainly
insisted on by the opposers of the doctrine of original sin, is the justice of
God; both in their objections against the imputation of Adam's sin, and
also against its being so ordered that men should come into the world with
a corrupt and ruined nature, without having merited the displeasure of
their Creator by any personal fault. But the latter is not repugnant to
God's justice, if men can be, and actually are, born into the world with a
tendency to sin, and to misery and ruin for their sin, which actually will be
the consequence, unless mere grace steps in and prevents it. If this be
allowed, the argument from justice is given up; for it is to suppose that
their lability to misery and ruin comes in a way of justice; otherwise
there would be no need of the interposition of divine grace to save 'em.
Justice alone would be sufficient security, if exercised, without grace. 'Tis
all one in this dispute about what is just and righteous, whether men are
born in a miserable state, by a tendency to ruin, which actually follows,
and that justly; or whether they are born in such a state as tends to a desert
of ruin, which might justly follow, and would actually follow, did not grace
prevent. For the controversy is not, what grace will do, but what justice
might do. . . .
event be an evidence of tendency, let it be considered, what can be meant by tendency, but a prevailing liableness or exposedness to such or such an event? Wherein consists the notion of any such thing, but some stated prevalence or preponderation in the nature or state of causes or occasions, that is followed by, and so proved to be effectual to, a stated prevalence or commonness of any particular kind of effect? Or, something in the permanent state of things, concerned in bringing a certain sort of event to pass, which is a foundation for the constancy, or strongly prevailing probability, of such an event? If we mean this by tendency (as I know not what else can be meant by it, but this, or something like this) then it is manifest, that where we see a stated prevalence of any kind of effect or event, there is a tendency to that effect in the nature and state of its causes. A common and steady effect shows, that there is somewhere a preponderation, a prevailing exposedness or liableness in the state of things, to what comes so steadily to pass. The natural dictate of reason shows, that where there is an effect, there is a cause, and a cause sufficient for the effect; because, if it were not sufficient, it would not be effectual: and that therefore, where there is a stated prevalence of the effect, there is a stated prevalence in the cause: A steady effect argues a steady cause. We obtain a notion of such a thing as tendency, no other way than by observation: and we can observe nothing but events: and 'tis the commonness or constancy of events, that gives us a notion of tendency in all cases. Thus we judge of tendencies in the natural world. Thus we judge of the tendencies or propensities of nature in minerals, vegetables, animals, rational and irrational creatures. A notion of a stated tendency or fixed propensity is not obtained by observing only a single event. A stated preponderation in the cause or occasion, is argued only by a stated prevalence of the effect. If a die be once thrown, and it falls on a particular side, we don't argue from hence, that that side is the heaviest; but if it be thrown without skill or care, many thousands or millions of times going, and constantly falls on the same side, we have not the least doubt in our minds, that there is something of propensity in the case, by superior weight of that side, or in some other respect. How ridiculous would he make himself, who should earnestly dispute against any tendency in the state of things to cold in winter, or heat in the summer; or should stand to it, that although it often happened that water quenched fire, yet there was no tendency in it to such an effect? In the case we are upon, the human nature, as existing in such an immense diversity of persons and circumstances, and never failing in any one instance, of coming to that issue, viz. that sinfulness which implies extreme misery and eternal ruin, is as the die is often cast. For it alters not the case in the least, as to the evidence of tendency, whether the subject of the constant event be an individual, or a nature and kind. Thus, if there be a succession of trees of the same sort, proceeding one from another, from the beginning of the world, growing in all countries, soils and climates, and otherwise in (as it were) an infinite variety of circumstances, all bearing ill fruit; it as much proves the nature and tendency of the kind, as if it were only one individual tree that had remained from the beginning of the world, had often been transplanted into different soils, etc. and had continued to bear only bad fruit. So, if there were a particular family, which, from generation to generation, and through every remove to innumerable different countries and places of abode, all died of a consumption, or all run distracted, or all murdered themselves, it would be as much an evidence of the tendency of something in the nature or constitution of that race, as it would be of the tendency of something in the nature or state of an individual, if some one person had lived all that time, and some remarkable event had often appeared in him, which he been the agent or subject of, from year to year and from age to age, continually and without fail. . . .

