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ARTICLE I.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR OPINIONS.

*The Eclipse of Faith; a Visit to a Religious Skeptic.—*  
*Third Edition. Boston: Crosby Nichols & Co., 111*  
*Washington-street: 1853.*

*Reason and Faith, and other Miscellanies of Henry Ro-*  
*gers, author of Eclipse of Faith. Boston: Crosby Ni-*  
*chols & Co. New-York: Charles S. Francis & Co.*  
*1853.*

The last named of these two volumes is made up of contributions to the Edinburgh Review, by one of its ablest recent writers. These essays are all valuable, and it is a great convenience to have them thus collected into a volume. That on the "Vanity and Glory of Literature," is worthy of the fine scholarship of the author, and presents to scholars many important lessons, both of hope and humility. The essays on the "Genius and Writings of Pascal," and on "Reason and Faith, their claims and conflicts," may, in this day, when Christianity has to meet her adversaries on a new arena, be read with advantage by all students of the Evidences. And the articles on "Luther's correspondence and character," is just such a tribute to the grandeur and nobleness of the Reformer's mind and life as we like to see. The author's views are produced in the form of an examination of Hallam's Critique upon Luther's intellect and writings. We think he demonstrates that Hallam's "excellent and well-practised judgment deserted him in this instance."

VOL. VII.—No. 3.

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## ARTICLE II.

THE BIBLE, AND NOT REASON, THE ONLY CERTAIN AND AUTHORITY SOURCE OF OUR KNOWLEDGE, EVEN OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

"We have also" says the Apostle Peter, "a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts."—Without entering into the discussion of the various shades of interpretation to which this passage of Scripture has given rise, I would present what appears to be implied as true in them all. The Apostle had adduced the miracle of the transfiguration, of which he was an eye-witness, as an irrefragable proof of the divinity and glory of Christ and his gospel, and of the assurance of future and everlasting blessedness. Of all this, the glory with which Christ was transfigured,—the testimony given to him by Moses and Elias,—and the voice of God openly declaring him to be his Son, and authoritatively requiring all men implicitly to receive and obey his teachings,—are irresistible proofs. But, adds the Apostle, strong as is *this* testimony, and infallible as is this evidence of the truth and certainty of the things in which we have believed, we have the very word of God conveyed to us through the instrumentality of holy men of God in every age of the Church, in those Scriptures which are filled with prophetic and inspired truths. The allusion is therefore to the entire Scriptures, both of the old and new Testaments. These Scriptures were "ALL GIVEN BY INSPIRATION," as is attested by miraculous and prophetic evidences, that is, by a supernatural power, and a supernatural wisdom and foreknowledge, which imply omniscience, and omnipotence, and omnipresence. They are not, therefore, the result of private or uninspired disclosure, impulse or discovery. They did not originate from the intuitive or rational powers of the human mind. The Prophets were, as Bishop Horsley states it, necessary agents, acting under the irresistible influence of the omniscient Spirit, who made the faculties

and the organs of those holy men the instruments for conveying to mankind some portion of the treasures of his own knowledge." All the information, both as to doctrine and duty, contained in the Scriptures, is the result of supernatural or divine influence, and is, therefore, as indisputably the Word of God, as the voice from "the excellent glory heard upon the holy mount."

To those Scriptures, therefore, we are required to "take heed," as being all "profitable for" the infallible communication of "doctrine" and knowledge of duty. In the midst of that obscurity and darkness which envelope the limited range of human reason, and the ignorance and inability to comprehend divine things, even when revealed, in which sin has involved the understandings of men, revelation shines as a light in a dark place, to instruct and guide, and is completely fitted to direct into all truth and all duty, the otherwise bewildered inquirer. While he who trusts to his *own*, or to *human* reason, is like the mariner without chart, compass or anchor, driven about by every wind of doctrine, and "never in one stay," he who takes heed to this divine light, possesses both a divine compass, chart and anchor, which are "sure and steadfast," and by which he is made "wise unto salvation."

And what is more: the evidences by which the Scriptures are found to be the only and infallible rule of faith and practice, bright, and burning as they *now* are, are ever increasing. Events which, at the time the Scriptures were in their several parts written, were in the womb of time, have many of them come forth, and many more shall yet be brought into existence, giving by their testimony increasing magnitude and effulgence to this radiant light of Divine truth. Monuments silent for ages, and ruins buried for thousands of years from the notice of mankind, are now vocal, and coming forth from the tomb of their supposed oblivion, are proclaiming, as with the united voices of all past generations, the truth, and certainty, and inspiration of the Scriptures. Even now, the day has but *begun* to dawn, and the day-star to *arise* upon our hearts, and this evidence and attestation to the Scriptures, as the word of God, shall shine more and more, until the unclouded blaze of perfect conviction

shines with noon-tide brilliance on every darkened mind of man.

It is thus that the Psalmist also, describes the word of God,—fully developed in the gospel of his Son,—as being the true light imaged by the light of the natural sun.—Like the sun, it is intended for all men, adapted to all, and to be communicated to all. It is the only source of real, certain, and infallible truth, on all subjects super-human and divine. There is no speech nor language, where its voice is not, or is not to be heard. In its light alone, we see light, and destitute of it, millions “sit as in the region and shadow of death,” and “perish for lack of knowledge.” This word of God is, and it *alone* is, perfect to restore the soul from error to truth, from sin to righteousness, from doubt to certainty. It alone convinces of sin, holds forth a Saviour, is the means of grace, a rule of conduct, a standard of faith, a source of wisdom, unveiling to the darkened vision of reason the wonderful nature, and works, and ways, and will, and worship, and purposes, and mercy, of God, and thus enlightening the eyes.

