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ARTICLE I.

LECTURES ON FOREIGN CHURCHES, *delivered in Edinburgh and Glasgow, May, 1845, in connection with the objects of the Free Church of Scotland.* FIRST SERIES. *Edinburgh, 1845.*

LECTURES ON FOREIGN CHURCHES. SECOND SERIES. *Edinburgh, 1846.*

The first series of these lectures is by the Rev. Drs. Candlish, Wilson, and McFarlane; and the Rev. Messrs. Thomas McCrie, Robert W. Stewart, Wm. K. Tweedie, and J. G. Lorimer.

The subjects are as follows:

- I. The Mutual Relations of the Churches of Christ.
- II. The Independent Eastern Churches.
- III. The Ancient History of the Waldensian Church.
- IV. The present condition and future prospects of the Waldensian Church.
- V. The Religious History of Holland and Belgium since the Reformation.
- VI. Past and Present State of Evangelical Religion in Switzerland, and especially Geneva.
- VII. The Past and Present State of Evangelical Religion in France.

The *Second Series*, contains seven lectures by Messrs. Wilson, Forbes, Fairbairn, Bryce, Tweedie, Hetherington, and Buchanan. Their subjects are:

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had been founded on the mountains of Helvetia;* in creating an empire within the despotic and unquestionably Popish France;† in erecting the Commonwealth of England upon the ruins of civil and religious despotism; in giving origin to that liberty and reform which are still at work in the gradual transformation of the British Constitution; in moulding and fashioning the character of the Scottish people, so as to make them preëminent among the nations of the earth; and, not to enlarge,—in giving birth to the spirit of independence in these colonies, inspiring courage to declare it, union to maintain it, and wisdom, in some degree at least, to mould the Constitution of these United States;—when, we say, these facts are contemplated with a searching and unprejudiced eye, our words may well be tolerated as not unwarrantably eulogizing the genius of Presbytery as the genius of civil and religious liberty.‡

ARTICLE III

THE MORAL CONDITION OF WESTERN AFRICA.

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The Prophet Isaiah, in the 18th chapter, and 7th verse of his prophecies, has these words: "In that time shall the present be brought to the Lord of Hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from the beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden under foot, whose lands the rivers have spoiled, to the place of the name of the Lord of Hosts, the Mount Zion." As may be

* Viller's Essay on the Reformatton, p. 71, 136, &c. Baird's Northern Europe, vol. 1, p. 82-93.

† In fact, in France the Huguenot body soon made pretensions equivalent to a partition of the monarchy. See Villiers' Essay as above.

‡ This was the title selected for a work, for which the late Rev. Dr. Winchester, of Natchez, had made large preparation, when death cut short his labours.

seen, by reference to the context, he speaks of their inhabitants of Ethiopia, a name which was anciently given, not only to those regions in Africa, now known as Nubia and Abyssinia, but to all the country south and west, and including, consequently, the entire Negro population of the African Continent.

There are some historical statements in the passage, as well as some geographical allusions, that are not well understood, and may be passed over without comment, inasmuch as neither have any important bearing upon the general subject which we intend to present. The leading idea is sufficiently plain, and it is to considerations arising out of this, that attention is invited.

The inhabitants of Ethiopia, are spoken of as "a people scattered and peeled," as "a nation meted out and trodden under foot;" and in immediate connection, it is declared, that "they shall be brought as a present to the Lord of Hosts," and "to the place of the name of the Lord of Hosts, the Mount Zion."

Divested of all figurative dress, it is here affirmed in substance, that the inhabitants of Ethiopia would, for a certain period, "be scattered and peeled;" be "meted out and trodden under foot;" after which, they would be converted to the Lord Jesus Christ, and participate in all the blessings of that salvation which he has purchased with his blood.

We have then in this passage a prophetic description, not only of the present and past condition of Africa, but likewise of her conversion and future prosperity. Her history is characterized, in the first instance, by a period of deep and protracted degradation, to be followed by another, not less remarkable for the prevalence of evangelical piety and solid happiness. And who is there, though ever so slightly versed in African history, that does not feel that her condition is described with singular accuracy and fidelity?

Who needs to be reminded that the inhabitants of Africa have been "scattered and peeled," "meted and trodden under foot," when there are living evidences of this in almost every country on the face of the earth? What nation under the sun is there, whose history is not tarnished by deeds of aggression against this defenceless people?

