

**REMARKS ON DR.
WARE'S
ANSWER, PP. 3-62**

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Remarks on Dr. Ware's Answer, pp. 3-62 by Leonard Woods

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ON

DR. WARE'S ANSWER.

BY LEONARD WOODS (D. D.)

ABBOT PROV. OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY IN THEOL. SEM. ANDOVER.

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The first edition of Dr Woods's REPLY was published Sept. 1821. In May, 1822, Dr Ware published an ANSWER. The principal points in this ANSWER are noticed in the following REMARKS.

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REMARKS.

THE design of this pamphlet is to make a few remarks on Dr Ware's Answer to my Reply. As this discussion has been already carried to a great length, and as I am unwilling to burden the patience, or abuse the candor, either of my opponent or of the public; I shall confine my remarks to those parts of the subject which appear most important, aiming to be as concise as possible, consistently with doing any degree of justice to what I believe to be the cause of truth.

The system of divine truth, emanating from the mind of God, and agreeing with his immutable perfections, must be consistent with itself. But in every erroneous system, there are *inconsistencies*. Some of these arise from the union in the same system of different and opposite forms of error; but a greater number arise from the mixture of certain portions of truth with error. In order that any system of error may have a plausible appearance and an extensive circulation, it is found indispensable that it should contain a considerable portion of truth, sufficient at least to afford some satisfaction to reason and some relief to conscience. But however skilfully truth may be mixed with error, and whatever plausibility may be given to a system of error by the truths which lie on its surface; it will always be found that such a mixture occasions a variety of inconsistencies which no art can long conceal.

I consider the general scheme of doctrine held by Unitarians,

as radically erroneous. And yet, as it is exhibited by my antagonist, and by all other Unitarians, it asserts many and very important truths. This circumstance, though in one point of view it becomes a recommendation of Unitarianism, really occasions an abundance of those inconsistencies with which the scheme is encumbered. The inconsistencies so apparent in Dr Ware's reasoning are, in my opinion, to be charged to the scheme itself. They are inseparable from it. No man, I think, can undertake its defence, without finding himself entangled in an endless train of self-contradictions.

Dr Ware signifies that "the apparent inconsistencies and absurdities" which have been "fastened" upon him, do not affect "the truth of the points at issue;" that they show, "not the weakness of the cause, but that its strength has not been fully displayed;" and that they are, "in general, if not in every instance, apparent only." He lets us know, in several places, that he thinks more highly of Unitarianism, than of his own skill in defending it, and rather chooses that any reproach should fall upon him, as a disputant, than upon his cause. But on all these points, my views and feelings are different from his. And in particular, it is my serious conviction, that the inconsistencies and absurdities which were pointed out in my Reply, are real; that they affect the truth of the points at issue; and that Dr Ware's Answer, instead of removing them, adds to their number.

I now proceed, though with all due respect for the good sense and good temper of my opponent, to offer the following remarks upon what appears to me exceptionable in his publications, particularly the last.

USE OF THE WORDS INNOCENCE AND PURITY.

There can be no doubt or difficulty in regard to the meaning of these terms, if we consider the subject to which they are in any case applied, and keep in mind the proper standard of judging. But on this point, I have little to add to what I said in my Reply. We sometimes give the name of innocence to the harmlessness of certain animals, meaning surely nothing of moral nature. When a man is free from particular crimes laid to his charge, we say, he is *innocent*, that is, in respect to those particular crimes. But

when *innocence* or *purity* is attributed to man, considered as a moral agent, and under obligations to obey the divine law, nothing can be meant but *holiness*. Nothing short of this can be regarded as *innocence* or *purity*, in relation to such a subject. But this is the subject and the only subject with which we are concerned in this discussion; and it is the subject to which the word generally relates, as used in the Scriptures. Now let us see in what sense Dr Ware uses the word *innocence* or *purity* in relation to this very subject. He says, human beings come into existence "*innocent, or pure.*" He shows what he means, when in the same general statement, he represents them as "without any greater bias to sin than to holiness; as no more inclined to vice than to virtue." It is clearly implied, that they are *innocent*, though really inclined to vice, if they are no more inclined to it, than to virtue. He says in his Answer, his object was to prove that man by nature is "*innocent, not totally depraved.*" It seems then, as he plainly shows afterwards, that *innocence*, in his sense of the word, belongs to those who, in a moral and religious view, have a mixed character, provided there is not in the mixture a greater quantity of evil, than of good. Now this representation, compared with what Dr Ware advances in his Letters, pp. 24, 25, would lead to the conclusion, that men in general, yea, the worst of men, are *innocent*; and that, in this respect, there is no essential difference between them and little children. For he says "that in by far the largest part of human beings, the just, and kind, and benevolent dispositions prevail beyond measure over the opposite; and that even in the worst men, good feelings and principles are predominant, and they probably perform in the course of their lives many more good, than bad actions." If it is then Dr Ware's opinion of men in general, and even of the worst, that they are "not totally depraved," and are "no more inclined to vice than to virtue;" he must of course consider them all as *innocent*.