To be a Christian, then, is to believe that Moses and the prophets, Christ and his Apostles, *were endued with divine* authority to teach all that they taught, and enforce all that they enjoined, and that God will verify in this world, and in the world to come, all that they have foretold,—it is, in short, cordially and with our hearts, to believe and act upon the truth that the Scriptures are the only rule of our faith and practice, of our hopes and fears, and that to add to, or take from, to modify or exchange any of their truths, is to endanger the only “foundation which God has laid in Zion.”

In what relation, then, does reason stand to Scripture and Scripture to reason? To perceive this with clearness, let us remember what has been determined concerning reason. Reason is that intelligent nature by which man is capable of thinking,—of discerning the relation of cause and effect,—of receiving and distinguishing testimony,—of weighing evidence,—of forming opinions,—of attaining knowledge,—of becoming acquainted with what is duty,—and of acting upon it under a sense of deep and solemn responsibility. This reason, we have seen, is

limited in its *capacity*, by its own finite nature, and in its *field of observation* and experience by the senses, to which, as inlets of sensation and organs of perception, it is at present allied. What is beyond this sphere, reason can only know by testimony, or remain ignorant of altogether, as is the case in reference to a *great part* of the things by which it is surrounded, and *universally*, as it regards their essences. Of course, this must be much more evidently and necessarily the case, as it relates to all things spiritual, supernatural and divine. This is an unknown region, which, like the terra incognita of earth, can only be surmised and conjectured, but of which we can have certain knowledge only so far as our actual observation and discovery in the one case, and actual testimony in the other, really extend. Both may be, to a certain extent, comprehensible by reason, when the means of judging of their existence and attributes is brought within its reach. In both, there will be much to be *believed*, as, for instance, the essence of things, which, with its present capacity, it never can *comprehend*. The belief, in regard to both, of all that is proved to be true, is most reasonable, and the attempt to explain or to dogmatize upon what is not proved or revealed, or comprehensible, is most unreasonable and absurd, yea, most sinful and impious.

But reason is not only limited. It is imperfect. It is not infallible. It is not omniscient, nor are its bodily organs absolutely perfect. It is, therefore, liable to misapprehension, perversion and mistake. To err is human. Infallibility is the prerogative only of Divinity. This imperfect and limited nature characterizes man as a creature "made a little lower than the angels," and not merely as a fallen and sinful creature. Adam, in Paradise, needed, and received, and rejoiced in, the instruction, guidance and holiness, imparted to him by his all-gracious and merciful Creator.

But now, man is a fallen and sinful, as well as a limited and imperfect being, and the Divine communion, holiness, and guidance, originally imparted to him, are, by his own sin, withdrawn. As it was in God's light man's reason saw perfectly, holily and wisely, so, when that light is withheld, reason is left to its own feeble

imperfection, and sees but dimly. A disordered heart ever enveloping it in a misty haze, it is seduced into error, mistakes truth for falsehood and falsehood for truth, regards evidence with attention or inattention, and investigates it thoroughly or imperfectly, according to the wishes of the heart. The understanding is itself darkened, and it will not come unto the light.

Thought  
 Precedes the will to think, and error lives  
 Ere reason can be born. Reason, the power  
 To guess at right and wrong, the twinkling lamp  
 Of wand'ring life, that winks and wakes by turns  
 Fooling the follower betwixt shade and shining.

While this limited, imperfect and perverted character of human reason has been manifested in every department of knowledge, it has been most lamentably exhibited in all inquiries into things divine. This was to be expected. These things lie beyond the field of sensible observation, experience and proof. We know not what life is, or what the soul is, or what spirit is, or how these act upon matter. And if thus ignorant concerning ourselves, and of what is within us, and constitutes ourselves, how can we know or comprehend that great Spirit who is infinite, eternal, omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent! How God, thus infinite, can be good, and yet man evil,—how God can be gracious, and yet man miserable,—how man can be free, and yet absolutely dependent,—how all things past, present and to come, can be present to God's knowledge, power, wisdom, and government, and yet the liberty of second causes remain unhindered,—these are difficulties, arising, not from revelation, but from the nature of things as they exist, and which, independently of revelation, reason has found to be incomprehensible, and the source of endless speculations and contradictory theories.

In thoughts more elevate sages have reasoned high  
 Of Providence, foreknowledge, will, of fate,—  
 Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute;  
 And found no end in wandering mazes lost.