But it is not more certain that one portion of this prophecy has already been fulfilled, than it is that the other will be, and that perhaps at no distant day. That same wise and Almighty Father of the universe, who foresaw and foretold her protracted degradation, as clearly foresaw and will as certainly bring to pass her promised deliverance.

Her past wrongs and injuries, as well as her present ignorance and degradation, as much as they are to be deplored for themselves, are nevertheless a sure token,—aye! a prophetic guarantee of her conversion and well-being.

We look forward, then, to a great change in the moral condition of this great continent. This expectation is not founded, however, upon any newly discovered tendency in the character of that country to renovate itself—nor is it expected as an immediate or necessary consequence from the advancing state of human affairs in other parts of the world. It has a surer foundation than any thing of this kind. It may be expected, because it is an event that has been determined in the councils of Heaven, for the fulfilment of which, the power and the veracity of Jehovah are alike and indubitably pledged.

In pursuing this subject, it will be our object to give, in a comprehensive view, a general outline of the moral condition of Western Africa.

It is not expected that the picture we are about to sketch, will be contemplated with feelings of unmingled satisfaction. A true description of heathenism any where, is little else than an exhibition of human depravity, in its worst and most revolting forms. And however painful may be the details which we shall feel constrained to give, let it not be forgotten, that they are nevertheless but too true a picture of the actual condition of the great mass of mankind; they are but the exhibition of scenes with which the missionary *must* be familiar; and they are facts with which the Christian church must be made acquainted, before it can be roused to suitable exertions in their behalf.

We would be justified, if we followed out the thoughts suggested by the prophet, in taking a wide range of observation. We might dwell specially upon the wrongs and injuries that have been practiced upon the African race by the rest of mankind. We might cite before the bar of pub-

lic opinion the slave trade, that foulest of all abominations, and by disclosing its deeds of cruelty, more flagitious than any other the world has ever heard, hold it up to universal abhorrence. We might excite public indignation, by exposing abuses practised upon that people, at the present day, by those from whom better things ought to be expected. But we refrain from these things. It is more consonant with our object, to inquire into the condition of the country, as affected by the prevalence of heathenism—and to ascertain by what means she may be raised up from her deep degradation, and be made to participate in the blessings of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The inhabitants of Western Africa, considered generally, are somewhat removed from that condition of society usually denominated the *savage state*, inasmuch as they have permanent habitations, are surrounded by herds of domestic animals, and depend for subsistence, mainly, upon agriculture. This statement, however, should be made with due qualification. Herds of domestic animals are kept, because they serve many important purposes, and maintain themselves, in a climate like that, without cost or care to their owners. The soil is cultivated, but in a very imperfect manner, and to an extent barely sufficient for their immediate personal wants. They construct houses that shield them from the scorching heats of a meridian sun, and from the chilling damps of night; but neither health, comfort, nor cheerfulness enter into any of their domestic arrangements. These possessions, and this mode of living, do not indicate, therefore, so much a relish for the improvements of civilized life, as aversion to the hardier and more perilous pursuits of the chase. The inhabitants of the country have made no progress in civilization. The condition of the country, in all important respects, is now substantially what it was three centuries ago; and we anticipate no improvement or amelioration, except such as shall result from the diffusion of Christianity.

There are no political organizations, in the maritime regions of Western Africa, that deserve to be dignified by the appellation of governments.

Villages are scattered over the country in every direction, at the distance of two, three, and four miles from each other, and varying in size from two or three hundred to

eight or ten thousand inhabitants. Each one of these villages, as a general thing, no matter how insignificant in the number of its inhabitants, or destitute of the means of defence, is entirely independent, and manages its internal concerns, without reference to any higher authority.

In imitation of what they have heard of the usages of European nations, and with the view of enhancing their importance in the estimation of foreigners, every village has its king, its prince, and its governor. But these distinguished personages, exercise none of the functions, and enjoy none of the emoluments of royalty; and indeed these titles are scarcely known, except in their intercourse with white men.

So far as there are resemblances to any of the known forms of government in the world, they are the extremes either of democracy or despotism. A specimen of the democratic form prevails at Cape Palmas, St. Andrews, and along the grain coast generally; and of the despotic, in Ashanti, in Dahomi, Lagos, and Cape Lopez.

At the last mentioned places, the authority of the chief, over the lives and property of his subjects, is absolute; and the deeds of barbarous cruelty that are constantly perpetrated, in obedience to the commands of these capricious tyrants, are too revolting to be recited.

