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LECTURES



ON THE

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY,

DELIVERED AT THE

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DURING THE SESSION OF 1860-1.

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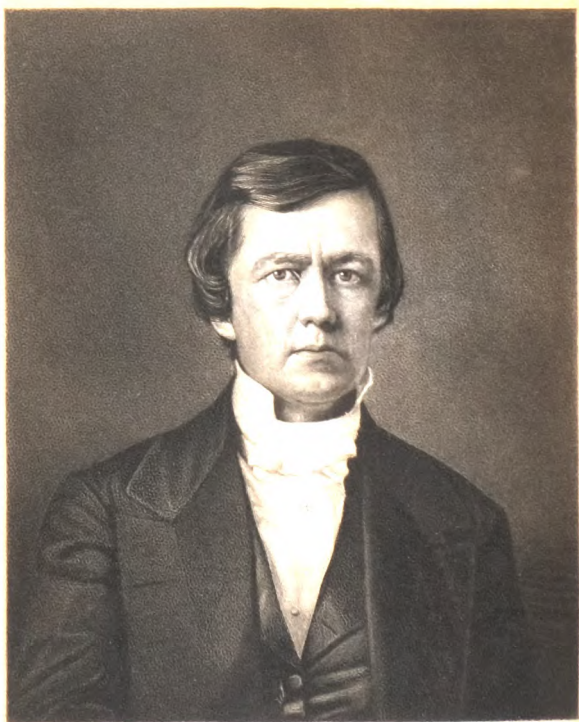
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Popular Objections to Christianity,

BY

BY B. M. SMITH,

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CHRISTIANITY has been the object of a varied and ceaseless, though futile opposition. Ruthless persecutions marked its early history. It grew strong under oppression. The flattering caresses of power, and the wealth and honors of the world were lavished, to corrupt its faith and form. Its vitality survived the taint. Intestine wars, which consume the vigor of other institutions, revived its energies and purified its principles. Religious controversies, intrinsically deplorable, served to define more clearly the boundaries of truth; and persecutions, fiercer than pagan, to distinguish its adherents. As a purer Christianity was emerging from the convulsions and revolutions of the sixteenth century, it encountered a form of opposition, professedly based on the principles avowed by the Reformers. With them, Deists renounced the bondage of superstition for the dictates of reason, and abjured the dogmas of Popery, for the authority of God. But, affirming that the teachings of natural opposed those of revealed religion, they boldly denied its claims, questioned its principles and attacked its evidences. They conducted the assault with seriousness, dignity and, at least, the semblance of reasoning. It was repelled with solemn earnestness, unassuming boldness, candor and generosity. If one party, with no personal concern in the result, had nothing to hope from success, but the honors of victory, and the other, confident in the power and permanence of divine truth, nothing to fear from defeat, but temporary dishonor, both seemed duly sensible that the solemn interests of the divine prerogative, man's duty here and destiny hereafter, were suspended on the issue.

A later stage of the deistical controversy presented a different aspect. If not convinced, intelligent and candid infidels had felt forced, by the irrefragable proofs of Christianity, to retire from the contest. The field was occupied by a desperate and distracted squadron of vulgar sciolists, content with an endless repetition of repelled attacks. The world saw, in the bold sophisms, the reck-

less assertions, the scurrilous abuse and drivelling wit of Paine, the degeneracy of his class, and the hopeless efforts of men, whose success had been the greatest curse, and whose defeat, the greatest blessing to mankind.

Meanwhile Christianity, released from the obligation to defend its existence, assumed its proper position and exerted its inherent energies. Constitutionally aggressive, it was not satisfied that the violence of the assault had ceased, and the activity of opponents subsided in the calm of indifference; but demanded a cordial embrace of its principles and a cheerful submission to its precepts. In religious relations, constitutionally exclusive, it was not enough that men ceased to swear by Mahomet and sacrifice to Juggernaut, cast their idols to moles and bats, or abandoned the worship of four-footed beasts and creeping things; they must also avow the doctrines, and practise the duties taught by the lowly Nazarene.

The zeal with which these claims have been urged, and the energy with which they have been prosecuted, have aroused the slumbering foe. Infidelity has revived the contest, in our generation, under a new policy, and one imposing on the advocates of Christianity new obligations to vigilance and effort. Our opponents now aim to weaken the efficiency of a system they despair of defeating, and, in the manner of retreating armies, to impede a progress they are unable to prevent. On the one hand, under the guise of friendship, proposing to elucidate the mysteries of Revelation, by bungling efforts, they make intricacies more perplexing. Thus we have metaphysicians, who, in explaining the mode of divine existence, obliterate all traces of a personal divinity in the lamina of Pantheism; theologians, who by the absurdities of transcendentalism, have eviscerated the moral power of the Saviour's life and doctrine, and the benefits of his atonement; and moralists, who in sentimental whinings, have stripped the divine character of the attributes of holiness and justice. On the other hand, taught by experience the futility of marshalling their forces for a general conflict, on whose issue the whole cause might depend, our opponents have posted them in detachments, armed with the weapons of a defensive, but annoying warfare. Old objections are revived or new devised. They seek not to destroy our reverence for Revelation, as a whole, by the arraignment of the Bible as a falsehood, but by an adroit exhibition of the alleged falsehoods of the Bible, they

aim to sap our confidence in its parts. Such a policy, though advantageous to them, involves us in much embarrassment. It is easy to object, and impudence or ignorance may propound, in a few words, questions, which ingenuity and learning may require pages to answer. In the course of eighteen centuries, countless objections have been started, as well the produce of curiosity, timidity, and candor, as of stupidity, arrogance, and malice. Many of them, though repeatedly confuted, are pertinaciously reiterated; for new books find new readers, and the old poison may prove efficient by repeated doses, or find subjects for its power unprovided with the antidote. With the more general diffusion of knowledge, the evil as well as the good has been disseminated. Skeptical opinions, which were once to be found only in the heavy folio or voluminous octavo, accessible to the learned, are now embodied in the essays of newspapers and diatribes of reviews, insinuated in novels or interwoven in amusing tales. They thus become entrenched in the fastnesses of popular incredulity, or sustain the strongholds of popular apathy and indifference. The farmer, mechanic, day-laborer, apprentice, and school-boy, learn objections to particular parts of the Bible, enough to engender doubts and cavils as to all, and hinder the workings of a true faith.

Such then, is the present aspect of opposition to Christianity. It is very evident, that the contest of our generation, must be more difficult, because more manifold, more perplexing, because more desultory, and more prolonged, because ultimate success is suspended on surmounting unnumbered obstacles, neither alone important, the greater part even trivial, but presenting an aggregate of imposing consequence.

I. Our way will be prepared for a particular examination of objections, and some repetition avoided, by a few preliminary remarks, connected with the general subject.

1. Since infidels, who reject the Christian, and Deists, who reject all revelation, receive in common with us, the truths of Natural Religion, as of divine origin, objections to Christianity are properly answered, by showing that they are equally pertinent to the religion of nature. Indeed, irrespective of the distinctness, with which the scheme of natural religion may be avowed, if men only allow that God is the Author of nature or natural governor of the world, whenever we find the same sort of difficulties common to Christianity and the course of nature, they cannot, on account of

such difficulties, deny that the former has come from God, unless they also deny that the world has come from God, and exchange Deism for Atheism.

2. The existence of objections against Christianity, even when we are incapable of providing satisfactory answers and explanations, in every case, is no argument against its claims.

(1.) Reason has been given to guide us to the knowledge of truth, and we may feel assured that God reveals nothing contradictory of its clear and proper deductions. But reason cannot devise schemes of Providence or systems of Revelation. There are many things in the constitution of nature, which we had never invented, and which are very different, when discovered, from what we might have previously expected. Now they are known, our reason judges and approves of them. Thus in the adaptation of one part of this constitution to another, we find, that the young of mammiferous animals being provided with suitable nourishment by the parent, may be produced at any season, while those of gramivorous animals, are ordinarily produced only at certain and suitable seasons. The sun's powers are said to be chemical, luminiferous, and calorific, and these are respectively strongest when most needed; the first, for germinating in the spring, the second for nutriment, in early summer, the last for maturing, in late summer and early autumn. As reason may thus be led to approve what it could not devise, in the course of nature, so, on a due examination and care, it may be led to approve, what it could not have devised in Revelation.

(2.) Moreover, there are many truths of natural and moral science, to which, before experience and observation, we might have objected as incredible, unreasonable or inconsistent with the divine attributes. Thus brutes without reason, act with more sagacity and foresight than man, in some cases, even involving life. The Copernican theory was once rejected by thousands on what they believed the irrefragable evidence of their senses, though now it is generally received. We now believe the light to be independent of the sun, which we are told is a dark body. We know that volcanoes and earthquakes, pestilence and famine, overwhelm in ruin, or sweep, as with a besom of destruction, many fair portions of earth, and that millions of infants are doomed to pain, suffering and untimely death. These and other strange and surprising facts in the course of nature, might, as matters of a revelation, have appeared liable to objections. Of the truth of those

which are matters of science, discovery, observation, and scientific investigation have satisfied us. Of the consistency of others with divine wisdom and benevolence, we feel satisfactory assurances. The grounds of this satisfaction, we are not called to state at large. It may be said, however, that the present scheme is one of imperfect development, and that we are ignorant and incapable of understanding all the reasons and modes of divine government, and hence, what, as isolated facts, now surprise and confound us, may, when seen with perfected faculties, as parts of one great plan, not only satisfy our doubts, but elicit our admiration. Now seeing that liableness to objections in the course of nature, may be removed, it is equally credible that liableness to objections in the scheme of Revelation may be removed. Satisfied by evidence, that the one is from God, we see that objections which might have existed because it contained things different from our expectations, would have been frivolous and invalid. Thus the divine origin of Christianity being sustained by reliable evidences, objections to its matter even grave and important, founded on our conceptions, ought not to impair our confidence in its truth, as they may, for aught we know, be as susceptible of refutation as the others.