Whether human reason *by its own unaided powers* could ever have attained to the knowledge of God's being, attributes, or providence, or of man's future destiny in a

world to come, or of the true origin of man's present contrarieties of feeling, character and judgment, or of the way in which the fears of death, and of evil after death, and of evil during life from some invisible and unknown powers, could be appeased or removed,—this I say is a question which cannot possibly be determined in the affirmative, and must, I would think, be decided in the negative. It cannot be proved that human reason *unassisted*, could discover the truth on these points, and for this simple reason, that human reason never has been without assistance. In the beginning it had the instruction given by God, actual communion with God, and knowledge of Him, of itself, and of its relations to Him. From the first moment of man's fall, reason was assisted and instructed by the remembrance of what was already known, and by a present and permanent revelation of God's purposes and plans for man's redemption,—the necessity and nature of divine worship,—a coming Saviour, and of the salvation and everlasting life to be obtained through Him. And at sundry times and in divers manners, God has replenished and renewed, and increased the light and knowledge thus originally, and always enjoyed. The traditionary rays of this light shining amid the darkness of human ignorance ever increasing as sin obscured what existed, have been preserved by every nation and kindred, and tongue, and tribe, and people, under the whole heavens. To many there was super-added the direct or indirect light of a positive and present revelation. And to *all* there were "the invisible things of God clearly understood by the things that are made," when—with the knowledge of God and the disposition to know of God—these were carefully examined. It was with all this light and assistance, and with more or less knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures that the ancient philosophers and sages wrote and spoke what they did on these points. In all that was dark, contradictory and obscure, we see the imperfections, vanity, and perversions of human reason, and in all, in them that was accordant to the truth, we see the reflected light of an existing, or of a traditionary revelation.

Any true, certain and assured knowledge on these subjects, the world by all its wisdom never has attained.

What God is, was the question which, the longer "the wisdom of this world" took to answer, the more impossible the answer became. All that philosophers could discover with certainty was what Socrates, the wisest of them, avouched as the great attainment of human wisdom, that God was incomprehensible and that man knew nothing. They all confessed and lamented their ignorance of these things. Plato was sensible of the depravity of human nature, acknowledged the want of a divine guide and earnestly desired such assistance to lead him to the truth. He compared the present condition of the soul to the statue of the sea-god Glaucus, which was partly broken with the waves, and almost covered with shells and stones and weeds. The mind at present, he says, "knows things but as in a dream, and in reality is ignorant of every thing;" and he affirms that he never met with a man who knew what virtue was. The ancients, too, referred all their original knowledge of divine things to the Gods, and to a primitive revelation from them. And when the Athenians inquired of Apollo, as Cicero informs us, what religion they should profess and hold, the oracle answered, "That of their forefathers." And since these were contradictory and various, they inquired again, which, and were answered, "The best." Even when Thales, Plato, and others, imported among them the purer ideas they had derived from their intercourse with nations in contact with the Jews, reason could not even receive, understand and conform to them. It heard the words, but attached to them no clear and certain ideas. Even Plato, therefore, represents himself as wandering upon the sea of truth, having no certain port to which to steer, no pilot to guide him, and ever tossed about like the waves. And thus we find even in the days of the Apostles, when Paul visited Athens, one of the most prominent objects was a statue "to the unknown God."

"The whole voice of antiquity agrees in this, that the knowledge of the first cause is a gift of the gods to men." Even Celsus concluded "That a divine Spirit descended to acquaint the ancient sages with those divine truths they taught the world." And Jamblichus asserts, "That our weak and frail nature possesses nothing of this knowledge as natural to it."

This one thing is certain, that the *earlier* we go in our inquiries into the notions of a God among any nation, the *clearer* they are found, because nearer, we believe, to the original light and purer reflection of revelation. The invariable effect of philosophy and human reason therefore, has been to confuse these ideas and to bring men into a state of practical atheism, or at least of scepticism.

Even the more profound thinkers of the Alexandrian school frankly acknowledged the impossibility of a proper proof of the existence of God.\*

Such was the result to which human reason among the most intellectual and refined nation of the ancient world, and aided too, by all that genius, philosophy, the traditions of primitive revelation and scintillations from existing revelation, could attain. "The world by all its wisdom knew not God."

If from the *ancient* we turn to the *modern* world, we find, just as surely as philosophers discard the light of divine revelation,—though their minds are brightened by its influence and their moral code is deduced from its pages,—that nevertheless they run into all the vagaries of rationalism, of transcendentalism, of pantheism, of the worship of genius, or on the other hand, into the depths of superstition.†

\* See Hagenbach's *Hist. of Doctr.* vol. i. p. 90, and Clem. of Alex., *Strom.* v. 12, p. 695; *ib.* in calce et. 696; *Strom.* iv. 25, p. 635; Likewise Origen *contra als.* viii, 42; (opp. T. J. p. 725,) maintains, in reference to the saying of Plato, that it is difficult to find God. Even the notions of the heathen, concerning the immortality of the soul, were founded on tradition and corrupted by philosophy, as may be seen in Leland's *Necessity of Divine Rev.* vol. ii, pt. 2, ch. 7, p. 107.

† Dr. Marehold, the celebrated antagonist of Strauss, in his treatise on *Vaticination* § 4, remarks, after enumerating the various points in which all religions coincide with one another and with revelation,—“I say, we are constrained, without reference to the holy volume, to adopt the sentiment that the supposition, prevalent for better than a century, of a natural religion, so called, is utterly false, and that all religions have proceeded from a common fountain, viz: ‘from the name of the Lord,’ which, when forgotten, righteous Abraham proclaimed again, and therefore as the human race manifests such harmonious doctrines, sages, and customs, as we have shown above, it likewise follows that, whenever in these doctrines, sages and customs appear irrational to subjective reason, when torn from mediate experience, has to be acknowledged as rational, because there exists no function in the human mind capable of producing from itself the same religious representations and figures in all ages, all localities, and among all nations. The great minds among the heathen have, at least in