Nor is the democratic form any better. Wherever it exists, it is, no doubt, the reaction of excessive despotism. But in a community where ignorance is universal, where moral restraint is unknown, and where the worst passions of men have uncontrolled sway, what could be expected but anarchy and oppression? The fact is, the people of Africa, every where, are strangers to the blessings of good government, and nothing but habit of long standing, and extreme insensibility of heart, can render their situation tolerable. It is doubtful whether a man in that country, ever composes himself to sleep at night, with a feeling of entire security. If he shall be so fortunate as to escape the machinations of witchcraft, which is supposed to be specially active in the night season, yet he knows not but he may rise from his bed in the morning, to witness a storm of lawless passion, that may not only strip him of every article of property he possesses, but may hurry him into the jaws of a cruel and violent death.

Nor is the peace of neighboring villages secured by any well established principles of international laws. Among those of the same neighborhood there are perpetual jealousies and strifes. The only point in which the people of any one village are ever heartily united among themselves, is their extreme hatred to their nearest neighbors. These antipathies are always heartily reciprocated, and necessarily lead to aggression and war, but without producing any beneficial results to either party, and without placing their political relations upon any better footing. The people of Africa seem incapable of forming themselves into extended political combinations; a fact that cannot be ascribed to their natural intractability, (for no people in the world, perhaps, are more easily governed,) but to a want of confidence in the integrity and ability of each other—to an excessive reliance upon their personal cunning, and still more perhaps than either, to their inability to see that the welfare of each individual is most effectually promoted, by securing the rights and interests of the whole. As a general thing the people live together in disorderly masses, without law, without legislation, without courts of justice, and without any kind of security, either of persons or property. If an enlightened and permanent government is ever established in that country, it must result from the diffusion of education—the spread of knowledge, and sentiments of patriotism, which Christianity alone can impart.

In point of morals, the condition of Africa is precisely what might be expected of any portion of the apostate race of man, utterly destitute, for centuries, of the influence of Christianity, and the restraints of morality. Selfishness, absolute selfishness, is the master passion of every heathen heart—the demon spirit which presides over every heathen community. It is not that chastened selfishness, however, which acknowledges the supremacy of law, and has regard to the rules of decency and propriety. In heathen countries it disregards all the conventional rules of society, and stretches forth its hand to appropriate everything desirable within its reach. The principles of justice, the rights of individuals, the rules of decency, the voice of humanity, the ties of kindred and friendship are trampled under foot with indiscriminate contempt. Theft, falsehood, fraud, deceit, duplicity, injustice, and oppression are favorite agents

and constant companions. Intemperance, licentiousness, gluttony, and debauchery furnish the aliment upon which it feeds—hatred, jealousy, and revenge pervade the air which it breathes, and is the atmosphere with which it is perpetually surrounded.

Now, when we reflect that this grasping, insatiable selfishness is not the spirit of one man alone, but is substantially the spirit which pervades and controls the mass of the people—when we reflect, further, that these conflicting and discordant elements are perpetually active, what must be the character of society formed under such auspices? To this question we have an ample, unequivocal answer, in the present moral condition of Western Africa. It is almost impossible to say what vice is preëminent among these degraded natives. Falsehood is universal: it may be safely said, that no man speaks the truth, who can find a motive for telling a lie. Theft is not only unrebuked, but when it is perpetrated for the public good, it receives the reward of public applause. Fraud is not only practised by every one, but the man who scruples to take advantage of another, when an opportunity offers, is regarded as deficient in manly worth. Intemperance is considered a lordly indulgence, and the only restraint which any one feels, in relation to this vice, is the want of ability to procure the means of intoxication. Chastity is a term for which they have no word in their language, and is a virtue of which they can scarcely form any conception. Envy, jealousy, and revenge enthrone themselves in every heart, and wield their triple sceptre with uncontrolled power.

We scarcely need turn aside to trace the practical operations of such principles upon society—suffice it to say, however, that there can be no confidence between man and man—no sympathy of interests, and no harmony of action—no man sees in the face of another “a friend or a brother.” Every man must be the sole guardian of his rights, his interests and property, and defend them against the evil designs of all around him. But we pass to the consideration of the *intellectual condition* of the country. Here, however, we can find nothing upon which the eye of humanity can rest with satisfaction. The African mind, though it may not possess all the peculiarities, or manifest the same amount of energy, activity and penetration, as have distinguished

the mind of other portions of the human race, is nevertheless capable of great improvement—much more so perhaps than is generally supposed, by those who wantonly under-rate its capabilities.

