

SERMON 22

A CHARGE OF PUBLISHING A PALPABLE FALSITY EXHIBITED
AGAINST,
AND FULLY PROVED UPON, THE AUTHORS OF *THE MONTHLY
REVIEW,*

In a Letter to those Gentlemen: Wherein is contained
A DEFENSE OF THE VINDICATION OF DIVINE JUSTICE, IN THE
INFLICTION OF ENDLESS PUNISHMENT FOR SIN,
1755

*In ANSWER to An anonymous Pamphlet, intitled, 'The Scripture-Account of a
Future State considered'*

GENTLEMAN,

IF this Address is *displeasing* to you, I apprehend, that I am not to be blamed; because you have given *just* Occasion unto me of a warmer Resentment, than I shall take the Liberty to shew, by imputing to me a Notion, which is most *ridiculous* and *absurd*; viz. That *there are Degrees of Infinity*. As I knew that such a *monstrous* Absurdity never entered into my Mind; and not being sensible, that I had said any Thing, which could justly cause you to suspect my entertaining such a Supposition, I took the Freedom to charge you with the Guilt of a *palpable Falsity*: From which Charge you endeavor, in an Appeal to the Public, to clear yourselves. ***In order that the Public, unto whom your Appeal is made, may form a true Judgment in this Cause between you and me, I will lay before them the following facts:*** The Ground of your Charge: The Form of your Charge: My Call upon you to vindicate yourselves; or, rather, the Charge, which I exhibited against you, of publishing a *Palpable Falsity*: And your Defense, or Vindication of yourselves from the Guilt of such an *atrocious* Crime.

The Ground of your Charge is, what I offer to prove, that there is an infinite Evil and Demerit in Sin, by Way of Answer unto that, which the Author of the *Scripture-Account* advanced against it; speaks thus: “In whatever Manner Sin or Vice be estimated, it must be finite, because it is the Production or Act of a finite Kind, of finite Principles and Passions.” My Answer unto which, is this: *Very well: Whoever said, that Sin, or a sinful Act, is infinite? No Mortal, I am persuaded. That which is infinite cannot possibly proceed from a finite Being. We know this, full as well as this Writer does. But, with his Leave, or without it, we must distinguish between the Act of Sin, and the Demerit of that Act.*

Though all sinful Actions are finite, and must be so, because they spring from finite Beings, yet there is an infinite Evil and Demerit in Sin, because it is committed against all possible and infinite Good. Its Demerit arises from the Object, against whom it is committed; and, therefore, as the Divine Object against whom all Sin is directed is infinite, so the Demerit of it must be infinite: If it as not, then there is not, there cannot be greater Evil and Demerit, in an Act of Sin against God, than attend an Act of Sin against a Creature. Why, do not such Persons, as our Author, speak out plainly what they mean, and tell us roundly, that there is no greater Evil in sinning against God than there is in sinning against a poor Mortal like ourselves? This is what he intends, it certainly is what he designs, though it was too impious a Thing for him, directly and explicitly, to assert. If this is not his Meaning he says nothing which is to his Purpose; for, if he allows, that there is greater Evil in Sin against God, than there is in Sin against a Creature, that Reason, which obliges him to grant, that it is, in any Degree, a greater Evil to offend against God, will compel him to yield, that it is infinitely greater, viz. the infinite Majesty of the Divine Being.

The Form of your Censure, or Charge, was this:

“This Person would persuade the Public of his Abilities, as a Critic and a Philosopher; Characters to which he may be justly intitled, if wild Conjectures, and dogmatical Affirmation be allowed in the Place of clear Reasoning and solid Judgment; by which alone, the Author of the *Scripture-Account* ought to have been tried, and by which, perhaps, it might be possible to convict that Gentleman of having sacrificed as much to *Imagination*, though not to *Dullness*, as Mr. *Brine*, who supposes, that there are *Degrees of Infinity*, and that Persons may be annihilated, and, at the same Time, not suffer Death.”

As I thought myself, in some Measure, injured by this Censure, or Charge of yours, particularly, in this Assertion, that I suppose, that *there are Degrees of Infinity*; which I knew I did not, and also was sure, that I had not expressed a *Tittle*, from which it might be inferred, that I entertained such a ridiculous and absurd Supposition; I apprehended, that I had a Right to wipe off this *false* Imputation; and, therefore, ***I took the Liberty, to exhibit this Charge against you, in some of the public Papers:*** “To the Authors of the *Monthly-Review*. Gentlemen, in your *Review* for *December*, 1754, you mention a small Pamphlet, which I lately published, intitled, A Vindication of the Justice of God, in the Infliction of endless Punishment for Sin; in Answer to the *Scripture-Account of a future State considered*. And you say, that I would persuade the Public of my Abilities, as a Critic and a Philosopher. This I deny; and, unless you know me *better*, than I know myself, you cannot prove it. Farther, you represent me as *dogmatical* and *dull*; both which, it is possible, may be true. But what Censure may I not pass upon you, for affirming, that I suppose that *there are*

Degrees of Infinity! This Assertion is a *palpable Falsity*. Such a Supposition I have neither expressed, nor, in the least Degree, suggested. If, therefore, you should be able to defend yourselves from a Charge of *Ill-manners*, which you exhibit against me, I am sure you will not be capable of vindicating your Veracity. I acknowledge that I suppose, (as you say I do) that Persons may be annihilated, and, at the same Time, not suffer Death. It is my Opinion, at present, that Annihilation is not Death. If you will be pleased to condescend so far, as to clear up to me my Mistake in this Matter, (if I am mistaken herein) the Favor will be gratefully acknowledged, by, Gentlemen, your humble Servant, *etc.*”

Very soon after this Advertisement of mine, the following Lines were inserted (by your Order, I presume) as News in the Evening Advertiser:

“If Mr. *Brine* will wait till the Publication of the *Review* for the present Month, he may then see, if he pleases, on the *blue Cover* of the said Number, a proper Notice of an Advertisement (wherein he has more than once exposed himself) relating to the JUST Account given, in a late *Review*, of his profound Answer to the Scripture-Account of a future State considered, for the *Reviewers* will have no News-Paper Controversy, “with such an Opponent.”