Even as to the EXISTENCE of God, it is a question of great doubt, whether reason, *entirely unassisted*, could demonstrate this great truth with any certainty. We see, it is true, in all the works of God, evidences of order, wisdom, and design, from which, by an intuitive principle or power of mind, we infer that there must be a wise and intelligent Being who ordered and designed them all. The events of life, the providence and protection manifested towards all creatures, also lead the mind to the contemplation of a Being "distinct from nature, who conducts and determines what seems to us accidental," and who is a GOVERNOR as well as an ARCHITECT. The consciousness of a something within us, which thinks, feels, reasons, plans, desires, and loves, leads us still further to believe that there must be a conscious, PERSONAL, benevolent, and all-wise God. The sense in man of right and wrong, of the evil of the one and the propriety of the other, of their desert of approbation or disapprobation, rewards or punishments, and the consequent emotions of self condemnation, or approval, of hope, and fear, joy or sorrow, these feelings in our nature also lead us, irresistibly, to believe in a God who is the Governor and Judge of men, and who, as He has the *power*, has also the will

part, felt, and humbly laid hold of this truth, that all the talk of subjective reason leads to no result. They therefore adhered to tradition, i. e. to what had been given them, though it had become ever so dim and imperfect. Hence Socrates says, in the *Gorgias* of Plato, that he did believe the sages of a spiritual world from tradition alone; and in Cicero's work, *De natura Deorum*, lib. 3d cap. 17, Cotta answers another philosopher, who had undertaken to demonstrate to him the existence of the gods by arguments drawn from reason: "This single argument suffices me that our ancestors have delivered to us the faith in the immortal gods.

Thus the individual idea, "God," which we meet with among most nations of the earth, does not yet permit us to prove the real existence of God, and to infer hence the rationality of the idea, as the ancient philosophers, an Aristotle, a Plato, a Cicero, and others, believed; but this historical proof of the existence of God, derived from the unanimous assent of all nations, has in later times been almost unanimously rejected, since we have become better acquainted with the earth and its inhabitants than the ancients were. In this article we agree with our modern philosophers, inasmuch as the idea of God was very indefinite in antiquity; and only admitted the adoption of something higher than man. But the view changes materially, if we consider this general belief of nations as some original revelation, which we shall have to do, so soon as we reflect on the further connection of their other religious traditions and views with our biblical revelation.—*Whitaker's Southern Magazine*, Aug. 1852, p. 122.

to punish or reward, according to the actions of His creatures.

Such are the sources from which human reason, guided by all the light which science, education and revelation, can throw around it, derives its proofs of the **EXISTENCE** of God. And undoubtedly, the premises are sound, and the conclusions most rational. But at the same time, it must be admitted, that these arguments require for their appreciation, a very close and rigid analysis, a very candid and impartial inquiry, and a perfect freedom from prejudice and disinclination to the truth.

There are also, it must be admitted, many difficulties, doubts and objections, which present themselves to every one of these conclusions,—“doubts and perplexities which,” it is admitted, by one of the ablest reasoners upon the subject,\* “the mind *must* entertain but which it feels that it *cannot solve*.” “When,” he adds, “the mind is fixed on any one of these groups of arguments, to the exclusion of the others, the conception becomes limited, partial, and so far, erroneous.”†

Beliefs which invariably exist, are those which both rationally and of necessity, we must adopt as primary and fundamental facts, and when it is impossible for us to conceive the negative of such beliefs, we have the highest evidence that they do, and must invariably, exist.‡ Such truths we must regard as the necessary result of the operation of the human mind in its relation to the external world, and to all impressions made upon it from whatever source.§

Now, if, as we may assume, this is the only certain criterion of a belief which is universal and necessary to the human mind, then it will follow that the existence of a God is not such. It is not universal, since nations have

\* Dr. McCosh on the Div. Govt., p. 12. † Do. Do.

‡ If there be, as Mr. Mill holds, certain absolute uniformities in nature; if these uniformities produce, as they must, absolute uniformities in our experience; and if, as he shows, these absolute uniformities in our experience disable us from conceiving the negations of them; then answering to each absolute uniformity in nature which we can cognize, there must exist in us a belief of which the negation is inconceivable, and which is absolutely true.

§ See Art. on the Universal Postulate, in the Westminster Review, Oct. 1853.

been found so sunk in barbaric ignorance as not to possess it; since it is only found to prevail in so far as a good degree of general intelligence and traditional knowledge are found to exist; and since when it is found to exist it is not manifested in any uniform belief, as is the reality of the existence of an external world, but in many various modes. And as we can easily conceive of the negation of such a belief, and many philosophers have rejected, and do now reject this belief, we have the most assured evidence that this belief is not universal, or one which the human mind must logically, or of necessity, admit, by any inherent and uninstructed power within itself. In other words, the belief in the existence of a God is not founded upon *a priori*, but upon *a posteriori*, evidence.

It is further to be remarked, that the predominating character of the present philosophy in France and Germany, and, to some extent, in all ages and countries, *is* and *has* been atheistical, either resolving itself into Pantheism, that is, making nature God and God nature, or denying God altogether, and reducing all events to fate, or to unalterable mechanical laws.

In Germany philosophy has either utterly scouted revelation, or it has rejected as a mere form, the text of Scripture, and aimed at *creating* a new christianity, a new religion, by its own power. In it, therefore, we see what the human mind is capable of when left to itself, even under the guidance of genius. "What had they been doing for twenty years? They had attacked with a sort of phrenzy all the principles on which rest religion, morality, the family, the State, the civil law. Not only had they abandoned Christianity in their audacious theories, they had denied the existence of the living God, man's liberty and responsibility, the immortality of the soul, and preached the most hideous pantheism with all its consequences." Even now, the prevailing philosophy is a pantheistic perversion of the terms of Christianity.