But, in their present ignorance and heathenism, it is freely admitted, that the intellectual faculties of the sons of Africa are obtuse and circumscribed, almost beyond conception. Their minds not only bear all the marks of ignorance and superstition, but of the deep degradation of centuries of neglect and inactivity.

None of the natives can read or write, except those who have been taught by the missionaries on that coast. Until recently they have had no books, no schools, and no systems of education; they have grown up, therefore, generation after generation, without any intellectual culture, and in the most abject ignorance.

A few local associations; a limited number of acquaintances, among their own people, (all equally ignorant;) some knowledge of the art of raising the bare necessities of life; a few traditionary stories handed down from father to son, and rehearsed in their social groups, as a pastime; and a superficial knowledge of the superstitious customs of their forefathers, comprise about the sum total of their stores of knowledge. Surrounded by an endless variety of outward objects, the native African knows but little about their properties, or their relation to each other. He knows nothing, and perhaps cares as little, about the origin or the destination of his species. He saunters through life, conscious that he shall exist hereafter, but strangely indifferent as to the nature or conditions of that existence. Every object in nature, upon which his eye rests, tells him that there is *one great first cause* of all things, but who he is, where he is, or what he requires of his rational creatures, are topics which seldom engage his thoughts, if they do not lie altogether beyond the ordinary range of his mental vision. He has marked the daily revolutions of the sun—he has gazed upon the bright moon, which cheers his nocturnal dance, and marks his seasons for him—he has watched the “state-ly march of the stars across the heavens,” but he has no adequate conceptions of the real grandeur of the heavenly bodies, and he is equally ignorant of the object for which they were created, or the laws by which their motions are

regulated. On all these points, the ideas of the most intelligent native on the coast of Africa, are not one particle more rational or dignified than the speculations of a child, in this country, of two or three years of age. Untrained to logical reasoning, and ignorant of the researches of science, the natives of Africa ascribe to every phenomenon in nature a mysterious origin. An eclipse of the sun is always portentous of some great calamity, and never fails to produce the utmost perturbation. They can see no connection between a lightning-rod and the transmission of electricity, and therefore this is always accounted the white man's charm. A leopard or an elephant that has invaded their premises and destroyed their property, is regarded as a malicious human being, metamorphosed, and an innocent man must pay his life as the forfeit of this absurd credulity. The powers ascribed to one who is supposed to possess the art of witchcraft are nothing short of *omnipotence*. He is supposed not only to hold dominion over all the elements of nature, but every object in the universe, which can possibly be converted into an instrument of harm to man, is supposed to come and go at his command. If the tempest spreads desolation over the face of nature — if the sea yawns and swallows its victim — if the lightning smites to the earth — if sickness invades the habitation of the living, and death bears away its prey, all is ascribed to the machinations of one of their fellow men, who possesses not one particle of power more than themselves.

Nor is the imbecility of the African mind less conspicuous in the undue importance which they attach to dreams. These are regarded as visitations from the dead, and the hints, cautions, admonitions, and advice, which are received through this medium have infinitely more weight in determining the general course of their conduct, than the clearest deductions of reason in their waking hours. Duties which no persuasion, no sense of shame, and no hope of gain could induce them to undertake, are cheerfully performed at the slightest instigation of a dream. Important enterprises are sometimes abandoned, long and fatiguing journeys are undertaken, houses are built, the streets and precincts of the largest villages are swept in obedience to the visions of the night. Nor are the results of these dreams

always harmless or mirthful. In many instances they are brought forward as evidence of the guilt of an accused man, and not unfrequently result in his condemnation and death. But we forbear to enlarge. In whatever point of light we contemplate the African mind, it presents little else than one inextricable maze of ignorance, credulity, and superstition, from which it can never be disengaged, except by the life-giving and light imparting influence of Christianity. •

But let us turn to the *social condition* of the country. And here we are met at the threshold of our inquiries, by the anomalous fact, of a people by nature preëminently social, and yet, in a practical point of view, entire strangers to all social happiness. And how shall this singular and anomalous fact be accounted for? The most comprehensive answer would be involved in ascribing it generally to the absence of true religion. But there are subordinate and more immediate agencies to which attention may be called. Among these may be mentioned the *existence of polygamy, the influence of the slave trade, and the prevailing belief in witchcraft.*

We shall not pretend to determine which of these has exerted the most powerful agency in undermining the social foundations of that unhappy land.