(3.) As we could not know before experience, what would be the course of nature, it is presumable from analogy, as well as the nature of Revelation, which purposes to enlighten us, that we could not know beforehand, what it ought or ought not to contain, how it ought to be expressed, figuratively or plainly, obscurely or clearly, and by what and what kind of evidence it ought to be presented. We may sit in judgment on man, the laws and modes of whose existence we can apprehend and appreciate, and of some things in human science, we can, in advance, affirm what will or will not be. But, of God's ways in the natural and moral world, we are incompetent judges, except in so far as he has provided materials. We may say in the matters of science, that such planets exist as Mars and Venus, but we cannot say, that in the "mighty annular space" between two planets, no other exists. Of parts of the universe we can say, "here are the monuments of divine power and wisdom," but of others we cannot say, "here God has never wrought; here he never will; no planet ever moved, and none will ever, no system will ever be arranged in these vast regions of space," till we shall have winged our flight over the boundless area of immensity, or traversed in one moment of time, the immeasurable cycles of an eternity from everlasting to everlasting.

So in matters of religion, we may assert what God has taught us in the works of his hands, and by the methods of his providence; but of other things, as the statements of Revelation, of which natural religion furnishes us with nothing similar, we dare not deny or affirm, as to say, "this is contrary to justice," or "this to mercy," or "this to reason," till we have fully compassed the nature and character of that God who is "unsearchable in his judgments," and "whose ways are past finding out."

(1.) These views are very much strengthened, when we bear in mind, that the Christian revelation is not only a republication of the religion of nature, but is a religion of sinners. It teaches men that they are rebels against God, haters of the light of truth, evildoers, and, as such, exposed to the just and severe indignation of God. Such a revelation must be displeasing to men, and supposing it to be true, and in the particulars mentioned, its teachings correspond with those of natural religion, men, as criminals, are in capable of sitting in judgment on the procedures of their sovereign. Hence besides an abatement from the force of objections, because of man's natural repugnance to the scheme, such as it is, there must be an abatement on the grounds of this moral incompetency, as we have seen there must be on account of the intellectual incapacity to decide on the character of a revelation.

It seems thus, on the whole, evident, that the existence of objections against Christianity forms no argument against its claims.

II. Whatever may formerly have been the relative consequence of objections to the scheme and objections to the evidences of Christianity, we feel assured, that in the present aspects of the opposition to its claims, the former are by no means matters of trivial importance, if indeed they do not rank with the latter, as hindrances to their acknowledgment. Were the divine origin of Christianity to be decided, only on the principles of sound reasoning, we might safely rest the decision on the force of its evidences; and these shown to be irrefragable, all objections, based on its alleged internal improbabilities, might be summarily met, by the proof of our incompetency to decide what a revelation ought to contain. But all men are not logicians, or at least, do not always reason logically, and hence it becomes important to give to the popular objections against Christianity, a particular consideration.

Under other circumstances, a detailed examination of all noticeable objections might be both practicable and profitable. But this is obviously inconsistent with our prescribed limits. Nor is it

absolutely necessary to our purpose. Such an examination of some of the most important, may furnish to the minds of candid and impartial persons, satisfactory assurances that none of them present adequate reasons for the neglect or rejection of the Christian scheme.

1. Objections to the evidences of Christianity constitute a prominent feature in the opposition to its claims. The most important of these, having, according to the syllabus of this course, been already fully discussed, either as special topics, or as falling within the scope of other lectures, require no farther attention. Since, however, the alleged insufficiency of some, or all of these evidences, to establish the truth of Christianity, has been sometimes adduced as a positive argument against its claims, it may neither be impertinent to our own general purpose, nor involve any material repetition, to give to this general objection to the evidences, a brief consideration.

(1.) In a matter, whose decision is sustained by several distinct proofs, the real deficiency of one does not necessarily invalidate the others. Thus could a proposition, subversive of the evidence of miracles, be sustained, our confidence in that afforded by other sources is not impaired. The character of Christianity as a system of moral truth and the effects of the truth would remain, and the prophecies recorded in the Bible, whose fulfilment is attested by history, would not be erased.

(2.) The alleged insufficiency of one or all of the evidences may not be owing to anything intrinsic. The impairing of any sense, will, of course, impair the force of evidence addressed to us through its medium. So defects of mental culture, as to knowledge or discipline, or obliquity of moral nature, may greatly impair the power of evidence, which, fairly presented, might be convincing. This is daily exemplified in respect of the moral and physical interests of men, and its pertinency to this subject is readily apprehended, by all who have observed, how much passion, pride and prejudice affect the human mind, in matters of religion.

(3.) Supposing that, on examination of the proofs in favor of Christianity, we are left in some doubt of their sufficiency to establish its claims, we are not thereby justified in its rejection, or even a suspension of our investigation. For our doubting itself implies some degree of evidence in favor of that, of which we doubt. Even when evidences, for and against a proposition, so

balance, that one set destroys the force of the other, as ground for a conclusion, yet there is more evidence for either side, than for thoughts or views, rising in the mind without any cause which may be assigned. That the evidences for Christianity do not produce conviction, is not therefore equivalent to saying, there is no evidence. There being some, it matters not how little, considering the importance of the interests at stake, that others of equal or greater general intelligence, reading and ability with ourselves, have decided favorably on these claims, so far from being justified in their dismissal, we should rather suspect some flaw in our course of reasoning, or some inaccuracy in our supposed facts, and earnestly seek more light. For there are numberless instances in our daily life, when we form decisions on very impeachable evidences of correctness, and engage in important enterprises, where the probabilities of success are very faint. The experience of others, their opinions, and our reasonings and deductions from supposed facts, received on doubtful testimony, are often relied on, though our liableness to deception, the uncertainties of all future events and that of our living among them, together with contrary experiences, opinions and observations, may, and often do raise, not only some, but great doubts of the propriety of our decisions. Thus we are compelled to act on probabilities. So, while God has very clearly marked the path of duty in Revelation, he has left us, as in other subjects of a moral nature, to ascertain that he has thus marked it, by the use of our reason, framing a judgment on the probabilities presented.

(4.) That the alleged insufficiency of evidence may be a groundless complaint, and want of conviction be ascribable to want of due attention in using the means, is made highly presumable, by this consideration: that the evidences in favor of the truths of natural religion, though patent to all, in the works of creation and providence, have not so extensively or permanently impressed the minds of men, as those in favor of revealed. This has been true, even although the propagation of its truths has not been resisted by virulent and cruel persecution, nor opposed so strongly by the natural dispositions of men. As God has not made these evidences irresistible, which would have been a virtual annulling of free agency, but has required us to exercise our reasoning and moral faculties, in order to an understanding and conviction of truth, we rightly ascribe this failure to receive the instructions of natural religion, to a want of proper attention. So, as God has not made the

evidences of Christianity irresistible, and for the same reason, we may justly ascribe the want of conviction, to a failure of diligence and serious attention, and not necessarily to a want of evidence, sufficient to secure our assent to its propositions.

(5.) The alleged insufficiency of some of these evidences may be ascribed to a neglect of others. It has been well observed, that the evidences of Christianity may have been constituted such as they are, as a part of some men's trial, or state of probation. This is consistent with the divine method in respect of other important moral subjects. We are exposed to temptations to do wrong, and furnished with incentives to do right, and resistance to one and concurrence with the other, are left to our choice, for which we are responsible. A studious and serious effort in pursuit of what is probably our duty, renders the path of virtue easier, and a yielding to the dictates of passion or suggestions of indolence, facilitates the progress of evil. Thus any evidences of Christianity appearing doubtful to any, even to a very great degree, affords temptation to its summary rejection, or gives opportunity for the virtuous exercise of our faculties. And as some men, perhaps inclined by the unpalatable truths of the Bible, to rejection, or failing, by indolence or carelessness, to examine the subject seriously and patiently, do not obtain evidence sufficient for conviction, they must blame themselves and not the divine dispensation under which they live, which, in this, as other things, commends itself to our enlightened reason and sober judgment.

(6.) However insufficient the evidences of Christianity may, for any reason, appear to some, yet on a fair and impartial estimate of the acknowledged facts in the case, it is far easier and more logical, to account for the origin of the system, on the hypothesis of a divine Revelation, than on that of human invention and imposture. If the Christian be esteemed credulous and superstitious, in receiving as divine, what the light of nature, the revelations of science and human experience have more and more confirmed, the infidel defies reason, by a creed of contradictions to its teachings, and disgraces Faith by a subscription to paradoxes, more preposterous than prophecy and more marvellous than miracles. The infidel must believe that predictions, with which history, written by neither Jews nor Christians, affords numerous striking coincidences, were merely shrewd guesses, and these, for the most part, guesses of men as devoid of political sagacity as, by the infidel's theory, of moral principle. As a specimen of such

predictions take one of the earliest, fullest and most minute, that respecting the fate of the Jews. It was foretold that they should be dispersed among all nations, be a proverb and a bye-word, and their sufferings and persecutions, involving various improbable and minute events, are detailed with the scrupulous exactness of an annalist. History has returned a most uncompromisingly accurate fulfilment. Unprecedented and paradoxical has been the fate of this people. Without temple or altar, a king, a priest or a prophet, unchanging they have endured all change, and remain to our day, distinct, in the practice of the religious rites received by their fathers. Other races have melted away or been merged into each other, in spite of every effort to prevent such a fate, while they have remained separate, with every effort to denationalize them. The infidel must believe that from a comparatively rude and uncultivated people, a horde of untutored shepherds, but just escaped from a cruel and oppressive bondage, without philosophy, science, or literature, we have obtained the only clear and consistent account of the origin of the world, the most sublime and rational, and only worthy views of the Divine Being and attributes, and the purest principles of law, for regulating his worship, and the duties and relations of mankind. He must believe, that men were found among the Jews, capable of instructing the world in these great truths, while the enlightened nations of antiquity, though justly celebrated for affording models of eloquence, poetry, statuary, and architecture, as well as sound principles of natural and moral science, have, in their highest stages of advancement, provided mankind with the most silly legends, puerile traditions and absurd theories on the world's origin and the first principles of religion. As to the New Testament, the infidel must believe, that a few obscure, ignorant, illiterate fishermen, "the scum of a nation, itself the scum of the world," so imposed on the senses of men, including foes as well as friends, that their "cunningly devised" tricks were acknowledged to be the most astounding miracles, the witnesses only differing in opinion of the power by which they were wrought, whether derived from heaven or hell. Or if it be contended, that the narratives of the New Testament were composed at a later period than that assigned by Christian writers, then must the infidel believe an absurdity still greater. For by rigid investigation into their literary history, these narratives are brought within thirty or forty years of the period whose wonders they detail; and with

numberless minute circumstances of times, places and persons, forming salient points for detection, were exposed to the rigid criticisms of a most malignant and inveterate opposition. Yet with accessible testimonies, in some cases as reliable as the senses, in all, removed but one step from their certainties, by which these narratives might have been branded as the fables of fools or the forgeries of knaves, mankind perversely determined to believe them to be true, and after centuries of laborious effort, by the most minute criticism, this most wonderful literary forgery has not only survived, unscathed, all attacks made upon it, but been transmitted to our day, with accumulating evidences of its genuineness and authenticity.