It is, therefore, very doubtful, whether human reason, if left entirely unassisted, could ever have arrived at any definite, fixed, or certain knowledge even, of the EXISTENCE of God.

The existence of atheism, says John Randolph, in his celebrated letters to H. St. G. Tucker, Esq., published in

the Washington Union, by Septimus Tustin, has been denied, but I was an honest atheist. Hume began, and Hobbes finished me. I read Spinoza and all the tribe. Surely I fell by no ignoble hand. And the very man (——) who gave me Hume's "Essay upon Nature" to read, administered "Beattie upon Truth," as the antidote—Venice treacle against arsenic and the essential oil of bitter almonds—bread and milk poultice for the "bite of the cobra capello."

Had I remained a successful political leader, I might never have been a Christian. But it pleased God that my pride should be mortified; that by death and desertion I should lose my friends; that, except in the veins of a maniac, and he too, possessed "of a child by a deaf and dumb spirit," there should not run one drop of my father's blood in any living creature besides myself. The death of Tudor finished my humiliation. I had tried all things but the refuge to Christ, and to that, with parental stripes, was I driven. Often did I cry out with the father of that wretched boy, "Lord! I believe—help thou mine unbelief;" and the gracious mercy of our Lord to this wavering faith, staggering under the force of the hard heart of unbelief, I humbly hoped would, in his good time, be extended to me also.—St. Mark, vii: 17-29.

"Throw Revelation aside, and I can drive any man by irresistible induction to atheism. John Marshall could not resist me. When I say any man, I mean a man capable of logical and consequential reasoning. Deism is the refuge of those that startle at atheism, and can't believe Revelation: and my ——, (may God have forgiven us both,) and myself used, with Diderot & Co., to laugh at the deistical bigots who must have milk, not being able to digest meat. All theism is derived from Revelation—that of the laws confessedly. Our own is from the same source—so is the false revelation of Mahomet; and and I can't much blame the Turks for considering the Franks and Greeks to be idolators. Every other idea of *one* God that floats in the world is derived from the tradition of the sons of Noah handed down to their posterity."\*

Mr. Charles Rosenkrantz, a distinguished disciple of Hegel, has published two books, one entitled "The System of Science," and the other "My

So much for the question of the EXISTENCE of God, a truth which, while it is most agreeable to human reason, requires the light of revelation to present it clear and evident to the eye of reason, and to enable that eye to see the invisible things of God, "even his eternal power and God-head, by the things that are made."

Nature, and time, and earth, and skies,  
God's heavenly skill proclaim;  
What shall we do to make us wise  
But learn to read thy name!

To fear thy power, to trust thy grace,  
Is our divinest skill:  
And he's the wisest of our race  
That best obeys thy will.

But we may bring this question to the test of experiment. As all the knowledge of God found among men may be accounted for by an original divine teaching and communicated knowledge, to which even language itself must, in all probability, be ascribed, this knowledge is no certain proof of what unassisted human reason can attain.

But there are and have been human beings who, by the want of the powers of speech and hearing, have been cut off from the instruction of their fellow men, and left to the powers of their own natural understanding.—What, then, I ask, is the fact in relation to them?

We will present an account sent by Mr. Fellebien to the Academy of Sciences at Paris, and printed in their *Memoirs*, by which is fully evinced the absolute incapacity of man, uninstructed, for making or thinking of any religion.\* The son of a tradesman in Chartres, who had been deaf from his birth, and consequently dumb, when he was about twenty-three or twenty-four years of age, began on a sudden to speak, without its being known that he had ever heard. This event drew the attention of every one, and many believed it to be miraculous.—

Reform of Hegel's Philosophy." He admits that the opinions of his master, interpreted by ignorant or rash scholars, have favoured the materialist tendencies of our age. He avows also, that Hegel errs in trying to form an idea by the mere force of human intelligence, of the Infinite and the finite, God, man and the universe.

\* See *The Scholar Armed*, vol. i: p. 180, 181.

The young man, however, gave a plain and rational account, by which it appeared to proceed from natural causes. He said, that about four months before, he was surprised by a new and pleasing sensation, which he afterwards discovered to arise from a ring of bells : that as yet, he heard only with one ear, but afterwards a kind of water came from his left ear, and then he could hear distinctly with both ; that from this time he listened, with the utmost curiosity and attention, to the sounds which accompany those motions of the lips, which he had before remarked to convey ideas from one person to another. In short, he was able to understand them, by noting the thing to which they related, and the action they produced. And after repeated attempts to imitate them when alone, at the end of four months he thought himself able to talk. He therefore, without having intimated what had happened, began at once to speak, and affected to join in conversation, though with much more imperfection than he was aware of.

Many Divines immediately visited him, and questioned him about God, and the soul, moral good and evil, and many other subjects of the same kind ; but of all this, they found him totally ignorant, though he had been used to go to mass, and had been instructed in all the externals of devotion, and making the sign of the cross, looking upwards, kneeling at proper seasons, and using gestures of penitence and prayer. Of death itself, which may be considered as a sensible object, he had very confused and imperfect ideas, nor did it appear that he had ever reflected upon it. His life was little more than animal and sensitive. He seemed to be content with the simple perception of such objects as he could perceive, and did not compare his ideas with each other, nor draw inferences, as might have been expected from him. It appeared, however, that his understanding was vigorous, and his apprehension quick ; so that his intellectual defects must have been caused, not by the barrenness of the soil, but merely by the want of necessary cultivation.