SECTION 3. THAT PROPENSITY WHICH HAS BEEN PROVED TO BE IN THE NATURE OF ALL MANKIND, MUST BE A VERY EVIL, DEPRAVED AND PERNICIOUS PROPENSITY, MAKING IT MANIFEST THAT THE SOUL OF MAN, AS IT IS BY NATURE, IS IN A CORRUPT, FALLEN AND RUINED STATE: WHICH IS THE OTHER PART OF THE CONSEQUENCE, DRAWN FROM THE PROPOSITION LAID DOWN IN THE FIRST SECTION

The question to be considered, in order to determine whether man's nature is not depraved and ruined, is not whether he is not inclined to perform as many good deeds as bad ones, but, which of these two he
preponderates to, in the frame of his heart, and state of his nature, a state of innocence and righteousness, and favor with God; or a state of sin, guiltiness and abhorrence in the sight of God. Persevering sinless righteousness, or else the guilt of sin, is the alternative, on the decision of which depends (as is confessed) according to the nature and truth of things, as they are in themselves, and according to the rule of right and perfect justice, man's being approved and accepted of his Maker, and eternally blessed as good; or his being rejected, thrown away and cursed as bad. And therefore the determination of the tendency of man's heart and nature with respect to these terms, is that which is to be looked at, in order to determine whether his nature is good or evil, pure or corrupt, sound or ruined. If such be man's nature, and state of his heart, that he has an infallibly effectual propensity to the latter of those terms; then it is wholly impertinent, to talk of the innocent and kind actions, even of criminals themselves, surpassing their crimes in numbers; and of the prevailing innocence, good nature, industry, felicity and cheerfulness of the greater part of mankind. Let never so many thousands, or millions of acts of honesty, good nature, etc. be supposed; yet, by the supposition, there is an unfailing propensity to such moral evil, as in its dreadful consequences infinitely outweighs all effects or consequences of any supposed good. Surely that tendency, which, in effect, is an infallible tendency to eternal destruction, is an infinitely dreadful and pernicious tendency: and that nature and frame of mind, which implies such a tendency, must be an infinitely dreadful and pernicious frame of mind. It would be much more absurd, to suppose that such a state of nature is good, or not bad, under a notion of men's doing more honest and kind things, than evil ones; than to say, the state of that ship is good, to cross the Atlantic Ocean in, that is such as cannot hold together through the voyage, but will infallibly founder and sink by the way; under a notion that it may probably go great part of the way before it sinks, or that it will proceed and sail above water more hours than it will be sinking: or to pronounce that road a good road to go to such a place, the greater part of which is plain and safe, though some parts of it are dangerous, and certainly fatal to them that travel in it; or to call that a good propensity, which is an inflexible inclination to travel in such a way.

A propensity to that sin which brings God's eternal wrath and curse (which has been proved to belong to the nature of man) is not evil, only as it is calamitous and sorrowful, ending in great natural evil; but it is odious too, and detestable; as, by the supposition, it tends to that moral evil, by which the subject becomes odious in the sight of God, and liable, as such, to be condemned, and utterly rejected and cursed by him. This also makes it evident, that the state which it has been proved mankind are in, is a corrupt state in a moral sense, that it is inconsistent with the fulfillment of the law of God, which is the rule of moral rectitude and goodness. That tendency, which is opposite to that which the moral law requires and insists upon, and prone to that which the moral law utterly forbids, and eternally condemns the subject for, is doubtless a corrupt tendency, in a moral sense.

So that this depravity is both odious, and also pernicious, fatal and destructive, in the highest sense, as inevitably tending to that which implies man's eternal ruin; it shows, that man, as he is by nature, is in a deplorable and undone state, in the highest sense. And this proves that men don't come into the world perfectly innocent in the sight of God, and without any just exposedness to his displeasure. For the being by nature in a lost and ruined state, in the highest sense, is not consistent with being by nature in a state of favor with God. . . .