Agreeably to this Piece of News, I find on the blue Cover of the said Number, your Defense, or Vindication of yourselves:

“The Authors of the *Review* have been called upon by ONE Mr. *John Brine*, in an Advertisement inserted in the public Papers, wherein he accuses them of having falsely charged upon him, Notions not entertained by him. In the *Review* for December 1754 Page 477, Mention is made of a Pamphlet, entitled, A Vindication of divine Justice, *etc.* written by Mr. *Brine*, and it is there said, that Mr. *B.* supposes there are *Degrees of Infinity*, and that Persons may be annihilated, and, at the same Time, not suffer Death. Mr. *B.* acknowledges, and still avows, this curious Doctrine of Annihilation; but denies his having in the least suggested the above expressed Notion of Infinity. Undoubtedly this Writer best understands his own Meaning, or *Un-meaning*; but whether we have erred, or not, in the Conclusion we drew from the following Passage, let the Reader determine: “In Page 28, Mr. *B.* has these Words: Though all sinful Actions are finite, and must be so, because they spring from finite Beings, yet there is an infinite Evil and Demerit in Sin, because it is committed against all possible and infinite Good. Its Demerit arises from the Object against whom it is committed; and, therefore, as the Divine Object against whom all Sin is directed, is infinite, so the Demerit of it must be infinite: If it is not, then there is not, there cannot be greater Evil and Demerit in an Act of Sin against God, than attend an Act of Sin against a Creature. — Here we are taught, that there is an infinite Evil and Demerit in Sin; and that as the Divine Object against whom all Sin is directed, is infinite, so the Demerit of it must be infinite. Now, will Mr. *B.* maintain, that all Sins are equal in Demerit, or that one Infinite is greater than another, and that

Blasphemy, Idolatry, and Murder, are not more heinous than petty Theft, Drunkenness, Lying, Scandal etc.? The Assertion would shock a rational Christian; and yet this Mr. B. will, we apprehend, be driven to, unless he admits, as a fair Deduction from his Premise, that there are Degrees of Infinity. This absurd Consequence occurred to us, on Perusal of his Pamphlet; and how far we are justifiable, in charging Mr. B. with such a Supposition (for he is not charged with any direct Assertion) let the candid By-stander pronounce: As for our Author, it is probable, as he is a very profound Writer, he will yet have a great deal to urge about, and about this Alternative; he is welcome to say what and how much he pleases; we shall look upon ourselves as unconcerned in the Matter. We have shewn the Ground upon which we first formed our Opinion of his Pamphlet; that Opinion, and its Foundation, are now before the Public; and if, in the Judgment of that Public, we stand acquitted of any Intention to impose upon them, or misrepresent any Author whatever, whole Writings are mentioned in the Review, it will be quite indifferent to us what this Writer may have to say, in the Defense of his own peculiar Notions.” Having laid before the Reader the true State of this Cause between

you and me, *I will now proceed to consider, calmly, that Defense which you make for yourselves, in Answer to the Charge, which I exhibited against you.* In this Defense, *you say, One Mr. John Brine*, by which Phrase, doubtless, you intended to put me in mind of my *Obscurity*; whereof I am not insensible, and did not need this *Memento* of it from you, though, that I confess, you might not know, and, therefore, you did well to give me this Hint, that I might not imagine myself to be much known, and taken Notice of in the World: Yet, I must say, there would have been a greater Propriety in the Hint, if you had not, more than once, honored me with the Mention of my Name, on former Occasions; whereby that became as extensively known, as your *Reviews* are spread: I cannot tell whether that is far or not, (nor is it the Matter of my Concern) you best know: However, that is a sufficient Evidence, that I am not *just now drop out of the Clouds*, and that your Readers are not Strangers to my Name, nor to that Respect, which you have formerly shewn unto it. But enough of this *trivial* Matter.

Again, *You say, “Mr. B. still acknowledges and avows this curious Doctrine of Annihilation.”*

The Manner of your expressing yourselves may occasion some less attentive Readers to think, that I suppose Men will be annihilated, and perhaps you are willing they should, although you know, that I utterly deny and disavow the Doctrine of the Annihilation of any of the human Race, and plead for the eternal Existence of both good and bad Men. By this Ambiguity, you cleared yourselves of the Trouble of offering any Thing, to prove the Absurdity of supposing, that Persons may be annihilated, and, at the same Time, not suffer Death. This is a considerable Instance of your Prudence. Truly, it was a *wise* Thing in you to decline attempting, at an

Impossibility. And, that this is such, I imagine, you are, by this Time, convinced; and are sensible, that Persons may be annihilated, and yet not suffer Death. When you say, of *Annihilation*, you cannot mean *Annihilation itself*; but must mean, *about*, or *concerning* Annihilation. The Thing *itself* I deny, which you need not be told; but this Doctrine concerning it, I still acknowledge, and avow, viz. *that Persons may be annihilated, and, at the same Time, not suffer Death*: For Annihilation is not Death. Much is not necessary to be said, to evince the Truth thereof. If Death is a Privation of Life, which it hath been thought to be, and a Creature must exist, in suffering that Privation, it is very clear, that Persons may be annihilated, and, at the same Time, not suffer Death. If a Privation of Life takes Place in a Creature, I own, that I think it must be while it exists, because, I cannot comprehend how it should when it is not. Notwithstanding, Gentlemen, the Reproof, which you have given me, for pretending to *philosophize*, I cannot refrain from saying: That it is very *unphilosophical*, to conceive of a Privation, without the Existence of some Subject. And, if a Privation necessarily supposes the Existence of some Subject, is it not evident, that the Being of a Creature, which suffers Death, must be of somewhat *longer* Duration, than that of its Life? If the Life of *Peter* is of the same Duration, with his Existence, how is it possible, he should suffer Death? He does not, while he is, and when he is not, it is certain, he cannot. In Annihilation, a living Creature, would not suffer a Privation of Life; because, so long as he exists, he lives, and, consequently, his Annihilation can be no other than a Cessation of Life, together with the Cessation of his Being, and in the very same Moment: For, his Existence and Life must be exactly of equal Duration. We cannot for this Reason, suppose him to suffer Death, in his Annihilation, unless we will suppose, there may be a Privation of Life, without the Existence of a Subject, of such Privation. And, therefore, I conclude, the Author of the *Scripture-Account*, etc. was mistaken, in thinking, that Annihilation is Death; particularly, as he stiles it, the *second Death*.