And since the authorship of the New Testament cannot be traced to any hand, competent, humanly speaking, to such a work, whether the infidel assigns it to one set of impostors or another, he must believe, that they have portrayed a character faultless and unique as a portrait, beyond all precedent pictures of the imagination, the most self-consistent and natural as a living example, without a duplicate in all the histories of fact or the fancies of fiction. He must believe, that not only one, but four persons were found competent to the wonderful feat of representing their hero in actual life, and while so differing from each other, as to avoid all well-grounded suspicion of collusion, they have evinced the same originality of invention, heavenly purity of thought and child-like simplicity of style, and have made their Master, in the sublimity and pathos of his instructions, purity and beauty of his life, and patience and dignity of his sufferings, speak and act in a manner unprecedented and inimitable. He must believe, that they succeeded in weaving into the web of his history, paragraphs not more wonderful for their avowals of divine origin, than for their susceptibility of a translation "without the loss of a thought or a grace" into the language of every nation; and while their congruities have been so firmly and consistently knit together that no material discrepancy has ever rewarded the most diligent scrutiny, yet the whole has been prepared with so little marks of design, that these congruities are often only apparent on the most careful study. He must believe that the early propagators of Christianity, with no assignable motive, and often against every assignable motive, persevered in imposing an astounding fraud on the world, and cheerfully braved contempt, persecution, infamy and exile, the scourge, the prison, and the

cross, to maintain their unprofitable falsehoods. He must believe, that bigoted as they previously were to the Jew's religion, as then popularly understood, they underwent all these dangers to destroy not only it, but every other; that without arms, wealth, or political power, they succeeded in establishing a system, which contrary to all precedents in the history of religion, transcended all natural, national or linguistic boundaries, and yet survives all disasters, defeats, and defections. He must believe that, such was the constancy of these conspirators against truth, among thousands, not one could be found, even of those who abjured the faith, who ever exposed the fraud or unfolded the secrets of this moral machinery which "turned the world upside down." He must believe, that with all their villainy they preached sincerity, that charity was taught by bigots, and holiness by impostors, and to all their inconsistencies, they added that of practising what they inculcated. Finally, must the infidel believe, that impostors, by the combined power of pure doctrines, precepts and practices, have fastened on the best part of the world, a system, more powerful in motives than all law, more efficient in energies than all enterprise, and more enduring in result than all human institutions. Surely such a faith is a definition of the blindest credulity.

2. There is a large number of objections arising from the misconceptions or misunderstandings of pardonable or culpable ignorance, perversions of the plain meaning or misapprehensions of the scope of particular parts of the Scriptures, and the malignity of self-conceited scoffers, swelled with the pride of a little learning and vain-glorious of its display. Such are readily set aside by the corrections of knowledge, and a careful and candid estimate of the declarations of the Scriptures. We present, in a summary manner, a few specimens, the facility of whose confutation may be predicated of all of the classes they represent.

It has been often asserted, that the ark could not hold its alleged contents. Its dimensions were 450 feet in length, 75 in breadth, and 45 in depth, by modern calculation, of a capacity equal to 32,000 tons, equivalent to that of sixteen large ships of war. Eight persons, 250 pair of quadrupeds, to which number the various species of such animals has been reduced, a fewer number of birds, with all the rest of the living contents, and sufficient provision for a year, might surely find space in a vessel, which would have contained twelve or fifteen thousand men and provisions for eighteen months.

The Scriptures are accused of containing many very indelicate passages. But when we bear in mind that they profess to detail facts, that the opinions of men vary, in different ages, respecting what is indelicate, and that the record in the Bible does not excite in our minds, as that of novels and romances may, any corresponding sinful emotions, but on the contrary, is calculated to produce an opposite influence, no great weight can be attached to this objection.

The curses and imprecations of the Psalms and other parts of the Old Testament, are adduced as inconsistent with the character of a work proceeding from God. Not to urge, that by a legitimate rendering of such passages, the expressions now appearing in an imperative mood, would lose their objectionable features in the future tense, it may be replied, that God, as a righteous judge, might delegate to his inspired servants, his acknowledged prerogative of calling down on his enemies the curses to which they may have rendered themselves obnoxious.

Philosophers so called, sneeringly remind us, that there were doubtless rainbows before the Flood, and hence Moses' statement, "I do set my bow in the cloud," implying its first appearance, is a most unfortunate blunder. But a tyro in Hebrew will inform us, that "I *appoint* my bow," is as lawful a translation, and thus relieve the philosophers of their kind concern for Moses.

Pretended antiquarians having identified no bricks from the tower of Babel, assure us, that Moses' narrative of its erection, is to be classed with the fabulous legends of the old world. We might simply ask for some valid reason for discrediting the Pentateuch. Strabo and Herodotus, however, have furnished some memoranda of the existence in Chaldea, of a tower called Belus, having walks upon it, along which two chariots could drive abreast.

Various mistakes, contradictions and inconsistencies have been industriously culled from the pages of inspiration, and triumphantly paraded as conclusive vouchers for the human origin of the Bible. That a book, whose most modern parts are nearly eighteen centuries old,—written in languages, of which one has been dead for 2500 years, describing a very ancient people, of dissimilar customs from ours, and of very peculiar history;—and which has passed through many hands, and been often copied, should present no literal and verbal inaccuracies, would indeed argue a miraculous preservation. But what is the amount of all

the alleged inaccuracies? Their historical and rhetorical effects do not alter a material fact of history, or modify a rule of good writing, and their moral have never influenced the nature of a doctrine or the character of a precept. The Hebrews and Greeks used letters in computation. It so happens that the numeral value of very similar letters was often different. Thus 40 and 400, 2 and 20, 4 and 200 are pairs of examples of this, in the Hebrew, and 3 and 6 in the Greek. This simple fact resolves a number of alleged contradictions and errors, since the mistake of a transcriber, in the matter of a line, one fiftieth of an inch long, might produce a considerable error in numbers. The accounts of John and Mark respecting our Saviour's crucifixion are different. John says it took place at the sixth hour, Mark says the third. Both might have used the letter whose numeral value is 6, and the copyist of Mark may have made it a 3.

Sometimes one writer gives the round number, and another, more accurately, furnishes the additional fractional number. One says our Saviour's transfiguration occurred "about eight days after." Another says it was "after six days." The former included the preceding and subsequent day.

A contradiction in different narrations of the same event is often easily reconciled by a little care in comparing the passages. Moses makes Jacob's family which went to Egypt sixty-six, or, adding Jacob, Joseph and his two sons, seventy. Stephen, in Acts vii. 14, states the number of the family at seventy-five. Now it will be observed, that Moses expressly excepts the wives of Jacob's sons, and gives "sixty-six" as the number of his descendants who *went* with him. Stephen says Joseph "sent for his father Jacob and all his kindred, seventy-five souls." In this were the sixty-six actual descendants of Jacob, and the nine wives of his sons, then living with him, who, as part of "*his kindred*," make up seventy-five. Thus, passages, once contradictory (apparently), are evinced to be *critically* correspondent.

The kings of the Jews often commenced their reigns during those of their fathers, or other predecessors, and sometimes one writer dates from the collegiate, and another from the sole succession. In genealogies, apparent errors are removed by the well-known facts, that one person sometimes had two names,—as to this day we speak of Cicero by the name of Tully,—sometimes the same name belonged to two persons, and names often appear with various spellings, by translations into other languages, or by

errors of copyists. The genealogy of our Saviour is twice given ; but that of Luke is evidently a tracing of his lineage through his mother. He is said to have been as "was supposed, the son of Joseph, who was the son of Heli," &c. Now the words "the son" before Heli, are supplied by the translators, and might as well have been, "the son-in-law." The custom of the Jews was to keep registers, and from them the evangelists doubtless compiled the genealogy. Other explanations of the phraseology here used have been given, but all coincide in the very natural and easy resolution of the difficulty, by adopting this as the register of Mary's ancestry.

Thus we see how readily the Scriptures may be relieved from the many petty objections, of which fair specimens have been presented. There are some indeed too trivial for notice, such as the sneer on Moses for using the third person in speaking of himself, of which Cæsar was notoriously guilty,—and the celebrated sophism, that contradictions are inferable when one writer omits what another relates, of which the abridgers of Dion Cassius furnish samples. For these contributions to the rules of writing and interpreting history, the world is indebted to the author of the "Age of Reason;" whether the discovery was original, we do not undertake to say.

3. One of the most prolific themes of a declamatory denunciation of Christianity is furnished by the existence of mysteries. The doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation and the Divine Decree are cited as special illustrations of this objection.

(1.) Mystery is properly opposed to explanation. The inspired volume is not necessarily precluded from containing mysteries, of whose existence it may be a part of inspiration to inform us. The sacred writers have nowhere professed to explain everything connected with the divine nature and economy. God's plan of redemption was called a mystery, because not fully explained, though a matter of inspiration, of which a record was made. We readily concede that the mysteries of the Bible are "great," and many things are presented which we cannot fully comprehend.

(2.) But while above reason, these mysteries are not necessarily inconsistent with reason. By the very nature of the case, this is more than we can assert, since reason has been furnished with no materials for forming an opinion. Thus the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation arise from our ignorance of the mode of divine existence. and that of the Decree from our igno-

rance of the mode of the divine government of free agents. To a school-boy Newton's philosophy may be above reason, but cannot be said to be opposed to his reason, for on account of ignorance and immaturity his reason cannot be exercised on its principles.