The case of this young man was not peculiar. What was true of him is true of every human being born in his circumstances. An individual who is cut off by total

deafness and speechlessness from all instruction, is destitute of the knowledge of God, and incapable, by any exercise of his own reason, even with all the phenomena of the heavens and the earth before him, of finding out God. His mind is a blank, in reference to all things supernatural and divine. The power of consciousness, the principle of causation, and the faculty of judgment, fail to lead him up from "the things that are made," to "the invisible things, even the eternal power and God-head" of Him that made them. It is only when, by the wonderful genius of modern philanthropy, he is brought into communication with other minds, with the fact of the existence of God, and with the evidences by which that fact is proved, that his mind is aroused to the deep and powerful conviction of this truth. Such is the invariable and universal fact.\*

Here then is a test, and the only test, we believe, of the real, intuitive, unaided, and uninstructed ability of human reason, to arrive at the certain knowledge of the existence of God. The inference from it, therefore, is, that while this truth commends itself to the intuitive powers of human reason, when brought, with its evidence before them, that, nevertheless, reason alone, unaided and uninstructed, is incapable of arriving at the sublime

\* The following communication is from Dr. Howe, the celebrated Teacher of Laura Bridgman, the deaf, dumb and blind mute, written in reply to my inquiries on this subject:

"Boston, Feb. 26, 1853.

Dear Sir,—I send you such of our Reports as I can find which mention the case of Laura Bridgman. You know it was laid down by Blackstone, and generally received as true, that a person born deaf and blind must necessarily be an idiot. Laura Bridgman was the first person who found her way out of the dreary isolation into the light of knowledge, and into communion with her fellows. By the way she came, others have followed; but it may safely be said that deaf and blind children would remain in idiocy, and of course in ignorance of the existence and attributes of God, unless their faculties are developed by special instruction. Laura's case proved very clearly the innateness of the *capacity* for religious ideas; for, without such capacity deeply seated in the moral nature, our instructions might have as well been given to a dog.

You will find some remarks germane to the subject of your inquiry, in some of the accompanying Reports.

If I can be of the slightest use to you in any way, please count upon my readiness. Faithfully yours,

S. G. HOWE.

REV. DR. SMYTH."

truth, that there is a God, who is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

Nay, more. We may venture to bring this question to the standard of reason, even in Christian lands. For, in the very bosom of Christendom, how many are there, in the lanes and alleys of our cities, in our woods and forests, in mines and cellars, and among the young, ignorant and vicious every where, who are "without God," and "atheists in the world." "Talk" says Locke, "but with the country people, almost of any age, and with young people, almost of any condition, and you shall find that though the name of God be frequently in their mouths, yet the notions they apply this name to, are so odd, low and pitiful, that no body can imagine they were taught by a rational man."\* Man, with all his searching, cannot find out his own spirit which is in him: and how then can he find out the Great Spirit, who is infinitely above and beyond, in His invisible and unapproachable greatness! He needs that one should teach him wherein be the first principles of the oracles of God.—He is a babe, and has need of milk. His reason, therefore, should be employed,—not in the vain attempts to penetrate the clouds and darkness which are round about the Deity, but, renouncing all imaginations of his own, in following that light which has shone forth from God's shrouded glory, and which alone reveals any part of His ways.

Such has, we may venture to say, been the prevailing doctrine among the ablest writers in the Christian church. These have ever maintained that the great principles of what is called natural religion, could never have been represented to the human mind, nor known by man, if God himself had not first taught them, and if they had not been preserved by a traditional, or an existing written revelation. This is perfectly consistent with the fact, which they also believed, that reason is an innate, natural faculty, for knowing the truth, and distinguishing truth from error, when that truth and its evidences are fairly and fully brought before it. The existence of God,

\* Essay L. 1; c. 4: § 16.

like all other truths of natural religion, when thus represented to the human mind, is rationally demonstrable and intuitively believed, and can be proved to the intellect and become a part of its intuitive inherent beliefs. But, until thus represented to the mind, we only maintain the approved sentiment of Christendom, in maintaining that man has not and cannot find out for, and by himself, any truth which respects things supernatural and divine. And if any parties should object to this conclusion, it ought not to be the Unitarians, since it was held by the fathers of their theology. Socinus says, "that to man naturally, and by his own reason or mind, there is no rooted, settled, or self-originated opinion of the Deity." Ostodorus, his fellow believer, says also, "what men know of God they do not derive from nature, neither from the consideration of the creation, but from instruction, since from the beginning God communicated the knowledge of himself to men."\*

The question then recurs, what is the relation of human reason to the scriptures? In this controversy, it is not my business to prove the *inspiration* and *authority* of the Scriptures. I have said enough to show the necessity of revelation to the discovery and knowledge of divine things. But, as I am arguing with professed Christians, I may, at present, assume that the Bible is proved by the evidence of miracles, of prophecy, of history, and of traditions, by its own nature and claims, and by its own self-commending power for the salvation of every one that believeth, to be the testimony of God, that is, *INSPIRED TRUTH*.