Therefore how absurd must it be for Christians to object, against the depravity of man's nature, a greater number of innocent and kind actions, than of crimes; and to talk of a prevailing innocence, good nature, industry, and cheerfulness of the greater part of mankind? Infinitely more absurd, than it would be to insist, that the domestic of a prince was not a bad servant, because though sometimes he contemned and affronted his master to a great degree, yet he did not spit in his master's face so often as he performed acts of service; or, than it would be to affirm, that his spouse was a good wife to him, because, although she committed adultery, and that with the slaves and scoundrels sometimes, yet she did not do this so often as she did the duties of a wife. These notions would be absurd, because the crimes are too heinous to be atoned for, by many honest actions of the servant or spouse of the prince; there being a vast disproportion between the merit of the one, and the ill-desert of the other; but in no
measure so great, nay infinitely less than that between the demerit of our offenses against God and the value of our acts of obedience.

Part IV. Containing Answers to Objections

Chapter II. Concerning that Objection against the Doctrine of Native Corruption, That to Suppose Men Receive Their First Existence in Sin, Is to Make Him Who Is the Author of Their Being, the Author of Their Depravity

One argument against men's being supposed to be born with sinful depravity, which Dr. Taylor greatly insists upon, is, "That this does in effect charge him who is the Author of our nature, who formed us in the womb, with being the author of a sinful corruption of nature; and that it is highly injurious to the God of our nature, whose hands have formed and fashioned us, to believe our nature to be originally corrupted, and that in the worst sense of corruption."

With respect to this, I would observe in the first place, that this writer, in his handling this grand objection, supposes something to belong to the doctrine objected against, as maintained by the divines whom he is opposing, which does not belong to it, nor does follow from it: as particularly, he supposes the doctrine of original sin to imply, that nature must be corrupted by some positive influence; "something, by some means or other, infused into the human nature; some quality or other, not from the choice of our minds, but like a taint, tincture, or infection, altering the natural constitution, faculties and dispositions of our souls. That sin and evil dispositions are implanted in the fetus in the womb." Whereas truly our doctrine neither implies nor infers any such thing. In order to account for a sinful corruption of nature, yea, a total native depravity of the heart of man, there is not the least need of supposing any evil quality infused, implanted, or wrought into the nature of man, by any positive cause, or influence whatsoever, either from God, or the creature; or of supposing, that man is conceived and born with a fountain of evil in his heart, such as is anything properly positive. I think, a little attention to the nature of things will be sufficient to satisfy any impartial considerate inquirer, that the absence of positive good principles, and so the withholding of a special divine influence to impart and maintain those good principles, leaving the common natural principles of self-love, natural appetite, etc. (which were in man in innocence) leaving these, I say, to themselves, without the government of superior divine principles, will certainly be followed with corruption, yea, the total corruption of the heart, without occasion for any positive influence at all: and that it was thus indeed that corruption of nature came on Adam, immediately on his fall, and comes on all his posterity, as sinning in him and falling with him.