(3.) The constitution and course of things in this world, not only raise a presumption that mysteries might be expected in a divine revelation, but ought to reconcile us to their existence. In the words of the inspired penman, "God doeth great things, which we cannot comprehend. Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds? Can any understand their spreadings, or the noise of his tabernacle? Who hath laid the measures of the earth, or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? Where is the way where light dwelleth? and as for darkness, where is the place thereof? Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail? Hath the rain a father? or who hath begotten the drops of dew? Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? or who hath given understanding to the heart? Dost thou know the wondrous works of Him, who is perfect in knowledge?"* Our daily and important duties, labors, studies, relaxation, nourishment, rest, motion, pain and pleasure, are all connected with most intricate and perplexing mysteries. We know the laws of motion, but of its real nature are profoundly ignorant. The formation of our bodies, the process of vegetation, the combination of instinct with brute forms, or of mind with human, the power of a wound to inflict pain, the odor of plants, the nature of chemical combinations, the structure of a worm, the tint of a violet, the painting of a rose, the source of an aerolite, the origin of an earthquake, and hundreds of similar subjects, are full of inexplicable wonders. What is heat? light? electricity? magnetism? If gravitation binds planets to a centre, what binds the centre to its place? We can know something of the habits of various animals, but who knows how those habits are formed? How, in the vast numbers of the irrational creation is knowledge imparted and obtained? Why does the sensitive plant recoil at our touch? Why does the graft perpetuate its kind, and not that of the stock on which it feeds? Why do plants seek the light, the sun-flower, more devotional than man, ever bow towards his god, as he makes

* From chaps. 37th and 38th of Job.

the circuit of the heavens? Of all the wonders of nature, man is the greatest. We can describe his frame, with its muscles and veins, arteries and blood, bones and flesh, but what gives motion and power to them all? Who has touched the quick, and searched out the hiding-place of animal life? And when all nature has been explored, let us question the explorer. What is mind? whence its being? when and how united with the body? Is it modified matter, or is matter modified thought? Does it ever cease to think, even in sleep? Why cannot it end its own operations? Is not then its essence thought? Does it know in what its essence consists? Where does it reside? In the brain? the chest? or the whole body? anywhere? nowhere? And what doubt and perplexity hang over every act and emotion of this most mysterious, most consummately curious work of an Almighty God! Who can stop his own breath, or check the throbbing of his heart? Who can explain the motion of a finger, or the opening of the eye? "Man," says one, "essaying to know his nature, resembles a kitten first brought before a mirror. It jumps over it and behind it, frisks and twists and turns, vainly striving to reach the fair illusion, till at length in weary despair," it demurely retires from that most mysterious enigma, the image of itself.

Yet who doubts the existence of the natural world, and that of himself, or the facts adverted to, however wonderful, because they involve mysteries?

He, indeed, who rejects any doctrine of Revelation or Revealed Religion itself, on account of mysteries, must, to be consistent, cease all mental and physical efforts, till satisfied, by explanations, of the mysteries involved in these efforts. The farmer must cease to sow, the mechanic to labor, and the philosopher to reason, till they fully comprehend the inexplicable wonders of the earth, the body, and the mind. We must, too, reject all natural religion. Is the Trinity incomprehensible? The omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, yea, self-existence of a great First Cause, are no less so. Who, by searching, can find out God? who can understand the Almighty to perfection? who can grasp the idea of an existence from everlasting to everlasting? who can comprehend an omnipresence, co-extensive with immensity, an omniscience, co-incident with every event, past, present, and future, intimate with myriads of agencies, multiplied by myriads of creatures, and an omnipotence, controlling the mighty evolutions of the physical

universe, and the yet mightier, more complicated, as well as subtle powers of the moral, in all their vast influences, in all worlds, through time and eternity?

The difficulties of the divine decree ultimately resolve themselves into the insoluble mystery, that God's purposes are accomplished, and yet free agency remains unimpaired. But the mystery is not a teaching peculiar to the Bible. If we believe there is a God, we believe he acts by design or plan, that is, decrees or purposes to act as he does. For the evidences of such design furnish the conclusive proofs of his existence. But such design, includes the mutual adaptations of all the parts of individuals, multiplied by those of a number of individuals, and these by those of the species, and these by those of a genus: and then again, the whole are multiplied by the adaptations of the whole material universe in the relations of its myriads. Connected with this vast number, in which each minute motion of the minutest insect is to be contemplated, in its relations to all the rest of the world, this design includes all mental and moral agencies and causes, of all intelligent beings of earth, so that a thought or a word, even of the humblest child, or the feeble moan of an unconscious infancy, forms an element in the production of remote results. Now the harmonious relations of all this vast and complicated system of material and immaterial, rational and irrational creation, are perpetuated in entire consistency with free agency. To disconnect any part, the least, of this wondrous design, from the great First Cause, is to destroy the proofs of his Being, since it would no longer be his design. But can there be a greater mystery than the coexistence of such design and free-agency? This is the problem common to the Revelation of the Bible and the Revelation of Nature. Indeed the blank and cheerless postulates of Atheism cannot escape the charge of mystery. What more wonderful than a creation full of design without a designer, laws of matter without a lawgiver, or a world of rational beings, ever seeking a God, where there is no God? What so wonderful as chance making all things, when it cannot build a cabin. In short, if belief is to be repelled by mysteries, there is no prospect of rest to ourselves, short of stark pyrrhonism, a negation of all belief, the belief that we do not believe, the conviction that we do not exist. These "awful and gigantic shadows" will probably never be entirely cleared, either from the book of Revelation or that of Nature. A Newton's genius cannot explore those of the

one, nor an angel's those of the other. Both may "desire to look into them," but in the effort to sound the abyss, are lost in unfathomable depths. While no doctrine suspends its instructions, and no precept its duties, on the comprehension of mysteries, let us desist, alike from vain speculation and wicked cavils, and "believe and wonder, love and adore."

4. Objections to the divine origin of the Scriptures, based on their alleged contradictions of morality, in the conduct of God himself, or of persons acting by his authority, deserve a brief notice.

(1.) God's treatment of Pharaoh, according to the Mosaic account, is regarded as an infringement of the principles of justice, in that he hardened Pharaoh's heart and then destroyed him for impotence. Attending to the order of the narrative, we find that Pharaoh first hardened his own heart, by rejecting God's authority. God's previous revelation to Moses, that he would harden the heart of Pharaoh, could not, of course, influence him, and indeed, may be no more than an intimation of his purpose to set before him the admonitions and warnings, by which God knew he would harden himself. This was not their necessary effect. But remembering that Pharaoh had rejected the divine message and aggravated his previous impiety, God was justified in his punishment, and selecting his own method, he made sin its own punishment. Men now meet the same result by persevering in evil courses.

(2.) As to the immorality recorded of God's servants or the instruments selected to accomplish his purposes, a few general principles will cover all important cases. The sacred writers are responsible for the facts they record and not the character of those facts, and their simplicity and impartiality in recording the faults as well as virtues of their heroes, should commend their credibility. The cruelties, perfidies, and barbarities of the age, delineated in the history of the Jews, are relieved by instances of generosity, kindness, and pity, seldom found in the history of other nations of the same period. While the Mosaic code presents enactments of great severity, it must be remembered, that it was drawn for a people on the verge of civilization, and withal, has furnished to the world, some of the best and most enduring principles of wise government. We may briefly notice, some particular instances of immorality, alleged to have been countenanced by God. Though guilty of murder and adultery, we are told that David is pronounced a "man after God's heart." But this was said of him in comparison with Saul, as to his official conduct and station. His

sins are mentioned with marked disapproval, and met a severe punishment. Rahab's faith in the divine promise and her concealment of the spies, and the "fear of God" evinced by the Hebrew midwives, and not the deception of the one case and the evasions and prevarications of the other, are mentioned with approbation. Ehud and Jael were both guilty of treachery and perhaps deceit—certainly of murder. They were instruments of God, for delivering the Israelites from oppression. The conduct of the former is merely stated, and the approval of that of the latter, by the prophetess Deborah, is restricted to the act of destroying a tyrant. God may have commissioned each as his agent, and left them, as he does and often has done, to select their methods of service. Such examples are not propounded for imitation, unless we were placed in circumstances of similarly extraordinary character.

(3.) There are several cases, in which conduct deemed immoral, is expressly averred to have been authorized by God. Thus the judgments on Korah and his company, on idolaters, on the forty-two *little* children, and on the various heathen nations of Canaan, are cited. God was the head of the Jewish nation, and idolatry or other sins were punished by him, with marked severity, in vindication of his prerogative and for preserving the purity of his truth and worship. Korah and his company perished for a wilful, presumptuous, and daring act of disobedience. The "forty-two *little* children," may have been, by as proper a translation, *youths*, and in this event, knew better than to revile God in the person of his inspired messenger. Accepting the translation of *little* children, it was a punishment on the parents, and like God's judgments of a similar character in our day, must be resolved into the exercise of his divine sovereignty.

The various nations of Canaan were intruders on the soil of the promised land, and besides were deservedly objects of divine displeasure. We are told that so great were their iniquities, the land was ready to vomit them forth as the stomach rejects a deadly poison. We acknowledge the righteousness, notwithstanding the severity, of the punishment of sin under every government. God often employs earthquakes and volcanoes, hurricanes, pestilence, and famine, and as in this case, bloody and destructive wars, to execute his purposed judgments. The Jews were the instruments of his hand, and only in part. They are often reminded of his extraordinary interventions in their behalf, and the "stars in their

courses," the fierce insect and the hail were commissioned to aid in driving out the nations whose iniquities were full.

5. We are told that it is inconsistent with the character of God to punish his frail creatures, eternally, for a few sins committed in this world.