You suggest, 'The Opinion of the Infinity of Evil and Demerit, in Sin, is a peculiar Notion of mine.' For, relating to that Point, you say: "It will be quite indifferent to us what this Writer may have to say, in Defense of his own peculiar Notions." Of which Notions, therefore, you must mean this is one. Pray, Gentlemen, do you speak as you think? Or do you *prevaricate*, in this Case, and take the Liberty to insinuate, that this is my *peculiar* Notion, though you know it not to be so? Perhaps, your Reading may not have been very large, on divine and religious Subjects; yet, I cannot be persuaded, that it hath been so very *scanty*, as to leave you under a Possibility of imagining, that this is a *Peculiarity* of mine. This Doctrine hath been maintained and defended, by all our Protestant Divines, who have opposed the *Popish* Notion of *venial* Sins. It is not necessary to produce many Testimonies hereof; but the Reader, I hope, will excuse my citing a Few. And they shall be such, as are not only full and explicit on this Head; but also from such Writers, as even the *Reviewers themselves*,

free as they are in their Censures, upon any who differ from them, may not, it is probable, choose to impute Dullness unto; though, indeed, I pretend not to be certain of their Civility and Respect to the Names following, since they stand directly in their Way. Bishop *Downname*, speaking of Sins, expresses himself thus: “None being so small, but that it is of sufficient Weight to press down the Sinner to Hell, being of infinite Guilt, committed against infinite Justice, deserving infinite Punishment, for which the Justice of God cannot be satisfied, but by a Propitiation of infinite Value.” Bishop *Davenant* asserts the same: “God, *says he*, is of infinite Majesty and Goodness: Whoever, therefore dishonors such Majesty, by any Transgression, be it great or small, demerits infinite Punishment.” Bishop *Reynolds* speaks thus: “This Demerit (*i.e.* of *Sin*) is founded, not only in the Constitution, *etc.* — of God, but in the Nature of his own Holiness and Justice, which in Sin is violated, and turned from; and this Guilt is after Sort infinite, because it springeth out of the Aversion from an infinite Good, the Violation of an infinite Holiness and Justice.” Bishop *Hopkins*, his Words are these: “Every Act of Sin, yea the least that we ever committed, is an infinite Debt, and carries in it infinite Guilt, because committed against an infinite Majesty. For, all Offences take their Measures, not only from the Matter of the Act, but from the Person against whom they are committed: As a reviling Word against our Equals, will but bear an Action at Law; but against the *Prince*, it is High-Treason and punishable with Death. So here, the least Offence against the infinite Majesty of God, becomes itself infinite.” Now can you, Gentlemen, persuade yourselves to believe, that these great and excellent Divines, supposed, that *there are Degrees of Infinity*? I will not peremptorily say, that you will be so favorable to their Character, as not to impute such an Absurdity to them; because I know not unto what Extent your Freedom, in Censuring, may be carried, against any, whose Opinions you dislike: Yet, I cannot allow myself to think, that you will be disposed fix such an Odium upon those *venerable* Names; though you have just the same Reason for it, with respect to them, as you had for so doing, with regard to myself.

Doubtless you thought yourselves, at full Liberty, to affirm whatever you pleased, concerning me, provided, the least: Color of a Foundation might be pretended, for what you should assert, though ever so *ridiculous* and *absurd*; and, therefore, affirmed, that I suppose there are Degrees of Infinity. Being, by me, charged with a *direct* Breach of Truth, in this Assertion: All that you have to offer in your Defense, is only this, you apprehend, that this is a Consequence naturally arising from my Notion of the Infinity of the Evil and Demerit, in Sin. But, good Sirs, are the Consequences which justly follow from Opinions, always seen, by those who hold them? I presume you know they are not. Fair it is, to urge the absurd Consequences of any Doctrine, against it, in order to shew, that it cannot be true: But it is very *unfair* to charge any with supposing the Consequences of a Doctrine, however justly they may follow therefrom, which the Asserters of it do not discern. Not long since,

I took into Consideration, an Assertion of a *learned* and *worthy* Author, from which, a Consequence most absurd, is fairly deducible. I apprehended, that it was lawful for me to observe it, and to caution against assenting to that Assertion; because of the Absurdity, which it cannot be cleared of. But if I had said, that, that Author supposed that Consequence; upon Reflection, I could not have acquitted myself, of having acted an exceedingly *disingenuous* and *unfair* Part. For this Reason, he did not discern the Consequence of his Assertion, and, therefore, could not suppose it, or, which is the same Thing, think that to be a Truth. You it seems, apprehend, that the Doctrine of the infinite Evil and Demerit of Sin, is unavoidably attended with this absurd Consequence, that there are Degrees of Infinity. Well, what if it is, must it necessarily be concluded, that our Protestant Divines saw that Consequence, and supposed it to be a Truth? Will you proceed so far in Censuring, as to affirm that of them? And, if such Writers, as are produced above, did not discern this to be the Consequence of the Doctrine, which they maintained; is it any Wonder, that so *dull* a Person as I am, should not make the Discovery? You cannot think it is. Why then did you charge me with supposing this Consequence? Can you produce any *Expression, Phrase*, or so much as a *single* Word, from which it may be inferred, that my Notion of Infinity, is different from your own? You cannot.