The case with man was plainly this: when God made man at first, he implanted in him two kinds of principles. There was an inferior kind, which may be called natural, being the principles of mere human nature; such as self-love, with those natural appetites and passions, which belong to the nature of man, in which his love to his own liberty, honor and pleasure, were exercised: these when alone, and left to themselves, are what the Scriptures sometimes call flesh. Besides these, there were superior principles, that were spiritual, holy and divine, summarily comprehended in divine love; wherein consisted the spiritual image of God, and man's righteousness and true holiness; which are called in Scripture the divine nature. These principles may, in some sense, be called supernatural, being (however concreated or connate, yet) such as are above those principles that are essentially implied in, or necessarily resulting from, and inseparably connected with, mere human nature; and being such as immediately depend on man's union and communion with God, or divine communications and influences of God's spirit; which though withdrawn, and man's nature forsaken of these principles, human nature would be human nature still; man's nature as such, being entire without those divine principles, which the Scripture sometimes calls spirit, in contradistinction to flesh. These superior principles were given to possess the throne, and maintain an absolute dominion in the heart: the other, to be wholly subordinate and subservient. And while things continued thus, all things were in excellent order, peace and beautiful harmony, and in their proper and perfect state. These divine principles thus reigning, were the dignity, life, happiness, and glory of man's nature. When man sinned, and broke God's Covenant, and fell under his curse, these superior principles left his heart: for indeed
God then left him; that communion with God, on which these principles depended, entirely ceased; the Holy Spirit, that divine inhabitant, forsook the house. Because it would have been utterly improper in itself, and inconsistent with the covenant and constitution God had established, that God should still maintain communion with man, and continue, by his friendly, gracious vital influences, to dwell with him and in him, after he was become a rebel, and had incurred God's wrath and curse. Therefore immediately the superior divine principles wholly ceased; so light ceases in a room, when the candle is withdrawn: and thus man was left in a state of darkness, woeful corruption and ruin; nothing but flesh, without spirit. The inferior principles of self-love and natural appetite, which were given only to serve, being alone, and left to themselves, of course became reigning principles; having no superior principles to regulate or control them, they became absolute masters of the heart. The immediate consequence of which was a fatal catastrophe, a turning of all things upside down, and the succession of a state of the most odious and dreadful confusion. Man did immediately set up himself, and the objects of his private affections and appetites, as supreme; and so they took the place of God. These inferior principles are like fire in an house; which, we say, is a good servant, but a bad master; very useful while kept in its place, but if left to take possession of the whole house, soon brings all to destruction. Man's love to his own honor, separate interest, and private pleasure, which before was wholly subordinate unto love to God and regard to his authority and glory, now dispose and impel man to pursue those objects, without regard to God's honor, or law; because there is no true regard to these divine things left in him. In consequence of which, he seeks those objects as much when against God's honor and law, as when agreeable to 'em. And God still continuing strictly to require supreme regard to himself, and forbidding all gratifications of these inferior passions, but only in perfect subordination to the ends, and agreeableness to the rules and limits, which his holiness, honor and law prescribe, hence immediately arises enmity in the heart, now wholly under the power of self-love; and nothing but war ensues, in a constant course, against God. As, when a subject has once renounced his lawful sovereign, and set up a pretender in his stead, a state of enmity and war against his rightful king necessarily ensues. It were easy to show, how every lust and depraved disposition of man's heart would naturally arise from this privatiue original, if here were room for it. Thus 'tis easy to give an account, how total corruption of heart should follow on man's eating the forbidden fruit, though that was but one act of sin, without God's putting any evil into his heart, or implanting any bad principle, or infusing any corrupt taint, and so becoming the author of depravity. Only God's withdrawing, as it was highly proper and necessary that he should, from rebel-man, being as it were driven away by his abominable wickedness, and men's natural principles being left to themselves, this is sufficient to account for his becoming entirely corrupt, and bent on sinning against God. . . .

Chapter III. That Great Objection against the Imputation of Adam's Sin to His Posterity Considered, That Such Imputation Is Unjust and Unreasonable, Inasmuch as Adam and His Posterity Are Not One and the Same . . .

That we may proceed with the greater clearness in considering the main objections against supposing the guilt of Adam's sin to be imputed to his posterity, I would premise some observations with a view to the right stating of the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's first sin; and then show the reasonableness of this doctrine, in opposition to the great clamor raised against it on this head.

I think, it would go far towards directing us to the more clear and distinct conceiving and right stating of this affair, if we steadily bear this in mind; that God, in each step of his proceeding with Adam, in relation to the covenant or constitution established with him, looked on his posterity as being one with him. (The propriety of his looking upon them so, I shall speak to afterwards.) And though he dealt more immediately with Adam, yet it was as the head of the whole body, and the root of the whole tree; and in his proceedings with him, he dealt with all the branches, as if they had been then existing in their root.

From which it will follow, that both guilt, or exposedness to punishment, and also depravity of heart, came upon Adam's posterity just as they came upon him, as much as if he and they had all coexisted, like a tree with many branches; allowing only for the difference necessarily resulting from
the place Adam stood in, as head or root of the whole, and being first and
most immediately dealt with, and most immediately acting and suffering.
Otherwise, it is as if, in every step of proceeding, every alteration in the
root had been attended, at the same instant, with the same steps and
alterations throughout the whole tree, in each individual branch. I think,
this will naturally follow on the supposition of there being a constituted
oneness or identity of Adam and his posterity in this affair. 

The depraved disposition of Adam's heart is to be considered two ways.
(1) As the first rising of an evil inclination in his heart, exerted in his first
act of sin, and the ground of the complete transgression. (2) An evil
disposition of heart continuing afterwards, as a confirmed principle, that
came by God's forsaking him; which was a punishment of his first trans­
gression. This confirmed corruption, by its remaining and continued
operation, brought additional guilt on his soul.