Deists have acknowledged that the doctrine of future rewards and punishments forms a valuable incentive to virtue and preventive of vice. The enhancement of the sanction, by investing the reward and punishment with the attribute of eternity, ought not, of itself, to form an objection. But since the alleged disproportion of sin and its punishment is the gist of the difficulty, it may be remarked: (1.) That equally disproportionate is virtue and its reward, to which none object. (2.) That if it be said, virtue brings its own reward, and being intrinsically a source of happiness, must perpetuate that happiness indefinitely, so may sin, by its nature, ever remove the sinner farther from God, which will be one chief element of his misery, and thus perpetuate that misery indefinitely. (3.) That according to the constitution of nature, comparatively unimportant acts or trifling words are often followed by a train of evils lasting as life, and enduring through generations. (4.) And after all, we are by no means competent to decide on the merit or demerit of conduct, whose consequences we cannot calculate—whose motives are unknown and the rules of whose approval or condemnation, none but a God of infinite wisdom and holiness can properly establish. To these considerations, may be added the well-known fact, that whencesoever derived, the idea of such punishment did not appear repugnant to the moral sentiments of the heathen Greeks and Romans, in whose mythologies we find it incorporated and illustrated in the well-known fables of Sisyphus and Tantalus.

6. Those who affect a peculiarly proper estimate of human "Progress" and "Development," in a free inquiry after truth, speak contemptuously and disparagingly of what they term a "stereotyped" Revelation—or revelation in a book, as calculated to cramp man's powers and bind us, of this enlightened period, to the antiquated dogmas of a primitive and unpolished age of the world.

(1.) Moral truth is, in its nature, permanent, and its principles are immutable and perpetually applicable. As to the recorded facts of the Bible, the progress of knowledge is affording increasing evidence of their accuracy, and the investigations and dis-

coveries of science, are strengthening the conviction, that the voice of nature confirms the utterances of that of Revelation. In the intellectual character of Bible truth, we discover depths in which giants may swim, as well as shoals where infants may wade. In the natural world, most of those truths, important for man's daily business, are comparatively plain; yet there are materials, on which his powers of discovery and invention may be exercised with no assignable limit. So the Scriptures, while affording readily, all truth that is material and essential, cast up, as it were, on the surface, present a sufficient compass for the most vigorous and extensive researches of the human mind, in unlocking and unfolding the treasures of divine wisdom. It is not probable, that any truth essential to man's physical necessities, remains undiscerned, in the volume of nature, or any essential to his spiritual, in that of Revelation; yet many, highly important for the confirmation and proper elucidation of truths already discerned, may yet be discovered in both: and the book of Revelation, as well as nature, may yet be sufficient to employ the most exalted intellect, even in the extreme "progress of development."

(2.) We know that without "books" as a means of perpetuating and diffusing thought, man would be little better than a savage. It is, surely, very accordant with this actual state of the world, that Revelation should be communicated as other valuable truth. It is very credible, that he who has given a Revelation, would adapt it to all ages and states of the world, and if true, the sooner it be made permanent the better.

7. The Mosaic account of the creation and fall of man, or the origin of evil, has been the theme of much cavil, sneering and ridicule.

(1.) The vindication of Scripture from the charge of inconsistency with the truths of science, especially as they affect the account of creation, having fallen into other hands, in the course of these Lectures, we pass over the subject with one remark. We may safely abide the decisions of competent and impartial judges, on a comparison of this account with the various absurd cosmogonies and puerile stories of other writers, whether ancient or modern.

(2.) The division of the creative process into periods, finds a beautiful and striking analogy in that course of nature, according to which, we discover a certain system or order, prevalent in all

the works of God. That God is said to have rested on the seventh day, is one of scores of instances in which the sacred writers accommodate to our finite faculties, their representations of the mode of divine thinking, speaking, and acting. Objections to such representations have been made, on the ground that they are debasing to God, who is thus made subject to our passions and infirmities. But those who make them can find no better mode of presenting intelligent views of the divine nature and attributes, and the explanation given ought to relieve this and all similar passages, of all liableness to any other than absurd criticism.

That man was created full-grown in body, and not an infant or a child, is not only consistent with all else of the divine work, but commends itself as highly proper; and that he was not left an overgrown child in intellect, is at once, agreeable to the analogy of the physical perfection of the universe, and suitable to the duties on which he was required immediately to enter.

(3.) The origin of evil is the dread mystery of time, the "abyss into which nearly all theological difficulties at last disembogue themselves," the enigma compared with which, and without which, all other enigmas are trifles. The Scripture account of this, both as to mode and fact, is the great stumbling-block of skepticism.

A few words as to the agents in this awful drama, are sufficient. He who could create a world, could endow the serpent with speech, and subject it to the influence of a spiritual being. How the animal previously moved, or with what physical changes it was affected after the Fall, are useless questions. That it was peculiarly doomed, in the curse which fell on all creation, is accordant with analogy, in that the irresponsible instruments or agents in man's sin, often suffer more than others, the penalties of his guilt. The permission to Satan to tempt Adam, no more involves God in his sin, than does the existence of a state of trial in this world, implicate its author in the evils which it may or does occasion. Of all tests, that submitted to man was the fairest. There was the least temptation, counterbalanced by the heaviest penalty. So far as we can know, had man been constituted impeccable, or subjected to no test of obedience, there had been no way in which he could have evinced virtuous principle. Angels are the only other intelligent creatures of whom we have any account, and as they sinned, we infer they were

also put upon a probation. Man was either constituted as alleged, and fell, or constituted a sinner, which no consistent deist will aver. It becomes those who object to the Scripture representation, to show some other mode of constituting a free agent, competent to divine power and consistent with the divine wisdom; and this cannot be done till man can measure omnipotence and compass infinity.

There are other difficulties connected with this subject, which lie back of Revelation, and whose solution is involved in that of a mystery already mentioned,—God's government of free agents, so that his decree does not impair their freedom, nor affect their responsibility. Thus, why is there any evil? Did God pre-determine it? Was his purpose or plan frustrated or fulfilled by its entrance? How is man responsible for what he was created to perform? The answer to these, and many other similar questions, easily asked, has been given. Our reason has no materials for the decision. These matters are above it. Our province is to vindicate what God has revealed, by showing its congruity with the discoveries and teachings of reason, exercised on the constitution and course of nature. Here are found evidences of man's fall and its consequences, palpable to its perceptions: and here are held forth hopes of a possible remedy, though reason, unprovided with the means of accurate knowledge, may fail to designate the precise character of that remedy.

Along with abundant indications of a primitive beauty and goodness in the natural world, there are equally clear indications, that the beautiful and the good have been marred and defaced. In the midst of order we observe disorder. Seasons, suns and systems, the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms, are governed by wise and fixed laws. Yet storm and tempest, plague and pestilence, desolated shores, vast and arid deserts, rock-bound coasts, shipwreck and hurricane, proclaim this earth to be the object and scene of some potent curse. The extinction of the generator is the price of reproduction. The existence of the offspring is often purchased by the death of the parent. Adversity is the fruit of prosperity. As each day closes in the darkness of night, so ruin and decay, with effacing fingers, follow loveliness and health. We seem to tread on the withered leaves of a departed life. Though the world is filled with the monuments of divine power and wisdom, they are monuments in ruins. Though we are surrounded with proofs of creative energy and consum-

mate skill, Death stalks forth among them, the king of terrors, the inexorable tyrant and great destroyer, and after marking all that is man's with his withering touch, prepared to lay man himself under the dust of the ruins among which he has lived.

In the moral world, we behold scenes mournfully analogous. We see man, the object of a benevolence that never tires in bestowing the bounties of a providence which never fails. He is endowed with faculties, which, unclouded by prejudice, undebased by vice and undegraded by ignorance, testify for God, lighten the path of duty, and constitute him, in the lowest stages of moral existence, a religious being. Yet he evinces a constant proclivity to evil. His reason disordered, understanding darkened, imagination polluted and taste depraved, he no longer delights in the beautiful and the good. He becomes an alien from God. Acknowledging the goodness of the law written on his heart, he perversely violates its precepts. God's name becomes his bye-word, and God's nature his abhorrence. He is subject to pain. As his body has become a machinery of torture, his mind becomes a fountain of woe. His plans are crossed and his prospects blighted. However explained, he feels that God opposes him. Rarely "amidst the darkest fears and deepest jealousies" has he discarded from his religion the idea of a benevolent being, and invested his divinity with the terrific attributes of inveterate malignity and cruelty, yet so much has fear prevailed over hope, that he has worshipped the devil. Fearing, but not trusting, he ceases to pray for favor and deprecates wrath. He feels that though a depository of great power, he is watched, curbed and restrained. His very liberty becomes his ruin. For he has not only separated from God, but divided himself. Now accusing and now excusing, his thoughts alternately darken hope and mitigate despair, neither the light of the one ever totally extinguished, nor the horrors of the other totally relieved. He is guilty of what he condemns. He fails to perform what he approves. He begins to seek God, and ends in a vain conceit of his virtue. In dreams of vanity he flatters himself that he is pure, and wakes to loathe his pollution. He lies amidst the ruins of the world, like a rock in the débris of some mighty precipice, in whose rugged and misshapen form you can trace the lineaments of its origin. So man is separated from his God. A gulf wide as eternity and deep as perdition divides them. Well did Pascal write, "What a chimaera is man,—what a chaos of contradictions! A judge of all things, yet a worm of earth; the depository of truth, yet a med-

ley of uncertainties ; the glory and scandal of the universe. If he exalt himself, I humble him. If he humble himself, I exalt him, and press him with his own inconsistencies till he comprehends himself to be an incomprehensible monster."

This view of man as an individual, presents a type of the condition of the race. Now amiable instincts and generous impulses furnish scenes of domestic happiness, social peace, political security and general prosperity. Benevolence feeds the hungry poor, comforts the distressed and alleviates the severities of adversity. Anon, conjugal affection degenerates into idolatry, or is drowned in selfishness. Parental tenderness becomes foolish weakness, or is extinguished by overbearing tyranny. Filial confidence softens into servility or dies in ingratitude. The covenants of friendship conceal crime and perpetuate villainy, or are sundered by treachery. The institutions of religion dwindle to trifling superstitions, or become the engines of spiritual despotism, and the cloaks of hypocrisy. Liberty waxes into licentiousness, order wanes to anarchy, and government turns into oppression. The exactions of avarice take the place of benevolence, the assumptions of arrogance succeed the condescensions of humility, and "Man's inhumanity to man makes countless millions mourn." Angels weep, and hell rejoices.