To perceive then, at once, what I apprehend to be the office of reason in reference to the Scriptures, I will introduce the following parable:†

A king sends one of his officers to a province, with authority to govern it in his name. After a time, this Governor allows himself to be ensnared and perverted by a faction. Hence the affairs of the province are very badly administered, and all things are thrown into confusion. The sovereign being well apprised of all that

\* Socinus Prælect, c. 2; Ostodorus Instit. pp. 1 and 10, quoted on De Gols' Vindec. p. 361.

† From Werenfels, a German writer, in Smith's Messiah, vol. i: p. 83.

had happened, and perceiving that the governor had not the wisdom and firmness, the exertion and authority requisite for remedying the disorders of the province and restoring it to peace, sends a deputy extraordinary, and gives orders to the governor to submit himself entirely, to this deputy, and to take no measures without his direction. The governor's first duty is to ascertain whether the superior minister be really sent by the king; for, unless he have satisfactory evidence of this, he would be guilty of treason in yielding to the *stranger* the authority which his sovereign had committed to *him*. But when he sees the sign manual, and the other unquestionable attestations of the royal commission, he immediately delivers up all his *own powers* to the *deputy*, and submits, in *all* respects, to *his* arrangements and decisions. Now, if I should ask, from whom does the deputy hold his authority over the premisses? From the king, who sent him, and whose commission, signed and sealed, he has in his hand, or from the governor, who, on the production of those documents, received him with due honor and acknowledgement? Every man of common sense will say, from the king, surely; for, to suppose the other would be absurd.

The application of this parable is plain. The gracious and almighty God has given reason to man for the guide of his conduct through life. But reason has submitted to be corrupted by sin, and man, therefore, is fallen into a state of extreme misery. God, of his infinite goodness, has had mercy upon man, and, seeing the insufficiency of reason to restore him from his fallen state, and to deliver him from his misery, has sent revelation, and has given orders to reason to yield obedience, and to take no part in directing the conduct of man, except what revelation may assign. What then, has reason to do in this case? First of all, she must examine whether this, which claims to be a revelation from God, is, indeed, such; for, if she have not satisfactory evidence of this, she cannot, without criminal rashness, surrender her own authority, which the Creator had invested her with for the government and guidance of man. But, as soon as she is satisfied, from indubitable proofs, that this is, indeed, a divine revelation, she yields without delay, and if reason

be indeed, *rational*, submits herself entirely, to the *Word of God*.

Against Fanatics, Romanists and Deists, we contend therefore, for the full and proper use of reason, in reference to all revealed, just as necessarily as in regard to all unrevealed, truth. The right and duty of judging for one's self is far more important and imperative in religion, than in anything beside. All the life, and power, and personal benefit of religion, consist in that inward conviction, and full persuasion of mind, which can arise only from examination, and the blessing of God, sought and obtained by prayer. It is to the understanding of every man the Bible addresses its proofs. Faith in the Word of God, is the assent of the understanding to the testimony of God upon the ground of His veracity, and wrought in us by the assistance of His holy Spirit, whose office it is to guide into all that is truth. Faith, therefore, is more certain than every other kind of belief, because the testimony of God in Scripture, is more certainly true than the conclusions of imperfect reason, founded upon the fallible evidence of our own observation, or the equally fallible testimony of man. Faith and the convictions of mere reason, are not, therefore, opposite, but the same, the one being produced by the infallible testimony of God brought home to the mind by the infallible Spirit of God, and the other being produced by the testimony of our own senses and the observation of our fellow-men, brought home to the mind by its own exertion, or by instructions from others. Faith, therefore, as it is the highest reason, is also the highest duty, because, as submission to the testimony of God in his word, is as reasonable as submission to the testimony of God in his works, and as God never requires faith without sufficient evidence that the testimony on which it is to rest is really his, unbelief is inexcusable impiety, since it makes God a liar, and his word untrue.

Whatever God says is, and must be, true: this is the principle of faith, and this is the principle of all reason. No reason can make us doubt God's veracity, whether we find him leading us to the knowledge of what is true by the senses he has given, by the reason he has im-

planted in us, by the intuitive and necessary beliefs to which that reason impels us, by the things he has placed around us, or by things he has been pleased to reveal to us. The office of reason, therefore, is to call to its aid all the powers of mind, and all the evidences within its reach, and thus to assure itself that God speaks, and to understand what God has spoken. Being satisfied by those evidences of miracles, prophecy, and the power of its truth, that the Bible, and that every part of the Bible, is the testimony of God, conveying to us, by whatsoever way inspired, HIS TRUTH, then reason is called upon to apply to that human language, in which God has spoken the laws of interpretation applied to all other human languages, and by their honest and faithful application to interpret the Bible. In this way reason discovers what the sacred writers really meant to declare as true. Reason having the evidence before her of what is really the truth God testifies, is bound by her own necessary and intuitive belief to acquiesce in that testimony, and to receive that truth, without presuming to call in question the propriety of the words in which it is delivered.

Here the office of reason ends, except so far as to explain, illustrate, vindicate, and contend earnestly for the truth. Reason is, therefore, THE INTERPRETER, and not the legislator or judge of the Bible, as she is of all truth. She *is*, indeed, a judge, so far as to know what the evidence proves to be testified as true, but not further. This would be intolerable temerity, since whatever is from God must be certainly true, and whatever God commands must be infallibly right, and our duty. This surely, is the true office, use, and dignity of reason.