And in like manner, depravity of heart is to be considered two ways in
Adam's posterity. The first existing of a corrupt disposition in their hearts
is not to be looked upon as sin belonging to them, distinct from their
participation of Adam's first sin: it is as it were the extended pollution
of that sin, through the whole tree, by virtue of the constituted union of the
branches with the root; or the inherence of the sin of that head of the
species in the members, in the consent and concurrence of the hearts of
the members with the head in that first act. (Which may be, without
God's being the author of sin; about which I have spoken in a former
chapter.) But the depravity of nature, remaining an established principle
in the heart of a child of Adam, and as exhibited in after-operations, is a
consequence and punishment of the first apostasy thus participated, and
brings new guilt.

The first existence of an evil disposition of heart, amounting to a full
consent to Adam's sin, no more infers God's being the author of that evil
disposition in the child, than in the father. The first arising or existing of
that evil disposition in the heart of Adam, was by God's permission; who
could have prevented it, if he had pleased, by giving such influences of his
spirit, as would have been absolutely effectual to hinder it; which, it is
plain in fact, he did withhold: and whatever mystery may be supposed in
the affair, yet no Christian will presume to say, it was not in perfect
consistence with God's holiness and righteousness, notwithstanding
Adam had been guilty of no offense before. So root and branches being
one, according to God's wise constitution, the case in fact is, that by virtue
of this oneness, answerable changes of effects through all the branches
do exist with the changes in the root: consequently an evil disposition exists
in the hearts of Adam's posterity, equivalent to that which was exerted in
his own heart, when he eat the forbidden fruit. Which God has no hand
in, any otherwise, than in not exerting such an influence, as might be
effectual to prevent it.

But now the grand objection is against the reasonableness of such a
constitution, by which Adam and his posterity should be looked upon as
one, and dealt with accordingly, in an affair of such infinite consequence;
so that if Adam sinned, they must necessarily be made sinners by his
disobedience, and come into existence with the same depravity of disposi­
tion, and be looked upon and treated as though they were partakers with
Adam in his act of sin. I have not room here to rehearse all Dr. Taylor's
vehement exclamations against the reasonableness and justice of this. The
reader may at his leisure consult his book, and see them in places referred
to in the margin. Whatever black colors and frightful representations are
employed on this occasion, all may be summed up in this, that Adam and
his posterity are not one, but entirely distinct agents.

But with respect to this mighty outcry made against the reasonableness of any such constitution,
by which God is supposed to treat Adam and his posterity as one, I would
make the following observations.

... It signifies nothing, to exclaim against plain fact. Such is the fact,
most evident and acknowledged fact, with respect to the state of all
mankind, without exception of one individual among all the natural de­
cendants of Adam, as makes it apparent, that God actually deals with
Adam and his posterity as one, in the affair of his apostasy, and its
infinitely terrible consequences. It has been demonstrated, and shown to
be in effect plainly acknowledged, that every individual of mankind comes
into the world in such circumstances, as that there is no hope or possibility
of any other than their violating God's holy law (if they ever live to act at
all, as moral agents), and being thereby justly exposed to eternal ruin. And
it is thus by God's ordering and disposing of things. And God either thus
deals with mankind, because he looks upon them as one with their first father, and so treats them as sinful and guilty by his apostasy; or (which won't mend the matter) he, without viewing them as at all concerned in that affair, but as in every respect perfectly innocent, does nevertheless subject them to this infinitely dreadful calamity. Adam by his sin was exposed to the calamities and sorrows of this life, to temporal death, and eternal ruin; as is confessed. And 'tis also in effect confessed, that all his posterity come into the world in such a state, as that the certain consequence is their being exposed, and justly so, to the sorrows of this life, to temporal death, and eternal ruin, unless saved by grace. So that we see, God in fact deals with them together, or as one. If God orders the consequences of Adam's sin, with regard to his posterity's welfare, even in those things which are most important, and which do in the highest degree concern their eternal interest, to be the same with the consequences to Adam himself, then he treats Adam and his posterity as in that affair one. Hence, however the matter be attended with difficulty, fact obliges us to get over the difficulty, either by finding out some solution, or by shutting our mouths, and acknowledging the weakness and scantiness of our understandings; as we must in innumerable other cases, where apparent and undeniable fact, in God's works of creation and providence, is attended with events and circumstances, the manner and reason of which are difficult to our understandings. . . .