Polygamy is one of those forms of social evil, the disastrous influence of which can be fully comprehended by those only who have lived in the midst of it and seen its practical workings day by day.

In Africa, as in all countries where this practice prevails, the number of a man's wives, is the standard by which his importance in society is regulated; and as the love of distinction is natural to man—his strongest passion perhaps—every one adds as many wives to his train as he can, without regard to the peace and quiet of his household, and with as little forethought of the means by which they are to be supported. These matrimonial connexions, (if indeed they may be designated by this term,) are formed without any affection for their basis, and are afterwards regulated by no sound principles, either of morality or expediency. The wife performs the commands of her husband, not from sentiments of affection, nor from any enlightened sense of duty, but because he has the physical power to compel her

obedience ; and perhaps the strongest detestation that ever occupies the heart of an African woman, is towards the companion of her bosom and the father of her children.

Nor is the relative position of the women of the same household, arranged on any better principles. A number of women are thrown together, without adequate means of support, without previous acquaintance or personal attachments, without the faculty of forming new friendships, and totally unaccustomed to govern their passions ; what could be expected from the congregation of such discordant elements, but strifes, jealousies, and endless bickerings ?

Nor are these the only bitter fruits of polygamy. The practice itself, is equally a violation of the order of nature and the law of God, and cannot therefore be otherwise than prolific of all sorts of social disorder. In communities where it prevails, and especially in Africa, where all the joints of society hang so loosely, conjugal fidelity is unknown,—chastity is not regarded as a virtue, and deception, insincerity, and the most indiscriminate profligacy have the countenance of universal practice.

These are the schools, too, in which each succeeding generation begins and ends its moral training. Should it occasion surprise, therefore, that the inhabitants of that land have reached the lowest abyss of moral debasement ?

The prevailing belief *in witchcraft*, is not less prejudicial to the social well-being of Africa. We have already alluded to this belief, as illustrating the obliquity of the African mind, and must recur to it again, to exhibit its influence upon the social character of the country. This idea or belief, is of such long standing,—is of such constant recurrence, and is so intimately interwoven with all their actions, their projects, their reasonings and their speculations, that it seems to form an essential part, both of their mental and moral constitution.

Of course, we cannot give an extended exposition of this somewhat natural but most absurd belief. It ascribes to those who are supposed to possess this mysterious and hateful art, power not only over the health and lives, but over the property and fortunes of all around them. Every event in life, if adverse or calamitous, is ascribed to this malignant agency. Sickness, no matter what its type or how contracted, the loss of property, no matter by what means or

under what circumstances of mismanagement, the disappointment of cherished hopes, however extravagant or unreasonable they may have been; the loss of friends by death, except it be the result of extreme old age, are indiscriminately ascribed to some one who is supposed to exercise this mysterious power. A death seldom occurs in one of their villages, that is not atoned for by the life of some one else. Other feelings than those of heartfelt sorrow, are awakened by the sound of the death drum. It is the voice of the accuser, that sends a thrill of concern to every heart. No man is exempt from the suspicion of having caused that death. To fly from the scene of anticipated danger, is a virtual confession of the charge of guilt. Uprightness of character and benevolence of heart afford no shield; the intimacy of friendship and the endearments of kindred ties, are alike unavailing; suspicion *may* fasten upon the son as the perpetrator of his father's death; the *mother* (Christian mothers, hear it!) the mother may be the victim upon which popular fury shall seize, as the destroyer of her own offspring.

How the inhabitants of Africa have any repose at all, is a matter of surprise to all who are familiar with their superstitious creed. Beings differently constituted, in their circumstances, would be utterly miserable and wretched. The senseless expedients to which they resort, not only to shield themselves from the power of witchcraft itself, but from the suspicion of practising against others, (for the one is to be deprecated as much as the other,) is scarcely credible of rational beings. Their persons, their houses, and almost every article of property, are not only guarded by *feteishes*, but a man must be careful what path he walks, whose house he enters, on what stool he sits, where he sleeps, and what he touches. A glass of water may not be taken into his hand, or a particle of food tasted, until the ceremony of what is called "taking off the feteish," is performed. The hair of the head and the pairings of the toes and fingers are concealed with studied care; and notwithstanding all these and ten thousand other expedients, yet more silly and stupid, these miserable people enjoy no sense of security. They are wretched and miserable among themselves, and know not where to turn for relief. Having forsaken God, the fountain of living waters, they have nothing left to them but broken cisterns that can hold no water.