All that you can pretend unto, is this: That I attribute Infinity unto that which is only finite. The clearest Proof that the Evil and Demerit of Sin, is finite, will be no Proof, that I suppose there are Degrees of Infinity: Or, that I entertain a mistaken Notion of Infinity. Such Proof, indeed, would evince, that I am mistaken in applying Infiniteness unto that, wherein, in Fact, it is not; but nothing more. And that would not, in the least, clear up your Veracity. I think, I may be allowed to say, that I have given such Evidence, that in my Account, Infinity hath no Limit, and, consequently, that there cannot be Degrees in it, that no Scruple can be made thereof. Have I not said, *that which is infinite cannot possibly proceed from a finite Being. We know this full as well as this Writer does.* If I had conceived, that there are Degrees of Infinity, I must have thought it possible, for that which is infinite to proceed from a finite Being.

Yea, if Infinity is really to be found with any Being at all, it must be with some created Being, if there are Degrees in it. Are not these my Words also? *Though all sinful Actions are finite, and must be so, because they spring from finite Beings, etc.* Is it not manifest from hence, that my Opinion in, that the highest Degrees rise not up to Infinity? The Thing is as *clear*, as a Matter can well be rendered by the Force of Language. And when I express the endless Punishment of Sinners, do I not say, *Punishment, which is infinite, in its Duration?* If you really thought, that my Opinion is, that there Degrees Infinity is limited or, that are Degrees in it, why did you not observe to me, that, according, to my Notion of Infinity, the Punishment of the wicked might be infinite, in its Duration, and yet not be *endless*; because I suppose

Infinity to have its Limits. So full and clear Intimation I have given, that I think Infinity is *unbounded*, that it requires a *very large Stretch of Charity*, to conclude, that you did not act directly against the Remonstrance of your own Consciences, in charging me with the Supposition of there being Degrees of Infinity. But I hope you did not do this, under the Influence of this Consideration, that there is not an infinite Evil and Demerit, in Sin. If the Evil of *falsely* accusing, is not infinite, as it is a Sin against God, it is not a *light* Thing, to violate the Divine Precepts, which require us to speak Truth *of*, as well as *unto* our Neighbor. The *candid Bystander*, to whose Sentence you seem willing to submit, it is highly probable, will conclude, that, as you have *falsely* charged me, with entertaining a very absurd Notion, it is but equitable, that you should, in as public a Manner, retract that Charge, as you exhibited it. Why should you not *dare* to be ingenuous, in your Acknowledgment of Guilt, which it is impossible for you to conceal? And, that you cannot cover it over, at any Rate, the Defense you make, is a full Proof of. You have nothing to say in your Vindication, but this, the Consequence, which you infer, occurred to you, on Perusal of my Pamphlet, and, therefore, you asserted, *that*, that Consequence is my Supposition, although you had that in *full View*, which demonstratively proves, that it is no Supposition of *mine*. As you think this to be the Consequence of my Opinion, you might have declared it, and urged it too, as an Objection to the Truth of that Sentiment, without the least Blame from me, had you not affirmed, that I suppose that Consequence, or, which is the same Thing, think that Absurdity to be Truth. For I am heartily willing to allow others the same Liberty, in objecting to my Opinions, as I make free to take, in opposing theirs.

You militate against the Doctrine of the Infinity of Evil and Demerit, in sin, with a very formidable Dilemma, and enquire thus:

“Now will Mr. *B.* maintain that all Sins are equal in Demerit, or that one Infinite is greater than another; and that Blasphemy, Idolatry, and Murder, are not more heinous than petty Theft, Drunkenness, Lying, Scandal, *etc.*? The Assertion would shock a rational Christian, and yet this Mr. *B.* will, we apprehend, be driven to, unless he admits, as a fair Deduction from *his Premises*, that *there are Degrees of Infinity.*” I will not *dissemble*, even in the Defense of what appears to me, a most important Truth. That which is here offered, may seem a *considerable* Objection, to the Doctrine under Debate, until it is thoroughly canvassed, and weighed in the Balance of right Reason. As to the latter Member of this Dilemma, *viz.* that one Infinite is greater than another, I imagine, that I may soon ease myself of it. For, I never dreamed of an Inequality, in Infinity, or, that one Infinite is greater than another. Nor do I believe you ever thought I did. But, having worked up yourselves unto a great Contempt of me and my Writings, under the Influence of what Considerations, you best know, your Virtue, it seems, was not sufficient to guard you effectually, against a Temptation, to endeavor to render me and them, contemptible in the View of

others, even though it was at your own Expense. And, therefore, you took the Liberty to affirm, that which, I think, you must then know to be *false*, for you had before your Eyes, sufficient Evidence thereof, *viz.* That I suppose *there are Degrees of Infinity*. The only Difficulty, wherewith I am pressed, is the former Branch of your Dilemma. And as to that, I do maintain, that all Sins are infinite, (and so equal) in Demerit. But not that all Sins are *equally heinous*: Nor that all Sins will be *equally* punished.

The Punishment for all Sins will be infinite, (and so equal) in its Duration. But the Punishment of no Sin will be infinite in Intenseness; for that is absolutely impossible: And, therefore, *more heinous* Sins, will be punished with *greater* Torments, and *less* heinous ones, with *lighter*. I continue to insist upon it, that there is an infinite Evil and Demerit, in Sin. When I say that there is an infinite Evil, in Sin, I do not mean, that the Act of Sin is infinite. Or, that the Privation of moral Rectitude is infinite. Or, that the whole Compound, or Sin considered, in its Concrete, is infinite. If it was, there could be no Disparity in Sins; but every Sin must be equal. I make no Difficulty of granting, that there is a great Difference in sinful Actions, and also in their Aggravations: And shall never shock the *rational* Christian, by suggesting, that all Sins, are equally heinous. I assure you, that you need not entertain the least Jealousy, that I shall ever so do.