It being thus manifest, that this constitution, by which Adam and his posterity are dealt with as one, is not unreasonable upon account of its being injurious and hurtful to the interest of mankind, the only thing remaining in the objection against such a constitution, is the impropriety of it, as implying falsehood, and contradiction to the true nature of things; as hereby they are viewed and treated as one, who are not one, but wholly distinct; and no arbitrary constitution can ever make that to be true, which in itself considered is not true.

The objection, however specious, is really founded on a false hypothesis, and wrong notion of what we call sameness or oneness, among created things; and the seeming force of the objection arises from ignorance or inconsideration of the degree, in which created identity or oneness with past existence, in general, depends on the sovereign constitution and law of the Supreme Author and Disposer of the universe.

Some things, being most simply considered, are entirely distinct, and very diverse; which yet are so united by the established law of the Creator, in some respects and with regard to some purposes and effects, that by virtue of that establishment it is with them as if they were one. Thus a tree, grown great, and an hundred years old, is one plant with the little sprout, that first came out of the ground, from whence it grew, and has been continued in constant succession; though it's now so exceeding diverse, many thousand times bigger, and of a very different form, and perhaps not one atom the very same: yet God, according to an established law of nature, has in a constant succession communicated to it many of the same qualities, and most important properties, as if it were one. It has been his pleasure, to constitute an union in these respects, and for these purposes, naturally leading us to look upon all as one. So the body of man at forty years of age, is one with the infant body which first came into the world, from whence it grew; though now constituted of different substance, and the greater part of the substance probably changed scores (if not hundreds) of times; and though it be now in so many respects exceeding diverse, yet God, according to the course of nature, which he has been pleased to establish, has caused, that in a certain method it should communicate with that infantile body, in the same life, the same senses, the same features, and many the same qualities, and in union with the same soul; and so, with regard to these purposes, 'tis dealt with by him as one body. . . .

That God does, by his immediate power, uphold every created substance in being, will be manifest, if we consider, that their present existence is a dependent existence, and therefore is an effect, and must have some cause: and the cause must be one of these two: either the antecedent existence of the same substance, or else the power of the Creator. But it can't be the antecedent existence of the same substance. For instance, the existence of the body of the moon at this present moment, can't be the effect of its existence at the last foregoing moment. For not only was what existed the last moment, no active cause, but wholly a passive thing; but
this also is to be considered, that no cause can produce effects in a time and place on which itself is not. 'Tis plain, nothing can exert itself, or operate, when and where it is not existing. But the moon's past existence was neither _where_ nor _when_ its present existence is. In point of time, what is _past_ entirely ceases, when _present_ existence begins; otherwise it would not be _past_. The past moment is ceased and gone, when the present moment takes place; and does no more coexist with it, than does any other moment that had ceased twenty years ago. Nor could the past existence of the particles of this moving body produce effects in any other place, than where it then was. But its existence at the present moment, in every point of it, is in a different place, from where its existence was at the last preceding moment. From these things, I suppose, it will certainly follow, that the present existence, either of this, or any other created substance, cannot be an effect of its past existence. The existences (so to speak) of an effect, or thing dependent, in different parts of space or duration, though ever so _near_ one to another, don't at all coexist one with the other; and therefore are as truly different effects, as if those parts of space and duration were ever so far asunder: and the prior existence can no more be the proper cause of the new existence, in the next moment, or next part of space, than if it had been in an age before, or at a thousand miles distance, without any existence to fill up the intermediate time or space. Therefore the existence of created substances, in each successive moment, must be the effect of the _immediate_ agency, will, and power of God.