But amidst all these disasters in the natural and moral world, both furnish evidences of tendencies to reconstruction. Science and art with their thousand hands are ministering to the disorders of nature and rebuilding this dilapidated temple with its own ruins. They convert poison into medicine, and of rivers and seas, which divided men, make highways of commerce. From the disembowelled earth are drawn the mighty wrecks of long forgotten convulsions, to furnish fuel and light, the implements of husbandry and machinery, which increase the fertility and remedy the defects of nature, and materials to adorn and beautify this renovated structure of man's dwelling-place. The ice-bound streams of the north become mines of wealth, and the burning sands and sickening fens of the tropics, furnish refreshing fruits and abundant food. The mighty agencies, which in nature's laboratory, rend rocks, burst mountains and ingulph cities, are trained by man, to bring nations together and erect the vast marts of commerce. He not only disarms the lightning of its terrors, but subjects it to the purposes of his interest and pleasure.

In a total ruin all is desolation. But God has not deserted man. He has not suffered all the impressions of his hatred to evil and

delight in goodness to be effaced from the human heart. The setting sun tinges with his departing rays the fleecy cloud and the mountain top, showing he has not set forever, and auspicious of a morning. So, though God has for a time forsaken the moral world, he has left behind him a train of light. Man still yearns for something better. He may be in a prison house of punishment, but it is one of discipline, not entirely of vengeance. His history is a history of sin and error, but a history too, of struggles for conformity to the light left to guide his path. Failed he has, most memorably and miserably, yet that he struggles, proves that all is not lost.

Now all this accords with Revelation. Open this book, and what man has learned, slowly and laboriously, from the observations and experiences of six thousand years, read by his reason, is here unfolded in a few sentences. God's curse fell on Adam, and on the earth, though sinless, for man's sake. It fell on all mankind, and the sufferings of infancy, pain, disease, travail and sorrow, the train closed by death, man's greatest evil, have been our sad inheritance. Whether men call this "imputation," or, sneering at the term, prefer some other, the facts of the record, thus attested by the deductions of reason from those of human history, remain unimpeachable. Prejudice may storm, but cannot overthrow them. It is useless to argue against them, sinful to cavil at them, absurd and puerile to ridicule them.

Here too is the promise of a remedy, intimated to man in the very hour of his curse; and the earnest expectation of the creature, the natural world, though with the moral, groaning and travailing, as in the throes of some mighty agony, seems, by the deductions of the same reason, awaiting the promised manifestation of the sons of God, and ardently longing for a deliverance from the long and grievous bondage of corruption.*

Attested thus, by the state of things in which we live, this brief but pregnant passage in the third chapter of Genesis, instead of sinking into a contemptible *myth*, or a baseless imposture, rises in all the grandeur, sublimity and power of a most stupendous truth, entitled to our confidence for its lineaments of inspiration, as to our veneration for its attributes of antiquity.

8. Some object to Christianity on account of the particular

* For the train of thought in the last two or three paragraphs, and for a few expressions, I acknowledge my obligations to the very ingenious and interesting work of Mr. McCosh "On Divine Government." in which the views here presented are ably and fully set forth.

remedy of the gospel. It might be supposed that a candid and impartial objector to Revelation on account of its doctrine of man's ruin, would find some relief to the difficulty in the provision of a remedy. But either by reason of ignorance of its nature, or wilful blindness to the truth, the scheme of redemption has been the subject of severe criticism.

(1.) As in respect of all doctrines, for whose discovery we are indebted to Revelation, it is peculiarly true of this, that antecedently to such Revelation, men could not be competent judges. They could form no opinion on the nature of a remedial scheme, the necessity for the particular agency of a Mediator, his character or offices.

(2.) It is also obvious, that the incarnation, resurrection, the combination of human and divine agency in the Saviour's sufferings, and their duration as too long or too short, and similar topics, are above our comprehension, and objections applicable to such, are as absurd, as the objections of a child, to the plans, principles and dealings of a father, while yet too young to appreciate or comprehend them.

(3.) Of such objections to the gospel remedy as are legitimate subjects of our discussion, we offer a few specimens, with summary replies.

The manner in which the remedy has been prepared, has been criticised, as presenting God reduced to the necessity of using a long series of intricate means to bring it about.

As to the facts of this scheme having been gradually and slowly developed, connected with human agencies, in the way of cause and effect, we well know that this accords with the course of nature. Vegetables and animal bodies grow by degrees. The mind increases in power. One series of means subserves another, and so the whole course of nature is progressive. Thus has the scheme of Redemption been developed. But its efficiency was not postponed to its full enactment, for its blessings flowed to man before, as well as after, the incarnation of the Son of God.

The system of a Mediator and a mediation is alleged to be irrational. Now it has been seen, that by the findings of observation and experience, there is, at least, a presumption raised, that some remedial system might be provided for man's spiritual as for his physical disabilities. And pursuing our reading of nature farther, though never discovering, because the book never contained it, that such a remedy would be effected by a Mediator, yet

we can see, now it has been published in God's other volume, that it is not discordant with the lessons of nature. We owe our birth, nurture, physical, mental and moral culture, to the various mediating agents, by which God has communicated such blessings to men. A reflecting mind may extend this illustration almost indefinitely. And if God, in his visible government, thus uses such agencies, it is at least credible, that he might adopt the principle in his spiritual government. There is certainly everything other than objectionable, in the idea, that as God has, by such agencies, provided for remedying the defects and neutralizing or removing the evils of this present disordered world, furnishing means of relief from calamities, as pain, disease, and the like, which men had induced by negligence, perversity, or stupidity; by a similar kind of agency he tenders the means of deliverance from that, which, to a sober and well-balanced mind, must appear the greatest of evils, sin and its consequences. This is surely a pleasing and amiable view of the Divine Being, that he should select his Son to effect a purpose so replete with blessings to man and glory to God.

The sacrifice of the innocent Son of God, in the place of the insignificant inhabitants of this little planet, is alleged to be unworthy of a just God, and that he should be as well pleased with the sufferings of the innocent as the guilty, is declared contradictory to the dictates of reason. The objections here presented are connected with each other and with one great fact, the death of Christ, in such a manner, that to avoid repetition they may be considered somewhat together.

The Scriptures represent the death of Christ, in the light of a sacrifice, in which he, in his mediatorial character and united nature, as a Priest, offers his human nature as a victim. Whether of human or divine origin, sacrifices are of very ancient date. Either with or without prayers, confessions and thanksgivings, they have constituted, in some form, a prominent part of the religious worship of all nations, who had a religion. If of human origin, there can be no objection to the Christian scheme as requiring a sacrifice, any more than to others. If of divine, this scheme then accords, in this principle, with the earliest lessons of primitive religion imparted to man. In either case, the objection applies to all religions, and if valid in one, is valid in all, and leaves us with none.

The involuntary suffering of an innocent being without ade-

quate cause is wrong, and though, were such a being rational, the wrong is aggravated, yet the principle of justice is infringed by the sufferings of any such, rational or irrational. The Deist might, on this view, well object to the sacrifices of the heathen, which inflicted suffering on innocent brutes, with no adequate cause. But the suffering inflicted on a voluntary victim is not injurious, and conflicts with no principle of justice. Jesus Christ was a voluntary victim, and as those sacrifices of brutes directed under the Old Testament economy were typical of His, and ordered by God, there was an adequate cause for the suffering. Thus the Scripture doctrine of sacrifice is not liable to cavil, however that of any other religious system may be.

Though relatively insignificant in enlarged views of God's intelligent universe, yet since man has formed, confessedly, an object of great interest to his Creator, in this world, there can be no force in an objection to a scheme, because it represents him as an object of a more intense interest, in so grave a matter as his spiritual and eternal welfare. Especially is this reasonable, when we connect with it, the inspired assurance, that the transactions in which this interest for man have been evinced, are designed, and will ultimately prove, to be contributive, in a most eminent degree, to declare the divine glory. Among other manifestations, we are assured, that these transactions display alike the evil of sin, God's hatred to it, and his love to sinners, and our reason leaves us in no doubt, that all this has been effected in a more clear and efficient method, by so much as the dignity and value of the sacrifice have been greater. While too, we see that in the course of nature, the innocent often suffer for the guilty, and that this principle is of very common and extensive prevalence in human government, as in the well-known laws of suretyship, we can have no valid occasion for objecting, that in view of honoring the divine law and sustaining inviolate, the principles of the divine government, God should accept the sufferings of the innocent instead of the guilty, as equally adequate to satisfying the claims of justice.

Finally, it is querulously asked, why all this array of means? Why may not sinful men be at once forgiven, and made holy and happy? Such questions are easily asked, and on superficial views of the divine character and government, not easily answered. It is very useless for us to speculate on the physical possibilities of omnipotence. By reason and Revelation alike, we are taught to

believe, that the perfection of the divine being involves the harmony of the divine attributes. God is a moral governor. We feel persuaded, that as such, he must govern by just and holy laws; and that his government, as well as every other and more than every other, forfeits our confidence if the laws are not executed. But as all men are sinners, justice requires their punishment. As no one can rightly estimate the heinousness of any one sin, or the importance of any one particular vindication of the law, we are compelled to assent to the righteousness of a principle, more or less acknowledged in human governments, that, "he who offends in one point is guilty of all"—that is, obnoxious to punishment. Violated law must be honored. The subsequent obedience of the transgressor cannot atone for the crime, nor can suffering alone repair the injury inflicted by disobedience. But man fails to obey. His sufferings, consistent with his happiness are ineffectual. The law violated is that of infinite holiness, of the supreme ruler. That offences are aggravated by considerations of the relations of the party offending to the party offended, is too plain to need an illustration. But beyond the highest disproportion between any man and any earthly power, that between man and God stretches with an infinite extent. Man's suffering then, to meet the just demands of a violated law of God, must involve his utter and hopeless ruin. If then sin be forgiven as proposed, the justice and holiness of God are dethroned, the harmony of the divine attributes is destroyed, and the moral power of the divine government impaired. Hence the necessity for this "array of means." Hence the necessity, in order that man may be forgiven, be made holy and happy, that a way be devised to satisfy divine justice. Now in the gospel scheme, mercy and truth are met together. Righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Justice and holiness shine most conspicuously on that cross, where God spared not his Son, innocent as he was, when he took the sinner's place; while there too, fall with his blood, the richer drops of divine mercy and compassion. The justice here illustrated is sterner than, if every sinner had died without mercy, and the mercy richer, than had every sinner been pardoned without justice. Mercy is unfolded, in God's so loving the world, that he gave his Son, and justice, in that no other than the costly blood of the incarnate Son of God could appease its holy wrath. Mercy secures the transfer of the sinner's guilt to his surety, while justice rigidly

exacts from the surety the full price of the sinner's pardon. Mercy providing a complete righteousness for the sinner,

—"Takes the robe the Saviour wrought,
And casts it all around,"

while justice

--"All God's vengeance pours
Upon the Saviour's head."