Yet, I affirm, that there is in Sin, as Sin, and so in every Sin, an infinite Evil.

First, objectively: As God is the Object against whom it is committed, there must be an infinite Evil in it. If the infinitely transcendent Excellencies of the Divine Being, are allowed to come into Consideration, in forming an Estimate, of the Evil, of Sin, I think this cannot well be denied. Indeed, if God is struck out of the Account, whose Law is broken, and whose immense Perfections are dishonored by Sin, the Infinity of Evil in Sin, cannot be proved. But Things do not seem to be quite come to that Pass yet, as *explicitly* to disallow of taking into Consideration, the Divine Attributes when we form an Estimate of the Evil, which there is in Sin. Even you, Gentlemen, do not say, that this is not to be allowed; but *artfully* pass it over in Silence, without the least Remark, although you law I argued for the Infinity of Evil in Sin, wholly from this Principle, that it is committed against Infinite Majesty.

And it was better, not to take any Notice of it, than *impiously*, to deny, that Respect is to be had, unto the infinite Perfections of the great Creator, when we form a Judgment of the Evil which there is in Sin, as it hath him for its Object. An *explicit* Denial of it, (to use your own Phrase) would shock a rational Christian. And granting of it, must have involved you in an *inextricable* Difficulty. For, if it is allowed, that the Evil in Sin, takes its Measure from the Nature and Perfections of God, the Infinity of its Evil cannot be denied, without a most manifest Contradiction. And, therefore, your Wisdom is to be applauded, in taking no Notice of an Argument, which really is *unanswerable*; and which, you could not deny, Without fixing *Infamy* upon

yourselves; because of the *dreadful Impiety*, that such a Denial evidently carries in it.

Secondly, There is in Sin, *as Sin*, and so in *every Sin*, an infinite Evil *extensively*. My Meaning is this: The Spot and Stain of Sin will continue *forever*: Or, its Guilt and Pollution will *eternally* remain; unless it is atoned for and pardoned, through the Blood of Christ. If Atonement is not made, and Satisfaction is not given to the violated Law, and offended Justice of God, the Sinner will *always* remain under a Charge of Guilt. Nothing which he can do, not any Thing which he can offer, nor Sufferings which he is able to endure, will ever be sufficient to obtain a Discharge from that Guilt, which he hath contracted. As the sinful Creature is under a Charge of Guilt, this Moment, without Atonement made, and Pardon extended unto him, upon that Foundation, his Guilt will remain upon him, unto a Duration, which is infinite in its Extent. So that, there is in Sin, *as Sin*, and so *in every Sin*, whether *great*; or *small*, an infinite Evil, both *objectively* and *extensively* considered.

Now, such as the Evil in Sin is, it is, surely, reasonable to conclude, that such is its Demerit. The Evil in Sin, *as Sin*, and so *in every Sin*, is infinite, *objectively*, and *extensively*: And, therefore, there is in Sin, *as Sin*, an infinite Demerit. It is no Absurdity to conceive, that the Demerit of Sin is proportionate to the Evil, which there is in Sin. And that, Evil is not infinite, will never be proved, until Proof is given, that the Infinity of the Divine Object, against whom Sin is committed, must not come into Consideration, when we form an Estimate of the Evil, which therein is. And who will dare to engage in such an *impious* Undertaking, I know not. I am willing to hope no Man whatever. There being in Sin an infinite Evil, and an infinite Demerit, or a Demerit proportionate to its Evil, therefore, **I**. The reasonable Creature suffers an *infinite Loss*, in Consequence of Sin, *as Sin*, whether the sinful Action be *more*, or *less* heinous.

This Loss is a Want of the Enjoyment of an infinite Good. An infinite Loss would not be the *penal Effect* of Sin, if there was not an infinite Demerit in Sin. It is absurd to suppose that the *penal Effect* of Sin, in any Sense, is infinite, if the Demerit of it is not infinite. For, in that Case, there would not be a Proportion between Demerit and the Penalty, unto which it relates; but the Disproportion would be such as exceeds *all Degrees*. Wisdom and Justice, most certainly, infinite Wisdom and Justice, will, in all Respects, proportion Punishment, unto the Demerit of Sin: Without great Impiety we cannot think otherwise, And, therefore, if it is to be proved, that it is the Constitution of God, that Sin shall subject the rational Creature, unto the Suffering of an infinite Loss, as a *penal Effect* of Sin, the clearest, the most undeniable Proof, even such as rises up to *evident* Demonstration, will be given, that there is an infinite Evil and Demerit, in Sin. And which of these two Things requires Proof? Which of them will be disputed? *viz.* Whether a Want of Communion with God, or of the Enjoyment of him, who is the Origin of all Felicity, be an infinite

Loss? Or, whether, it is the Appointment of the most holy, most wise, and most just Creator, that Sin, *as Sin*, and so *every Sin, whether great, or small*, and whether *more*, or less heinous, shall subject reasonable Creatures, unto the Suffering of such an infinite Loss? I think neither can be contested. And until either one, or the other is denied, we may take them both for granted. This is an irrefragable Argument, for the Proof of the Infinity of Evil and Demerit, in Sin. Such an Argument it is, that all the Skill and Force, of all the *rational* Christians, (as they call themselves) in the World, will never be able to answer. You see, Gentlemen, notwithstanding your Reproof, I remain *dogmatical* still. At which you need not be surprised, because you knew what *Solomon* says: *Though thou shouldest bray a Fool in a Mortar, among Wheat with a Pestle, yet his Foolishness will not depart from him.*

II. This Loss is infinite *extensively*, as the Evil in Sin is, and the Demerit of it too, for that Reason. For, as the Guilt and Pollution of Sin will eternally remain, if not atoned for, and pardoned, so the reasonable Creature will forever suffer the Loss of the Enjoyment of God, as the *penal Effect* of Sin.