But whatever desolations may have been made in the social condition of Africa, by the existence of polygamy and the prevailing belief in witchcraft, it has been reserved to the foreign *slave trade* to complete the work of ruin. Much has been said and written, and perhaps without material exaggeration, about the "horrors of the middle passage"—the merciless waste of human life, both before and after the embarkation of the unfortunate victims of this traffic. But these, after all, are but the lesser evils of this nefarious trade. It is upon the moral and social condition of the country, that it has inflicted its severest, most enduring and deadliest wound. The sufferings and misery, which result from this traffic, to those who have been violently torn from their homes, and transported to foreign countries, revolting as they are to every sentiment of justice and humanity, are nevertheless transient in their nature—they may be forgotten—they may be overruled by a wise and merciful Providence to their good and salvation. But who shall measure the length and breadth and depth of that torrent of iniquity which has thereby been let loose upon the mother country? Who shall devise a name for that terrible scourge, which has traversed the land in every direction, and has almost deprived the inhabitants of the attributes of humanity? Where shall a parallel be found for that monster, which having undermined all the deep foundations of society, dissolved the bonds of friendly alliance between neighboring villages, and destroyed the peace of families, *pauses because there is no more work of destruction?* What is there, it may be asked, ennobling in human nature, upon which its polluting, unhallowed influence has not been exerted. Aye! it has invaded the sanctuary of a mother's heart, and by tempting her cupidity, has made her a traitor to her own offspring. Strange and almost incredible as it may seem, yet it is a matter of no rare occurrence, that an African mother, for a gallon of rum and a few yards of cloth, will sell her own child.

It remains for us to take a hasty review of the *religious condition* of the country. And here we are constrained to observe, that whatever humanity may see in her social misery and mental degradation to deplore, Christianity will find in her religious condition, a theme for still more intense commiseration.

The forms of false religion in Western Africa, may be classed under three heads. 1st. *The Worship of Evil Spirits.* 2d. *The Worship of Reptiles;* and 3d. *Image Worship, or the Worship of Ancestry.*

1st. Image Worship, or *the Worship of Ancestry*, is practised at the Gaboon, at Cape Lopez, at Congo, and perhaps to a greater or less extent, over the whole of the Southern portion of the African continent. Images, carved out of wood, are set up in the secret corners of their dwellings, and are treated as the representatives of deceased ancestors, whose memories are held in veneration. Offerings of food and drink are stately carried to them, as expressions of filial affection; and their aid is often invoked, especially in times of perplexity and distress. The influence of this, like every other species of idolatry, necessarily stupifies the mind; but it is less hurtful than the other forms of religion in the country, inasmuch as it promotes a lively sense of a future existence, and softens the character of the people, by exciting and cherishing feelings of filial and parental affection.

The *homage paid to reptiles*, is confined mainly to those regions of country bordering on the Gulf of Benin. At Dixcove, the crocodile is a sacred animal; the snake is worshipped at Whydah and Popo; the guana is an object of religious veneration at Benin, and the shark at Calabar. At the last mentioned place, human victims are stately offered to these voracious monsters of the deep.

But *Devil worship is the religion of Africa.* With some unimportant variations, it is practised in all parts of the country. Its object is to court the favour, or ward off the displeasure of evil spirits, with whom they fancy themselves to be constantly surrounded. They offer such homage only as is dictated by their avarice or prompted by their guilty fears. We need scarcely turn aside, to point out the influence of such a religion upon the moral character of the people. If it be true, and it undoubtedly is, that our moral characters constantly assimilate to the character of the Being we worship, it follows as a necessary consequence, that African character has been approximating for centuries, to a model the most hideously immoral and depraved the human imagination can conceive; and here is at once the secret cause of all that cunning, duplicity, and cruelty, that have ever characterized this people. The lineaments of the

divine image have been effectually effaced from their hearts, whilst those of the spirits of the infernal pit, have been drawn with too bold a hand to be mistaken or misapprehended.