Mercy inclines the ear of God to the prayer of the penitent, pleading in the Saviour's name, while justice awakens the sword of divine anger against him who was God's equal. In fine, mercy, rich, free and full, appears in forgiving millions of sins, and justice, holy, strict and inexorable in refusing pardon for the least without the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God. Equally conspicuous are the divine wisdom and power. Man lost beyond all hope and all remedy, by his own efforts, afforded an object of pity to holy beings. Angels may well be supposed to have beheld the scene with feelings of mingled compassion and wonder. To restore the race to favor consistently with justice, no scheme ever imagined by man was competent, none within the reach of less than omnipotence could avail. Not only must the divine attributes be harmonized, but man's nature must be renovated. In the gospel, the latter is effected, as well as the former. Not only was the law of God honored and his justice satisfied, by the Saviour's sufferings and obedience, but the gift of a renewing, sanctifying spirit was procured. By his agency man is made "willing in the day of God's power." Convinced of sin, he is led to repentance and faith. He is new created. Old things pass away. His corrupt propensities and his inveterate depravity, are gradually destroyed, his rebellion subdued, and his nature averse to holiness, renewed and sanctified and made fit for the holy employments of a glorious abode.

"'Twas great to speak this world from naught,
'Twas greater to redeem."

Thus in a word, do we discover in the gospel plan the divine attributes harmoniously co-operating. Wisdom to devise, power to execute, justice to punish, mercy to forgive, equally conspicuous with the holiness which is intolerant of sin, the love which delights in the sinner's salvation, the truth which binds to the fulfilment of threatening, and the goodness which inclines to the performance of promises. Man is raised from the dregs of pollution and the

verge of perdition, to the eternal purity and unfailing security of heavenly happiness. Earth is filled with the blessings and Heaven with the glories of this great redemption.

"Oh the sweet wonders of that cross
Where God the Saviour loved and died,
Her richest life my spirit draws
From his dear wounds and bleeding side."

9. The limited publication of Christianity, and its limited prevalence and power as consequences of this, have frequently been urged as inconsistent with its divine origin and its claims to be regarded as a necessary and universal blessing.

(1.) If Christianity be tendered to us, accompanied by reliable evidence, the deprivation of others, no more mars its purity, than invalidates its evidences. Moreover we are incompetent judges of the divine procedure. Apparent inconsistencies in human governments, as we have had occasion to see as to God's natural government of the world, are often removed by more accurate and extensive information. So may it be, that there are valid reasons for a state of things, apparently inconsistent with God's power, wisdom or benevolence or all.

(2.) Indeed none will require the universal reception of Christianity, as either an evidence of its divine origin or an argument for its purity; for where it has been fully published, it has not been universally received, and unless free agency were destroyed by an enforcement of its claims, in the present state of things, we see no reason to expect such a reception. This conceded, whether a minority or majority have received it, is not very material. But we have reason to believe, that a much larger number will ultimately appear to have been benefited than the objection intimates. The present and the past generations of men, may constitute a minority of the whole race. What are yet to be the effects of Christianity we know not. Probably they will exceed all former experience. When then, to Christian adults, we add the vast millions of infants interested in the atoning blood of Christ and the healing power of the divine Spirit, it is possible, a vast majority of the human family will have been found participants in the blessings of the gospel.

And, after all, it remains to be seen whether the causes of the alleged "*inconsistency*" are intrinsic evils of the Christian scheme.

(3.) Admitting that a formal and particular publication of re-

vealed religion was limited to one nation under the old dispensation, and has been generally restricted to a few, under the new, we ourselves may see a propriety and justice in both cases. We have abundant reason for believing, that sufficiently full disclosures of the divine will were made to our first parents and to Noah and his family. That men not liking to retain the knowledge of God, lost, by perversity and negligence, the advantages of revealed truth, may be read in the progressions of every system of idolatry, as well as in the inspired record. Now, God deals with his creatures as moral agents, and provides neither irresistible evidences nor means for preserving to them the knowledge of his will. Because of this tendency to apostasy and deterioration, on the principle already indicated, he selected one nation as the depositary of his truth, and by restrictive laws and peculiar institutions, separated it from the permanent taint of that idolatry, to which in common with other nations, it ever manifested a proclivity.

As to the Christian dispensation, God was pleased to leave to man a discovery of its necessity, by an experience of his moral destitution, and when the Gospel was promulgated, we can easily see that it was not only consistent with the divine procedure, in other things, but was better calculated to preserve the purity of the system, and promote sincerity in its advocates, that it should meet opposition and be subjected to a rigid scrutiny. By too sudden a change from paganism to Christianity, universally occurring, there would have been danger of a fatal and general corruption of the system, while the tests of sincerity withdrawn, there might have been a fearful prevalence of hypocrisy. We reason from facts. At a later period, when the civil power was substituted for the pulpit, and earthly rewards for eternal, these results followed; and that to such extent, that all are accustomed to regard the primitive, as the age of the greatest Christian purity, from whose history we derive our lessons of the true nature and power of the gospel.

(4.) It may be true, that the Christian religion does not secure the perfection of its followers, in moral character, while on earth, nor has it preserved among them entire unity of opinion. Many of its professed votaries, including ministers, have disgraced human nature, as well as Christianity by immoral lives, and the exhibition of cruel and persecuting tempers, while the wars waged, professedly in behalf of religion, have been distinguished for ferocity and cru-

elty. But objections founded on these statements lose all their force, when the statements themselves are rightly considered.

Though taught that, at death, believers are made perfect in holiness, yet the general tone of Scripture doctrine, precept and biography prove that the production of a comparative holiness is the extent of power on individuals, claimed for the Christian system in this world; and that it rather aims to carry us through a state of discipline, preparatory and subservient to one of perfection in heaven, where we shall no more see through a glass darkly, or know in part, but shall see God and be made like him.

The divisions of Christians are no more, nor more important, than reasoning from other things, we might presume. Laws and constitutions, though carefully drawn by the wisest men, education, medicine, agriculture, natural and moral science, and even mathematics, are all subjects, on which either as to their principles, modes of exhibition or application, great diversity of opinion exists. And it is observable, that the acrimony, zeal, and pertinacity which are evinced by sectaries, are usually in the direct ratio of the general importance of a subject, or the inverse ratio of that of its specialities. But no one pretends that division or controversy imply that its subject is one of doubt or uncertainty, or that any system is responsible for the variety of opinions of which it is the occasion. This is more frequently owing to the influence of extrinsic causes. There is more agreement among Christians on the fundamental propositions of Christianity, than can be found among the adherents of any other system of moral truth.

But divisions on some subjects are ascribed to a want of clearness in the Scriptures. The Trinity, infant baptism, observance of Sunday, and the constitution and powers of the church, are specimens of such subjects. It will ordinarily be found, that these differences are ascribable to defects in plans of study, or power of reasoning, or the influences of education or prejudices, or all combined. It is admitted, that all subjects are not revealed with the same clearness. On no fundamental topic is there any want, and yet the deliverances of Scripture on these, are not all in the same mode. We find that the causes of difference mentioned, out of the question, very few who evince a right apprehension of the acknowledged and plain truths of Scripture, fail to agree on such subjects as the doctrine of the Trinity and the observance of Sunday. God has endowed us with faculties and furnished us with facilities for collecting the scattered rays of truth, on all important

topics, and by scattering them on some, has evinced his wisdom, as thereby a more diligent study of the whole is secured. On those of less importance, the differences involve the rejection or uncertainty of nothing essential to the spiritual character of the system.

No cause ought to be judged by its corruptions and abuses. Immoralities of Christians cannot be charged on the system, till shown to proceed from its principles. But the purity of these principles is admitted in the charge, for Christians are criticised as much or more, for want of conformity to the peculiar precepts of their own religion, as those common to it and the religion of nature.

If persecution were of the spirit of Christianity, where this most prevails that would most abound. But the reverse is notoriously true. Religious wars have uniformly resulted from the acts and motives of unchristian men, and history attests, that those ministers or others, who have become tyrants over the souls and bodies of their fellows, erected stakes and gibbets, founded the infernal dungeons and contrived the cruel racks of the Inquisition, in other respects, forfeited all claim to be regarded as Christians. Isolated instances may be found, when under the influence of evil examples and depraved public sentiment, or driven by oppression, men of undoubted Christian principle, have turned aside from rectitude in these respects, but persecution, and every harsh and cruel mode of propagating Christianity, have ever been condemned by those, who in every age, have enjoyed the best reputation as Christians; and the Bible not only does not teach, but most expressly denounces such practices. Our Saviour's admonition of the effect of his doctrine in producing divisions and hatreds among the nearest friends, was a candid prediction of the harsh reception it would find in the world. Peculiar duties, as the agents of heaven in destroying idolaters, were delegated to the Jews; but no precept of the Old Testament can be adduced to show, that they were ever instructed to propagate their faith, by any other than the methods used for propagating all truth, rational conviction and persuasion. As to the imputations on the character of the Christian ministry, without indelicate boasting, we may challenge the world to produce a body, which, as such, presents a greater number of serious, self-denying, laborious, and upright men than may be found in the protestant clergy of the United States. And it deserves to be mentioned, that in respect of the moral character and influence of the Christian Church and ministry, both are to be

regarded as something other than the Christian scheme, especially in countries, where by the unnatural alliance of Church and State, the true genius of Christianity has been mournfully marred.