III. The Infinity of the Demerit of Sin, arising from the infinite Evil, which there is in it, as to Punishment of *Sense*, respects the Extent of its Duration; but not its Intenseness and Weight. Punishment for Sin, in this View, will be infinite in Duration, but finite in Intenseness. It is not to be supposed, that Sin demerits infinite Tortures. For which, three Reasons are assigned, by the most learned, and very accurate *Witsius*.

1. Because such Punishment (*i.e.* which is infinite in Intenseness) is absolutely impossible: For, no Creature is able to endure Tortures, which are infinitely intense. **2.** Because it would follow, God could never satisfy his Justice, by the Infliction of condign Punishment on the Ungodly. **3.** Because it would follow, that equal Punishment is due to all Sins: Or, that in Fact, all sins are equally punished, which is absurd to suppose, and contrary to *Matthew 11:22.*” From hence, it is evident, that the Infinity of the Evil and Demerit, in Sin, may be maintained, without the Absurdity of supposing, that *there are Degrees of Infinity*. It is also clear, that this Doctrine may be defended, without supposing, that all Sins are *equally* heinous, and also without supposing, that all Sins are *equally* punished. The Punishment of all Sin is infinite, (and so equal) in its Duration, as I laid in Page 30 of my Pamphlet. But the Intenseness of the Torments inflicted by God, for Sin; for no Sin *whatever*, will be infinite; but they will be *more*, or *less*, intense, as the Sins, for which they are inflicted, are *more*, or *less* heinous, and *more*, or *less* aggravated. And, therefore, there will be Degrees, in Divine Punishment, as Men are *more* or *less* guilty. Which I also observed, in Page 26. Upon the whole, I think, it is most clear, that your very *formidable* Dilemma, being thoroughly examined, appears to have no Weight or Force at all in it. And it can do no Execution, upon the Doctrine of the Infinity of Evil and Demerit, in Sin, against which it is levelled.

It does not in the least affect that Doctrine. Take it in both its Branches, the Distance, between it, and that Doctrine, is as great as the Distance of the *two Poles*, and far greater too. I am not driven by it to suppose that *there are Degrees of Infinity*. Because I plead not for the Infinity of Evil and Demerit in Sin, from Sin *materially* considered; but: from the Infinity of the Divine Object, against which it is committed. And, in this Consideration of Sin, (*i.e. objectively*) there is no *Difference* in Sins, however great the Difference may be in *Acts of Sin*. Nor am I driven by it, to maintain, that “Blasphemy, Idolatry, and Murder, are not more heinous than petty Theft, Drunkenness, Lying, Scandal, *etc.*” Because I have not contended for the Infinity of Evil and Demerit, in Sin, from its Heinousness; and, therefore, I may, as *I do, allow, that Blasphemy, etc. are more heinous, (as you say) than petty Theft, etc.* can be supposed to be, perfectly consistent, with my Opinion of the Infinity of Evil and Demerit, in Sin, *as Sin*, and so *in every, sin*, whether *great* or *small*; because I plead, that this Infinity of the Evil and Demerit, in Sin, arises from the Infinity of God, the Object against whom it is committed, and not from the Heinousness of the sinful Act. If I had done that, as you say, I must have been driven to assert one of there two Things: *Either, that one Infinite is greater than another: Or, that all Sins are greater in Heinousness.* But, as I argue upon quite another Principle, your Dilemma does not come near me. It is as far from me, as the Earth is from Heaven. And I am much secure from being hurt by it, as a Man would be secure from being injured by the Discharge of a Pistol, if he was placed in the highest Heavens.

It is astonishing, that you could prevail with yourselves, to pretend, that you have not misrepresented me to the Public; because you must know, that you were guilty of a Misrepresentation of me, in saying, that I suppose *there are Degrees of Infinity*, except you are exceedingly *dull*, as I am. For, I absolutely denied the Infinity of every Being, and of all Acts, wherein there can be Degrees. Did I not say: *That which is infinite, cannot possibly proceed from a finite Being?* There are my Words also, and you quote them, and thereby prove upon yourselves, that Guilt, which I charge you with: *Though all sinful Actions are finite, and must be so, because they spring from finite Beings.* Is not here a full and absolute Denial of Infinity, wherein there is a Possibility of Degrees?

How unaccountable is it, therefore, that you could allow yourselves to assert, that I suppose *there are Degrees of Infinity!* And it is more strange still, that you can now pretend to acquit yourselves of the Guilt, of a Misrepresentation of me unto the Public. This Assertion is as *gross* a Misrepresentation of me, as affirming, that I suppose that *God is finite in his Being, Powers, and Acts, and his rational Creatures are infinite in their Beings, Powers, and Actions,* would have been. You had as much Ground to assert this of me, as you have to affirm the other. That Assertion implies, that I think Infinity is *limited*; which you could not but know, is *a palpable Falsity.* You were certainly convinced in your Consciences, that I entertain no *mistaken*

Notion of Infinity, though you dared to affirm I do. You might, indeed, think, that I attribute Infinity, unto that wherein it is not; and, therefore, mistook in that Respect. But as to Infinity *itself*, you must, undoubtedly, know, that my Apprehension of it is, the very same with your own, and the Apprehensions of all other Men; *viz.* That it is *absolutely without a Limit*. The clearest Proof, that I am mistaken, in thinking, that there is an infinite Evil and Demerit, in Sin, (could such Proof be given) would not in the least prove, that suppose, that *there are Degrees of Infinity*. But with respect to the Doctrine of the Infinity of Evil and Demerit, in Sin, I think, I may take Leave to say, that such Evidence and Demonstration of its Truth is given, as will not admit of a *solid* Reply.

As you have *grossly*, misrepresented, me, in *falsely* charging me, with supposing, that *there are Degrees of Infinity*, I have a Right to demand of you a full Retraction of that Charge, I do demand it. And, unless you comply with this Demand, and, in the *very same public* Manner, withdraw your Charge, (in the Body of your Number for the Month of *April*) as you exhibited it, I shall take the Liberty to expose you farther, than I have yet done. When I consider unto whom I now write, I think, it may not be improper for me to add this: The Punishment of Sins will be *equal*, in its Duration; but *unequal*, in its Intenseness; because I have said, that Punishment for Sin will be *infinite*, and so *equal*: Lest you should tell your Readers, that I suppose an *Equality* and an *Inequality*, in the same Thing, and in the *very same* Respect.