In nothing are the debasement and worthlessness of this religion more palpable, than in the fact that it has no reference to the improvement of the heart, and makes no pretensions to conduct mankind to a happier state of being in the world to come. In this respect, it falls short even of all other Pagan religions. Intent upon securing some temporal good, or of avoiding some impending evil, it blots out from the mind of man all thought of the future. So completely does it engage the thoughts of men with the things of this transient world, that eternity is lost sight of, God is forgotten, and the immortality of the soul becomes a mere inoperative speculation. We think of the millions of Asia, as fellow creatures panting after higher good, but pitifully misled as to the means of attaining that good; but of the degraded inhabitants of Africa, as fellow beings who have sunk too low to care for the salvation of their souls.

They believe in the existence of *one Supreme Being*; his name is constantly upon their lips, but they no where offer him any kind of religious worship, nor have they any suitable conceptions of his mysterious and glorious character. On the contrary, their conceptions of him are the most grovelling that can be conceived.*

The belief in a future existence is common, if not universal, but they have no definite ideas of what is to be their condition in another world. In relation to the great and

* 1st. Once after preaching at Graway, (the first sermon the people had ever heard,) I told my interpreter to tell the people that I was now going to pray to God, when he turned upon me a look of unutterable surprise, and said, "God cannot hear you—he is not close here—he is far away."

I was asked once by a native of considerable intelligence, "if God drank rum." He was an intemperate man, and could conceive of no higher happiness than the feeling of intoxication.

By another native, not less respectable, I was asked "what kind of a hat God wore." He was a vain man, and no doubt transferred his feelings of vanity to the Supreme Being.

By a woman, I heard it remarked that the old God must be dead, and a new one taken his place, for that she and her people were once rich and had many vessels to visit their town; but that now they were poor and forsaken by white men—whilst others, who were then poor and insignificant, have since risen to favour and wealth.

glorious light of the Gospel, the inhabitants of Africa generally, are as profoundly ignorant as if no such light had broken upon the world. They sit in the region and shadow of death, as unmoved and as unblessed, as if no Saviour had been born,—as if no atonement had been made,—as if no Gospel had been proclaimed to a dying world.

This then, *is a sketch of the moral condition of Africa.* Contemplated, therefore, from any point of view, Africa presents little else to the eye of humanity, than one vast continent of sin, misery, and superstition. No race of men in the world, perhaps, are endowed with stronger social propensities, and yet in that land social happiness is a term without a meaning. Possessed of intellectual faculties, if not of the highest, yet of a respectable order, and unquestionably capable of great improvement; yet the African mind is completely buried in superstition and ignorance.

No people in the world have a stronger *religious bias*; and yet up to the present moment their religious propensities are prostituted to the most pitiable and grovelling forms of idolatry in the world.

Occupying as she does, a central and advantageous position in the geographical world, and possessing unbounded natural resources, she ought to take a high stand among the nations of the earth; but is nevertheless, and justly too, regarded as one of the poorest and most degraded portions of the globe. Her shores, for three centuries, have witnessed little else than one unvaried scene of plunder, rapine and blood; and the most painful and anomalous feature in the picture is, that Africa herself has not only countenanced, but has even participated in this conspiracy against her own peace and happiness.

When we cast our eyes over this great continent, to which Providence has assigned so central a position on our globe—when we remember the complete obscurity in which the history of the great mass of her inhabitants, is involved—the entire absence of all traces of former greatness—when we remember the protracted moral darkness that has overshadowed that land—the deep degradation in which her children have been involved for centuries—the scenes of violence and cruelty that have been enacted upon her shores—the contempt and disgust with which that people have been treated by all the rest of the world. When we re-

member how her sons and daughters have been "peeled and scattered"—"meted out and trodden under foot" by the rest of mankind, we are constrained to ask, why has all this been permitted, under the government of a wise and merciful Providence? To what great results in the moral government of God, are all these things tending?

We know of but one probable solution, and that is, that as Africa has heretofore been the scene, upon which have been enacted the foulest deeds ever perpetrated by man, so it is to become the theatre upon which shall be displayed the most illustrious triumphs of Divine grace, that the world has ever witnessed. These views are not only founded in reason, and are strictly analagous with the providence God, but they are amply authorized by his word.