If any shall say, this reasoning is not good, and shall insist upon it, that there is no need of any immediate divine power, to produce the present existence of created substances, but that their present existence is the same effect or consequence of past existence, according to the nature of things; that the established course of nature is sufficient to continue existence, where existence is once given; I allow it: but then it should be remembered, what nature is, in created things: and what the established course of nature is; that, as has been observed already, it is nothing, separate from the agency of God; and that, as Dr. Taylor says, "God, the Original of all being, is the only cause of all natural effects." A father, according to the course of nature, begets a child; an oak, according to the course of nature, produces an acorn, or a bud; so according to the course of nature, the former existence of the trunk of the tree is followed by its new or present existence. In the one case, and the other, the new effect is consequent on the former, only by the established laws, and settled course of nature; which is allowed to be nothing but the continued immediate efficiency of God, according to a constitution that he has been pleased to establish. Therefore, as our author greatly urges, that the child and the acorn, which come into existence according to the course of nature, in consequence of the prior existence and state of the parent and the oak, are truly _immediately_ created or made by God; so must the existence of each created person and thing, at each moment of it, be from the immediate _continued_ creation of God. It will certainly follow from these things, that God's _preserving_ created things in being is perfectly equivalent to a _continued_ creation, or to his creating those things out of nothing at each _moment_ of their existence. If the continued existence of created things be wholly dependent on God's preservation, then those things would drop into nothing, upon the ceasing of the present moment, without a new exertion of the divine power to cause them to exist in the following moment. If there be any who own, that God preserves things in being, and yet hold that they would continue in being without any further help from him, after they once have existence; I think, it is hard to know what they mean. To what purpose can it be, to talk of God's preserving things in being, when there is no need of his preserving them? Or to talk of their being dependent on God for continued existence, when they would of themselves continue to exist, without his help, nay, though he should wholly withdraw his sustaining power and influence?

It will follow from what has been observed, that God's upholding created substance, or causing its existence in each successive moment, is altogether equivalent to an _immediate_ production _out of nothing_, at each moment, because its existence at this moment is not merely in part from God, but wholly from him, and not in any part, or degree, from its antecedent existence. For the supposing, that its antecedent existence _concurs_ with God in _efficiency_, to produce some part of the effect, is attended with all the very same absurdities, which have been shown to attend the supposition of its producing it wholly. Therefore the antecedent existence is nothing, as to any proper influence or assistance in the
affair: and consequently God produces the effect as much from nothing, as if there had been nothing before. So that this effect differs not at all from the first creation, but only circumstantially: as in first creation there had been no such act and effect of God's power before; whereas, his giving existence afterwards, follows preceding acts and effects of the same kind, in an established order.

Now, in the next place, let us see how the consequence of these things is to my present purpose. If the existence of created substance, in each successive moment, be wholly the effect of God's immediate power, in that moment, without any dependence on prior existence, as much as the first creation out of nothing, then what exists at this moment, by this power, is a new effect; and simply and absolutely considered, not the same with any past existence, though it be like it, and follows it according to a certain established method. And there is no identity or oneness in the case, but what depends on the arbitrary constitution of the Creator; who by his wise sovereign establishment so unites these successive new effects, that he treats them as one, by communicating to them like properties, relations, and circumstances; and so, leads us to regard and treat them as one. When I call this an arbitrary constitution, I mean, that it is a constitution which depends on nothing but the divine will; which divine will depends on nothing but the divine wisdom. In this sense, the whole course of nature, with all that belongs to it, all its laws and methods, and constancy and regularity, continuance and proceeding, is an arbitrary constitution. In this sense, the continuance of the very being of the world and all its parts, as well as the manner of continued being, depends entirely on an arbitrary constitution: for it don't all necessarily follow, that because there was sound, or light, or color, or resistance, or gravity, or thought, or consciousness, or any other dependent thing the last moment, that therefore there shall be the like at the next. All dependent existence whatsoever is in a constant flux, ever passing and returning; renewed every moment, as the colors of bodies are every moment renewed by the light that shines upon them; and all is constantly proceeding from God, as light from the sun. "In him we live, and move, and have our being."

Thus it appears, if we consider matters strictly, there is no such thing as any identity or oneness in created objects, existing at different times, but what depends on God's sovereign constitution. And so it appears, that the objection we are upon, made against a supposed divine constitution, whereby Adam and his posterity are viewed and treated as one, in the manner and for the purposes supposed, as if it were not consistent with truth, because no constitution can make those to be one, which are not one; I say, it appears that this objection is built on a false hypothesis: for it appears, that a divine constitution is the thing which makes truth, in affairs of this nature. The objection supposes, there is a oneness in created beings, whence qualities and relations are derived down from past existence, distinct from, and prior to any oneness that can be supposed to be founded on divine constitution. Which is demonstrably false; and sufficiently appears so from things conceded by the adversaries themselves: and therefore the objection wholly falls to the ground. . . .