To conclude, if you, on your Part, will be pleased to allow me the Liberty, of defending what appears to me to be true; I assure you, on my Part, you shall always have full Leave to represent me, unto your Readers, as *ostentatious, dogmatical, dull, ill-mannered, very profound, and un-meaning*: But if, in Contradiction to the last Encomium, you shall say my *Un-meaning*, is a *Meaning*, and such a Meaning, as is absurd, which is the Fact here, if it comes within my Notice, you shall not fail of hearing from me. As to everything else, I shall be silent, say of me *whatever* you please, that you shall think is agreeable to *Politeness, Civility, and Candor*. For, it is Matter of as *much* Indifference unto me, *what Epithets*, you shall be pleased to honor me with, as it is to you, *what, or how much*, I may have to say, in Defense of the Notions, which I entertain. I think it not amiss to make some Improvement, on the important Subject, of this Letter, in a little *pious Enthusiasm, and Cant*. But, as you are *rational* Christians, such *Stuff* cannot be acceptable to you, and, therefore, I will not presume to offer it to your Consideration: But bid you Adieu, for the present. I am, *Gentlemen, Your humble Servant, JOHN BRINE Bridgewater-square, March 31, 1755*

Some Improvement of the Doctrine of the Infinity of the Evil and Demerit, in Sin: In a few Reflections I. Our Indignation against Sin, ought to rise up, unto the highest Degree, from the Consideration of the infinite Evil, which there is in Sin, as Sin, and so in every Sin. One of its numerous Ways, whereby, an a Time of Temptation, it surprises us, into Acts of Folly, is by *hiding* its Vile Nature.

This is a Deception extremely dangerous, and without a speedy Interposition of Divine Grace, and Power, in our Favor, to awaken us, unto due Consideration, of the *dreadful* Evil of sinning against God; such woeful Effects, may be expected to ensue, as will overwhelm us, in Sorrow, Shame, and Confusion, upon a Reflection. It is to be feared, that not a Few, can bear Testimony, unto the Truth of this, from their own, *sad* Experience. Men are apt to compare sinful Actions, with one another; and because there is a Difference in them, *materially* considered, some being far more heinous, than others; they think, that without much Danger to themselves, at least, a little Gratification, may be allowed unto the Flesh, in some particular instance, or, to such a Degree, though not in a higher Measure.

Hence, we are prevailed with, (*i.e.* through Inattention, unto the Evil of Sin, *as Sin*) to think within ourselves of this or that Sin, is it not a little one? There is no great Harm therein, or it is not an *atrocious* Crime; and so Sin obtains a Conquest over our Minds, and we are in the utmost Danger, of contracting such Guilt, as will be just Cause of the *deepest* Resentment against ourselves, so long as Life shall last. The only Way of being secured from Sin's Prevalence, is to have our Souls impressed with a due Sense of its *exceeding Sinfulness*: Without this, Men will *make a Trade* of committing *lesser* Evils, which will most assuredly prove forever ruinous unto them, if infinite Mercy prevent it not, by a timely Conviction of their Guilt and Misery in Consequence of it. *Slight* Thoughts of the Evil of Sin, wilt certainly be productive of the most pernicious Fruits, in some Way, or other. And, therefore, it is our Wisdom, to take into our most serious and fixed Consideration, what an abominable Thing it is, to sin against infinite Goodness, Holiness, and Justice, even in the *lowest* Instance: For, then, only, we are safe from Sin's Encroachments. And, without this, we shall never exercise that Repentance for Sin, which God *accepts*. Because we shall extenuate our Guilt, and palliate our Offences, if we have not a Sense of Sin's Evil, as it is committed against infinite Goodness, and Majesty. As we value our precious Souls, therefore, let none persuade us to think, that there is not an infinite Evil in Sin, unless they produce such Evidence for it, as will not admit of the least Scruple, concerning its Truth. Such Evidence can be no other than this; *viz.* that God's infinite Perfections are not to be taken into View, when we form our Judgment of Sin's evil Nature. The Supposition of which, surely; must be shocking, unto every *pious* Mind.

II. *The Infinity of the Demerit of Sin, objectively considered, proves, that we are all, and everyone, in a miserable Condition. Men universally are chargeable with Sin. Every Mouth is stopped, and all the World is become guilty before God.* And, none can possibly, by any Means, make a Compensation for their Offences, to the Law and Justice of God. Dost thou, O Sinner! because thou art not so guilty; as some others are, think that it may be in thy Power, to procure thy Pardon, and secure thy Person from suffering Divine Punishment? Thou art dreadfully deceived herein. For,

the *least* of thy Transgressions, even in Thought, exposes thee unto the Suffering of an infinite Loss, for evermore. Sin *as Sin*, and so *every Sin*, whether *great, or small*, forfeits a Title, unto the Enjoyment of God, the Origin of Blessedness. And, therefore, no Creature, who is guilty, though but in the *lowest* Degree, hath a Claim upon God, the Fountain of all Goodness, for Communion with him, a Sense of his Favor, and the Enjoyment of him. The *least* Act of Sin subjects the rational Creature, unto the Suffering of this infinite Loss; because of the Infinity of Evil, in Sins, as committed against God. And, as the Guilt of the Sinner, will forever remain upon him, if not atoned for, and pardoned, on the Foundation of Atonement made. He must eternally suffer that infinite Loss. Never, never, can he be admitted into the Presence of God: *Where is Fulness of Joy*. But must always be separated from him. And though, through the *dreadful* Enmity, which there is in the Heart of a Sinner, against God, he will not desire the Happiness of Communion with him, in his infinitely glorious Perfections; his infinite Indignation, discovered, in his Expulsion from his gracious Presence, will pierce him *through, and through*, and fill his Soul with *agonizing* Tortures. *This! O dreadful! This!* is what we all and everyone deserve, let our Guilt be ever so *small*, or how *little so ever*, it may be aggravated, in its Circumstances. How stupid, therefore, are our Hearts, which are unaffected with our *deplorable* Condition! Very justly we are compared unto *a Man asleep, upon the Top of a Mast*: Who is every Moment, in Danger of being swallowed up, in the Waves of the Sea; but is insensible of that Danger. And thus it is with sinful Men.