It can scarcely be expected that we could enter into any detailed speculations, in relation to the probable character and efficiency of the African race, under the influence of Christianity. Let it be summarily stated, however, that if they never discover the same amount of energy and enterprize as that evinced by other races, they will be behind none in the fervor of their love and the steadiness of their zeal. If they shall be among the last to receive the blessings of the Gospel, they will be unsurpassed in their devout and steady adherence to the cause of their Saviour.

But the *great question*, the one which most immediately concerns us is, how is this great change in her moral condition to be brought about? This is a question from which no friend of the Redeemer should avert his eyes. * * *

It will not be attained by the operation of any active, inherent principle in herself. Of her own insufficiency, we have had ample proof in her past history. If left to herself, her future progress, as has been her past, must be perpetually downward.

Nor will it result from the suppression of the slave-trade, as devoutly as this object is to be desired. The extinction of this traffic, may relieve the land from many of its sufferings—it may prepare the way for a better state of things—but it can never rectify the moral and social disorder of that unhappy land.

Nor will the development of her commercial resources necessarily effect any important change, either in her moral or religious condition. On the contrary, modern commerce,

though an invaluable, and in some respects an indispensable auxiliary to the cause of missions, yet, if it goes forth unattended by Christianity, it goes to curse, and not to bless. Abundant proofs of this are not now wanting on the coast of Africa.

Nor will any other secular enterprize, or even any moral or religious enterprize, which unavoidably involves much of a secular character, effect the renovation of the land. They may have their use—they may effect indirect and subordinate good—they may follow in the footsteps of Christianity, and turn to good account the new life which she shall stir up, but of themselves they are utterly impotent to awaken the dormant energies of a heathen mind. * * *

It is reserved to the *preaching of the Gospel*—that simple, but powerful and divinely appointed instrumentality to effect this great object. The more tenaciously and exclusively we cling to this, the more surely and the more speedily will the great end be attained. Let us relax our hold upon this, or let us turn aside to any of the expedients of human device, and we put farther off the great object for which we labour; we are taking steps, that must be retraced by ourselves, or others, who shall be wiser than ourselves; and what is still worse, we shall leave that people, for the present at least, in all the misery and hopelessness of heathenism.

We conclude with a single reflection—and that is, *what we propose to do for Africa should be done speedily*. There never was, and there never will be, perhaps, a more favorable crisis for the introduction of Christianity into that land. The providence of God is before us, preparing the way, and if we do not fall in, and coöperate in the work, it must be ten-fold more difficult at any subsequent period. The adversary watches the movements of Providence there, with an untiring and sleepless eye. If the openings that are now made in his kingdom, for the establishment of Christianity, are not speedily occupied by us, his forces will be concentrated there with redoubled power.

But of all the evil agencies at work, none are to be more dreaded than the workings of *heathenism itself*. It is common remark of the present day, that the heathen world is as depraved now, as it was in the days of Paul. But this does not meet the case. It is *worse* now, than it was then.

There are but few modern missionaries who cannot testify to the existence of forms of human depravity among the heathen of the present day, of which there is no mention in the Apostle's category, and of which perhaps there was no existence in his day. And is it unnatural or improbable, that such should be the case? Can it be supposed that the heathen world has not been made worse, by the unrestrained, unqualified workings of *heathenism*, for eighteen centuries? What is modern heathenism, but human depravity embodied, and tottering with old age. But let it be borne in mind, that although it may appear to us to be decrepid with age, and on the borders of dissolution, this is only a disguise. Yea, it is operating at the present moment, with undiminished energy. The depth of infamy and pollution to which heathen tribes have already reduced themselves, can scarcely be conceived. To what they are yet to attain, if not wrested from the powers of darkness, God only knows. When we reflect upon their deep degradation, their vices, their crimes, and their excesses, we cease to wonder that they are beginning to disappear from the face of the earth. We see in their gradual extinction, the fulfilment of Divine threatenings—the hand of exhausted forbearance—the operation of natural laws, in cause and effect.

But all this accumulated guilt of the heathen, and this fearful depopulation in their ranks, are chargeable to the neglect of those who ought to have sent them the Gospel. We have in our hands the means of arresting these disastrous evils, but we have not applied it. Every day the work is put off, but renders it the more difficult to be performed. What, therefore, we would do, let us do without delay.

ARTICLE IV.

AN INQUIRY INTO THE DOCTRINE OF IMPUTED SIN.

No fact is capable of stricter proof than the universal existence of sin. The uniform testimony of conscience, the various expiatory rites which enter into every system of