It must be admitted by candid and intelligent men, that the tone of morality has ever been higher in Christian, than in Mohammedan and Pagan lands, and of Christian lands, higher in those, where the principles of Christianity have been most extensively diffused. Though practical religion may have been corrupted in later times, the lives of primitive Christians, when temptations to hypocrisy were few, and to apostasy, many, were monuments of their faith in the estimate of enemies. Then, as now, Christians were not inmates of jails, and victims for gibbets, as evil-doers. It must be admitted, that Christianity provides better for those classes, which most need moral benefits, than any other system; for while philosophy neglected the poor, and after ages of speculation and scores of schools, and sects, and systems had passed away, the multitude still lay neglected and degraded, Christianity has succeeded in enlightening the illiterate, comforting the distressed, and in healing the maladies, easing the burdens, and enlarging the enjoyments of men in every grade of penury and sorrow, of all nations, ages, and circumstances. It must be admitted, that it has won trophies of its moral power from people of every color, clime, and condition. The Moor, the Hindoo, the Chinese, and the Hottentot, the deluded victims of imposture, and the degraded servants of apostasy and superstition, have been released from their bonds of ignorance and vice, by its influence; and from hovels, dungeons, and manacles, have issued the songs of praise, inspired by its promises.

To the whole of this objection, that Christianity has been of limited publication, prevalence and power, three considerations may be offered in reply, which, at least, greatly impair its force.

(1.) Men who never hear the gospel are not injured by its publication to others. God accepts or condemns men according to what they have, and not according to what they have not. They will be judged by the law written on their hearts, and not by the gospel they never knew. True, by reason of man's wilful blindness and perversity, that law conducts none to heaven, and as ignorance is no reason why men should not learn, or others teach them, so moral darkness is no reason they should not seek the light, and Christians endeavor to impart it. But the misery of

their condition is not that *we* have the gospel, but that they have not improved the light they had.

(2.) And when it is still urged, that the gospel has not been given to them as well as to us, it must be conceded, that judging by the constitution of nature, we had little reason to expect anything otherwise.

The advantages of soil, climate, commerce and civilization, are very unequally distributed. As no two persons can be found exactly alike in physical constitution, so no two individuals possess precisely the same privileges; but we find an endless variety in respect of physical form and strength, learning, taste and temper. A survey of the world will show, that the greatest blessings are possessed by the few. Now as God has been under no obligation to confer like blessings on all, or certain blessings on any, his distinguishing some men with advantages, does not impeach the divine justice or benevolence in withholding them from others. These last are not less favored than had the others received nothing. No more was God obliged to confer the benefits of revelation on any persons whatever, since all were undeserving, unless it be contended that he had made man at first without the knowledge necessary to fulfil the end of his being, which, of course, no consistent deist will aver. And as in the former case, so in this, those from whom the gospel has been withheld are not less favored than had others not received it. Indeed, the divine provision for man's spiritual welfare, seems conducted on the principle by which that for his temporal welfare has been made. God has provided in the mineral and vegetable kingdoms a great variety of medicines, and has furnished the vast storehouse of nature with materials for the various useful arts, which contribute to our safety, convenience and comfort. He has also endowed us with the physical and mental faculties by which we may make these provisions available. Yet we find that in his providence, long periods have elapsed before some very important remedies and valuable discoveries in the sciences and arts have become known to man. Thousands are still unaffected by them. Owing to indolence and ignorance, prejudice and passion, it has often been only after long labor, unsuccessful experiments, contempt, disputes, divisions, controversies, doubts and rejections, that some of them have obtained reception and success. Many who greatly need them, cannot be brought to appreciate them. To millions they are never offered. Others again derive no benefit from them.

on account of some circumstances which countervail their effects. In short, we thus see that these provisions are neither certain, perfect, nor universal. So has been the course of Providence in respect of a revelation. And yet in one aspect, our illustration fails. Christianity has not been left hidden for man's discovery or invention. Though not published to every successive apostate generation, and, for reasons already offered, a particular mode of revelation was adopted, yet from the earliest ages, the knowledge of its material truths has been in the world. Before the Saviour came, men were taught to believe on him who was promised, and since he appeared, the gospel has been offered, at various periods, to a great part of the world's population, not, it is true, in every century, but in the course of the eighteen which have elapsed, and especially during the first and second. If its prevalence and power have been limited, man and not its author is blamable, and this is peculiarly true in our day and country.

(3.) If our recurrence to the constitution of nature be deemed unfair, because the interests affected are by no means equal to those of religion, or if it be said that the provisions for man's temporal welfare are scattered very generally in some sort, we may furnish in the case of natural religion a consideration which fully relieves us of all pressure from such allegations. We have seen that however published, by its evidences being everywhere patent, in the providence of God, its prevalence has been less extensive than that of revealed religion. We mean the prevalence of those truths which constitute its claims to be called a religion. Its power has been far less exemplified. Scarcely a dozen deists have ever agreed fully on its principles. None have fully illustrated them by consistent lives. Hypocrisy is as glaring in its votaries, as in professed Christians. Some have doubted whether any traces of it could be found in the world but for Christianity. Certainly, and it deserves remark, since the Christian era, its developments in other than Christian lands, have been very limited. Its temples adorn no cities. It has neither ministers nor altars, nor rites, nor ordinances, nor worship. Heaven, earth and sea may proclaim with voiceless eloquence, "The hand that made us is divine," but man makes no response. Natural creation may be vocal with harmonies of praise, but man's voice is unheard in the swelling anthem. What has mere natural religion ever done? The trophies of its triumphs are yet to be seen in reformed societies, happy families, patient, meek, humble and peaceable men

and women. Husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants are yet to be found, who have learned their duties from its precepts, and practised them under its sanctions. On the greatest of all topics in any religion, it is silent. By no suggestions of reason, no analogies of nature, no records of experience, no monuments of earth, blackened and withered by the curse of God, no pealing thunder, no convulsions of the elements, no smiling landscape, no blushing beauties of spring, brilliant glories of summer, or sombre shades of autumn, in short, by no voice from heaven, earth or air, has it ever taught how God could be just and yet the sinner saved. In no dungeon of despair has it cast a ray of hope. In no hovel of poverty has it left a crumb of comfort. In no scene of sorrow has it mingled its joys. No widow's heart has ever welcomed its consolations. No orphan's tears have been dried by its hands. Athwart no dark and gloomy tomb of infancy have its beams been shed. From no bed of pain and weakness, disease and death, have been heard the accents of its peace, or the notes of its triumphs. No portals of perdition have been closed by its power. No heaven of glory opened to its voice. If Christianity is to be despised and neglected as limited and feeble, much more must the boasted religion of nature be discarded, and from the toils and dangers of a fatherless world, he must launch forth on the dread Unknown of Futurity, without rudder or compass, pilot or sail, in the frail and foundering wreck of Atheism.

We conclude, 1. That as on those topics, which are common to the course of nature and Revelation, objections to the latter are often relieved by showing that they apply to the former, we are justified in receiving Revelation, even although objections derived from other sources, as the apparent contradictions of science or our fallible apprehensions of the contents of the Bible, may still exist. For as we receive the course of nature to be from God, notwithstanding the existence of some very grave difficulties, on the general evidence afforded us, so we may believe Revelation credible. And as in the natural world, the same faculties of investigation and the same phenomena, from which great discoveries have been made and great objections removed, have been long possessed by men before such results were attained, so it is credible, that as time rolls on, existing difficulties in Revelation, may give way to the investigations which may yet be made. This has actually occurred in time past. We should

then, on the whole, very modestly urge objections, and very cautiously permit them to influence our minds.

2. That while the existence of difficulties is acknowledged, yet there is such an *appearance* of truth in Christianity, and all the objections are counterbalanced by such strong evidences in its favor, we ought rather to suspect such difficulties are removable, than the contrary, and be urged to diligence in prosecuting our inquiries. True or false, Christianity must possess some inherent vitality. It has survived the rise and fall of numberless other systems, as well as numberless disasters, affecting itself. That appearance of truth has secured for it the suffrages of some of the acutest minds, the most profound reasoners, and the most splendid geniuses of the world. A system claiming as adherents, such men as Milton and Bacon, Locke and Newton, Pascal and Leibnitz, Chalmers and Edwards, and still sustained by the best men, other than its professed advocates, ought, were no objections to its matter capable of clear resolution, to obtain our favorable regard. And since all leading objections of this class are confutable, it is but little to ask, that we give it a fair, full, and impartial hearing.

3. Sound religious knowledge should be carefully imparted to the young. Infidelity is doubtless often more of the heart than of the head. After all the evidences have been accumulated and all objections confuted, still the greatest of all difficulties remains. It lies back of reason. Christianity is the foe of sin, which the heart is loving. The natural heart opposes it. But if the mind be uninformed, darkened by error and blinded by prejudice, the avenues to the heart are closed. Let these be kept open by a sound and thorough exhibition of the truth of the gospel scheme, and then may we hope successfully to approach the heart, and by the word of God and the Spirit of his power, subdue its opposition, resist its proclivity to evil, and renew its nature. We do not decry any kind of learning. But however enlightened on other subjects, he knows nothing commensurate with the responsibilities or destinies of man, who is not wise to salvation. The wisdom which is here taught, is alone permanent, pure, and eternally productive. The "fear of the Lord" is its beginning; to know Him, love him, and see him as he is, its glorious consummation.

4. Let the blessed results of Christian faith evinced in the lives and deaths of its true professors, be contrasted with the unfruitful works of that darkness which is unrelieved by a ray from

heaven. Let the generous and expansive love, the zealous and untiring benevolent labors, and the self-denying and devoted faithfulness of the Christian be compared with the selfish and contracted tempers, the fierce and vindictive passions, and the degrading sensuality or deceitful dealings of the best of heathen. Above all, let the peace, security, and triumph, of the feeblest of the feeblest sex in the feeblest hours of human frailty, under the appalling approaches of man's most terrible enemy, be set against the dim uncertainties, the gloomy forebodings and often, fearful premonitions of despair, which have signalized the dying hours of the caviller and skeptic, and with all objections to his faith, reason compels the exclamation, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."