III. *This Doctrine of the Infinity of the Evil and Demerit, in Sin; must surely, convince us, that our Redemption from Sin, and its penal Effects, could not be affected, by a mere Creature.* Infinite Merit can never attend the Obedience, and Sufferings of one, who is not of infinite Dignity, in his Person. Now, if it be a Truth, that there is an infinite Demerit, in Sin; the Sufferings of Christ, great as they were, could not atone for our Guilt, if; he was no other than a *voluntary* Production, or a *created* Being; because infinite Merit, had not attended them. And, therefore, those, who *sacrilegiously* rob him of the Glory of his *proper* Divinity; are driven by it, to deny, that there is an infinite Evil and Demerit, in Sin. For, if that is allowed, it necessarily follows, that Christ by his Obedience and Sufferings, could not have *obtained eternal Redemption*, for one Individual of the human Race. If Men expect Salvation from Sin, and its penal Effects, by the Acts and Sufferings of a *mere* Creature, it behooves them, to prove the Possibility of it, if they are able; for, otherwise, they must acknowledge, that such high Expectations, which are, indeed, the greatest a Creature can possibly entertain, are without a solid Foundation, and must certainly be disappointed. From hence appears, the evident Necessity, such Men are under, to maintain, that there is not, an infinite Evil and Demerit, in Sin;

who insist upon it, that Christ is not a *Divine* Person, or *truly* God; but a Creature, or, a *voluntary* Production only.

IV. *This important Doctrine lets us see, that we are infinitely indebted, unto the Grace, Kindness, and Mercy of God.* If there is an infinite Evil and Demerit, in Sin, *as Sin*, and *so in every Sin*: And our sinful Actions are more, than we can possibly number, and in all of which, there is an infinite Evil and Demerit: O what a *Profusion* of Goodness and Grace, is there in our Pardon! Infinite Mercy alone, can be a proper Ground of a Hope of Remission, since the Demerit of every one of our numerous Offences, is infinite, agreeably unto the infinite Evil, which there is in all, and every one of them.

Surely, upon a due Consideration of the Multitude of our Transgressions, in every one of which there is an infinite Evil and Demerit; we must be filled with an Admiration of the *boundless* Exuberance of the Mercy of God, which is so conspicuous, in the Forgiveness of them. If, we have a suitable Apprehension thereof, in any Degree, we shall not fail of expressing our holy Adoration, of that *immense* Goodness and Mercy, in the devotional Language of the Church: *Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth Iniquity, and passeth by the Transgression of the Remnant of his Heritage? He retaineth not his Anger forever, because he delighteth in Mercy.*

(Micah 7:18.)

V. *No less adorable, is Divine Wisdom, which contrived the Way of our Remission, than Divine Grace, which resolved upon our Pardon.* Infinite Wisdom only could provide for Sin's Atonement, which is of infinite Demerit, as its Evil is infinite. In that Provision, the *unbounded* Understanding of God, discovers itself, more than in all his other Works; for which Reason, the Scheme of Redemption by Christ, is *emphatically* stilled: *The Wisdom of God in a Mystery, even the hidden Wisdom.* It is what could never have entered into any created Mind, angelic, or human. But, if the Doctrine of the Infinity of Evil and Demerit, in Sin, is not true, the evangelical Scheme of Redemption, is not so *mysterious*, as it is represented to be. Of this, those who deny that Doctrine are fully sensible, and, therefore, do not allow it to be, in the *Depth* of its Wisdom, any more than, in the *Riches* of its Grace, what it really is. To close, if we give up this Doctrine of the Infinity of Evil and Demerit, in Sin, I am not able to discern, that we can possibly have any Objection, against joining with the *Socinians*, in a Denial of Christ's Atonement; which is what we can never do, I am lure, if we have any just Sense of God's Rectitude and Holiness.

POSTSCRIPT

To the Authors of the *Monthly-Review*, GENTLEMEN, I AM persuaded, that the Public, to whom you appeal, will conclude, that you were guilty, of misrepresenting me, in laying, that I suppose *there are Degrees of Infinity*; when they are informed, that my Words, concerning Infinity are there: *Indeed, we have learned to speak very*

familiarly of Infinity; but we have not, nor can have an adequate Idea of it. Infiniteness is only knowable unto an Understanding which is infinite. A finite Mind, when it hath stretched its Conceptions as far as it possibly can, it is still in its Ideas infinitely short of comprehending that which is infinite. Every Person upon reading these Words, must think, either, that your Capacity is *extremely dull*: Or, that you were guilty of a *willful* Misrepresentation of me, in laying, that I suppose *there are Degrees of Infinity*. My Opinion is, that you had much rather, be charged with *willfully* publishing a *gross* Falsehood, than be thought incapable of discerning, when Infinity, is in a proper Manner spoken of; and, therefore, it is not your Understanding, that I call in Question, but it is a Want of Virtue, *in this Particular*, that I charge you with. For, I would willingly act that Part, in this Affair, which may be least offensive to you. As you have dared, against the Remonstrance of your Consciences, to assert this *gross* Falsehood, of me, it may be, that you will not have Ingenuity enough to confers your Guilt, and retract your Charge: But if you do not, in the very same public Manner, as you exhibited that Charge, withdraw it; be assured, that the Consequence of denying this Justice, will be farther exposing yourselves. J.B.