If my readers should think I must be mistaken as to the real meaning of Dr Ware, let them look at his Answer, p. 9, and they will see that he does actually attribute to those whom he calls *innocent*, just such a mixture of virtue and vice. After laying down his position "that human beings come into existence *innocent*, and without any greater bias to sin than to holiness; not inclined to holiness only, nor to holiness more than to sin," he says; "if this

be the truth, the earliest indications of character will be of a *mixed* nature; and at an early period, as soon indeed as the child becomes capable of moral action, we shall be likely to find in its dispositions and in its character, *as much* of that which is good as that which is evil." This is brought forward as an exhibition in early life of *that very innocence*, which he says belongs to human beings at first. That he means to ascribe innocence to those, who exhibit this mixture of good and evil, is perfectly manifest from his Letters, p. 26, and else-where, and from his Answer, p. 10. Here he reminds us, that when he had occasion to speak of the good dispositions of children, that is, of their *innocence, purity, simplicity*, &c. he meant, not that they are *holy* by nature, but that they are *not totally depraved*. And as he asserts of *all men*, that they are *not totally depraved*, but have a preponderance of good; he must, to be consistent, regard them all as *innocent* and *pure*.

I think, however, that the sense in which Dr Ware seems here to use the word *innocence*, is different from that in which it has commonly been used by those who deny native depravity. When they assert the natural innocence of man, they mean that he is *free from every moral taint, entirely free* from sinful propensity, and not that he is of a *mixed* character. It is plain that this was the prevailing sense of Dr Ware himself, in his first publication. He says that "man is by nature *innocent* and *pure, free from all moral corruption*." But now he tells us abundantly, that when he speaks of the characteristics of children, and of the earliest indications of their disposition and character, he means to prove *only* that they are *not totally depraved*; clearly implying that, though they are *partially* depraved, and exhibit a *mixed* character, they are still *innocent*;—*innocent*, though inclined to *vice* as much as to *virtue*; *pure*, though *partly polluted*; *pure* in a *mixed* sense, having as much of good as of evil, and as much of evil as of good.

I hope that Dr Ware, on a careful review, will be convinced, that there is some radical error in a system which leads him into so many stray paths, and involves him thus in greater and greater difficulties. How must it appear to the reader, and how must it appear to Dr Ware himself, to find, that he has spoken of the *innocence* and *purity* of those who have a *mixed* character;—the *innocence* and *purity* of *the very worst of men*, because, as he thinks, though they are inclined to *vice*, they are no more inclined to *vice*

than to virtue. In his reasoning on this subject, he seems to have forgotten, that man, as a moral agent, is under obligation perfectly to obey the law of God, and that he never can be considered as completely *innocent* and *pure*, unless he yields the whole obedience which is required; nor in any degree *innocent* and *pure*, without some degree of holy obedience.

Dr Ware will perceive what strange inconsistencies attend his use of words, when he looks over some of his pages, and finds that he has expressly asserted the necessity of *regeneration* for those who are, in his view, *innocent* and *pure*. It is one of his positions, that those very beings whom he denominates *innocent* and *pure*, have not that holiness which is necessary to their being Christians, and therefore that they must be born again. He frequently suggests that the *innocence*, *purity*, and *simplicity* of little children are not *moral* qualities, that they imply no holiness and no moral character. But in his Answer, pp. 14, 15, he shows himself quite dissatisfied with the same suggestion in my Reply. I had endeavoured to show that what Christ says of children does not imply that they have "any moral excellence, like the moral excellence of Christians," and that the amiable qualities belonging to them, as innocence, purity, &c. are *natural*, not *moral* qualities. His whole argument in opposition to this implies, that the good qualities of children, their innocence, purity, &c. must be *moral* qualities, like the moral qualities peculiar to Christians. In short, he seems to say, they are moral qualities, or they are not, just as the different and clashing parts of his system happen to require. I attribute this, not to any intention of his, but to the perplexity in which he is involved by the defence of his system.

This confusion in the use of words might have been prevented, had Dr Ware fixed in his mind, that the divine law is the standard of moral good, and then carefully inquired whether the qualities of human nature referred to, are what that law requires. But he seems to have turned off his eye from this simple and perfect standard, and to have framed his whole argument on other principles.