Is not this all that reason does, or can do, in regard to the truth of God, in nature? It is but few of the facts or truths in nature, whose operation it can comprehend. What it does comprehend is the qualities or attributes by which things are distinguished and arranged.

Innumerable things are, however, believed in as true and real, which are, in their nature, purpose, and laws, altogether incomprehensible. The fixed principles and classifications of science, are constantly modified by new discoveries, which prove the fallaciousness of pre-existent theories. Many things also, which are exceptions to

general laws, and therefore, apparently, in contrariety to what is true, are, nevertheless, believed to be true. And thus, even in mathematical science, the same principles of reasoning require us to believe that two lines not parallel must, ultimately, form an angle, and yet, that in the curve called the asymptote, its lines are ever approximating, and yet, will never meet. Incomprehensibility, therefore, and apparent contrariety to other truths, or to what may be regarded by us as truths, is no test of what is really true.

How much more must this be the case in the whole region of things supernatural, in all that relates to God, and the relations between God and man, time and eternity? God himself, is the most incomprehensible of all things. His being and nature, are as high above our possible comprehension as are the heavens above the earth. God's providence and procedure being founded upon his own omniscient and eternal knowledge of all things, and of all that would follow from every kind of creation, every kind of providence, and every action of every creature, including the free agency of men, is founded, evidently, upon reasons infinitely beyond our possible comprehension. These things are not only unknown, but they are beyond the possibility of being known by us. They imply for their knowledge the same eternity, omniscience, omnipresence, and infinite almightiness, which can order and direct them. In all his dealings with man, God must also, of necessity, have regard to the whole duration of human things, the whole race of mankind, the whole order of human changes and events, the whole combination of all the causes of human tempers, all the actions of free agents, and all the consequences of his own action upon all the interests of every portion of the universe, in all the eternity that is to come.

A child, therefore, might as reasonably attempt to grasp the knowledge, and perform the functions of an arch-angel, as for finite reason to discover, comprehend, or judge the truth or reasonableness of anything that pertains to the nature, character, or doings of the infinite and omniscient reason. And that man, who, without God's revelation, would endeavor by searching, to find

out God, or determine the propriety of God's course of procedure, or who, having a revelation, endeavours by the rush-light of his glimmering reason, to mould and fashion its teaching into conformity to what he thinks reasonable and proper, and true, is as great a visionary as the man who, without the organs of sense, and without any instruction from others, should undertake to discourse of the true nature of the external, visible creation. In a moral point of view, such conduct can only be likened to the daring impiety of the Titans attempting to scale the heavens, or of the angels in that rebellion which sunk them to perdition, or to the pride and arrogance, and impiety of our first progenitors in attempting to become "*wise as God*." The very object of revelation is to make known what could not be known at all, except so far as it is revealed. In the more common Scripture sense of the word, all that is contained in revelation is mystery, inasmuch as it was before hidden and unknown, and it all remains, and must remain mystery, except so far as it is now made known and unveiled. To do any thing else than receive this revelation gratefully and humbly, to interpret it conscientiously, candidly, and according to the established principles of all rational interpretation, and then, in implicit reverence and submission, to believe and obey its truths and precepts, is *virtually*, even when it is not openly and avowedly, to reject that revelation. To add to, or take *from* the Scriptures by tradition on the one hand, or by vain philosophy and rationalistic pride on the other, is to incur the curse and the woe with which God, in his book, threatens every such impious audacity.

Does reason then, affect to be self-sufficient, she is an impotent usurper; but if she act in a state of dependence she is a valuable servant. Does she pretend to be our light in matters of a spiritual and heavenly nature? She is then a despicable dotard, or an *ignis fatuus*. Does she kindle her torch at the fire of revelation? She may then be a discernor of doctrines, and we will call her "The candle of the Lord." Submitting to her divine author and learning at the feet of omniscience, she is reason in her senses, presuming to be equal with the All-wise; undertaking to comprehend his words, or dar-

ring to dispute his word, she is reason run mad. In this quality we disclaim and cashier her; in the other, we cherish and employ her." "The prerogative of God, (says Lord Bacon,) comprehends the whole man; and is extended as well to the *reason*, as to the *will* of man: that is, that man renounce himself wholly, and draw near to God. Wherefore, as we are to obey his law, though we find a reluctance in our *will*; so we are to believe His word, though we find a reluctance in our *reason*: for, if we believe only that which is agreeable to our reason, we give assent to the *matter*, not to the *author*, which is no more than we would do towards a *suspected* and *discredited witness*. Theology is grounded on, and must be deduced from the oracles of God; and not from the light of nature, or the dictates of reason."

We only add the testimony of Locke. "Revelation, where God has been pleased to give it, must carry it against the probable conjectures of reason, because the mind, not being certain of the truth of that it does not evidently know, but only yielding to the probability that appears in it, is bound to give up its assent to such a testimony, which it is satisfied comes from one who can not err, and will not deceive."

"There is nothing more required of a Christian, but that he receive all the parts of Divine revelation with a docility and disposition prepared to embrace and assent to all truths coming from God, and submit his mind to whatsoever shall appear to him to bear that character."

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### ARTICLE III.

#### THE OBSTACLES TO MINISTERIAL PIETY.

We propose in this article to consider the difficulties in the way of eminent ministerial piety. We shall not spend any time in attempting to demonstrate the desirableness of eminent piety in a minister of the Gospel. By common consent, this is considered the first essential element for his work. Talent, learning, aptness to teach,